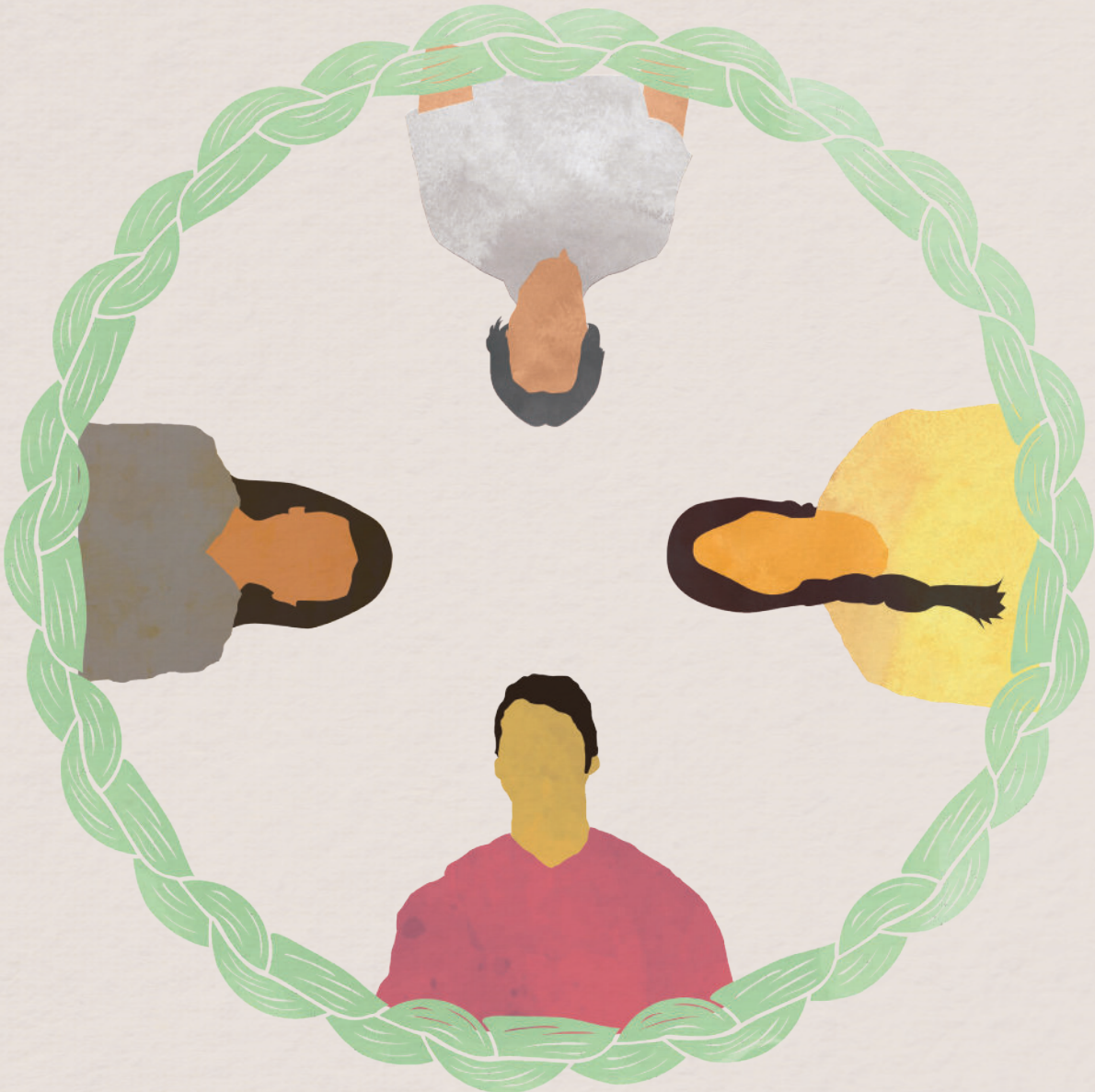


Giwiidabindimin Welcome Kit

Responding to Trauma and Grief With Decolonized Practices



Dear participant,

Welcome to the Giwiidabindimin Certificate Program – Responding to Trauma and Grief With Decolonized Practices.

We are so glad you're here, and we'd like to let you know a little bit about what to expect in the five days we spend together.

In order for real change to happen – within ourselves, our organizations, and our communities – we must be willing to do things differently. This is why we have designed this program around a decolonized approach. While research and theory have their place, this learning experience honours a deeper knowing. We believe that every one of us carries valuable knowledge, whether it comes from lived experience, community, ceremony, dreams, or formal education.

This program embodies a two-eyed seeing perspective, which means we intentionally bring together the strengths of both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. We walk together with both eyes open, recognizing that wisdom is carried not just in books, but in stories, relationships, the land, and spirit.

You are here for a reason – one that may be known to you, or may unfold through your time in circle. We trust that your presence, stories, and wisdom will contribute to the collective experience in ways that are meaningful and healing.

We believe that we do not learn alone – we learn in relationship. That's why we invite you to sit in circle. In a circle, there is no hierarchy, no front or back – simply balance and connection. It is a space where every voice matters, where we listen deeply, and where we share from the heart.

Throughout the week, you'll notice we work in co-facilitation pairs and invite your perspectives, wisdom, and knowledge to be shared. This is intentional, as it models balance, relational accountability, and shared leadership. No one person holds all the knowledge. Together, we co-create a space that invites curiosity, humility, and mutual respect.

You are invited to bring your full self into this experience – your voice, your questions, your silence, and your stories.

We wish you an engaging and meaningful week of learning and building relationships.

In gratitude,



Melanie Bazin,
Director of Indigenous Services



Jaicee Chartrand
Senior Manager of Indigenous Programs



Activities and Resources

Here are a few resources and reflection activities to help ground you in your learning as you prepare to build relationships, share, and learn with others in the Giwiidabindimin Certificate Program.

[Who Am I as a Helper?](#)

[What Are Your Anchor Points](#)

[Colonial Trauma](#)

[7 Steps to Decolonize Your Practice](#)

[Packing for the Journey](#)

Who Am I as a Helper?

Unpacking how we know what we know as individuals and in our roles as helpers is essential. Think about who you are in your helping role. How did you learn this? What teachings or formal trainings were part of your learning?



Now, go further. How was this informed? Where did this knowledge come from? What do you consider to be valuable knowledge in your learning journey as a helper or counsellor? What do you not consider to be helpful? (For example, lived experiences, cultural teachings, visions, ancestral knowledge, etc.)

Reflection

1. What are the dominant ways of knowing in your circle?

2. What is unbalanced or missing from the circle?

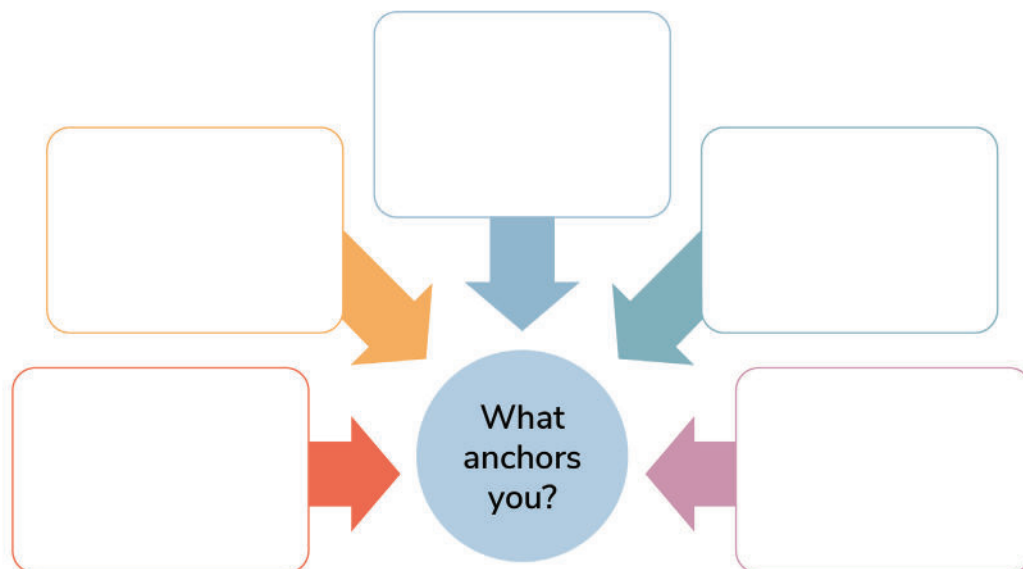
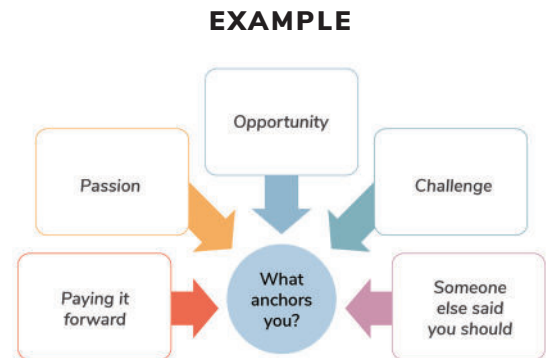
3. How can you restore balance in your helping practice?

What Are Your Anchor Points?

For helpers and healers, anchor points are a key mechanism we can use to strengthen our compassion satisfaction through increasing our awareness and accessing our internal motivators and passions. Anchor points help us stay steady amidst challenges and rocky waters. Anchor points – like empathy, caring for our clients, and the values that undergird our work – are integral to this rich pool of grit, motivation, and meaning we can use to tap into resilience when we need it.

What contributed to your choice of working in a helping or healing role? What motivates and connects you to your passion for this work? These may be qualities, values, or important messages you carry and want to remember.

What qualities, values, or important messages anchor you in your work?



After you've filled in your anchor points, consider the following questions:

- Would you have identified these same reasons six months ago? Five years ago?
- When you imagine yourself five years down the road, what do you hope will still be an anchor point?

Colonial Trauma

Colonial trauma happens when people live in unsafe places and survive violence from the ruling group. It can be felt individually, collectively, historically, currently, or through ancestral trauma, especially by those whose land and communities have been colonized by another group.

In the geopolitical area known as North America, settler colonialism has a long, complex history. Since settlers arrived, their policies, practices, and domination have affected every aspect of society, from taking land and governance to forcing people to fit into the dominant society.

It is important to consider the impact of colonial trauma on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada using a critical lens. Different groups have experienced colonization differently, and it is crucial to understand individual experiences within the intersecting systemic forces, both past and present.

Examples of colonial trauma on community:

- Loss of culture or belief system due to criminalization or stigmatization of beliefs
- Forced assimilation into settler culture
- Loss of land, property, economic means
- Increased rates of lateral violence
- Prohibited use of native language
- Denied access to control over education of children
- Disrupted social systems
- Genocide
- Overrepresentation in child welfare, prison systems
- Increased rates of violence (MMIWG)
- Loss of power to governance
- Denied access to culturally appropriate means of parenting children
- Poorer health due to marginalization and decreased access to resources

Examples of colonial trauma on individuals:

- Disconnection from family, culture, and community
- Increased violence to members of colonized group
- Feelings of shame about self or culture
- Lack of voice in matters impacting their own lives and/or community lives
- Increased negative perceptions or stereotypes about colonized group
- Increased involvement in social services
- Decreased educational opportunities
- Increased incarceration rates
- Decreased access to economic and social means and supports
- Increased rates of mental health, substance use, suicide

Reflection

1. How has colonial trauma showed up in your life?

2. How can you take care of yourself while I go through this process?

7 Steps to Decolonize Your Practice

Throughout colonization, land has been taken, Indigenous practices and ceremonies have been outlawed, and people have been displaced. Children were stolen from their homes and forced to attend residential schools, where many suffered abuse, and their languages, ceremonies, and ways of life were disallowed.

These events created a loss of connection to culture, practices, medicines, ceremonies, land, and traditions. This disconnection continues to impact identity, physical and mental health, and spirituality. Despite the oppressive realities of colonization, Indigenous knowledge, practices, languages, culture, and ways of being remain strong.

We encourage you to honour the resilience of Indigenous peoples and contribute to the revitalization and strength of their enduring practices and wisdom. One way you can do this is by using the seven steps below to actively decolonize your helping practice.

1

Research and acknowledge the history of colonization.

- Understand the history of the land you work and live on.
- Determine how you fit into this history.
- Acknowledge and understand the effects of systemic oppression, power imbalances, and colonization on the human condition and on all our relationships.
- Acknowledge how oppression and trauma can impact mental health.

2

Know yourself and understand your limitations.

- Pay attention to cultural influences and differences.
- Recognize the importance of your own intersecting identities, privileges, and experiences as they relate to your own wellness and your work as a therapist.
- Participate in your own trauma healing, and improve your capacity to support those who have been impacted by colonization.

3

Understand that you have been educated in and are working within a Western, Eurocentric system.

- Recognize the limitations of Western counselling methods and modalities.
- Expand your notions of wellness and learn about wholistic and relational cultural modalities that move away from an individualistic focus.
- Challenge the inequalities present within mental health care systems.

4

Build relationships with Indigenous peoples in your area and learn about Indigenous culture.

- Learn about Indigenous helping practices.
- Connect with Indigenous service providers, Elders, and knowledge holders, and build collaborative relationships.
- Participate in and invite opportunities for reciprocal learning within your practice.
- Consider and implement wholistic models of health and well-being.
- Create safe spaces where everyone can show up authentically, including you.

5**Offer services that address oppression and colonization trauma.**

- Destigmatize mental health and challenge dominant beliefs.
- Acknowledge, uncover, and address intergenerational histories and intersecting identities and how these relate to wellness in your therapeutic process.
- Unlearn patriarchal ways of doing and Eurocentric internalized conditioning. Acknowledge how these patterns inhibit authentic connection.

6**Review the calls to action from the TRC and MMIWG+.**

- Identify the calls to action that directly relate to your area of work.
- Create an action plan to address these calls to action in your workplace.
- Inform yourself of local and national movements that are centred on these calls to action.

7**Continue the journey.**

- Decolonizing your helping practice is an ongoing and active process.
- Practice self-reflection and examine your areas of power and privilege.
- Challenge your implicit and explicit biases.
- Partner with a mentor, coworker, or colleague to encourage accountability.





Grief

Grief is a journey, and its impact can be experienced individually and relationally. It can stem from personal losses such as a job or relationship ending, or from the loss of someone we are in relation with. Grief can also come from intergenerational experiences of loss and trauma.

During our week of learning together, it is possible for your grief to be activated. As helpers, it's important to understand how grief impacts us and continuously take care of ourselves through our journeys. This activity will help prepare you for your continued journey through grief. As you reflect on packing for your journey, consider bringing items of comfort or identifying people that can support you.

Packing for the Journey

Some difficult experiences we see coming; others happen out of the blue. Regardless, we are all on a journey, and like all types of travel, it is helpful if we can bring things to assist along the way.

For some experiences, we can prepare what we pack; for others, we are thrust into the voyage with little to no preparation and are forced to consider picking up items along the way.

As we walk through our journey, it is helpful to pack and consider the following:



A notebook/guidebook: This represents lessons learned and notes made from previous experiences. These lessons may be your own, perhaps you've observed them, or maybe they've been passed on from others.



First aid kit: Bumps and bruises are inevitable – what are the things that can help with the pain on this journey that you want to intentionally employ?



Compass: This represents the values and beliefs that you want to hold on to and have as your guide.



Toiletries bag: What are the rituals and routines that you want to continue? (Daily, weekly, etc.)



Snacks: What will nourish you along the way?



Souvenirs: What reminders of this journey do you want to hold on to and why?

Additional considerations:

Companions: Some trips are best made alone while others welcome company.

- Who do you wish to accompany you?
- On what parts of the journey would you welcome others?
- When might you prefer to be on your own?

Who are the people you have met along the way that have been helpful?