

Part 2

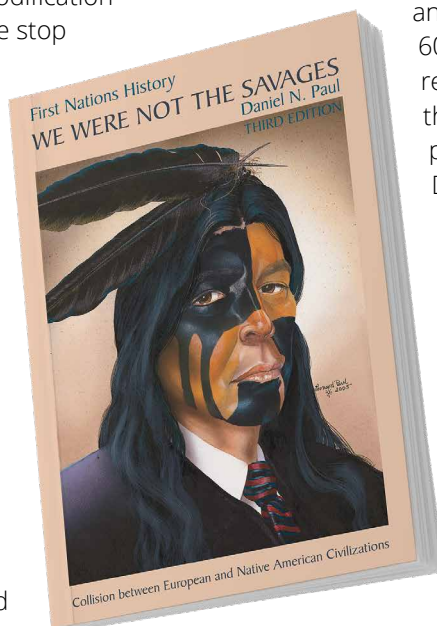
## Understanding Colonial Mind Control Patterns using the BITE Model and Influence Continuum

Mind control is an undue influence process that involves the systematic use of specific methods to assert control over a person or group of people.<sup>1</sup> These methods are used by authoritarians<sup>2</sup> to coerce and gain control over people. It is useful to note that some of the same methods can be used to empower people to gain more control over their own lives. For example, with a person's consent, techniques like hypnosis and behaviour modification could be used to help someone stop smoking. However, these methods are often used in destructive ways, creating "dependency and obedience to some leader or cause" and undermining "a person's ability to think and act independently."<sup>3</sup>

In terms of colonialism, it is useful to think about Canada Day. While millions of Canadians don maple leaves and reflect on a benevolent country that welcomed their ancestors, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are reminded of the broken treaties, Indian Residential Schools, the ongoing crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, the contemporary haunting of the *Indian Act*, inequitable public services, and more. The waving maple leaf version of Canada Day is made possible by concealing from the consciousness of non-Indigenous Canadians the inhumane treatment foisted upon Indigenous peoples by Canadian governments in the name

of the so-called public good. Understanding colonial mind control, therefore, is essential to meaningful reconciliation, and Dr. Hassan's BITE Model and Influence Continuum can help identify and deconstruct colonial patterns.

Authoritarian mind control has been used against Indigenous peoples to free up the land for European settlement in what is now known as Canada by Christian missionaries and colonial governments for over 600 years. The taking of land and resources was legitimized through the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples. As Mi'kmaw historian Daniel Paul notes, the colonial powers made their savage tactics toward Indigenous peoples more palatable to the public themselves, and their God, by relegating Indigenous peoples to the category "savage" and coining their own behaviour as "civilizing."<sup>4</sup> Canada's so-called civilizing mission aimed to free up the land for settlers by forcing Indigenous peoples to identify with and follow European Christian ideas, laws, and values, or by eliminating Indigenous peoples altogether.



*We Were Not the Savages* by Mi'kmaw historian Daniel Paul (originally published 1993).

The creation of Indian Residential Schools was the hallmark of the colonizer's savagery. These institutions were designed to assimilate Indigenous children by forcibly removing them from their parents and placing them in re-education camps called "schools," where officials and clergy perpetrated and covered

1 Freedom of Mind Resource Centre, "Steven Hassan's BITE Model of Authoritarian Control": <https://freedomofmind.com/cult-mind-control/bite-model/>  
 2 An authoritarian, in this context, is an individual or group that demands obedience to an authority at the cost of personal freedom in a way that negatively impacts a person's ability to think and act for themselves.  
 3 Freedom of Mind Resource Centre, "Steven Hassan's BITE Model of Authoritarian Control."  
 4 Daniel N. Paul (1993), *We Were Not the Savages: Collision Between European and Native American Civilizations*.

up all forms of abuse and skyrocketing death rates. In addition, colonial governments used laws to legitimize the theft of Indigenous lands and resources and to control all manner of Indigenous society, including governance, tradition, social, marriage, burial, mourning, and child-raising practices.<sup>5</sup> While all of this was unfolding, new settlers and their descendants were indoctrinated with the Canadian narrative that it was necessary for the government to take over the land because the Indians could not look

persistent, but colonial mind control narrows the scope of what one views as possible in one's reality, and the societal impacts of colonialism are profound. These impacts shape the way Indigenous peoples view themselves and how they are viewed by others. And they pave the way for the entrenchment of colonial relationship patterns that allow for the affirmation and legitimization of *Indian Act* governments, negotiations with the colonial government to achieve self-government, and valuing political photo ops with colonial actors.

**“When mind control takes hold, serious human rights abuses and genocides are brushed off as exceptions to the rule or as necessary sacrifices to achieve the authoritarian vision of a better society.”**

While the forms of societal colonial mind control have shifted over time, Canadian governments and the public continue to be steeped in it. This fact helps explain why so many Canadians were shocked by images of unmarked children's graves on residential school grounds, despite credible public reports of child deaths in government records, survivor testimony, and newspaper headlines dating back over a century.

Through undue influence, colonial regimes gain coercive control by asserting themselves into the lands and lives of Indigenous peoples, and they maintain coercive control through invasive laws, and by introducing mass dispossession, trauma, and

after it, or themselves. In creating this fiction, the government represented itself as helping Indigenous peoples out, propagating the myth of Canada as a benevolent country. Meanwhile, both settler and Indigenous children were taught that European knowledge and values were superior, and settler children learned nothing about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, or their knowledge systems; colonial stereotypes took hold in the knowledge vacuum.

From a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit point of view, the savagery of the colonizers was potent and multi-generational, and was characterized by dispossession, starvation, abuse, and trauma. Resistance to colonialism was heroic and

death, creating a sense of cultural insecurity and self-doubt. As Steven Hassan asserts, “authoritarianism creates debilitating, insecure questioning and ongoing confusion, something critical to maintaining coercive control.”<sup>6</sup> First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples often incorrectly blame themselves for failing within the system when, in fact, the system is set up for them to fail. Like mind control cults, authoritarian colonial regimes project false beliefs that the leaders, doctrine, and policies are perfect, “and if you have a problem with them, the problem is in you,” not the colonial government and its leaders.<sup>7</sup> When mind control takes hold, serious human rights abuses and genocides are brushed off as exceptions to the rule or as necessary

5 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939*, pp. 34–35: [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume\\_1\\_History\\_Part\\_1\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume_1_History_Part_1_English_Web.pdf)

6 Steven Hassan, *Mind Control and Colonization* (34:35): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYHuBGR-Otk&t=3350s>

7 Ibid

sacrifices to achieve the authoritarian vision of a better society.

### The BITE Model of Authoritarian Control: Going from free thinking to harmful group thinking

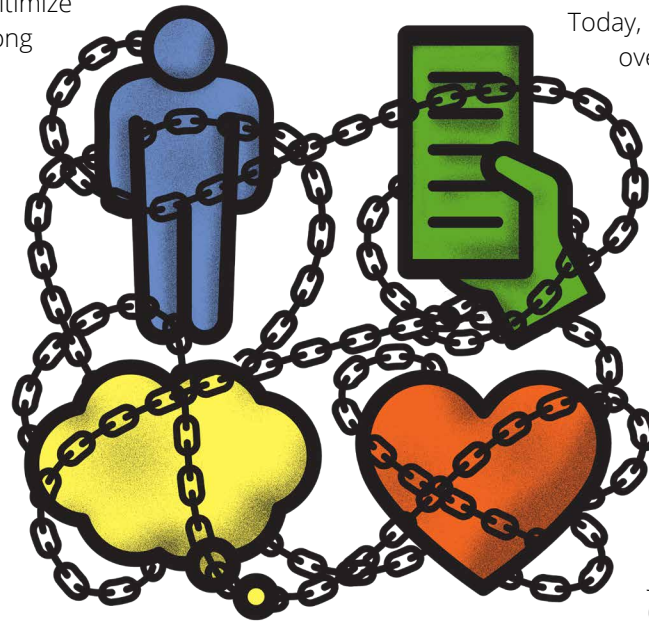
Originally developed to describe methods used by cults to recruit and control group members, Steven Hassan's BITE Model of Authoritarian Control<sup>8</sup> can help us understand the methods used by Canada to create dependency and coerce First Nations peoples to obey government-imposed rules and restrictions and to legitimize cultural genocide among the mainstream population. While this information sheet focuses on identifying how these methods have been employed to limit First Nations people's ability to think and act outside of colonial structures, another information sheet in this series will explore undue influence from the perspective of non-Indigenous Canadians and governments.

Under the BITE Model, there are four main categories of control: **B**ehaviour Control, **I**nformation Control, **T**hought Control, and **E**motional control.<sup>9</sup>

#### Behaviour Control

This involves regulating the physical reality of individuals to instill dependency on, and obedience to, those exerting authority. For

example, people might be told how to dress, how to wear their hair, what to eat, where to live, what to drink, and who to marry. The authority also controls resources, including money, and tells people what cultural practices they can participate in and which ones are forbidden. Those exerting authority also set up a reward and punishment system where members are encouraged to spy on each other and report people behaving outside the rules. They may also maintain power and control by participating in the separation of families, kidnapping, beating, rape, and murder.



Today, Canada asserts control over the behaviour of First Nations peoples largely through the Indian Act, and resistance to Canada's colonial laws and policies is criminalized and subject to significant penalties.<sup>10</sup> Previous renditions of the Indian Act controlled what ceremonies one could practice, what job one could have (and still retain "Indian Status"), whether one

could leave the reserve (the pass system), and whether one could vote in federal, provincial, and/or band elections. In the 1880s, as Canada started forcing First Nations peoples onto reserves, the government controlled access to food by withholding food rations, causing mass illness and starvation.<sup>11</sup> The contemporary version of the Indian Act controls almost every aspect of First Nations life on reserves, including who has "Indian status." Imagine if Canada issued "status" or "non-status" Canadian cards

8 Steven Hassan's BITE model of authoritarian control "is primarily a social psychological, behavioural construct that offers a unique way to analyze healthy and unhealthy influence" (Steven Hassan [2020]), *The Bite Model of Authoritarian Control: Undue Influence, Thought Reform, Brainwashing, Mind Control, Trafficking and the Law*, p. 105: <https://freedomofmind.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Dr-Hassan-Dissertation-Published.pdf>

9 Definitions of Behaviour, Information, Thought, and Emotional Control to follow are all from "Steven Hassan's BITE Model of Authoritarian Control," *Freedom of Mind Resource Centre*: <https://freedomofmind.com/cult-mind-control/bite-model/>

10 Melisa Brittain and Cindy Blackstock (2015), *First Nations Child Poverty*: <https://incaringociety.com/publications/first-nations-child-poverty-literature-review-and-analysis-2015>

11 *Ibid*

to every baby born in Canada; that is the daily experience of First Nations in 2022. The very fact that this racist law that forced children into residential schools is still on the books and is being applied to First Nations peoples without public controversy demonstrates the power of undue influence in Canada. Today, through ongoing underfunding of child welfare services, education, and infrastructure on reserve, the federal government continues to incentivize the removal of First Nations children from their families. This is beginning to change, but only because First Nations continue to hold Canada accountable through litigation like the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case.<sup>12</sup>

As noted by Neu and Therrien, Canadian and provincial/territorial governments also use money to exercise control over First Nations peoples, governments, and organizations.<sup>13</sup> Canada's unequal funding of public services on reserves for necessities like water, education, child welfare, health, and housing make it difficult for First Nations to recover from



the multi-generational impacts of residential schools and other types of colonial violence. Discriminatory service provision for First Nations was normalized within governments and in the Canadian public for over a century, and was only partially addressed via the landmark human rights case brought by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations.<sup>14</sup> Canada deepens its control by using funding agreements that dictate what the funds can be used for, impeding the ability of

First Nations to meet the actual needs of their communities.

### Information Control

This category of control includes deception, which involves outright and systematic lies, as well as the deliberate withholding and distorting of information. It also involves minimizing or discouraging access to information the authority has not itself produced, including media and research, as well as information critical of the authority and its beliefs. Information is compartmentalized into “outsider” versus “insider” doctrines, and information is not freely accessible to all group members. Instead, information is controlled and only accessible to people at different levels within the group. It is a culmination of withholding truth, spinning messages, deflection, and outright deception deployed society-wide and with vigour on those who the authority wants to oppress.

Canada's lies, deception, and withholding of information is so integral to its attempts to control First Nations and cover its tracks that the examples are endless. Here are just a few: Canada's choice, from very early on, to not honour treaties signed with First Nations (and, many argue, the deceptive way they were drawn up in the first place);<sup>15</sup> the choice to not educate non-Indigenous Canadians about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, their histories, and contexts; Canada's withholding of millions of documents from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada during its investigations into residential schools;<sup>16</sup> Canada's withholding of police records from survivors of St. Anne's



12 See Tribunal ruling ([https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/2016\\_chrt\\_2\\_access\\_0.pdf](https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/2016_chrt_2_access_0.pdf)) and I am a Witness (<https://fncaringsociety.com/i-am-witness>)

13 Dean Neu and Richard Therrien (2003), *Accounting for Genocide: Canada's Bureaucratic Assault on Aboriginal People*.

14 See Tribunal ruling ([https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/2016\\_chrt\\_2\\_access\\_0.pdf](https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/2016_chrt_2_access_0.pdf)) and I am a Witness (<https://fncaringsociety.com/i-am-witness>)

15 Alanis Obomsawin (2014), *Trick or Treaty? NFB*: [https://www.nfb.ca/film/trick\\_or\\_treaty/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/trick_or_treaty/); Brandi Morin (17 March 2020), “Canada and the First Nations: A History of Broken Promises,” *Aljazeera*: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/3/17/canada-and-the-first-nations-a-history-of-broken-promises>; OKT Law, *Recent Examples Where the Supreme Court of Canada Found that the Crown Violated the Treaties*: <http://www.oktlaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/treaty.pdf>

16 Gloria Galloway (Dec. 3, 2012), “Ottawa Taken to Court Over Release of Residential Schools Documents,” *The Globe and Mail*: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-taken-to-court-over-release-of-residential-schools-documents/article5904543/>

Indian residential school, threatening to destroy these records, and heavily redacting the documents when they were legally compelled to hand them over;<sup>17</sup> and Canada's withholding of documents that showed they knew of child welfare funding shortfalls and its dire consequences during Canadian Human Rights Tribunal hearings.<sup>18</sup>

As more and more First Nations discover thousands of unmarked children's graves on the grounds of former residential schools, Canada's control of information about children's deaths at residential schools is becoming more tenuous. Through the ongoing work of survivors and others, the government's lies, distortion, and withholding of information is becoming increasingly more difficult to hide. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada notes in its final report: "Getting to the truth was hard, but getting to reconciliation will be harder," because it "requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship."<sup>19</sup>

### Thought Control

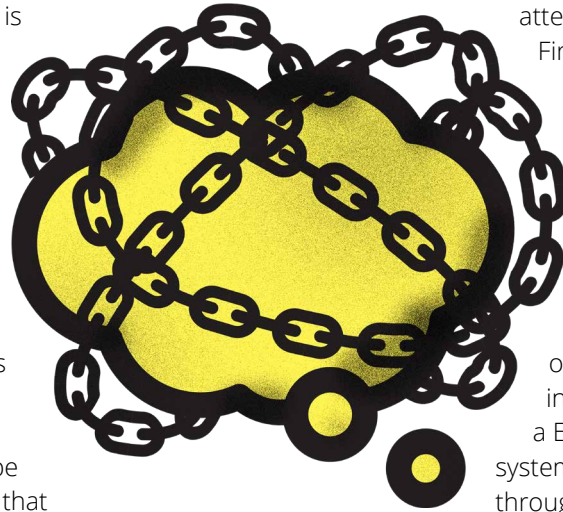
The authority requires members to accept and internalize the group's doctrine as absolute truth, which involves adopting the group's map of reality as the only truth. It instills polarized (good versus bad) thinking and organizes people into insiders and outsiders. People are encouraged to change their name and identity, stop critical thoughts (which involves denial, rationalization, justification, and wishful thinking),

and reduce complex ideas to buzz words and clichés. Authorities deem alternative belief (including spiritual) systems as illegitimate and forbid questioning leaders or policy.

The doctrine of discovery, which falsely "presumed racial superiority of European Christian peoples" and was used by Europeans "to dehumanize, exploit and subjugate Indigenous peoples," forms the ideological foundation for colonization in Canada, and informs both past and present colonial laws and practices.<sup>20</sup> Canada's

attempt to indoctrinate First Nations children into Christianity and Euro-Christian culture via the residential school system is the most well-known form of thought control, but it is by no means the only one. Other examples include the imposition of a European-style electoral system onto First Nations through the *Indian Act*, which disrupted the diverse

traditional forms of governance amongst First Nations that had worked for centuries. The electoral band system requires all First Nations to adopt a single political system in order to access reserve lands, funds from the federal government, and social service and educational programs.<sup>21</sup> The *Indian Act* also institutionalizes First Nations people's legal identities as either "insiders" or "outsiders" through "Indian Status" requirements, which entitles "Status Indians" to certain legal rights and resources controlled by Canada and distributed through their bands.<sup>22</sup>



17 "Survivor Urges PM to Release Residential School Documents," *Edmonton Journal*, Dec. 24, 2020: A5; Jorge Barerra, "81 St. Anne's Residential School Compensation Cases Require 'significant review,' Says Court Filing," CBC, Sept. 2, 2021: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/st-annes-review-compensation-1.6161642>

18 Cindy Blackstock (October 6, 2016), "The Long History of Discrimination Against First Nations Children," *Policy Options*: <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/october-2016/the-long-history-of-discrimination-against-first-nations-children/>

19 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, p. vi: [https://irsi.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://irsi.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf)

20 Assembly of First Nations (2018), *Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery*, p. 2: <https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/18-01-22-Dismantling-the-Doctrine-of-Discovery-EN.pdf>

21 Indigenous Foundations (2009), "Bands": <https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/bands/>

22 Indigenous Foundations (2009), "Indian Status": [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/indian\\_status/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/indian_status/)

In attempts to delegitimize First Nations cultural and spiritual beliefs, Canada banned the Potlatch ceremony of Northwest Coast First Nations between 1885 and 1951,<sup>23</sup> and the Sun Dance (Tamanawas) ceremony of many First Nations on the plains between 1895 and 1951.<sup>24</sup> In efforts to forbid questions of leaders or policy, Canada punishes whistleblowers like Dr. P.H. Bryce, Chief Medical Officer of the Department of the Interior, who reported in 1907 that around 25 percent of children in residential schools had died from tuberculosis and tied the deaths directly to the poor “sanitation and health conditions within the schools.”<sup>25</sup> More recently, the federal government tried to intimidate and silence another truth teller, First Nations child advocate Cindy Blackstock, when she, in conjunction with the Assembly of First Nations, filed a human rights complaint against Canada for its inequitable child welfare funding for First Nations children and families on reserve.<sup>26</sup> Despite Canada’s ongoing attempts to control and intimidate, First Nations people continue to reveal their own truths and expose Canada’s attempts to suppress them.



### **Emotional Control**

Authoritarian leaders seek to control the emotions of group members by manipulating and narrowing the range of emotions deemed acceptable and encouraging people to block emotions and feelings of homesickness and doubt. These leaders alternate between praising or “love bombing” an individual one moment (making them feel chosen and special) and

promoting feelings of unworthiness and guilt the next. They make members feel as if they and their families are deficient, their “past is suspect,” and their “thoughts, feelings, and actions are irrelevant or selfish.”<sup>27</sup> Problems that arise are considered the individual’s fault, never the fault of the leader or group, and leaders manipulate members by levelling threats and instilling phobias, making members think that there is no possibility of happiness outside the group, and that there will be terrible consequences if they leave.

The residential schooling system institutionalized the colonial practice of shaming First Nations Métis, and Inuit children about every aspect of their traditional cultures and communities; this functioned as a form of emotional control. Those who worked at the institutions punished children for speaking their language, making them feel ashamed about who they were. The children were punished by those who ran the institutions for everything from crying to bedwetting in ways designed to induce the most fear and shame possible.<sup>28</sup> Canada’s continued attempts at emotional control include the denial that there is ongoing discrimination by repeating the narrative that residential schools were a “sad chapter”<sup>29</sup> in Canada’s history and the lie that “[n]o relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples,”<sup>30</sup> all the while actively violating Indigenous peoples’ land rights and human rights, and spending millions of dollars in legal

23 Simon Fraser University (n.d.), “The Potlatch Ban”: [https://www.sfu.ca/brc/online\\_exhibits/masks-2-0/the-potlatch-ban.html](https://www.sfu.ca/brc/online_exhibits/masks-2-0/the-potlatch-ban.html)

24 The Canadian Encyclopedia (2022), “Sun Dance”: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sun-dance>

25 First Nations Child & Family Caring Society (2022), “People in History: Dr. P.H. Bryce”: <https://fncaringsociety.com/people-history>

26 Tim Harper (Nov. 16, 2011), “Government Spies Keep Watch of Aboriginal Aid Worker,” *The Record*: <https://www.therecord.com/opinion/columnists/2011/11/16/government-spies-keep-watch-of-aboriginal-aid-worker.html>

27 Freedom of Mind Resource Centre, “Steven Hassan’s BITE Model of Authoritarian Control.”

28 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, pp. 42, 104, 108: [https://irsi.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://irsi.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf)

29 Prime Minister Harper offers full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system (2006): <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1571589171655>

30 Prime Minister of Canada (2017), *Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on National Aboriginal Day*: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2017/06/21/statement-prime-minister-canada-national-aboriginal-day>

fees fighting First Nations in court.<sup>31</sup> Another pertinent example is the long and complex “needs assessment” process First Nations must go through to

document problems they are experiencing, with housing or health. Canada’s claim is that they want to see healthy and strong communities, and that they want to support First Nations to get there, but so often, after communities do all the hard work required to jump through the government’s hoops to prove their needs, Canada downgrades or shelves the reports.

### The Influence Continuum

Steven Hassan’s Influence Continuum (see Figure 1) provides a tool for discerning where individuals, leaders, or organizations are in

# Where are you on the influence continuum?

relation to healthy/constructive or unhealthy/destructive relations. Whereas healthy influences promote an individual’s ability to think and act independently, unhealthy influences try to “instill

dependency and obedience, at times even indoctrinating people to harm themselves and others.”<sup>32</sup>

In a First Nations context, the Influence Continuum can be used to understand how much influence one is under as an individual, leader, community, and/or family. For an individual, one can consider influence to be healthy/constructive if it supports connection with one’s authentic self, unconditional love, compassion, free will, and critical thinking. An individual may be under unhealthy and destructive influence if they have adopted an

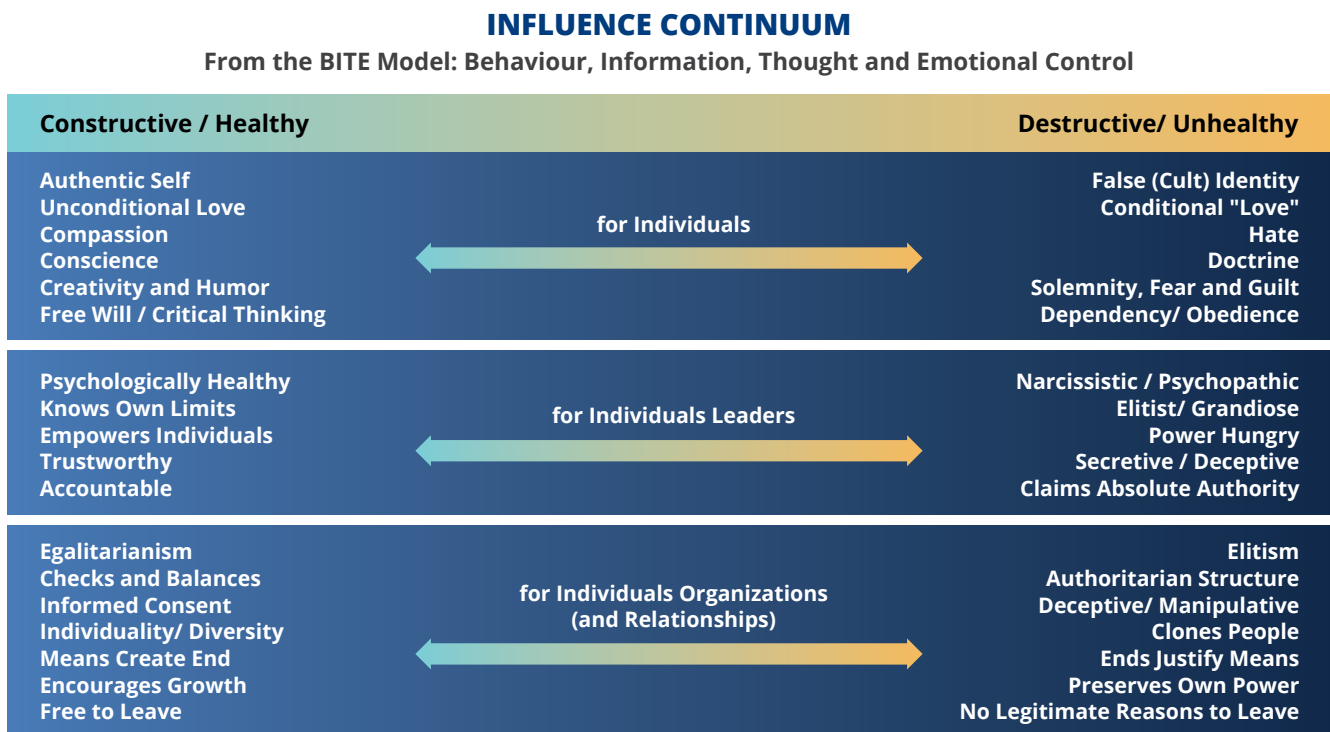


Figure 1. Influence Continuum, from *Combating Cult Mind Control* (2018) by Steven Hassan. Used with permission.

31 Brett Forester (Dec. 18, 2020), “Despite Promise of Reconciliation, Trudeau spent nearly \$100M Fighting First Nations in Court During First Years in Power,” *APTN*: <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/trudeau-spent-nearly-100m-fighting-first-nations-in-court-during-first-years-in-power/>  
 32 “Influence Continuum,” Freedom of Mind Resource Centre: <https://freedomofmind.com/cult-mind-control/influence-continuum/>

identity that is based on the government's or someone else's rules or ideas about whether they are First Nations or not, and if those influencing them provide love on the condition that they do and believe only what the authority tells them to. They may be dependent and obedient to someone outside of themselves.

For leaders, constructive/healthy influence means they know their own limits and empower individuals. They are trustworthy, accountable, ethical, reflective, and community-minded, and they uplift others. Leaders who are destructive/unhealthy, or perpetuate destructive/unhealthy influence onto others, are secretive, dishonest, elitist, authoritative, abusive, and power hungry.

Communities and families can consider the following in relation to healthy/constructive influence: individuals are supported and

encouraged to grow; they are free to leave, treated equally, and encouraged to think critically and be their authentic selves; people who belong to the group have given free and informed consent, and the group has transparent checks and balances. Unhealthy/destructive influence within a community and family context often involves deception and manipulation, an authoritarian structure, internalized colonial violence, predation, and gaslighting.

Using the BITE Model and Influence Continuum, individuals, leaders, communities, and families can be empowered to disrupt colonial thought control patterns and the behaviours that contribute to ongoing abuse and discrimination.

Part 3 in this series discusses strategies for overcoming colonial mind control.

This is Part 2 in the series, **Mind Control and Colonization**.

[Click here](#)<sup>33</sup> to see all information sheets in this series.

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33 <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/mind-control-and-colonization-information-sheets>

