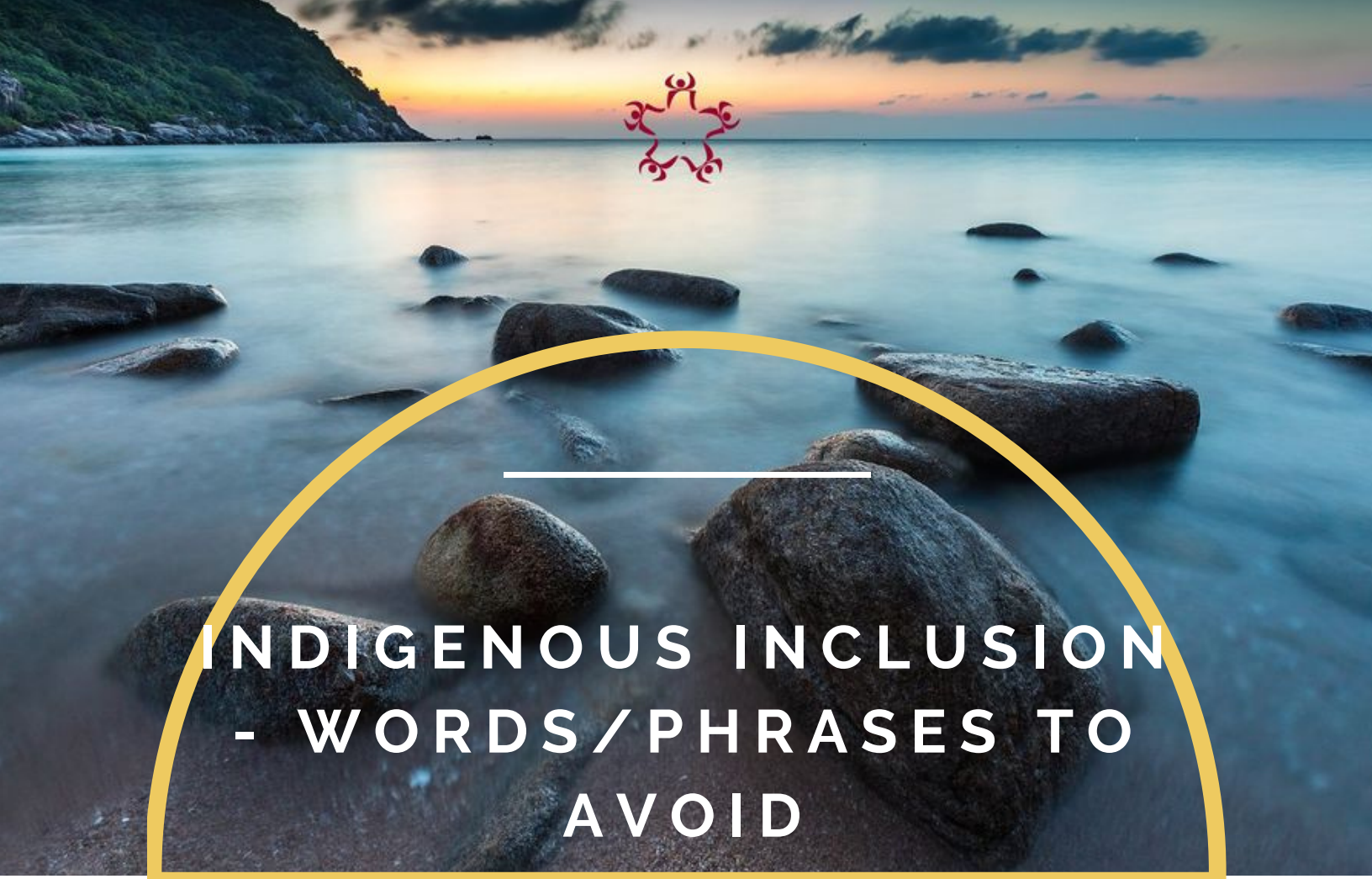


INDIGENOUS INCLUSION - WORDS/PHRASES TO AVOID

PORTAL RESOURCES

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Creating a respectful and inclusive workplace requires continuous learning and understanding, especially when it concerns Indigenous cultures. Language plays a significant role in this process. To ensure a culturally safe environment, here are some words and phrases to be cautious of:

"Indian Giver": Originating from colonial misunderstandings between European settlers and Indigenous peoples, this phrase is considered offensive as it perpetuates negative stereotypes. Avoid its use and instead opt for neutral, descriptive terms.

“You don’t look Native/Indian/Indigenous”: Commenting on someone's appearance in relation to their ethnicity is both reductive and hurtful. Indigenous identity is multifaceted and not solely based on physical appearance.

"Squaw": Historically used to refer to Indigenous women, this term is now considered derogatory and disrespectful. Always use appropriate and respectful terms when referring to Indigenous women or any individual.

"Indian Time": This phrase is used to stereotype Indigenous people as being frequently late or having a relaxed sense of time. Such stereotypes are harmful and do not contribute to an understanding or respectful environment.

"Off the Reservation": This term, used to describe someone acting unpredictably or deviating from the norm, is rooted in a history of forced relocations and oppressive policies. Avoid its use.

"Tribe" when referring to Canadian Indigenous groups: In Canada, it's more appropriate to use "First Nations," "Métis," or "Inuit." The term "tribe" is more commonly used in the U.S. and can be seen as a generalization when used out of context.

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"**Eskimo":** This term is considered derogatory in many contexts. The appropriate term to use is "Inuit."

"Primitive" or "Savage": These terms are rooted in colonial perspectives that viewed Indigenous cultures as inferior. They are offensive and should be avoided.

"Discovery" when referring to lands that Indigenous peoples have inhabited for millennia: Phrases like "Columbus discovered America" overlook the rich histories and civilizations of Indigenous peoples prior to European contact.

"New World": This term negates the ancient civilizations of Indigenous peoples who have lived in the Americas for thousands of years.

“Low Man on the Totem Pole”: This phrase misrepresents the intricate and culturally rich carvings of Indigenous communities, turning them into a mere representation of rank. Often used to describe someone with minimal power or influence, the saying diminishes the profound significance of totem poles in Indigenous traditions and can lead to misunderstandings about their true purpose and meaning.

For a culturally safe and inclusive workplace, always prioritize listening, learning, and being open to feedback. When in doubt about language, seek guidance from Indigenous colleagues or resources. Remember, it's not just about avoiding certain terms but understanding why they are problematic and actively promoting respect and understanding.

Language plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and attitudes. Certain terms and phrases can perpetuate stereotypes, reinforce colonial narratives, or cause harm. This infosheet provides guidance on language to avoid in the workplace to foster an inclusive environment for Indigenous colleagues and clients.

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Words/Phrases to Avoid and Alternatives:

- Avoid: "Indian" (except when referring to legal terms). Use: "Indigenous," "First Nations," "Inuit," "Métis," or specific nation names.
- Avoid: "Primitive" or "Savage." Use: "Traditional," "Customary," or avoid altogether.
- Avoid: "Discovery of Canada." Use: "Arrival of Europeans in North America."
- Avoid: Generic spiritual references (e.g., "spirit animal"). Use: Specific and respectful references to Indigenous spiritual beliefs only when relevant and accurate.

Promoting Respectful Language:

- Listen and Learn: Pay attention to how Indigenous people self-identify and respect their preferences.
- Educate: Provide resources and training on appropriate language use related to Indigenous Peoples.
- Correct Mistakes: Encourage a culture where it's safe to correct and learn from linguistic mistakes related to cultural insensitivity.

Creating a respectful and inclusive workplace, especially concerning Indigenous cultures, is an ongoing journey that necessitates continuous learning, understanding, and sensitivity towards language and its impact.

This guide outlines key phrases to avoid and emphasizes the importance of respectful communication. Embracing correct terminology, actively listening to Indigenous colleagues, and engaging in educational opportunities are vital steps toward fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

Next Steps:

Consider reading the Indigenous Terms Glossaries 1, 2 & 3 in Indigenous Works' Resource Portal.

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