



## **The Ottawa Mission's Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation**



***There are three core practices  
of true reconciliation:  
learn, understand, and act.***

***These practices are interrelated and  
interconnected. They build on each other,  
yet they also should be operable  
in our lives at the same time.***

Jody Wilson-Raybould,  
True Reconciliation: How to be a  
Force for Change, 2022, p. 21.



***There is no more important task  
for Canadians than to hear the voices  
of Indigenous Peoples.***

***This is humanity's responsibility —  
to face uncomfortable, sometimes horrific  
truths, to educate ourselves, to listen,  
to reflect, to learn, and to act with  
newfound awareness and sensitivity.***

Lieutenant General (Retired) Romeo Dallaire,  
commenting on Namwayut:  
A Pathway to Reconciliation (2022)  
by Chief Robert Joseph (Kwinkwinxwaligedzi Wakas).

## WHAT THIS REPORT IS ABOUT AND HOW TO USE IT

As part of its strategic plan, The Ottawa Mission is developing and launching a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) given the hugely disproportionate number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit shelter and community clients we serve.

The Ottawa Mission also wants to help address the conditions in society that have led to this disproportionate burden of homelessness amongst First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples through advocacy, programming, and other initiatives.

The Mission does not want to passively assume that Indigenous Peoples who turn to our shelter for help will all automatically feel welcome and comfortable. As such, we want to implement cross-program supports such as anti-racism, Reconciliation, and Indigenous cultural safety training for all staff, volunteers and partners. We also want publicly report annually on our efforts as part of our accountability to the community.

We want to hear directly from First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples during community consultations regarding what the Mission can do to support them as per some of the key questions toward the end of this companion document.

**This Reconciliation poster and companion document is The Ottawa Mission's public statement of accountability to our community of our commitment to walk the path of Reconciliation to ensure that Indigenous community members feel welcome in our shelter and we can respond to their needs.**

We are honoured to work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people toward this end.

— October 2023

### Front cover credits:

- Painting by Tom Hogan, an Ojibway artist who passed away in the Ottawa Mission's Hospice in 2014.
- Tapestry by Normee Ekoomiak, an Inuit artist who passed in our Hospice in 2009.

We are honoured to provide a permanent home for these works.

In addition to First Nations and Inuit clients, the Ottawa Mission's Hospice has been and continues to be home to Metis clients. We hang the Metis sash in our Hospice in their honour.

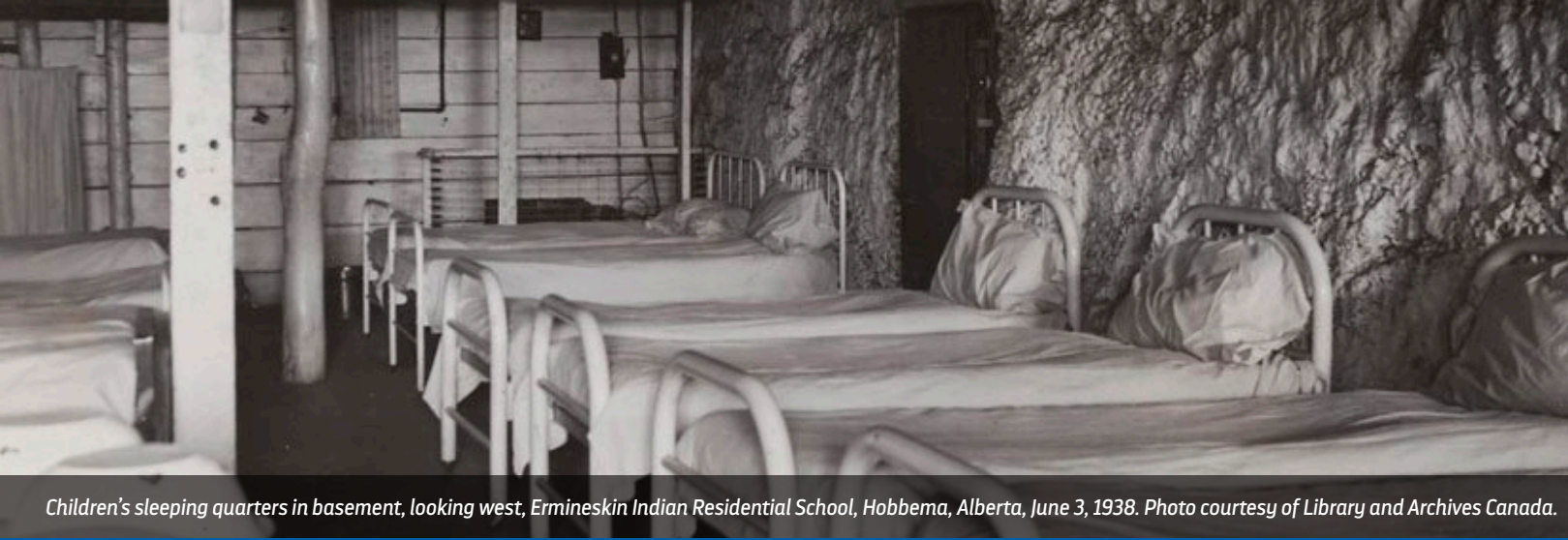


**The goal of the  
Reconciliation Action Plan  
is to ensure that all  
Indigenous clients, staff,  
volunteers and partners  
feel welcome, safe  
and  
unconditionally  
accepted.**

**Unlike the common  
colonialist definition  
of homelessness,  
Indigenous homelessness  
is not defined as lacking  
a structure of habitation;  
rather, it is more fully  
described and understood  
through a composite lens  
of Indigenous worldviews.**



Aboriginal Standing Committee on  
Housing and Homelessness, 2012.  
Quoted in Definition of Indigenous  
Homelessness in Canada, by Jesse  
Thistle, Canadian Observatory on  
Homelessness Press, 2017.



Children's sleeping quarters in basement, looking west, Ermineskin Indian Residential School, Hobbema, Alberta, June 3, 1938. Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.

***I want to get rid of the Indian problem... Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question.***

Duncan Campbell Scott, Head of Indian Affairs for the Government of Canada appearing before Parliament in 1920 to advocate that the Indian Act make attendance at residential schools or Indian Day Schools mandatory for Aboriginal children up to age 15. National Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, vol. 6810, file 470-2-3, vol. 7, 55 (L-3) and 63 (N-3).

“

***For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as 'cultural genocide'.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>***

***Physical genocide is the mass killing of the members of a targeted group, and biological genocide is the destruction of the group's reproductive capacity.***

***Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next... In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things.***

Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, December 2015, p 1

## PROLOGUE

**In the lands known now as Canada, there are First Nations, Inuit and Métis.** “Indigenous peoples” is a collective name for these original peoples of North America and their descendants. Previously the term “Aboriginal peoples” was used. Within each of these distinct populations, there are also many subpopulations, each with their own unique histories, languages, cultural practices, systems of governance and spiritual beliefs.

**The Ottawa Mission exists on the unceded, unsurrendered Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, whose presence on this land reaches back to time immemorial.** We express our sincere gratitude to the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation for their generosity as hosts for our continuing work to support vulnerable community members on their lands.

Indigenous Peoples have existed in the land called Canada for tens of thousands of years. **The Ottawa Mission affirms the inherent rights of all First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples as well as the Treaty Rights of all First Nations across this land.** Despite the attempt by Canada to extinguish First Peoples through forcible assimilation, they remain resilient and worthy of respect.

As Ottawa's oldest and largest homeless shelter and part of the systems and structures that perpetuate colonialism, The Ottawa Mission sees the impact of colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism, with hugely disproportionate numbers of First Nations, Métis and Inuit People requesting our services.

In our duty of care and as a commitment to fundamental justice, The Ottawa Mission pledge to walk the path of Reconciliation that reflects *learning* about the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and in Ottawa, *understanding* that history, and *action* to address injustice.

Our journey will also reflect the strength and resiliency of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples based on right relations between Indigenous and settler populations founded on truth, respect and an aligned understanding of our shared history as *one family*.



1. A qulliq lamp burning whale blubber to keep the iglu warm. Photo by Brendan Griebel, 2012.
2. Burning Smudge with Quartz on Blue Table. Photo by Serena Tayyan.
3. Handmade Items by Elsie Quintal, Alberta, 2013.

## THE HISTORY OF COLONIALISM AND ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM IN CANADA



Moses Newtak, Four years old, in Aklavik. Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.



Group of female students [7<sup>th</sup> from left Josephine Gillis (née Hamilton), 8<sup>th</sup> from left Eleanor Halcrow (née Ross)] and a nun (Sister Antoine) in a classroom at Cross Lake Indian Residential School, Cross Lake, Manitoba, February 1940. Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.



Cross Lake Indian Residential School burned stone building, Cross Lake, Manitoba, March 3–4, 1930. Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.



St. Michael's residential school, Alert Bay, BC. Photo by AK Leo.

### The history of colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism in Canada is indisputable.

Prior to contact with settlers arriving in the land now called Canada in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, **about 500,000 Indigenous peoples inhabited these lands.**<sup>5</sup> Beginning in the 1400s, a series of Papal bulls [edicts]<sup>6,7</sup> promulgated the “**Doctrine of Discovery**” based on the false claim that North America was uninhabited.<sup>8</sup>

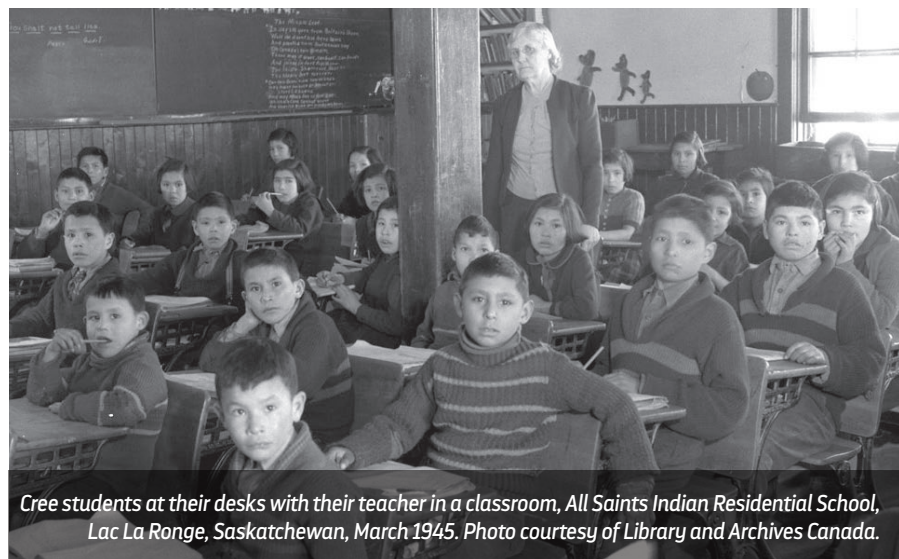
As settlers arrived, **Indigenous peoples provided assistance** to help them survive and adapt. Military and trading alliances formed between these communities as well as intermarriage. However, as the settler population grew, the **Indigenous population declined by at least 50%** within 300 years of first contact due to exposure to diseases to which they had no immunity. **Some Indigenous populations also moved away from their traditional territories to preserve their autonomy** as settler colonies expanded.<sup>9</sup>

To adjudicate the relationships between these two populations, First Nations<sup>10</sup> employed two-row **wampum belts as treaties to outline their relationships with settler communities based on mutual respect without one community trying to control the other.**<sup>11,12</sup>

Sadly, as colonization spread throughout pre-Confederation lands, the false narrative of Canada as “empty”, the increasing desire of settler communities to control resources, and the perceived duty of missionaries to convert Indigenous people to Christianity resulted in the **later seizure of Indigenous lands and the systematic dishonouring of subsequent treaties with First Nations.**<sup>13,14,15,16,17</sup>

Further increasingly harsh measures were codified within the **Indian Act, passed in 1876**, which **implemented highly restrictive and discriminatory regulations governing almost every aspect of the lives of First Nations**, including:

- ↳ **Forcible removal of Indigenous Peoples** from their traditional lands and the establishment of the reserve and band systems,<sup>18,19</sup> including the forced relocation of entire Inuit communities to the far north with no support.
- ↳ **Placement of Indian agents within individual reserves**, effectively making Indigenous People wards of the state and subject to the dictates of these agents.<sup>20</sup>
- ↳ **The definition who is an “Indian”**, thus excluding entire classes of people such as Métis, Inuit, and “Non-Status” as well as Indigenous women through entrenchment of gender discrimination by denying them Indian status.<sup>21, 22, 23, 24</sup>
- ↳ **Refusal to allow Métis to negotiate treaties** as Métis collectivities, and in lieu of treaties, offering scrip to individuals, a practice mismanaged and vulnerable to fraud.<sup>25,26,27</sup>
- ↳ **The establishment of residential schools**,<sup>28,29</sup> which saw 150,000 children forcibly removed from their families and home communities, subjecting them to pervasive and constant fear, loneliness and neglect,<sup>30, 31</sup> physical, emotional, sexual and other forms of abuse,<sup>32, 33, 34, 35</sup> stripping them of their languages and cultural practices,<sup>36, 37, 38, 39</sup> identity,<sup>40, 41</sup> and, in thousands of cases, their lives,<sup>42, 43, 44, 45, 46</sup> until the closure of the last of these institutions in 1997.<sup>47</sup>



Cree students at their desks with their teacher in a classroom, All Saints Indian Residential School, Lac La Ronge, Saskatchewan, March 1945. Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.

**Discipline is not severe, but strict to the degree of teaching them its value and to appreciate authority.**

“The History of the St Michael’s Residential School,” Indian Residential School Commission of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, 1933.

Quoted in St. Michael’s Residential School: Lament and Legacy, by Nancy Dyson and Dan Rubenstein, 2021.



**Miss B would apply a ruler, blackboard pointer, or a leather strap to mete out her anger... Miss B caught me from behind and cuffed my right ear. I almost blacked out and was overcome by the screeching in my ear. She then grabbed me by the same ear and led me to the corner of the classroom where I stood until the end of the day. The damage was permanent. From that day through adulthood, the infections started with the untreated rupture of my eardrum.**

Chief Robert Joseph (Kwinkwinxwaligedzi Wakas) Namwayut: A Pathway to Reconciliation, 2022, his memoir of his time at St. Michael’s from ages 6 to 17.

- ↳ **The establishment of Indian day schools**, which also sought to assimilate Indigenous children and subjected them to physical, emotional and sexual abuse.<sup>48</sup>
- ↳ **Bans on religious ceremonies** integral to Indigenous cultures and theft of ceremonial artifacts.<sup>49</sup>
- ↳ **Disenfranchisement** from Canadian citizenship and voting rights.<sup>50</sup>
- ↳ **Barriers to legal assistance** and the courts.<sup>51</sup>

- ↳ Measures outside of the Act such as the **establishment of the pass system**, which forbade residents from leaving their reserves without the permission of the Indian agent.<sup>52, 53, 54</sup>
- ↳ **Chronic government underfunding** of education, health, and other services to Indigenous people.
- ↳ **Development projects** in traditional territories without adequate protection for conservation to preserve a balanced ecosystem or negative impacts on communities such as contaminants in soil and water.<sup>55</sup>
- ↳ **Seizure of Indigenous children** followed by adoption into non-Indigenous families, with subsequent losses of family, culture, and community, e.g., the Sixties Scoop.<sup>56</sup>

In essence, Canada’s relationship with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples has sought to forcibly assimilate them into the dominant culture through measures which attacked and undermined their family structures, cultures, spiritual belief systems, languages, governments, rights, traditional livelihoods and relationships to the land.

## The legacy of colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism today

**“...if anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young.”**

Nicholas Flood Davin. “Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds,” 1879. Known as the Davin report, it served as the model for the establishment of residential schools in Canada.

**“A village emptied of its children is a haunting.”**

Billy-Ray Belcourt, Indigenous Poet and Scholar, NDN Coping Mechanisms, 2019



Photos courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

- ↳ **Use of force and violence** by governments and individuals in response to Indigenous resistance to colonization from the Red River and Northwest Rebellions (1869 and 1885 respectively) to more recent examples such as the Oka Crisis (1990), the Gustafsen Lake Standoff and Ipperwash Crisis (1995), Burnt Church (1999), the standoff at Calendonia (2007) and the Wet’suwet’en pipeline protests (2010–2021).
- ↳ Many other forms of **coercive control** over people and the natural world in support of acquisition and exploitation of Indigenous land and an ideology of supremacy and materialism, which has resulted in successive intergenerational trauma for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples.

**... of a total of 1537 pupils reported upon nearly 25 per cent are dead, of one school with an absolutely accurate statement, 69 per cent of ex-pupils are dead, and that everywhere the almost invariable cause of death given is tuberculosis.”**

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce. “Report on the Indian schools of Manitoba and the North-West Territories,” Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1907.



**... it is readily acknowledged that Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habituating so closely in their schools, and that they die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this alone does not justify a change in the policy of this Department, which is geared toward the final solution of our Indian problem.**

Duncan Campbell Scott to B.C. Indian Agent-General Major D. MacKay, April 12, 1910, DIA archives, RG 10 Series.

## The ongoing legacy of colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism in Canada is evident across Canada, affecting almost every aspect of our society, including:

### Higher rates of unemployment and poverty.

In 2021, across Canada, the non-Indigenous unemployment rate was 7.4%, while amongst Indigenous peoples it was 11.6% (First Nations 14.4% and Métis 8.8%) respectively.<sup>57</sup> And while 13% of Canada's non-Indigenous population lives in poverty, about 25% of Indigenous peoples in urban areas live in poverty.<sup>58, 59</sup>

The situation is more dire on reserves: 53% of Status First Nations children on reserves live in poverty compared to 41% who live off reserve.<sup>60</sup>

### Higher rates of homelessness and housing precarity:

Indigenous people comprise 5% of Canada's population.<sup>61</sup>

However, for people who are homeless, the percentage of people who are Indigenous is much higher: **68% of emergency shelter users on the Prairies are Indigenous** compared to 10.4% of the population. **1 in 38 of First Nations people experiences homelessness compared to 1 in 900 of those who are non-Indigenous.** First Nations shelter users also have a **higher rate of episodic homelessness and shelter stays** per year than non-Indigenous shelter users. They are also 19% less likely than non-Indigenous shelter users to exit a shelter because they found housing, which suggests that they face barriers to finding housing.<sup>62</sup>

At the local level, **people who are Indigenous comprise 4% of Ottawa's population, but 32% of people experiencing homelessness.**<sup>63</sup>

Lack of appropriate housing is common on reserves, resulting in **overcrowded homes as well as years-long waitlists for housing as well as for housing repairs and maintenance.** The experience of overcrowded and inadequate housing is many times higher for First Nations on reserve than for non-Indigenous people.<sup>64</sup> Almost half of homes located on reserves contain mold at levels associated with high rates of respiratory and other illnesses.<sup>65</sup>

*I have reason to believe that the agents as a whole ... are doing all they can, by refusing food until the Indians are on the verge of starvation, to reduce the expense.*

Prime Minister John A. MacDonald

— “ —  
*... it is pretty evident that the Indians have become pensioners upon the Public treasury, that we are called upon to feed them, to clothe them, and that they are doing little or nothing for themselves ... No doubt the Indians will bear a great degree of starvation before they will work, and so long as they are certain the Government will come to their aid they will not do much for themselves.*

David Mills, MP, Minister of the interior under the government of Alexander Mackenzie, 1873–1878

...  
Both quoted in Hansard, April 27, 1882.

— “ —  
*There is overwhelming evidence that the First Nations poverty crisis is grounded in centuries of colonialism, including starvation, disease, murder, ... land loss, broken treaties, residential schools, child welfare displacement, government underfunding, and discrimination in the workforce. Despite this, many Canadians wrongly believe that First Nations and 'the poor', in general, are responsible for their own poverty.*

Melisa Brittain and Cindy Blackstock.  
First Nations Child Poverty:  
A Literature Review and Analysis, 2015.

### Poorer physical health.

Disparities in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are highlighted in far higher rates of:

#### SERIOUS CHRONIC AND LIFE-THREATENING DISEASES SUCH AS:

##### ↳ Diabetes.

Diabetes prevalence is much higher for Indigenous people than for non-Indigenous people. They are diagnosed at a younger age, have greater severity at diagnosis, develop higher rates of complications, and have poorer treatment outcomes. Diabetes disproportionately affects First Nations women, and may be related to an increased prevalence of diabetes during pregnancy, as well as poorer health outcomes and a more rapid progression to type 2 diabetes.<sup>66</sup> Socioeconomic conditions such as a lack of affordable healthy foods and infrastructure for recreational activities contribute to the disproportionate burden of Indigenous peoples. **Colonization and subsequent changes in food gathering, physical activity and diet as well as the impact of poor nutrition in residential schools have been recognized as factors contributing to the disproportionate burden of diabetes among Indigenous peoples.**<sup>67, 68, 69</sup>

##### ↳ Cancer.

**Until a few generations ago, cancer was relatively rare among First Nations peoples.**<sup>70, 71</sup> Today, **cancer is among the top three causes of death for First Nations people.** The risk of cancer as well as the burden of cancer for Indigenous peoples in Canada is substantially higher than that for non-Indigenous peoples, while the five-year survival rate is poorer.<sup>72</sup>

#### HEART DISEASE.

People from areas with high Indigenous populations are more likely to have a heart attack than non-Indigenous peoples at a younger age. They are also more likely to have one or more comorbid conditions such as diabetes, heart failure, and other conditions.<sup>73</sup> Sadly, death rates from cardiovascular disease for First Nations people are higher than for non-Indigenous Canadians across income and education levels and Indigenous Canadians die at younger ages from heart disease.<sup>74</sup>

**The role of colonization and its impact on cardiovascular health for Indigenous peoples has been recognized<sup>75</sup> and their higher risk for cardiovascular disease has been attributed to factors such as historical oppression, racism, healthcare biases, and social determinants of health disparities.**<sup>76</sup>

*Compared with non-Aboriginal cohort members, premature deaths among First Nations cohort members were more likely to be attributable to avoidable causes. The difference was particularly pronounced among First Nations women and younger age groups, and for causes such as unintentional injuries, alcohol and drug use disorders, and diabetes mellitus.*

*Low income and education explain a substantial share of these differences in avoidable mortality.*

— “ —  
Jungwee Park et al.  
“Avoidable mortality among First Nations adults in Canada: A cohort analysis.”  
Health Reports, Statistics Canada, August 19, 2015.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES SUCH AS:

### ↳ Tuberculosis.

The disproportionate burden of TB amongst Indigenous population compared to non-Indigenous populations is striking: only of 0.6 Canadian-born, non-Indigenous people per 100,000 develop TB versus 23.8 per 100,000 among all First Nations people, 170.1 per 100,000 among Inuit, and 2.1 per 100,000 among Métis people.<sup>77,78</sup> **Indigenous peoples have greater risk factors for TB, including poverty, poor and overcrowded housing conditions (including mold), food insecurity, community isolation, and other factors.**<sup>79,80</sup>

### ↳ HIV.

While Indigenous peoples comprise 5% of the Canadian population, they account for 11.3% of new HIV infections.<sup>81</sup> **Gender also impacts the risk of HIV for Indigenous peoples:** Indigenous women bear a greater risk of HIV infection compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. While Indigenous women represented 4% of the female population in Canada, from 1998–2012 they accounted for 47.3% of all new HIV infections. In Ontario, from 2016–2017, Indigenous women accounted for 44% of new HIV infections among Indigenous peoples.<sup>82</sup> **Living on reserve also increases the risk of HIV,** with newly diagnosed HIV three times higher in First Nations on-reserve than the overall Canadian population.<sup>83</sup>

### ↳ COVID-19.

In Manitoba, while approximately 10% of people are Indigenous, they comprise almost 70% of this province's COVID-19 cases.<sup>84</sup> In British Columbia, First Nations people tested positive for COVID-19 at a rate more than double the rate of non-Indigenous people.<sup>85</sup> **The higher rates of health conditions such as diabetes and tuberculosis experienced by Indigenous peoples, overrepresentation in populations of people at greater risk of COVID-19 (those who are homeless, poor, or incarcerated), and poor social conditions such as lack of access to clean water and overcrowded housing on reserves contribute to a greater risk of COVID-19 for Indigenous peoples both on and off reserves.**<sup>86</sup>

## PREMATURE DEATH.

As a result of this disproportionate burden of chronic and life-threatening disease, **life expectancy for Indigenous people is 15 years shorter than for other Canadians.** As well, infant mortality rates two to three times higher and incidence of diseases such as diabetes four times the rate in non-Indigenous populations.<sup>87</sup>

*The legacy of the schools remains. The health of generations of aboriginal children was undermined by inadequate diets, poor sanitation, overcrowded conditions and a failure to address the tuberculosis crisis.*

*There should be little wonder that Aboriginal health status remains far below that of the general population.*

— “ —

Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future.  
Summary of the Final Report of the  
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,  
2015, p. 133.



Two Cree girls in their beds in the girls' dormitory at All Saints Indian Residential School, Lac La Ronge, Saskatchewan, March 1945. Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.

## Poorer mental health and related conditions.

Colonization and residential school attendance have been recognized as **predictive factors for Indigenous peoples having post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse disorder, major depression,<sup>88</sup> distress, suicidal ideation and suicide attempt.<sup>89,90</sup> These effects are intergenerational, affecting the descendants of those attended these institutions through the degradation of Indigenous family and community structures, and epigenetic changes to the genetic make-up of Indigenous peoples themselves from exposure to violence, abuse and neglect.<sup>91</sup>**

## SUBSTANCE USE.

Prior to colonization, First Nations had no exposure to alcohol. Its introduction by coureur des bois as part of the fur trade had a devastating impact on First Nations societies.<sup>92</sup> **While 17% of non-Indigenous people in Canada engage in substance use, 25% of Indigenous people have addictions.**<sup>93</sup> Compared to non-Indigenous youth, Indigenous youth off reserve are five times more likely to be tobacco smokers and use alcohol and marijuana at younger ages.<sup>94</sup> **Indigenous people are also at a far greater risk of death due to opioids.** For example, in British Columbia, the mortality rate for Indigenous people who use substances is five times higher than for other drug users; Indigenous women are eight times more likely to have a nonfatal overdose and are five times more likely to have a fatal overdose than non-Indigenous women.<sup>95</sup> In Ontario, opioid-related deaths among First Nations people increased 132% during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>96</sup> In Saskatchewan, Indigenous people represented more than half the opioid deaths from 2018–2021, despite being only 16.3% of the population in that province.<sup>97</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that First Nations and Inuit populations have higher rates of non-consumption of alcohol than non-Indigenous populations.<sup>98,99</sup>

## SUICIDE.

Suicide rates among Indigenous peoples remain higher than those among non-Indigenous peoples. The rate among First Nations people is three times higher than the rate among non-Indigenous people, and among First Nations people living on reserve, the rate is about twice as high as that among those off reserve. Having said this, it should be noted that suicide rates vary by First Nations, with about 60% of bands having no suicides. The rate among Métis people is approximately twice as high as the rate among non-Indigenous people. Inuit people have the highest suicide rate at about nine times that of non-Indigenous people. **Suicide rates are highest in those aged 15 to 24 years** and First Nations males and Inuit male and females.<sup>100,101,102</sup> “Many Indigenous communities face concentrated and intersecting vulnerabilities for suicide due to social exclusion, economic inequality, and systemic discrimination ... **“Suicide prevention in Indigenous communities must be founded on a broader effort to reinstate Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty over resources and services, enshrine human rights in public policy, take steps to improve social equity, and promote health across the life course.”**<sup>103</sup>



Photos of Indigenous children who took their own lives remembered in Regina, Saskatchewan. Photo kindly supplied by Michael Bramadat-Willcock.

*We had identified that several children were secretly planning suicide several months ago, and we immediately applied for health funding to work with the children in preventing any suicides from happening. Our community plan was turned down by government and now two are dead.*

Joshua Frogg, Wapekeka First Nation  
community spokesperson

*That is the frontline face of systemic discrimination in this country. It happens again and again. We lose children literally every single day due to a lack of services and supports that other children and families would take for granted.*

Charlie Angus, MP, Timmins-James Bay

Both quoted in Tanya Talaga. “Wapekeka First Nation feared suicide pact, says they were denied help,” Toronto Star, January 19, 2017.

### Poorer access and barriers to health services.

Beginning with so-called “Indian hospitals”, which followed the model of residential schools by offering segregated and inferior care to Indigenous people for over 50 years until the late 1960s as one response to elevated levels of tuberculosis in these populations,<sup>104, 105</sup> today, factors contributing to poorer access and barriers to health services include:

### JURISDICTIONAL DISPUTES AND AMBIGUITY BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS.

Ongoing issues involving jurisdiction and responsibility for Indigenous healthcare continue to result in “frustration, confusion, unmet health care needs and, most concerning, higher mortality and morbidity of Indigenous peoples.”<sup>106</sup>

The most poignant example of this is the case of Jordan River Anderson, a child from Norway House Cree Nation born with complex medical conditions. After being cleared to leave the hospital at age 2, he nonetheless remained there while the government of Manitoba and Canada disputed which should pay for his ongoing care.



Photo of Jordan River Anderson kindly provided by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.



Jordan died in hospital at age five, never having spent a day at home.

Despite a motion passed unanimously in the House of Commons in 2007 calling on the federal government to adopt a broad definition of Jordan’s Principle to ensure that First Nations children receive the care they need, it continued to be applied narrowly so that few, if any, First Nations children qualified.

**They wanted us to dress like the white people, eat like the white people. We were savages to them.**

Survivor of Queen Mary Hospital for Tuberculous Children Annie Michael in “Mistreated: The legacy of segregated hospitals haunts Indigenous survivors.” CBC News, no date.



**No amount of compensation can ever recover what you have lost, the scars that are left on your souls or the suffering that you have gone through as a result of racism, colonial practices and discrimination.**

**This is the truth. In awarding the maximum amount allowed under our Statute, the Panel recognizes, to the best of its ability and with the tools that it currently has under the CHRA, that this case of racial discrimination is one of the worst possible cases warranting the maximum awards.**

2019 CHRT 39, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal order which found Canada to be wilfully and recklessly discriminating against First Nations children and ordered maximum compensation under the CHRA.



### UNDERFUNDING OF HEALTHCARE AND OTHER SERVICES FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.



Photo kindly supplied by Open Access Government which accompanies ‘Poor housing creates respiratory health issues for Indigenous children,’ January 24, 2022.

In 2016, in response to a case brought forward nine years earlier by the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered the federal government to fully implement Jordan’s Principle. Initially, Canada said it welcomed the findings and would work to do better, but almost immediately, the Tribunal was forced to issue the first of many non-compliance orders against Canada. The Tribunal found Canada to be racially discriminating against

First Nations children in 2016 (2016 CHRT 2). Compensation was ordered in 2019 (2019 CHRT 39). In 2019, the Tribunal issued its Compensation Decision, which ordered maximum human rights compensation to certain First Nations children and families. Additional non-compliance orders were subsequently issued, and in September 2021, the Federal Court upheld the Tribunal’s order that the federal government must pay \$40,000 in compensation to First Nations children and their families, following Canada’s application for judicial review of the decision. The Court also agreed with the Tribunal that all First Nations children should be eligible for Jordan’s Principle regardless of their *Indian Act* status or where they live.<sup>107, 108, 109</sup>

In 2022, an independent review of the application of Jordan’s Principle found that “the initial implementation ... was inconsistent with the goal of substantive equality. **Rather than structuring Jordan’s Principle to track and reflect substantive equality and related measures, the implementation was hurried to respond to the CHRT’s requirements focusing instead on the number of approved recipients and the timelines for adjudication...** Only when equitable points of departure are established for First Nations children can substantive equality be achievable.<sup>110</sup> Underfunding of health services on reserve means a **paucity of these services in many First Nations communities**, which can negatively impact care for serious chronic and life-threatening conditions.<sup>111, 112, 113</sup>

**It’s to me contrary to reconciliation to, on the one hand, make representations that you are going to do something and you’ve learned from the past and you’re not going to perpetrate injustice, and then... do something that’s in direct opposition to that... this is the government that said that they did not want to litigate against First Nations children anymore.**



Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, Toronto Star, November 24, 2022.

In April 2023, the federal government added additional funds to the proposed offer to address these remaining issues noted by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, which must be approved by this body to go forward.<sup>114</sup>

The importance of this enhanced offer cannot be overstated. More than a decade later, and after much litigation and pressure to get Canada to do the right thing, almost 2.2 million services have been provided to First Nations children since 2016, thanks to the spirit and legacy of Jordan River Anderson.<sup>115</sup>



## SYSTEMIC RACISM IN HEALTHCARE AND LACK OF ACCESS TO CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE AND SAFE CARE.

While Indian Hospitals have been dismantled, systemic racism in healthcare remains in Canada.<sup>116</sup>

When anti-Indigenous racism in healthcare is acknowledged, it has often framed as an individual failing as opposed to being societally constructed as part of a colonial narrative.<sup>117</sup>

However, a recent extensive review of the British Columbia healthcare system found **extensive stereotyping of Indigenous patients**, who were seen as people who:

- ↳ Are less capable of taking responsibility for their care or being “worthy” of care;
- ↳ Use drugs or alcohol;
- ↳ Overuse the healthcare system while also being non-compliant by not showing up for appointments;
- ↳ Are bad parents who lack capacity to look after their children
- ↳ Are always “getting stuff for free”

The accompanying discrimination that attends these views by healthcare providers is marked by unwelcoming environments for Indigenous patients, particularly Indigenous women, including abusive interactions, denials of service, ignoring and shunning inappropriate pain management, medical mistakes, and disdain for cultural healing practices.

In the longer term, less access to needed health services results in a lower rate of attachment to a primary healthcare provider, mistrust and avoidance of healthcare services by Indigenous people, and poorer health outcomes, including higher infant mortality and reduced life expectancy:<sup>118</sup>

**systemic racism costs lives.**

*How did he sit for a day and a half in a waiting room of an 800-bed hospital before he died?*

*Thirteen years and one inquest later, the experience of Indigenous people in the Canadian health care system would suggest that the only unifying answer to that question is systemic racism.*

*There is now finally a collective, dawning recognition that if he hadn't been Indigenous, everything in his life could have been different.*

Jillian Horton, MD.  
“I was Brian Sinclair’s doctor. I understand how our healthcare system failed him,”  
Globe and Mail, October 8, 2021.



*Coroner Gehane Kamel concluded last year after an inquest that [Joyce] Echaquan’s initial diagnosis, that she was going through withdrawal from opioids or narcotics, was faulty and based on prejudice.*

*The coroner found she wasn’t properly monitored before finally being transferred to intensive care, where she died of a pulmonary edema that was linked to a rare heart condition ...*

*Kamel has said Echaquan would likely still be alive if she were a white woman and that systemic racism ‘undeniably’ contributed to her death.*

CTV News, September 29, 2022.

## Higher rates of negative social conditions, including:

### INCARCERATION.

Despite accounting for only 5% of Canada’s total population, **Indigenous People comprise 32% of the prison population.** Shockingly, in April 2022, the percentage of incarcerated women who are Indigenous reached 50%, and almost 65% in maximum security.<sup>119</sup>

Indigenous young people represent 8% of the youth population overall, but **50% of custody admissions and 42% of community supervision admissions.** Indigenous female youth accounted for 60% of female admissions, while Aboriginal male youth made up 47% of male youth admissions.<sup>120</sup>



Photo by Fer Gregory.

### CHILD SEIZURE.

There are more children who have been separated from their parents now than during the height of residential schools. In 1953, there were over 11,000 children in these institutions, forcibly removed from their families under threat of imprisonment of their parents.<sup>121</sup>

Today, **14,970 out of 28,665 foster children in private homes young than 14 are Indigenous or 53.8% of all children in care.** This is particularly striking given that Indigenous children comprise only 7.7% of all children under this age in Canada.<sup>122, 123</sup>

In Manitoba alone, there are about 10,000 children in care, 90% are Indigenous.<sup>124</sup>

*Unfortunately, these are not new developments in federal corrections. My Office and others have been reporting on the Indigenization of Canadian corrections for years ...*

*This overrepresentation is largely the result of systemic bias and racism, including discriminatory risk assessment tools, ineffective case management, and bureaucratic delay and inertia.*



Ivan Singer, J.D, Ph.D.  
Office of the Correctional Investigator  
Annual Report 2021- 2022.

*“The Commission also identified a number of issues with the investigation ... like the failure to protect the vehicle Mr. Boushie was sitting in when he was shot.... The Commission [also] found that the RCMP members who notified Mr. Boushie’s mother, Debbie Baptiste, of his death treated her with such insensitivity that her treatment amounted to a prima facie case of discrimination. The RCMP members’ actions included questioning Ms. Baptiste about her sobriety, smelling her breath.”*

Civilian Review and Complaints Commission’s Final Report: Chairperson-Initiated Complaint and Public Interest Investigation Into the RCMP’s Investigation of the Death of Colten Boushie and the Events that Followed, March 22, 2021.



*“I miss my son so much. He was not there stealing. He was sleeping in the back of the vehicle when he woke up, jumped in the front and moments later he was shot. Those are the facts and people need to be reminded that that’s what happened.”*

“I miss my son so much.’ Colten Boushie’s mother demands change in justice,” APTN, March 22, 2021. Gerald Stanley, charged with Boushie’s killing, was acquitted.

## EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE, INCLUDING:

### ↳ **Physical violence and sexual assault.**

Almost **1 in 10 Indigenous people reported being victims of at least one sexual assault** compared to 4.2% for non-Indigenous people.<sup>125</sup> The burden of violence is particularly severe for Indigenous women: 56% of Indigenous women have experienced physical assault while 46% of Indigenous women have experienced sexual assault as compared to about a third of non-Indigenous women for both physical and sexual assault in their lifetime. Having a disability or experiencing homelessness increases this risk for Indigenous women. Being placed in care does not protect Indigenous children since **34% of individuals 15 years and older who experienced childhood violence while under the custody of the government are Indigenous.**<sup>126</sup> Tragically, many Indigenous children die while in foster care: for example, in 2021–2022, **of the 45 children in children who died in care in the province of Alberta, 36 (80%) were Indigenous.**<sup>127</sup> The risk is greater for Indigenous women since they are more likely than non-Indigenous women (11 vs 2.3%) to have been under government care, and 81% of Indigenous women who have been under government care experience violent victimization.<sup>128</sup>

**4 in 10**  
**Indigenous people**  
aged 15 years and older  
**have reported**  
**experiencing sexual**  
**or physical violence**  
by an adult  
**before the age**  
**of 15**  
...  
as compared to 25% of  
non-Indigenous people<sup>134</sup>

### ↳ **Murder.**

**Twenty-two percent of homicide victims in Canada are Indigenous despite comprising only 5% of Canada's population.** The rate of homicide for Indigenous peoples (7.31 per 100,000 population) is five times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous people (1.44 per people). While there are more male than female victims of Indigenous homicide, the rate for males is decreasing, while the rates for females is increasing.<sup>129</sup> The rate of Indigenous homicide is highest in Saskatchewan, where 3 in 4 homicide victims are Indigenous.<sup>130</sup> **Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or to go missing than members of any other demographic group in Canada, and 16 times more likely to be killed or to disappear than Caucasian women.**<sup>131</sup>

**22%**  
**of homicide**  
**victims**  
in Canada  
**are Indigenous**  
...  
despite comprising  
only 5% of Canada's  
population

*I am particularly concerned about the forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous women.*

*The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the 2021 and 2022 Senate hearings have all identified forced and coerced sterilization as part of a continuum of violence against Indigenous women in the healthcare systems.*

— “ —  
José Francisco Calí-Tzay, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Visit to Canada, March 1–10, 2023.

### ↳ **Forced sterilization.**

Forced sterilization occurs without informed or voluntary consent and began in Canada in Indian hospitals early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continued despite the overturning of various government policies in the 1970s.

**Indigenous people comprise 25% of those who had been sterilized.** Sterilization often occurred when women were forced to consent while in labour or otherwise medically dependent or vulnerable. These procedures occurred as recently as 2018.<sup>132, 133</sup>

## INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCY

First Nations, Métis and Inuit People have a long history of resisting colonization and its coercive measures to assimilate them into the Canadian body politic. Indigenous political resistance goes back by to when Canada was being formed and continues to the present day. First Nations, Métis and Inuit People are also building new organizations, forms of governance and employing methods to return to the original conception embodied by the wampum belt of the relationship between First Nations, Métis and Inuit People and Canada based on equality and mutual respect.<sup>135</sup>

### RED RIVER REBELLION OF 1869–1870.

**The Rebellion was sparked by the sale of a vast parcel of land by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in what is now Manitoba to Canada without consulting its Indigenous inhabitants.** The Métis felt that HBC did not have the right to sell the territory without consultation or consent and occupied Upper Fort Garry, forming a provisional government in December 1869. The Métis' Bill of Rights formed the basis of the Manitoba Act of 1870, but it did not recognize Louis Riel and the Métis as Manitoba's founders. The execution of Orangeman Thomas Scott by the Métis led to reprisals and in 1870, more than 1,000 troops were sent in by Ottawa to the region; more than half the Métis population left the region. Fearing persecution, Riel fled to the United States.<sup>136</sup>

### NORTHWEST REBELLION OF 1885.

**The Rebellion occurred in response to political and social developments in what is now Saskatchewan** through separate actions by the Métis population led by Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, and the First Nations Cree led by Chiefs Big Bear and Poundmaker.

↳ After the Red River rebellion, many Métis moved to the area now known as Saskatchewan, and found that their lands were again being surveyed to be sold to settlers. Armed conflicts between the Métis and Canadian Forces broke out in several communities, including Batoche, where the Métis provisional government had been declared. Riel surrendered and was later hanged in Regina; Dumont escaped to Montana.

↳ Federal government policies in the 1880s led to widespread hunger and starvation among the Plains Cree. During the winter of 1883–84, 10% of this population died of malnutrition and disease due to the decimation of the buffalo. Conflicts broke out across the Saskatchewan territory between the Plains Cree and thousands of Canadian Forces, including Battleford; nine settlers were killed. After several skirmishes both Big Bear and Poundmaker surrendered to Canadian Forces and went to prison, while eight of their followers were hanged at Battleford.<sup>137, 138</sup>

*Our big game is no more... You now own millions of acres — and we have no food... We cannot work. We are tired. Feed us until we recoup our wasted bodies... We are hungry.*

Chief Big Bear, quoted in “A Slow Death: Starvation seizes the once-might prairies tribes and forces them to turn to Ottawa for food,” CBC (no date).

— “ —

*For years, government officials withheld food from aboriginal people until they moved to their appointed reserves, forcing them to trade freedom for rations. Once on reserves, food placed in ration houses was withheld for so long that much of it rotted while the people it was intended to feed fell into a decades-long cycle of malnutrition, suppressed immunity and sickness from tuberculosis and other diseases. Thousands died.*

James Daschuk, “When Canada used hunger to clear the West,” Globe and Mail, July 19, 2013.

## POLITICAL ORGANIZING.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit People began organizing into political organizations as early as 1919 with the formation of the *League of Indians of Canada*. Various successor organizations emerged, and by 1982, the *Assembly of First Nations* (AFN) formed, representing over 630 First Nation communities.<sup>139</sup> *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami* (ITK) represents 65,000 Inuit in Canada,<sup>140</sup> and the *Métis National Council* represents members in western Canada and Ontario.<sup>141</sup>

## WHITE PAPER/RED PAPER.

In 1969, the Trudeau government released its “**White Paper,**” which acknowledged Canada’s discrimination against Indigenous peoples and proposed their full participation in Canadian society by integrating them and granting them Canadian citizenship. It also advocated abolishing treaty rights and reserve lands. Indigenous leaders viewed this as another attempt at assimilation.

In response, the *Indian Association of Alberta* released “Citizen Plus”, also known as the “**Red Paper,**” which rejected the assumptions of the White Paper and advanced Indigenous treaty rights, land rights, and right to public services and self-determination. These position were later adopted by other organizations such as the *National Indian Brotherhood*.<sup>142</sup>

## SECTION 35 OF THE CONSTITUTION AND UNDRIP.

Decades of activism by Indigenous peoples provided the foundation of the recognition of Indigenous rights through the inclusion of section 35 in Canada’s repatriated Constitution of 1982, which affirms existing Indigenous and treaty rights. While section 35 does not define these rights, Indigenous peoples have used it in court cases to confirm their rights across domains, including hunting, fishing, land title, religion, culture, gender equality, taxation, treaty rights, and self-government.<sup>143, 144</sup> Indigenous peoples have also used the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to advance their rights. Adopted by 143 nations, Canada initially opposed the Declaration, but reversed its position and UNDRIP reserved Royal Assent in 2021.<sup>145, 146</sup>

## THE OKA CRISIS.

In 1989, the city of Oka, Québec announced that it would expand a golf course into a pine forest containing an Indigenous burial claimed by the neighbouring reserve of Kanesatake.

Mohawks from Kanesatake occupied the pines in March 1990, and tensions came to a head on July 11 when provincial police raided the encampment. In the confusion, an officer was shot and police retreated behind Mohawk barricades. Kahnawake Mohawks block the Mercier bridge and adjacent highways in solidarity with Mohawks in Kanesatake. Tensions erupted throughout the summer between Mohawk protestors and surrounding non-Indigenous communities. In August, the Canadian army was dispatched, and after 78 days, the standoff ended. The land claim which includes the pines remains unsettled.<sup>147</sup> In 1991, the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* was formed in response to the crisis.

## THE CREATION OF NUNAVUT.

The creation of Nunavut was the result of over 30 years of advocacy by Inuit in the north. In 1971, Inuit successfully lobbied the federal government to create and fund the *Inuit Tapirisat of Canada* (now known as ITK). In 1982, 56% of voters in the Northwest Territories voted in favour of creating Nunavut. In May 1992, the majority of NWT residents voted in favour of the proposed boundary between Nunavut and the Western Arctic, and the Inuit of Nunavut ratified the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* in November of 1992. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement was passed in Parliament in June 1993, and the Territory of Nunavut was created on April 1, 1999.<sup>148, 149</sup>

## INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

The Agreement was the result of survivors coming together to advocate for justice for the abuses they suffered at these institutions.

In 1990, AFN Chief Phil Fontaine made a public statement on the physical and sexual abuse he suffered there, which helped to spread awareness of what survivors had experienced.

In 2001, the federal government created the *Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada* to resolve the large number of abuse claims filed by former students.

In 2006, the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement*, the largest class action in Canadian history, was approved. It called for a formal apology by the federal government (delivered in the House of Commons in 2008), the establishment of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, which was formed in 2009 and delivered its final report in 2015, and compensation for survivors.<sup>150, 151</sup>

## IDLE NO MORE.

*Idle No More* (INM) is an Indigenous-led social movement that began in 2012 in response to federal legislation to dismantle environmental protections.

While this legislation eventually passed, INM continues to connect thousands of Indigenous Peoples on reserves with those in urban areas as well as non-Indigenous Peoples.<sup>152, 153</sup> It is an ongoing movement that runs campaigns and actions across social, environmental and political issues. For example, INM opposes federal legislation to implement UNDRIP since according to the movement, this legislation would make UNDRIP subject to Canadian law instead of having Canadian law conform to this international standard.<sup>154</sup>



“Ottawa, Canada - March 25, 2013: Cree youth walked 1600 kilometers from their home in Whapmagoostui, Québec to bring attention Indigenous issues to the federal government. Photo by Paul McKinnon

## MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS COMMISSION

In 2016, after many years of advocacy by Indigenous Peoples, the federal government established a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The inquiry held 15 community hearings and spoke with 2,386 people.

A final report was released in 2019 outlining the hugely disproportionate risk of violence Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people face, calling it a genocide as defined by the United Nations<sup>155</sup> based on race, identity and gender. The report also included 231 Calls for Justice based on Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people as rights-holders defined as “**not only ‘victims’ or survivors of colonial violence, but holders of inherent, constitutional, Treaty, and human rights that are still being violated.**”<sup>156</sup>

## LISTEN, LEARN, UNDERSTAND AND ACT: Reflections on apologies for residential schools

In the 1980s, Indigenous Peoples began to advocate for an apology as well as concrete actions and support to help survivors heal from the horrendous abuses they suffered at residential schools and similar institutions such as Indian day schools. Since that time, a number of colonial institutions have issued apologies for these institutions. For example:

### From governments:

*For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities.*

*In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, 'to kill the Indian in the child'.*

*Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.*

— “ —

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, June 11, 2008, as mandated by the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA)*.<sup>157</sup>

*We want the First Nation, Métis and Inuit People of Alberta to know that we deeply regret the profound harm and damage that occurred to generations of children forced to attend residential schools. Although the Province of Alberta did not establish this system, members of this Chamber did not take a stand against it. For this silence, we apologize.*

*These schools broke the connection between child and family... between community, language and culture.*

*These children too often lost the ability to connect again with their families ... losing their identity and the confidence to pass on their traditions to their own children ... we also deeply regret the intergenerational damage that perpetuates itself in poverty, neglect, drug addiction, mental health issues, and great despair.*

— “ —

Alberta Premier Rachel Notley, June 23, 2015.<sup>158</sup>

*As Premier, I apologize for the policies and practices supported by past Ontario governments and for the harm they caused.*

*I apologize for the province's silence in the face of abuses and deaths at residential schools.*

*And I apologize for the fact that the residential schools are only one example of systemic, intergenerational injustices inflicted upon Indigenous communities throughout Canada.*

*By adopting policies designed to eradicate your cultures and extinguish your rightful claims, previous generations set in motion a force so destructive that its impact continues to reverberate in our time. And so I want to apologize for all of this by saying I am sorry for the continued harm that generations of abuse is causing to Indigenous communities, families and individuals.*

— “ —

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, May 30, 2016.<sup>159</sup>

### From churches:

*We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be. We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the Spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.*

— “ —

The Right Rev. Bob Smith General Council, The United Church of Canada, 1986.<sup>160</sup>

*To those individuals who were physically, sexually, and mentally abused as students of the Indian Residential Schools in which The United Church of Canada was involved, I offer you our most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong. You were and are the victims of evil acts that cannot under any circumstances be justified or excused.*

— “ —

The Right Rev. Bill Phipps General Council Executive, The United Church of Canada, 1998.<sup>161</sup>

*I have felt shame and humiliation as I have heard of suffering inflicted by my people, and as I think of the part our church played in that suffering. I am deeply conscious of the sacredness of the stories that you have told and I hold in the highest honour those who have told them ... I acknowledge and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God.*

— “ —

Anglican Archbishop and Primate Michael Peers, August 6, 1993.<sup>162</sup>

*We regret that there are those whose lives have been deeply scarred by the effects of the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada ... It is our hope that those whom we have wronged with a hurt too deep for telling will accept what we have to say. With God's guidance our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God's people.*

— “ —

The Presbyterian Church of Canada, 1994.<sup>163</sup>

*I feel sorrow and shame for the role that a number of Catholics, particularly those with educational responsibilities, have had in all these things that wounded you, the abuses you suffered and the lack of respect shown for your identity, your culture and even your spiritual values. For the deplorable conduct of these members of the Catholic Church, I ask for God's forgiveness and I want to say to you with all my heart, I am very sorry. And I join my brothers, Canadian bishops, in asking your pardon.*

— “ —

Pope Francis, April 1, 2022.<sup>164</sup>

## From the RCMP:

*...To those of you who suffered tragedies at Residential Schools, we are very sorry for your experience... Canadians can never forget what happened and they never should... as Commissioner of the RCMP — am truly sorry for what role we played in the Residential School system and the abuse that took place in that system.*

— “ —  
Giuliano Zaccardelli, RCMP Commissioner, May 2004.

*...As Commissioner of the RCMP, on behalf of the RCMP and on behalf of all men and women who comprise the RCMP or have ever been a part of it, I am deeply sorry for what has happened to you and the part my organization played in it.*

— “ —  
Bob Paulson, RCMP Commissioner, March 2014.<sup>165</sup>

For many First Nations, Métis and Inuit People, these gestures have been important. Having said this, in addition to these apologies, institutions that supported residential schools must comply with further measures to support survivors, including:

- ↳ **Fully complying with the requirements under the IRSSA**, including payment of funds to support healing and other functions such as protecting unmarked graves near former residential school sites.
- ↳ **Releasing all documentation concerning residential schools** to assist in accounting for all children who were forced to attend these institutions but did not return home.
- ↳ **Holding those who committed offences in these institutions accountable.**
- ↳ **Returning cultural artifacts.**
- ↳ **Looking inward within each institution to change behaviours** to ensure that similar harms will not be repeated.
- ↳ **Working to address negative conditions in society** that continue to impact the lives of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>166, 167</sup>

*Many people have said over the years that I've been involved in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 'Why can't you just get over it and move on?' And my answer has always been 'Why can't you always remember this?' Because this is about memorializing those people who have been victims of a great wrong...*

*Why don't you tell this country to get over all the veterans who died in the Second World War instead of honouring them once a year?*

*Why don't you tell your families to stop thinking about all your ancestors who died?*

*It's because it's important for us to remember. We learn from it. All until people show that they have learned from this, we will never forget. And we should never forget even once they have learned from it because this is part of who we are. It's not just a part of who we are as survivors and children of survivors and relatives of survivors, but part of who we are as a nation. And this nation must never forget what it once did to its most vulnerable people.*

— “ —  
TRC Chair Justice Murray Sinclair  
(Mizanay [Mizhana] Gheezhik),  
Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation  
Commission of Canada,  
The Current, CBC, April 4, 2017.

## THE ROLE OF THE OTTAWA MISSION

### What is our responsibility?

Indigenous Peoples have existed in the land called Canada for tens of thousands of years. Sadly, Canada has a history of denial of First Nations, Inuit and Métis rights, including Indigenous rights to stewardship and protection of their traditional territorial lands and waters. Canada has often violated the treaty relationships on which Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations were founded.

The Ottawa Mission exists on the unceded, unsurrendered Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, whose presence on this land reaches back to time immemorial. We express our sincere gratitude to the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation for their generosity as hosts for our continuing work to support vulnerable community members on their lands.

The Ottawa Mission affirms the inherent and Treaty Rights of all First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples across this land as the basis for co-existence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This relationship is based on mutual respect, support, and recognition. We express gratitude for the survival of Indigenous peoples and their teachings, and for the contributions of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous understandings as we move forward on a better path for all of the people of Turtle Island.

As Ottawa's oldest and largest homeless shelter and part of the systems and structures that have perpetuated colonialism, **The Ottawa Mission sees the impact of colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism, with hugely disproportionate numbers of First Nations, Métis and Inuit People requesting our services.**

### THE OTTAWA MISSION COMMITS PUBLICLY TO WALKING THE PATH OF RECONCILIATION WITH OUR FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT PARTNERS TO:

- ↳ **Tell the truth** about Canada's history with First Peoples;
- ↳ **Examine and monitor our own practices** to ensure that:
  - » All policies, procedures, programs and practices are formulated and reviewed through the lens of anti-racism, reconciliation and Indigenous cultural safety.
  - » All Indigenous clients, staff, volunteers and partners feel welcome, safe and unconditionally accepted through all non-Indigenous staff, volunteers and partners receiving anti-racism, reconciliation, and Indigenous cultural safety training.
- ↳ **Evaluate and report on our efforts annually** to judge progress and adjust as required.
- ↳ **Call out conditions in society** that contribute to the disproportionate burden of homelessness and housing precarity for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples to advocate for change.
- ↳ **Support increased safe, appropriate and affordable housing** for First Nations, Métis and Inuit People through advocacy and partnerships.



Canada Day July 1, 2021: Canadians remember those Indigenous children who died in residential schools as their unmarked graves are discovered.

## How will we do it?

The Ottawa Mission commits publicly to the following actions to achieve, maintain, and enhance reconciliation in our ongoing work to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples seeking our support.

- 1 Formation of an Ottawa Mission working group on Reconciliation to lead the project.**
- 2 Formation of and support for an Indigenous Advisory Circle to provide project guidance to the Reconciliation working group.**
- 3 Meaningfully consult with Indigenous service providers and community members to determine how to move forward with Reconciliation, including the following key questions:**

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN FOR THE MISSION RE: GOVERNANCE? FOR EXAMPLE:

How can the knowledge and experience of First Nations, Inuit and Métis be represented at the governance level of The Mission?

- ↳ How can we support the presence of Indigenous history, ethics and values such as Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility and Truth to continuously inform The Ottawa Mission's work to offer unconditional acceptance and support at the governance level?



Pauline, a Mohawk Elder and recent graduate of our Food Services Training Program, helps prepare and serve caribou stew and bannock at The Ottawa Mission's monthly Country Food Feast. Photo by Amanda Havey.

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RAP FOR THE MISSION RE: OPERATIONS? FOR EXAMPLE:

How should the experience of First Nations, Inuit and Métis clients change starting from intake at the shelter through to exiting the shelter?

- ↳ What measures should be implemented to support First Nations, Inuit and Métis clients who may be hesitant to disclose their identity?
- ↳ How should First Nations, Inuit and Métis clients continue to be supported after they leave the shelter to help avoid a return to homelessness?

### WHAT CORE COMPETENCIES SHOULD BE REQUIRED FOR TRAINING FOR STAFF TO ENSURE CULTURAL SAFETY FOR FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS CLIENTS?

What training will provide in-depth knowledge of cultural competencies needed for First Nations, Inuit and Métis clients to ensure that clients from all populations feel safe and supported?

### WHAT SORTS OF PROGRAMS SHOULD BE OFFERED TO FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS SHELTER GUESTS AND COMMUNITY CLIENTS AND HOW SHOULD THEY BE DEVELOPED?

- ↳ What service areas should receive priority for new program development specifically geared toward First Nations, Inuit and Métis clients (e.g., housing, mental health, addictions and trauma, etc.)?
- ↳ What are the potential implications of the RAP for The Mission re: its facilities?
- ↳ How can The Mission support the holding of ceremonies important to First Nations, Inuit and Métis clients?

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RAP FOR THE MISSION RE: ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING? FOR EXAMPLE:

How can The Mission report on both quantitative data (e.g., the number of First Nations, Inuit and Métis clients supported through which programs; the number of staff who received training; etc.) and qualitative data (e.g., the experiences of First Nations, Inuit and Métis clients through focus groups, client surveys, etc.)?

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RAP FOR THE MISSION RE: STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS? FOR EXAMPLE:

- ↳ How can working relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations be enhanced to inform the work needed above?
- ↳ How can The Mission collaborate with First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations to educate the public at large about homelessness within their constituencies as part of destigmatizing homelessness for these populations?

### OTHER KEY QUESTIONS AS CONSULTATIONS ARISE AND FEEDBACK IS RECEIVED.

- 4 Present the findings derived from these consultations to Indigenous communities for feedback, refinement and confirmation.**
- 5 Gather information annually on our efforts to evaluate and adjust as required.**
- 6 Report publicly on our efforts concerning Reconciliation to ensure accountability.**

## ALL OUR RELATIONS: ONE FAMILY BASED ON NAMWAYUT (*we are all one*)

The **Royal Commission on Aboriginal People** released its final report in 1996. Spurred by the 1990 *Oka Crisis*<sup>168</sup> and the failure to pass the *Meech Lake Accord* that same year,<sup>169</sup> the 4,000 page final report of the Commission had 440 recommendations and a 20-year plan for implementing these changes.<sup>170</sup>

Almost 20 years later, the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation was issued along with companion reports in 2015 and 2016, and 94 Calls to Action concerning child welfare, education, health, justice, missing children and burial information, media, sports, newcomers to Canada, and other areas of focus.

In 2019, the **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls** released its two-volume report containing 1,080 pages, including 231 recommendations for change.

Thus far, **few of these recommendations have been implemented.**<sup>171, 172, 173</sup>

Having said this, there are signs of a shift in the Canadian consciousness concerning our relationship with Indigenous peoples as our land's first inhabitants. For example:

↳ In a national poll released in conjunction with the second *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation* in September 2022, **72% of respondents agreed** that **“I am much more understanding of why reconciliation is important for Indigenous Peoples and Canada as a whole.”** Support for reconciliation had very little variation between demographics, including the age and location of respondents.<sup>174</sup>



Canadians rally in Ottawa on July 1, 2021 in the wake of the discovery of unmarked graves of children at Canada's residential schools.

↳ By a two-to-one margin, Canadians are more likely to indicate that governments in Canada have not gone far enough in trying to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples than they are to say that governments have gone too far. This has increased over the past year across the country. Seven out of 10 ten Canadians also say that individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people — a number higher than in previous years.<sup>175</sup>

↳ In a poll released shortly after the discovery of mass graves at the sites of former residential schools in June 2021, **62% of Canadians stated that provincial education curricula do not include nearly enough about residential schools, and 65% believe the level of education concerning residential schools should be increased.** Seventy percent indicated that the framing of residential schools has been downplayed in the education system.<sup>176</sup>

↳ And while the RCAP's recommendations have gone unimplemented, Indigenous lawyers note the impact of the Commission's work on subsequent legal cases involving Indigenous rights.<sup>177</sup>

As Canadians learn about our shared past and the truth about colonization, there is a growing desire to learn more about the realities of the lives of Indigenous peoples, the lasting impact of residential schools, and a commitment to move forward to repair this relationship. “*Namwayut*” is a Kwak’wala word meaning “*We are all one*”. It reflects the underlying value of “*right relations*,” that is, living in the world with respect and reciprocity to other people, animals, nature, and the world at large. It is a world view based on a decolonizing approach to our shared past as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in which one group does not impose itself upon the other. As such, it is a recognition of value in the worldviews and cultures of Indigenous peoples as well as the importance of mutual respect and enriched understandings between Non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. **For reconciliation, non-Indigenous Canadians must listen actively, learn the truth, and commit to action.**

The Ottawa Mission **must do our part.**

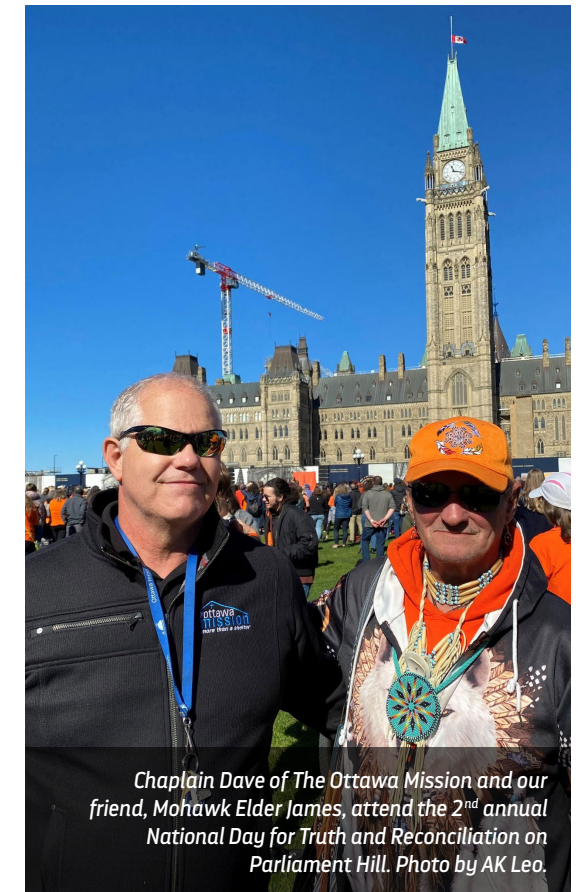
We commit to ensuring that **all those who seek our services, provide those services, and work and volunteer with us are unconditionally accepted, respected and welcomed.** We also commit to action to **call out conditions in society that have led to the disproportionate burden of homelessness among Indigenous peoples so that everyone has a place to call home.**

**The Ottawa Mission commits to reconciliation that reflects the strength and resiliency of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, based on right relations between indigenous and settler populations, founded on *truth, respect and an aligned understanding of our shared history as one family based on Namwayut (we are all one).***

*As for the four-kilometre Walk for Reconciliation, people laughed, danced and cried. They hugged each other and shared stories... On that walk we were coming together for humanity, for Indigenous Peoples, and for ourselves.*

*Those who walked were giving credence to the collective will and desire for the cause of peace and reconciliation. The Walk for Reconciliation was designed to bring people together to call for a renewal of a broken relationship.*

— “ —  
Chief Robert Joseph  
(Kwinkwinxwaligedzi Wakas)  
Namwayut: A Pathway to Reconciliation, 2022.  
70,000 participated in the first Walk for Reconciliation in Vancouver in 2013.



Chaplain Dave of The Ottawa Mission and our friend, Mohawk Elder James, attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on Parliament Hill. Photo by AK Leo.

# CODA: working together in equal partnership for the benefit of all

One of the Ottawa Mission's 17 programs to help people rebuild their lives is our *Food Services Training Program* (FSTP), a free job training program which teaches people the required skills to work in a commercial kitchen.

**This program has helped many Indigenous students into careers in the culinary sector. The Mission is honoured to work with Indigenous students to support them to graduate with newfound skills, pride and confidence.**



Here our friend and colleague Pauline receives her diploma from Chef Ric and Program Coordinator Hilary in May 2023.



Health Services Director Lynn gave Pauline a huge hug in gratitude for her invaluable help in preparing and serving caribou stew and bannock during each Country Food Feast.



Pauline also received a hug from her friend and kitchen colleague Lulu.



We were so pleased that Pauline's family travelled from Tyendinaga to be with her during the graduation ceremony.



Pauline took the time to congratulate Kenzie on this new position with the Ottawa Mission.



Before the graduation ceremony, Pauline and Chef Ric worked in the kitchen to prepare meals for the day.

- 1 "Pope says genocide took place at Canada's residential schools," CBC News, July 30, 2022.
- 2 70% of Canadians agree with the use of the term "cultural genocide" to describe residential schools. "Truth and Reconciliation: Canadians see value in process, skeptical about government action," Angus Reid Institute, July 9, 2015.
- 3 MP Leah Gazan's motion calling on the federal government to characterize what happened in residential schools as a genocide received unanimous consent in the House of Commons on October 27, 2022. CTV News, October 27, 2022.
- 4 The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls stated that "Within the National Inquiry, and in the short time we have had to do our work, families and survivors have provided important truths. These truths force us to reconsider where the roots of violence lie, and in doing so, to reconsider the solutions. I hope that knowing these truths will contribute to a better understanding of the real lives of Indigenous people and the violations of their human and Indigenous rights when they are targeted for violence. The truth is that we live in a country whose laws and institutions perpetuate violations of basic human and Indigenous rights. These violations amount to nothing less than the deliberate, often covert campaign of genocide against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people. This is not what Canada is supposed to be about; it is not what it purports to stand for." Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Jun 03, 2019.
- 5 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Volume 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back, 1996, p. 21.
- 6 "With these bulls, the papacy was granting the lands of Indigenous peoples to the Portuguese Crown on the basis of discovery and conquest. These bulls helped shape the political and legal arguments that have come to be referred to as the 'Doctrine of Discovery,' which was used to justify the colonization of the Americas in the sixteenth century... The Doctrine of Discovery was linked to a second idea: the lands being claimed were terra nullius (land belonging to no one) and therefore open to claim." Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939*. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 1, 2015, pp 16–17.
- 7 The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) characterizes "all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust."
- 8 On March 30, 2023, the Catholic Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, a key request of Indigenous delegations who visited the Vatican and met with Pope Francis in 2022. The Church stated that it "repudiates those concepts that fail to recognize the inherent human rights of indigenous peoples, including what has become known as the legal and political 'doctrine of discovery.' The Church also stated that it strongly supports the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which it says can help protect Indigenous rights as well as improving living conditions and development "in a way that respects their identity, language and culture." "Church defends Indigenous peoples: 'Doctrine of Discovery' was never Catholic," Vatican News, March 30, 2023.
- 9 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 1, op.cit., p. 97.
- 10 These included individual First Nations communities as well as alliances such as Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat Confederacy, and other partnerships. Ibid, pp 94–128.
- 11 Wampum belts are comprised of white and coloured shells and embody political and social arrangements between peoples. "It is on a bed of white wampum, which symbolizes the purity of the agreement. There are two rows of purple, and those two rows have the spirit of our ancestors; those two rows never come together in that belt, and it is easy to see what that means. It means that we have two different paths, two different people. The agreement was made that your road will have your vessel, your people, your politics, your government, your way of life, your religion, your beliefs — they are all in there. The same goes for ours. ...They said there will be three beads of wampum separating the two, and they will symbolize peace, friendship, and respect." Description of the purpose of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Ibid, p. 97.
- 12 See also the Assembly of First Nations. "We will travel the river together, side by side, but in our own vessel. Neither of us will make compulsory laws nor interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel." The Two Row Wampum Belt, *It's Our Time: Educational Toolkit, Module 4.1. Treaties and Why They Are Important* (no date).
- 13 The Royal Proclamation by George III (1763) established the constitutional foundations of Canada after France withdrew its territorial claims to North America. Canada's Constitution Act (1982) affirms Indigenous and Treaty rights. Despite this, "the tendency on the part of federal and provincial governments has been to interpret Treaties as narrowly and legalistically as possible, while holding to the position that First Nations 'ceded, surrendered and released' their title and rights through these instruments." Assembly of First Nations, *Treaties Fact Sheet*, May 2010.
- 14 In the Supreme Court's decision *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2014 SCC 44, the Court noted that "At the time of assertion of European sovereignty, the Crown acquired radical or underlying title to all the land in the province. This Crown title, however, was burdened by the pre-existing legal rights of Aboriginal people who occupied and used the land prior to European arrival. The doctrine of terra nullius (that no one owned the land prior to European assertion of sovereignty) never applied in Canada, as confirmed by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The Aboriginal interest in land that burdens the Crown's underlying title is an independent legal interest, which gives rise to a fiduciary duty on the part of the Crown." (para. 69)
- 15 From 1871–1921, 11 Numbered Treaties outlined formal obligations between the Crown and First Nations were negotiated. Government of Canada. *The Numbered Treaties (1871–1921)*. Date modified: 2023-03-15.
- 16 "During the period in which Britain went from treating Canada as a colony to recognizing it as a nation, Aboriginal policy evolved in the opposite direction. Initially, Aboriginal people were treated as members of independent nations, military and diplomatic allies, and trading partners with rights to their lands, cultures, and languages. However, they came to be treated as colonized peoples whose lands existed to be exploited and whose lives were to be transformed in every way, and who were expected to live under laws they had no hand in formulating. Although Aboriginal people negotiated Treaties with the British in what is now Ontario from the 1780s onwards, the terms of those agreements often were ignored by the British North American authorities, or interpreted in ways that left Aboriginal rights unprotected." *Canada's Residential Schools: The History*, op.cit., p. 49.



17 “In general the Indian nations, based on their cultural and oral traditions, understood they were sharing the land, not ‘surrendering’ it. While the surrender clauses of the early land sales in Ontario were included in the later written numbered treaties, it is questionable whether their implications were known to the Indian parties, since these legal and real estate concepts would have been incomprehensible to many Aboriginal people. Further, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to translate the legal language expressing these concepts into the Indian languages. Aboriginal people often understood that they were being compensated for the use of their lands and that they were not being asked to give up or surrender them, but to allow settlers to move onto their lands peaceably... On the whole the First Nations did not agree to having their lands taken over by the Crown, nor did they agree to come under the control of the Crown. Their understanding was that they would share their lands and resources in a treaty relationship that would respect their agreement to co-exist as separate nations but linked in a partnership with the Crown.” Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Volume 1, p. 148.

18 “Aboriginal peoples were displaced physically — they were denied access to their traditional territories and in many cases actually forced to move to new locations selected for them by colonial authorities.” Ibid, p. 132.

19 “As settlers replaced soldiers in their territories — often taking over choice coastal, riverfront and agricultural lands — Aboriginal people had to abandon their traditional hunting, fishing and residential lands. They also saw their homelands restricted and often changed as a result of land purchase agreements, the treaty-making process, and the establishment of reserves.” Ibid, p. 395.

20 “It is also doubtful in many cases that the First Nations participating in the numbered treaties knew that the written texts they signed differed from the oral agreements they concluded. In fact, it was not evident to them until some years after treaties were made that the Crown was not honouring its treaty commitments or was acting in a way that violated treaty agreements. Their reaction to the imposition of government laws and restrictions upon them was seen as a violation of the Queen’s promise to protect their way of life and not subject them to the Queen’s laws (the Indian Act) or the Queen’s servants (the Indian agent)... Those who failed to comply with any of the myriad social and economic regulations faced fines or imprisonment in a legal system whose integrity was undermined when Indian agents were made justices of the peace. The department then had the power to make and to enforce regulations, which had the force of law, with regard to the full spectrum of public and private life in communities.” Ibid, p. 160.

21 Consolidation of Indian Legislation. Vol II: Indian Acts and Amendments, 1868–1975. Chapter 18 of Indian Act, 1876 defined an “Indian” as “First. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band. Second. Any child of such person. Third. Any woman who is or was lawfully married to such person.”

22 The advocacy of Aboriginal women’s organizations as well as individual First Nations women who had been denied Indian status resulted in the enacting Bill C-31 in 1985, which amended the Indian Act to ensure equality rights for Indigenous women in line with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. See: Hartley, Gerard, “The Search for Consensus: A Legislative History of Bill C-31, 1969–1985”, 2007. Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium International (APRCi). 98.

23 “Federal legislative responsibility was restricted to Indians. The Métis people were disavowed, and Inuit were not recognized as a federal constitutional responsibility until 1939 and then were exempted explicitly from the Indian Act in 1951 ... Furthermore, the Indian Act empowered the department to decide who was an Indian on the basis of definitions determined not in consultation with communities but unilaterally by Parliament, which created more division by distinguishing between ‘status’ and ‘nonstatus’ Indians.” Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Volume 1, op.cit., p. 166.

24 The Constitution Act of 1982 recognized the Indigenous and treaty rights in section 35 of Inuit, Métis as well as Indians. Ibid, p. 235.

25 “What’s Métis scrip? North America’s ‘largest land swindle,’ says Indigenous lawyer,” Unreserved, CBC, April 28, 2019.”

26 OECD Library. “Chapter 3. The importance of land for Indigenous economic development,” *Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Canada* (no date).

27 See for example, Metis Nation. *What We Heard: Report of the Métis Nation’s Engagement with Métis Sixties Scoop Survivors*, 2019.

28 Religious orders operated the first residential schools in Canada prior to Confederation as part of their efforts to convert Indigenous Peoples to Christianity. From then on, churches ran the national residential school system in partnership with the federal government. *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, op.cit.*

29 In 1894 the Indian Act was amended to make attendance at residential schools compulsory and keep these children at these institutions until they were aged 18. Indian agents were authorized to appoint truancy officers who could charge parents for not sending their children to these schools with fines, jail time, or both. *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939*, pp. 254–255.

30 In *The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 2015, pp 109–115, survivors of residential schools speak poignantly about how fear and loneliness was inculcated into them during their time at these institutions. For example, Shirley Waskewitch said that at the Catholic school in Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, “I learned the fear, how to be so fearful at six years old. It was instilled in me. I was scared and fearful all the time, and that stayed with me throughout my life.” Paul Dixon stated that “You hear children crying at bedtime, you know. But all that time, you know, we had to weep silently. You were not allowed to cry, and we were in fear that we, as nobody to hear us, you know. If one child was caught crying... everybody was in trouble... Now, they hit you between your legs, or pull you out of bed by the hair, even if it was a top bunk, you know. Homesickness was your constant companion besides hunger, loneliness, and fear.”

31 Lack of access to regular medical or dental care was another form of neglect encountered by former students at residential schools. “I remember when we were sick we were never taken to a hospital, never.” [Robert] Malcolm could not recall receiving any medical attention while attending the Sandy Bay, Manitoba, school. “Well, you would tell, you would tell the, the, the supervisor, and the supervisor would either do something, or I don’t ever once remember going to see a doctor in the time that I was there. If I was sick, then you just had to tough it out...” Roger Cromarty noted that students did not receive dental care until the opening of Indian Affairs hospital opened in Sioux Lookout. “The doctor there came up to the school, and did the dental work, and he wasn’t a dentist ... If you didn’t have any cavities, he’d shove you on and go onto the next guy. But if you had to have a tooth pull out, he did it right there, and there was no ether, or ether, or any kind of, what they call that when you freeze, freezing. He didn’t have that. He just go ahead and pulled that. I saw lots of kids there cry.” Ibid, pp. 177–178.

32 Many survivors also recounted their experiences of horrific sexual and other forms of abuse. As the report notes, “While reports of sexual abuse were common, it was far from being the only type of abuse experienced by students,” Ibid, p. 153.

33 Survivors also recounted how discipline at these institutions was

often violent and inflicted for no reason. Ibid, pp 139–151.

34 Some of the most horrifying abuse took place at St. Anne’s residential school in northern Ontario. Former students report being forced to eat their own vomit and shocked in a homemade electric chair. The federal government did not disclose transcripts of criminal trials, investigative reports from the Ontario Provincial Police and civil proceedings about child abuse as part of the compensation process under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. After the Ontario Superior Court ordered that the 12,300 pages of records be produced in 2014, heavily redacted document were supplied by the federal government, making determination of compensation difficult. Survivors appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, however, the Court declined to hear the case. “Supreme Court will not hear from St. Anne’s residential school survivors,” CTV News, October 20, 2022.

35 From 1942–1952, a series of nutritional experiments were carried in Aboriginal communities and six residential schools without the consent of community members or students. Hunger had existed in these communities and institutions for decades prior to the start of these experiments due to deliberate policy decisions. Some students were given supplements while some were part of “control groups”, and interventions to treat malnutrition and associated conditions were denied. Aspects of these experiments also “could be confusing, painful and potentially traumatic” for students. “Ultimately, it seems that none of these experiments and studies conducted... had much in the way of long-term positive effects on the lives of those being studied... These experiments therefore must be remembered and recognized for what they truly were: one among many examples of a larger institutionalized and, ultimately, dehumanizing colonialist racial ideology that has governed Canada’s policies towards and treatment of Aboriginal peoples throughout the twentieth century.” Ian Mosby. “Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952,” *Histoire sociale/Social history*, Volume 46, Number 91, Mai-May 2013, pp. 145–172.

36 “Many former students spoke of what their lives were like prior to going to residential school. These recollections describe the ways in which cultural and spiritual practices and values had been transmitted from one generation to the next before life in the schools interfered with that process. They are also a reminder that these practices — and the languages in which they were embedded — are not things of the ancient past, but, rather, are vibrant elements of the childhoods of people who are still alive. Whether the governmental goal was assimilation, as initially stated, or, as the government later claimed, integration, the cultural practices described in the following section were under attack.” *The Survivors Speak*, op.cit., pp. 3–4.

37 Students were often punished for not understanding either English or French. For example, Marcel Guiboche at the Pine Creek school, stated that “A sister, a nun started talking to me in English and French, and yelling at me. I did not speak English, and didn’t understand what she, what she was asking. She got very upset, and started hitting me all over my body, hands, legs and back. I began to cry, yell, and became very scared, and this infuriated her more. She got a black strap and hit me some more.” Ibid, p. 48.

38 Students were also punished for speaking their original languages after they learned English or French. “When two sisters attended the Anglican school at Aklavik, they could not speak English. But, according to one sister, the staff would ‘spank us when we tried to talk our language. So, we just keep away from one another.” Ibid, p. 49.

39 According to the Assembly of First Nations, “all Indigenous languages in Canada are in danger of disappearing. Assimilationist policies and practices have disrupted intergenerational transmission of language, and resulted in significant language loss. In 2016, only

20% of First Nations people could converse in an Indigenous language, down almost 6 percentage points from 2006.” “Languages and Culture. Indigenous Languages Act Legislation,” Fact Sheet (no date).

40 In addition to punishing students for speaking their home languages and banning religious and cultural practices, when children arrived at residential schools, it was common practice to assign them numbers and call them by these numbers instead of their birth names. See *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School*, by Xatsu’ll Chief Bev Sellars, Talonbooks, November 30, 2012.

41 Children at residential schools also lost their original given names, replaced by English or French names. “That’s where I had the most difficulty in school because I didn’t understand English. My hand was hit because I wrote on my scribbles, the scribbles that were given on starting school, pencils, erasers, rulers and that, scribbles, and textbooks that were given. ‘Write your names,’ she said, so they don’t get lost. But I wrote on my scribbles in Cree syllabics. And so I got the nun really mad that I was writing in Cree. And then I only knew my name was Ministik from the first time I heard my name, my name was Ministik. So I was whipped again because I didn’t know my name was Peter Nakogee.” *The Survivors Speak*, op.cit., p. 48.

42 Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission identified 3,200 deaths at residential schools. It also concluded that:

- Indigenous children in residential schools died at a far higher rate than school-aged children in the general population;

- for a significant percentage of these deaths, important information such as the child’s name, gender or cause of death was not recorded;

- for the most part, residential schools did not send these children’s bodies back to their home communities and the cemeteries are abandoned, disused, and vulnerable to accidental disturbance;

- the federal government never established an adequate set of standards and regulations to guarantee the health and safety of residential school students, nor did it sufficiently enforce the minimal standards that it did set, a consequence predicated by a desire to keep costs low;

- the failure to establish standards and adequately fund these schools resulted in these unnecessarily high death rates.

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Canada’s Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*, The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 4, 2015, pp 1–2.

43 In addition to elevated mortality rates at residential schools, Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce’s findings 1907 findings as Chief Medical Officer for the federal Department of Indian Affairs also noted that many students died shortly after leaving these institutions. Dr. Bryce attributed these shocking numbers to overcrowding, poor sanitation and poor ventilation at these institutions. His report was distributed to Members of Parliament and churches, and was reported on in various media such as the Evening Citizen (now the Ottawa Citizen), Saturday Night Magazine and the Montreal Star. Despite this, no concrete measures were put in place to improve the situation. Dr. Bryce’s research funding was cut, he was barred from presenting his findings at academic conferences, denied positions, and eventually forced out of the public service in 1921. Undeterred, in 1922 after his retirement from the federal public service, Dr. Bryce published *The Story of a National Crime: An Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada* (James, Hope and Sons Ltd.), which detailed the federal government’s role in creating and perpetuating the conditions

- Bryce outlined in his original 1907 report leading to such high death rates of Aboriginal children in these institutions. First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. "Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce: A Story of Courage," Fact Sheet, July 2016.
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- 44 In June 2022, the federal government appointed Kimberly Murray as Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools. The Special Interlocutor will work on a new federal legal framework to ensure the respectful and culturally appropriate treatment of unmarked graves and burial sites of children associated with former residential schools in collaboration with First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments, Survivors and families, and others. Department of Justice, Government of Canada. "Mandate of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools." Background, June 8, 2022.
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- 45 Since the discovery of 215 unmarked grave by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, 80 communities have begun work to recover the bodies of these children. David McGuffin. "Interview: Kimberly Murray on honour and justice for missing Indigenous children," Canadian Geographic, September 28, 2022.
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- 46 After reports of unmarked graves at former residential school sites surfaced in 2021, former Senator and TRC Chair Murray Sinclair stated that the number of missing and dead students may be as high as 15,000–20,000. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre urged the federal government to work with Indigenous governments to establish a framework to investigate and protect potential burial sites from erosion, destruction, manipulation or disturbance. Tonda McCharles. "Protect sites where Indigenous children may be buried, advocates urge Ottawa," Toronto Star, June 2, 2021.
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- 47 139 schools were recognized by the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement which operated from the 1870s until the closure of Kivalliq Hall in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, in 1997. The Agreement did not include school in Newfoundland and Labrador nor schools run by religious orders or provincial governments. See: "Your questions answered about Canada's residential school system," CBC, July 1, 2022.
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- 48 "As extension period for Indian Day Schools settlement comes to an end, concerns remain," CBC News, January 11, 2023.
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- 49 The potlatch ban is among the most well known examples of bans on religious ceremonies and theft of cultural artifacts allowed under the Indian Act. Potlatches were employed to share wealth and mark important occasions by west coast Indigenous peoples. "This provision of the Indian Act was in place for close to 75 years and what that did was it prevented the passing down of our oral history. It prevented the passing down of our values. It meant an interruption of the respected forms of government that we used to have, and we did have forms of government be they oral and not in writing before any of the Europeans came to this country. We had a system that worked for us. We respected each other. We had ways of dealing with disputes." Scow, Alfred. Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), Transcriptions of Public Hearings and Round Table Discussions, 1992-1993, Ottawa, Ontario. Thursday, November 26, 1992. 344-5. Quoted in "The Indian Act," Indigenous Foundations, University of British Columbia (no date).
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- 50 While there were some exceptions (i.e., initial allowance for Indians in eastern Canada to vote, which was later rescinded; allowing voting for Indigenous veterans of WW1; etc.), the right to vote federally without qualification was not extended to all "Indians" until 1960. *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Volume 1*, op.cit., p. 276–300.
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- 51 After 1880, the Indian Act required federal government approval for Indian people to have access to their own band funds. Later measures made it an offense for bands to solicit funds to advance Indian claims without permission. More generally, "the Indian Act produced gross disparities in legal rights. It subjected status Indians to prohibitions and penalties that would have been ruled illegal and unconstitutional if applied to other Canadians." Ibid, p. 250.
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- 52 "Inspired by what it has read about Canada's Indian Act and its legal classification of 'status Indians,' the South African government examines Canada's Indian reserve system and later models elements of apartheid after the Canadian system." "A Series of Missteps," Toronto Star, October 30, 2010.
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- 53 The pass system was put in place in 1885 as the Northwest Rebellion broke out by Indian Affairs commissioner Hayter Reed to contain Indigenous Peoples within their reserves despite having no basis in law. The "temporary measure" remained in place for almost 60 years. See: "Dark history of Canada's First Nations pass system uncovered in documentary," CBC Indigenous, February 19, 2016.
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- 54 "The notorious pass system was never part of the formal Indian Act regime. It began as a result of informal discussions among government officials in the early 1880s in response to the threat that prairie Indians might forge a pan-Indian alliance against Canadian authorities. Designed to prevent Indians on the prairies from leaving their reserves, its immediate goal was to inhibit their mobility. Under the system, Indians were permitted to leave their reserves only if they had a written pass from the local Indian agent." *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Volume 1*, op.cit., p. 272.
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- 55 See OECD Library. "Chapter 3. The importance of land for Indigenous economic development," *Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Canada* (no date).
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- 56 See *What We Heard: Report of the Métis Nation's Engagement with Métis Sixties Scoop Survivors*, op.cit.
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- 57 Statistics Canada. "Labour force characteristics by region and detailed Indigenous group." Release date: 2023-01-06
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- 58 Statistics Canada. "Indigenous people in urban areas: Vulnerabilities to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19." Release date: 2020-05-26.
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- 59 Devastating, chronic and endemic rates of poverty among Indigenous peoples have been characterized as "poverty by design" by Indigenous scholars, noting the pervasive role of successive colonialist policies in perpetuating this difference. See: Melissa Brittain and Cindy Blackstock. "First Nations Child Poverty. A Literature Review and Analysis," 2015.
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- 60 Natasha Beedie, David Macdonald, Daniel Wilson. "Towards Justice: Tackling Indigenous Child Poverty in Canada," July 2019.
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Roman Catholic cemetery in Fort George, Québec, the province's first residential school. Truth and Reconciliation Commission/Deschâtelets Archives



Michel Guenette. Parliament Hill. July 2021

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*Mohawk Elders*

*Reconciliation is not a project,  
nor does it have an end date.*

**We must always strive  
to acknowledge the pain and  
the truth of our history.**

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon (ᑦᐱᐱᐱ ᑭᐱᐱᐱ),  
Governor General of Canada, Lecture to Queen's University,  
quoted in Nunatsiaq News, April 13, 2022.

— “ —

**The road we travel is  
equal in importance  
to the destination we seek.**

*There are no shortcuts.*

**When it comes to truth and  
reconciliation we are forced  
to go the distance.**

TRC Chair Justice Murray Sinclair (Mizanay [Mizhana] Gheezhik),  
Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,  
to the Canadian Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples,  
September 28, 2010.



