



Mind the Land You Are Mining! Creative Design of Critical Learning Experiences with Minecraft

UBC MET Conference 2023

Yumiko Murai, Robyn Ilten-Gee, Maryam Gharib | Simon Fraser University

Land Acknowledgment





Link to Google Site

- bit.ly/3NQ8eKJ

Turn to your neighbor

Share:

- Introduce yourself!
- Where are you coming from?
- How do you use Minecraft in the learning environment that you are in (if you are already doing)?

Background Context

- Minecraft has around 140 million active players every month
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, Minecraft players increased by 14 million as teachers began embracing the potential for covering curriculum in the game
- There is a robust community of educators creating, designing, implementing innovative Minecraft lessons in classrooms in all subjects
- Every student with an Office 365 Education account has access to Minecraft: Education Edition

Existing Examples of Indigenous Representation in Minecraft



Nga Motu: Exploring the Maori Universe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3wmzvl3GFY&t=2s>



Manito Ahbee Aki: Anishinaabe Village

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3r_48XAF_Y

Critiques of Minecraft: Cycle of extraction, narratives of *terra nullius*

"At the heart of Minecraft lies a cycle of extraction, exploitation, and expansion... The game's 'Creative' mode focuses on settling and building without the need to extract ore and survive. This mode removes the possibility of death and allows players to freely use all of the resources needed to build their worlds without any resistance from any pre-existing Inhabitants" (Lopez et al., 2019, p. 1042).

"In its production, content, and (classroom) consumption, then, Minecraft presents a fictional terra nullius. As Dooghan suggests, Minecraft positions its players as 'technologically empowered conqueror[s]' that rehearse mythical processes of imperial colonization and domination (2016, 81). It encourages players and students to indulge in an actualization of an illusory frontier while conveniently erasing its previous inhabitants" (Lopez et al., 2019, p. 1043).

Doctrine of Discovery and *Terra nullius*:

- The Doctrine of Discovery was a principle used by European colonizers to claim Indigenous land and invalidate Indigenous claims to land. *Terra nullius* is legal terminology that referred to land that is "unowned" (by Europeans), often taken by force and without Indigenous consent.

How Canadian law could change with the Vatican repudiation the Doctrine of Discovery



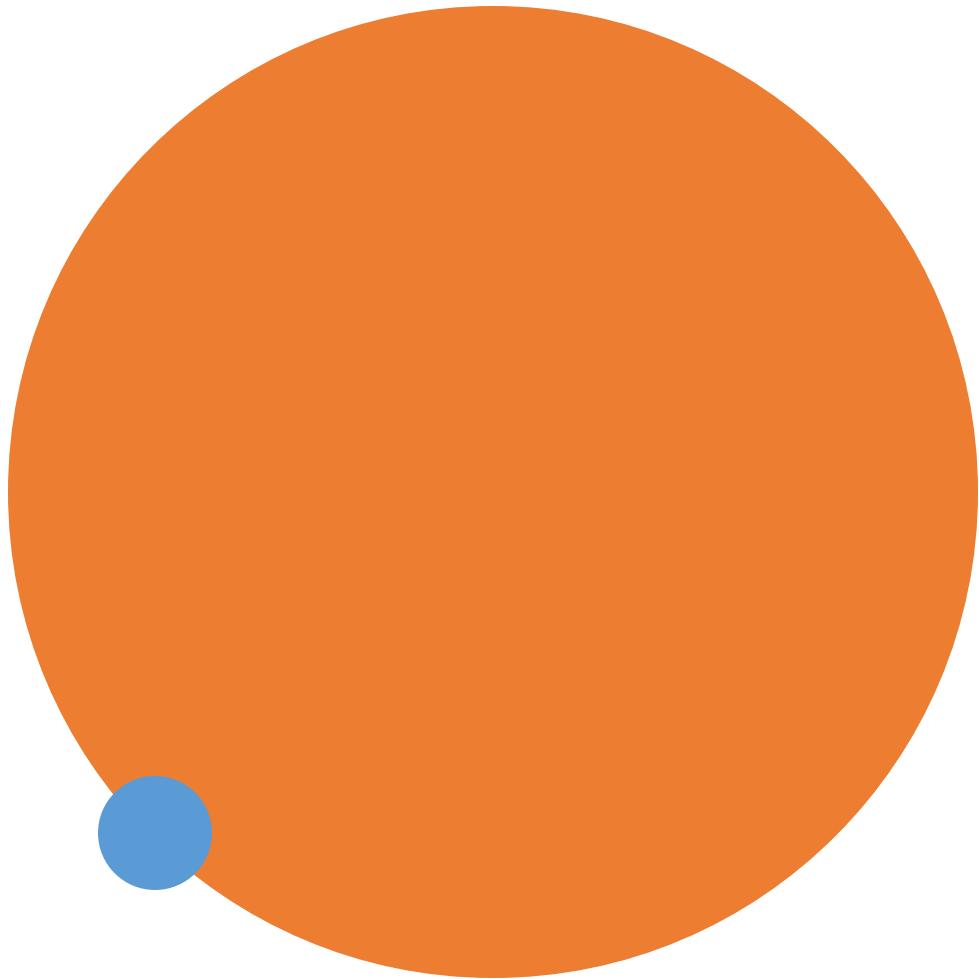
Law prof hopes it will reform contemporary understanding of Indigenous rights and equality



Paul Hantiuk - CBC Radio - Posted: Apr 08, 2023 10:23 AM PDT | Last Updated: April 8



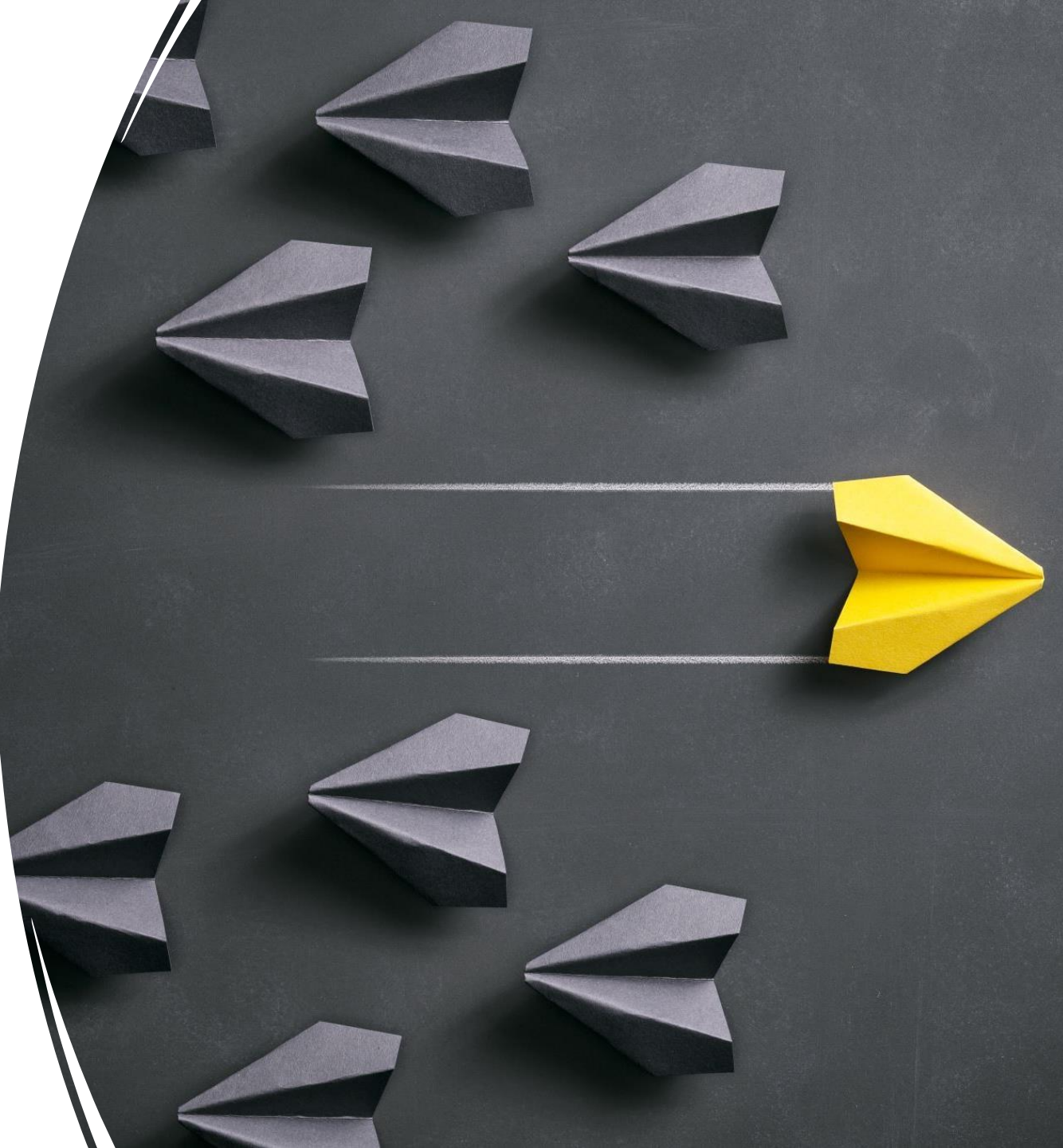
In this photo, taken moments before the start of mass, two people are seen holding up a banner that says 'Rescind the doctrine,' in reference to the Doctrine of Discovery. (Guglielmo Mangiapane/Reuters)



What other issues have YOU noticed about colonialism in Minecraft?

Challenge for Today!

- Task 1: Explore
- Task 2: Identifying the colonial ideologies in the game
- Task 3: Design and Prototype
- Task 4: Reflection



Getting Started:



1) Open up Minecraft: Education Edition

2) Log in with your Microsoft Office 365 account and PW

3) Select your "Skin" for your avatar

4) Select Settings: Audio --> Turn music down

5) Click on Play

6) Create New --> Template --> Blocks of Grass

Navigating Around Your World:

1) Keyboard Controls:

To **MOVE**: W, A, S, D

To **Jump / Fly**: Space bar (hold)

To **place object**: Right click w/ mouse

To **destroy**: Click with mouse

2) Touch Screen Controls:

To **MOVE**: Use the arrows on the screen

To **Jump / Fly**: Tap and hold the grey icon on the bottom right

To **place**: Tap once

To **destroy**: Tap and hold



As you explore and play individually or with your neighbor:



What draws your attention?

What does the game make you notice? What does it make you ignore?



With a peer
discuss the
key concepts
of colonization

- What connections are you making ?
- How might the features be interpreted ?
(agent, avatar, biome, blocks, inventory, resources, etc.)

Doctrine of Discovery and *Terra nullius*:

- The Doctrine of Discovery was a principle used by European colonizers to claim Indigenous land and invalidate Indigenous claims to land. *Terra nullius* is legal terminology that referred to land that is "unowned" (by Europeans), often taken by force and without Indigenous consent.

How Canadian law could change with the Vatican repudiation the Doctrine of Discovery



Law prof hopes it will reform contemporary understanding of Indigenous rights and equality



Paul Hantiuk - CBC Radio - Posted: Apr 08, 2023 10:23 AM PDT | Last Updated: April 8



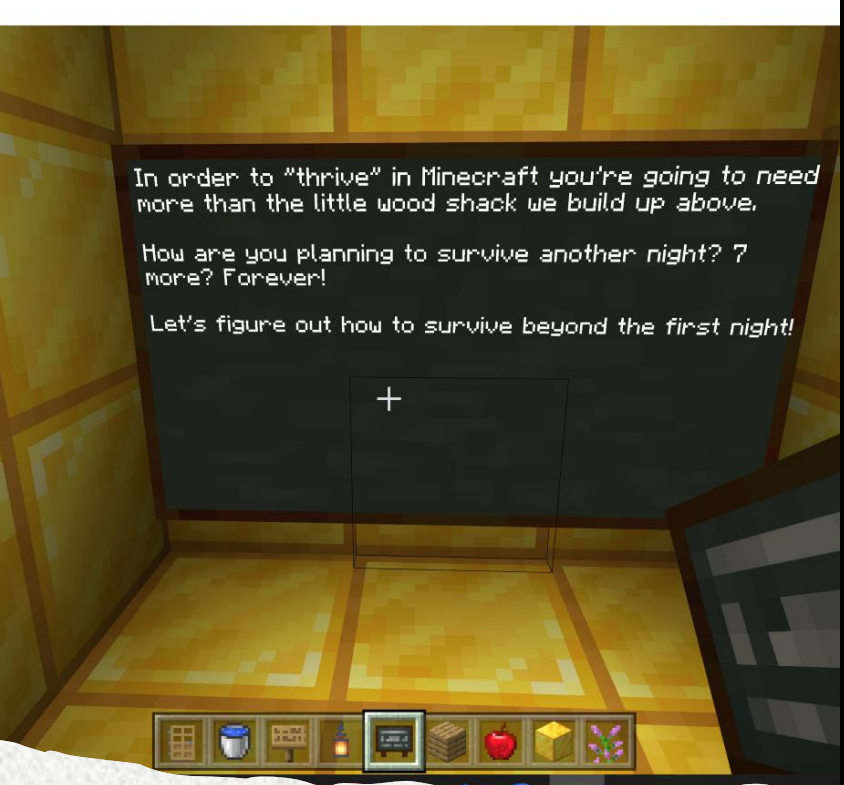
In this photo, taken moments before the start of mass, two people are seen holding up a banner that says 'Rescind the doctrine,' in reference to the Doctrine of Discovery. (Guglielmo Mangiapane/Reuters)

Design & Prototype!

1. Brainstorm and **design a learning opportunity** for critical learning experience with Minecraft: Education Edition.
2. **Design a prototype** or teaching tool of something that you might use with students or other educators to facilitate this learning
3. **Share** with others

Things to consider:

- What would the learning goals be?
- What resources / tools would you want them to engage with?
- What key understandings would you want them to walk away with?
- What features of Minecraft are relevant to these understandings?



Some Examples..

Minecraft Through a Critical Lens

P25

Solidarity Action (get together with other voices)

- Inviting a guest speaker/elder to the class prior to using this game to establish a sense of connection to the land/animals/first Peoples in order to establish a proper background knowledge for students?

Inclusivity:

- Is this activity inclusive to all members of the class? What about for the visually impaired?



Access: (ability to do the work).

- Access to technology. If you do not have access to a personal device, how much time would be dedicated to learning how to first work the new device then learning the game?



Agency (be your own thinker)

- There is opportunity for individual learning but lacks the awareness of other approaches to the task at hand.



Advocacy: How can the learnings be extended and used in real life? (Ex: Reflection activity - how are resources gathered to build housing in real life vs in the game?)



Suggestions



Ask Students Guiding Questions

Post signs within the game
that ask questions and
encourage students to think
critically



Home



Game



Tools



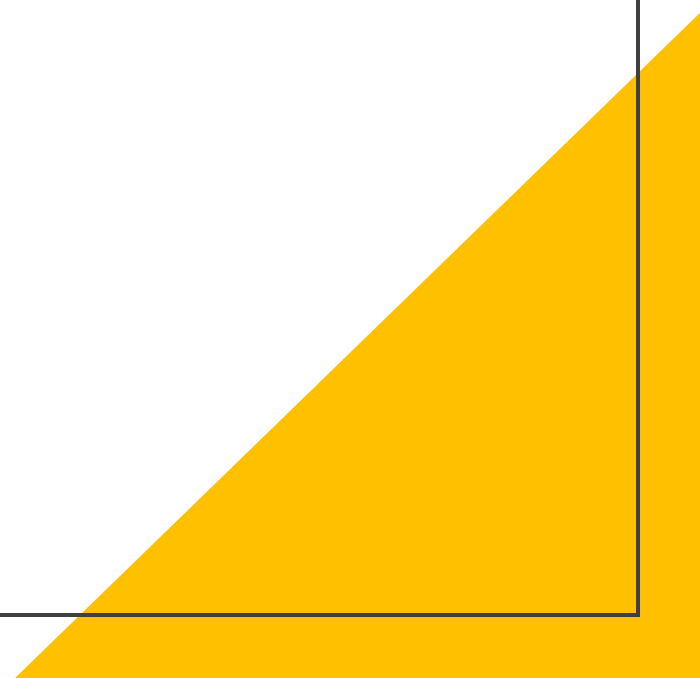
Facts



Team



Share



Reflect

- How has this experience impacted the way you understand or connect to the topic of colonialism?
- How do you see the role of this kind of activity for preservice / in service teachers, using this tool?
- How would you implement these tools in your classrooms? What ideas are you going to take back to your teaching environment?

Thank you!

Any questions?



[This Photo](#) by Unknown author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#).

Contact us:

Yumiko Murai

yumiko_murai@sfu.ca

Robyn Ilten-Gee

robyn_iltengee@sfu.ca

Maryam Gharib

maryam_gharib@sfu.ca