




Towards Decolonization: Goals and directions for Mental Health services at University of British Columbia

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x^wməθk^wəyəm, Musqueam Traditional Territory

Acknowledging the land



UBC's Vancouver campus is situated on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Musqueam people





Overview

1. Introduction and positionality
2. UBC's Indigenous Strategic Plan
3. Theoretical Overview
4. Decolonizing Mental Health Services



Introduction and Positionality

Introduction and positionality

- Myself and my role
- Decolonization and Indigenization within Counselling Services
- Honoring the work of Renee Avitan

Historical and Contemporary context

Settler colonialism is our context

- Systematic dispossession of land and resources
- European domination, cultural superiority and racism
- Suppression of Indigenous culture and knowledge
- Residential schools

“Settler colonialism is a structure, and not an event,
that continues to shape the everyday lives of
Indigenous
and non-Indigenous peoples” (Arvin, Tuck,
Morrill 2013)



The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation process

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada provided evidence of the genocide of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

The TRC report outlined 94 Calls to Action:

- Child welfare
- **Education**
- **Health**
- Justice
- Language
- Culture

UBC Indigenous Strategic plan

The ISP sets out a series of eight goals and 43 actions to advance Indigenous peoples' human rights

Implementation tool kit and Grant funding initiative

- Self assessment and planning to help faculties and units advance the goals of the ISP
- Supports implementation of the ISP for innovative and transformative projects

“Our expectation is that this plan moves beyond our UBC goals. We want it to demonstrate how public institutions, not just governments, can play a critical role in upholding, advancing and implementing the human rights standards set out in the UN Declaration, and inspire others to do the same.” Sheryl Lightfoot

CPA Indigenous Task Force

- Acknowledgement of accountability of harms done by the profession of psychology
- Formal apology to Indigenous Peoples in Canada on behalf of the profession
- Position statement on moving toward reconciliation, and better supporting Indigenous Peoples in Canada moving forward



SHW COMMITMENTS

Respect & Compassion

We engage with empathy and purpose, ensuring every voice is heard.

We see diversity as a strength and value multiple perspectives and professional expertise.

Equity & Social Justice

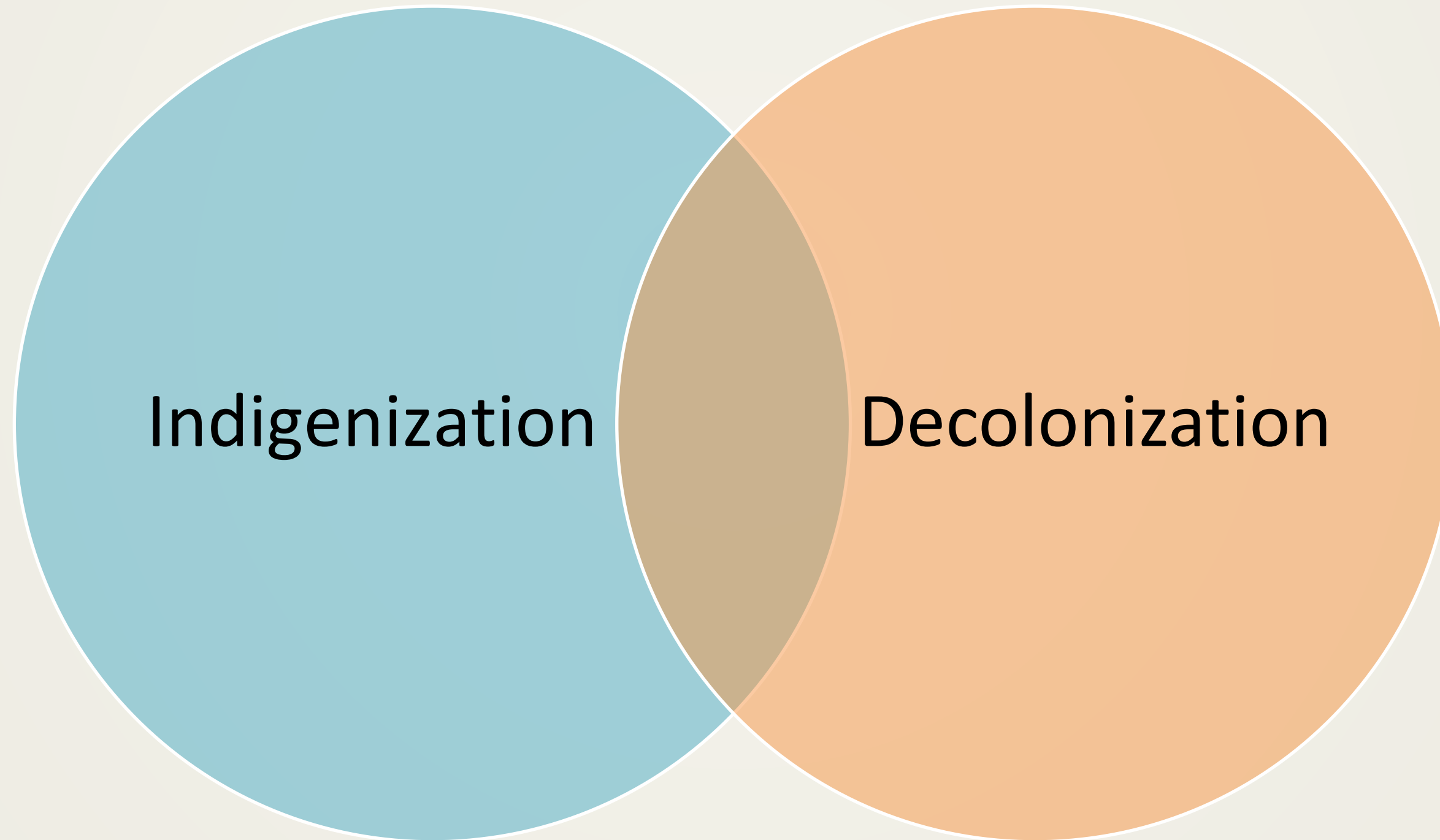
We honor and reflect individual lived experiences, advancing decolonization, cultivating a welcoming environment of safety, belonging, and cultural humility.

We identify and seek to address barriers to our services and programs.

Connection & Collaboration

We evolve our services through meaningful partnerships with students.

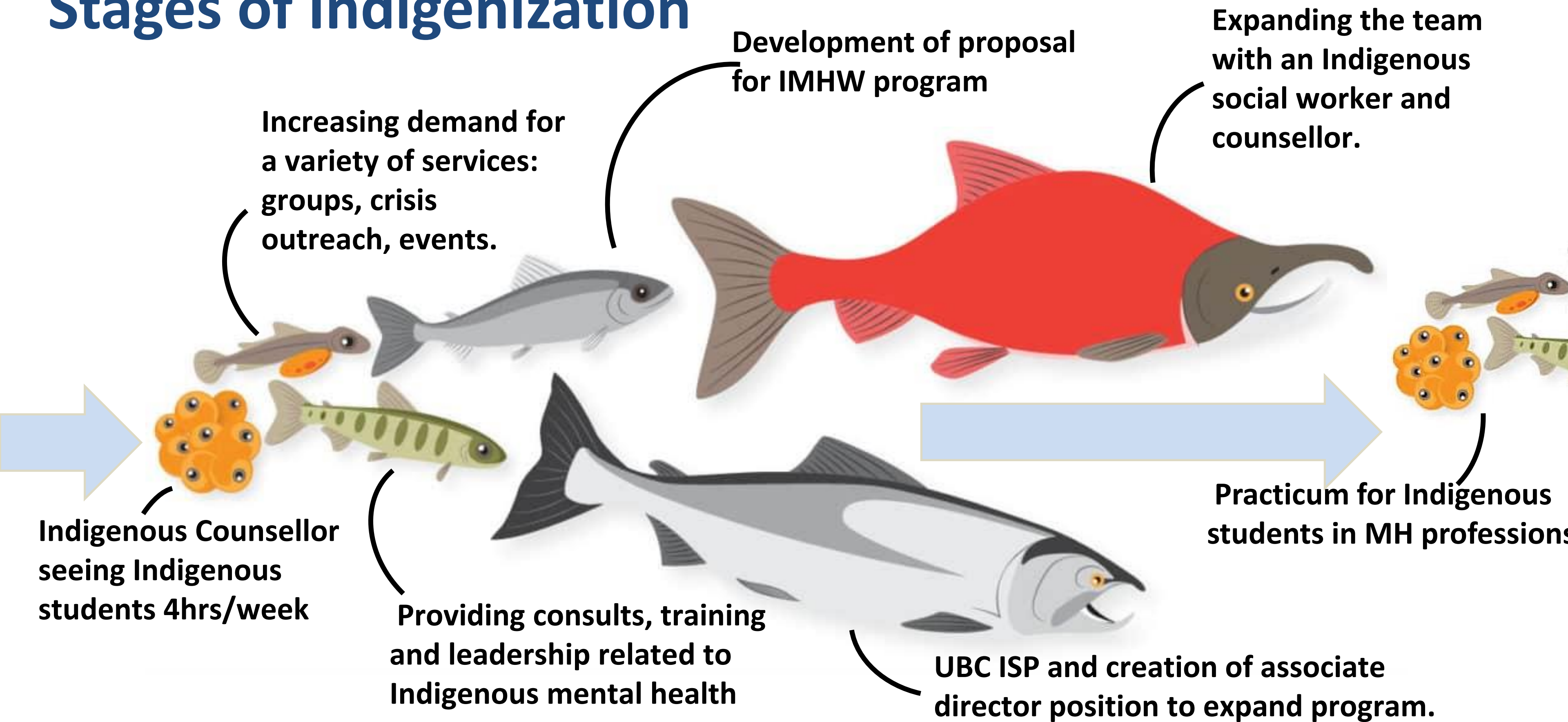
We build relationships with colleagues, within and beyond the university, to offer coordinated services and programs.



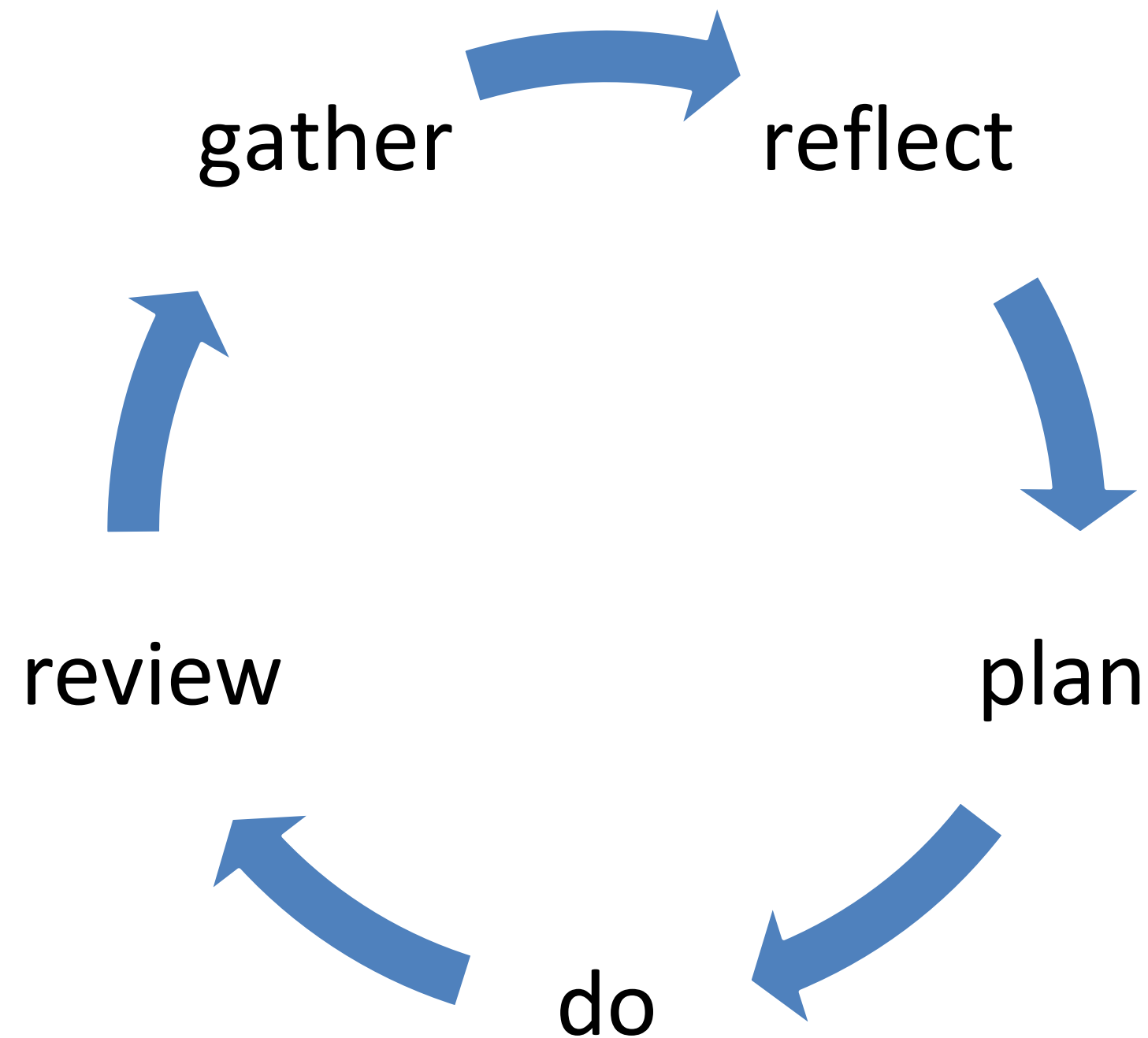
Indigenization

Decolonization

Stages of Indigenization



Toward Decolonizing Mental Health on Campus



Self-study and Literature Review

- UBC ISP, Canadian Psychological Association recommendations, and Provincial Standards for health professionals on Cultural Safety and Anti-racism
- Counselling Psychology literature
- Review CS policies and procedures

Engagement with staff and students

- Indigenous staff: What are your observations and recommendations?
- Indigenous students: What are your needs and experiences/
- Non-indigenous staff: what are your understandings of decolonization?



Theoretical Overview

Decolonizing framework for Mental health:

- Indigenous wellbeing
- Social suffering
- Cultural humility and safety
- Allyship and solidarity
- Sovereignty



Indigenous wellbeing and healing traditions

“The good life”

- Balance among physical, mental, emotional, spiritual aspects of being
- Connection to family, community, land
- Respect for traditional methods of healing
- Efforts to restore language, cultural and spiritual practices
- Survival, resistance, resilience, resurgence

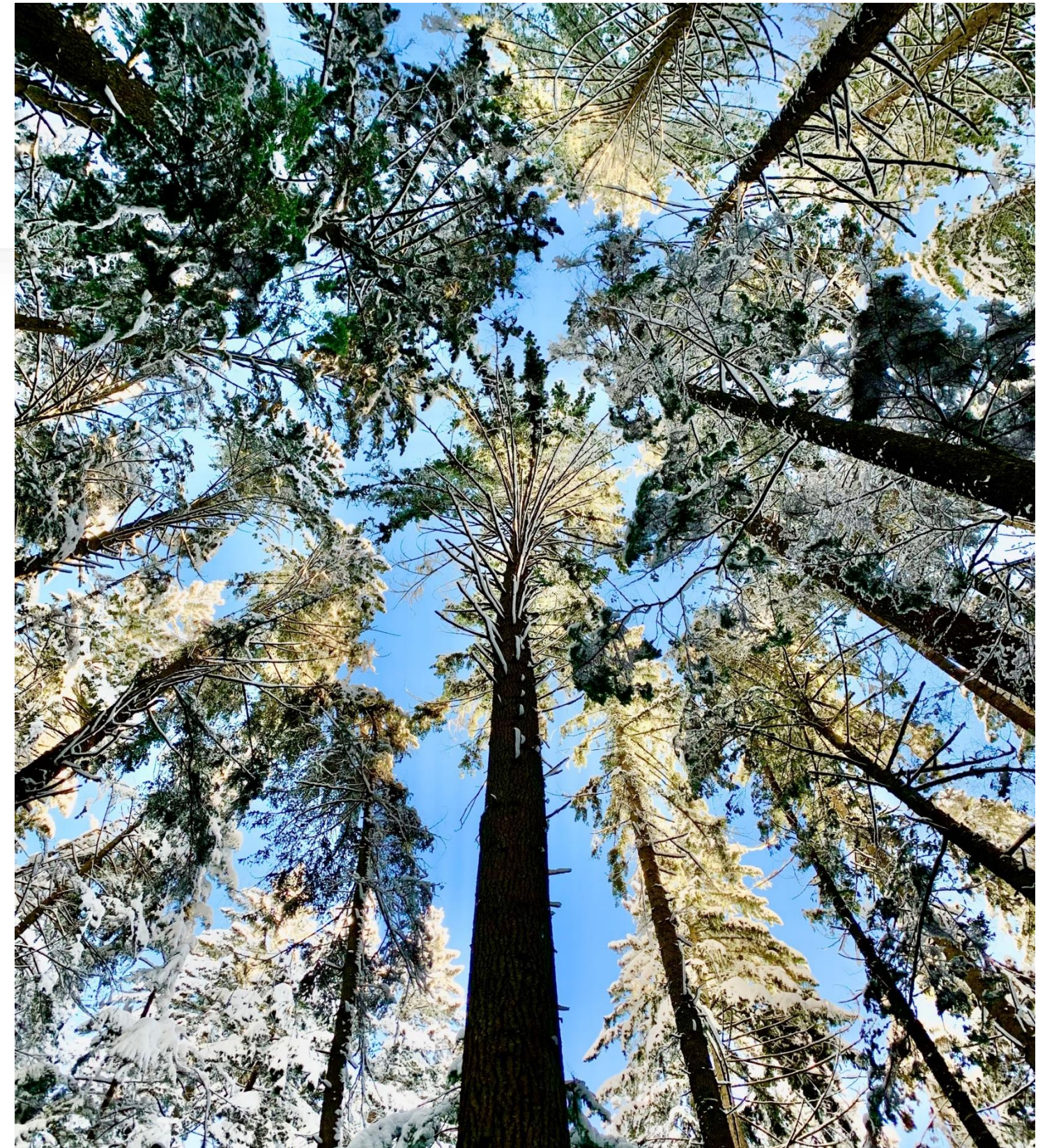


Social suffering

- Intergenerational trauma
- Profound human rights violations
- Everyday, bureaucratized experiences of violence, marginalization and exclusion
- Damaged attachment and trust, belief in a just world, a sense of connection to others

Creating a healing environment

- Cultural humility and safety
- Allyship and solidarity
- Sovereignty





Trauma informed practice

- Earning trust
- Building a sense of safety
- Welcoming procedures and spaces
- Choice and consent
- Dignity
- Sources of strength and resilience



Counselling Services strategic goals (1)

1) System-level change

- Indigenous staff team
- IMHW program
- BC Cultural Safety, Humility and Anti-racism standard
- SHW Commitments
- Continual review of policies and procedures
- Welcoming spaces

Counselling Services strategic goals (2)

2) Decolonizing our therapy Practice

- Professional development for all staff
 - Sany'as
 - 3 module workshop
 - Indigenous focused PD
- Deepening reflection and relationships
 - Monthly discussion group time
- Indigenous-focused training into training curriculum
- Professional training program for Indigenous trainees in mental health professions

Counselling Services strategic goals (3)

3)Building relationships

- First Nations House of Learning
- x^wci'cəsəm Medicine Garden
- Indigenous Counsellors of BC network
- Department of Counselling Psychology
Experiential learning initiatives
- CPA CNPS section



Short, medium and long vision

- What can we do right now (and what do we need to stop doing)?
- What work needs to be done to support changes over the next 5 years?
- What can we set in motion that will unfold in the next generation(s)?

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Thank you

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