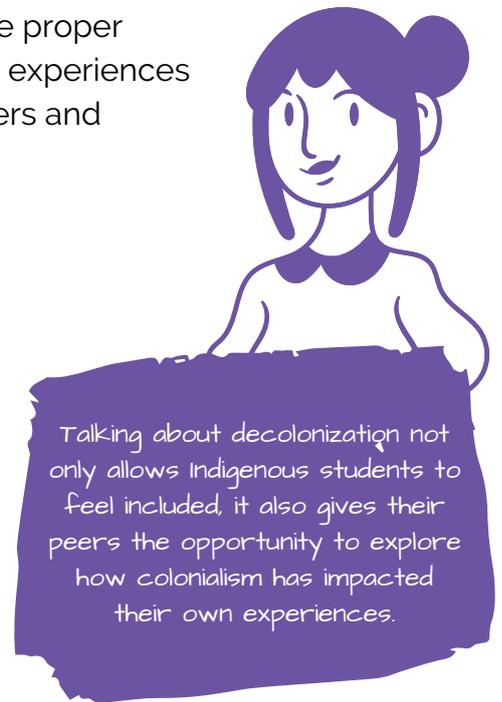


Resource:

Indigenizing Sex Ed Resource



Comprehensive sex ed allows young people access to the proper information to make conscious choices about their sexual experiences that empower and strengthen their relationships with others and themselves. Decolonization and Indigenization must be applied to all aspects of education including sexual health. Decolonization is the act of undoing or removing colonial ideals and Indigenization goes one step further and calls for the inclusion of Indigenous traditions and ways of knowing. Decolonizing sexual health education requires an intersectional lens where educators are able to consider students' varying experiences and needs. Indigenization calls on educators to include Indigenous people, ideas, and culture in their lessons. Culturally considerate sex ed can create space for students with different experiences to discuss and strengthen their sexual identity.



History

In order to understand what Indigenizing sex ed means, we must examine the history of these communities and their experiences with sexuality and identity. Historically Indigenous communities have respected the traditional roles of men, women and two spirit individuals and believe each person has a significant and meaningful part to play. Two spirit is an umbrella term and may mean different things to different people, it is a term that is unique to each individual. For some it may mean 'queer,' for others it might mean the embodiment of both the masculine and feminine energies. Indigenous communities believed in the abilities of women as leaders and caretakers, men as protectors and two spirit peoples as the embodiment of all roles as fluidity was accepted and celebrated. Traditional ceremonies celebrated important identity milestones including physical, spiritual, and emotional growth and gender diversity. Colonization denied Indigenous people the use of their own knowledge systems and enforced a settler colonial lens on their livelihood through violent assimilation projects, like the residential school system. The eugenic sterilization of Indigenous women caused significant trauma as social institutions aimed to control the reproduction of Indigenous people. These practices created a severe disconnect to identity, well-being, and culture for Indigenous people and reinforced their displacement. Without the connection to traditional teachings, knowledge keepers, and cultural practices, young Indigenous people may experience a disconnect and may not relate to materials used in our current curriculums. Specifically related to sexual health, Indigenous communities face institutional racism and have suffered greatly as a direct result of residential schools, the sixties scoop and systemic racism.

Impact

Teaching sex education, educators need to have difficult conversations and navigate topics around consent, identity and how to recognize sexual violence. Similarly, race must be discussed and navigated in a way that supports dialogue and experiences of students of colour. As mentioned within the 'Anti-racist Sex Ed' resource, good sex ed has the power to be transformative and in order for good sex ed to be transformative, it must actively denounce racism. Anti-racist education uses critical race theory to analyze and dismantle systems of oppression. An anti-racist approach aims to examine race, power dynamics, and social oppression and apply these concepts to gain an understanding of the oppression faced by BIPOC communities. When we combine the concept of anti-racist education with the concept of Indigenization we create space for dialogue that includes Indigenous narratives and ideas, while at the same time acknowledging the different experiences of Indigenous communities.

The determinants of health reference the social, personal, economic and environmental factors that may impact a person's health and well-being. These determinants of health highlight the health inequities that Indigenous people experience as research has shown that Indigenous people are disproportionately impacted by issues such as inadequate housing, access to natural resources including clean drinking water, limited access to education and health services, developing chronic diseases, mental health crisis and sexual violence. If we choose to remove race from the conversation of sexual health we actively erase the inequities that impact Indigenous students' well-being. These extreme barriers to services have exacerbated illness, poverty and other socioeconomic issues borne out of colonization. Similarly to the conversation about anti-racism, 'raceless' and 'multicultural' approaches minimize the experiences of Indigenous people and the impacts of societal oppression. Indigenizing sex ed must demonstrate the ability to include discrimination, race, and oppression into the conversation.

Culturally responsive sex ed allows Indigenous students a safe space to learn about their sexual health. Culturally responsive sex ed calls for us to understand the lasting impacts that colonization has had on Indigenous youth and their experiences. This requires educators to be aware not only of the information they share with students but also the emotional, cultural and social messages that are pervasive within society. Language is also an important piece of culturally responsive education as it has been used as a form of violence against particular groups. Consent and sexual freedom is also a key component to culturally responsive sex ed as Indigenous women have been hypersexualized but also over policed and politicized. As educators, we must have relevant conversations about consent, how to recognize sexual coercion and abuse and in order to empower Indigenous students to claim their sexuality as their own. Anti-racist education not only supports students of colour but also encourages other students to understand how power dynamics related to race lead to harmful experiences for their peers. Anti-racist education benefits all students.

Recommendations

Community

Indigenous teachings demonstrate the strength and resilience of a community. Traditionally, Indigenous people rely on their families and communities when faced with hardships. Indigenous students may still benefit from being introduced to Indigenous leaders, knowledge keepers, sexual health educators and students that look like them.

Create space (literally)

Colonialism uprooted Indigenous people physically, emotionally and spiritually. Creating a physical room or area that is dedicated to Indigenous students to pray or smudge in may allow a sense of connection to culture when having difficult and vulnerable conversations.

Holistic Approach

Elders and knowledge keepers speak about the holistic approach that communities focused on to ensure all pieces of the individual are cared for. Holistic care calls for the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of each person are fully met. Within sex education, educators should include spiritual and emotional care when discussing pleasurable experiences. There are some physical experiences that may impact a person's mental and spiritual being as well, such as being pressured to do something they may not be ready to, having sex before they are ready and exploring sexuality in general.

Representation

Including Indigenous leaders in the movement toward culturally inclusive sex ed. Incorporate processes and methodologies that address the effects of colonization and oppression. This may look like sitting in a circle to discuss the history of Indigenous people before having conversations around sexual health. Storytelling is another traditional way of sharing knowledge that may allow Indigenous students to connect to the content in a more meaningful way.

Resources



Books:

- Decolonizing Trauma Work by Renee Linklater
- Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin by Michael Hart

Organizations:

- Canadian Aboriginal Aids Network
- Decolonising Contraception
- Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Women's Secretariat
 - Sâkîyiso
- First Nations Parents Society
- Native Youth Sexual Health Network
- Native Women's Association of Canada
 - Know Your Rights
- Roots of Resilience
 - Overcoming Inequities in Aboriginal Communities
- Saskatchewan Prevention Institute
 - Decolonizing Sexual Health with Carrie Bourassa
- Sex Information and Education Council of Canada
 - Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education
 - Questions & Answers
- Women of Colour Sexual Health Network

Educators:

- @apiscikahkakis
- @tipiconfessions
- @nyshn
- @seedingsovereignty
- @ekwi7tlcollective
- @yuusnewas