Updated: 4/10/23

ESCI Commitments to Confront Colonization

(following our Statement of Intent)

[See links for a Commitments Executive Summary and an Implementation Timeline.]

Beginning Fall 2021, with guidance from Indigenous experts Iyekiyapiwin Darlene St. Clair (Ḍaŋ̣ṡayapi/ Lower Sioux Indian Community, Associate Professor, Saint Cloud State University, Director, Multicultural Resource Center), Karen Diver (Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Senior Advisor to the President for Native American Affairs at the UMN), and An Garagiola (Bois Forte Band Of Chippewa, PhD Student, UMN-TC, Research Assistant, Office of American Indian and Tribal Nations Relations), the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences (ESCI) at University of Minnesota-Twin Cities began a process of learning about settler colonialism through a series of workshops and seminars on Indigenous issues. Following this, we committed to develop a practice of conducting ethical geoscience work that is accountable to the Indigenous peoples of the lands where it takes place. The following ten proposed commitments (order does not indicate priority level) were drafted by Gabriela Ines Diaz (CHamoru and Pohnpeian; B.A. 2021: Major: American Indian Studies, Minor: Environmental Geoscience) and a Confronting Colonization working group within ESCI (consisting of faculty, researchers, staff, and students), based on guidance from Indigenous experts, and other readings. In response to feedback from the greater ESCI community on an early draft, we have assembled specific, actionable plans for the commitments, which we hope will offer tangible strategies through which we can all work towards the larger vision of confronting colonization. We anticipate that ESCI members will revisit this list and regularly develop additional commitments and/or improve any as needed.

Suggested citation (APA):
Diaz, G. I., Barefoot, E., Cantner, K., Chen, M., Francis, S., Hassenruck-Gudipati, H. J., Ito, E., Ng, G.-H. C., Nyblade, M., Raia, N. (2022, September 20). *ESCI Commitments to Confront Colonization*. University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Feedback:
If you have comments on the commitments or have built on the commitments, please contact us through this Google Form.

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Addendum 1: Guidance on ethical research practices

Note on Accountability

Having mechanisms for accountability was identified as a priority by ESCI members when reviewing an early version of these commitments. As highlighted by Dakota scholar Iyekiyapiwin (Darlene St. Clair) in her discussions with us, social accountability is powerful. Other more readily measurable mechanisms of accountability can also be highly effective for keeping us on track.

We will report on progress on **all** commitments in semesterly department seminars as the default approach to accountability. Below, we have indicated any additional accountability measures relevant to specific activities.

Community Connections

1. Cultivating an understanding of Indigenous issues

Actively create and maintain an environment where staff, faculty, students and researchers are encouraged to be informed about issues relating to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, Indigenous traditional ecological knowledges (TEK), Indigenous environmental justice struggles and efforts to restore and repatriate Indigenous lands.

Actions for implementation:

A. Promote general learning opportunities: Distribute Resources Guide and other materials to new ESCI members, invite departmental speakers on these topics, share announcements about related public events outside of ESCI.
   - *Who:* All ESCI members - particularly staff involved in HR onboarding, seminar organizers, and Confronting Colonization working group
   - *Timeline:* YEARS 1-3
   - *Accountability:* Track relevant ESCI seminars and record the numbers of ESCI attendees.

B. Coordinate ESCI-wide collaborations with Indigenous constituents, including American Indian Studies department members, regional tribal representatives, tribal colleges, and relevant student groups. Individual efforts are described under relevant Commitments, but a shared contact list (spreadsheet) should be compiled to facilitate and leverage efforts. It should be noted, however, that one-on-one relationships will remain important for trust-building.
   - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group
   - *Timeline:* ONGOING

C. Maintain and further develop a Working Group where people within ESCI can gather to learn and discuss these topics.
   - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group
   - *Timeline:* ONGOING
   - *Accountability:* Ensure there is a team lead for the Working Group.

D. Include treaty history, ceded territories, and reservation boundaries on maps and displays throughout Tate Hall.
   - *Who:* Display Committee
   - *Timeline:* YEAR 2

2. Rematriation from ESCI collections

Develop a process for assessing and determining the origins of all holdings within the ESCI's collections (recognizing that records may be lost or nonexistent due to destructive conflicts) *and* oversee the rematriation of holdings to Indigenous communities as outlined in The ESCI Policy Statement on Collections Management (currently under review). *Through this policy, ESCI will return holdings from its collections, through appropriate consultation and protocol, to Indigenous communities that hold claim to them and request them.*

Actions for implementation:

A. Review and finalize Collections Management policy.
   - *Who:* Display Committee, Department Head.
   - *Timeline:* YEAR 1
   - *Accountability:* Post the policy on ESCI website.

B. Conduct an inventory of ESCI's holdings (e.g., locate in Tate Hall, Murphy Hall, MGS collections) and build a database of provenance, possession history, and other pertinent metadata.
    - *Who:* A paid undergraduate position, or crowd-sourced with coordination by the Display Committee
    - *Timeline:* YEAR 1-2: Conduct general inventory. YEAR 2-3: Build database.
C. Work with Indigenous consultants (e.g., Senior Advisor to the President for Native American Affairs, currently Karen Diver) to reach out to tribal constituents about discussions on ESCI's holdings.
    - *Who:* Display Committee, Department leadership, and Confronting Colonization Working group.
    - *Timeline:* 5 years YEAR 2-4
D. Rematriation of holdings in accordance with finalized policy.
    - *Who:* Display Committee, Department leadership
    - *Timeline:* Ongoing YEAR 2-4+
    - *Accountability:* List rematriated items on the ESCI website

3. Accounting for ESCI's history with Indigenous peoples

Incentivize and develop a practice for inventorying and accounting for the ESCI's past and ongoing interactions with Indigenous communities and Indigenous lands, particularly with Dakota and Ojibwe communities, given UMN's status as a beneficiary of Dakota and Ojibwe dispossession and its legacy as a land-grant university. These interactions encompass related funding sources, investments, historical origins, and supported projects, including those that have harmed Indigenous communities and their homelands.

Actions for implementation:

A. Identify interested mentors (e.g., professors and/or additional staff within and outside of ESCI) and funding sources (e.g., UROP) for student research into ESCI's harms against Indigenous communities and their homelands.
    - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, Undergraduate advisors
    - *Timeline:* Within 1 year: Initiate effort and continue YEAR 1-2
B. Build partnerships with tribal constituents to ensure that tribal perspectives are incorporated into historical research projects (see also Commitment 1D).
    - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, other ESCI members
    - *Timeline:* YEAR 2-4
C. Carry out research projects and include findings on ESCI's website, in displays, and in curriculum (with Commitments 2 and 9).
    - *Who:* ESCI members, Display committee, and instructors

- *Timeline:* YEAR 2-4+

4. Recruiting and supporting Indigenous peoples in ESCI

Improve outreach and recruiting efforts to increase Indigenous student, staff, researchers, and faculty representation. A requirement for engaging in the action items in this section is cultivating a supportive department climate to ensure retention (see Commitment 1).

Actions for implementation:

A. Build relationships with Indigenous constituents at UMN, including the American Indian Studies department and UMN AISES chapter. Advertise ESCI courses and undergraduate research opportunities that are of potential interest, and develop research and teaching collaborations with faculty.
   - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, Undergraduate Studies Committee, other ESCI members
   - *Timeline:* YEAR 1-4+
   - *Accountability:*

B. Build relationships with academic Indigenous constituents outside of UMN-TC, including with UMN-Morris, UMN-Duluth, Lake Superior State University, Bemidji State University, Tribal colleges, and other two- and four-year colleges with high Indigenous student enrollments, and with professional organizations such as Geoscience Alliance, AISES, and SACNAS. Send ESCI professors and/or other representatives on campus visits and to conferences. Advertise student, faculty, and staff positions with these constituents.
   - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, Undergraduate Studies Committee, Graduate Studies Committee, URGE committee
   - *Timeline:* YEAR 2-4+
   - *Accountability:* Collect and monitor data on Indigenous student enrollments and graduation rates (see Commitment 8).

C. Create a resource guide to help students from diverse backgrounds (including Indigenous heritage) with transfer and onboarding processes. Connect with the NorthStar STEM Alliance for resources on guiding transfer students.
   - *Who:* Undergraduate Studies Committee, Graduate Studies Committee, URGE committee
   - *Timeline:* YEAR 3
   - *Accountability:* Post resource guide to ESCI website

D. Reach out to Indigenous high school programs in the Twin Cities area (and elsewhere in Minnesota) to start to build relationships, with the aim of cultivating interests in UMN and Earth & Environmental Sciences among their students.

When possible, work with other university initiatives that have existing high school programs.
    - *Who:* Outreach Committee, Undergraduate Studies Committee
    - *Timeline:* YEAR 3-4+
    - *Accountability:* Collect and monitor data on Indigenous student enrollments and graduation rates (see Commitment 9).

⚙️ Funding & Infrastructure

5. Communicating scholarship opportunities

Communicate and facilitate access to existing academic scholarships for Indigenous graduate and undergraduate students pursuing studies in Earth and Environmental Sciences by listing these resources on the new department website

Actions for implementation:

A. Research and develop a list of academic scholarships and other opportunities (including looking at other institutions' websites who have this type of infrastructure in place). Create a submission form for ongoing collection of solicitations. In-progress list is here.
    - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group
    - *Timeline:* YEARS 1-2
B. Publish and disseminate this list through the ESCI website and in coordination with the Undergraduate Studies Committee and Graduate Studies Committee.
    - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, Undergraduate Studies Committee, Graduate Studies Committee, DEI Committee
    - *Timeline:* YEARS 2-3

6. Fundraising for Indigenous students and relationship-building

Seek funds for (1) scholarships for American Indian, First Nations, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander and Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students in ESCI and (2) for investing in the personnel, training and resources necessary for long term relation-building efforts with Indigenous communities. The latter could include appropriate compensation for Indigenous researchers, community members, and representatives who collaborate to establish more ethical and accountable practices with Indigenous peoples and lands.

Actions for implementation:

A. Develop a strategy for fundraising; this includes establishing who will drive this. Identify ESCI members motivated to write proposals and manage grants, e.g., from the Confronting Colonization working group. Also, to make this sustainable,

seek someone for whom this work is an official (paid) responsibility - possibly a dedicated or shared ESCI DEI coordinator (as proposed by the ESCI Head) or a graduate research assistant student funded to do this specific work.
    - *Who:* ESCI leadership, DEI Committee, Confronting Colonization working group
    - *Timeline:* YEARS 1-2

B. Fundraise from internal and external grant opportunities with open calls for proposals. Although private funds or endowments will enable long-term support, grants are effective for jump-starting efforts. Assemble and maintain a list of grants, match with relevant Commitments, and pursue - ideally in collaboration with Indigenous constituents.
    - *Who:* TBD dedicated fundraiser for this effort, TBD Confronting Colonization working group members
    - *Timeline:* YEARS 1-3

C. Fundraise and seek endowments from private sources, including individuals (e.g. through UMN's Community Campaign or targeted ESCI donors) and regional companies/organizations (e.g., 3M, US Bank, and General Mills). Coordinate with Lexi Thompson from College of Science and Engineering's External Relations, who leads development efforts for ESCI. Identify and build upon faculty who have relationships with private donors.
    - *Who:* TBD dedicated fundraiser for this effort, TBD Confronting Colonization working group members
    - *Timeline:* YEARS 2-4: Reach out to Lexi Thompson. YEARS 2-4: Pursue funds.

7. Tribal input to external advisory board

Add tribal representation to the ESCI's external advisory board - especially from tribal nations within Minnesota, given our status as a land-grant benefactor of Dakota and Ojibwe land dispossession. When considering appropriate representation, note that each tribe is its own sovereign nation with its unique priorities and identity. Also note that official tribal representation may not necessarily equate with tribal membership or identity.

Actions for implementation:

A. Hold discussions about whether this position should be funded. Currently, external advisory board members are NOT compensated, and so not only would this require fundraising, but it would result in compensation for some but not all board members. Most likely it should be decided based on whether the board member is working within the capacity of their current paid position – if not, funds would be appropriate.

- *Who:* ESCI leadership, current external advisory board.
- *Timeline:* YEAR 1-2

B. If decided that funding is necessary, seek and secure a stable and ongoing source of funding for this position.
   - *Who:* Fundraising team established in Commitment 6.
   - *Timeline:* YEARS 2-3

C. Reach out to tribes about their interest and possible nominations for representatives. Tribes can inform us of whether compensation should be granted.
   - *Who:* ESCI leadership, current external advisory board
   - *Timeline:* YEARS 1-3

8. Data collection to monitor Confronting Colonization outcomes

Maintain record of enrollment and graduation rates of American Indian, First Nations, Alaska Native and Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students in their programs to track and improve efforts to recruit, support, and retain Indigenous students.

Actions for implementation:

A. Coordinate with the DEI, Graduate Studies, and Undergrad Studies Committees for their related data collection efforts for the URGE Action Plan. As part of this coordination: reach out to HR to determine access to this data and restrictions on its usage.
   - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, URGE Committee, DEI Committee, Graduate Studies Committee, and Undergraduate Studies Committees
   - *Timeline:* YEAR 1-2: coordinate with other committees. YEARS 2-3: work with HR.

B. Collect data and analyze results over time, monitoring when commitments and actions are implemented
   - *Who:* TBD based on above coordination with other committees on related data collection efforts.
   - *Timeline:* YEAR 2-3: Start collecting data. YEAR 3-4: Continue collection, analyze data.
   - *Accountability:* This is itself an accountability measure and is related to the URGE Action Plan, for which the Department Head reports updates in their annual report the Dean

Teaching

9. Indigenous content in curriculum

Review and develop curricula to reflect our commitments to ethical geoscience work and research. Such developments could include, when appropriate, the promotion and inclusion of course material on Indigenous environmental issues, struggles, and sovereignty. This can encompass activities around field trips and at field camps, as well as in the regular classroom setting. This work can include comprehensive review of existing material on Indigenous histories in the current curricula, as well as further development of the curricula through collaboration with Indigenous constituents (i.e. community members, experts, scholars and activists) who have expertise.

Actions for implementation:

A. Accept, recommend, and possibly require Department of American Indian Studies (AMIN) classes as part of the ESCI degree programs – expand on current technical credits awarded to Earth Science majors.
    - *Who:* Graduate Studies Committee, Undergraduate Studies Committee, Curriculum Committee
    - *Timeline:* YEARS 1-2
    - *Accountability:* Post new credit policy on ESCI website. Track, analyze, and report the number of ESCI students who have taken AMIN classes.

B. Coordinate with the Curriculum Committee and course instructors to develop a timeline for updating course curricula. This includes identifying high-impact (high enrollment and/or required) classes and courses with topics highly relevant for Indigenous issues – these can serve as priority classes to update. This also includes surveying faculty about their interest and capacity in updating their curricula.
    - *Who:* Curriculum Committee, ESCI course instructors
    - *Timeline:* YEARS 1-2
    - *Accountability:* Updated ESCI curriculum plan should explicitly include relevant multicultural learning (especially relating to Indigenous peoples and lands) and point to specific courses.

C. Build a community-of-practice that includes and supports instructors interested in updating their curricula to cover Indigenous issues. Collectively, this community will gather resources on relevant topics, and design possible activities that would fit with course curricula. They will hold workshops for developing the curricula. They will compile newly developed course materials (lecture slides, activities, collaborator information) on Indigenous issues to share with each other.
    - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, ESCI course instructors

- *Timeline:* YEARS 2-4+
- *Accountability:* Shared Google Drive with resources and new curricula. Instructors should report in their annual report about any teaching material they include on Indigenous issues. Actual course updates should be compared back to the planned timeline in part B.

D. Through relationships built with local Indigenous leaders and American Indian Studies department members (see Commitment 1D), invite (with credit/compensation as appropriate) collaborators/advisors/co-instructors to provide their expertise. This can include giving guest presentations, suggesting course material, and reviewing course content related to Indigenous issues.
   - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, ESCI instructors
   - *Timeline:* YEARS 1-4+
   - *Accountability:* These activities should be shared through the Google Drive mentioned in part C and included in instructors' annual reports.

Research

10. Ethical research with Indigenous peoples and lands

Develop an ethical research practice and set of protocols/guidelines for conducting work on Indigenous lands that honors the sovereignty of the Indigenous peoples whose land and water the work takes place - in Minnesota, other parts of the U.S., and globally. These can be Indigenous lands that are recognized as Tribal lands; Treaty Territories; reservation lands; *and* public or private lands. Ethical practices include (but are not limited to) seeking permission from the appropriate Indigenous entities BEFORE conducting any work on or impacting Indigenous land, water, or interests. See Addendum 1 for more detailed guidance on what ethical practices can be implemented.

Actions for implementation:

A. All ESCI members will be able to explore how current/past research has affected Indigenous peoples and begin considering improved approaches for ethical research that aligns with ESCI's Commitments to Confronting Colonization. A "Group Reflection Worksheet" has been developed to guide small groups through this.
   - *Who:* ESCI faculty, graduate students, researcher staff (including in department and all institutes/centers), and undergraduate researchers
   - *Timeline:* YEAR 1
   - *Accountability:* Each group appoints a point person to check in on progress. Each group reports out at the end of the academic year.

B. Create a flowchart to guide ESCI members from initiating to carrying out research that aligns with commitments to Confronting Colonization. Create and implement a follow-up group activity built around the flowchart to facilitate implementation of changes to current/future research.
    - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group will develop the flowchart and activity. All ESCI members who conduct research will participate in the activity.
    - *Timeline:* YEAR 2: develop flowchart and activity. YEARS 2-4+: Implement activity and increase commitments to confronting colonization in research.
    - *Accountability:* All participants list activities in their annual reports.
C. Promote, support, and (as possible) implement the Minnesota tribal land mapping policy as established by the MGS DEI committee in consultation with Karen Diver, the UMN Senior Advisor to the President for Native American Affairs.
    - *Who:* MGS staff, other ESCI members who engage in mapping activities in Minnesota and support the policy.
    - *Timeline:* YEAR 1
    - *Accountability:* Post the policy on the ESCI website, and directly send the policy to all the 11 federally recognized tribes in Minnesota.
D. Develop and implement official (endorsed by ESCI Head and other UMN leaders) research policies for all ESCI work in Minnesota. This includes supporting and executing the MGS tribal mapping policy as established by the MGS DEI committee in consultation with Karen Diver. These policies may be reviewed and updated with input from tribal representatives.
    - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, ESCI Head.
    - *Timeline:* YEAR 1: Support and execute MGS tribal mapping policy. YEARS 2-4: Develop further policies for other ESCI research.
    - *Accountability:* Post the policies on the ESCI website, and directly send the policy to all the 11 federally recognized tribes in Minnesota.
E. Develop more comprehensive guidelines that extend beyond Minnesota and the US. It may be more difficult to make this an official policy because specifics will vary greatly depending on location, but we will strive for a working document that ESCI members collectively put together based on what they learn about their research sites
    - *Who:* Confronting Colonization working group, other ESCI members working on Indigenous lands outside of Minnesota and the US.
    - *Timeline:* YEARS 3-5
    - *Accountability:* The Confronting Colonization working group will circulate this activity once a reasonable working document has been drafted.

Addendum 1: Guidance on ethical research practices

I. Determine if any research and/ or related work is to be conducted on tribal lands or waters located within tribal reservation boundaries OR ceded territories (regions where tribes retain and exercise certain treaty rights) AND in doing so, determine whose land this work is to be conducted on **before** this work is started.

II. Determine if any research and/ or related work is to be conducted on resources OR lands, waters or sites that are of importance to the Indigenous peoples of that place. *For federally recognized American Indian Tribal Nations in the US, these may include (but are not limited to) resources and sites used for fishing, hunting, and gathering within reservation boundaries and in ceded territories (known as usufructuary rights).*

III. Carry out prior and meaningful communication with the Indigenous communities whose lands work is to be conducted on before any of this work and any research is started. This may take several years.

IV. Seek (and obtain) free, prior and fully-informed permission and consent from the appropriate Indigenous communities and their respective forms of leadership *(i.e. tribal nations if work concerns reservation lands, Inter-tribal treaty organizations if work concerns ceded territories, or otherwise other respective leadership councils and advisory boards).*

V. **Do not produce** research/ project proposals concerning work on tribal lands and waters if it has not received the consent and permission from the respective Indigenous peoples of those places and in doing so, **do not list** the names of any tribal or community members if their consent has not been given to do so.

VI. Expect and **accept** the possibility of not receiving permission and consent from Indigenous entities to move forward with proposals, research, or projects of interest concerning Indigenous homelands. *If permission is not granted, we hold ourselves accountable to not only modify such plans through consultation with the Indigenous peoples of the places when possible but also to **NOT** pursue these projects in any way unless approval is given.*

VII. Explicitly recognize and credit any partnerships with and any contributions by Indigenous communities and/ or community members that resulted in any research products in a manner that respects the sovereignty of the Indigenous collaborators. *We hold ourselves accountable to attributing and sharing knowledge ethically, in accordance with the terms, consent, and interests of Indigenous research partners on a case-by-case basis.*