



CANADA DAY 2021

A TIME FOR REFLECTION

Toronto-St. Paul's

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Reconciliation: A Poem by Gimma R. Stacey Laforme

I sit here crying
I don't know why

I didn't know the children
I didn't know the parents

But I knew their spirit
I knew their love

I know their loss
I know their potential

And I am overwhelmed
By the pain and the hurt

The pain of the families and friends
The pain of an entire people

Unable to protect them, to help them
To comfort them, to love them

I did not know them
But the pain is so real, so personal

I feel it in my core, my heart, my spirit
I sit here crying and I am not ashamed

I will cry for them, and the many others like them
I will cry for you, I will cry for me

I'll cry for the what could have been
Then I will calm myself, smudge myself, offer prayers

And know they are no longer in pain
No longer do they hurt, they are at peace

In time I will tell their story, I will educate society
So their memory is not lost to this world

And when I am asked
what does reconciliation mean to me

I will say I want their lives back
I want them to live, to soar

I want to hear their laughter
See their smiles

Give me that
And I'll grant you reconciliation.



Chief R. Stacey Laforme
Mississaugas of the Credit
First Nation

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

This Canada Day will feel different from previous years. The discoveries of unmarked graves on the grounds of former residential schools in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, Cowessess First Nation and others across the country woke up all Canadians to the truth – and once you know the truth, you cannot un-know it.

Residential Schools were part of a shameful and racist colonial policy that removed Indigenous children from their communities and denied them their families, language, and culture. The trauma, including intergenerational trauma, inflicted on Indigenous Peoples by these institutions had lasting impacts that are felt to this day. The tragic colonial policies have hurt people.

I will be wearing an Orange Shirt on Canada Day. I encourage you to learn about Phyllis (Jack) Webstad's story and the design behind the Orange Shirt. We need to stand in solidarity with the Survivors of residential schools and the families and communities of the innocent children who never returned home. Parliament has now passed legislation to designate September 30 as the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in response to TRC Call to Action 80 "to honour Survivors, their families, and communities and to ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process." The date September 30 was chosen building upon the tremendous impact of Phyllis Webstad's Orange Shirt Day (orangeshirtday.org) in schools coast to coast to coast. [Click here](#) to watch my interview with Phyllis Webstad on her book 'Phyllis' Orange Shirt'.

As the Prime Minister has said July 1 will be a day of reflection this year. It will be an opportunity for all of us to reflect and to understand the ongoing impacts of our past and to look toward our country's future with a firm intention to do better. It is a day in which we acknowledge that trauma inflicted by the residential schools and reflect on this history that continues to negatively impact First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals, families and communities.

The revelations in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and Cowessess First Nation and others across the country need to be an exercise in consciousness raising, like we saw following the inexcusable deaths of George Floyd and Joyce Echaquan. Today, it would be important for Canadians to read Volume 4 in the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Missing Children and Burial Information, and visit the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation website to understand the need for the ongoing work to find the truth. All Canadians need to reread the TRC Calls to Action and to choose their part in the journey of reconciliation: What can each of us do to fight against systemic racism, how can we better understand the impacts of intergenerational trauma, and how can all Canadians better understand the importance of the recognition of Indigenous rights, respect, cooperation and partnership in charting the path forward for Canada?

This Canada Day, I feel the honour of being an MP. I recognize that this position that has given me the opportunity to experience the beauty of the First Nations, Inuit and Metis languages and culture and teachings. I feel that shame of a settler, generations of whom thought they were superior to the First Peoples of this land. They agreed to share the land fairly . We didn't honour that.

I often speak about my settler learnings that have changed my understanding of Canada and being Canadian.

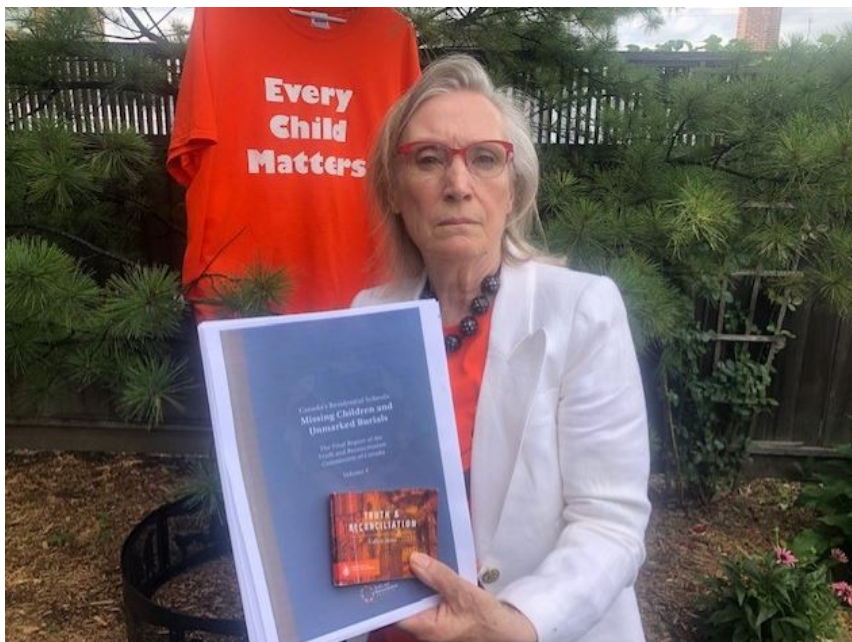
- Seven Generations Out. Imagine where we would have been on climate change and pollution if we had listened, if we had respected the land and the air, the water and the ice.
- The Medicine Wheel instead of the medical model. Imagine if we had focused on keeping people well - physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually - instead of the 'repair shop' approach that for too long dominated modern medicine.
- Indigenous pedagogy. Imagine if our western school systems focused on 'learning by doing' – no tidy straight rows, copying off a blackboard, instead learning by being out on the land and water, learning physics by trying to paddle your canoe forward in a wind, learning biology by cleaning a fish or dressing a moose, learning chemistry by using the brain of a deer to tan the hide.
- Putting children first in all decisions. Imagine if we really understood that decisions which are good for children are good for everyone.
- Respect for Women. Imagine if when the male settlers arrived they had understood the importance of speaking with the women leadership, if the colonial policies and laws had not disempowered Indigenous women and girls from their rightful place in their communities.
- Respect for 2-Spirit and gender diverse people. Imagine if homophobia hadn't arrived on the boats and 2-Spirit and gender diverse peoples had continued to be held with respect and honour and carrying special responsibilities.
- Elders. Imagine if we respected our elders and listened to their wise counsel and protected them instead of referring to them as elderly. very important. Imagine if we included them in decisions and then worked with on the appropriate ceremony to recognize events, to commemorate and for healing.

- Leadership. Imagine if we better understood that Indigenous leadership – later followed by the early feminists learning from Haudenshoney women in North East United States – is real leadership, based on ‘asking not telling;’ the ability to listen and determine if a consensus already exists or whether the community needs more information before people are prepared to weigh in on a decision that will affect their families and community. Imagine if we all aspired to be leaders not bosses; if we understood our role as leaders at the centre of a circle instead of the top of a pyramid.
- Ceremony. For First Nations, Inuit and Métis people ceremony is very important. Imagine if we included them in decisions and then worked with on the appropriate ceremony to recognize events, to commemorate and for healing.

Canada Day is different today. It is a day for reflection. It will be a summer of reflection as we move to the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation on September 30. I still believe we live in the best country in the world. But as the Prime Minister says and believes ‘Better is always possible.’ As we Build Back Better – economically, socially and environmentally – after the scourge of COVID-19, we need to focus on justice, fairness and leaving no one behind. We must be truly intentional on the path of ReconciliACTION.

With sincere humility,

Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Member of Parliament for Toronto-St. Paul's

National Indigenous Peoples History Month

Learn about Indigenous history from the perspective of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada [here](#).

Check out this virtual historical exhibition, based largely on information and artifacts presented in the First Peoples Hall of the Canadian Museum of History story [here](#).

Learn more about historic and modern treaties in Canada, treaty rights and the treaty relationship [here](#).

Learn about the inter-generational harms caused by Indian Residential Schools and what is being done to support Survivors, families and communities [here](#).

Learn how the Government of Canada is working to advance reconciliation and renew the relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on the affirmation of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership [here](#).

From the Prime Minister - Canada Day & Former Residential Schools

Statement Made on June 25, 2021 at Rideau Cottage

“I want to begin by addressing the news that hundreds of unmarked graves have been found near the former residential school in Cowessess First Nation.

This was an incredibly harmful government policy. And Canadians today are horrified and ashamed of how our country behaved, and of a policy that ripped kids from their homes, communities, cultures, and languages, and forced assimilation upon them.

To the members of the Cowessess First Nation and Treaty 4 communities: we are sorry. This is not something we can fix in the past, but we can pledge to do better for today and tomorrow.

I spoke with Chief Delorme yesterday and offered all of the federal government’s continued support and partnership. This includes on healing and moving forward. And it also includes on the issue of Child and Family Services.

We know that Child and Family Services has taken children away from families and communities. I spoke to the Chief about how we can accelerate the work of Cowessess First Nation on Child and Family Services.

This news out of Saskatchewan has come on the heels of the terrible news in Kamloops. And it has caused a lot of Canadians to reflect and have difficult conversations about Canada’s history and Canada’s present.

Truth and reconciliation requires that we start with truth and recognizing the terrible mistakes of the past.

With Canada Day coming up next week, a lot of people will be reflecting on many different things – on the really tough year we had with COVID-19. And on reconciliation, and how it needs to continue.

This Canada Day will be a time of reflection on what we have achieved as a country, and what more we have to do. So as we gather with family and friends, carefully still, we need to understand and remind ourselves that Canada didn’t happen by accident and won’t continue without effort.

This Canada Day we all need to pledge ourselves to continue making Canada better, and listening to all those for whom this is not yet a day of celebration.

Yesterday, I also talked with National Chief Bellgarde. Because tragically, Cowessess is not the only place in this country where children died in the residential school system. It is not the only place where children faced abuse, loneliness, illness, and neglect.

So to all families and survivors across the country: I know that no words can right these terrible wrongs. It is with our actions that we will need to continue to recognize the truth and do everything we can to support you.

Following the discovery at the former Kamloops residential school earlier this month, we've made \$27 million available immediately to Indigenous communities to find and honour children who died at these institutions.

For communities in Saskatchewan in particular, like Cowessess, we've reached an agreement with the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations to provide almost \$4.9 million to search for burial sites. And for people across the country, we're providing whatever mental health support survivors, families, and communities need for healing."

CBC/Radio Canada – Interview with Cowessess First Nation Chief Cadmus Delorme

June 25, 2021 – [Click here for video.](#)

What is your message to Canadians across the country, many who are not Indigenous?

"From a First Nation perspective, I love living in Canada. I went to university, I grew up on Cowessess, I have the best job I think I ever wanted, being chief. It's not an easy task. But there is an accidental racism and ignorance in this country when it comes to history. You know, Indigenous people - and I'm speaking from Cowessess perspective - we don't want to live in our current state. We want to be part of the economy. We want to be part of the growth... the social lives.

Sometimes in this country, being Indigenous, it's as if you gotta prove yourself a little more. You're so used seeing maybe, someone asking for change and being Indigenous... you know, there's a story behind every one, of the history that we inherited. So my comment to everybody listening is, from Cowessess, we're not asking for pity. We're asking for understanding. We're asking that you stand beside us, that as we are gaining our control again - as Indigenous people - in our Treaty relationship, that we have better understanding. That our kids going to school understand the impact that residential school made, but also more well-off, when Indigenous ideology and understanding is welcomed in, and not just brought in on even pre... what great economy Indigenous people had prior to Treaty. This country would be so much certain days of the year."

Reflect, Learn and Become a Part of Reconciliation through Reading



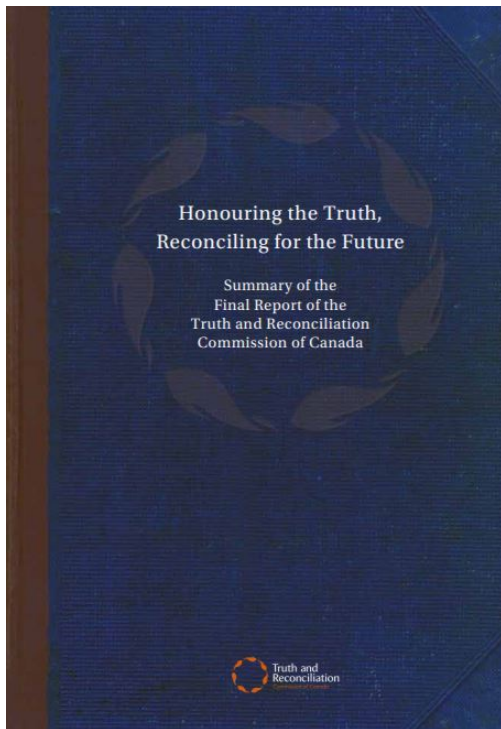
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) provided those directly or indirectly affected by the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools system with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences.

[Click here to read.](#)

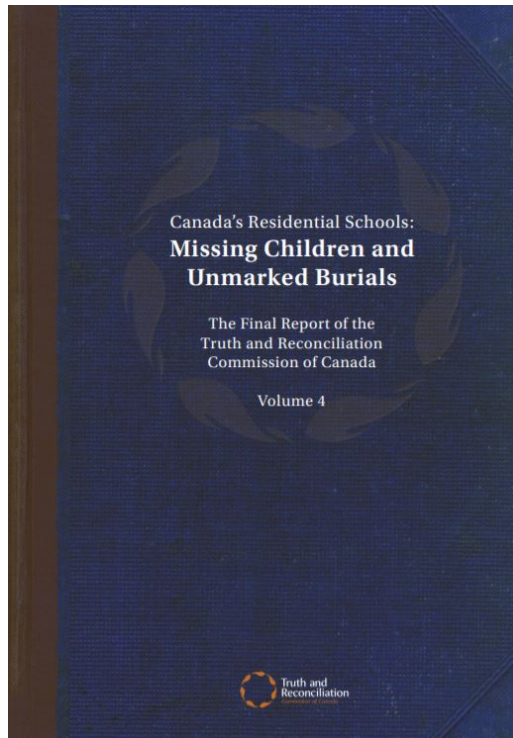


Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report is a testament to the courage of each and every survivor and family member who shared their story.

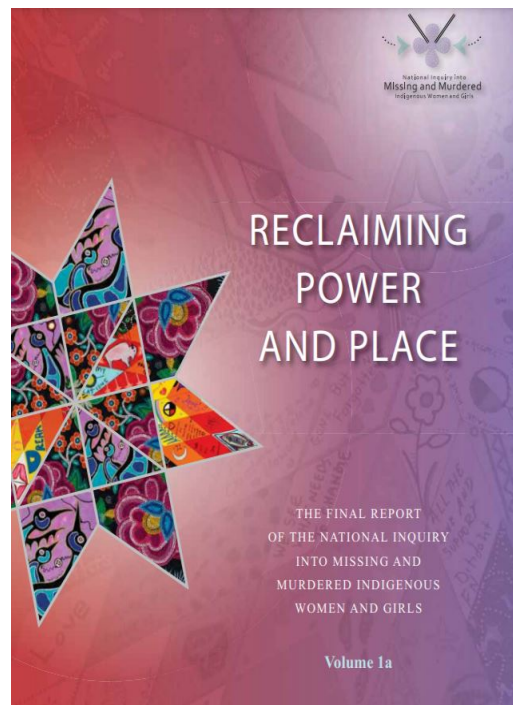
To access, [click here.](#)



**Canada's Residential Schools:
Missing Children and Unmarked Burials - The Final Report of
the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
(Volume 4)**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's "Missing Children and Unmarked Burials Project" is a systematic effort to record and analyze the deaths at the schools, and the presence and condition of student cemeteries, within the regulatory context in which the schools were intended to operate.

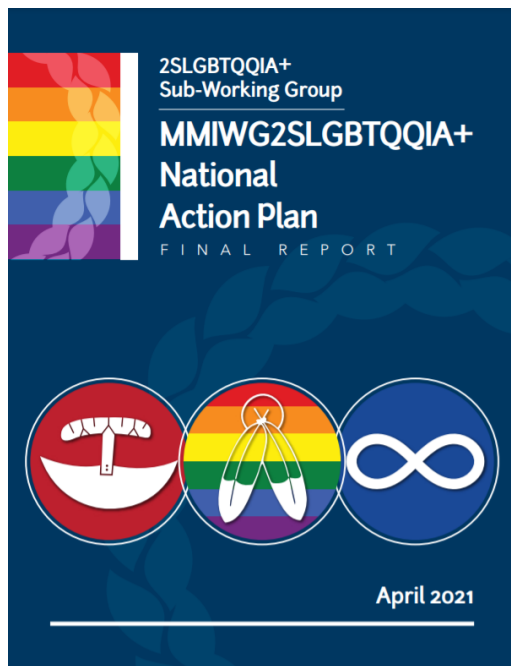
[Click here to access.](#)



**Reclaiming Power and Place:
The Final Report of the National Inquiry Into Missing and
Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Volume 1a & 1b)**

The National Inquiry's Final Report reveals that persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses are the root cause behind Canada's staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The two volume report calls for transformative legal and social changes to resolve the crisis that has devastated Indigenous communities across the country.

[Click here to access.](#)



[Click here for the Final Report.](#)

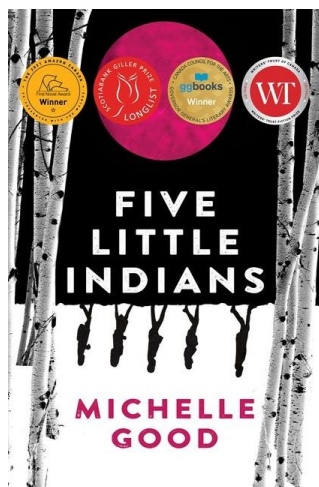
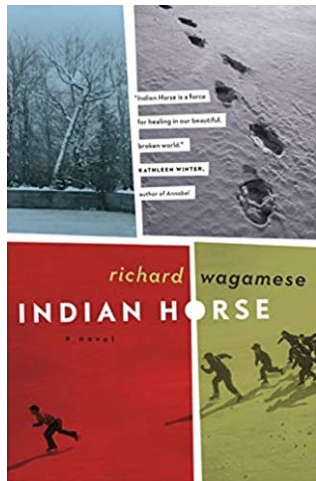
2SLGBTQIA+ Sub-Working Group: MMIWG2SLGBTQIA+

The mandate of the NIMMIWG was initially designed to report on all forms of violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, however Indigenous concepts of gender identity broadened the inquiry's mission to include Two-Spirit/Indigenous LGBTQ+ people. This shift recognized that Indigenous cultures accepted and included diverse concepts of gender and sexuality prior to European colonization. The terms, Two-Spirit and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual are modern post-contact non-Indigenous constructions that some 2SLGBTQIA+ people may choose to identify themselves. The Sub-Working Group recognizes there are over 150 known words and terms in various Indigenous languages in North America that were used prior to contact to describe people who were gender diverse and LGBTQ+. Additionally, the 2S Sub-Working Group recognizes 2SLGBTQIA+-specific words and terms that are being reclaimed and introduced as Indigenous languages continue to evolve.



Indigenous Reads Reading List for 2021

Indigenous Reads has been celebrated annually by the Government of Canada for the last 6 years to encourage Canadians to discover and read works by Indigenous authors and creators. During a time of constant change and adaptation, we can all learn from First Nations, Inuit and Métis authors, as they help to ground us in the roots of this land we all call home. I encourage you to take time to dive into the books on our list and increase your understanding of Indigenous issues, cultures and histories.



By clicking below, you will find different suggested reads by Indigenous authors. Whether this is a starting ground for your reading selection or in addition to, we encourage you to share these amongst your friends and family and amplify these Indigenous author's voices by sharing your readings on social media with #IndigenousReads throughout the year!

Children - [click here](#)

Young Adult - [Click here](#)

Poetry - [Click here](#)

Adult - [Click here](#)



[Please click here for the video.](#)

What if? Canada Day - a Statement from Chief Laforme

This year you will not see any parades
You will see no fireworks light up the sky
This July 1 will be quiet and thoughtful as we gather with family and friend
As we consider the legacy and the future of this Country
The truth is before us, there are no more excuses to be made or accepted
And awful, unimaginable truth has been confirmed
This land is built on the bones of the indigenous people
And the tears of their children
They wept for stolen children
As we hugged and loved ours
They grieved as their future died at a desk, in a bed, at the hand of a stranger
We sent ours to school, to chores, kissed them goodnight as we tucked them into bed
So there can be no Canada day this year
There can be no celebration
We will not have our indigenous brothers and sisters mourn
As we sing, dance and make merry
This is a moment in the life of this country
That will determine our future
We need to be united in this moment
To express our love and equally important our support
For this is not just the indigenous history, it is our history
These are not just the indigenous children, they are all our children, the children of this land
And we cannot celebrate until we have justice for our children
We have answers for our people and we have accountability for our future
We are with you today and always
What if!

Chief R Stacey Laforme

A national Indian Residential School Crisis Line has been set up to provide support for former students and those affected. Access emotional and crisis referral services by calling the 24-hour national crisis line: **1-866-925-4419**.

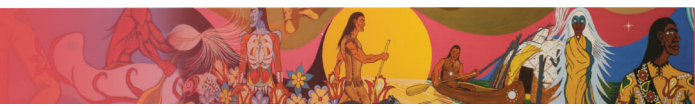


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Other Canada Day Resources

Virtual Canada Day Celebrations 2021 – [Click here](#)

History of Canada Day – [Click Here](#)