



Reconciliation Information

FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA

Created By:

Students of Red River College Polytech in Partnership with
Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations
(MANSO)© and Reviewed by Elder Paul Guimond.

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully recognize that Red River College Polytechnic campuses are located on the original lands of Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene Peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.©

Why Acknowledge Territory?

"Territorial acknowledgments are a way that people insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. This is often done at the beginning of ceremonies, lectures, or any public event. It can be a subtle way to recognize the history of colonialism and a need for change in settler colonial societies"© ¹

Indigenous Elders

In First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, Elders are healers and knowledge keepers who provide guidance, counselling and teachings within and beyond their communities. ³

Who are the Indigenous Peoples in Canada?

Indigenous

The first groups of people living in this land now called Canada; the First Peoples, Original Peoples.

Métis

Indigenous peoples who are descendants of First Nations and Europeans in West Central Canada.

Inuit

Indigenous peoples who traditionally live in Northern Canada.

First Nations

Indigenous peoples who are not Métis or Inuit. ²

Introduction

Reconciliation is the work of non-Indigenous people, including newcomers to Canada. With a significant part of the country's population born abroad, new Canadians can play an essential role in Reconciliation. We know that starting this journey is a personal choice, and it may feel overwhelming for an individual, especially someone new to the country; therefore, this educational guide has the objective to serve as a first step in providing Reconciliation information for newcomers. We hope to encourage the readers to learn about Canadian history and inspire actions to strengthen their relationship with Indigenous Peoples. If many individuals decide to take responsibility and implement small changes in their lives, Canada will move forward as a nation with less racism and discrimination.

The Residential School System

The following is an excerpt about residential schools from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's [website](#). Please note that the term “Aboriginal” is increasingly being replaced by the term “Indigenous”. Some Indigenous peoples prefer not to be called Aboriginal peoples.

"For a period of more than 150 years, First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation children were taken from their families and communities to attend schools which were often located far from their homes. More than 150,000 children attended Indian Residential Schools. Many never returned.

The first church-run Indian Residential School was opened in 1831. By the 1880s, the federal government had adopted an official policy of funding residential schools across Canada. The explicit intent was to separate these children from their families and cultures. In 1920, the Indian Act made attendance at Indian Residential Schools compulsory for Treaty-status children between the ages of 7 and 15.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) concluded that residential schools were “a systematic, government-sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples.” The TRC characterized this intent as “cultural genocide.” The schools were often underfunded and overcrowded. The quality of education was substandard. Children were harshly punished for speaking their own languages. Staff were not held accountable for how they treated the children.

We know that thousands of students suffered physical and sexual abuse at residential schools. All suffered from loneliness and a longing to be home with their families. The schools hurt the children. The schools also hurt their families and their communities. Children were deprived of healthy examples of love and respect. The distinct cultures, traditions, languages, and knowledge systems of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples were eroded by forced assimilation.

The damages inflicted by Residential Schools continue to this day. For a great many Survivors, talking about their experiences in Residential Schools means reliving the traumas they experienced. For years, many told no one about what they had endured.”⁴

What is Reconciliation?

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) defined Reconciliation as the process of “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. The TRC went on to say that in order for reconciliation to happen in Canada, “there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgment of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.”⁵

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in residential schools. The TRC documented the truth of Survivors, their families, communities and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience.

The TRC was created in June of 2008 as part of the largest class-action settlement in Canada, called the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSS). This lawsuit resulted in a multibillion-dollar settlement to help Survivors of Residential Schools in their healing. The TRC has transferred its work to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. ⁶

What Is a Class Action Lawsuit?

A class action lawsuit is a legal action filed by more than one individual and against a single defendant. The group of people taking legal action are called the class and they are all making the same claim against the accused. ⁷

Goals of the TRC

The TRC website states the Commission's goals are to:

- Acknowledge residential school experiences, impacts, and consequences. Provide a
- safe setting for former students and families and anyone else impacted to come forward to the Commission with their stories.
- Spread public awareness and provide education about residential schools and their impacts.
- Create an archive of historical records about the Indian Residential Schools System (IRSS) that are accessible to the public.
- Create and submit a report that includes recommendations to the government of Canada regarding the Indian Residential Schools and their consequences.
- Provide support for commemoration of former residential schools and their impacts.⁸

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)

The NCTR was created in partnership with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. After the conclusion of the TRC's mandate, the NCTR was created, and the University of Manitoba was chosen to carry forward its work. The NCTR is responsible for providing access to the history of Indian Residential Schools, documenting and archiving the stories of IRSS. It has provided a safe place for Survivors to come forward with their stories. ⁹

Calls To Action

The Commission put together an in-depth report of ninety-four recommendations that call upon all levels of government and organizations to implement policy changes that will foster reconciliation in Canada. The Commission addresses areas of the health sector, child welfare, justice departments, immigration, and education.

Call To Action #93

"We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the national Aboriginal organizations, to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools." ¹⁰

-Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

Survivors' Flag

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation states, *"The Survivors' Flag is an expression of remembrance, meant to honour residential school Survivors and all the lives and communities impacted by the residential school system in Canada. Each element depicted on the flag was carefully selected by Survivors from across Canada, who were consulted in the flag's creation."* ¹¹



[Survivors' Flag Image. Retrieved from NCTR.ca](http://NCTR.ca)

What are Numbered Treaties?

According to the [Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba](#), "In Canada, Treaties represent the source of First Nations peoples' unique nation-to-nation relationship with the Crown. In Western Canada, the Numbered Treaties 1 to 11 are a series of historic post-Confederation Treaties made in rapid succession over a short period from 1871 to 1921 between First Nations peoples and the Crown (Canada). They are as relevant today as when they were signed."

"The Numbered Treaties were used as political tools to secure alliances and ensure that both parties could achieve the goals they had set out for their peoples — both at the time of Treaty-making and into the future. Treaty-making was historically used among First Nations peoples for inter-tribal trade alliances, peace, friendship, safe passage, and access to shared resources within another nation's ancestral lands." ¹²



What are Indigenous Reserves?

An Indigenous Reserve is land set aside by the federal government for the exclusive use and benefit of First Nations. ["Visit the Reserves page of the First Nations and Indigenous Studies department at UBC to learn more".](#) ¹³

According to Statistics Canada data from 2016, "there were 820,120 Status First Nations people in Canada. Of those, 40% (331,025) lived on reserve, 14% live in rural areas (off-reserve), and 45% live in urban areas". ¹⁴

Most Indigenous peoples have had to move off of reserves because as the population grew, there was not enough land available for everyone. First Nations peoples have not received the full amount of land that the government promised to them by way of their respective Treaties. ⁶

Common Misconceptions about Indigenous Peoples

Misconception #1

Many assume that all Indigenous peoples get free education and don't pay taxes.

Fact: It is a common misconception that all First Nations get a free post-secondary education, but it is more complicated than that. Only status Indians (people recognized by the federal government as “Indian”) are eligible to receive funding for post-secondary education through Indigenous and Northern Affairs funding.

Moreover, Elder Paul Guimond emphasizes that free education was part of the agreements that were made between settlers and Indigenous peoples. The whole intent was to use Western education to colonize Indigenous peoples and control what information Indigenous peoples should have access to. By doing that, the government destroyed Indigenous history, language, culture and a way of life.

The Canadian Government is responsible for upholding its obligations and commitments created through Treaties, which are formal agreements made between the Government of Canada and Indigenous peoples.¹⁵

In total, fewer than 1% of the Indigenous population in Canada are exempt from paying certain taxes.¹⁶

Misconception #2

The idea that Indigenous peoples are all the same.

Fact: Indigenous peoples' cultural diversity is not always recognized. There are many different Indigenous groups, and each one of them has its own histories, language, values, symbols, traditions and needs, so it is inaccurate to refer to Indigenous peoples as if they were all the same. For example, “there are over 600 bands [communities] and over 2,000 reserves [in Canada] - each one with a distinct history that shaped their particular cultural identity. They each have distinct economies, capacities, and challenges”.¹⁶

Misconception #3

Residential Schools are ancient history.

Residential schools are not ancient history, as the last school closed in 1996. More than 150,000 children had to suffer these horrifying experiences (of which 6000 children died or disappeared), and graves continue to be discovered recently. Moreover, the trauma experienced by the Survivors keeps being passed down generationally.¹⁶

Responsibility and Further Learning

Actions you can take on your own

- Watch movies, films, and documentaries about Indigenous histories
- Visit your local library, and ask for books and resources about Indigenous peoples and their histories
- Elder Paul recommends visiting the People's Library at [Manitoba Indigenous Cultural Education Centre in Winnipeg](#)
- Volunteer at an Indigenous organization
- Listen and ask thoughtful questions
- Read books about Indigenous histories in Canada and on Residential School experiences
- Listen to [podcasts](#) and [music](#), and support emerging [Indigenous artists](#)
- Support Indigenous businesses
- Read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action

Recommended Books

- Joseph Boyden "Wenjack"
- Beatrice Mosionier "In Search of April Raintree"
- Joseph Boyden "Three Day Road"
- Aimée Craft "Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty"
- Richard Wagamese "Indian Horse "
- Phil Fontaine, Aimée Craft "A Knock on the Door"
- Theodore Fontaine "Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools: a Memoir" (Recommended by Elder Paul Guimond)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#)

Movies to Watch

[Indian Horse](#)

[Rumble: the Indians that Rocked the World](#)

[We Were Children](#)

[The Secret Path](#)

More found here:

[National Film Board of Canada](#)

Websites to Explore

[Native-Land.ca](#)

[nctr.ca - National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)

[TRCM.ca -Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba](#)

[Groundworksforchange.org](#)

[Reconciliationcanada.ca](#)

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

[National Association of Friendship Centres](#)

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In partnership with the Manitoba

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and reviewed by Elder Paul

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About Us

We are a group of students attending Red River College Polytech's Social Innovation and Community Development program. This project aims to provide information to newcomers to Canada on the true history of Indigenous-Settler relations; in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action number 93.

Notes

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