

# **My Reconciliation Journey**

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## Defense Committee

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What I am going to share in this acknowledgement and throughout this report is what I see and feel deeply – it contains my words, feelings, and thoughts to provoke non-Indigenous people to take action for a better and equitable society for the Indigenous people of Canada.

## **Acknowledgements and Appreciation**

I acknowledge that over 10,000 murdered children have been discovered so far in Canada and the ongoing violence Indigenous people face daily through Canada's racist systems. I acknowledge the attempt to genocide the Indigenous people of Canada through the various systems.

I recognize the resiliency of the Indigenous people of Canada for continuously fighting against Canada's racist systems and thank them for sharing their ways of knowing, being and doing with us. I hope that through the Your Reconciliation Journey workshops series, the people of Canada will build a better understanding of the past and present and see hope for the future. I especially thank the Canim Lake, Esquimalt, Homalco, K'ómoks, Klahoose, Kwiakah, Qualicum, Songhees, Tla'amin, Tlowitsis, We Wai Kai, and Wei Wai Kum Nations for whose homelands I play, learn, work, discover and love for sharing their lands and knowledge with me.

Also, some extraordinary people have always held me up and encouraged me to move forward in life, especially with this project. My gratitude for these people has filled my heart and continues to do so: Athena B, bob, Bonnie S, Brendon L, Cam B, Colleen L, Erin M, Fiona D, Frank S, Gordy B, Heather B, Jen H, Jen T, Kate D, Kim S, Kristy D, Maisy M, Margie F, Nathaniel L, Roxanne C, Sally-Anne H, Savannah B, Susanne T, Walter L and Zoey M – each of these amazing people have contributed to the success of this project in some aspect of its development.

Mom (aka Bonnie S), I could not have done this without your strength and wisdom – I love you too much and want to thank you for being there for me unconditionally and always being my biggest cheerleader!

## Preface

How did this all begin? Where did I start? Why do I want to do this?

It began when my son Nathaniel and I adopted each other. It has become a passion of mine to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. When I started my Master's in Community Development in 2021 my thought was that I wanted practical skills to enhance the skills I already have, such as program development, leadership, strategic planning, and evaluation. All of this drove me to do something that helps build better communities for Indigenous people across Canada. I also considered what I love doing and how to combine it into my practice. That is when I decided to develop the "Your Reconciliation Journey" workshop series. Now, I needed a community organization that shared my values and vision.

In Sept of 2022, I went through a transformation period where I began to evaluate my career and where I wanted it to go. I envisioned myself in a camper van travelling around BC, facilitating to groups of youth and training youth workers and teachers to implement the "Your Reconciliation Journey" workshop series. This costs money, and that is when the text went out to my friends, some youth from the community I knew and colleagues to see if they would consider being part of the board if I created the Reconciliation Project Society (RPS). I was pleasantly surprised that several people said they could join me on this adventure, and with that, the RPS was formed on Oct 23, 2022. Not only did this give us a way to apply for funding, but it also gave me an advisory board to guide the development of the Society, this report and the Your Reconciliation Journey workshop series.

I am a white cis female, an uninvited settler with Polish and Scottish/English ancestry. I am a single parent, daughter, Auntie, sister, cousin, friend, non-profit worker, a person with invisible disabilities, and a student with white privilege. I have felt a connection to the Indigenous culture almost my whole life. It started with one of my mom's stories about my great-grandfather and how he spoke Cree on his deathbed. My Great-grandfather owned a trading post, and he learned to speak Cree to trade with Indigenous peoples – this was sometime in the early 1900s. I hope and have no reason not to believe that my great-grandfather did this out of respect. As a teenager, I attended a coming-of-age ceremony with one of my close friends. I remember him telling me not to look into the eyes of the dancers because I could get sick. This was in the 1990s, and the ceremony took place in a small trailer on the reserve. Reflecting, I am unsure if Indigenous people could hold ceremonies, then. I wish I had known then what I know now so I could have followed some of the protocols and honoured my friend in a good way. Although I have always been somewhat of a social justice warrior, I have found in my late 40s that I value equity, justice, family, fairness, love, transparency, learning and understanding. One might say I have found myself on the right side of TikTok (TT) and admire the voices and experiences people share on the app. I have surrounded myself with other like-minded social justice warriors and find I am fighting against injustice and oppression even more now that I am in my 40s.

My son and I adopted each other when he was 14 after his biological mom passed away—the best choice I have ever made, and I am incredibly grateful to have him in my life. One of the reasons I like to learn about Indigenous culture is because my son is Ojibway from the Pic Mobert Nation. This has led me to learn and participate in several cultural ceremonies and work for Indigenous organizations. Connecting my son to Indigenous culture is essential for him to heal from the trauma he and his family have experienced. Adopting each other was the decision that started my journey to discover the

practices and protocols of local Nations across Canada. This has also led to building relationships and some incredible friendships with Indigenous people across Canada.

I am sharing this with you all, so you know my values and why I want to do this work and why I want to do it in a good way. I want to build a relationship with all of you as you accompany me on my journey to Reconciliation.

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

It is a well-known fact that Indigenous people are treated horribly, and I would like to see the systems change globally to create safer countries for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC). At some point, systems need to change, and people will realize that we need to do better because how the systems are set up now violates fundamental human rights. I believe we can create a system that allows Indigenous people to have their rights and freedoms upheld and where self-determination is the way of life for all Indigenous people across Canada. I also believe that all Indigenous people should have clean drinking water. It is disgusting that so many Indigenous people are without clean drinking water. I stand in solidarity with Every Child Matters, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirited (MMIWG2S), and #LandBack movements. I hope this report provokes feelings and inspiration to make positive changes for Indigenous people. I also hope non-Indigenous people feel inspired to take practical and actionable steps to start their journey of Reconciliation. I dream of facilitating Your Reconciliation Journey workshop series across BC and Canada.

Canada is not doing enough to ensure that Canadians understand what Reconciliation is and what it means. A national survey by the Institute for Research Public Policy (IRPP) in 2021 showed that 60% of Indigenous and 42% of non-Indigenous people who took the survey do not think enough is being done. Non-Indigenous participants indicated it was up to them to do more (National Survey Shows Increased Support among Non-Indigenous Canadians for Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation, n.d.). I also believe that things will not change for Indigenous people unless we build understanding, go beyond that understanding, and act.

The purpose of this report is to share my journey of Reconciliation with you. It is also about collecting the information I need to create the Your Reconciliation Journey workshops series that aims to build an understanding of Indigenous experiences within Canada's systems. I did this through secondary research and quantitative analysis using several platforms outlined in the report's methodology section. I drew on secondary research collaboratively and responsibly, ensuring that the research questions aligned with the values and priorities of the Indigenous creators. This approach contributed to a more culturally sensitive method of research that included respect, responsibility, and reciprocity (Q'um Q'um Xiiem et al., 2019, p.153).

## Method

In this section, I wanted to make this process simple and not overcomplicate my research, hoping everyone can understand the importance of Reconciliation and suggest some practical actions they can take after reading this report. I have done this because academic language can be exclusionary and inaccessible and used as a form of control over knowledge, so I am choosing to write in a way that is accessible for everyone and is easy to share.

## Framework

Storytelling, educational training, and secondary research with key informants through videos, books, and reels.

## Key Themes

I combined the video/reels and book themes and came up with my final list of themes to outline in this report:

1. whiteness
2. Residential School (the Truth)
3. Land and Treaty Rights
4. Re-Indigenization (Healing)
5. Reconciliation

## Recommendations

- Build Understanding
- Build Relationships
- Take Action

More recommendations are below and throughout the report - the list could be pages long on what to include in your Reconciliation Journey. It's up to you where you begin. Remember, though, it is a journey, not a destination. Your plan should be a working document that can and does change as you learn more and views and conversations change.

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# Abbreviations and Terminology

## Abbreviations

BC Treaty Commission - BCTC  
Government of Canada - GC  
Instagram - IG  
Institute for Research Public Policy - IRPP  
Reconciliation Project Society – RPS  
Snotty Nose Rez Kids - SNRK  
TikTok – TT  
Truth and Reconciliation Commission – TRC  
University of Victoria – UVic

## Terminology

### Racism

“a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>)

### White Privilege

“the set of social and economic advantages that white people have by virtue of their race...in a culture characterized by racial inequality” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/white%20privilege>)

### Reconciliation

Reconciliation is re-building open and trusting relationships between First Nations, Metis and Inuit and the government of Canada that leads to Land Back and Indigenous Sovereignty. Reconciliation goes further than that and is also about individual Canadians building relationships with Indigenous people and communities from the ground up.

### Key Informant

Key Informants are people with lived experiences who have shared their stories and voices through Indigenous content creation, such as IG reels, TT videos and Indigenous-authored books.

### Thematic Analysis

To provoke feeling while talking about the harm the government of Canada and the church has done and continues to do to Indigenous people.

### Secondary Research

A literature review of research that has already been done.

### Storytelling

First-person narrative

## Introduction

Canada is not doing enough to ensure that Canadians understand what Reconciliation is and what it means. A national survey by the Institute for Research Public Policy (IRPP) in 2021 showed that 60% of Indigenous and 42% of non-Indigenous people who took the survey do not think enough is being done. Non-indigenous participants indicated it was up to them to do more (National Survey Shows Increased Support among Non-Indigenous Canadians for Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation, n.d.). I also believe that things will not change for Indigenous people unless we build understanding, go beyond that understanding, and act.

The purpose of this report is to share my journey of Reconciliation with you in hopes of provoking feelings within all of you that inspire you to start your own Reconciliation journey. I will also use this research to create the “Your Reconciliation Journey” workshop series I hope to facilitate across BC and Canada. Through the workshops, you will build understanding and acceptance and engage in meaningful dialogue and reflection on the historical injustices and harms inflicted upon Indigenous communities. Through a structured and facilitated approach, participants will explore the complexities of Truth and Reconciliation and develop a deeper understanding of the impact of systemic oppression. The series will also provide opportunities for participants to consider their role in promoting healing and Reconciliation as they develop their Reconciliation journey action plan. Ultimately, the workshop series seeks to foster a more just and equitable society for all.

I want to start by acknowledging that I hold a lot of privilege, and this influenced my research in ways such as having access to academic, human, and financial resources. I would also like to acknowledge some of my biases, such as my belief that the government is harming Indigenous people today. I believe they do not care, and this has affected my research by books and videos I chose to read and watch on Reconciliation. Most books and videos I used to create this report are Indigenous-authored or produced. My privilege and unconscious biases have come up during my research and have influenced me to ensure Indigenous voices are highlighted in this report. One of the ways of being that several Indigenous communities follow is that knowledge is shared, and no one owns it. It is in this spirit that I will disseminate this report and my future work on Reconciliation in a meaningful way. I will show that Canadians are not doing enough for Reconciliation and recommend ways that we can be better agents of change for Indigenous communities across Canada.

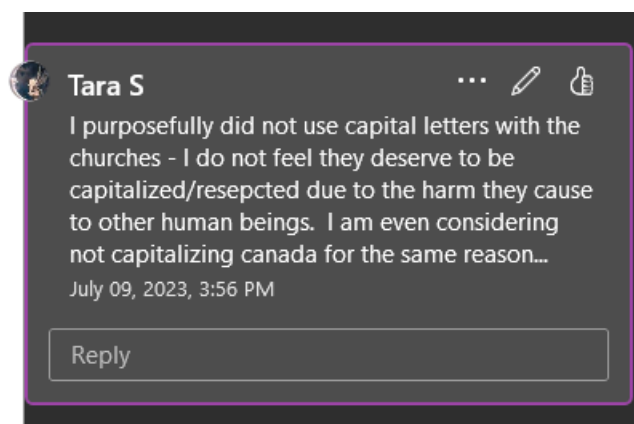
While visiting with the Snotty Nose Rez Kids (SNRK), a hip-hop group from Haida Gwaii, BC, we were talking about Reconciliation and hip-hop artist Quinto Nyce said, “It’s up to us natives to decolonize ourselves, and it is up to the settlers to reconcile” (SNRK, Nov 29th, 2022). When Quinto said these words, I knew that they would need to be added to this report because they are so accurate, and this is the lens I will be guiding this project. To add to this while watching an Instagram (IG) reel by Māori content creator Aio: a road to peace @learnmaoribroad speaks of how decolonization centres the colonizer and how Indigenous people need to re-Indigenization because it centres the Indigenous person and allows Indigenous people to reclaim and reconnect to Indigenous culture (Aio.thepodcast, 2023). Indigenous people are the best at representing themselves. This is why I will use re-Indigenization when talking about Indigenous people and de-colonization when talking about settlers/colonizers.

## Background

It is a well-known fact that Indigenous people are treated horribly, and I would like to see the systems change globally to create safer countries for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC). At some

point, systems need to change, and people will realize that we need to do better because how the systems are set up now violates fundamental human rights. I believe we can create a system that allows Indigenous people to have their rights and freedoms upheld and where self-determination is the way of life for all Indigenous people across Canada. I also believe that all Indigenous people should have clean drinking water. It is disgusting that so many Indigenous people are without clean drinking water. I stand in solidarity with Every Child Matters, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirited (MMIWG2S), and #LandBack movements.

Through my work in the community, I have learned that there is a lack of understanding of what Reconciliation is, what it means, how it works and our individual responsibility with Canada's Reconciliation goals. The lack of knowledge implies a lack of action - nothing will change; this is the ultimate problem. I have found through personal experiences that many do not understand what it means to see "Land Back" or when people talk about treaties. Bob Joseph is a member of the Gwawa'enuk Nation and a hereditary chief of the Gayaxala clan. He states that it is fundamental that non-Indigenous people understand how the Indian Act is a tool of oppression and the damage it has done and continues to do today to the Indigenous people and communities (Joseph, 2018, p.4). Joseph (2018) explains that the [Indian Act of 1876](#) is a piece of legislation that is solely to uphold Canada's agenda of genocide of Indigenous people and is still in use today – it is part of an Indigenous person's life experience. He also explains that the Indian Act is rooted in the [Bagot Report of 1844](#). The report suggested that the government needed to take control of Indigenous people, send Indigenous people to boarding schools, and assimilate them into European ways of being, knowing and doing (colonization). Settler colonization was to separate Indigenous people from each other and their lands deliberately – so we could steal their land and resources. [The Canadian Constitution Act of 1867](#) gave the government jurisdiction over Indigenous people (Joseph, B., 2018, p.7). According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Government of Canada (GC) has been trying to terminate Indigenous sovereignty through assimilation for over a century and still is. When residential schools were founded, this began the cultural, physical, and biological genocide of Indigenous children and people (TRC., 2015, p.1). Canada partnered with the roman catholic, anglican, united, methodist and presbyterian churches federally until the 1990s. Canada purposely removed children from their homes and put them in these schools to break their connections to their culture and identity as Indigenous children (TRC., 2015, p.2-3). I include the picture below because it speaks to who I am and what I value. It also is a strong statement against the churches mentioned above.



Picture 1: Comment from my Draft

The TRC was created in 2008 because of the largest legal battle between Canadian courts and Indigenous people and was like no other in Canada (Ramírez., 2021 & Mack and Newberry., 2020. & TRC, 2015). The TRC's mandate was to investigate "the history, purpose, operation and supervision of Canada's residential schools" (TRC., 2015, p.43). The TRC collected data from over 6000 residential school survivors, families and other people directly and indirectly affected by the attempted genocide of the Indigenous people of Canada. The TRC hopes their findings will help Canadians understand what happened in residential schools for children and their continued impact on Indigenous people today. They hope that this process of gaining understanding will build mutual respect between all people of Canada (Ramírez, 2021 & TRC, 2015).

## Project Client

### The Reconciliation Project Society

**Date of Inception:** Oct 23, 2022

**Canada Revenue Agency Business Number:** 75705 7740

**Societies Number:** S0077242

**The Purpose** of the Reconciliation Project is to create a movement towards a more just society for Indigenous people through anti-racism. It aims to create an understanding of Indigenous histories and current realities with non-Indigenous people.

**The Reconciliation Project Society** meets its purpose by:

- Training youth workers and teachers across Canada to teach the Reconciliation Project to youth.
- Teaching youth across Canada the Reconciliation Project
- Building relationships with Indigenous Communities across Canada

**The Vision** of the Reconciliation Project is for all youth in Canada to understand the violence Indigenous People endured through residential schools, the 60's Scoop, stolen land, and ongoing oppression to create a better Canada for Indigenous people for generations to come.

**The Mission** of the Reconciliation Project is to teach and empower youth workers with the knowledge and understanding of Truth and Reconciliation and deliver a series of workshops to youth in their communities.

**The Values** of the Reconciliation Project are:

- **Knowledge:** will be shared with youth workers and youth to increase understanding of the continued violence Indigenous people go through daily
- **Discovery:** youth will discover ideas on how to build relations with Indigenous communities
- **Empowerment:** youth will be empowered by knowing the truth about Indigenous history in Canada and will understand what Reconciliation means
- **Integrity:** the Reconciliation Project will build relationships with Indigenous communities to ensure knowledge is shared and reflects the current situation for our Indigenous communities

## Project Deliverables

The deliverables below allowed us to start a non-profit organization in a good way. Through my coursework in the Community Development program at UVic, I was able to support the Reconciliation Project Society by creating the following:

1. **My Reconciliation Journey Capstone Project** – completed.
  - a. This research/report will be the foundation of the workshop series.
2. **To create a Strategic Plan** – completed
  - a. This allows RPS to have direction and a plan moving forward.
3. **To create a Board Manual** – completed
  - a. This allowed Board members to fully understand the Society's goals, policies, and roles of board members.
4. **Your Reconciliation Journey” Workshop Sessions** – in-progress
  - a. Completion date – Summer of 2024.

## My Journey of Reconciliation

This is where my capstone project begins. Please join me on this journey of discovery as I share the steps I have taken and what I have learned along the way!



I have decided to write in the first person, even though one of my supervisors discouraged it. I want to share my journey with you in a de-colonized way through respect, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity. I will start with my guiding principles and end with the final piece - connecting my journey to community development. While you are reading this, I hope that something will resonate with you and you will act and begin your journey of Reconciliation with the Indigenous people of Canada.

## Guiding Principles

My guiding principles come from Indigenous authors like Carolyn Kenny, who explains that Indigenous knowing and doing is grounded in the seven generations' teachings. The Elders teach us that we must think about the consequences of our actions seven generations from now. She also states that Elder's bring their teaching through stories and our "road...is paved with land, ancestors, Elders and story" (Kenny, 2012, p. 3-4). The four strategies outlined below draw on the work of Indigenous researchers such as Carolyn Kenny, Shawn Wilson, and Linda Smith. Wiebe (2019) explains that we must bear witness to Indigenous expertise and do the work in a good way through ethical engagement (p.189). I am doing this through my guiding principles and the four strategies outlined below. As well, listening to Indigenous content creators allows me to hear and amplify Indigenous voices and not just hear the narrative of the colonizer and mainstream media.

### The four strategies used in creating this report:

1. Listen to the Elders and Indigenous People
  - a. I want to centre the Indigenous person, not the colonizer, in this report.
  - b. I credit Gordy Bear for teaching me the importance of listening to the Elders and the respect that must be given.
2. Use current social media platforms to hear Indigenous voices.
  - a. I feel these voices are current and reflect on what is happening in the world for Indigenous people.
3. Be open-minded for deeper learning.
  - a. I believe keeping your mind open and being curious leads to deeper understanding.
4. Share your knowledge through story with everyone.
  - a. I am doing this by having this conversation with my readers. Kovach (2010) states that sharing a story or having a conversation aligns with Indigenous ways of doing, knowing and being and is a "culturally organic" way to collect knowledge (p.42). I also believe this is what the content creators and authors are doing. They share their stories and engage in conversation through the comment sections of their reels and videos.

## Introduction

*"I attend two residential schools...I actually had dental work without freezing and sexual abuse from my catholic brother who was my supervisor...I was whipped slapped punched beat up...my arms were frozen for six hours I could not use them from the strap. I had ten straps on each arm for being late for study."*

~Ray Tony Charlie~

I have reflected repeatedly about a white person doing this work, and what it always comes down to for me is that my grandchildren will be Indigenous. I want them to have a better world to live in than is currently happening for Indigenous people in Canada and around the world. I have also reflected on "staying in my lane" and listened to numerous Indigenous friends and speakers. I have heard them say that it is not their job to teach us white people - white people need to educate themselves. This is

another reason why Reconciliation is so important to me. I believe that we need to be educated, and that's the only way that we can make a better tomorrow for the Indigenous people of Canada. Also, the decision to make the Reconciliation Project for non-Indigenous people is because a professor told me at residency that white people say dumb stuff all the time, and Indigenous people do not need to hear it.

## **Framework**

My framework is respect, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity. I wanted to frame my research in a way that honours Indigenous ways of doing things, and I did not want to do more harm. I want to build relationships respectfully and responsibly, ensuring that I am giving back to the Indigenous community meaningfully. This report will be available for anyone who wants to read it; no fee will be attached. Martin & Mirraboopa (2003) state that Indigenous research must be culturally safe and respectful and privilege Indigenous voices. This is another reason I wrote this report in the first-person narrative. Doing culturally safe research means honouring Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, which Martin & Mirraboopa (2003) describe as being interconnected and forming and maintaining relationships with all things (p. 208). Indigenous research is about relationships; our relationships with our ideas, with the land, with each other and "it's alive and changes over time," making research and Reconciliation about the journey – "learning, growing and changing" and what better way to see new things and build understanding than through a good story (Wilson et al., 2019, p xii).

## **Methodology and Methods**

### **Methodology**

I wanted to make this process simple and not overcomplicate my research, hoping everyone can understand the importance of Reconciliation and some practical actions they can take after reading this report. I have done this because academic language can be exclusionary and inaccessible and used as a form of control over knowledge, so I am choosing to write in a way that is accessible for everyone and is easy to share.

I decided to do secondary research because, as stated earlier, Indigenous people are experts in their experiences. I found my resources for this report through numerous books authored by Indigenous people. I attended educational trainings hosted by Indigenous, Black and People of Colour and watched Reconciliation videos and reels on TikTok (TT) and Instagram (IG) that Indigenous people created. I also used the University of Victoria's (UVic) online library through the various databases that they offer, such as sage journals, academic search complete and indexed TRC calls to action, as well as through Brightspace course material such as the MACD Project Template for the outline of this report. I also found resources online using the Google Scholar search engine. The keywords I used while locating appropriate material were Reconciliation, Truth and Reconciliation, and Reconciliation Canada. Another reason I decided to do secondary research is that I do not want to do any more harm to Indigenous people by asking them to relive the trauma through sharing their stories. I also do not believe in reinventing the wheel whenever someone wants to create something new. I believe in my fellow researchers and their work and would like to honour their work by using it to make a better tomorrow for Indigenous communities.

The methodology used throughout this report is what Kovack (2010) explains as decolonized research by putting the Indigenous person in the centre. Researchers must do this because of the inequities that

Indigenous people face every day. She explains that understanding that relationship is the most crucial piece of Indigenous methodology and is critical to know as a researcher because even de-colonizing my work puts me at the centre, not the Indigenous person (p.42). It is important to me to ensure Indigenous voices are being centred and not my own. I will do this through reflection and asking myself – whose voice is centred right now?

## Methods

*“Stories allow listeners to draw their own conclusions and to gain life lessons from a more personal perspective” ~ Shawn Wilson*

As part of my journey, I needed to reflect on my own beliefs and decide how to move forward in writing this report. I wanted to decolonize my work in a way that honoured Indigenous ways of learning, and knowing so, I chose the first-person narrative. Shawn Wilson talks about how he hopes that through his research, you build your own relationships with the research participants/co-researchers (2008, p.232). I hope you develop relationships with my key informants by reading their books, following their IG and TT accounts, and buying their merchandise.

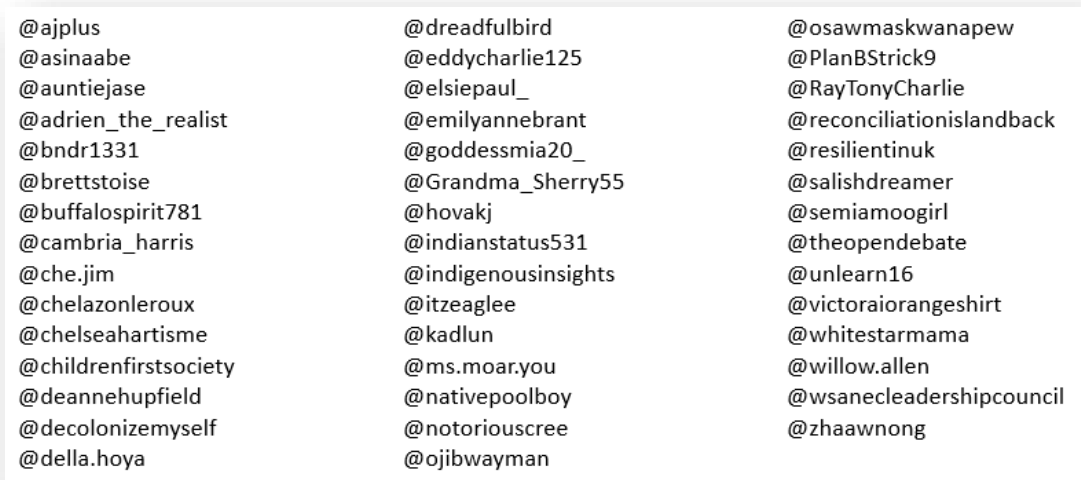
I like how McGregor (2018) describes a method as a plan to go after something you are curious about, to pursue, to inquire or to investigate, and to use specific procedures and techniques laid out in an orderly way (p.208). When I first started my journey, I thought I was well organized and that I was ready. I admire people who can stay organized in their research. Wilson (2008) says we cannot remove ourselves from the research; we are a part of the world, which makes us part of the research (p.377). This year was what I would call chaotic. So it holds true that my journey/research may not have been as well organized as I liked even though the methods I used were straightforward – read books and watch videos, pull out common themes, research these themes, and provoke emotions in the readers of this report. A lesson learned in this area is to use a small sample group, watch the videos/reels in a place where you can take notes and not in bed before you fall asleep or while you are just scrolling for hours– you need to scroll with a purpose and a plan to collect your data. Also, save your videos/reels to your phone/electronic device and not just within the app. Content creators can remove their content, trolls can report videos and reels to get them banned, and you can lose track of your saved videos/reels. I would encourage you to make different albums within your photos for any themes you want to report on. Save your references properly so you do not have to go back and find all the videos/reels you referenced within your report at the end.

Moving on, to meet some of the academic goals of my capstone project, I also read several articles – even writing that sentence made me think, “Okay, colonizer.” I am finding it very hard to walk in two worlds – Reconciliation in Canada will take a lot of work and a lot of understanding. Anyways, back to my methods. All articles I read were peer-reviewed and added to the betterment of the Indigenous People of Canada. Ball (n.d.) teaches us that to decolonize our research, we must show respect, reverence, responsibility, and reciprocity when involving Indigenous people. Therefore, I included my positionality and have spoken about Indigenous people’s historical and current background in this report. Many Indigenous communities feel that the word research is a dirty word because of the lack of respect from settler researchers who have come into Indigenous communities to do research with good intentions but with no benefit to the communities themselves (Wilson, 2008 & Smith, LT., 2021). My hope in doing this research and creating the Your Reconciliation Journey workshops series is that there is a long-term benefit to the Indigenous communities across Canada.

Reconciliation is not a tick-box list of things to do; it is a personal journey. A journey requires us to be open-minded and attempt to learn more deeply (Smith, 2017, p.9). The other methods I used in this report were reading books authored by Indigenous people, attending educational trainings/opportunities, and listening to people's lived experiences through TT and IG videos. I decided to use these platforms as the people are creating their content for people to see and view, so I do not feel that I am re-traumatizing Indigenous people by asking them personal questions. I have been watching and saving these videos for over a year. I have learned through watching these videos and reading the following books that my Reconciliation goals should be a working action plan so I can update my action plan as needed. I read the following books to gain a deeper understanding of Reconciliation. I bought some of the books I read on BC Ferries, and I did this because I wanted to see the narrative being put out to the public. The books have built my knowledge around Reconciliation and what Indigenous people are saying and asking for.

1. Indigenous Relations Insights, Tips and Suggestions to Make Reconciliation a Reality – Bob and Cynthia Joseph
2. 21 Things you might not know about the Indian Act - Bob and Cynthia Joseph
3. Namwayut – Chief Robert Joseph
4. Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Volume One Summary – TRC
5. To Share, Not Surrender: Indigenous and Settler Visions of Treaty Making in the Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia – Edited by: Peter Cook, Neil Vallance, John Sutton Lutz, Graham Brazier, and Hamar Foster
6. The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, Rebuilding the Economy – Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson
7. True Reconciliation: How to Be a Force of Change – Jody Wilson-Raybould
8. Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation – Monique Gray Smith

I follow hundreds of Indigenous, Black and People of Colour on TT and IG. As outlined above, Indigenous research is about building relationships, which I feel I did with the following content creators while doing my research. I did this by commenting and replying to their content. The purpose of doing this was also to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous people's experiences in Canada. Whether they know it or not, they have influenced my way of being, doing and knowing. I have compiled a list of content creators I continue to watch, learn, laugh, and grow with on TikTok and Instagram and thank them wholeheartedly for sharing their knowledge and experiences with me.



Picture 2: List of social media content creators I follow and learn from

I also tried to watch videos with different viewpoints throughout my journey. Indigenous content creator Adrien\_the\_realist (@adrien\_the\_realistttt) is one of the people. Black content creator TOD (@theopendebate) would also host live TT debates on several subjects, including Reconciliation, which included many different experiences and perspectives. It was also an exciting time on TT because I watched videos simultaneously as Canada’s “freedom convey” was happening in Ottawa. I found that this brought out more passion in people. Many Indigenous content creators were voicing that if you do not care about Indigenous issues, you are not fighting for freedom – people were upset, and it showed in their videos and reels. Ignorance also shined through in white people’s comments on social media. Racism is alive and well in Canada.



Picture 3: x.com/jimmcmurtry01?s=11

I also attended the following educational trainings while doing this work. I wanted to learn how to create safer environments for IBPOC people and gain a deeper understanding of how our systems are currently and historically affecting the Indigenous community.

1. Leadership Through an Anti-Oppressive Lens - Valerie Cortes, Royals Roads, Victoria, BC
2. Appropriation vs Appreciation & How to be a Good Ally - Gordy Bear, Victoria BC

3. Recruitment & Retention of Indigenous People - Indigenous Perspectives Society, Victoria BC
4. Anti-Racism and the Workplace - Salem Debs, Canada
5. Anti-Racism - Salem Debs, Canada
6. Film Screening and Anti-Racism Discussion - Simone Blais, Victoria BC
7. Grief and Loss for Community Workers - Learning Through Loss, Victoria, BC
8. Creating Safe Spaces for BIPOC Youth - Ruth Nakalyowa and Donnell McNab, Victoria, BC
9. Anti-Racism and Policy - Gayle Nyre, Victoria BC
10. Anti-Racism and White Privilege - Jasindra Jawanda, Victoria BC
11. How NOT to Tick a Box: Building Relationships with Indigenous Communities - Hulitan Family & Community Services, Victoria, BC
12. Reconciliation: The Journey of Our Generation - Cowichan Tribes, Victoria, BC
13. The Blanket Exercise - Capital Regional District, Victoria BC
14. Cultural Perspectives and Youth Work - Indigenous Perspectives Society, Victoria BC

One of my supervisors has pointed out that all my avenues of collecting data are secondary research and that the content creators and authors are not key informants. This is where I feel the need to fight the system a bit. So, for this report, I am defining key informants as people with lived experiences who have shared their stories and voices through Indigenous content creation, such as IG reels, TT videos and Indigenous-authored books. I consider them key informants because they are the experts in their own lives. It does not seem right to call them secondary key informants, so I will move forward using Indigenous content creators and authors as key informants even though there are some limitations to key informant research. According to Mckenna & Main (2013), the limits can be too heavy of a reliance on the key informants, their views and priorities may not match community members' views and priorities, and there are other challenges when selecting and relying on your key informants. One of my supervisors asked me how I would determine whose voice I would value (rely on), and I replied, "All of them." I genuinely believe that all voices matter, and this is why I was watching so many Indigenous people's videos and reels on TT and IG. I know you will never be able to find one person who can talk for the whole community. An example is even our elected officials not speaking for the entire community, as not everyone votes the same way. When I think about how the key informants were found, I feel like my key informants found me through my "for you" page on TT as well as I searched "Reconciliation, LandBack, Treaties, Re-Indigenization, colonization, racism, and Indigenous Sovereignty" in the search bars on TT and IG to find the people I learned from.

When learning from others, Mckenna & Main (2013) encourage us to take into consideration the person's position in the community (which I did by way of followers, but honestly, I did not care about the number of followers because all voices matter), if they are willing to share their knowledge and lived experience (which they did by way of creating the content on their page) and are unbiased or able to reflect on their biases. First, I do not believe that a person can be fully unbiased. I feel, in some ways, I can pull out other people's biases, such as oppressive systems that target people who are struggling and fellow human beings torturing and humiliating Indigenous CHILDREN to take the Indian out of the child – this is so sickening. I will never be okay with it, nor do I feel that Indigenous people should ever be okay with it. This is an example of how we all have biases – letting them flow brings emotion into the scene, and what is life without emotion? I love it when people get passionate/angry/emotional about a social justice issue and act on it. I believe this brings fuel to make a change.

The methods I used were straightforward – I read books and watched videos, pulled out the common themes, and researched these themes. I collected my data utilizing highlighters and ticks to keep track

of themes on a half sheet of paper. I thought that if I quantitatively kept track of my learning, I could put a chart in this report of the percentage of times each theme came out in my data.

### Data Analysis

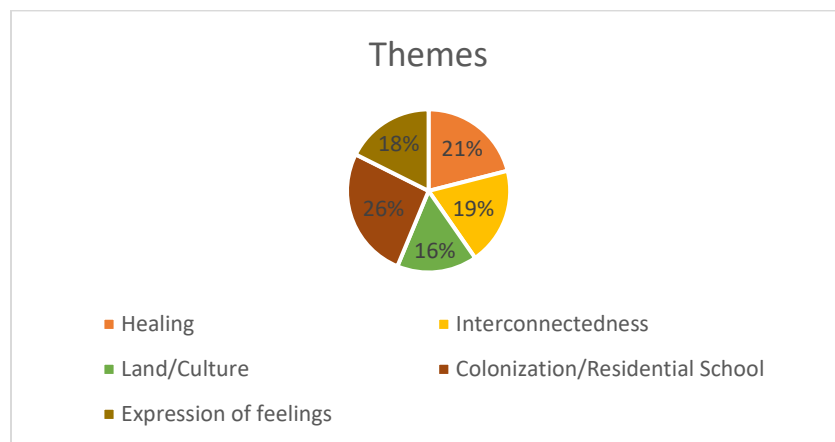
McGregor (2018) describes finding research as “a systematic search process,” so I decided on a plan of action and made the steps forward to gather the research I needed. He also explains there are many ways to report your findings and how you collect your data. Thematic analysis is a prevalent way to report any themes that may emerge from your research, and the common themes should be researched (McGregor, 2018, p.354-355). I will be doing a thematic analysis for my research - pulling out common themes and selecting meaningful quotes to sensitize people to feeling deeper emotions about what happened to Indigenous children and youth in Canada’s residential schools.

*While taking part in a learning opportunity, an Indigenous man stood in front of everyone and shared his story of how the priest made him stand up in front of his class, pull down his pants and play with his penis as a punishment for laughing with his friends ~ Tara Skobel.*

In the long term, I will use the findings to create an impactful curriculum for youth service providers and educators to create an opportunity for youth to start their Reconciliation journey across Canada. I had six different highlighters, and I would read each book or article and then highlight the six different themes throughout the reading. I would then go through the reading and tick how many times it was highlighted in the book or article. Other researchers did not inspire this way of collecting data; it is what made sense to me at the time. I wanted to make a chart for this report, so I wrote the themes on a half sheet of paper and started ticking away. I thought the report would look better if it had charts. As I write that, I think to myself – how very colonizer of me. I must remember that it is about the relationship between things, not a number, but since I already did the work, I decided to put the charts in anyway. The following five themes came out of the books. I found it easy to see the themes once engaged with the content.

1. Healing
2. Interconnectedness
3. Land/Culture
4. Colonization/Residential School
5. Expressions of Feelings

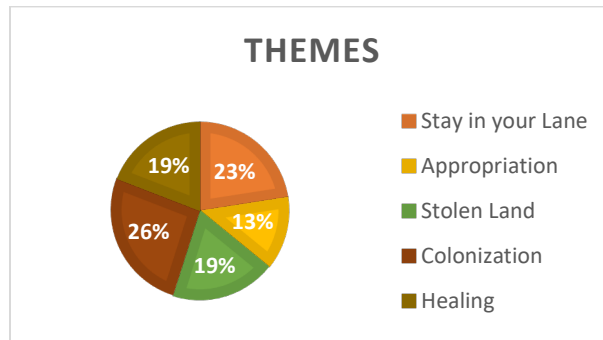
Table 1: Percentage of time each theme was mentioned in each book.



While watching the videos, I would keep track of the following themes by ticking the other side of the half sheet of paper when the following themes appeared:

1. Connection to Culture/Ceremony – Healing
2. White people need to “Stay in their Lane.”
3. Cultural Appropriation of Sacred Ceremony Regalia
4. Stolen Land
5. Impacts of Colonization/Residential School

*Table 2: Number of times each theme was mentioned in the videos.*



Of course, Reconciliation was the umbrellaing theme of most books and articles I read and videos/reels I watched. There was an overwhelming amount of content, and I sometimes found it hard to watch or read. We have a lot of unlearning to do. I watched 125 videos, approximately 375 hours of content. I did my best to include everything I learned in my findings and recommendations. A lesson from this is that my sample group should have been smaller – 125 is too much. I bet I could have selected 12 Indigenous content creators and came out with the with the same findings.

I combined the video and book themes and developed my final list of themes to outline below. This was easy to determine; I will not lie; the themes were prominent. It made sense to me to put the themes in the following order below. At first, I had residential schools before whiteness. Still, I reflected and decided that it was essential to unpack my privilege and understand the racist systems and how it all came about before I could build a deeper understanding of the truth – the attempt of genocide of Indigenous people. I needed to know where it all started, what happened, what rights are not being upheld, how to heal from the past trauma, and how to reconcile with Indigenous people.

1. whiteness
  - a. White people educating themselves.
  - b. White people have privilege.
  - c. White people are racist.
2. Residential School (the Truth)
  - a. Expression of feelings
3. Land and Treaty Rights
  - a. Stolen Land
  - b. Indigenous Sovereignty
4. Re-Indigenization (Healing)
  - a. Interconnectedness, Healing, Ceremony, and Culture (re-Indigenization)
5. Reconciliation
  - a. Culturally competent
  - b. Taking action

c. Building relationships

**Strengths and Limitations**

Some of the limitations are my feelings towards the government of Canada and the treatment of Indigenous people – it is what drives my Reconciliation Journey, but this could make it subjective instead of objective in some areas of this report, especially when outlining the truth of what happened in residential schools. Another limitation in my journey is that I have not reached out to local First Nations to let them know about the work that I am doing. Knowing the importance of building relationships and the time restraints of this project, the long-term plan will be to introduce myself to local First Nations as part of the “Your Reconciliation Journey” workshop series. However, I feel I should have already done this. I have not reached out of fear of rejection, but I will need to work through this fear as it is an essential step in my Reconciliation journey. Another reflective moment was with my colleague; we discussed whether the Reconciliation Journey workshop series was suitable for white people to facilitate and if it should be left in the hands of the Indigenous community. I have two thought patterns in this area:

1. I have heard from Indigenous voices that white people should educate themselves. This makes me believe my actions align with what Indigenous voices say.
2. Indigenous voices are also saying pay us to educate you. This might not be in line because there is no money to pay them, and I will be using their shared knowledge to enhance Reconciliation in BC and across Canada.

I have done some reflecting, and the goal will be to have Indigenous voices join the workshops when appropriate and when proper funding is in place. I am not willing to ask Indigenous people to do this work for free. My recommendation would ensure financial compensation for any work Indigenous people may do alongside the Reconciliation Project Society.

Some of the strengths of this report are that I have accountability to the RSP Board and my son, plus a network of people dedicated to unlearning. I have also contacted the creators on TT and IG and got permission to reference them throughout the report, and if any of them ask me to stop, I will. Not all creators got back to me, which I believe is because if they are not friends with you, they may not see your message, and I was unable to message them entirely due to their privacy settings. This step may be unnecessary because they have a public profile, but I wanted to be authentic and let them know.

**Findings/Main Themes**

The stops I made along my journey are outlined below. Each step below builds my understanding. I am looking at this through a holistic view. This means I need to understand the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual to fully understand, so my journey begins with whiteness and ends with Reconciliation.

**whiteness**

Where did it come from? Where did it begin?

In this part of my journey, I wanted to understand how to be anti-racist, leading me to several training workshops led by Black people. I listened to what they were saying, and I felt uncomfortable and like I would make a mistake. Of course, I did and still do make mistakes, but I have a better understanding of the historical and current experiences of the black community, and I take steps to be anti-racist.

#### ANTI-RACISM:

The government of British Columbia recognizes the need to address Indigenous-specific racism in this province and within our systems, practices, and policies. First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples have experienced ongoing, systemic and race-based discrimination that has maintained unequal treatment and normalized the false notion that Indigenous Peoples are 'less than' their non-racialized counterparts.

Anti-racism is fundamental to achieving the objectives of the UN Declaration. Therefore, anti-racism is foundational to the goals, objectives and actions laid out in this plan. Key to the implementation of the Declaration Act are actions that identify, challenge, prevent, eliminate and change the values, structures, policies, programs, practices and behaviours that perpetuate racism. This will require understanding and targeting the root causes of systemic discrimination, our colonial and racist foundations, and committing to take action to create conditions of greater inclusion, equality and justice.<sup>8</sup>

Picture 4: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/ministries/indigenous-relationships-reconciliation/declaration\\_act\\_action\\_plan.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/ministries/indigenous-relationships-reconciliation/declaration_act_action_plan.pdf)

In the summer of 2022, I attended my friends Gordy and Brianna's baby naming ceremony, and part of their cultural practice was to give the attendees numerous gifts. Gordy had a book in his hand and looked around the room. He looked at me and gave me the book. The book was called *Nice Racism: How progressive white people perpetuate racial harm* by Robin Diangelo. There were other white people in the room, but I think Gordy knew if he gave it to me, I would not be offended because I try my best to be anti-racist and maybe I would learn something. I know that I am racist, and I have a lot of unlearning to do – I mean, we are all racist because we all grow up in racist systems with racist foundations. Diangelo (2021) describes progressive white people as seeing themselves as not racist and that the anti-racism campaigns are not directed at them because they know about racism and its effects. She states that when she does workshops and keynotes, she is consistently asked how she will prepare the white people and if there should be a trigger warning. Also, some progressives want to talk and will attend workshops, but they likely think the other white people in the room need this education (p.2-5). My white friends have also asked me this type of question, or they instead suggested to me that I come at white privilege and racism gently for workshop participants. I was then talking to a person of colour about the same group of participants, and they said no, be blunt and direct – they should feel uncomfortable. I tend to side with the person of colour – white people NEED to feel uncomfortable for anything to change.

Where did racism start? Well, according to John Biewen, it was invented with a lie. In his podcast, *How Race Was Made (Seeing White, Part 2)*, Biewen outlined where racism started. In 1482, Gomes de Zurara was hired by the King of Portugal to write a book about Prince Henry the Navigator's travels – Henry was the first significant slave trader. In this book, Zurara glorifies Prince Henry's travels as the first time a white person enslaved black people directly instead of through a middleman. In Zurara's writings, he lumped together various different-looking people – lighter-skinned to darker-skinned. Zurara described slavery as an improvement over freedom because the slaves lived like beasts. He dehumanized them, portrayed them as one group and described them as inferior. In his writings, Zurara



I encourage anyone reading this to locate yourself on the wheel. This helped me understand my power and privilege. Knowing where I have power and privilege lets me know the areas where I might have enough power to work alongside like-minded people to help make change and create a better society for all.

I have been working on being anti-racist for several years now. When I was first unlearning, I felt a lot of uncomfortableness, and I was so worried I would make a mistake. Well, I have, and I will continue to make mistakes. These mistakes are essential lessons. I have learned that when I make a mistake by saying or doing something racist or discriminatory, I take accountability for it and make an action plan to ensure that it does not happen again. Other ways I practice being anti-racist is by listening to IBPOC voices through books and articles and by calling out racism (an example of this is I hosted a learning opportunity with the skin cancer clinic staff the other day about using the term “grandfathered in” after hearing the receptionist use it three times during a call - this term was used to steal/occupy Indigenous land as Canada was forming). I have educated myself by attending workshops to learn about racism, how it shows up, and its impacts; I highlight/share Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour creative content on social media, especially when there is a learning component to their content. I attend gatherings, protests and walks to stand in solidarity with people that our racist systems continuously harm.

## Residential Schools (1831-1996) the Truth

What is the Truth? What happened and why?

In this part of my journey, I felt uncomfortable, guilty, disgusted, shameful, and embarrassed of Canada and human beings, including myself. I wanted to fully understand the torture Indigenous children suffered and still suffer today. I want to know this to be a voice saying #NeverAgain.

### **165 years of genocide of Indigenous CHILDREN by the government and church**

Residential schools were not schools; some people call them death camps for children, and I agree. In this section, I wanted to call residential schools death camps because people need to feel the severity of what these schools were really like. Still, after talking with my supervisor, I chose not to as it could cause harm to an Indigenous reader. Canada's government has known for over 60 years that these residential schools were harmful. In the 1960s, Canada commissioned the Hawthorn Report on residential schools. The Hawthorn report clearly stated that Indigenous people should not need to assimilate and that the determination of Indigenous identities should be solely up to the Indigenous person (King, 2012, p.116). These residential schools were a jail yard where you needed protection from other students and joined “gangs,” and we would bully each other because of the abuse we were all suffering at the hands of the church and the government of Canada (Sellars, 2013, p.88). John B Custer, Lydia Ross, Mel H Buffalo, and Daniel Andre are just a few Indigenous people who describe the residential school as run like an army, very military - like we were a herd of cattle. They describe how they needed to make their beds, how they lined up to do everything and even what prayers they would say (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.79). Sellars (2013) remembers how her teacher would keep her distance except when angry and goes on to say that the school must have had a large budget for yardsticks, implying that if you upset the teacher, you would be hit with a yardstick and the force in which the teacher would use the yardstick would break it. And how speaking her mind would get her punished (p.36-37). The TRC (2015) states that most Indigenous children who were part of the residential schools

felt worthless and lonely and lived in fear of the schools (p.125). Raymond Cutknife, Timothy Henderson, Shirley Waskewitch, and Patrick Bruyere are just a few survivors who talked about how scared they were to be in these residential schools. The young Indigenous children would cry themselves to sleep, and how fear would turn into anger as they grew older. (Sellars, 2013, p.36-37; Smith, 2013, p. 186; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.125-126).

*It was not until 2008 that the Prime Minister of Canada publicly apologized for the treatment of Indigenous children in these residential schools: "The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history" (Joseph, B., 2019, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).*

The residential schools were created to separate children from their families and culture. They were poorly heated and ventilated, and there was a lack of food and supervision, making it easy for the abuse to occur. The TRC (2015) reports 3201 child deaths from 1867 to 2000 in residential schools – we know this is not true now as over 10,000 unmarked graves were discovered in Canada, and all the residential schools still have not been searched.

As outlined above, there is clear evidence that the residential schools did harm Indigenous people. We must all understand what happened in these residential schools for children so we do not repeat the past. Also, because of how Indigenous people are portrayed in the movies and the news, Canadians may only see Indigenous people in relation to "their" problems. Canadians tend not to connect "their" issues to the torture and violence Indigenous people endured while in the residential school and the Canadian policies for cultural genocide but see it as a weakness and personality flaw, making Indigenous people inferior (Joseph, B., 2013, p.37). This needs to change. Canadians need to understand the effects and impact the residential schools had on the Indigenous community.

When I think about the residential schools, I connect them to what happened in the holocaust and what is happening in Israel in 2023, with the difference being the church and government hiding what they were doing and blatantly knowing it was harming other human beings – what is wrong with people? They used Indigenous CHILDREN as test subjects; they starved them, raped them, they abused them – this is Canada's history, and the government and church said this was okay. I see this as cultural, physical, and biological genocide in the name of capitalism and consumption – it's sickening.

To make things worse, after Canada did so much harm to the children that when they returned to their homes and started families, they treated their children how they were treated, the government then decided that Indigenous women could not look after their children and put Indigenous children up for adoption all over the world – this was called the 60's scoop. And to make things even worse, they sterilized Indigenous women without their consent in the hospitals.

We also must understand that Indigenous people still endure violence today through the child welfare system, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirited people (#MMIWG2S), RCMP enforcing Canadian laws on Indigenous land taking away their Independence (#LandBack), still uncovering unmarked graves of children (#EveryChildMatters), not searching the landfill (#ReconciliationisSearchingtheLandfill), the Indian Act, no clean drinking water in some Indigenous communities and high rates of incarceration and suicide. When we understand the effects of colonization on Indigenous people, we can spread awareness and support - this is the start of the Reconciliation Journey. You can not have Reconciliation without first knowing the truth.

## Land and Treaty Rights

What does #LandBack mean? What does it mean when Indigenous people say you have no right on our land? Are we on stolen land?

As part of the truth, I knew I needed to learn more about Land and Treaty Rights. I had very little knowledge in this area and wanted to learn more. This led me to the next part of my journey.



Picture 7: Designed by Kwakwaka'wakw artist Curtis Wilson

I attended an engagement summit on Lək̓ʷəŋən homelands that the City of Victoria hosted in 2019. Of course, I was interested in the Reconciliation piece of the engagement and how the city would do better for the Indigenous community. In this workshop, I met a white woman who was so proud that she lived on Treaty land. This was the first time I thought about what the Douglas Treaty meant to the Indigenous Nations of Vancouver Island and how it was obtained. I mean, my reaction was to tell the lady the treaty was rubbish, and we colonizers/settlers took advantage of Indigenous generosity – which I do believe to be true. I knew this was inappropriate behaviour and knew I had to learn more.

In the book “To Share, Not Surrender,” the authors write that when discussing treaties, we need to include Indigenous land rights and British colonization (Lutz et al., 2021, p.6.). There were 14 agreements throughout Vancouver Island Nations when James Douglas was the land agent for the Hudson’s Bay Company (1849-1858). During a conference in 2017 that Songhees Nation and the UVic hosted at the Songhees Wellness Centre, they discovered that the Vancouver Island treaties were neglected by both the government and the academic community. There was no recognition of the Vancouver Island treaties in 1891 when the government published a list of treaties and land surrenders.

It was not until the 1850s that treaty-making became a bureaucratized process, and the process did not consider the First Nation's relationship to the land (Cook et al., 2021, p.6-8). From 1858 to 1864, Douglas went from treaties to the creation of reserves because of the fight for land control – violent settlers wanted the land they were promised, and Douglas wanted to honour the Indigenous people's rights. It is said that Douglas did and did not recognize Indigenous rights to land and did and did not recognize Indigenous people as humans during this time. This had long-term costs and consequences for Indigenous people in BC (Perry, 2021, p.29). We need to learn about Douglas (1803-77) because he was

the leader in BC at the time the Douglas treaties were being formed. Douglas was trying his best to do right by the Indigenous people and the violent settlers while the prime minister of Canada James A MacDonald was trying to kill the Indian in the CHILD. John A MacDonald was the first prime minister of Canada. He was Canada's leader from 1867 to 1873 and 1878 to 1891. During his time as prime minister, the Residential School system was created.

In 1852, the Douglas treaty was signed, and Chief Ivan Morris of the Tsartlip First Nation said that the government had not lived up to the treaty's terms. First Nations continue showing us these injustices through LandBack, MMIWG2S, and Every Child Matters demonstrations and bringing the government to court. These events will only intensify if non-Indigenous people do not start to recognize and acknowledge First Nations' understanding of the treaties. Elder Gabriel Bartleman recalls being present in a meeting when he was a young boy, where they discussed the treaty. Chief David Latesse oversaw the treaty between the Tsawout Nation and Douglas. Chief David Latesse told his people after meeting with Douglas that their lives would not be disturbed; they would be able to continue to use the land for food and travel as they always had, and nothing would be taken away from them (Cook et al., 2021, p.123-125).

The GC characterizes the Douglas Treaties as "deeds of conveyance" and states that the Douglas Treaties were only about 350 square miles in size. Douglas only wanted the land that would benefit the Hudson Bay Company (<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360945974712/1544619909155#rt>). There is a very different vibe/feeling when reading historical accounts from the governments' and the First Nations' points of view. There is no mention of relationships with each other, Indigenous relationship to the land or the interconnectedness of the human race with nature.

Andre Bear on his TT video states, "Canada does not own the land because they have no proof or bill of sale that the land was ever sold." He discusses the importance of settlers knowing whose land they are on and understanding the treaty because the settler must honour the treaty relationships. He says that "the treaties give Canada the legal rights to Indigenous land" (Bear, 2022).

After listening to many voices on TT regarding land rights and reading books that outline the history of treaties, I have come to the following conclusions. First Nations believed that they were entering into the agreements with good intentions. There was no understanding that the treaty would be lifelong, and the GC is currently not holding up the agreements in these treaties. The BC Treaty Commission (BCTC) states that Britain did recognize Indigenous rights to their land, and Britain declared in 1763 through a Royal Proclamation that only the crown could buy land from the First Nations, and they did this through treaties (<https://bctreaty.ca/negotiations/aboriginal-rights>). The BCTC also states that the only treaties that were in BC were the 14 treaties on Vancouver Island – the Douglas Treaties. As I have said above, the First Nations' understanding of the treaties was not lifelong. This is one of the reasons the BCTC helps negotiate what they call modern treaties.

## MODERN TREATIES

Modern treaties are negotiated amongst the governments of Canada, British Columbia and First Nations in BC. Treaties: are grounded in the recognition of the Indigenous rights; reconcile pre-existing Indigenous sovereignty with assumed Crown sovereignty; do not extinguish the rights, including title, in form or result; and are able to evolve over time based on the co-existence of Crown and Indigenous governments and the ongoing process of reconciling preexisting Indigenous sovereignty with assumed Crown sovereignty.

Picture 8: <https://bctreaty.ca/treaties-and-agreements/modern-treaties>

### MODERN TREATIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:

The Province's relationship with the eight Nations with whom it has signed modern treaties is distinct and unique. These treaties, to which the Government of Canada is also a signatory, set out constitutionally protected rights and obligations of the parties and contain the actions and language necessary to carry out those rights and obligations. The rights and obligations contained in modern treaties have been established, a distinction that has significant and important implications for the work the Province does with modern treaty nations.

The Province recognizes that, consistent with the distinctions-based approach, all Indigenous Nations can choose whether they wish to enter the treaty making process.

The Province's work with modern treaty nations to fully implement these treaties occurs both with individual nations and collectively through the Alliance of British Columbia Modern Treaty Nations (the Alliance). The Alliance was formed to collaborate and advance areas of shared interest relating to the implementation of modern treaties in B.C.

As part of the continued work under the action plan, the Province has entered into a government-to-government [Shared Priorities Framework](#) with modern treaty nations with the goal of renewing its commitment to timely, effective and fully resourced implementation of modern treaties. The framework will address three broad outcomes:

- Comprehensive organizational and policy changes in the public service to ensure timely, effective, fully resourced whole-of-government approach to treaty implementation;
- Appropriate fiscal arrangements to fulfill treaty rights and obligations; and
- Meaningful involvement of modern treaty nations in legislative and policy initiatives.

Progress made to achieve these outcomes will be included in future annual Declaration Act annual reports.

Picture 9: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/ministries/indigenous-relations-reconciliation/declaration\\_act\\_action\\_plan.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/ministries/indigenous-relations-reconciliation/declaration_act_action_plan.pdf)

One of the things I heard multiple times watching TT videos and IG reels is that RCMP and Canada have no right to be on Indigenous land, and this is true. The GC, including the RCMP and local police, have no right on their land. One thing treaties do is allow for Indigenous people to govern their land and selves – Indigenous Sovereignty. Modern treaties allow for Indigenous sovereignty and Canadian sovereignty. For me, this sounds very nice of Indigenous people as we know that Canada stole the land from Indigenous people. Some Indigenous people want to see all the land given back, and some want Canada to stay off their land. These ideas probably make the average white person feel uncomfortable. The thought of Indigenous people taking our land and our homes frightens us and, indeed, makes us feel uncomfortable. Just a reminder, we stole this land first, and I can hardly believe that Indigenous people are being as graceful as they are and are saying they will co-exist with Canada.

At the very least, the BC government has created a [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act Action Plan](#). I believe it is up to every person in BC to read this plan and do what they can to implement it. The action plan outlines its goals in four areas – one of which is the land rights of Indigenous people.

## GOAL

Indigenous Peoples exercise and have full enjoyment of their inherent rights, including the rights of First Nations to own, use, develop and control lands and resources within their territories in B.C.

## OUTCOMES

A British Columbia where:

- The distinctions-based rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected, upheld and exercised.
- The rights of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations title, are exercised, recognized and respected, and cooperatively implemented including through treaties, government-to-government agreements and other constructive arrangements.
- The Province's laws, policies and practices recognize and respect the distinctions-based rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Dispute-resolution and relationship-building with Indigenous Peoples are supported through cooperatively established institutions and processes that are fair, just and accessible, integrate Indigenous laws and protocols, and use the court system only as a last resort.
- First Nations benefit socially, culturally and economically from land and resources in their territories, including having access to multiple and diverse streams of revenue to finance their governments and deliver services to their citizens.
- Through their governments, Indigenous Peoples exercise their autonomy to set their own priorities, allocate fiscal resources and determine how to deliver programs and services to their citizens.
- Indigenous Peoples have meaningful and sufficient access to abundant and healthy traditional foods and have peaceful enjoyment of their harvesting rights.
- First Nations exercise their right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development, use and/or stewardship of their traditional territories and other resources.

*Picture 10: Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan – page 14.*

The @wsanecleadershipcouncil reel on IG has one of their members letting us know that they have started a Land Trust where settlers can give back lands to the WSANEC Nation at [www.supportlandback.com](http://www.supportlandback.com). (WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council, 2023). I encourage us all to give what we can to the Nation whose land we live on, whether through land trusts, volunteering or donating.

There is a statement white people like to make, "It's my tax money," when talking about where First Nations communities get their money. Well, what I like to say to these white people is – have you heard of land trusts? According to the government, your local First Nations receive their funding through capital and revenue moneys.

### Capital moneys

Capital moneys are trust moneys that come from the sale of the First Nation's surrendered lands, from an interest in the land, or from the sale of the First Nation's non-renewable resources.

Examples of capital moneys include proceeds from:

- oil and gas revenues
- sale of a First Nation's reserve lands
- sale of timber without a reforestation program
- sale of gravel

### Revenue moneys

Revenue moneys include all other band moneys other than capital moneys.

Examples of revenue moneys include proceeds from:

- the sale of renewable resources
- reserve land activities such as leases, permits and rights-of-way
- fines
- interest earned on capital and revenue moneys held by ISC

Picture 11: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1428673130728/1581870217607>

The picture above does not say tax money pays for First Nation bands. And yes, some tax money may be spent on First Nations communities - so there should be. Let's not forget that in Neskantaga, Canada, they have had a boil water advisory for 27 years, and according to Layla Staats, the children feel "like they don't exist" (2023, Staats). Let's put our tax money into clean drinking water for all communities in Canada and SHOW these CHILDREN that they matter.



Picture 12: Artist: Jennifer Adomeit

The map above "illustrates the synchronous, intricately connected relationship that First Nations People have with their land." explains the artist, Jennifer Adomeit...[Jennifer] continues: "It serves as a reminder that we need to learn more about the culture and history of the Indigenous people in our country and help to protect the land which they so greatly rely upon. And of course, we should remember where our home and native land actually came from"

(<https://www.facebook.com/broadviewunited/photos/a.172461876185241/2863290300435705/?type=3>)

I encourage everyone to know and sing “Our Home “ON” Native Land moving forward. I suggest changing our anthem to read “ON” Native Land. As a white person, it is getting tiresome that so many white people have opinions about the Indigenous people of Canada and their rights and have never picked up a book or googled to learn about land rights, treaties, and Indigenous sovereignty. The learning I am taking away in this section is that we need to do more to support the First Nation communities and build an understanding of how they are funded, what it means to live on unceded land, and Indigenous rights to govern themselves.

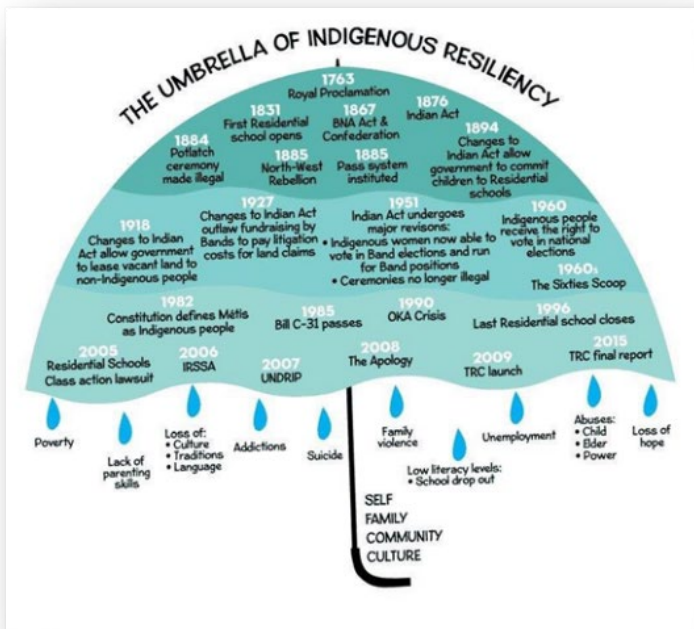
Before the Indian Act, Indigenous people had their own systems of government. In 1869, the Indian Act imposed European-style elections on First Nation communities. Chief and Council would be elected, and the Chief oversees administering the Indian Act – still to this day. This system of government does not meet the values and needs of Indigenous communities. Imposing this type of government on Indigenous communities is designed for assimilation (Joseph, 2018, p16). I believe this is why there is conflict on which Chief has land say. I look at it like this – Hereditary Chiefs are in charge of the land – their entire territory, ensuring they sustain their resources. The Band Chiefs administer the Indian Act, which is why conflicts within Nations exist. As each Nation becomes independent and gains its sovereignty through modern treaties, it will have to decide how to lead – through its traditional methods of government or as laid out in the Indian Act. Unfortunately, at this time and due to the Indian Act, they are forced to run as the Canadian government and here lies the problem.

## Re-Indigenization

How do we decolonize?  
How do Indigenous people heal from physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse?

The next part of my journey started as I wanted to learn about decolonization. I have learned to decolonize fully; we would need to be at war with ourselves and dismantle our entire systems from the inside out – this is why I hope to facilitate the workshops for youth as they are the leaders of the next generations.

Indigenous Sovereignty is part of the healing process – I believe Nations will be able to heal when they gain their land back and/or sovereignty through modern treaties. When we think about healing, we first need to acknowledge intergenerational trauma. There is a ton of evidence that people who experience a traumatic event can pass that trauma to multiple generations. This can happen from a personal event, such as rape, to a collective event, such as attempted genocide (Bombay et al., 2009). When we look at the trauma (sexual, physical, emotional, verbal violence, starvation, and neglect) that happened in residential schools, the 60’s scoop, and the justice and child welfare system, we can determine that this trauma has been passed down through generations. Indigenous people have endured 165 years of attempted genocide, torture, rape, malnutrition, and sterilization and continue to endure violence today through our government, justice, and child welfare systems.

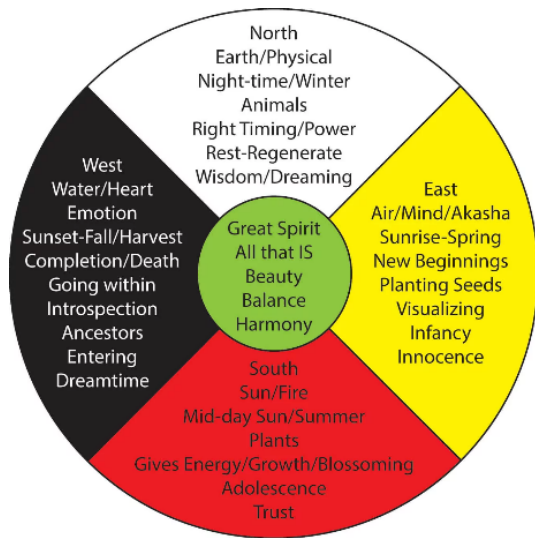


Picture 13: Created by Monique Gray Smith in 2000 and updated for the *Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation Teacher Guide* by Tasha Henry.

Monique Gray Smith’s Umbrella of Indigenous Resiliency outlines what effects the government and church have had on Indigenous people and the effects that are still happening today.

This is a good learning or reminder for white people to remember how much trauma Indigenous people have endured and continue to endure today through our violent systems of government.

So, how do Indigenous heal from the trauma caused by the church and government?



Picture 14: <https://katherineskaggs.com/wp-content/uploads/medicine-wheel.jpg>

Mawhiney & Nabigon (2011) explain that the healing process for Indigenous people is holistic, and Indigenous people have been practicing holistic healing for many centuries (p.15). The medicine wheel is a Cree teaching and helps guide the holistic healing process. TT creator @sciencenorth (Science North, 2023) speaks of the importance of the medicine wheel in Indigenous culture and explains what it represents. The four colours (red, yellow, black, and white) represent everyone on Turtle Island (North America was called Turtle Island before colonization), the four seasons (Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall), and four aspects of well-being (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual). TT creator @maggielamar126 (Ajei, 2022) teaches us that there are four directions (North, East, South, West), the four stages of life (infant, child, adult and Elder), the four essential elements (air, water, earth and fire), the four medicines (sage, cedar, sweet grass, and tobacco) and how the medicine wheel

represents balance, holistic healing and the wholeness of life. This holistic model is a way to live in balance and guides us in our learning and healing journey (Science North, 2023). Another holistic method Indigenous people use as part of their healing is the Seven Grandfathers. The Seven Grandfathers teach that everything is interconnected, and harmony ties us together (Wagamese, 2019, p.38-41).

IG creator @zhaawnong explains Anishinaabek's teaching of the Seven Grandfathers as "mino bimaadiziwin" the "good life" (Webb, 2023). The Seven Grandfathers came to teach the good life through seven teachings – Humility, Courage, Respect, Love, Honesty, Truth, and Wisdom.

1. Humility
  - a. Foundation of everything
  - b. To know yourself
2. Courage
  - a. To have integrity
  - b. To be brave from the heart is to have courage.
3. Respect
  - a. To honour all things
  - b. To have humility is to have respect.
  - c. To be gentle with ourselves
4. Love
  - a. To have unconditional love for all creation
  - b. To heal all things
  - c. To find peacefulness through love
5. Honesty
  - a. To live an honest life
  - b. To be honest,
  - c. Honesty recognizes Equality.
  - d. To treat people equitable
6. Truth
  - a. Truth talks about both surrounding ourselves in truth and being true to who we are.
  - b. To know the above is true.
7. Wisdom
  - a. To know the above is to have wisdom.
  - b. To cherish knowledge

(Wagamese, 2019 & Webb, 2023)

Indigenous people use other methods to heal as well. I believe Indigenous people are healing through connecting to their culture, drumming, dancing, singing, ceremonies, powwows, potlatches, healing circles, campaigns, sharing creation stories, humour and learning their language. In my experience with my son, I found that the more things we did that connected him to his culture, the better he felt about himself.

What can settlers do to make it easier for the healing to happen?

We can continue to acknowledge the violence and unjust systems of racial superiority; we can listen; we can believe the lived experiences of Indigenous people; we can end the court cases and give the

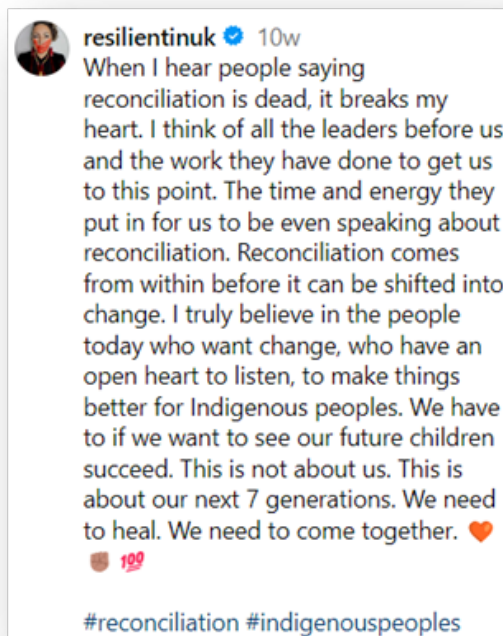
Indigenous people what they are asking for; we can walk and stand with Indigenous people by being part of the campaigns that affect them such as but not limited to Every Child Matters, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirited, Moose Hide, and Land Back, we can treat Truth and Reconciliation Day as a learning day, not a holiday, we can volunteer at Indigenous People Day events, we can buy from Indigenous makers, and donate to important causes like the Moose Hide Campaign and Orange Shirt Day. We can also share their stories on social media and wear our orange shirts, not just on Orange Shirt Day. By doing the above, I believe you are helping to create a safe and supportive space and building relationships with Indigenous people and communities. And in this space and through these relationships, healing can begin.

A trusted friend asked me if I was the right person to lead this module of the workshop series – straight up asked me, “As a white person, is that ethical?” My friend is right. It is unsuitable for me to do this, so this module of the workshop series will be hosted/taught by an Indigenous person. I feel as a white person, it is not my lane.

## Reconciliation

Can Reconciliation happen? Is Reconciliation dead?

In this part of the journey, I learned that it’s not a tick box of things to do; it is ongoing learning, understanding, and taking action for justice for Indigenous people. It’s building authentic, meaningful relationships with each individual and each Nation across Canada.



Picture 15: Resilientinuk’s description of her IG Reel on Reconciliation (<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cxu7djKr9I8>)

Reconciliation is controversial; some may feel it is dead (Wilson-Raybould, 2022, p.4). Manual & Derrickson (2017) state that when the GC talks of Reconciliation, “they really mean extinguishment of our [Indigenous] title and rights” (p.202). They go on to talk about how Reconciliation is “self-serving rhetoric” because the GC has no intention of recognizing Indigenous land rights, and true Reconciliation cannot happen without this. They go on to speak of how if a change is going to be made, it must come from the ground up – grassroots movements (p.203). Chief Robert Joesph (2022) also states that Reconciliation is not just political. It happens where we learn, work, play and live, and Reconciliation starts with us, grassroots from the ground up (p.199). Besides the books I read, I searched IG for “Reconciliation is Dead” and found @resilientinuk’s reel on Reconciliation. She writes that there have been 150 years of violence towards Indigenous people – it is going to take time to heal. She further states that for

Reconciliation to move forward, we need to give it time, education, truth-telling, and recognition of our shared history (Brousseau, 2023).

For this report, I will define Reconciliation as re-building open and trusting relationships between First Nations, Metis and Inuit, and the GC that leads to land back and Indigenous sovereignty. Reconciliation goes further than that and is also about individual Canadians building relationships with Indigenous people and communities from the ground up.

Wilson-Raybould (2022) divides her book True Reconciliation: How to Be a Force for Change into three parts: Learn, Understand, and Act. Learning about the history of violence and attempts of genocide of the Indigenous people and acknowledging the history is part of the learning and needs to be talked about so it NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN. Being truthful and recognizing the harm that has been done are the beginning stages of building a new and trusting relationship with Indigenous people.

Wilson-Raybould (2022) also speaks about the need for societal structural change in her understanding stage of the book and how we need to support these changes through our choices in our everyday lives (p.185-186). She goes on to speak about how Indigenous communities had their governing systems with hereditary dimensions, collective decision-making, and the roles of women and men, which were valued and critical to their governing systems. There were practices and protocols on how decisions about the land were made with their neighbours – these systems were destroyed by colonization (p.194-196). Settlers need to understand that Indigenous people were not “savages.” They were humans with their ways of knowing, being and doing, and when we came here, we tried to destroy Indigenous people by dehumanizing them so we could take the land and conquer/colonize what we call North America.

This is where the Act of Reconciliation comes in. We must all act and take action to dismantle our systems of racial superiority. This is where we must ask ourselves what we can do to make a better society for Indigenous people and the next seven generations. This is the moment in the report where I need to state my recommendations. I acknowledge that a ton of information is not in this report, but I only had a certain number of pages, and I already went over.

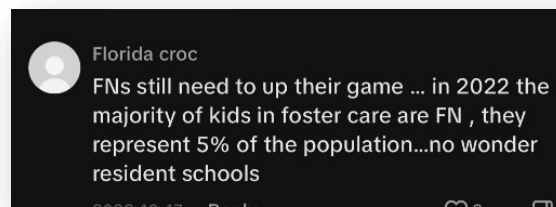
## Recommendations

What can I do? Where do I want to start?

And so it begins, the final part, although it does feel more like the beginning – the building of Your Reconciliation Journey workshop series. I hope I have inspired you to start your own Reconciliation journey by sharing mine with all of you. My journey does not end here. It continues a forward loop as I continue to learn.

When embarking on your Reconciliation Journey, you must note that you will feel uncomfortable, which is good because it means you care. If you become defensive in this uncomfortableness, you may need to lean in a little more and reflect on why you got defensive – the truth hurts, which is okay. We do not need to defend ourselves. We need to unlearn our foundations of knowing, doing and being that are built on racial superiority.

I have learned a lot – I thought I knew a lot. Still, I gained a deeper understanding of how our systems run, the privilege I hold, and how there are still people out there saying, “I am not racist; I have black friends,” and in another breath, using the N-word as a non-Black person and getting defensive when asked not to use that word in front of someone. This happened to me last night, Dec 8, 2023, and below is a comment from a question asked by Black content creator @theopendebate asking when the first time you learned about residential schools (TOD, 2022) – it’s 2023, and people still have so much unlearning to do.



Picture 16: Comments from [https://www.tiktok.com/@theopendebate/video/7154197503959665925?\\_r=1&\\_t=8inPDjeQ098](https://www.tiktok.com/@theopendebate/video/7154197503959665925?_r=1&_t=8inPDjeQ098)

My big takeaway from all of this is about land. The GC needs to find a way to give back land and resources – I mean, one solution could be to take one percent of the landowner's tax and give it to the local Nation in that area or allow landowners to give to the local Nation through land tax. There needs to be more to Reconciliation than a sorry and a handshake. Not only do we need to give Land Back, but we also need to make Indigenous communities able to sustain the stewardship of the land. I also understand that this will not happen unless the majority of Canadians get behind this plan. This is where it happens – grassroots from the ground up, with each of us creating an action plan to help create a better society for Indigenous communities across Canada and Turtle Island.

Some people do well with to-do lists. I am one of these people, so I will make a to-do list of steps to consider while embarking on your Reconciliation Journey. The list is inspired and taught by the Indigenous content creators and authors named above in the methodology section.

#### **Build Understanding:**

- Learn the history of what happened in Residential schools through the voices of the people who experienced it. You can search for any topic on IG or TT and find people talking about it with all types of views. Use your critical thinking skills to hear all the voices.
- Build an understanding of treaties and land rights.
- Do not wear Regalia as a Halloween costume. Learn what Regalia is and how it is sacred to Indigenous people.
- Read to understand the Indian Act and how it affects Indigenous people today.
- Reflect on your privilege and why you are doing this work often.
- Take any educational training you can as often as you can.
- Understand UNDRIP, the 94 Calls to Action and the Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People Act Action Plan. Use these as foundations of where we need to go and strive for
- Learn about the court cases of Indigenous people against the government of Canada. Ask Canada to settle court cases regarding residential schools.
- Listen, Listen, Listen, Reflect, Reflect, Reflect

## **Build Relationship**

- **Build a relationship with your local First Nations before needing something.** This is an important piece. Do NOT wait; the opportunity is now – reach out and say hello.
- Learn how to say hello and thank you in the local language.
- Use the language Indigenous, First Nation, Metis, and Inuit.
- Join and support Indigenous campaigns.
- Stay humble – you are not saving anyone, and you are going to make mistakes.
- Learn the Indigenous creation stories and history of the land you live, play and work on.

## **Take Action**

- Learn to acknowledge and thank the local Nations meaningfully and intentionally. Acknowledgements and Appreciation should come from the heart. There is no right way or wrong way. I include in the ones I do with acknowledgement of the violence Indigenous have and still endure today, recognizing Indigenous resiliency in the government's attempt of genocide; I thank them for sharing their land and show appreciation for the land I live, work, play and love on.
- Start following and sharing Indigenous, Black and People of Colour creators on social media.
- Buy from local Indigenous makers. Make sure you do not buy from people who are appropriating Indigenous art and culture. For example, you would not buy a dream catcher from the dollar store.
- Reach out to the government (municipal, provincial, and federal) and request clean drinking for all Indigenous communities.
- Join the mailing list of Indigenous events you can volunteer at.
- Stay in your lane and use your networks to help make positive change.
- Create safe spaces that include everyone. Remove barriers whenever possible.
- Build a network of like-minded people to stay accountable for your work.

## **Reconciliation in the Workspace**

The Indigenous Perspective Society's training Recruitment & Retention of Indigenous People inspired and taught the following ideas.

- Ask local Nations what they need and how you can help through your organization.
- Learn to acknowledge and thank the local Nations meaningfully and intentionally. See above for some ideas.
- See your local Chiefs and let them know what you are doing as an organization. The leadership team should do this. Bring a gift like donuts and muffins, a bouquet of flowers for the office, or a fruit basket.
- Provide free space for Indigenous people to gather and share stories.
- Hire an Elder in Residence and a Cultural Liaison Worker. Do not rely on your Indigenous staff to educate non-Indigenous staff.
- Deliver programs on Reconciliation and offer Reconciliation and anti-racism training to your staff.
- Make program spaces Indigenous-friendly by displaying First Nations artwork.
- Host your meetings in circles and have a talking stick.
- Smudge before doing wellness work.
- Create a wellness room with fresh water, food, and traditional medicines that feels comfortable and relaxing.
- Go to and financially support National Indigenous Peoples Day and Truth and Reconciliation Day events. I would recommend organizations have mandatory Truth and Reconciliation Day

training on Sept 30th each year and allow their Indigenous staff to have the day off to mourn the loss of the children through colonization in Canada.

- Ensure current language is updated in all forms, posters, flyers, and documents.
- Allow flexible work schedules that allow their children to be cared for at the organization and in the community.

The list could be pages of ideas on what to include in your Reconciliation Journey and your workplace. It's up to you where you begin. Remember, though, it is a journey, not a destination. Your plan should be a working document that can and does change as you learn more and views and discourse change. Our learning or unlearning adventures will vary from person to person – I encourage you to embrace these opportunities and learn all you can – become a living, breathing, Reconciliation role model.

I will leave you with a vital lesson from my friend Gordy Bear about Elders's well-being while doing something for you. When you invite an Elder to your event/organization/program, you are responsible for them from when they step out of their house to when they step back into their home. This means you are responsible for their well-being (basic needs, food, water, comfortable chairs, easy access, and help to get to their location within the space, transportation, and anything they might ask for), and they must feel comfortable and always looked after. Elders are fed first and usually served by the youth. One thing I learned the hard way is to always serve jam and butter with bannock and/or fry bread unless you are serving fry bread tacos or hotdogs. On second thought, it might be better to have butter and jam on hand no matter what – I say this humorously, but seriously, it is essential!

## The Final Piece

### My Reconciliation Journey and Community Development and Engagement

The final piece section came after the above capstone project. As part of passing my capstone project with minor adjustments, I needed to add a piece around community development. I felt that was more than reasonable, so here it goes...

One of my supervisors kept calling this report a reflection, and I am unsure how I feel about that. Is it a reflection piece, or is it the journey I took to learn about Indigenous experiences through their eyes, to learn about Reconciliation and to come out of it with a tangible item that can be used to create a just and equitable society for all? It's like the poster above that shows the river and the steps I took along the way. I was learning as I was floating down the river, and sometimes, I needed to paddle up the river, which was complex and full of unlearning. Of course, I reflected regularly throughout the journey as it is essential to ethical research and Indigenous ways of doing within community development. You know what I will leave up to you, the reader, whether you speak of it as a journey or reflection – it is like a choice, your own adventure.

When I think about my journey, not only with this capstone project but also through UVic's Community Development Program, I must end with connecting Indigenous ways of doing with community development. Hopkins & Thomas (2016) state that community development is about collaborating and is not a competition (p.29), and "any power, good or bad, if not recognized, *can become oppressive and harmful*. We need to make a concerted effort to understand our relationship with power and privilege to use this to co-create a more caring, just, equitable and life-enhancing world - in solidarity with those our current culture most marginalizes" (p.25). The ideas above remind me that relationships are the most

important thing, whether doing research or building connections and networks in the community. You cannot do community work without incorporating Indigenous ways of doing - respect, responsibility, and reciprocity (Ball n.d., Kovach 2010., Q'um Q'um Xiem 2019., Wilson 2008). Community development work, to me, means listening and hearing, engaging the people, and helping make their ideas sustainably come to fruition. One way I believe Indigenous sovereignty can happen sustainably is what Goodchild (2021) describes as a "Two Row Methodology" framework - a way for two systems to work together while doing different things and respecting each other simultaneously. Suppose the Canadian government would release their power, stop viewing it as a competition for resources, honour Indigenous rights to their land, and support Indigenous sovereignty. In that case, I believe we, as Canadians, could live in a way that eliminates harm being done to Indigenous people in Canada. I also believe that to sustain our world, we must adapt to the Indigenous worldview of interconnectedness and let Indigenous people be stewards of the land again as they have been for 1000 years. I did not keep track of how many times the words land, connection, and culture came up, but it was clear that they were all interconnected, and you cannot have one without the other.

I believe this to be the same for community development. You must understand the relationship the people you are engaging have with the ideas they are sharing, with the land, and what the culture is of the community you are working alongside. Plus, you must have respect, responsibility, and reciprocity in all your community work. When asked, "What does your report do to advance the community development?" I would say it highlights the importance of centring Indigenous people's voices in all research that has to do with Indigenous people; it outlines practical steps you can take to include Reconciliation as part of your personal and organizational goal, and most of all, it encourages you all to work outside the academic box (if you want to) and work in a way that aligns with your values. Do the work in a way that makes sense to you – your work does not devalue just because it does not fit perfectly into some pre-determined set of rules. Be authentically you in all things you do!

One of the practical things you can take away from this work is the process by which you do things. Taking a slow (not too slow) and gentle approach to things is important. Some of the things I am trying to do is pause more, lower my voice, try to talk in a friendly tone even when triggered (this is hard), listen to all the voices, hear all the voices, stay accountable to the work and the relationships, stay true to yourself, and most importantly bring Reconciliation into everything you do. This report gives you a foundation for Reconciliation grounded in Indigenous voices and knowledge.

I hope this report has given you a deeper understanding of whiteness, residential schools, land and treaty rights, Indigenization, decolonization, and Reconciliation. Now that you have a foundation, you can ask yourself the following questions while creating, facilitating, and implementing community development initiatives worldwide.

1. Where does my power/privilege sit?
2. What can my power influence to help make positive change? Where might it harm?
3. How will this initiative impact all things seven generations from now? Remember, everything is interconnected.
4. What are the different relationships that need to be respected and looked after? Remember, it is about relationships.
5. How do I feel about not owning the knowledge? How will I distribute the knowledge in an ethical and meaningful way?
6. How does my work give back to the community and honour the current community strengths?
7. How can I incorporate Indigenous voices into this initiative?
8. How do I build reciprocity with local First Nations communities?

9. How can I connect Reconciliation to this initiative?
10. Repeat questions one through nine multiple times throughout your initiative.

A part of community work is engagement and facilitation. Straight up, the **best way I have found to engage the community is through food!** I am not talking about just snacks, either. Cook dinner with a main, dessert, beverages, or build-your-own sandwich/salad lunch bar (meet all dietary needs). Set up the room in a way that people can eat and connect. I usually set up centrepieces with nice tablecloths and get-to-know-you questions on the table with a stack of napkins and salt and pepper. I encourage participants to sit with people they do not know and learn about each other. Facilitating connections between community members is a massive part of my community work. I also provide coffee, tea, and water at every engagement event I host. This is especially important for morning meetings. I try to have muffins and fruit at morning meetings as well. When I am facilitating a meeting or training, I usually set the room up in a circle even when tables are needed – it looks more like a square, but the vital piece is everyone can see each other.



Picture 17: YPQI Hierarchy of Quality Programming (<https://forumfyi.org/weikartcenter>)

Below are some practical skills I use for community engagement and facilitation work. The strategies below are inspired and taught by “bob” from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality and the [Youth Program Quality Assessment Tool](#) - “we empower youth development leaders to adapt, implement, and scale research-validated quality improvement systems to advance child and youth development” (The Weikart Center., n.d.). bob was a facilitator from the Weikart Center who trained youth workers on how to engage youth meaningfully. I love the energy they brought, and the different ways they used to engage us within the different trainings were inspiring - #FacilitationGoals.

These strategies have been successful in having high participant engagement and retention. I have received positive feedback from community members on the following strategy through surveys, conversations, and structured feedback opportunities.

1. Express genuine happiness and interest when you see community members.
2. Ask the community members what they need/want in their community.
3. Provide time for everyone to share their stories and participate.
4. Ask them to help at special events and other related activities.
5. Celebrate the community and milestones along the way.
6. Offer free programming and services.
7. Meet community members' basic needs with free hygiene products, clothing, bus tickets, and food whenever possible, or at least know where a person can go to get these things.
8. Provide structured opportunities for community members to get to know each other, plan for their community and have choices in programs, services, and events.
9. Outreach – go out into the community and poster doors, talk to people you see, use social media to post events, and join Facebook groups for your community.
10. Send out reminders a couple of days before and the day of.
11. Use multiple communications strategies (messenger, text, email, newsletters, website, phone)
12. Provide feedback forms and other structured opportunities to give feedback.

13. Ask reflective and open-ended questions when engaging community members.
14. Provide community members with transportation to and from the program, service or event if needed and whenever possible.
15. Ensure quality programming for boards, focus groups, committees, and meetings by including heart-warmers, get-to-know-each-other games, choices, energizers, time for sharing, skill building and planning, and reflection strategies.
16. Direct communication with community members

Remember to stay humble - mistakes are going to happen, and as long as you are doing your work in a good way, people are going to help you learn and be successful.

This capstone project and final piece is an extension of the research that has already been done; it is what I have learned and what I am going to teach/share with others through the “Your Reconciliation Journey” workshop series as part of my Reconciliation Journey Action Plan. I am thankful and grateful for everyone who has shared their knowledge with me and supported me throughout this journey. On to the next step in my journey: developing and implementing Your Reconciliation Journey workshop series!

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