

Decolonisation in Imagery and Language

GUIDANCE AND RESOURCE LIST



Decolonisation in Imagery and Language

Resource and Guidance List

Prepared by Mahroo Shahbaz

This document is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). You are free to share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) or adapt (remix, transform, and build upon) the material with appropriate attribution. You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests that the authors or The Embedding Project endorse you or your use of our work product.



Mahroo Shahbaz (2023). *Decolonisation in Imagery and Language: Resource and Guidance List*. Embedding Project.

Introduction

Depicting decolonisation, reconciliation and justice within imagery, storytelling, and presentations requires mindfulness. Within the corporate sphere and beyond, it's increasingly important to understand our own roles in perpetuating systemic inequities and reframe how we speak and display decolonisation in our context. This document offers some general guidance to keep in mind when beginning to consider invoking images and stories of peoples faced with historical and continued colonial oppression within your work. This is followed by a short list of resources that capture the importance of respectful imagery and inclusive storytelling for further guidance.

It is important to note that this document is not comprehensive of all the nuances present within decolonial work across the globe, but rather serves as a starting point for growing your understanding.

General Guidance

Be mindful of how depictions of decolonisation may rely on stereotypes.

This includes ensuring all graphics used and stories told center and uplift perspectives of people most effected by colonial history and lasting legacies. If drawing upon lived experiences of those other than yourself, ensure that there is due diligence to ensure depictions are accurate and not merging experiences or cultures under one understanding. Don't misappropriate media to build storytelling narratives - see the [Think Before You Appropriate Guide](#), page 14 and onwards, for examples to build an understanding of how depictions can misrepresent and reproduce stereotypes of Indigenous cultures.

Take into consideration and respect worldviews and experiences of people with different cultural heritages. Ensure that your storytelling does not exist in conflict with their values and practices.

Understand how ways of making meaning, of framing practices and decolonisation, within presentations is tied to personal positionality within an unjust world. Remain mindful of your own degrees of privilege through factors of race, class, educational attainment, income, ability, gender, and citizenship and how that influences the narrative you build. Confronting ways that we may have been complicit in perpetuating institutional and systemic injustices, engaging with any discomfort this may bring, and reframing our role in the work required for decolonisation of systems is crucial to go about storytelling in respectful and mindful ways. See Embedding Project's [Becoming an Agent of Change Guide](#) to explore the importance of facing our own complicity as a starting point for meaningful change.

Understand and represent decolonisation as an empowerment principle of oppressed peoples across the world, and not as a vulnerability.

Avoid overshadowing/easing the reality of colonisation. Be clear and represent the realities in ways that acknowledge the real and violent history that shapes our current systems. This can include recognising the role of business and economic ambitions as an instrument of displacement and exploitation.

Acknowledge uncertainty, discomfort, and openness to learning – these are important tools to help you create respectful narratives around decolonisation.

Resource List

General

- [Decolonization Theory and Practice](#). This list by Racial Equity Tools offers a range of resources that provide insights on fundamental aspects of decolonisation theory and practice that can help guide mindful learning and thinking about representing decolonisation.
- [Indigenous Peoples](#). This article by Amnesty International offers an overview of Indigenous Peoples globally and the importance of protecting Indigenous cultures and knowledge.

Decolonising Imagery

- [Decolonisation of visual communication: More than a question of dignity](#). This article by fair picture serves as a good explainer of the importance of being mindful of what we communicate through visual media.
- [Think Before You appropriate: A Guide for Creators and Designers](#). While for creators and designers, this guide from SFU offers important insights for anyone representing Indigenous populations and provides examples of misappropriation that can be helpful to guide broader thinking on appropriate representation.
- [Indigenous Protocols for the Visual Arts](#). This guide was designed to provide practical guidelines for respectful engagement with Indigenous Peoples and cultures. It focuses on collaboration and engagement for visual arts, but key principles and overarching protocols are important aspects to keep in mind.

Inclusive Language and Storytelling

- [Inclusive Language Guide](#). This guide by Oxfam International offers an introduction to the power of language and offers an opportunity to explore different terms related to a variety of topics, including race, power, and decolonisation.
- [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#). This glossary offers definitions of a range of terms that can offer an initial and shared understanding of key racial equity themes.
- [Language, Please: Style Guide and Resources](#). This resource provides style guidance for six categories: borders and populations; class and social standing; disabilities, neurodiversity, and chronic illness; gender and sexuality; mental health, trauma, and substance use; and race and ethnicity.
- [Decolonising Language in History](#). While focused on decolonisation of language of History in a British and academic context, the central principles of Humanise, Decentre, Specify, Expand, and Listen offer applicable insights for storytelling in all aspects.
- [Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines](#). This guide by UBC provides general guidance on respectful use of language and the importance of terminology that can be an important starting point.

Acknowledgements

The Embedding Project is hosted by the Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University.



This research was supported by the Social Sciences and
Humanities Research Council of Canada



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

and contributions from our partner companies:

<https://embeddingproject.org/our-community/>