

Week 2, Module 2: Race, Racism, and Colonization

By: Dr. Lindsay Morcom

In this module, we will explore how race and racism developed as social constructs through colonization. We will also look at how that development informs interactions and social movements today, and what that means for us all as teachers. This module will take about 70-90 minutes to complete.

The module contains many hyperlinks to news, opinion, or academic articles and other resources. Those are there if you want to do a deep dive on any of the subjects we'll be talking about. **You are not expected to access all of them by any stretch of the imagination.**

Mandatory readings and videos will be highlighted in red and noted in the text.

I am grateful to Dr. Alana Butler for her guidance and help on the development of this module. Chi-miigwech.

Difficult Knowledge

This module contains difficult content. You might experience negative emotions such as anger, confusion, or sadness as you go through it. Those are normal reactions - I felt that way too as I wrote this module, even after having taught this content for many years.

For those of you who are Indigenous, or People of Colour, colonization and racism are not theoretical: they are real, and they impact your families and lives constantly. You may be wondering why we are going through these topics in such detail given that we live with their effects daily and given that you may already have significant knowledge of them. It's important that we continually deconstruct colonization and racism because they are so insidious. Everyone in society, including Indigenous people and People of Colour, has internalized colonial ideas because we are surrounded by them all the time. Talking about colonization and how it has impacted you will help you consider what decolonization, Indigenization, and healing look like for yourself, your family, your community, and your students, wherever you may choose to teach. If you're an Indigenous person of mixed heritage, as I am, you may find that you have both benefited and been victimized by colonial systems. Deconstructing that can be very complex, but it's going to help you understand colonization from both sides, bridge ways of seeing, and teach for empathy and anti-oppression. If you're an Indigenous person who hasn't been taught about these things before, that's also an impact of colonization. It's OK for you to not know because that's by design in colonial society and education. It's OK for you to ask questions, and it's OK to not be an authority on all things Indigenous.

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If you are a Settler, I know you will also experience sadness, anger, or confusion in this module. I believe that shows that this content matters to you. It is based in empathy. It is something you can channel to help you strive to be an ally and take up your responsibilities for decolonization and anti-oppressive education. You might also experience guilt or defensiveness. The point of this module is not to make anyone feel guilty. Nobody in this class is personally responsible for the actions of the past or their modern consequences. You do live within the systems those actions created and, depending on who you are, you benefit from those systems. That's not a choice, it's a fact of the society we live in. Many people aren't even aware of it; for teachers, that unconsciously informs how they relate to their students, and what and how they teach. That's why it is extremely important that Settler ally teachers know about colonization, race, and racism in detail and consciously work to see and disrupt oppressive systems. As a non-Indigenous person, you may still come from a background in which you and your ancestors were victims of colonization too. Colonialism is a global phenomenon, and the complexity of your experience as a person with roots in a colonization living as a Settler on other Indigenous lands is valid and important. I hope you will bring your perspective to our class because we all need to hear it.

You are all more than welcome to contact me or Deb St. Amant to talk about what you're thinking and feeling as you learn or revisit this difficult knowledge, to ask questions, and to smudge virtually together if that's a part of your practice or helpful to you.

You might be worried that some questions that arise for you may come across as uneducated or offensive or might be harmful to your classmates. If that's the case, rather than asking in class I really encourage you to e-mail me your questions, come to office hours, or set up a meeting with me and we can talk about it. I am always willing to find times to meet - remember, you as students are my #1 priority. I am also very difficult to offend. I'll be glad you're thinking critically and happy to help you make sense of what you're learning.

So, please take time to go through this module and process this difficult content. It is divided into smaller sub-modules to allow you to take pauses and consider what you're learning and how it effects you and your students. For class next week, please come with your well-considered thoughts about your roles and responsibilities in decolonization, as well as questions you might have. We will share through talking circles and/or open discussion.

Trigger Warning

This lecture will discuss in detail:

- Enslavement of African and Indigenous people;
- Genocide;
- Racism including lived experiences of racism in society and in schools.
- White supremacy and White Nationalism;
- Incarceration;

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- Institutional violence particularly police brutality against Black and Indigenous people, including the killing of Black and Indigenous people by police, and the murders of individual Black and Indigenous people in recent years; and
- Social issues within some Black and Indigenous communities and racist assumptions about those issues.

Please let me know if any of these subjects present a risk to your mental health, and we will work together, no questions asked, to make sure you can learn in wellness. Also please contact me or Elder-In-Residence Deb St. Amant (dars@queensu.ca) if you would like to talk during or after the module, or if you would like to be connected with counselling through Student Wellness Services.

1. What are Colonialism and Colonization?

Colonialism and colonization are processes by which one Nation takes and exercises control over another. Through these processes, the colonizer subjugates the colonized population, either by settling among them and appropriating land and resources or by taking economic, social, and political control from them. Through these processes, colonizers exploit colonized Nations and force their language, culture, and institutions on them. Colonialism is related to and underlies Imperialism, which is policy or social ethos within the colonizing population regarding the control and exploitation of other Nations. Strictly speaking, colonialism is the overarching term for the subjugation and exploitation of another Nation's peoples and lands, while colonization is narrower and involves either settling among the subjugated population or displacing them to claim their lands and resources. In practice, the two terms are frequently used interchangeably as the overarching term.

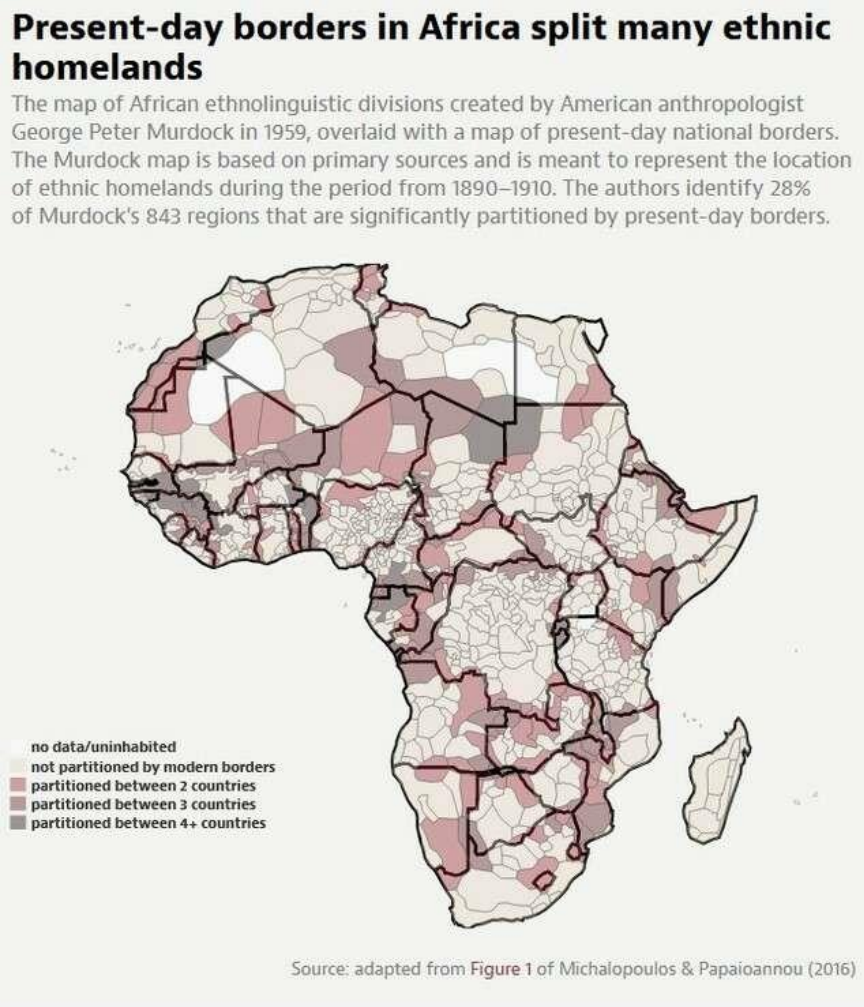
Colonialism has occurred throughout time on a smaller scale, but the European colonization of the 15th century to the present is different due to its sheer scale and its ongoing global impacts. European Nations had colonized the majority of the world by 1914, and the effects continue to the present. That's why when we talk about 'colonial periods' and 'colonialism,' we are referring to European colonialism.

European colonization changed the way the entire world functions. The point of colonialism was to claim land and extract resources for Europe. This [ongoing extraction](#) has resulted in much of the wealth in Europe and other Western countries today, and much of the poverty that we frequently see in colonized Nations and Nation States. Colonialism changed the languages, customs, laws and religions of people around the world. It created connections between peoples who were colonized by the same European countries where no connection had existed before: look at the [Commonwealth and L'organisation internationale de la Francophonie](#), which include countries colonized by Britain and France around the world (Canada is a member of both). Colonialism has also resulted in the imposition of the Nation State, and the drawing of

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Nation State borders, [often without consultation with the people who live in the region](#). As in Canada and the United States, those borders frequently bisect existing territories of Indigenous Nations. That has contributed to much of the [conflict we have seen globally](#), even in recent years. In many places, it had a significant impact on culture and demographics. For example, the map below shows how the territories of pre-existing Nations in Africa have in many cases been cut apart by colonially imposed borders.



Colonialism is generally divided into two (or sometimes more) categories: Settler colonialism and exploitation or extractive colonialism.

- 1. Settler Colonialism.** Settler colonialism reflects the narrow definition of colonization. Settlers, usually from the colonizing state or states, claim land as their own and become the majority population, with significant importation of their cultures and social institutions such as laws, governance, religion, education, etc. Settler colonialism

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always involves the displacement of Indigenous peoples to at least some extent. It is usually planned so that Indigenous populations cease to exist, either biologically or culturally – which is by definition [genocide](#). Canada is an example of a Settler colonial state. Others include New Zealand, Australia, and the United States.

- 2. Extractive Colonialism.** Colonizers are interested in raw material and resources available in a particular place. Colonizers remain the minority but exercise control economically, politically, and socially. Early Canadian colonization had elements of this in terms of the fur trade, and it has also been extremely common elsewhere; much of Africa and Asia were subject to extractive colonialism: Côte D'Ivoire/The Ivory Coast got its name from extractive colonialism based in the Ivory trade. 'Resources' may not mean 'goods', but may also refer to lands or trade routes. For example, British colonization in the Middle East was done primarily for the protection of trade routes between Europe and Asia, especially India. In extractive colonialism, the political, economic, and social power that colonizers take continues to impact the colonized territory even after the end of formal colonial control. This is often evident in the European structure of government, education, and other social institutions in places that were previously colonized, even as the Indigenous population remains the majority. It is also important to note that even after a territory is no longer formally a colony, extractive colonialism still occurs – again, this is evident in the ongoing extraction of resources from previously colonized African and Asian states. It is usually of no benefit to local people and is often to their detriment. Examples include mining practices by wealthier countries in developing countries, and the production of goods in developing countries for wealthier countries at low cost through mistreatment of workers. This is called *neocolonialism*.

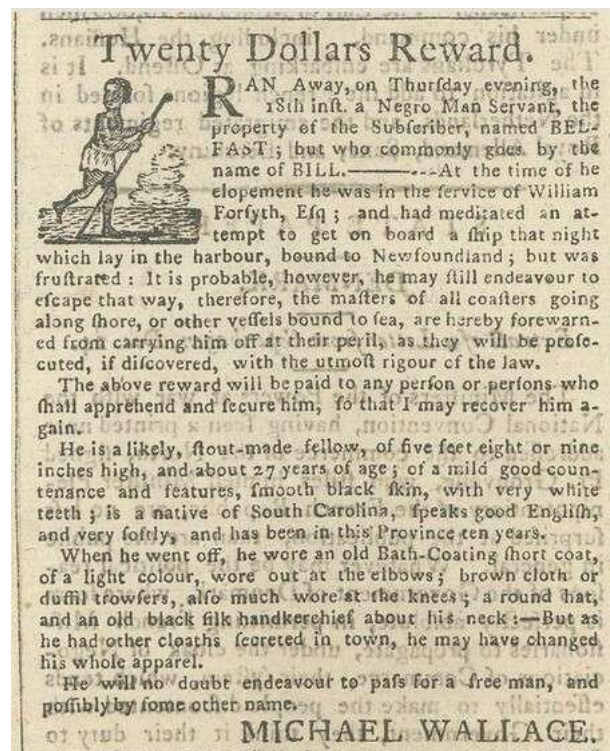
Within extractive colonialism is an important subcategory in terms of the history of the Americas: **Planter Colonialism**, in which colonizers occupy land to produce resources or goods that are needed by their home countries or empires. Although they remain a minority, the colonizers have economic, political, and social control. In the Colonial Era, when demand for resources from the Americas could not be met by Indigenous populations, enslaved people or indentured labourers were brought from other Nations. For example, disease and brutal slavery decimated Indigenous populations in the Caribbean soon after contact. To provide labour, people were enslaved in parts of Africa and brought by force to the Americas. Indentured labourers – people who were bound by contract to work without pay for a given amount of time – were also brought from India and other countries.

It is important to note that slavery is not limited to extractive colonialism. The United States and Canada are both Settler colonial states where the enslavement of human beings was pivotal to the development and success of colonial settlements and

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economies. Prior to colonization, enslavement of prisoners of war occurred in some Indigenous Nations, and it was certainly detrimental to enslaved people. However, it differed from European concepts of slavery. European slavery was based on the idea that there is a racial hierarchy, and Europeans introduced Chattel Slavery, in which enslaved people are owned as property forever, and their children are considered property from birth. [Slavery was common in New France as early as 1632 and continued after the establishment of British control.](#) A majority enslaved people were Indigenous, while a large minority were people who had been forcibly relocated from Africa. Although some jurisdictions such as Ontario had abolished slavery by the end of the 18th century, it continued in British North America until it was abolished across the British empire in 1834. That means that chattel slavery as an institution existed within Settler colonies in what is now Canada for at least 200 years. The picture below is an ad offering a \$20 reward for the return of Belfast, an escaped enslaved person, Nova Scotia, 1794.

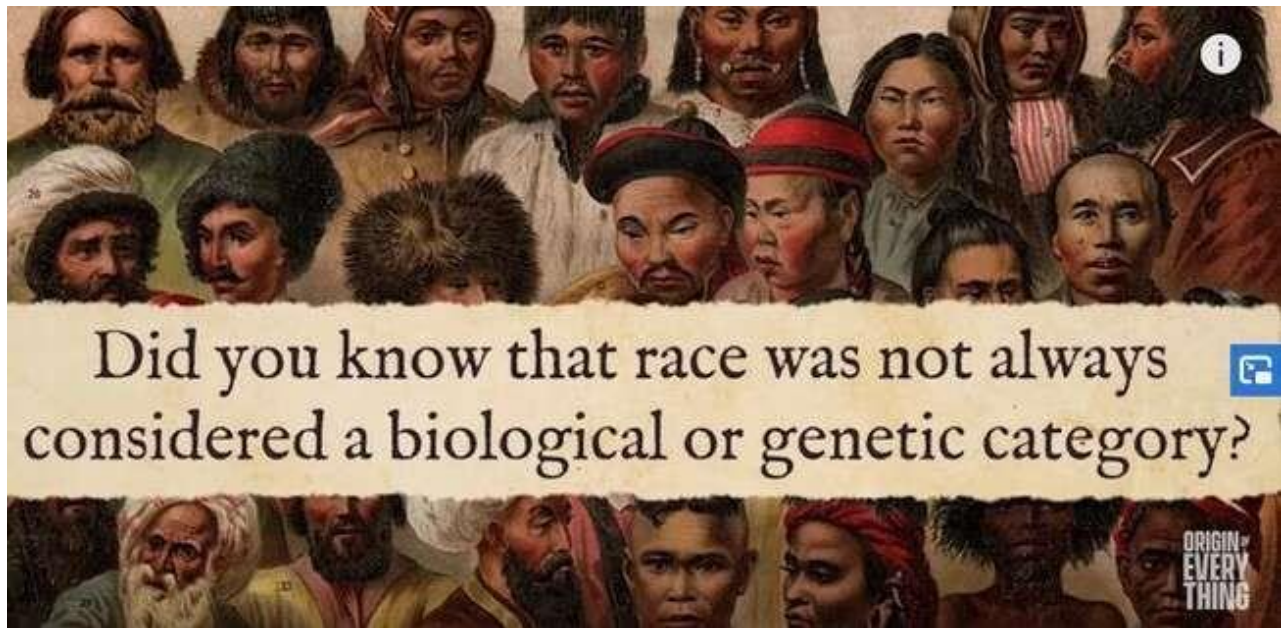


2. The Construction of Race and Racism

The concept of race developed out of colonialism to justify colonial practices. As it developed, people began to see race intrinsic and biological – ideas that are still around today. Please [watch the following video](#), in which Dr. Danielle Bainbridge explains the development of race as a social construct and why it was central to the colonial project.

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(While Dr. Bainbridge's videos are mostly focused on the USA, because of overlapping colonial histories they also apply in Canada. As an aside, her videos are great resources for in the classroom and are wonderfully informative. If you're going to fall down a YouTube rabbit hole, make it this one.)

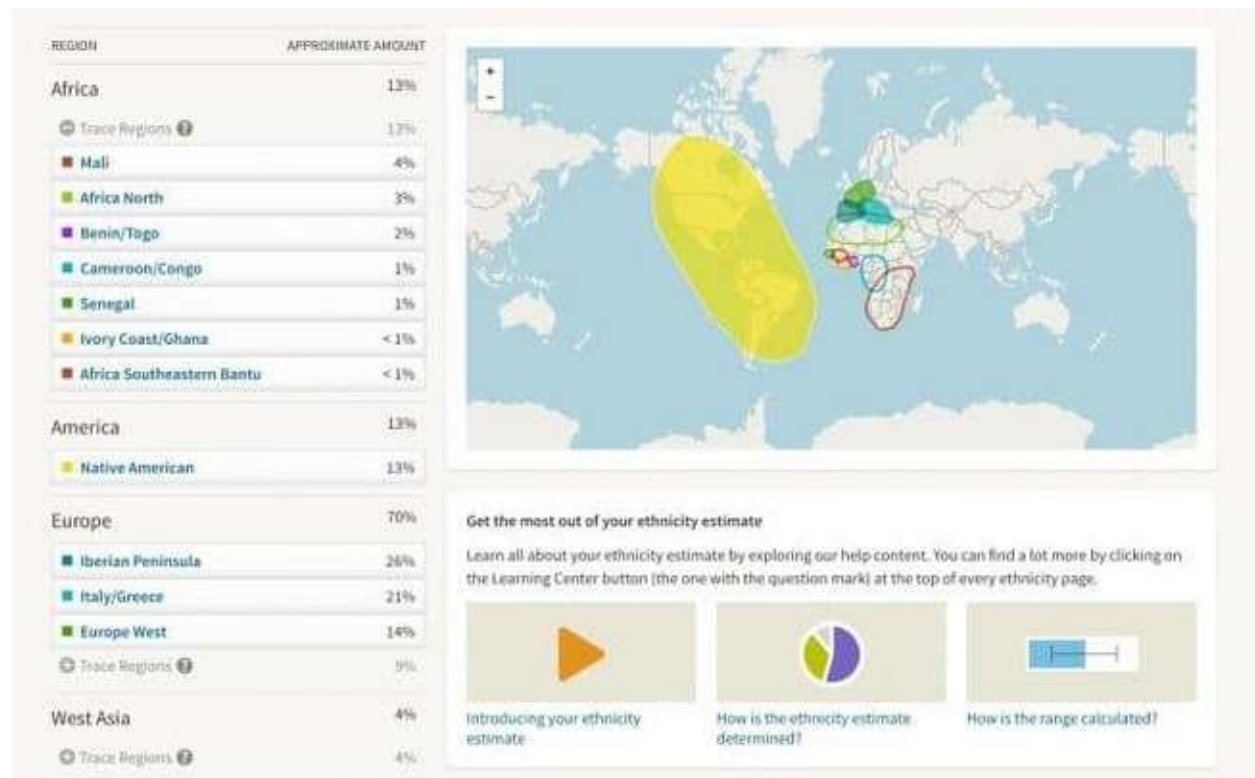
As this video points out, race is a social construct and not a biological reality. Still, assumptions based on race are very much present, either implicitly or explicitly, in our society today. Just because something is a social construct doesn't mean it isn't 'real' in terms of its impact on people's everyday lives. As George Dei points out, "[Racism is what makes race real.](#)"

The colonial idea that race is supported by science – that it is biological or genetic, and that it is intrinsic, is still visible in modern society. You need to look no further than the marketing of DNA tests that are sold to people who want to know their 'Ethnic Breakdown'. First, as you learned in the last module, ethnicity is lived and sociocultural, not biological. These companies mean race, and they categorize according to race – using thinly veiled categories Sub-Saharan African, European, East Asian, West Asian and Middle Eastern, and Native American. You can see that in the sample composition from 23 and Me, below. Just like with ethnicity, the idea that a DNA test can tell you who you are racially is not only untrue but deeply problematic. DNA tests for race are based on genetic markers that appear more commonly in certain populations around the world than in others. Human DNA is 99.9% identical between all humans, and after that there is more variation within societally-determined racial groups than there is between them. But race exists in people's minds, and it sells. If you'd like more information, check out this article from [Popular Science](#) and this article from [The Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Science](#).

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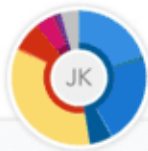
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You can see some examples of that below. The first is an 'ethnicity estimate' from AncestryDNA. The second, 23andMe.com, softens it a bit by calling it an 'Ancestry Composition', but both companies still divide genetic categories by race.



Ancestry Composition

Your DNA tells the story of who you are and how you're connected to populations around the world. Trace your heritage through the centuries and uncover clues about where your ancestors lived and when.



Jamie King

European	47.4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iberian (Spain) 19.7% Ashkenazi Jewish 0.5% Sardinian 0.2% Broadly Southern European 21.1% Broadly Northwestern European 0.3% Broadly European 5.5% 	
East Asian & Native American	41.8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native American (Peru) 34.4% Manchurian & Mongolian < 0.1% Southeast Asian < 0.1% Broadly East Asian 0.5% Broadly East Asian & Native American 6.8% 	
Sub-Saharan African	5.2%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West African 4.5% East African < 0.1% African Hunter-Gatherer < 0.1% Broadly Sub-Saharan African 0.6% 	
Western Asian & North African	1.3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North African & Arabian 1.0% Broadly Western Asian & North African 0.3% 	
Unassigned	4.4%

[See all 150+ populations](#)



3. Race and Colonialism

Both Settler and exploitation colonialism required the creation of social institutions to maintain European control. With respect to race, three practices were necessary to ensure the justification and success of the colonial project. These three things are present across the histories of Settler colonial states.

1. **It was necessary to have a system that differentiated colonizers from the colonized on a deep, intrinsic level. That system needed to be based in White supremacy, a hierarchy that positioned colonizers as inherently superior to the colonized.** The system of race that positioned Europeans as superior to other peoples is the essence of White supremacy. The term White supremacy is usually used today to describe people with radical and pronounced views on race and the superiority of White people, such as the White Nationalists of the [Alternative Right \(alt-right\)](#). But that oversimplifies the situation and distracts from the fact that the assumed superiority of White people was and is the basis for colonialism. White supremacy is something that surrounds all of us every day. As Jason Petty said, “Fish don’t consider the water because that’s just the world they’re in. And when you’re just in it, you don’t think about it, unless it becomes toxic. Then you start to notice it.” We are fish, and White supremacy through colonization is the water we swim in. Now, we are all starting to notice the toxicity.

The assumption of European superiority was codified in policy and law in Europe and in the colonies. The most important example of this is the [Doctrine of Discovery](#). Based on a series of Papal bulls starting in the late 1400s, Europeans were given the right by the Church to claim ‘empty’ lands (*Terra Nullius*) in the name of European ruling powers. That eventually extended to lands not occupied by Christians. A mythology was built surrounding the lack of sophistication of Indigenous societies in colonized lands that justified the continuation of colonization – that mythology is still present in modern curriculum. It gave Europeans the God-given right to access and colonize Indigenous lands. The concept of [Manifest Destiny](#) is an example of that. It also presented Europeans with the responsibility to spread Christianity and ‘civilization’ to other Nations through colonization. Rudyard Kipling’s astoundingly racist poem “[The White Man’s Burden](#)” is a prime example of how that attitude was used to further colonization. In a North American context the subjugation of Black and Indigenous people was most key to the colonial project, and other communities were victimized as well. In this context:

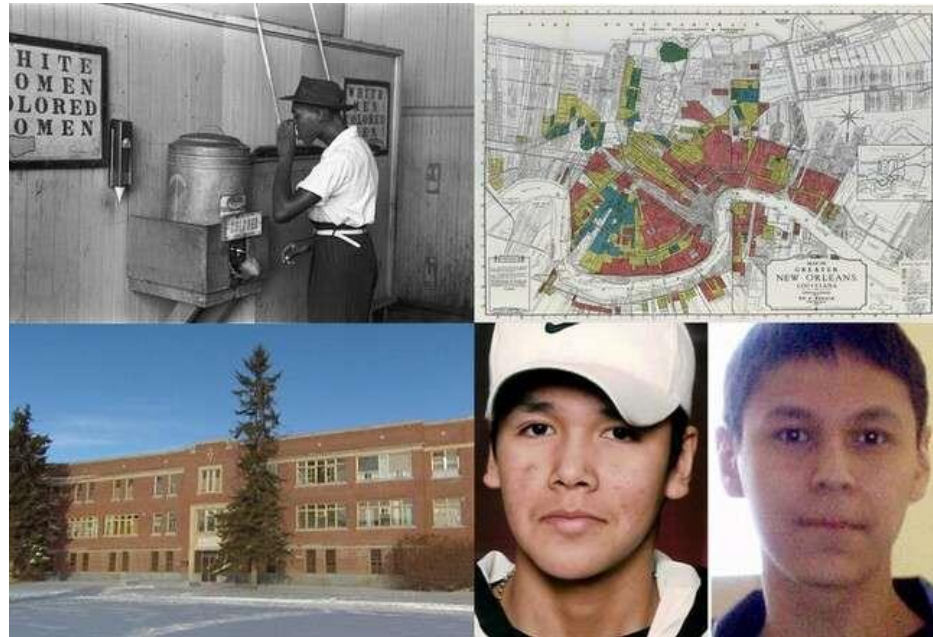
- a. Black people were dehumanized so that colonizers were justified in the taking of African lands and the kidnapping of members of African societies, and enslaving these people to the benefit of colonizers and the European ruling class;

- b. Indigenous people were dehumanized to justify the taking of lands and resources, and the subjugation, genocide, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples.
- c. Settler colonial states like Canada used the concept of White supremacy to justify the promotion of immigration of others of their 'race', and to discriminate against those that they perceived as belonging to other races. A Canadian example of this is the Chinese Immigration Act (1885), which brought in the Chinese head tax, and The *Electoral Franchise Act* (1885), which explicitly denied the right to vote to people of Chinese heritage. With respect to the *Electoral Enfranchisement Act*, then-Prime Minister [Sir John A. McDonald declared](#), "if you look around the world you will see that the Aryan races will not wholesomely amalgamate with the Africans or the Asiatics. It is not to be desired that they should come; that we should have a mongrel race, that the Aryan character of the future of British America should be destroyed by a cross or crosses of that kind" (Commons Debates, 1885, vol. xviii, p. 1589; in Stanley, 2016).
- d. Colonizers used the concept of White supremacy to maintain segregation between White and racialized communities by limiting the mobility of those communities. For example, in the United States, segregation was enforced through laws like the [Jim Crow Laws](#), which enforced racial segregation, particularly in the South. Segregation also happened through informal but common practices such as [Redlining](#). Redlining is the practice of marking primarily Black neighbourhoods as hazardous for mortgage lenders, enforcing poverty and limiting movement for Black people. While laws enforcing segregation were more widespread in the United States, Canada has had similar laws. In [Ontario and Nova Scotia](#), for example, laws came into force in the mid-1800's enforcing segregated schools for Black students that were in place until the 1950's or 60's. [Racial segregation of Indigenous people in Canada](#) was perpetrated through the *Indian Act*, through the Pass System, which required First Nations people to get a pass from the Indian Agent to leave their reserves, through the establishment of separate, often sub-par health services for Indigenous people, and, in education, through enforced attendance at Residential Schools and Indian Day schools. The modern structure of the *Indian Act* still puts services for Indigenous people under the federal government that are controlled by the provinces for other people, and a lack of provision of services to remote, primarily Indigenous communities is still evident. That has resulted in far lower funding, less access to high quality services, and requirements to leave Indigenous communities to access services like [health care](#) and [education](#). The pictures below show 1) segregated washrooms and drinking fountains under Jim Crow laws in Oklahoma; 2) a 'redlining' map created by the Home Owner's Loan Corporation highlighting primarily Black neighbourhoods in

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New Orleans; 3) the [Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Hospital](#), in Saskatchewan; Jethro Anderson and Paul Panachese two youth who had to move from their communities to Thunder Bay as teenagers to access a high school education, and who subsequently died there; theirs are two of the stories documented in Tanya Talaga's *Seven Fallen Feathers*.



- 2. It was necessary to have a system that divided colonized populations from each other in order to prevent the realization of the colonial systems at play.** This is still visible today – we very seldom step back to realize how the marginalization of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities is not just about racism directed specifically toward those communities. It is really due to an overarching colonial system based in White supremacy that requires the subjugation of marginalized communities to justify itself. It is important that marginalized communities vocally stand up for each other, and that Settler allies stand up for all marginalized communities. For example, for Indigenous people, calling out anti-Black racism when Black people are killed by police or otherwise victimized, and calling out Anti-Asian racism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hate and subjugation when those forms are most evident, is the only appropriate response. The same is true for other communities when anti-Indigenous hate comes to the forefront, like the recent vandalism at Queen's of Indigenous flags. This is about recognizing that when we stand up for marginalized communities and call out the violence we see as anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, Islamophobia, etc., we stand up for the dismantling systems of White supremacy for everyone.

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3. It was necessary to divide people of colour from White communities who were also economically marginalized through colonization. As Tim Wise describes, practices such as slavery were detrimental to poor White people as well because it replaced their paid labour with unpaid labour. Through the construct of race, impoverished White people saw themselves as more similar to the wealthy White landowners who enforced colonial systems like slavery, than to the enslaved people who were also suffering because of these systems. Please watch [the following video](#) in which Tim Wise describes how this occurred and how it remains in society today.



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I think it's important to note, because people often ask, if all Settlers in the Colonial Era were aware of the dehumanization of colonialism and participated enthusiastically in it. Certainly, colonial leaders were aware and the racist constructs and actions they embraced were done willingly and intentionally. For example, [Lord Jeffrey Amherst](#) (the man who Amherst Island outside of Kingston is named after) use of biological warfare through smallpox blanket is documented in a written directive to a mercenary in his service that “you will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets, as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race”. Similarly, [John A. MacDonald](#) made numerous openly racist and genocidal proclamations in his speeches and writings, including in Parliament, and passed laws to enact his beliefs. While these opinions did receive protest [in their time](#), much of society was mired in the social ethos of Imperialism, which justified European appropriation of lands and resources. All Europeans were not consciously in on a nefarious plot that was planned communally to carry out genocide on other Nations, but they participated in colonization because it was the norm at the time. That doesn't justify colonialism at all – in fact, the opposite is true. We need to be aware that normal people will participate in oppressive systems without particularly questioning it, if those systems are justified and normalized socially, if they are mired in their own challenges (eg. People who came to Canada to escape poverty and conflict), especially if they personally benefit from them. While colonialism has changed, we are still participating in unjust systems that marginalize people both in Canada and abroad. This is exactly why teachers need to deconstruct and teach about colonialism in a critical way.

4. Definitions of Racism and Manifestations in Modern Society

What is Racism?

Colonialism is an ongoing project. You might hear the term ‘post-colonial,’ which can be misleading. [Postcolonial theory](#) is a school of thought focused on the impacts of colonization globally and how it manifests in modern states that resulted from colonization. It does not mean that colonialism is over.

Racism developed through colonization and continues to be intrinsic to the colonial process. Race informs how we treat and interact with each other in our society [in various ways](#).

Racism is usually classified into three interconnected categories:

- 1) **Individual or Interpersonal Racism.** This is the most societally salient form of racism. It refers to an individual's internalized beliefs and assumptions about race, and their behaviour surrounding race. It tends to be the most visible form – slurs, [vandalism](#), race-based interpersonal violence, social marginalization, and open declarations of

white supremacy. However, it can also take the form of implicit individual bias or microaggressions that are much less obvious.

- 2) **Systemic Racism.** Systemic racism refers to beliefs, policies, and practices or procedures that marginalize racialized groups, create unfair obstacles based on race, or alternatively offer unearned benefits because of race (ie. privilege). While it is harder to see, colonization and systemic racism are [endemic to our society](#). Systemic racism is the basis of individual racism, since individual racism is rooted in systems of privilege and perceived racial hierarchy. Institutionally, it informs policies and practices; more insidiously, it perpetuates and normalizes racial inequality across society. It is so pervasive that many people don't notice its existence unless it impacts them personally, or they stop to critically examine its influence in the institutions and beliefs that surround them. But once you begin to notice it, [you see it everywhere](#).
- 3) **Epistemological Racism.** This is the idea that the knowledge systems of one racial group are superior to the knowledge systems of others. Epistemological racism is pervasive too, and is particularly visible in the education system. Consider what content is included in Big Ideas and general expectations, and what content is suggested in the brackets. Think about how much you learned in school about the 15,000 years of Indigenous history on the land where you live, as compared to the 400 years of Settler history. What were you taught about the social and governance systems of African and Indigenous peoples? Or was your knowledge of their histories focused only on European colonization? Did the knowledge systems of these societies enter into your other classes – did you learn, for example, about Indigenous [math](#) or [astronomy](#)? How were you taught – in a model reflecting European education practices, or education practices from other societies? As Dr. Bainbridge talked about, the erasure or oversimplification colonized peoples' histories and knowledge systems is a key part of the process of colonization.

Manifestations of Race, Racism, and Colonization in Modern Society

Racism manifests in many ways, but because individual racism is the most visible and salient, we tend to think of it as an individual act, based on an individual's character flaws or flawed belief systems. That makes it really difficult to point out and dismantle racism. 'Good people' carry racism and perpetuate colonialism and white supremacy. Members of racialized communities engage in lateral violence because of internalized beliefs about their own communities. We have all internalized these concepts because we're constantly soaking in them.

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More insidious forms of racism are based in that internalization, and people who are engaging in it may not even be conscious of it. For example, [microaggressions, are](#) “the everyday slights, indignities, put-downs and insults that members of marginalized groups experience in their day-to-day interactions with individuals who are often unaware that they have engaged in an offensive or demeaning way.” Similarly, implicit bias can inform how people interact without their being aware of it. Implicit bias is present in our assumptions. We talked before about assumptions surrounding race and genetics that influence how we perceive human genetic science. There are assumptions based in Western ways of knowing that inform how we understand science generally . They also informs how we understand the social sciences, arts, and structures of education. For example, what image comes into your head when I ask you what a professor ‘looks like’? Which academics do you see being called on as experts in the media, especially on subjects that are not overtly connected to specific communities or discussions of race and culture?

In schools, teacher bias against Black and Indigenous children manifests as soon as children start school. The problem is made worse by the significant underrepresentation of [Indigenous teachers and teachers of colour](#) – which, if you’re Indigenous or from a racialized community, is one of many reasons it’s so important that you’re here. Black and Indigenous children in American and Canadian schools [face harsher punishment for similar behaviours](#), are [significantly more likely to be suspended or expelled](#), are less likely to be referred to gifted programs, and are more likely to be referred to [applied or locally developed courses](#). Other racialized children face other stereotypes and acts of racism in school as well that have real impacts on expectations and performance. If you ask these children’s’ teachers if they are racist, they would very likely say ‘no’. But the fact is that nobody is colour-blind. We live in a society where race and racism are entrenched, pervasive concepts.

Although teachers may not even be aware of it, their bias has serious repercussions for their students. Black and Indigenous people are far more likely to be caught up in the [school to prison pipeline](#). In Canada today, Indigenous people make up about [5% of the Canadian population but more than 30% of the prison population](#) – in Saskatchewan, where 16.3% of the population is Indigenous, the within the prison population that soars as high [as a staggering 76%](#). While no statistics are available for Black Canadians, other studies, such as the rates of contact with police and processing after arrest, indicate a [similar scenario](#). I know that people are often quick to point to social issues or perceived behaviours within the affected communities as the reason for these statistics. Once you stop to deconstruct that idea, it becomes obvious that this a societal issue and is not endemic to certain groups. It certainly isn’t due to inherent behaviours in certain

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racialized groups due to genetic or biological factors, which is what assumptions of innate social inferiority insinuate. It's clear that:

1. Societies on Turtle Island and in Africa were functional prior to the Colonial Era, and so social issues are not due to inherent flaws but rather due to the negative effects of colonization;
2. Colonialism has been an ongoing process for over 500 years that still continues, and that has not allowed time, space, or resources for healing to occur in many communities, and
3. systemic racism is institutionalized across society and impacts how marginalized communities are able to access services like healthcare, education, and social supports that members of other communities take for granted, and how they may be victimized by services meant to help other members of society, often due to implicit bias of people who work in those services. A prime example is the [overrepresentation of Indigenous and Black children in Ontario Child Welfare](#).

Knowing that, we can see the insidiousness of systemic racism, and the epistemological racism that informs our assumptions.

5. Decolonization and Indigenization

What is Decolonization and how do we do it?

Decolonization should really be called 'decolonizing', because it is an ongoing process. Right now, we talk about it a lot, but we haven't seen much in terms of real practice and tangible action. Decolonization involves questioning colonial assumptions and systems, and dismantling hierarchies of marginalization and privilege that perpetuate racism and oppression in our society. Decolonization requires the [relinquishing of privilege](#). In a specifically Indigenous context, it also involves driving forward Indigenous self-determination – real self-determination based in full ownership of Indigenous education, governance, lands, ways of life - and equal Nation-to-Nation understandings of Indigenous relations with the Nation State.

Decolonization and Current Events

The need for real decolonization, in practice, not as a [metaphor](#), has become increasingly glaring with recent current events and movements.

1. [Black Lives Matter \(BLM\)](#). Black lives have never mattered in the settler colonial state. The belief in the lesser importance of Black lives is one of the underpinning principles of colonization. While BLM rose as a response to state-sanctioned anti-Black racism and brutality, and while it is critical to say the names of the victims of this brutality - victims like [Trayvon Martin](#), Jacob Blake,

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George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones – this movement is not about individual experiences of racism but dismantling systems of racism that oppress Black people and communities. BLM is also not a new movement, but a continuation of a long history of protest such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Panther Party, and other activists who have fought for the rights and dignity of Black people. In all of these movements, we can see how systemic racism functions. Civil Rights Activists and Black Panthers were portrayed, as BLM activists are now, as [violent, radical, and extreme](#). (Note that this link to Fox News does not at all demonstrate support for their views, but rather demonstrates how rhetoric in media such as this serves to perpetuate the status quo.) Movements within BLM, such as [#Defundpolice](#) and [#Investincommunities](#) have both practical and larger ideological bases. This movement calls us all to recognize how institutions like police do not serve to keep all members of the community safe, but rather to enforce colonial norms and laws. That has immediate implications in terms of police violence, and larger implications in terms of dismantling systems that are mired in colonial mentalities. We also need to be aware of divide and conquer (See Basis of Colonization #2, above). This movement is not about the safety of Black citizens only. Brutality as enforced by colonial institutions impacts other marginalized communities as well. In Canada, [Indigenous people are 10x more likely](#) to be shot by police than White people, and [analysis of the last 100 police shootings show](#) a clearly disproportionate impact on Black and Indigenous communities on this side of the border as well; 5% of Canadians are Indigenous, but 38% of people killed by police are; similarly 3.5% of the Canadian population is Black, but Black people account for 9% of police killings. It isn't just about police brutality, either – it's about a lack of justice for Indigenous and Black victims generally. That was clearly demonstrated by the acquittal of Gerald Stanley by an all-white jury for the murder of [Colton Boushie](#), a young Cree man – in a case that had clear echos of the acquittal of George Zimmerman by a jury that had 5 white members out of 6, in the [murder of Trayvon Martin](#), a Black teenager.

- 2. Removal of Celebrations of Sir John A. MacDonald.** This issue is particularly salient in Kingston. MacDonald is widely celebrated here, and consultation is happening to rename the [Faculty of Law building at Queen's](#), which is named in his honour. This movement isn't about calling equal attention to Indigenous histories; it is about removing colonial celebrations of Indigenous genocide. The conversation is frequently focused on residential schools, but MacDonald's actions against Indigenous people go far beyond that. They include changes to the *Indian Act* (Created under MacKenzie in 1876) to give more power to Indian Agents and effectively create the Pass System (1882); banning of cultural and

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spiritual ceremonies in order to destroy Indigenous spirituality (1884); clearing the prairies through the deliberate starvation and detention of the Indigenous peoples in order to make way for European settlement and the construction of the railroad; and executing Métis leader Louis Riel (1885). As mentioned previously, he victimized other communities as well, as with the 1885 Chinese Head Tax and *Electoral Franchise Act*. These movements are practical, in that the visual presence of statues and memorials constitutes a microaggression against Indigenous people who are reminded upon seeing them that their history of colonial oppression is easily ignored by much of the Canadian population. It has wider aims as well, in that celebrations of MacDonald are also celebrations of a colonial past that perpetuate white supremacy and are based in epistemological racism. Far from removing history, moves to rename buildings and remove statues of MacDonald are steps toward the deconstruction of colonial mythologies and the telling of a more truthful version of Canadian history.

Decolonization and Indigenization in Education

In schools, decolonizing education means deep consideration of the biases we carry and how those impact our students. It involves deep consideration of what we teach children in terms of systemic and epistemological racism, and what children in our schools experience in terms of racism, from microaggressions to all-out violence. It requires concerted efforts for greater diversity in teachers. It means meaningfully challenging what is included and omitted from curriculum. It means teaching the truth about history, and providing diverse perspectives on current events. It requires pushing back against pan-Indigenous and pan-African portrayals of diverse communities that perpetuate colonial dehumanization, both in terms of content and resources, and treatment of individual students. Please watch the following video, [*The Danger of a Single Story* by Chimamanda Adichie](#).



Decolonization is connected to but not the same as Indigenization. Indigenization means the reclamation of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, understanding, and honouring, and the reclamation of how we think about teaching and learning. Indigenization is NOT tacking Indigenous content onto existing curriculum. Our positionality informs our roles in these processes. Settler teachers have a particular responsibility with respect to decolonization in terms of what and how they teach. Contributing to decolonization means being aware of personal and curriculum bias, modelling what it means to try to be an ally, and dismantling epistemological racism by teaching beyond the Eurocentric curriculum. All students should be leaving school with a much deeper understanding than they do, and since Indigenous teachers constitute less than 1% of the teaching population, Settler teachers need to take that responsibility on. Indigenous teachers need to lead the charge on Indigenization. Indigenous cultures, sacred teachings, ways of teaching and learning belong to Indigenous people, and Indigenous people need to be the ones bringing those into the classroom and deciding what that means for changes to the education system and educational self-determination.

6. About Privilege

Dismantling systems of privilege

Privilege is a systemic experience based on power structures in which members of a certain group (in the case of White privilege, White-identified people), have certain advantages not because they are earned, but by virtue of their group membership. Privilege is experienced individually and is also a pervasive system that informs our day-to-day interactions and our life experiences. To gain an understanding of that, please read [“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh](#).

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Intersectionality and Privilege

Racial privilege isn't the only kind of privilege: people also gain privilege based on factors such as ability, economic class, education, gender, gender identity, religion, passing (as a member of a more privileged group), and sexuality. Most if not all of us probably possess privilege of one or several kinds. Looking at myself, I do not have racial privilege or religious privilege because I'm Indigenous and follow Indigenous spirituality instead of a mainstream religion, but I have passing privilege because I can be seen as white-coded (someone who other people assume to be White), which means I can avoid much of the day-to-day racism other Indigenous people who are not white-coded experience. I am able-bodied, cis-gender, and in a heterosexual relationship. I am educated and financially secure. So I have certain kinds of privilege, and I lack others.

Types of privilege do not exist separately from one another. Our society has hierarchies with respect to all kinds of privilege I mentioned above, and more. The term 'Intersectionality' arose from the school of thought of Black Feminism, and was coined by feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw [defines](#) intersectionality as “lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.” Because this class looks specifically at Indigeneity and education, it is important to understand oppression and privilege, and our own identities, as informed by numerous overlapping hierarchies. It's really important that you consider this, because just like you and your classmates, your students will have or lack various kinds of privilege; that will inform their experience in school and life, and it will also inform the way that other people perceive them and the biases that they carry about them. You may choose to watch [Kimberlé Crenshaw's Ted Talk](#), in which she explains intersectionality and how it applies to modern society.

What Privilege Isn't

It is also important to consider what privilege does NOT mean:

- 1) It does not mean people of a privileged group are 'bad people' and should feel guilty. Privilege is usually something people are born into, and the result of longstanding societal structures. Saying that a person has privilege is not an insult or an accusation. It has nothing to do with your individual character. It is a recognition of your place in society and the responsibilities that brings.
- 2) It does not mean people of a privileged group have it easy and don't have to work for anything. Clearly, not everything is handed to people with privilege without having to

earn it. It's not a matter of not having to work; it's a matter of not having to encounter the same obstacles as someone without the same privilege.

- 3) It does not mean people of the privileged group are never treated badly.
- 4) It does not mean prejudice is unique to people with privilege. While racism is based in systems of oppression, prejudice occurs across society. We are all steeped in complex systems of colonial racism, and that results sometimes in lateral violence (aggression within a given group) or prejudice between groups.
- 5) It does not mean people with one type of privilege have all the other types of privilege. For example, a person who is White but who lives in poverty has racial/White privilege and so doesn't face the obstacles that a Person of Colour would, but lacks socio-economic privilege and the advantages that come with it. An Indigenous person who is financially secure lacks racial privilege but has socio-economic privilege.

Decolonization necessarily involves dismantling systems of racial privilege. If you are Indigenous or a Person of Colour, the necessity of that is clear. However, if you're someone who carries racial privilege, it's important to note that decolonization means giving that privilege up. It's true that decolonization benefits us all. It creates a more equitable society and offers access to rich knowledge systems and perspectives that are largely absent from education now. But in truth, decolonization is not about dismantling a system that benefits you with the goal of further benefits to you. It involves real sacrifice based in the belief that it is the right thing to do.

The idea of privilege comes with some difficult conversations. People are resistant to the idea of privilege because they often don't understand what it means. Some tips to make conversations surrounding privilege easier are:

- 1) Acknowledge the privileges you have. In situations where your privilege gives you advantages, remove yourself from the centre of focus and amplify the voices of people who do not share your privileges. Your job is to follow the lead of marginalized people in dismantling oppressive systems, not to 'save' marginalized people. Like Chimamanda Adichie said, the idea of the 'White Saviour' is pervasive in our culture and our media – check out Skeeter in *The Help* or Jake in *Avatar* (yes, they're blue, but the movie is still about colonialism and focused on a white saviour).
- 2) Listen with compassion and patience while people sort out their concepts of privilege. Check back to our conversation about calling in and calling out.
- 3) Learn from your mistakes. We all make them. Own them and grow from them. If you make a mistake in front of your students, acknowledge it and show them how adults should respond when they're wrong.
- 4) Understand why people who lack privilege in a given situation may be angry or distrustful of privileged people. Their experiences are lifelong and rooted in hundreds of years of oppression.

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Please read this [comic from Robot Hugs](#), which explains privilege in a really accessible way. It's a great resource for starting conversations about privilege or educating others about it. Please be aware that this version contains foul language. A clean version is available [here](#) but it's more difficult to bring up in a browser.

Because Privilege is systemic and epistemological in addition to individual, it is present in curriculum and in the education system. To help you think critically about it, ask the following questions from *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into the School Curriculum* by Yatta Kanu (2008):

Epistemological: What counts as knowledge?

Political: Who controls selection and distribution of knowledge?

Economic: How is knowledge linked to power, goods, and services?

Ideological: What knowledge has the most worth?

Technical: How is knowledge made available?

Aesthetic: How do we link knowledge to the lives of students?

Ethical: What morality and values underpin how students and teachers are treated?

Conclusion

I know that this module was a lot to cover in a short time. But it's really important that teachers be aware of colonialism and racism, and especially that you have a background in this content before we enter into the rest of the year. I am hopeful what you have learned or remembered here will inform your teaching and your ways of building relationships with your students. As Thomas King says in his Massey Lecture, *The Truth about Stories*, "Take [it]. It's yours. Do with it what you will...But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (King, 2008, 60).