

DECOLONIZING HEALTH, HEALING, AND CARE

Embodying Culturally Responsive and Socially Just Counselling



Sandra Collins and Melissa Jay (Editors)

Decolonizing Health, Healing, and Care

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Counselling Concepts

Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

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Book Cover Art and Artist



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We are grateful for the beautiful expression of culture through art offer by Kitana Connelly (she/her), also known as TwahnaCreation, throughout this book.

I (Kitana) am a member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in Oregon, a descendent of the Molalla tribe, the Klickitat tribe, and more. I am an artist entrepreneur amplifying the spiritual lifeways of my Indigenous culture in both modern and traditional practices.

The intention for "Connection" was to create a light, serene movement that looks layered and smooth.

There are many layers to decolonizing ourselves and the way we operate. It will take generations of work, and there is honour and beauty in that. Our Ancestors did not have the space or support like we do now. I feel a responsibility to heal both my past and future.

A Heart-based Acknowledgment of Land, Humanity, and Labour

We share this acknowledgement with a heartfelt commitment to continuing to amplify, uplift, celebrate, and learn from the many Indigenous Peoples and Nations who are, and have always been, caretakers of Turtle Island for time immemorial.

As editors of this book we acknowledge and honour the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island. We recognize that the term, Turtle Island, emerged through creation stories specific to the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Peoples. We use it symbolically and with care as a stand against coloniality and an affirmation of Indigenous sovereignty. We recognize that Indigenous communities each have unique Teachings, cosmologies, histories, ways of knowing, doing, and being in relationship with the land, and we welcome diverse ways of naming and acknowledging this land.

We also specifically acknowledge the Indigenous collaborators who have helped shape and guide the pathways and practices to which you are introduced in this book. We appreciate their gifts of time, knowledge, and wisdom.

We recognize the ancestral and unceded territories of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. This book is a collaboration, created by people spread across Turtle Island (colonially and corporately referred to as Canada). We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this resource and join together with them in naming, and remaining responsive to, past and present injustices, including the devastating impacts of colonization, forced displacement, cultural genocide, and ongoing systemic injustices faced by Indigenous communities and First Nations Citizens.

We celebrate all Nations and peoples who live, work, play, and help care for these lands. We acknowledge and appreciate the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from across Turtle Island who have contributed to this book. We honour the cultural richness of their diverse perspectives and voices. We acknowledge the importance of centring global Indigeneity. We are committed to uplifting Indigenous voices, knowledge, humanity, and perspectives in all aspects of our work and lives. We honour the profound, nourishing, and inherent connection that Indigenous Peoples across the globe have to land, waters, animals, resources, and humanity.

As a settler and a white disrupter I respectfully acknowledge the unceded traditional lands of the Lək'wəŋən People, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, and the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria. I recognize that I live and work as an uninvited guest on this beautiful land, surrounded by the gifts of the sea, where Lək'wəŋən People have hunted and gathered for thousands of years.

Sandra (Editor)

As a nêhiyaw (Cree) member of the Métis Nation of Alberta, I am grateful to have lived for over a decade on the sacred lands located in Chuwapchipchiyân Kudi Bi (translated from Îyârhe Nakoda as "shooting at the willows") in the beautiful Rocky Mountains, which is now colonially known as Canmore, Alberta. These lands are part of Treaty 7 land, which is the sacred territory home of Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III, the Îyârhe Nakoda, including the Bearspaw First Nation, Chiniki First Nation, and Wesley First Nation, as well as the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Blackfoot Confederacy, including the Siksika First Nation, Piikani First Nation, and Kainai First Nation. I am currently located on the unceded traditional lands of the Lək'wəŋən People, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, and the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria.

Melissa (Editor)

We invite you to pause and position yourself on the landscape of Turtle Island. If you are not familiar with the Indigenous Territories on which you live and work, you may want to check out the Whose Land or Native Land Digital websites.

Our Gratitude

I (Sandra) am deeply grateful to my spouse, Glo Kelly, for the many ways that she has supported me in the creation of this book. She has generously given up time together to aid in the creation of this work because of her commitment to equity and social justice. We have walked the path of decolonization together and built a deeper sense of how to engage in anti-oppression in all aspects of our lives. She has processed new learning and unlearning with me on long walks and in moments of reflection throughout our days. Glo also read carefully through each chapter of this book, offering valuable insights as someone outside of the helping professions and of academia to ensure that we remained responsive to our diverse readers.

Most importantly she has provided me with unwavering love, nourishment of mind–body–Spirit–heart, and the stamina to stay focused on offering you the best possible learning experience.

To my chosen family and community who have offered support and encouragement as you patiently waiting for me to complete this project, thank you for always being there and believing in me.

Sandra

I (Melissa) am grateful for so many. To Michael, my spouse, and Lulu, our dog and forever my boss, it is a joy to do life together. Our endless walks and talks about life, justice, and the beauty of the land ground me in what matters most.

Glo, your care for Sandra and your steady commitment to community care through learning and unlearning has been a gift on this journey. To my friends who listened with curiosity and care, and to the amazing souls I walk alongside in our practice and yoga school community, thank you for being you and for trusting that learning rooted in love is a form of healing.

I am not the same person I was when we began. I have become more discerning, choosing reciprocity as Medicine, and learning to trust the wisdom of my mind-body-Spirit-heart. This Medicine offers me the courage to choose alignment, deepen relationships, and honour boundaries as a form of love.

To each of you who join us on this journey, thank you for your commitment to decolonizing health, healing, and care. We need you.

Melissa

Book Collaborators

This book has been created in and through relationships. As editors we (Sandra and Melissa) have been so enriched by the learning and unlearning offered to us by each contributor. What you experience in this book has emerged through the mind–body–Spirit–heart commitment of everyone who has participated, sometimes in the midst of their own challenging life experiences, and always with the intent of enhancing the quality and responsivity of health, healing, and care for those they and we walk alongside. We want to honour the depth of their influence on our thinking and writing. You can access more information about each of the book's contributors on the Collaborator Bios section. We also link to each of their bios when they first appear in the book. For now we acknowledge each of them here. Firstly we list First Nations, Inuit, and Métis collaborators from across Turtle Island who have guided us to centre Indigenous worldviews.



Albert Marshall



Andrea Currie



Cheyenne Johns



Darlene Auger



Darlene Denis-Friske



Fyre Jean Graveline



Gwendolyn Villebrun



Jamie Consoli



Janelle Baker



Jessie King



Joanna Gladue



Kitana Connelly



Lana Whiskeyjack



Maryann Fleet



Melissa Jay



Nicole Lightning-Strongman



Randy White



sakâw laboucan



Stephanie Day

Below we recognize other collaborators who offer their stories and insights throughout the book, many of whom are members of other groups in society that are marginalized based on their cultural identities, relationalities, and intersectionalities. You read more about each of them as you move through the book and also on the Collaborator Bios section.



Aaron Wong



Adrienne Carter



Ahmad Eltassi



Alexandra Zúñiga



Allison Reeves



Amy Rubin



Andrew Estefan



Annie Pilote



Ayesha Notiar



Bukola Salami



Carolyn Shaw



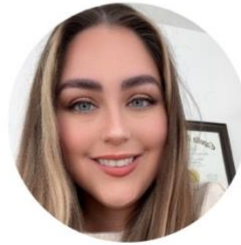
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Ruth Strunz



Sandra Collins



Sandra Dixon



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Sonya Sehgal



Stephanie Martin



Surinder Singh Sodhi



Swaati Mehra-Ramcharan



Taya Henriques



Ya Xi Lei



Yevgen Yasynsky



Zuraída Dada

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Preface

Sandra Collins and Melissa Jay

Welcome to the book, *Decolonizing Health, Healing, and Care: Embodying Culturally Responsive and Socially Just Counselling*. The intent of this book is to provide a resource for learners, helpers, practitioners, and educators in the fields of counselling and psychology, as well as for those working or training to offer care in other health-related fields. In this preface we (Sandra Collins [she/her] and Melissa Jay [she/her]) describe the ways in which this book came into being, our relationship with those who have supported and contributed to this work, and the ways in which we envision its use. In the next chapter, [Our Starting Place](#), we introduce ourselves further and invite you more fully into the learning processes we have intentionally chosen.



Melissa Jay (she/her) and Sandra Collins (she/her)

The book builds upon an approach to culturally responsive and socially just (CRSJ) counselling practice first introduced by Sandra (Collins, 2018d). We (Sandra and Melissa) have used the 2018 CRSJ counselling approach as a starting place for asking ourselves the three following questions:

- What would counselling theory and practice look like if we centred Indigenous worldviews rather than eurowestern worldviews?
- How can decolonizing health, healing, and care offer pathways for honouring the lived experiences of all clients?
- How can we respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC, 2015a) 94 Calls to Action in a meaningful way through this process?

We integrate updated content from Collins (2018d); however, we are also excited to welcome you into a new and multivoiced collaboration that has facilitated our process of deconstruction and reconstruction of what it might look like to decolonize health, healing, and care. We hope to demonstrate how to approach the theory and practice of counselling and psychology with a

culturally responsive and socially just lens that centres Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

DIVERSITY OF VOICES

We are so grateful for the generous gifts offered by Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Wisdom Holders, and Scholars who share Indigenous perspectives and Teachings throughout this book. We are inspired by our many colleagues who speak to various issues and concepts related to culturally responsive and socially just counselling. Our intention for this resource is to celebrate diversity of voices and perspectives. We have been guided and supported in this work by Indigenous colleagues and students, many of whom have contributed as authors to the book. We are also privileged in this work to include contributions by counsellors and other healthcare practitioners who embody cultural identities that are racialized or otherwise equity deserving, and who, as a result, generously share their wisdom and lived experiences to fill gaps in current counselling theory and practice. Throughout the book each author shares their lived experiences as they position themselves transparently along various dimensions of cultural identity and relationality in their writing (i.e., ethnicity, ability, social class, age, gender, gender identity, religion or spirituality, and sexual orientation). We are grateful for each author's transparency as we celebrate culture as complex, fluid, and contextualized. It is impossible and unhelpful to avoid naming identity labels altogether if we want to talk in a meaningful way about how culture, history, and lived experiences play out in counselling and in society. At the same time we encourage you to join us in acknowledging that these self-identifiers may change over time. We (Melissa and Sandra) share stories about how our own identities and relationalities have shifted, and continue to shift over our lifetimes, as well as the influences those shifts have had on our ways of knowing, being, and doing in our relationships and in our work.

We are grateful for the ways in which each of the over 75 collaborators provides a valuable contribution to the overall learning process. We invited them to speak from their lived experiences as we shifted away from the typical focus on specific populations in many counselling textbooks, a focus that can perpetuate stereotypes, support overgeneralization, and potentially perpetuate harm. Instead this book focuses on stories of specific clients, with multiple, intersecting, contextualized cultural identities, in a way that integrates each author's personal cultural identities and nuanced contexts where appropriate. We encourage you to read the detailed author biographies in the [Collaborator Bios](#) section as a way of getting to know them and the incredible ways they offer community care. Some of the collaborating authors intentionally illustrate particular concepts in the CRSJ counselling approach introduced in this book. Some provide culture-specific approaches to health, healing, and care; offer personal reflections; or share stories from their interactions with clients. Others provide examples of organizational, community, or broader systems-level change processes. As a collective we demonstrate how client cultural identities, positionalities, and social locations may be considered and navigated with each new client, based on their presenting concerns and taking into account the specific contexts of their lives.

The edited collection of chapters in this book contributed to the re-envisioning of the CRSJ counselling approach as we reflected on, and integrated, the wisdom of each author. Some of these collaborators joined us in designing a re-imagined way to offer culturally responsive and socially just counselling by emphasizing a decolonial approach to health, healing, and care. Some have co-authored the conceptual chapters that analyze and expand on CRSJ counselling, and others have written stand-alone chapters that inform the pathways and practices. We appreciate and honour the diversity of perspective they offer. Each author has contributed to an emergent process of decolonizing health, healing, and care. Throughout the book you are invited to consider what it means to be culturally responsive and socially just, while also learning how to integrate specific practices. The intent is to encourage you to move back and forth between conceptual, theoretical ideas and tangible, applied practice examples of how to put culturally responsive and socially just counselling into practice.

We struggled thoughtfully as editors of this book with how to honour Protocol related to Indigenous Teachings and other cultural ways of knowing, doing, and being. You may want to check out [Rethinking Authorship in a Good Way](#) where we describe our intent to challenge traditional publication guidelines related to authorship, ownership, and copyright to create a more inclusive and respectful way of collaborating with all contributors to this book. In my conversations with Indigenous collaborators and kin, I (Melissa) have had the privilege of integrating the Teachings I have received related to Tobacco Protocol and learning how to honour these sacred practices in a good way. I am always learning how the phrase, in a good way, holds profound meaning in many Indigenous communities, serving as a reminder of ethical care, relationality, and accountability. I am deeply grateful to learn alongside Métis, Cree, and Anishinaabe friends, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers who embody and share the wisdom of moving through the world in a good way. Based on my learning this phrase reflects a commitment to caring for the world, the land and beings we share it with, and one another with love, respect, and reciprocity. It invites us to be mindful of how we show up, grounding our actions in integrity and our relationships in accountability. "In a good way" is more than a phrase. It is a guide for living ethically, with intention, humility, and heart.

You may notice that many of our co-authors take a position that is values-based. As practitioners, researchers, and educators, we choose to model the importance of taking a stance and expressing a personal and professional voice that reflects thoughtful and critical integration of our own learning and positions us within the sociocultural, economic, and political landscape of Turtle Island. Our co-authors took up the challenge to bring their whole selves to their writing, both honestly and transparently. You may see some of them struggle with being human, as they share how their assumptions and biases have impacted their work, how intersectionality impacts their work, and what they have learned from the people they walk alongside. We hope this book welcomes imperfection by illustrating the ways in which the counselling and other professional relationships are genuine, challenging, thoughtful, and sometimes a bit messy. Unless otherwise identified, all client stories are fictional, altered, or

composite to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. We are grateful for the ways each author speaks from their spirits, hearts, embodiment, and minds.

CONTEXTUALIZING OUR VOICES

We have been purposeful in this book to invite contributors and to locate client stories in the sociocultural context of those regions of Turtle Island that are now known as Canada, with a few contributions from those on the other side of the medicine line, colonially known as the United States. We recognize these boundaries as colonial impositions on the land intended to uphold capitalism and imperialism. Some of the authors and those they write about are descendants of Turtle Island's First Peoples, whose land and cultural claims to this vast country have yet to be recognized by the Canadian government; some authors are descendants of African family members who were enslaved. We also recognize authors who are descendants of those who were recruited for capitalist and colonial gain from East and South Asia, as well as newcomers who arrived through forced or voluntary (im)migration. Other authors came from Europe to escape famine, war, persecution, or cultural genocide, while other Europeans came as settlers with the intent to colonize Turtle Island for profit. This diversity of culture and heritage forms an important foundation to understand the uniqueness of our multicultural society and to inspire each of us to envision what social justice might look like within our profession and within society. The authors of this book collectively profile other aspects of their cultural identities in the context of Canada's evolving demographics, legal and political contexts, and sociocultural discourses related to, though not exclusive to, age, ability, social class, religion or spirituality, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Our commitment to the voices of First Peoples and others who have settled on Turtle Island from diverse cultural backgrounds is reflected also in our prioritizing of voices and perspectives often excluded from academic writing (e.g., Elders, practitioners, students, artists, and nonacademics), inclusion of Canadian research and theory wherever possible, and our decision to publish the book locally. We have also been very intentional about our writing style. Where appropriate, we model the basic principles of the American Psychological Association (2020) Publication Manual (7th ed.) because this is the style guide that most learners in counselling and psychology programs are required to follow. However we use Canadian spelling, we prioritize Elements of Indigenous Style (Younging, 2018) and other guidelines related to writing about Indigenous Peoples, and we draw on feminist and accessibility justice principles to align our work with anti-oppressive editorial and digital practices. Rather than listing each adaptation here, we point them out where most meaningful throughout the book.

We also encourage creativity, personal expression, and culture-centred meaning-making. We attend carefully to language choices throughout the book, both in terms of the persons and peoples about whom we speak and the terminology we use to describe the theory and practice of counselling and psychology. We pause to comment on our language choices at various points, and invite you to move slowly through the content, and when possible, to join us in this practice. We are committed to our ongoing learning and unlearning related to language, and we acknowledge that this learning will continue long after this book is published.

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We have carefully considered how best to support your learning through the design and the learning processes we introduce throughout this ebook. The use of the ebook format, itself, is deliberate from a pedagogical perspective because it enables us to provide a more integrated, interactive, and accessible learning experience. Here are a few of the features of this ebook that we hope can enhance your engagement and learning. We speak more directly to Indigenous teaching and learning practices in the next chapter, Our Starting Place.

Learning Invitation

Through the process of writing this book in collaboration with other authors we have been actively decolonizing ourselves and our approaches to teaching and learning. Unlike some of my (Sandra's) previous books we do not tie the content in this book to specific learning outcomes or direct you to what we hope you can draw from each contribution to the book. We have intentionally chosen to allow the various elements of the book to speak to each of you in different ways, to honour that your learning process is unique to you, and to allow the collaborating authors to speak freely to you. We have actively resisted the colonial urge to interpret the creative work of others. For this reason we do not include a summary of all of the chapters in this preface, although this is a common editorial practice elsewhere.

The CRSJ counselling approach provides a conceptual framework for the book, or as Algonquin Anishinaabe co-author Darlene Denis-Friske calls it, the "connective tissue" (personal communication, July 31, 2024). It is this connective tissue that holds the book together as a whole, built upon, but more than the sum of, each part. We invite you to personalize this framework in a way that works for you, culturally, relationally, and theoretically. We believe in your autonomy, self-determination, and ability to shape your own learning. Throughout this book we create space for you to pause and reflect through guided practices and prompts, and we invite you to offer yourself gentleness and openness on your learning journey. We hope that by the time you wander through the various pathways and reflect on the teachings and practices offered by the over 75 collaborators, you have created your own learning story to support your ongoing journey of health, healing, and care for others.

We are also conscious of the multiple audiences for this book, learners who come from a diversity of ethnicities, nationalities, genders, ages, abilities, social classes, gender and sexual identities, religions, and so on. We see you, and we intend to speak to you. We decentre the voices that have often taken centre stage in education and welcome others, in support of justice, equity, and inclusion of all persons and peoples. We recognize, with humility, that we will not meet everyone's learning needs all of the time; however, by inviting you to actively lean into the learning process with us, we hope your learning needs are honoured most of the time.

Ebook Design

This book is available only in ePub format through Vital Source. We made this choice to optimize flexibility in integrating multimedia resources and to enhance digital accessibility. We

encourage you to download the desktop version of Vital Source Bookshelf and to become familiar with the [Bookshelf features](#) to support your learning experiences. You can read off-line in Bookshelf; however, you will need an Internet connection to access audio and video features. If no Internet is available transcripts are provided for all audios and videos. Written (or alt text) descriptions are also provided for all images and figures.

Our commitment to decolonizing authorship and publishing includes intentional guidance about how to cite various elements of this resource, including audio and video offerings. Our intent is to support you to honour the contributions of each collaborator appropriately, reinforcing their ownership over their creative works. At the end of each chapter we provide a reference notation for the chapter as a whole and to elements that should be attributed specifically to one or more chapter co-authors. We invite you to access the [How to Cite This Work](#) appendix for examples of how to provide in-text citations for paraphrases or quotations you draw from audio, video, or written components of the chapters in this book. The [Comprehensive Reference List](#) includes all of the sources cited throughout the book. We have created a thematic [Index](#) (instead of a word-search index) so the links take you to each section of the book where a particular practice, teaching, concept, or theme is addressed in a substantive way. You can use the search function in Vital Source Bookshelf to find all instances of word use.

A LIVING, EVOLVING, COLLABORATIVE WORK

We do not consider ourselves experts on the topics of cultural responsiveness and social justice, or more specifically on decolonization and Indigenous ways of knowing. We are lifelong learners, listeners, and collaborators who have the privilege to invest considerably in our own learning. We are committed to remaining curious, passionate, active, and excited about how cultural responsiveness and social justice play out within the profession. We acknowledge those collaborators who have supported us to integrate ideas from various sources, to deconstruct and reconstruct previous conceptualizations, and to transform them into a CRSJ approach to counselling. We have been touched and influenced by many others along the way and are grateful for the opportunity to amplify their work throughout this book.

It has been a great privilege to write this book together and to integrate the writing of so many of our community members, colleagues, students, and mentors. It is our hope that you, too, engage with these ideas as an active contributor to our shared appreciation for culture and social justice. This book is not intended to offer a final or definitive or universal perspective. Instead we hope it challenges, inspires, and motivates you to consider carefully your professional values and to identify and embrace a vision for social change in which we collectively address the systemic challenges that bring many clients into our offices in the first place.

The beauty of an ebook is that the book itself can evolve and grow over time. Because of the endless combinations and permutations of cultural identities, social locations, and contexts of peoples' lives, there are many other voices that could contribute to our shared understanding of

cultural responsiveness and social justice in counselling practice. We invite those of you reading this book to contact us directly to ask a question, provide us with feedback, or offer suggestions. Please reach out to crsjcounselling@gmail.com.

We are so grateful you are here!

With care,

Sandra and Melissa