

CREATING BIPOC-CENTERED SPACES

Setting the Space: finding out what your group needs from a BIPOC-centred space and methods of building safety

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Communities and Nations whose land my work is taking place on, and invite participants to consider where their own work and life takes place. For me, this includes the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, as well as the many other Indigenous communities and persons from across Turtle Island who meet here. It is important for me to ground this workshop in the recognition of the historical and ongoing process of colonization. In particular, I, as a settler colonial person, work to keep in mind the ways I contribute to and benefit from the harm of colonialism, so that I have a better understanding of how to challenge colonial processes.

In this workshop, we will talk about building safety, while knowing that colonialism and its violent systems makes Indigenous persons inherently unsafe. We may never have a perfectly safe space, but there are ways to genuinely work toward safety. This requires centring the voices of Indigenous persons, as well as other communities made vulnerable by the Canadian state. It is also important to name that ideas and tools we will discuss may come from foundations built by Indigenous communities internationally.

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Setting the space: Community Agreements
- Popular education: a brief introduction
- Root-cause analysis: a tool for planning
- Care and Considerations

A close-up photograph of a field of white daisies with bright yellow centers. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage. A white rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the text "INTRODUCTIONS".

INTRODUCTIONS

SETTING THE SPACE: COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Why?

We are trying to create a space that reflects the world we want to live in.

What?

- Needs, wants, and desires of participants that will help them feel *safe enough* to take part in a space
- Guidelines for how we will interact with each other in genuine and caring ways
- A tool for accountability
- Can be creative, unique, fun, flexible
- Are always changeable throughout days, weeks, and months!

SETTING THE SPACE: COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

How?

With your group, brainstorm guidelines that improve safety

- Clarify
- Review
- Discuss orally, and
- Write them up so they can always be visible in the space

Some questions for brainstorming:

- What do you need from the space/other participants to feel safe?
- What might you bring to the space that could help others feel safe?
- What makes you feel respected?
- Am I someone who feels comfortable sharing? Why might that be?

COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

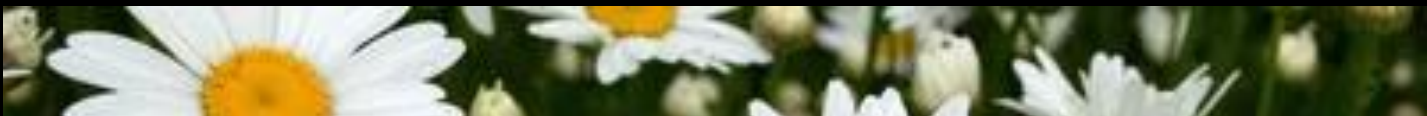
- confidentiality
- Listening (can mean different things to different people)
- everything is passable or modifiable
- silence is okay
- we all make mistakes
- everyone is the expert of their own experience
- consent for sharing potentially triggering stories
- intent is not equal to impact
- steps for accountability
- accessibility needs

NON-NEGOTIABLES?

Some groups might find it important to be very specific about rules that are not open for debate - for example:

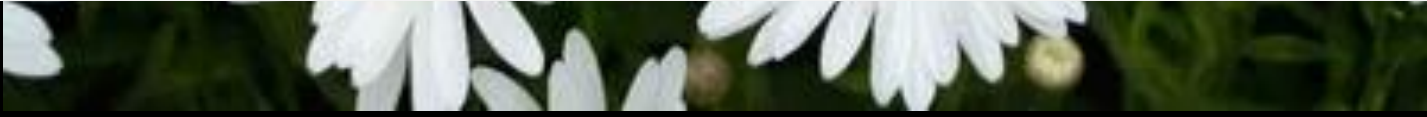
- This space celebrates [Indigenous, Black, queer, etc.] life
- This space does not tolerate [homophobia, sexism, racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, cis-sexism, transphobia, etc.]
- In this space, we do not debate [others' experiences, oppression]

The purpose of these are to ensure everyone who enters the space (whether they align with these ideas or not) knows that the space is holding solidarity, safety, and joy for its communities above all else.



This is only *one* way to imagine our BIPOC-centred space as the world we want to live in!

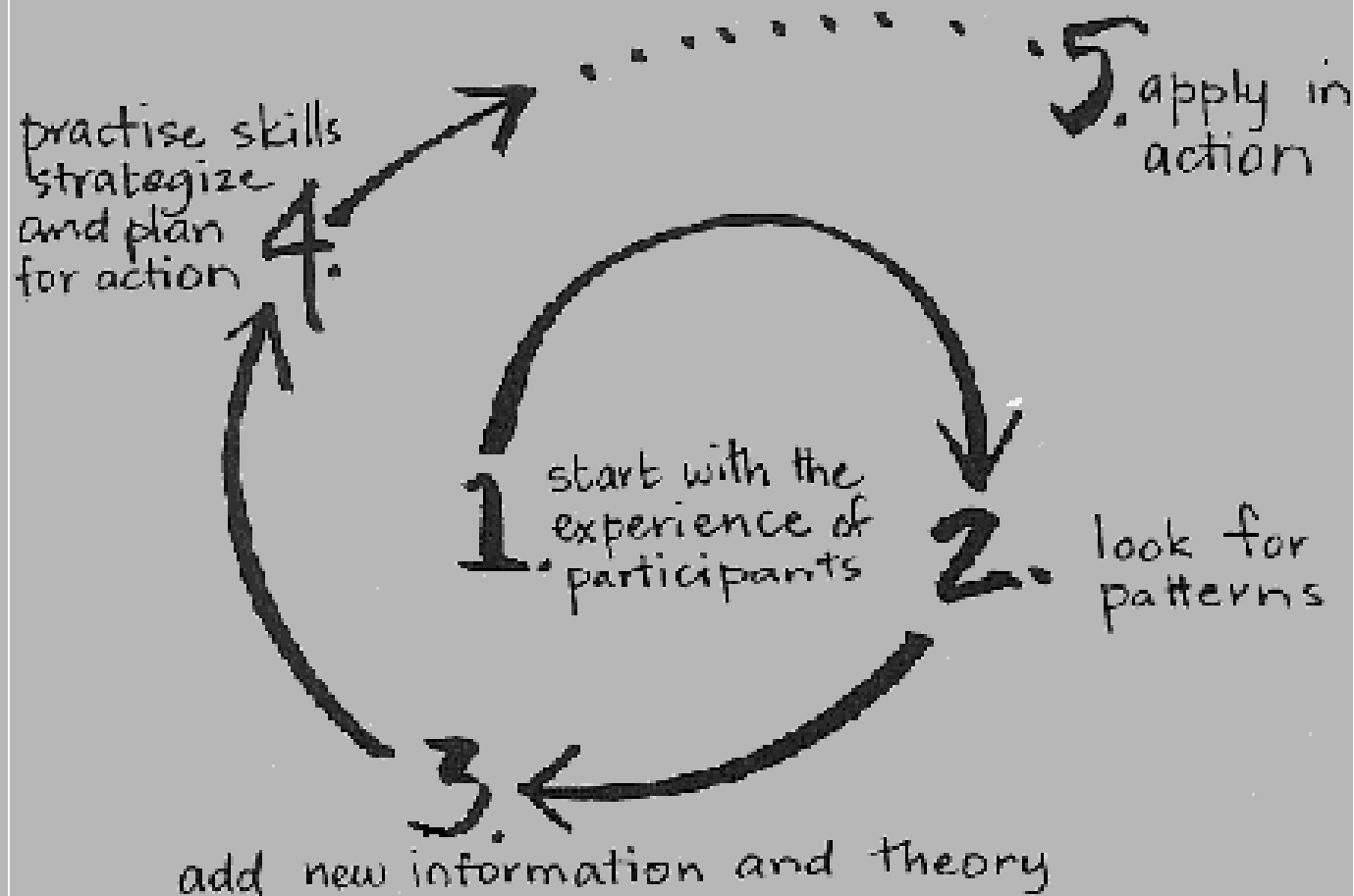
Are there other (ex. culturally-relevant) ways your group can imagine this world, build safety, or make collective agreements?



POPULAR EDUCATION ROOTS

1. Work to set up a safer space
2. Ask participants about their experiences, what they know about the world, and listen
3. Collectively search for themes and commonalities between stories
 - To draw out themes: Ask questions, record responses, ask participants to reflect
1. Add new information (ex. own experiences, a story, statistics)
2. Action plan and implementation
3. Reflection:
 - Evaluate the implementation by **repeating the process**
 - This time ask what was it like to implement the plan:
How did it feel? What did they learn?

The spiral model



ROOT-CAUSE ANALYSIS

(Adapted from worksheet by Bill Lee and Mike Balkwill)

1. Ask a question
2. Pick an image that has parts (ex. flower, tree, forest, beehive etc.)

Each part of the image = a part of the issue/solution

ex. Plant metaphor could have three parts:

- **Flower:** problems we see day-to-day **OR** solution we want to see
- **Stem:** what supports these problems/solutions + helps them grow
- **Roots:** deeper causes / long-term sustainability

1. Brainstorm in groups of 3-7

Open-ended: participants encouraged to change or interpret their metaphor as they wish

1. Once you can see the potential problems/solutions, you can then start brainstorming a plan to either address problems or implement solutions!

Important!: Be transparent about what organizers' capacity and resources are!

We will not be able to do or solve everything, we can only try our best.

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QUESTIONS BRAINSTORM

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SPACE FOR CULTURE

Arrange opportunities for your groups culture(s) to be celebrated:

- Knowledge sharing (ex. By group members, guests, etc.)
 - Language, story-telling
 - Art creation (music-making, painting, collaging)
 - Presentations (on events, people, places, styles)
- Connecting with mentors/Elders
- Food sharing
- Cultural events, watching films, etc.

GROUP CARE

- Food
- Transportation
- Consider your location
- Flexibility & differences (ability, economic)

SELF CARE

Reflect and make a list of:

- Capacity to organize (time, money, space, emotional capacity, etc.)
- Ways you know you are burning out
- People, places, things, and activities that help you feel cared for

FEEDBACK + RESOURCES

If you feel up for it, please e-mail me at yasmine.elh@gmail.com with your feedback on:

What worked well?

What could be better?

What was missing?

Any further questions?

More information: <https://www.youthline.ca/youthorganize/resources/>