



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Suppression of Palestinian Liberation Movements by Canadian Institutions: Implications for Social Work Education & Practice

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Overview

Our analysis explores:

- 1) The ways that the **Palestinian liberation movement** is being **suppressed by Canadian institutions**, particularly during the ongoing genocide.
- 2) Draws connections to **denialism of Canada's colonial history**, including Indigenous genocide.
- 3) Examines **implications for social work education and practice** in Canada.

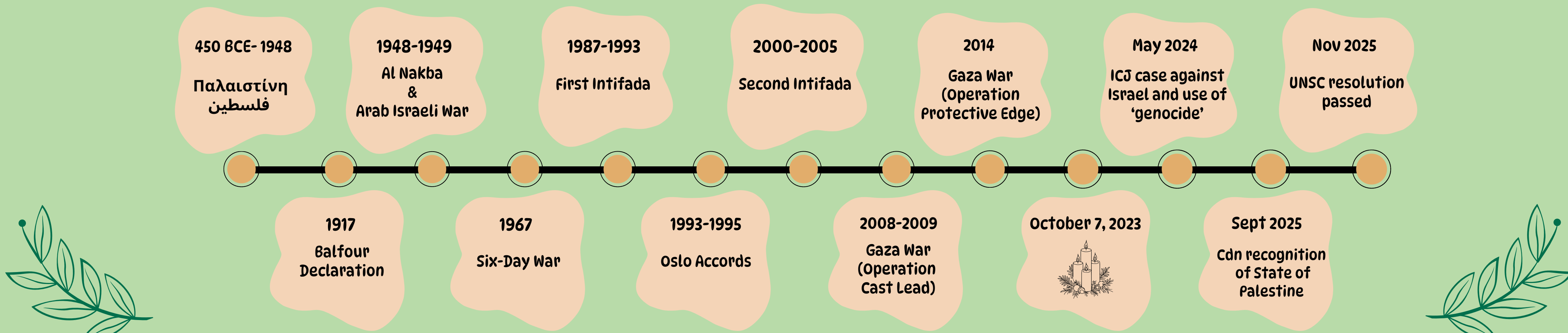
Theory

- **Decolonial Theory**
 - Goal of 'undoing' colonialism, return to traditional ways of knowing, and land rights to all Indigenous peoples.
- **Neocolonial Theory**
 - Focuses on how colonial powers maintain influence through indirect control and how modern power structures continue to shape the lives of formerly colonized peoples.

Comparison: Canada vs. South Africa

- Canada, South Africa, and Israel are all **settler states**. Under colonial rule in 19th Century Canada, the residential school and reserve systems were set up to consolidate settler power, and later served as inspiration for **South Africa's apartheid system**, the formal system of racial segregation and discrimination in place from 1949 until 1991.
- In the 1990s, South Africa went through a Truth and Reconciliation process focused on restorative justice, in part inspiring Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission a decade later.
- **Despite similar shared histories, Canada and South Africa have very different relationships with Palestine and Israel.** South Africa recognized Palestinian statehood in 1995, and in 2024, brought a case against Israel and its leaders to the International Court of Justice, accusing them of violating the 1948 Genocide Convention.
- While in Canada, Indigenous people make up only 5% of the population, in South Africa, Black and Coloured people make up a combined 89.6% of the population. South Africa may be considered a post-colonial settler state with power shared amongst groups, while **Canada remains a settler state with most power wielded by descendants of settlers.**

History of Palestine: Key Points



Global to Local: Colonialism & Denialism

- The Palestinian liberation movement challenges the legitimacy of **Canadian institutions** due to their role in the **genocide of Indigenous peoples here**. Today, Canada's national identity excludes intentional efforts to eradicate Indigenous culture and land rights. In this way, Canada maintains an image of innocence despite our history and ongoing status as a **violent colonial project**.
- **Decolonial liberatory efforts** in Canada attempt to hold the government accountable for its actions and acknowledge the **real history** of this country, and to put autonomy back into the hands of Indigenous people. Efforts like this challenge the Canadian **national identity** as a benevolent nation.
- **Resistance movements have real implications for the systems and structures that our country is built upon**, as many of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action include restructuring of the justice, healthcare, and education systems, and overall redistribution of resources to account for damage done.

Canadian Institutional Suppression of the Truth about Palestine

- **Media**
 - Distortion of factual narratives in media outlets funded by the Israeli government to support their colonialist agenda.
- **Federal Government**
 - Supports the genocide by providing Israel with artillery propellants through the U.S.
 - Humanitarian assistance, diplomacy, and immigration measures mask arming of Israel.
- **Law Enforcement & Justice Systems**
 - Law enforcement arrest and detain individuals for speaking up about Palestine.
- **Healthcare Systems**
 - Hospitals and healthcare providers label healthcare workers who express their support for Palestine as anti-Semitic as a way to suppress their voices.
- **Education Systems**
 - Professors, teachers, and students face retaliation from academic institutions for voicing their support for Palestine.

Putting Theory into Practice

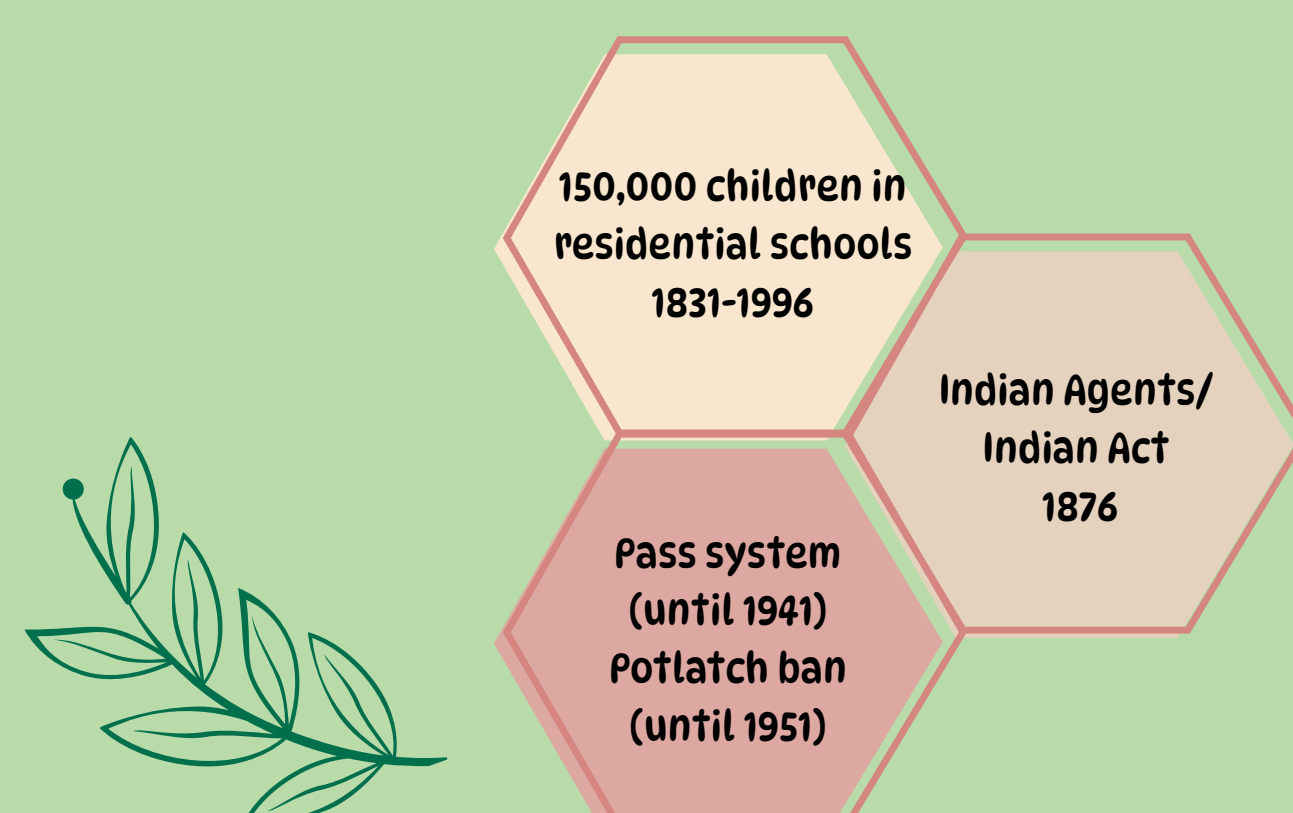
Decolonization as a process (Laenui, 2000):



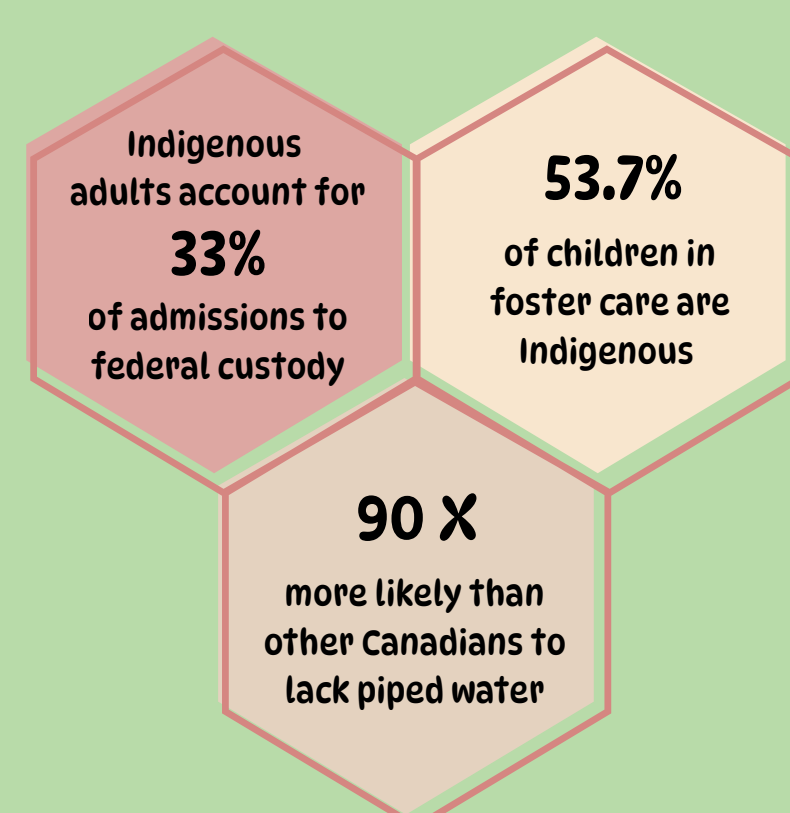
Implications for Social Work Education & Practice

- Social justice and Truth & Reconciliation are **key values of our profession**, per CASW Code of Ethics.
- There is an opportunity for contemporary social work education to be **reconciliatory in nature**, and to support students in the process of decolonizing their own minds.
- Part of the role of educational institutions is to be **places of discourse** and social work faculties could serve as potential moral compass – e.g., critical thinking around partnerships, divestment, origins of research, etc.
- As social workers, **we all have a responsibility to:**
 - Educate ourselves & use language intentionally (e.g., validate use of the term 'genocide');
 - Draw from our theoretical toolkits (e.g., relevance of ecological theory, strengths-based approaches, trauma-informed care, etc.);
 - Build professional alliances, support advocacy efforts, and advance change from within systems we work in;
 - Take care of ourselves and each other.

Mechanisms of Colonialism in Canada:



Current Realities in Canada:



Results of Colonialism in Palestine:



Key Take-Aways

- Our own history as a colonial country serves as a strong incentive for institutions to deny our own history and suppress the Palestinian liberation movement, because **the success of Canada as a colonial project is built on similar colonial actions and values to those of Israel**.
- If Canadian institutions were to support a Free Palestine, it would have large-scale implications for Land Back movements here, and would challenge the existing structures of power held by our institutions.
- In the social work field, we must see the connections between decolonial efforts here at home, and liberatory movements in Palestine and around the world. This includes our responsibility to resist the suppression and denialism of our true histories, as we **work towards freedom for all peoples**.

Scan for References



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