

TRUTH BEFORE RECONCILIATION

— m i n o - p i m a t i s i w i n —



CANADA'S
HISTORY



National Centre for
Truth and Reconciliation

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

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The inspiration for the cover design came from what we all represent. With our gifts and cultural practices we have been trusted to carry, I believe we can all move forward together. The illustration is to serve as a reminder of our strength and perseverance, which are required to live a good life. —*Jordan Stranger, Art Director*



Koolamalsi  Kue

Watkwa:nonh

Welcome!

Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in this country.

In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.

What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation
Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Sinie Segha Niya

Pjila'si

Boozhoo

Hadeeh

Pihitkwa
Tawâw
Uwliwuw
minuwum

eräton
Qey
istigstgijul

FROM THE ELDERS

Mino-pimatisiwin: living the good life

By Elder Harry Bone and Elder Florence Paynter

This is an important teaching that we share with you.

Mino-pimatisiwin is about you, and it's about how you are in relationship with everyone and everything around you. It is about the life you are gifted with and walking through the world with a good, kind and loving heart.

Mino-pimatisiwin also means taking responsibility to walk a good path. Just as food cannot feed you unless it is eaten, a good life cannot be realized unless it is lived.

When you walk in a good, kind and loving way, you offer this good medicine to yourself and the rest of Creation.

We can stay on a good path by taking the teachings of respect, wisdom, love, honesty, courage, humility and truth as guides in our thoughts and actions. By taking good care of your spirit and treating yourself kindly and with respect, you help others do so as well. By walking on a good path, you help ensure they have their own ability to live out their own gifts offered to them by the Creator.



Elder Harry Bone (Hons LLD, Order of Canada) (Treaty 2, Keeseekoowenin Ojibway Nation)



Elder Florence Paynter (M.Ed, 4th Degree Anishinabe Mide Kwe) (Sandy Bay First Nation)

We do this work together. None of us can achieve anything solely on our own. It takes the support of others, and our own work to support others to bring forward positive change, healing and justice.

As Elders, our hope is that each person finds their own pathway to realizing their own unique gift of life within them. We also hope that people see the many connections and gifts we each have in the people and things that surround us, including the love offered to us by the land and

planet itself.

We also hope, that for all the Indigenous Peoples out there, that you see the gifts of your languages, cultures and traditions as gifts to be both cherished and honoured. It is your right to practise your traditions and cultures, and those are given to you to help you.

For each of us, we make the world a better place when we share our unique gifts with the world. Through working together, we all have the ability to make the world a better place.

HUMAN RIGHTS ARE FOR EVERYONE



Inherent

Every person in the world is born with human rights. No one can take them away from anyone else.

Inalienable

No one is allowed to take your human rights away from you, unless there is a fair process to determine it is necessary to keep others safe (for example, if you broke a law).

Indivisible

Human rights can't be divided up. They work as a package. In other words, human rights are the entire pizza AND the slice.

Interdependent

Human rights work when all rights are protected. They are strong if they are protected as a whole.

You have human rights!

We have human rights!

Human rights help keep people safe.

Human rights help make sure people are treated fairly.

Understanding human rights

Human rights have always **existed**, but they have not always been **respected**.

After the Second World War, the world saw a need to protect human rights. In 1948, the countries of the United Nations agreed on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This was the first agreement to set out human rights for all people. The goal was to protect all people from unfair treatment.

Since 1948, many other international agreements have created protections for groups that face injustice, such as children and Indigenous Peoples. Countries like Canada have also created protections at home to keep people safe.

A special gathering of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2024 to mark the tenth anniversary of a meeting of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

UN PHOTO/RICK BALORNAS



What is the United Nations?

The United Nations is an organization of countries working together towards some shared goals:

- to keep peace in the world
- to help countries work together
- to improve living conditions for all people of the world

“If there is to be perpetual peace in a world of nation states, the individuals who live in them must be free and their human rights must be respected.”

Canadian John Humphrey, Director of the Human Rights Division of the United Nations, 1946-1966

How do human rights create protections?

Everyone has human rights. That is why they are universal.

Think of human rights as a **foundation**.

Once they are in place, we can build a safe place where people are free from discrimination and other forms of unfair treatment.

In Canada, the 30 articles

of the UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are protected by laws and the Canadian constitution.



Some groups also have special protections because their human rights have been attacked in specific ways.

These groups need special protections to keep them safe because of the way they have been treated.

Children's Human Rights

As a young person, you have special rights and protections.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* is meant to protect kids across the world

including here in Canada. There are 54 articles in this 1990 document. They set out the rights that you have and the rights that Canada as a country needs to protect.

Article 2

You have rights no matter who you are, where you come from, your gender, religion, culture or language, if you have a disability or how much money you have. You deserve to be treated fairly.

Article 3

All grown-ups should act in your best interest. This means they always do what is best for you, and make sure you are always well taken care of.

Article 12

You have the right to voice your opinion and to be listened to.

Article 19

You have the right to be protected from violence and to be safe at all times.

Adapted from the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society information sheet *Child-friendly Convention on the Rights of the Child*, available online.



Listening to youth, listening to each other

Even though the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* exists today, we can point to many moments where those rights were not protected. For example, First Nations, Métis and Inuit children inside Residential Schools were not treated fairly. They were not protected from violence. Grown-ups did not look out for their best interests. Sadly, the children were often not believed when they told others about what was happening.

A very important lesson from

Survivors is the importance of listening when people share their truth. **Listening to and hearing** what is being shared is important to ensure human rights are protected. This is also important to ensure your voice is heard. **Your voice matters**, and it is important others hear it!

Listening to and hearing one another is important for young people and adults. This helps ensure people's needs and concerns are taken seriously.



- What are some examples of good listening skills?
- What are some examples of not listening?



Action to protect children – Truth and Reconciliation

The Residential School system is a heartbreaking example of how Canada violated the human rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children.

The schools operated for more than 150 years, affecting generations of children, families, communities and nations.

Had human rights protections been in place earlier in Canada's history, many racist and prejudiced parts of our shared history would have been prevented. For example, Residential Schools could not have occurred if the *United Nations Declaration on the*

Rights of Indigenous Peoples were in place. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* also creates important protections for children now, preventing a system like the Residential Schools from ever happening again.

There is still a lot of work to do in Canada, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) set out more steps to make sure all children are safe in Canada.

The first 10 of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action focus directly on keeping kids safe and ending discrimination in Canada.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DESCHATELLET'S-NDC ARCHIVES, UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA, ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED CHURCH BRITISH COLUMBIA



Being forced into Residential Schools violated Indigenous children's human rights. Clockwise from bottom left: Alberni Residential School near Port Alberni, B.C., circa 1920s; St. Anne's Residential School, Fort Albany, Ont., 1953; Mount Elgin Residential School near London, Ont., early 1900s.

What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have happened all over the world. They are a way to help create peace when countries have violated the human rights of many people all at once.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada started its work in 2008 and finished in 2015. It was a special effort to uncover the truth of what happened in Residential Schools and to make

sure the abuses that took place there could never, and would never, happen again. The TRC is a result of a lot of hard work, especially by Survivors who fought very hard for their truths to be heard, and the truth to be known.

Left to right: Commissioner Wilton Littlechild, Commission Chair Murray Sinclair and Commissioner Marie Wilson, December 2015. The unveiling of their final report was part of a ceremony to mark the close of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

CANADIAN PRESS





The Bentwood Box

Coast Salish artist Luke Marston carved the TRC's Bentwood Box. It is a powerful tribute to his own family's experience, and the experiences of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Works of art, promises, statements and other commitments were placed inside the Bentwood

Box by Survivors, their families, governments, churches and organizations. Together, these **gestures of reconciliation** document the past and a promise of the future. Human rights, Indigenous rights and the rights of children are at the centre of this work. Creating respectful relationships is the goal.

What would you put in the Bentwood Box if you had a chance?

A promise? A piece of art?



Role Model

Dr. Cindy Blackstock

A member of the Gitksan First Nation and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Cindy helped win fairer treatment from Canada for First Nations children, youth and families. The case centred on Jordan's Principle, named for Jordan River Anderson, a young boy from Norway House Cree Nation, who had health problems governments argued over paying for.



Role Model

Wilton (Willie) Littlechild

His full title now is International Chief Wilton Littlechild, Confederacy of Treaties 6, 7 and 8. But when he was just six, he was sent from the Ermineskin reserve, Maskwacis, to Residential School. For more than 30 years, Willie has worked with the United Nations to promote the rights of Indigenous Peoples all over the world. He was Canada's first Treaty Indian Member of Parliament, and served on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Indigenous Rights

First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Canada have faced a long and difficult battle to have their rights respected and honoured.

For a long time, Indigenous Peoples had very few rights at all compared to other members of society. For example, First Nations and Inuit people were denied the right to vote in Canada for decades. This was unfair and discriminatory.

Other violations of Indigenous rights include:

- forcing children into Residential Schools
- banning Indigenous Peoples' ceremonies including the Potlatch and Sundance
- banning cultural practices such as drumming and singing
- removing Indigenous names from people and places
- moving entire communities off their lands and onto land chosen by the government

Many of these attacks occurred because protections were not in place to prevent them from happening. The fight to have Indigenous rights recognized and protected has required the dedication of generations of Indigenous people.

The struggle continues to have Indigenous rights recognized.

Each and every day, First Nations, Métis and Inuit are working hard to ensure their rights are respected, both here in Canada and in other places of the world. There are also countless allies working hard with Indigenous Peoples to ensure Indigenous rights are protected.

Major efforts such as the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are examples of Indigenous Peoples working hard for recognition of truth, healing and the need for change.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission said that, as a country, Canada needs to protect human rights to help make sure that the mistakes of the past never happen again.

For this reason, the TRC made the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* an important first step in reconciliation.





MMIW by Kwaya'tsiq'Kwe Bluesky of Vancouver, an entry in the 2024 Imagine a Canada program.

What is UNDRIP?

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) is an agreement among countries on how Indigenous Peoples should be treated. It is a global agreement because Indigenous Peoples live across the world, with different cultures and traditions. Because of colonization and other events, though, the human rights of Indigenous Peoples are often violated in similar ways. UNDRIP's 47 articles set out the minimum standard for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the responsibilities of governments to protect these rights. In other words, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of*

Indigenous Peoples is the **floor**, not the **ceiling**!

UNDRIP is powerful because it was created by Indigenous Peoples. It represents the hard work they did to push for recognition of their rights by countries around the world. Some governments, including Canada, had difficulty agreeing on parts of it. It took more than 20 years before the UN adopted the Declaration on Sept. 13, 2007.

In Canada, there is more work to do. While we have an UNDRIP law at the federal level, only one province has an UNDRIP law. That means the human rights of Indigenous Peoples are not yet protected throughout Canada.

Does your province or territory have an UNDRIP law?

Some content on these two pages adapted from the UN publication *Know Your Rights! United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous Adolescents*, available online.



Precious Abygall Dedam of Esgeenoopetitj First Nation dances at a Truth and Reconciliation Day gathering in Fredericton, N.B., 2023.



UNDRIP has four main themes

The right to self-determination

Indigenous Peoples have the right to decide what is best for them and their communities. They can carry out those decisions in the way that is best for Indigenous Peoples, while respecting the human rights of their community members (including children) and other peoples. Self-determination is about dreaming dreams for the future, and taking action to achieve them.

The right to a cultural identity


Indigenous Peoples are equal to other peoples, but they also have the right to be different. Differences might include the way they dress, the food they eat and the language they speak.

The right to free, prior and informed consent

Indigenous Peoples have the right to be asked about any matter that may affect their rights. Indigenous Peoples have the right to make decisions freely, without pressure, having all the information before anything happens.

The right to be free from discrimination

Governments must ensure that Indigenous Peoples and individuals are treated the same way as other people, regardless of sex, disability or religion.



Sweetgrass is a medicine used by some Indigenous Peoples to bring in good energy and for healing.

Individual blades of grass are brought together into three main strands.

The individual pieces of grass within each strand can be thought of as the articles.

The individual strands become strong when they are combined with others. Woven together they form strength and can't easily be undone.

This idea can help us understand how our own individual actions become strong when we work with others.

These three strands are woven together to form a braid of good medicine.

The strands can be thought of as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

The articles of the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* can be thought of as a braid of good medicine.

By understanding our relationships with each other, and the broad relationships of human rights here in Canada and around the world, we can work together to make the world a better place, for everyone.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit across the lands now known as Canada have teachings and knowledge on how to create and maintain respectful relationships between peoples.

These approaches are important. The unique offerings of First Nations, Métis and Inuit help improve ideas of human rights, relationships and reconciliation.

The perspectives and understandings of Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers about the ethics, concepts, and practices of Reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.

Principles of Reconciliation
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

It's all about respect.

Respect requires that we take good care of ourselves, and of those around us. Respect for ourselves and

others also comes with responsibilities. Working to create greater respect helps make society better for everyone!

I can respect myself by:



I can respect others by:



It's also about relationships.

Reconciliation means we live in respectful relationships with those who are like us and those who are different, but also with the plants, animals, air

and water — the planet itself. Respecting people's right to be different from you is an important part of building respectful relationships.

To help create good relationships with other people, I can:



To help create good relationships with the planet, I can:



Speaking Up, Speaking Out!

The more you know about human rights, the stronger human rights protections become. **Human rights are best protected when they are talked about.** You have an important part to play.

Speaking out against injustice can be scary. It can take a lot of courage.

Sometimes it is hard even for leaders who have been doing this work for a very long time to find the courage to speak out.

The good news is that it gets easier with practice.

And don't worry — **you're not alone!**

Learning from Survivors

We can learn a lot from the strength and courage of Residential School Survivors. Thousands of Survivors spoke to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Some spoke behind closed doors in private sessions while others spoke to entire stadiums of people.

They shared what happened to them as children to help educate all of Canada about what they went through. This took a lot of courage and strength. It brought tears, sadness and even anger.

Many brave people also spoke up during the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Their voices carried the truth of what they endured and that truth was a powerful agent for change.

Others are using their voice in film, journalism, media, art and on social media to speak out.

It takes courage to speak out when you see injustice.

Thankfully we have many examples of role models.



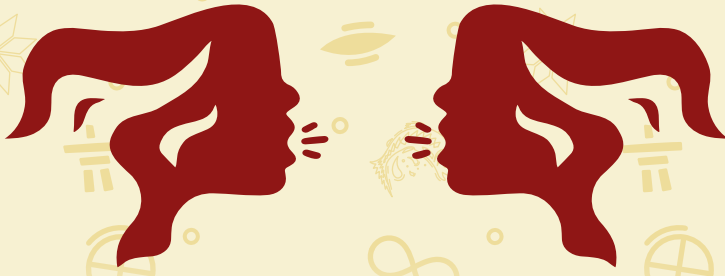
Elders, Survivors and youth attend an Imagine a Canada gathering at Turtle Lodge in Manitoba, 2017.

Your voice matters!

“Children and youth are rights-bearing members of a society trying to confront the past, and active participants in the process of social change aiming for a new future.”

International Center for Transitional Justice





**It is important to speak out against injustice
when you see it and to use your
voice for change.**

**Being who you are, knowing where you
come from, the cultures and languages that
brought you to this moment is important.**

**Understanding where we come from and how
we share land together is an important step
in achieving respectful relationships. For
many, this will mean asking members of your
family, community and nation.**

DID YOU KNOW? Indigenous languages ROCK!

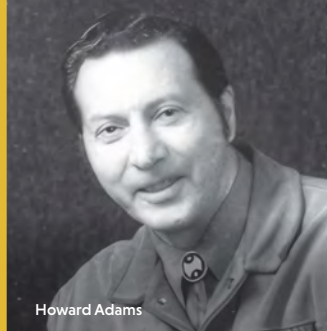
**The United Nations dedicated 2022 to 2032 as
the Decade of Indigenous Languages.**

**What Indigenous languages are spoken in
your region? In your home?**

OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP ROW: SGT JOHANIE MAHEU, RIDEAU HALL. © OS6G-856G, 2021, GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE. THE CANADIAN PRESS/JUSTIN TANG. CENTRE ROW: MANITOBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY. THE CANADIAN PRESS/MICHEL PINAULT. FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AUTHORITY. BOTTOM ROW: THE CANADIAN PRESS/SIF DAVE BURTON, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA PHOTO SERVICES, TED WHITECAL



Her Excellency the Right Honourable
Mary Simon, Governor General and
Commander-in-Chief of Canada



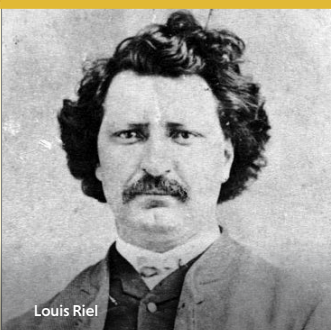
Howard Adams



Claudette Commanda

Being in good relationship

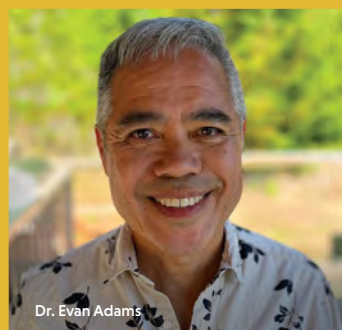
You can also look up important role models from the past and present like the ones pictured on this page, as well as Christi Belcourt, Zacharias Kunuk, Nora Bernard and so many more.



Louis Riel



Elisapie Isaac



Dr. Evan Adams



Nellie Cournoyea



Carey Newman



Maria Campbell

Get Involved!



IMAGINE A CANADA

What do you think of when you picture a reconciled Canada? The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation runs a program every year where students can submit art or writing and schools can send their Reconciliation projects. Art and essays are published in a special booklet. Along with the bigger projects, they are honoured in a national celebration held each spring.



INDSPIRE

Among other things, Indspire offers money for First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth who want to go to college or university. And every year the Indspire Awards celebrate amazing Indigenous achievers.



BE AN UPSTANDER SHOWCASE

Use everything you've learned in this publication to be a voice for change! Every year the Canadian Museum for Human Rights invites students to share the work they're doing as Upstanders for human rights. This showcase highlights student projects throughout the museum. Students get to explain to visitors what they're doing to make the world a fairer, more just place.

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RY MORAN - WRITER & LEAD EDITOR

Ry is a proud member of the Red River Métis. His work focuses on advancing Indigenous rights, the protection, preservation and sharing of Indigenous knowledges, and building strong and lasting relationships. Currently the Associate University Librarian — Reconciliation at the University of Victoria, Ry was the founding Director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. He facilitated the gathering of statements from Residential School Survivors for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Ry is also a musician with a passion for the arts and creative practices.



JORDAN STRANGER - ART DIRECTOR

Through pencil, paint or digital mediums, Jordan Stranger communicates the importance of life, culture and acceptance. His works are deeply rooted in the traditions within contemporary Indigenous culture. As an Anishinaabe individual originally from Peguis First Nation, Jordan uses his life experiences to drive his artistic passions.

Visit the websites for these organizations to discover more about the things you've learned in this publication.



CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS



**First Nations Child &
Family Caring Society**



Indspire

Indigenous education. | L'éducation des autochtones.
Creating a Future. | Créer un avenir.



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Download the National Truth and Reconciliation Week
Teacher's Guide CanadasHistory.ca/LivingTheGoodLife

For more lesson plans and resources,
visit nctr.ca

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“A good life for you is to learn who you are. Then you gradually find out what the world is all about and find out what living a good life is about.”

-Elder Dennis Saddleman

For more information on the Survivors' Flag, visit
nctr.ca/exhibits/survivors-flag/