

Twice Colonized

A FILM BY LIN ALLUNA



POV

DISCUSSION GUIDE





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Film Summary



Aaju Peter is a renowned Inuit lawyer and activist who defends the human rights of Indigenous peoples. She's a fierce protector of her ancestral lands in the Arctic and works to bring her colonizers to justice. As Aaju launches an inspiring effort to establish an Indigenous forum, she also embarks upon a deeply personal journey to mend her own wounds, including the unexpected passing of her son.

Using This Guide

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection and designed for people who want to use *Twice Colonized* to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and communities. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit <https://communitynetwork.amdoc.org/>.

A NOTE TO FACILITATORS

Dear POV Community,

We are so glad you have chosen to facilitate a discussion inspired by the film *Twice Colonized*. Before you facilitate, please prepare yourself for the conversation, as this film invites you and your community to discuss experiences of Indigenous peoples, activism, mental and emotional health, and U.S. political landscapes. These conversations require learning truths about society, culture, and political motivations that typically have not been taught in schools. We urge you, as a facilitator, to take the necessary steps to ensure that you are prepared to guide a conversation that prioritizes the well-being and rights of Indigenous and other colonized people in your community. Importantly, this film shares experiences, centers leadership and transformation from the POV of the main film participant and rejects a static focus on trauma. We hope that this guide will aid you in conversations that expand understanding while maximizing care, critical curiosity, transformation, and connection with these challenging personal histories and historical legacies.

Tips and Tools for Facilitators

Here are some supports to help you prepare for facilitating a conversation that inspires curiosity, connection, critical questions, recognition of difference, power, and possibility.

Share Community Agreements

Community Agreements: What Are They? Why Are They Useful?

Community agreements help provide a framework for engaging in dialogue that establishes a shared sense of intention ahead of participating in discussion. Community agreements can be co-constructed and created as an opening activity that your group completes collectively and collaboratively. Here is a model of community agreements you can review. As the facilitator, you can gauge how long your group should take to form these agreements or whether participants would be amenable to using pre-established community agreements.

Opening Activity (Optional): Establishing Community Agreements for Discussion

Whether you are a group of people coming together once for this screening and discussion or a group whose members know each other well, creating a set of community agreements helps foster clear discussion in a manner that draws in and respects all participants, especially when tackling intimate or complex conversations around identity. These steps will help provide guidelines for the process:

- Pass around sample community agreements and take time to read aloud as a group to make sure all participants can both hear and read the text.
- Allow time for clarifying questions, make sure all participants understand the necessity for the agreements, and allow time to make sure everyone understands the agreements themselves.
- Go around in a circle and have every participant name an agreement they would like to include. Chart this in front of the room where all can see.
- Go around two to three times to give participants multiple chances to contribute and also to give a conclusive end to the process.
- Read the list aloud.
- Invite questions or revisions.
- Ask if all are satisfied with the list.

COMMON CONCEPTS & LANGUAGE

Colonization

Colonization can be defined as the invasion, dispossession, or subjugation of a people, commonly resulting in land dispossession, displacement, cultural erasure, social control, and institutionalized inequality.

Cultural Erasure

The elimination of cultural and linguistic practices and communal memories of cultural minorities or indigenous groups that results from the imposition of cultural practices, social norms, and institutional policies initiated in settler societies. These may include revisionist history, customs, mannerisms, traditions, pedagogy, attire, names, language, history, religion, etc, as well

as economic systems in which settlers have inherent advantages or that do not align with the values of the indigenous group, such as indigenous cosmovision, perception of self and, notions of land ownership or stewardship.

Cosmovision

Cosmovision is how a given culture expresses and understands its core principles, values, and way of life within a given period and context. It encompasses everything in philosophy and science that refers to the universe and life. It implies a foundational and systemic understanding of the components as life, the world, nature, human phenomena, and their relationships.

Dominant Narratives/ Official Curriculum

In a paper titled “The Politics of Official Knowledge: Does a National Curriculum Make Sense?” Michael W. Apple discusses how decisions to define some groups’ knowledge as more legitimate than the knowledge of others leads to the knowledge of the former group coming to be understood as “official knowledge,” while other knowledge is perpetually marginalized.

Hidden Curriculum

This phrase refers to the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school. While the “formal” curriculum consists of the courses, lessons, and learning activities students participate in, as well as the knowledge and skills educators intentionally teach to students, the hidden curriculum consists of the unspoken or implicit academic, social, and cultural messages that are communicated to students while they are in school.

Intergenerational Trauma

Events faced by parents or ancestors—such as migration, racial oppression, and the loss of kinship and traditions—can impact the ability to experience and express grief, joy, and other emotions.

While witnessing active instances of abuse can contribute to unresolved racial trauma and handed down over generations, institutionalized racism can also play a role by creating fissures in the individual’s sense of identity in relation to legacies of family stress and struggles for acceptance in the wider society.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. Institutional policies may never mention any specific racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for Whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

Self-Determination

The right to self-determination is a human rights principle and legal theory that individuals are entitled to self-determination to decide their destiny. The theory encourages individuals to choose their political position and decide the means through which they pursue economic, cultural, and social growth. The exercise of this right can lead to various outcomes, from political autonomy to full integration of the State.

Participants

Aaju Peter

Aaju Peter is a dynamic Inuit activist and lawyer. She is a formidable guardian of her ancestral homelands in Arkissserniaq, Greenland and has devoted her life to advocating for the cultural, economic, social, and political rights of Inuit people of the Arctic. Peter has campaigned to bring her colonizers in both Canada and Denmark to justice and to establish international mechanisms to advance indigenous rights. She is a maker, designer, singer, dancer and writer.

Key Issues

Twice Colonized is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people who want to explore the following topics:

- Activism and leadership
- Colonialism and extractive practices
- Cultural erasure
- Environmental justice
- Global governance
- Indigenous rights and self-determination
- Intergenerational trauma and grief

Background Information

COLONIZATION: A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

The demand for land and resources has served as a driver of the social, cultural, and political destabilization of indigenous societies throughout the industrialized world. In the area known today as Greenland, colonialism has had a lasting impact on the way of life of the Inuit, who have made their ancestral home in the Arctic Rim for over 4,000 years.

The exploitation of Greenland by Western powers has and continues to threaten the future of its indigenous communities. Colonization began in 1721 with the establishment of a trading company under the auspices of the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway and an accompanying Lutheran mission led by the evangelist Hans Egede. In 1776, the Danish government assumed a full monopoly of trade and expanded commercial shipping activities that would continue into the 20th century with the expansion of the fur trade, fishing, mining and tourism industries. Resource extraction has been synonymous with religious indoctrination and policies promoting the cultural assimilation of Inuit people. Today, the Church of Denmark still governs the Church of Greenland, an institution established in 1905 and enshrined in Denmark's constitutional monarchy system.

Although the Kalaait people obtained sovereignty in 1979—and Greenland itself became self-governing in 2008—the country is still working to transform deeply entrenched social, cultural, and political norms that have imposed European standards on the Inuit and destabilized their communities through systematic economic exclusion and social hierarchies. Meanwhile, as global warming melts ice across the Arctic and puts oil reserves at risk, the environmental and economic fate of Greenland and its inhabitants hangs in the balance.

THE INUIT IN GREENLAND AND THE MODERN WORLD

The term Inuit refers collectively to more than 125,000 people dispersed in 40 traditional ethnic communities across the vast Arctic Rim (comprising parts of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Russia). Inuit communities make up the vast majority of the population. Traditionally nomadic, today they retain their traditional knowledge and environmentally adaptive practices, such as hunting, birding, fishing (walruses, seals, caribou, whales, birds), weather-proof clothing design, and foraging. The majority of Greenlandic Inuit refer to themselves as Kalaallit.

The introduction of westernized education in Greenland created intergenerational ruptures in the social fabric of Inuit communities. In the 1950's, prior to the end of colonial rule in 1954, the Danish government instituted various policies of cultural assimilation, including social experiments that resulted in the forced removal of Inuit children to boarding houses in Denmark. After home rule was established, the government once again displaced young Inuit students, like Aaju Peter, placing them in families and schools in Denmark where they were rewarded for excelling in the Danish language and discouraged from speaking Inuit while exposed to harsh and abusive methods.

Additional indignities Inuit suffered during colonialism include the coerced sterilization of Inuit women and exclusion from the fishing industry that impoverished former breadwinners. Today, Greenland has one of the highest rates of suicide in the world—a reality that is inseparable from this legacy of colonial violence.

Legacies of cultural erasure, especially among younger generations, are the long-term effects of the erosion of identity and social fabric caused by colonialism. Specifically, this erosion is linked to causing severed family ties, language loss, low self-esteem, and high school dropout rates of up to 50%. The disruption of traditional Inuit lifestyles and the loss of kinship bonds have also been linked to alcoholism, violence, and delinquency.

Peter's story is emblematic of the deep scars left by colonization. Separated from her family and homeland at age of 11 and moving from home to home in Denmark, Peter suffered damaging psychological effects from the attempts to disconnect her from her traditions, culture, and language. These consumed her family including her son, who she tragically lost to suicide, leading her on a journey of grief, catharsis, and healing.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

In resource-rich regions of the world and those vulnerable to climate change, advocates are working to bring environmental policies into harmony with the rights and livelihoods of local communities, particularly those whose lands have been subjected to extractive practices. As movements among Inuit peoples in Greenland, Canada, Alaska and Russia coalesce, their individual and collective social, political and cultural concerns have received greater attention and legal protections.

Peter has been one of the leading voices advocating for the dignity and political integrity of the Inuit. In the 1980s she began to protest against, and has since written extensively about, the banning of sealing by Western countries; citing economic losses, food security issues and the cultural vilification of Inuit hunters as contrary to their human rights.

As a lawyer and advocate, she has also become a formidable leader, organizing Inuit people and innovating strategies for full participation in domestic and international processes that impact the Inuits' rights and social welfare.

Establishing a Permanent Forum of Indigenous Peoples in the EU, similar to the one within the United Nations, has been one of Peter's key platforms. She also advocates for the enforcement of human rights norms through comprehensive instruments protecting indigenous rights. The most historic of these treaties, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, affirms the standards upon which Inuit people and the international community have agreed for Inuit survival, dignity and well-being. Specific provisions, such as Article 8 which prohibits forced assimilation, have been incorporated into domestic laws by some member States. But political gains throughout the Arctic Rim have been met with political roadblocks, paternalistic views, corporate malfeasance, and the exclusion of indigenous communities from decisions about conservation and economic development plans.

TIMELINE OF THE INUIT MOVEMENT

Today, organizing on behalf of the rights of Inuit peoples has become more coalition-based and Inuit communities have mobilized to fight for shared issues, concerns, and more protected futures. Here is a history of the this movement:

In 1969, the first international gathering of Inuit from Canada, Alaska and Greenland took place in France.

In 1973, Greenland and Canada ratified their maritime boundary to prevent either country from extending its sovereign rights beyond a certain point.

In 1979, the Kalaallit—Greenland's largest Inuit community—regained their lands in a historic compromise with Denmark.

In June 1977, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), a key decision-making and political body for the Inuit people, held its 1st General Assembly in Barrow, Alaska.

In June 1983, due to public outcry, the European Economic Community (EU) banned the import of white-harp seal pup furs.

In 2007, the UN General Assembly approved the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People after 25 years of dialogue and negotiation.

In 2007, Aaju Peter also led a group to The Hague, Netherlands, to protest European legislation banning sealskin products.

In 2009, the EU voted to extend the ban on white-harp seal pup furs to all seal products.

In 2014, the Greenlandic government established a reconciliation commission to investigate the continuing consequences of colonialism.

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DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. You could pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion. Alternatively, you could ask participants to share their thoughts with a partner before starting a group discussion.

1. After watching the film, what has shifted in your perception of the Inuit people in Greenland? Were you familiar with the themes of racism, cultural erasure, and exploitation that the story contends with?
2. How do Aaju and others define colonization in the film?
 - a. Why does Aaju describe her experience as “twice colonized?” How does she experience colonization as an ongoing phenomenon?
 - b. What does Aaju mean when she says she’s experienced mental colonization? How do you think she connects this to the experience of language loss and cultural assimilation?
3. In her [TED Talk](#), Aaju asks the audience, “Do you want us to be sustainable and traditional or part of the modern world?”
 - a. According to Aaju, how does the world see indigenous people? In what ways does this constrain the full expression of their identity?

- b. What beliefs or stereotypes of your own have you held about indigenous people or Inuit people specifically?
- c. What tensions might these conflicting views and stereotypes create in policies impacting Inuit communities?

Colonizations Lasting Impacts

1. Historically, laws dictated that civil servants born in Greenland could be paid only 85% of the salary of those born in Denmark. They also banned indigenous fishers from the commercial industry. How might economic policies like these contribute to social issues and economic insecurity in Inuit communities today?
2. In 2016, Peter told an interviewer, “the union of the effects of climate change with the European ban on seal products is lethal to the Inuit.”
 - a. What is the relationship between the history of economic exploitation and cultural erasure in the Arctic and the environmental threats they face today?
 - b. How could regulations restricting the Inuit’s traditional hunting/sealing practices impact their economic security, family stability, and cultural identity?
 - c. In what ways may these policies impede the Inuit’s resilience to climate change?
3. In her advocacy for Inuit rights, why is it so important for Aaju to use culture (language, song, etc) as a tool to communicate? In what ways does her own story become her strength?

Intergenerational Trauma

1. Why was Aaju sent to Denmark to study as a youth? How does she describe the intent of Denmark's experiment in "Native" education?
 - a. How does this period of her life continue to impact her today?
 - b. How does Aaju reconcile her feelings of abandonment, shame, and disconnection?
2. In the film, Aaju experiences a wide range of emotions, from anger to sadness to fierce determination. The range of emotions we witness in the film is reminiscent of someone experiencing grief.
 - a. What is Aaju grieving? What other emotions does Aaju express throughout the film?
 - b. Do you think the loss of her son contributes to how she understands other losses in her life? What relationships must she sever or change?
 - c. How can the experience of grief contribute to intergenerational trauma?
 - d. How can grief spark not just personal but collective healing?
3. What is the value of Aaju's friendships with other indigenous friends and family members in the film? How do her friendships contribute to her healing journey?

Indigenous Rights and Global Governance

1. What barriers have Inuit people faced to achieving self-determination and sovereignty? How do you think political organizing and international law have helped indigenous communities build and protect their own governance and cultural norms?
2. Why has Aaju advocated for the establishment of the EU Permanent Forum? How does she believe that greater participation in these forums will help to bring about greater environmental, social, and cultural rights for Inuit people?



3. In the negotiations for the Forum, how do the positions of Danish parliamentarians reveal threats to indigenous sovereignty?
4. How do you think global institutions and Western power structures have evolved as a result of activism and advocacy by Aaju and others? How do you see the role of allies—indigenous and non-indigenous—in achieving milestones toward indigenous rights as shown in the film?

OPENING ACTIVITY: GROUNDING

OPTIONAL

At the end of your discussion, to help people synthesize what they've experienced and move the focus from dialogue to action steps, you may want to choose one of these questions.

This film may trigger difficult emotions. Before you invite participants to get into conversation, invite everyone to take a moment to sit with their body. Consider the following practice and please adapt to ensure your community feels comfortable, safe, and supported. Invite participants to:

Sit back in your chair in a comfortable position.

Take a few breaths.

Allow yourself to notice the quality of your breath as it happens naturally. Try not to force it. Is there a quality or energy to your presence that you can notice? Focus for a moment on the back of your body. Let the breath carry your awareness from your lower back into your hips and the muscles of your buttocks. Can you release a little bit with each breath?

ASK: What is behind you that you wish to carry forward—your ancestors' sacrifices and hopes for you? What do you want to let go of? Continue to sit for at least 5 minutes, noticing how the ground is supporting the weight of your body.

Now, take a moment to reflect on how you reacted to the film's themes. Are there any emotions that surprised you? Is there anything that is not sitting well with you?

OPENING ACTIVITY (cont.)

TAKING ACTION

Identify and acknowledge the territory where you live. Investigate the names of local towns and waterways in your area. Which ones are indigenous in origin?

Go farther than mere acknowledgment to attend local events honoring this indigenous land claim and celebrating Native histories and languages.

Learn about the history of abuses against indigenous communities—such as Residential Boarding Schools—in your own territory, and current efforts toward reconciliation. One source to begin your learning can be found through [PBS's Native America](#) series.

If you are in the United States, learn about the [Arctic Refuge Protection Act of 2023](#) and The [Arctic Extraction Bill](#).

Find ways to disseminate information to your community or school about indigenous governance forums and international human rights mechanisms.

Resources

Whose Land?

Identify where you live in relation to the indigenous communities that traditionally inhabited, as an expression of relationship, connection, and solidarity.

National Center for Truth and Reconciliation of Canada

Established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the NCTR is a place of learning and dialogue where the truths of the residential school experience will be honoured and kept safe for future generations.

Inuit Circumpolar Council

The Inuit Circumpolar Council is a governing body for the Inuit people throughout the Arctic. The Council, which holds United Nations consultative status, seeks to speak with a united voice on issues of common concern and combine their energies and talents towards protecting and promoting the way of life of Inuit people.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is a body governing the rights of Inuit communities in Canada. It has conducted extensive research and advocacy and authored position papers regarding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Credits & Acknowledgments



About the Author, Nyasha Laing

Nyasha Laing is a documentarian, producer, lawyer, and impact strategist and a Founding Partner at Red Owl. Her independent films exploring freedom, cultural expression, and inheritance, have been featured in the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Indie Memphis, the Pan-African Film Festival, and museums and festivals around the world. Her impact storytelling and educational tools have been featured on the BBC World Service, PBS, and other media platforms. Nyasha is a graduate of Yale University and NYU School of Law.

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