

Surrey First Peoples Guide for Newcomers



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Territorial Acknowledgement

This work is taking place on the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the SEMYOME (Semiahmoo), ǰícəy̓ (Katzic), kʷikʷəłəm (Kwikwetlem), ǰʷɑ:ńłəń (Kwantlen), ǰiqéyt (Qayqayt), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and s̓əwəθəń məsteyəxʷ (Tsawwassen) First Nations. The knowledge, traditions and ongoing contributions of these communities are significant in providing context to the work of this resource. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

The Surrey First Peoples Guide would like to thank Chief Harley Chappell of Semiahmoo First Nation and Chief Marilyn Gabriel of Kwantlen First Nation for providing their wisdom, truth, and sharing their heartfelt intentions for their communities. These interviews were conducted at a time when

these communities were going through incredible challenges. Our hands go up to the tireless efforts of the land-based Nations to assert their rights, not only for themselves but in a way that impacts all Indigenous people in the region. This leadership shows us the spirit of the land-based laws, systems of accountability and important teachings that have existed here since time immemorial.

Forward



Len Pierre, Katzie First Nation

śy̓ swéyəl (good day) & mí ce:p kʷətxʷiləm (welcome). My name is Len Pierre, my ancestral name is Puleeqweeluck, I am Coast Salish from Katzie First Nation, one of the host territories of the municipality of Surrey. To you I say hay cəxʷ ǰə (thank you). Thank you for being here, for picking up this guide, reading it, internalizing it, leaning in with your curiosity, with a sense of unity, and a sense of humility. Thank you for being here, your presence and participation in the learning, understanding and relationship building of First Peoples cannot be understated.

It is worth mentioning that as Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island (North America), we have been left out of the history books, guidebooks, and education programs for well over one hundred years in Canada and the US. There has been a long and treacherous history of erasing us from society. The importance of documents like this First Peoples Guide, written by Indigenous people and within an Indigenous perspective is a celebration, a progressive step in the right direction towards learning, understanding and respecting the original and First Peoples of the lands you now call home.

Upon reading and learning this document, I encourage each and everyone of you to set an intention to keep an open heart and open mind with what you are about to learn. Not just in reading this guide, but to continue to hold that space in your heart and mind long after you read this. We, the First People, have been on this land since the beginning of time. We have an ancient knowledge and wisdom of the land, water, and air we all enjoy so much.

On behalf of the people, Nations, and lands you call home, welcome to each and everyone of you! Be well, continue your learning about the land and the First People, and always remember to treat one another with compassion. Those are the laws of the land here.

-Len Pierre, Katzie First Nation

Welcome

The Surrey First Peoples Guide for Newcomers is a response to the call for accurate resources on First Peoples in Canada from an Indigenous perspective. In 2018, the Indigenous and Newcomer Youth Dialogues Project brought young people from both communities together to Kwantlen First Nation to learn about their respective lived experiences and to build solidarity. Through these dialogues, newcomer youth reported that misconceptions about Indigenous people are normalized (acquired) immediately upon arriving in Canada. This indicates that discrimination against Indigenous people is a norm in Canada and needs to be proactively addressed.

In this resource, we will provide information on the traditional protocols, histories, and current realities of Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada, and address common misconceptions about the First People of this land.. By adopting a community-centred approach, this document seeks to uplift and amplify the voices of the land-based Nations that Surrey occupies. This resource will uncover hard truths, construct a foundation for shared understanding, and continue the important work of building solidarity between the Indigenous and newcomer communities in Surrey.

In 2014, the City of Vancouver released the First Peoples Guide for Newcomers. This extensive report offered clear information about Indigenous, Métis and Inuit people in Canada. The author, Kory Wilson, is now the Executive Director of Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). Kory has created a free, interactive, online course called the Indigenous Awareness Modules. This report will reference Kory's work to ensure that we are not doubling our efforts and that we are creating space to uplift the voices of local, land-based leaders and community members. The authors hold our hands up to Kory in respect of the years of dedicated work she has done to create quality resources about Indigenous people. We hope to honour the writers, knowledge keepers and Elders who have done this work before us in a good way.

To access BCIT's free, interactive Indigenous Awareness Modules: <https://www.bcit.ca/indigenous-services/resources/indigenous-modules/>

To access Kory Wilson's Pulling Together Foundations Guide: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/>

This resource will refer to the extensive research conducted over the last five years by the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee (SUILC). The committee is a coalition of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations that have a significant connection to the Indigenous population



in Surrey. SUILC's research and initiatives have provided important findings on the Indigenous community in Surrey. This work uplifts local, Indigenous and Métis wisdom, which advocates for the community's needs. SUILC outlines four priorities in their report to the Province of BC: 1 Reducing urban Indigenous child poverty; 2 Creating more Indigenous housing options; 3 Establishing the infrastructure for community and cultural resurgence; 4 Addressing anti-Indigenous racism.

The Surrey First Peoples Guide will use a community-centred method that uplifts the stories of the land-based Nations, urban populations, and Indigenous champions. Anti-Indigenous racism is a common experience for Indigenous people living in Surrey. Racism and stereotypes negatively affect Indigenous people in many areas of life, including health, justice, education, and social services. When these racial stereotypes are normalized, Indigenous people face greater barriers in their communities. Actively dismantling these stereotypes and normalized biases will work to ensure that Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit people in Surrey live free from colonial harm.



Definitions

Aboriginal (n):

Aboriginal: Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 defines Aboriginal peoples to include: Indian, Inuit, Métis. Both Indigenous and Aboriginal are collective nouns for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. It is important to note that there are often regional and personal preferences for terms.

Aboriginal rights and title (n.):

“are collective rights that flow from the simple fact that since time immemorial Indigenous people have continuously occupied this land that is now called Canada. Indigenous rights are different from rights that non-Indigenous Canadians have and they cannot be extinguished, legislate away or “written-off.”

Canadian law recognizes and protects Aboriginal Rights and Title in s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Section 35 is as follows:

35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.”

“Aboriginal Title is the inherent Indigenous right to land. It is Aboriginal Title to land whereas Aboriginal Rights are the rights to use and occupy the land. They are both protected under s.35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Since 1982, the meaning and extent of Aboriginal Title and Rights has been the subject of much Indigenous litigation in Canada.”

Contact or First Contact (n.): Before the arrival of the colonizers, Indigenous people were organized into complex, self-governing nations throughout what is now called North America. The conception of “contact” or “discovery” is invalid, as Indigenous people existed on Turtle Island for thousands of years.

Assimilate (v.), assimilation (n.):

“encouraging them or coercing them to abandon their culture, languages, and way of life, and to adopt the culture of the colonizers.”

Coast Salish (n.):

“Coast Salish is the term used for the group of ethnically and linguistically related Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest, living in BC and the northwestern United States. Coast Salish territory straddles the Canada-US border from the northern part of the Gulf of Georgia to Oregon, and covers the lower half and eastern side of Vancouver Island, all the Lower Mainland and most of Puget Sound and the Olympic Peninsula.

In 2010 the bodies of water previously known as the Strait of Georgia, Gulf of Georgia, Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound were officially renamed the Salish Sea in honour of the First Peoples who live on their shores.”

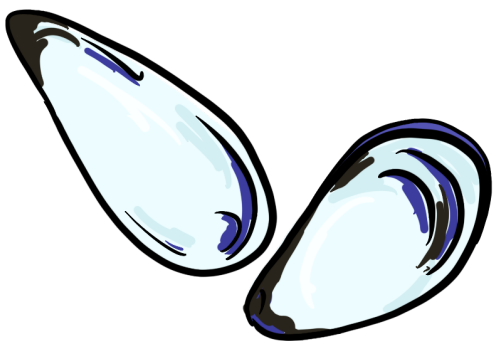
Colonize (v.), Colonization (n.):

“Colonization is a process where one group of people moves into the territory or area of another group then ultimately takes over and changes the lives of the colonized. Colonization has happened all over the world: the British and French in North America; the British in India; the Dutch in South Africa; the Spanish in Latin America; and the Portuguese in Brazil. Today many Indigenous groups are living with the impacts of colonization and they are fighting for self-determination.”

“Colonization occurs when a new group exercises control over a Indigenous group. The colonizers impose their own cultural values, religions and laws, and make policies that are in their favour, and against the Indigenous peoples. They seize land and control the access to resources and trade. As a result, the Indigenous people become dependent on the colonizers.”

Culture (n.):

“An expression of a community’s worldview and unique relationship with the land. Indigenous cultures across Canada are diverse, but there are commonalities amongst them. Traditionally, their societies were communal: every member had a role and responsibilities, there was equality between men and women, nature was valued, and life was cyclical”



Enfranchisement (n.):

Enfranchisement is a legal process to terminate a person's Indigenous status and status rights and to confer full Canadian citizenship. This process was initially voluntary under the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 and became legally compulsory under the Indian Act of 1876, which was in place until 1961. The aim of enfranchisement was the assimilation of 'civilized' individuals and Bands into settler society and meant that Indigenous men could own property (subtracted from allotted reserve lands) and vote in Provincial and Federal elections (Indigenous women were not given any legal rights at the time). Enfranchisement continued until 1985, in cases where, when an Indigenous woman married a non-Indigenous person, she would lose her status.

With enfranchisement, status holders would lose their status if they:

- Served in the Canadian Armed Forces
- Earned a college or university degree
- Left their reserves for long periods, e.g. for employment
- Became an ordained minister
- Became a professional, e.g. a doctor or lawyer

Elder (n.):

"In Indigenous cultures, Elders are cherished and respected. An Elder is not simply an older or elderly person, but rather, they are usually someone who is very knowledgeable about the history, values and teachings of his or her culture. He or she lives their life according to these values and teachings.

For their knowledge, wisdom and behaviour, Elders are valuable role models and teachers to all members of the community. Elders play an important role in maintaining the tradition of passing along oral histories."

First Nation (n.):

"In Canada, First Nations is the term used to refer to people who are Indigenous and who do not identify as Inuit or Métis. In the past, First Nations people used to be referred to as "Indians". There are 634 First Nations across Canada and over 60 distinct Nations.

First Nations is the accepted term today instead of the term "Indian" which is considered an offensive colonial term."

Indigenous (n, adj.):

"Indigenous is a term that is being heard more and more in Canada. It is being used synonymously with Aboriginal, and is the preferred term. Both Indigenous and Aboriginal are collective nouns for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. It is important to note that there are often regional and personal preferences for terms."

Indian (n.; adj.), Indian status (n.):

No, it is not okay to use the word "Indian". The use of the term "Indian" in Canada is considered outdated and offensive.

However, the term is still in use in legal documents such as the Indian Act and in the Constitution Act (1982). The term "Indian" is used when referring to a First Nations person with status under the Indian Act. The Indian Act defines who is and who is not an Indian. Those with status have cards that "Certify their Indian Status".

Indian Act (n.):

The Indian Act was another attempt to assimilate First Nations people into European society as quickly as possible. Under section 91(24) of the British North America Act (1867), the Federal government was given jurisdiction or control over "Indians and Lands reserved for Indians".

Inuit (n.; adj.):

"The Inuit are a group of Indigenous peoples living in the Northern regions of Canada, Greenland and Alaska. Inuit have lived and thrived in the Arctic for thousands of years. Traditionally, they lived off the resources of the land by hunting whales, seals, caribou, fish and birds. Many Inuit continue to harvest these resources today."

*Historically Inuit were referred to as "Eskimos", but this term is neither accurate nor respectful, and should not be used."

Land claim (n.):

"The Government of Canada officially calls modern treaties Comprehensive Land Claims."

Oral Tradition (n.):

"Indigenous peoples pass along values and histories through oral storytelling. Oral histories and stories have been passed down from generation to generation and are essential to maintaining Indigenous identity and culture. People repeat their history and stories to keep information alive over generations. Often it is the role of particular people within each community to memorize the oral history with great care. These people are often called Witnesses."



Reserve (n.):

“Land that has been set apart by the Federal government for the use and benefit of an Indian band.”

Not all Indigenous people live on reserves. In 2011, the statistics were as follows for the First Nations people who reported being Registered Indians:

- 49.3% (637,660) lived on a reserve in Canada
- In Quebec, 72% lived on reserve, the highest proportion among the provinces
- In New Brunswick, 68.8% lived on reserve
- In Nova Scotia, 68% lived on reserve
- In Ontario, 37.0% lived on a reserve
- In Newfoundland and Labrador 35.1% lived on reserve”

Many First Nations people would like to live on their reserves but there are many reasons why they cannot – often there are not enough houses, the reserves are too far away from their employment, or the infrastructure is insufficient.

Self-Determination (n.):

The United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples includes the right to self-determination. The Assembly of First Nations describes self-determination as a Nation’s right to choose its own government and decide its own economic, social and cultural development. Today, Indigenous people are exercising Aboriginal Rights and Title for self-determination and benefitting from the wealth and resources of this land that is now called Canada”

Settler-colonialism (n.):

First, settler colonizers “come to stay”: unlike colonial agents such as traders, soldiers, or governors, settler collectives intend to permanently occupy and assert sovereignty over Indigenous lands.

Second, settler colonial invasion is a structure, not an event: settler colonialism persists in the ongoing elimination of Indigenous populations, and the assertion of state sovereignty and juridical control over their lands. In 2009 Stephen Harper said “Canada does not have a history with colonialism.” This statement was widely criticized because 1) the Canadian government had issued the apology for the Residential School System in 2008 2) colonialism in Canada is still alive and well. Indigenous people still feel the impacts of unjust laws in place today. Despite notions of post-coloniality, settler colonial societies do not stop being colonial when political allegiance is obtained.

Third, settler colonialism seeks its own end: unlike other types of colonialism in which the goal is to maintain colonial structures and imbalances in power between coloniser and colonised, settler colonisation trends towards ending colonial difference in the form of a supreme and unchallenged settler state and people. However, this is not a drive to decolonise, but rather an attempt to eliminate the challenges posed to

settler sovereignty by indigenous peoples’ claims to land, by eliminating indigenous peoples themselves and asserting false narratives and structures of settler belonging.

Status and Non-Status Indians (n.):

A “Status Indian” (or “Registered Indian”) is a person recognized by the federal government as being entitled to be registered under the Indian Act, as an “Indian”.

“Non-status Indians” refers to people who identify as First Nations (Indians) but who are not entitled to registration on the Indian Register pursuant to the Indian Act. Some may also have membership in a First Nation.

Sovereignty (n.):

“Historically, First Nations managed their lands and resources with their own governments, laws, policies, and practices. Their societies were very complex and included systems for trade and commerce, building relationships, managing resources, and spirituality.”

Treaties (n.):

Early settlers “viewed treaties as a process transferring title and control of Indigenous land to non-Indigenous people and governments.”

“In signing treaties with First Nations, the British government, followed by the Canadian government (after 1867), viewed treaties as the completion of transfer of title to the Crown.”

“First Nations viewed themselves as equal partners (a Nation) when signing treaties and believed that under the treaties they would still have access to their way of life and their traditional territories.”

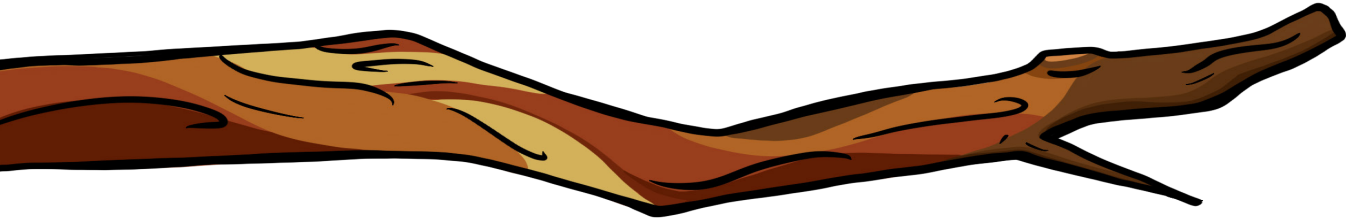
Terra Nullius (n.):

“European map-makers drew unexplored landscapes as blank spaces instead of interpreting these blank spaces as areas yet to be mapped, they saw them as empty land waiting to be settled. When Europeans arrived in North America, they regarded it as terra nullius or “nobody’s land”. They simply ignored the fact that Indigenous people had been living in these lands for thousands of years, with their own cultures and civilizations. For the newcomers, the land was theirs to colonize. As time passed, the newcomers began to take over land that was part of the traditional territories of Indigenous people who had occupied this land long before the arrival of the newcomers.”

Traditional territory (n.):

Land that a First Nation has lived on or used since time immemorial. They have a primary sacred, cultural and economic connection to this land. [T]he geographic area identified by a First Nations as the area of land which they and/or their ancestors traditionally occupied and used. Often parts of these territories were shared with neighbouring nations.” 7

Stories from the Land-Based Nations



Chief Harley Chappell of Semiahmoo First Nation

Good day. My Traditional name is Xopocton and my English name is Harley Chappell. I am the elected leader of Semiahmoo First Nation (one of the traditional territories Surrey resides on). When we talk about Semiahmoo pre-contact, we need to put that into context. When we talk about our story of the flood, it is not our origin story, as that predates our flood story. We describe ourselves as the “Xlactumush people” which translates to “survivors of the great flood” I’ll begin by addressing the English term, story. When we say “story,” there’s a misbelief or misunderstanding that our stories are fictional. But we call them Xol Xol (oral tradition). We call Xol Xol our ancient history that has been passed down generation to generation through oral tradition.

These are not stories. When Semiahmoo people go back in our history, we go back pre-flood times, go a little bit further before that. We even have oral tradition, oral history about when the world was different. This was a time when humans and animals and nature were much more interconnected.

I was once working with a group and someone said to me “you know, you seem like a pretty smart guy, how can you believe that?” My explanation is this: I asked this person, “Do you love your grandparents?” And they said, “Yes, of course!” I said, “Do you think your grandparents would lie to you and send you on a wrong path?” They said, “Absolutely not.” I agreed with him. “I don’t believe that, that our ancestors would have lined us up with, with lies, or with falsehoods”

Our oral traditions have held our history, held our customs, our practices, and our protocols, through ceremony and through our relationship with our lands, our territories, and it holds our connection to those ancient times. And I share that because as a younger leader, I say that we have to have that faith, we have to have faith in our history, to acknowledge, and understand it. It’s that simple phrase, “You don’t know where you’re going if you don’t know where you’ve been.”

So, when we talk about our origin and our relationship to nature and our relationship to the animals, and the sea life, then we begin to understand even the root word of who we

are, as “Semiahmoo” people. Semiahmoo means the “place of the people.” We are also Xwelmux (people of the land). So, when we say Semiahmoo and Xwelmux - we understand who we are and where we come from.

As Indigenous people, we need to understand this fundamental belief system. We need to take a few steps back ... and acknowledge the differences between western and Indigenous worldviews. Our main challenge right now is around differences in western and Indigenous worldview when it comes to the protection and safety of our earth, waterways and lands, the consumption of resources and land and why and how we do that.

“You don’t know
where you’re
going if you don’t
know where
you’ve been



Xopocton, Chief Harley Chappell



Chief Marilyn Gabriel

Chief Marilyn Gabriel of Kwantlen First Nation

On Kwantlen territory, there were 10,000 people. After smallpox and other devastations Kwantlen’s population was reduced to 69 people. Now in Kwantlen, there are 310 people. We are trying to reinstate more. One of the Elders is fighting for our people to get their status back and for them to come home. It’s not our people’s fault they can’t live at home. We try to welcome everyone home with open arms, an open mind, and an open heart. My late father appointed me to Chief on June 11, 1993, my daughter Tricia’s birthday. They had a big gathering on our sports field. They were bestowing the title of Grand Chief on my father, Grand Chief Joe Gabriel. They were having a big gathering and my father was not well. He hadn’t been well for some time. But he said, “You come down with me, but YOU will have work to do as well.” Back in the day, and even today it is really hard being a leader in the community. It’s just not a nice thing sometimes.

I was pushing my father down the hill to the field in his wheelchair. Just before we were to go out to the field, my Dad told me “it’s going to be you.” [I was going to be chief.]

I was like “What?!”

Back in the day, the word “chief” or “leader” was not a nice word. It was almost like a swear word. We didn’t feel proud of who we were. Nobody wanted to be chief, and we sort of passed it around like a hot potato!

I am the middle child of 9 children. As I was pushing him down the hill, I said “Dad, you know you don’t have to do this! You can give it to my siblings.” He said, “Be quiet and push me down to the park, I chose YOU! And now let’s be quiet and now let’s go do our work.”

I remember feeling grateful at the gathering. This ceremony was to honour my late father and uncle because they did over 30 years of service for the Nation. They did this work at a time when there was no funding, no money anywhere. My late father was a commercial fisherman. Him and my mom used most of their money to run our Nation. At that time, they didn’t get paid for anything, it was just their duty to their people.

At Christmas time, [the community] would say, “If it wasn’t for your dad, we wouldn’t still be here [on Kwantlen].” At Christmas, my family would slaughter some of their cattle and give them out to community members. We also had to buy freezers for families because at that time the people didn’t have a way to store food for the winter.

My father led with kindness and generosity. I learned from watching him that I wanted to keep these values in my leadership of Kwantlen. Leadership based on generosity, respect, and on honouring our culture.”

Protocols

Protocols are part of complex Indigenous law systems. Traditional laws and protocols differ from nation to nation. Protocols refer to how land-based Nations conduct ceremonies, welcome guests, honour their ancestors and respect the lands of Nations they visit. Although diverse, these law systems pre-date contact by thousands of years. Protocols are actions that ensure respectful relationships between different Nations. For instance, when a neighbouring tribe would visit Semiahmoo they would back their canoes into shore. This was a sign that they were approaching the Nation's village with respect and sometimes with the spirit of celebration. Songs would be sung to welcome the guests to shore (Chappell, 2021). Today, one protocol that is commonly observed is offering a territorial acknowledgement.

The Indian Act was a tool to assimilate Indigenous communities into Canada. During colonization, protocols and Indigenous law systems embedded in cultural practices were outlawed by the Indian Act from 1884 to 1951. Indigenous people were often arrested if they were caught practising their traditional protocols. The effects from this prohibition have had long-standing impacts on how protocols and cultural acts have been passed down. Today, practising protocols, such as territorial acknowledgements, play a vital role in cultural reclamation.

Starting in a Good Way

Kwantlen Cultural Ambassador, Micheal Kelly Gabriel:

A few years back, we were doing our First Salmon Ceremony. We do this ceremony to give thanks for the salmon for sustaining our Nations since time immemorial. Over the years, many people have asked for my Grandpa Herb or Grandma Helen for support with ceremonies and this salmon ceremony was no different. We asked them because they would ensure that our ceremonies are done as culturally grounded as they were back in the day (following protocols).

One time, we had finished our ceremony and we were sitting down, visiting and talking to each other. We asked my grandpa, "Did we do everything at the ceremony in a good way, Grandpa?" He said we did everything perfectly except for one thing. "You forgot that you need a song, an entrance song for when you people come in."

He explained to us about the teaching behind the entrance song:

"When we host a gathering, we must honour our guests. When starting a gathering, our community would all hold their hands

Chief Harley Chappell of Semiahmoo describes protocols used today: "Welcoming other tribes [and] other nations [is] a time when we use our ancestral songs. I was taught that song is the first language. So, when we would welcome one another when they would visit our community [we would sing] and that is something we still practice today. When we do our canoe journeys, we will sing those songs before we come to the beach. We'll pull up to the shore, and we'll sing those songs, those welcome songs and those love songs. And then we would turn our canoes around and we back them out. Because being here we would understand that if a canoe would [approach] headfirst, it was a sign of war. It was a sign of conflict. There are very different tones to our welcome songs as opposed to our war songs. And the people would know by the different songs, how the people are approaching. But really, I think it's [acknowledging] we're on somebody else's land. We don't just come into somebody else's territory and [plop] down and do whatever we want to do. That's really what happened here in British Columbia. It is a sign of respect and good practice to acknowledge that we're on these territories, and these are the original people of this land."

up to the guests. We did not know how far they have travelled to be with us, how long it took them to get here and how much time attending our gathering has taken away from their family and their loved ones.

"So because of this, we start our gatherings by singing a song to thank them for travelling to our ceremony. This opening song plays another purpose as well. It is meant to ground the guests so we can all work with one heart and one mind. The word for this is *Let'semot* in our language – working with one heart and one mind for the good of the people."



The Importance of the Territorial Acknowledgment

Territorial acknowledgements are important because they recognize the long-standing relationships land-based Nations have with the land. One of the most critical consequences of colonization was that Indigenous land-bases were reduced to 0.2%. This has had devastating impacts on Indigenous people. By acknowledging the land-based Nations, you are honouring the history of the lands where you reside or where your gathering is taking place. That history includes Indigenous peoples' relationships with the land since time immemorial and acknowledges the rights and title they have to their homelands.

Land-based Indigenous laws and protocols ensured that the land was taken care of for future generations. It is important to acknowledge the intentions that First Peoples have to care for the land in a spirit of reciprocity, stewardship and relationship.

Kory Wilson states, "Here in BC, you will often hear the term 'unceded.' When land is ceded, it means that there was a formal agreement made to share or give the land to another party. Most of the land in BC was never formally ceded. Ninety-five percent of British Columbia, including Vancouver, is on unceded traditional First Nations territory. Unceded means that First Nations people never ceded or legally signed away their lands to the Crown or to Canada."

In 2013, Vancouver City Council began acknowledging the unceded territories of the Squamish, Tsleil Waututh and the Musqueam First Nations. The legislation reads, "On National Aboriginal Day, June 21, 2013, the Mayor of the City of Vancouver took the extraordinary step of declaring a Year of Reconciliation, a year-long effort that seeks to heal from the past and build new relationships between Aboriginal peoples and all Vancouverites, built on a foundation of openness, dignity, understanding and hope"

In the legislation, the document states: "Underlying all other truths spoken during the Year of Reconciliation is the truth that the modern city of Vancouver was founded on the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations and that these territories were never ceded through treaty, war or surrender."

By acknowledging these territories, Canadians are taking a small step towards fostering good relations between themselves and Indigenous people. Today in Canada, Indigenous governments and organizations have to continually advocate for equal opportunity, for their rights to be acknowledged, and to be able to live a life free from harm. Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Knowledge Keeper and Consultant, Ta7taliya (Michelle Nahanee) states, "I've been taught by my Elders and others who know that territorial acknowledgements are about showing respect, or connecting to the land, to be in better relations together."



Photo by Darren Tierney via Unsplash

Holding our Hands Up

One way of showing respect and gratitude is to hold your hands up. This protocol dates back thousands of years. Nations would carve and erect large poles depicting a man or a woman with their arms outstretched. These figures would welcome approaching tribes.

"When we hold her hands high, when I hold my hands out to you, that's our sign that we have the utmost respect. But back in the day, when we would journey by canoe, [raising your hands] showed that we meant no harm, that we had no weapons in our hands. But over time we adopted it to show respect to the people that we love and care about." - Michael Kelly Gabriel



History of Land-Based Nations

Traditions and histories of the Indigenous people pre-date contact by thousands of years. Both Kwantlen and Semiahmoo people have oral traditions of the flood. Xeytem Rock, an archeological site in Mission BC, dates back approximately 10,000 years.

Chief Harley Chappell:

A long, long time ago, one of the elders in our territory had a vision. They saw a great flood coming, which devastated the territory and killed many people. The elder told people, “We need to get ready. I don't know when it's coming, but we need to be ready when it does.” After the warning, they started to build two giant dugout cedar canoes. One was filled with supplies, like dried fruit, dried vegetables, dried seafood and meats.

They filled the canoe and covered it with mats. They were prepared and then one day the water, like the elder foresaw, started to rise and rise. The elder came and said, “We're only putting the children in [the canoes].” So they filled the second canoe with the children. When the water continued to rise, the other people not in the canoe perished in the flood.

Our land was changed and the world changed too. After a period of time the water started to recede. The children started to leave the canoe and begin exploring the changed world. Over time, they started to branch off from each other. One of the older children reminded the others, “We need to gather all the people again, we need to remember who we are and where we come from.” It was agreed upon that when they would gather again, they would put a suffix on their name. The children added the suffix -mish on the names of their places

to signify that they come from x^wleq̓təm̓x, which means the “survivors of the flood.” In that story, I excluded our relatives to the north of Squamish. They have a different people, with a different origin, but our people, and the people to the south, all have -mish at the end of their names like Stillaguamish, Suquamish, Swinomish, Duwamish, Samish.”

When we start to identify ourselves, geographically, it puts it into context. It shows who we are and the scope of our growth through the generations. I asked my elder why we didn't change our name, we're not Semiahmoo-ish. We're Semiahmoo. My elder stated “Well, those two canoes, one landed just south of where you are, and one landed a little bit further south. We never really left home. We never left where those canoes landed after the flood.” So we were the home base, us and our relatives to the south, were the ones that stayed close to home.

This is important for me to remember: the sacrifice that our ancestors made for future generations. How their sacrifice was the opportunity and the ability for the young people to survive. When days get tough, I try to remember this. Speaking of immigration, and newcomers, that's another father that's come to this country to seek a better life for his children and his family. It's the exact same thing we do.

“Speaking of immigration, and newcomers, that's another father that's come to this country to seek a better life for his children and his family. It's the exact same thing we do

Contact

Prior to contact, it is said that there were 90 to 110 million Indigenous people living in North America. When the first settlers arrived in Canada, they were dependent on the knowledge of Indigenous people on how to survive on the land. “Aboriginal peoples were crucial to early European explorers’ survival in unfamiliar territories, and later were valuable military allies in wars between Canada and the United States in the 17th and 18th centuries” The contributions of Indigenous people to the early developments of Canada helped to build the Canada we know today. In America, the Iroquois Great Law of Peace had an influence on the development of the American constitution.

Semiahmoo at the time of contact

“Semiahmoo People lived in longhouses. In one village site, in what is now known as Point Roberts, there was a large village with 12 longhouses. Each longhouse contained families of 50 to 100 people. These structures were huge! Sometimes a kilometre in length. Each generation would add to the longhouse, and inside families were separated by woven mats. This communal style of living embedded the values of accountability and community interconnectedness. Gathering, hunting and sharing food was more efficient if families and communities worked together for the health of the community in large family dwellings. If Indigenous people lived in the “nuclear” family dwellings of today, communities would not have been able to survive. Many Indigenous people today, both land-based and urban, live in multi-generational housing.”

- Chief Harley Chappell

The idea of a nuclear family is a relatively new concept:

“We grew up within a nuclear family, you know, a small nuclear family, me, my mom and my dad. Now that I am married, I have moved to my wife’s community, in her mother’s house. We have done lots of work on the home, and my in-laws live here as well. It’s actually fantastic. We must be able to decolonize our own perspectives on family structures, on family relationships. The nuclear family system is not ours. We must acknowledge the importance of our children growing up and being around their grandparents, and the learning and understanding that comes from spending time with elders”

- Chief Harley Chappell



Borders

In North America, Indigenous people had territories that overlapped with one another. Protocols, relationships, and intermarrying were observed to share traditional hunting, fishing and gathering grounds. When Canada was founded, the border between Canada and the United States cut many Nations in half. On Semiahmoo territory, the Nation had to choose what side of the border to move their community. This forced relocation had dire consequences for the community.

Brooks Arcand Paul states “Borders are a colonial construct. Any border was imposed unilaterally, without consulting the Indigenous Nations that would be impacted... Canadian institutions need to break down the idea that Indigenous Nations are bound by one country or the other.”

In the 2019 BC Supreme Court appeal, [R.v. Desautel](#), affirmed that Indigenous Peoples living outside Canada who are separated from their ancestral territories by international borders may be entitled to rights under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.



Clash of Indigenous & Western Worldviews

Chief Harley Chappell discusses the clash of Indigenous vs. western worldviews at the time when settlers started coming in large numbers during the gold rush in BC:

During contact in BC, there was a clash of worldviews. Indigenous worldviews are about interconnectedness and inclusion, of being part of [the bigger creation]. I am sure you have heard that Indigenous people “never take more than you need.” This is a major part of our worldview. It is built on relationships and reciprocity, not extraction. Another major difference in our worldviews was, our understanding of ownership was different from the Europeans.

I'll share a little story to explain more. I was told this story by one of the Elders from the Sto:lo territory, about ownership. He said, when the gold rush came through this territory in the mid to late 1800s, one of the gold miners came to the territory and said “Wow, whose territory is this?”

The Sto:lo man replied, “It's mine. It's ours.” The Gold Rusher told the Sto:lo man that he would buy the land from him. They both snickered because from the Indigenous worldview, we don't own it, we can't own it, we will never own it, we're just holding on to it for future generations. The western mindset was about ownership and extraction. They said, “I own this now, it is mine and I have rights to it.”

This was one of the first examples of the two opposing worldviews colliding. When the gold rush man came through, he gave the First Nation a very small compensation. And they both walked away snickering because from one worldview, you can't own it. So from the Indigenous worldview they got money for something that you can't own.

The other man was snickering too and said “I just got a steal of a deal on this land.” Years went by and eventually the Sto:lo man came back to the territory and there was a fence around the land. That was the beginning of this clash of worldviews. And it's pretty much been like that since then.”

“we don't own it, we can't own it, we will never own it, we're just holding on to it for future generations

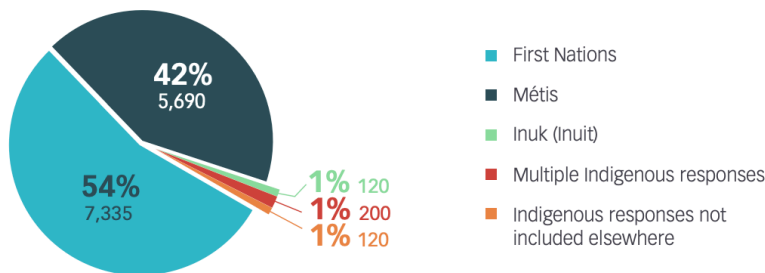
Surrey

Urban Indigenous and Métis Community

Indigenous Communities in Surrey

Surrey is now home to the largest Indigenous population in BC! 60% of Indigenous people in Canada live off-reserve, or away from their homelands. Since reserves are so small and under-served, there are often not enough economic opportunities for residents to be able to thrive. There is also often a lack of housing on-reserve to house all members. Many Indigenous people find their ways to major cities to pursue opportunities away from their home communities. Some Indigenous people were displaced because they were placed in government care either during the 60's Scoop or relocated due to being put in foster care. In Surrey, Indigenous residents have spoken about feeling "invisible" or "disconnected" from each other and their culture. Surrey does not have critical cultural infrastructure like an Indigenous gathering space. Surrey has only 5 Indigenous community organizations while Vancouver has 28 for the same size population. This means that there is a lack of services and programs for Indigenous people in Surrey, and unfortunately, this population is experiencing some challenges.

Figure 1 Indigenous Population by Indigenous Identity, Surrey, 2016

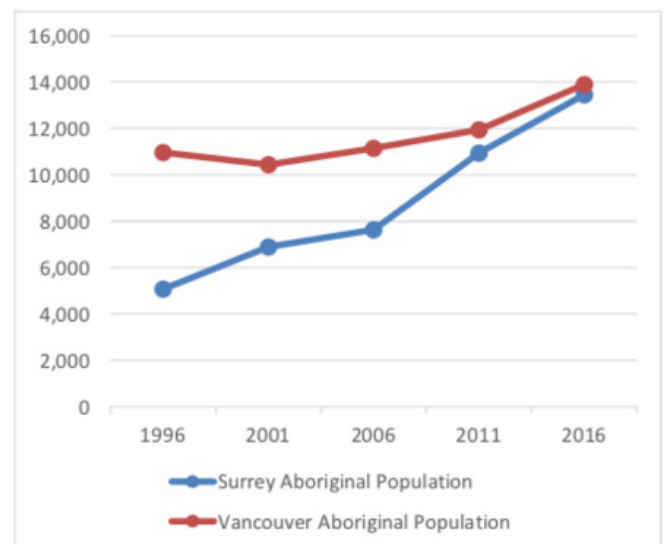


Source: Custom Data Organization from Statistics Canada, Census 2016

Some facts about the Indigenous population in Surrey from the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Coalition (SUILC):

- The urban population is young and fast-growing
- Average annual growth rate in Surrey is 4.9%, whereas it is only 1.2 % in Vancouver
- "Based on this growth rate (figure 2), we are confident that Surrey is now the largest Indigenous community in BC and will be twice as large as Vancouver[s] within the next 25 years"

- 55% of the Indigenous population in Surrey is First Nations, from all over BC and Canada, representing many Nations, cultures, and languages
- "Indigenous people live in neighbourhoods throughout Surrey. North Surrey is home to many Indigenous Surrey residents...but so is Newton, Cloverdale, and South Surrey" (SUILC, 2019)
- The median age of the Indigenous population in Surrey is 28 years old, vs. Vancouver, where the median age of Indigenous peoples is 33. In Surrey's total population, the median age is 38 years old, and in Vancouver, it is 39(SUILC, 2019)
- Almost half (45%) of the population is younger than 24 years old. There are 3,655 Indigenous children aged 0-14 living in Surrey, representing nearly 30% of Indigenous Surrey residents.



Métis Community in Surrey

Métis people in Canada are a distinct cultural group. Métis culture stems from intermarriage that occurred in the 17th and 18th century between either French or Scottish men and Indigenous women. Métis people developed their own culture and built their own communities. The Red River settlement in Manitoba is said to have cultural significance for the Métis people.

The Métis are not governed under the Indian Act, but some Métis settlements were created across Canada. Unfortunately, much of this land was unlawfully claimed by settlers and the government.

In 1885, the Canadian government executed Louis Riel for defending his Métis homelands and the rights of his people. In the same year, the Canadian government gave Métis families a currency called Métis scrip, which could be exchanged for land or money. Many Métis people lost their lands to settlers by using scrip and were left homeless as a result of this system. The federal government was aware of the scrip system's flaws, and used these flaws to take advantage of Métis people.

Métis people today face struggles to have their rights recognized by the federal government, although changes have been made to include Métis people in legislation, such as the Indian Act, to grant them the same rights that status holders have. On April 17, 2014, the Federal Court of Appeal released a decision, *Daniels v Canada, 2014*. It ruled Métis and non-status Indians would have the same rights as First Nations.

There are now 70,000 people who identify themselves as Métis in B.C. In Surrey, Métis people make up over 45% of the Indigenous population. Despite this, Métis people often battle for recognition and space in Surrey.



Indigenous Rights & Title Canadian Policy

The following section will outline policy and legislation, and other impacts on the rights and title of Indigenous people in Canada.

Papal Bulls

A Papal bull is a public order made by the Catholic Pope. In 1455, Pope Nicolas V issued the papal bulls Romanus Pontifex and in 1495, Pope Alexander VI issued the papal bull Inter Caetera. These documents authorized Spain and Portugal to colonize North America and deemed Indigenous people as “less than human.” It also legitimized the slave trade from Africa. In this way, these early acts of colonization had genocidal impacts around the globe.

These Vatican directives became the basis of centuries of laws in both Canada and the United States that gave legitimacy to the discriminatory treatment of Indigenous people. The Doctrine of Discovery is an element in Romanus Pontifex that justified the seizure of Indigenous lands for profit

and exploitation. Because the Catholic Church thought of Indigenous people as heathens, they thought they could create laws to take the land with no consequences. These laws intended to make Indigenous people “subjects” of the Pope and did not acknowledge the sovereignty of Indigenous people to govern themselves.

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, a scholar and expert on papal bulls, states, “Both the church and state were colonizers with purely economic interests. The exploration of the ‘New World’ was not a search for Christian converts but a quest for domination, looting, taking the wealth.”



Terra Nullius

Terra Nullius is a Latin term meaning “empty land” or “nobody’s land.” The laws of Terra Nullius were developed in Europe in the 18th century. Colonized land, like Canada, was deemed “empty,” although Indigenous people inhabited it continuously. This policy was a way of justifying the theft of Indigenous lands. By the logic of Terra Nullius, if no previous European power had laid claim to land, a newly arrived European power was allowed to claim to it. Terra Nullius justified the colonization of North America between the 17th - 20th century. Over time, the concept grew to include territories that European powers decided were “devoid of civilized society.”

Both the Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullius have implications in Canadian law and on Indigenous people today. The United Nations, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Assembly of First Nations have all called to renounce these principles. This means that the formation of Canada based on these concepts would not have legal authority. The problem is, Canada was built on these documents, and they still impact laws that affect Indigenous lives today.

Royal Proclamation of 1763

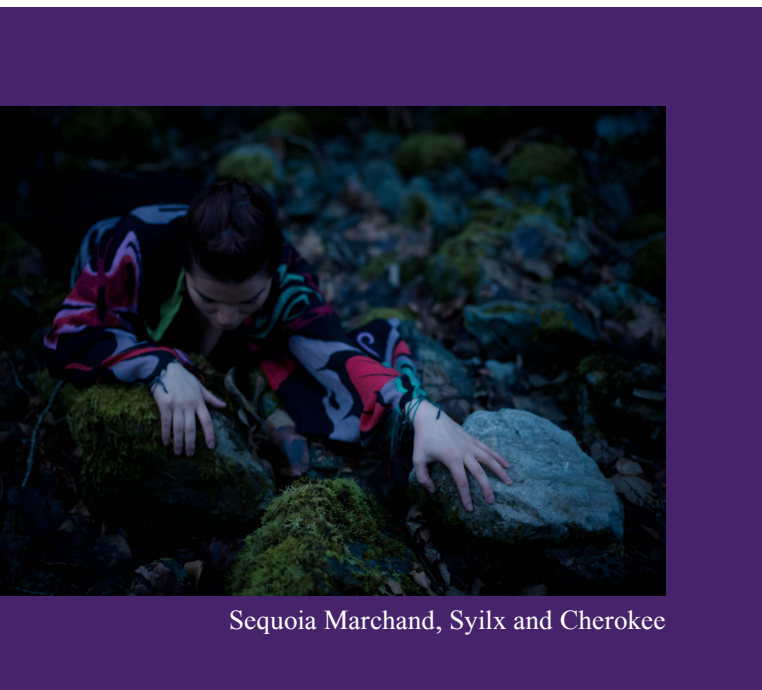
In 1763, King George of England announced the Royal Proclamation. This document was a set of guidelines that claimed territories in North America after England won the Seven Years' War. The Proclamation recognized Indigenous people had sovereignty over their lands and communities. The Proclamation stated that lands must be reserved for Indigenous tribes, and that no Indigenous people would be forced off of their original lands base. The document also recognized tribal governments and their legal rights to govern their Nations. Dan Wilson, an Indigenous lawyer in Vernon BC describes sovereignty:

“Sovereignty, in terms of governance, is when a political body of people has complete power and rights over itself without interference from another entity or power.

In the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Crown defined three important things,

1. The ‘Indian’ Nations which are associated (allied) with the Crown are not to be ‘molested’ by any subject of the Crown; (they cannot be harmed, or stolen from)
2. An ‘Indian’ Nation can not be dispossessed of their land and resources without having first given their ‘public’ consent
3. The ‘Indian’ Nations can only treaty with the Crown, and no other colonizing nation. -

The Royal Proclamation states that Indigenous title and rights have existed and continue to exist until the land is ceded by treaty.



Sequoia Marchand, Syilx and Cherokee

Disease

With the arrival of Europeans to Canada, Indigenous nations across Turtle Island were damaged by diseases like smallpox. Kwantlen First Nation had an estimated population of 10,000 people, which was reduced to 69 after a smallpox outbreak. Kwantlen has approximately 400 members today. Semiahmoo was reduced from 1000 to just 16 residents. They are currently only 100 members.

“When the Europeans arrived, they brought smallpox and other diseases that were previously unknown in North America. The Indigenous population had no immunity because, unlike the Europeans, they did not have centuries of exposure to these diseases. It has been estimated that as many as 90%–95% of the Indigenous population died from these introduced diseases”

- Kory Wilson

Indian Act

To read the Indian Act - <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/>

Pull Out - “You can find John A. McDonald on the Canadian ten-dollar bill”

The controversial Indian Act is a piece of legislation that governs life for Indigenous people in Canada. The Act, introduced by Sir John A. MacDonal in 1875, was intended to assimilate Indigenous people into the European model of society being encouraged in Canada.

In 1876, the Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, produced under John A. MacDonal states: “The aborigines are to be kept in a condition of tutelage and treated as wards or children of the State. Every effort should be made to aid the Redman in lifting himself out of his condition of tutelage and dependence, and that is clearly our wisdom and our duty . . . to prepare him for a higher civilization.”

The Indian Act viewed Indigenous people as inferior to the European population. It made Indigenous people “wards of the state,” which had devastating long-term, negative effects on the Indigenous people of Canada. Prior to the creation of the Act, most of the land was taken by settlers and the government. Once the Act passed, Indigenous people were not allowed to leave their reserve or participate in the economy. The “condition of tutelage and dependence” forced on Indigenous people by European powers established a paternalistic relationship that created conditions of social and economic disparity, which still impact communities today. UBC’s Indigenous foundations states,

This legislation was based on the assumption that in order to function within Canada, Aboriginal peoples needed to adopt a “Canadian” identity and abandon their cultures and traditions. Colonial thinking perceived Aboriginal peoples and cultures as “savage” and “primitive”, and ultimately unable to survive contemporary colonial society without the direct intervention and supervision of the Canadian government.

Before the Indian Act, the Royal Proclamation created “Indian Reserves” which were meant to ensure that Indigenous lands would not be open to settlement. Over the decades, more and more land was taken away from these reserves. Arthur Manuel states that Indigenous peoples were left with 0.2 % of all land in Canada.

The theft of lands coupled with the legislation in the Indian Act made it so Indigenous people could not meaningfully participate in the economy and developed what Manuel calls “legislated dependence.” (See Myths and Facts)

In 1867, Canada became a country with the passing of the British North America Act; Section 91(24) assigned the Federal Government the responsibility for all “Indians and lands reserved for Indians.” Under the Indian Act, Indigenous people:

- could not leave their small reserves without a pass
- needed to acquire a pass to sell livestock or crops. This controlled Indigenous people’s ability to meaningfully participate in the economy and made them poor across generations
- could not practice traditional ceremonies such as the potlatch, sundance, and all other ceremonies. These important ceremonies embedded traditional land-based laws, such as the potlatch economy and the Cree sacred law practice of Miyo Pimatisiwin (1925-1951)
- were banned from using traditional and ceremonial clothing
- could not vote (Indigenous people were not extended the vote until 1960)
- could not form their own political groups (1925-1951)
- could be removed as Chief by the Indian Agent if the Chief stood up to the federal government
- “[c]ouldn’t hire a lawyer - If lands were expropriated illegally, Indigenous people could not fight in courts with a lawyer. It was illegal for status Indians to hire lawyers or seek legal advice, fundraise for land claims, or meet in groups. Many had to stop organizing but others continued to do so secretly to fight for their rights.” K. Wilson

The most devastating part of the Indian Act was the legislation that forced all children between the ages of 6 to 17 into residential schools. (See Residential Schools)

In the early decades of the Indian Act, the federal government established the role of Indian Agent, to control life on reserve. Today the Indian Act is still administered by the federal government through two federal ministries: Crown-Indigenous Relations and Indigenous Services Canada.

Indian Act Today

Today 630 communities and 60 distinct Nations are governed by the Indian Act in Canada.

Kory Wilson states:

1. The Indian Act has gone through many amendments and today controls:
2. who get status, and who can pass on status
3. tax-exempt rules - Indigenous people with status do not have to pay tax if they earn income or purchase something on reserve; since reserves are so small, Indigenous people still pay income and property tax if they work or live outside of the reserve
4. housing, infrastructure and development on reserve
5. Band (Indigenous governments) on reserve

Reserves & Housing

Because Indigenous people were unable to own lands and were contained on such a small portion of their traditional territories, Indigenous people were unable to pass down wealth associated with owning land. This is one systemic cause for poverty on reserve and for Indigenous people living in urban areas. Today, the Indian Act still controls who can own land on reserve.

Reserve lands are held in a federal trust, meaning Indigenous people on reserve do not own the land, but can borrow to develop and own housing; however, most of on-reserve housing is considered social housing. Housing shortages and substandard living conditions have created a housing crisis on reserves. Historical treaty agreements require the federal government to provide on-reserve housing, but the estimates of 20,000-35,000 units needed to combat the housing crisis have not been met.

“Housing on reserves falls short by almost any measure, especially when compared with housing off-reserve: 41.5 percent of homes on reserves need major repairs, compared with seven percent in non-[A]boriginal households outside reserves. Rates of overcrowding are six times greater on reserve than off. In many communities, it’s not uncommon to have three generations living under one roof – not by choice but by necessity.”



Indigenous Women & the Indian Act

Since time immemorial, Indigenous women have been the backbone of Indigenous communities. Many of the nations across Turtle Island are matrilineal, which means that children belonged to their mother's clan and traced their family line through their mother's relations. In some Nations, girls received education from their mothers and aunts. Boys learned to hunt from their mother's brothers. Those communities that were not matrilineal still honoured women, holding them in high regard and looking to them for wisdom and guidance.

In many Nations, women held influential political roles, like the Matriarchs of the west coast Nations and the Clan Mothers of the plains tribes. Matriarchs and Clan Mothers had important decision-making roles. In some Nations, Chiefs were considered figureheads, which means that although they represented their communities, the Chiefs could not pass laws without the consent of the women's leadership. The Indian Act stripped all political powers from Indigenous women. The imposed European power structures gave all political authority to men in Indigenous communities, creating a power imbalance and a loss of cultural knowledge. Indigenous people across Turtle Island view Indigenous women as one of the most sacred beings on earth as they are the "live givers."

The definition of who is an "Indian" has also separated Indigenous families, communities and Nations. For example, until 1982, the ability to obtain and keep status for First Nations women was decided by their relationships with men. If an Indigenous woman were to marry a Métis or non-Indigenous man, she would lose her status, and their children would be without status as well. Non-Indigenous women who married Indigenous men, however, received status.

Indigenous women "became a tool to decrease and eventually exterminate the Indigenous population. Indigenous women were portrayed as poor parents, making it excusable for the Canadian state to remove Indigenous children and put them in residential schools or foster homes. Currently, [Indigenous women] are burdened with the over-sexualized projections that taint the images of our mothers, sisters, aunts, and grannies."

- Renee Elizabeth Mzinegizhigo-kwe Bedard

Glen Coulthard, Dene scholar and activist, notes that in 1869, the Canadian government passed the Gradual Enfranchisement Act. This Act was created to establish the elective Band Council system. Not only was this destructive for the traditional governance systems within Nations, it further disadvantaged Indigenous women. After the Act was passed, women no longer had a right to receive inheritances from their husbands and were denied the right to vote and participate in Band politics. This enfranchisement of Indigenous women was done without consent, and the government also retained the power to strip a woman of her status if she married a non-status man. Losing status meant a loss of the right to reside on reserve, access to housing, and to receive federally subsidized health care.

"The Indian Act resulted in the displacement of power and authority that Aboriginal women had prior to colonization... By the early twentieth century, Aboriginal women's very capacity to reproduce came under government security [scrutiny] and with the eugenics movement, legislation was passed that allowed the arbitrary, involuntary sterilization of Aboriginal women and men."



Kenzie Miller (Syilx), Amy Cote (Tsilhqot'in), and Taya Nickel (Tsilhqot'in and Secwepemc)

The Indian Homemakers' Association started on reserves in the 1930s and became an important voice for status and non-status Indigenous women. It was the first association to represent non-status Indigenous women, and the association pointed out how status laws discriminated against women. Some of those challenges remain today.

Indigenous women continue to face a significant amount of discrimination in Canada. Indigenous women are 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women. The critical issue of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada and the US has drawn clear correlations between Canada's treatment of Indigenous women through policy and legislative neglect as genocide:

“The violence the National Inquiry heard amounts to a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis, which especially targets women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people. This genocide has been empowered by colonial structures evidenced notably by the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools and breaches of human and Indigenous rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death, and suicide in Indigenous populations.”

The Indian Residential School System

Residential Schools are a dark legacy in Canadian history. The first Residential School opened in 1870, beginning 126 years of devastating impacts on Indigenous people. Many believe incorrectly that the network of Residential Schools disappeared or were closed down a long time ago; however, the last school was only closed in 1996. The effects of the Indian Residential School system are pervasive and on-going.

Residential Schools were created by the Government of Canada and administered by a variety of Christian Churches. The intended purpose of these schools was to “erase Indigenous culture in the children - “Kill the Indian in the child” - and to stop the transmission of culture from one generation to another.” Approximately 150,000 Indigenous children attended Indian Residential Schools. While attending these schools, 90 - 100% of the students experienced severe physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual abuse. Additionally, a staggering 40 - 60% of children did not survive Residential School. The majority of these victims were buried in unmarked graves.

In 1884, the Canadian government required all Indigenous children to attend these Residential Schools. Laws were established to punish parents that resisted the order, imposing fines or prison sentences for disobedience. Families were torn apart, and although siblings were often sent to the same school, they were frequently separated. Students were segregated based on age, sex, and work duties. These laws were enforced by Indian Agents and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

The Native Women's Association of Canada reports:

Statistics Canada reports that Aboriginal women are significantly overrepresented as victims of homicide.

- Between 1997 and 2000, homicide rates of Aboriginal females were almost seven times higher than those of non-Aboriginal females.
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) data published in Amnesty International Canada's report *Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* indicate that Aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 44 with Indian status are five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as the result of violence.
- NWAC's research indicates that homicides involving Aboriginal women are more likely to go unsolved. Only 53% of murder cases in NWAC's *Sisters In Spirit* database have been solved, compared to 84% of all murder cases across the country.

For more information, please see the MMIWG Final Report found here: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

Life in Indian Residential Schools

Indigenous children were abused daily. Upon arrival, children were subjected to physical abuse, many being washed with kerosene, or having their clothes replaced and hair cut to conform with European standards. In many reports, Indigenous survivors speak of being physically beaten for speaking their language or practising any aspect of their culture. The living conditions in Residential Schools were horrible; food was scarce, and when available it was often mouldy, and was forced to the children. Because of these conditions, Indigenous children were malnourished and suffered poor health. Coupled with poor sanitation, many lives were lost to disease. Most students received a Grade 5 education and then were forced into manual labour. During their time at Residential School, some Indigenous children were subjected to experiments by Health Canada. Experiments consisted of what malnutrition does to the human body and how it could be prevented. Sexual abuse was also common in Residential Schools. Teenage girls that became pregnant often had their babies forcefully taken from them and given away, and sometimes the babies were murdered.

Returning home

A child's early years are a crucial time of human development. Indigenous children returning home from Residential Schools faced many obstacles. School-aged children returned traumatized by physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and sexual abuse. Many survivors returned unable to speak their language or to participate in cultural events. Since expressions of culture were punished in Residential School, some children experienced shame about their cultural practices. Residential School also impacted children's attachment to their parents, causing damage to family connections that can pass from generation to generation.

The Indian Residential School system was designed to strip students of their previously-developed cultural knowledge, leaving them isolated from their families and communities. Separated both from their home communities and from 'mainstream' Euro-Canadian society, Indigenous children experienced loss, shame and a lack of belonging that continues to ripple across the generations.

Manitoba Trauma Informed Information and Education Centre reports:

"A significant factor to consider is how the attachment relationship between children, their parents, their natural community and cultural supports were violated. The experience of being taken away from their caregivers would have been traumatic and had a significant impact on the children's development. Attachment to a responsive, nurturing, consistent caregiver is essential for healthy growth and development. Many children of the Residential School system did not have this experience after they were taken from their families and subsequently struggle today because of the trauma of being taken away from attachment figures. The impact of these disrupted attachments is felt at individual, family and community levels."

Many survivors report that they did not know what a healthy family, love, or parenting looked like, due to their pain and trauma. Traditional parenting practices were not passed down to younger generations. Because many residential school survivors were forced to be raised in a militaristic way, they did not learn how to pass down the loving kindness that is embedded in the Indigenous worldview to their own children. Many young Indigenous people today report that they were never told by their parents that they were loved, and that this generation is breaking that cycle.

The long term effects of the Residential School system is referred to as intergenerational trauma, as evidence suggests that the trauma is passed down to children and grandchildren. However, intergenerational trauma does not only refer to Residential School and its survivors, it is also in reference to the trauma Indigenous people have experienced since settlers arrived.

Sir John A. MacDonald understood the harms that Residential Schools caused to Indigenous families and communities, including the high rates of death of school-aged children. In 1910, MacDonald stated, "It is readily acknowledged that Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habitating so closely in these schools and that they die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this alone does not justify a change in the policy of this Department, which is being geared towards the final solution of our Indian Problem."



Current policies Impacting Indigenous people

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) and the United Nations (UN) have all called for Canada to renounce the racist doctrines of superiority. The AFN states “While this does not mean that past injustices will not change, it would acknowledge responsibility and recognize obligations Canada has in the present to First Nations.” In essence, Canadians must acknowledge that the laws that provided a basis for the development of Canada were based on concepts of racial superiority.

The AFN goes further:

“Rather than taking an adversarial position against First Nations, Canada must uphold the honour of the Crown and engage in a resolution of land rights that does not seek to minimize our rights to our lands. First Nations should not have to engage in protracted, expensive litigation to have our lands and rights respected.”

There are many barriers to fight for inherent land rights in Canada. The costs associated with taking the federal government to court to assert existing title and rights falls on First Nations, many of which have been left in economic disparity, what Arthur Manuel calls the 0.2% economy. On the topic of Indigenous title and rights, the AFN states, “The big question remains: how did the Crown obtain title and how does the Crown continue to assert sovereignty? As scholar John Borrows reminds us, ‘Canadian law will remain problematic for Indigenous peoples as long as it continues to assume away the underlying title and overarching governance powers that First Nations possess.’”

Aboriginal Rights and Title exist - DeGaulmoux

Rights and Recognition Framework

DRIPA / UNDRIP

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/frequently-asked-questions-the-united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>

- Yellow Head Institute CG: So while not a treaty, it could still be very powerful. I want to talk more about B.C. Act. Do you think it binds provincial governments along the lines you suggest? JB: The normal way that political communities would implement international law is through legislation. So the process would identify our treaty standards, our principles of customary international law or general principles of international law and they would say “okay – that’s what the standard is, now we need to put it into our own legislative sphere to give that force, to give that greater certainty.” If the B.C. government sees this “merely” as a declaration and not a treaty they wouldn’t be obligated to put this into legislation, they could have taken other measures to work with Indigenous peoples, or to work with the federal government to enact the rights. But, to the extent that it does represent principles of international law, customary international law, there would be an obligation that
 - Human Rights Tribunal - Blackstock vs Government of Canada

Skookamina Marchand, Syilx and Secwepemc



Anti-Indigenous Racism in Canada

Contributing to anti-Indigenous bias is lack of awareness about Indigenous people, their histories, cultures, and the current issues they face. The Canadian education system has also contributed to this lack of awareness and has historically under-represented and oppressed Indigenous people and their languages.

In more recent history, educational materials have favoured the history of settler culture in Canada. To this day, Canadian school children are assigned materials that glorify the arrival of Columbus as the one who “discovered” what came to be called North America. Provincial and regional education authorities are starting to shift their curriculum to include the Indigenous worldview, however many feel that this transition has been slow and there is a need for more training and resources for teachers. A lack of education from an Indigenous perspective will further embed harmful stereotypes against Indigenous people.

Mainstream media often focuses on social problems or unrest in Indigenous stories or history, often painting Indigenous people as unruly or unlawful. Examples of anti-Indigenous bias in the media persist, such as how the death of Coulten

Boushie, a young Indigenous man who was murdered in Saskatchewan, was covered. Canadian media regularly portrayed Boushie as an unlawful suspect, while his murderer was acquitted. This story sent shockwaves through Indigenous communities in Canada, and there were calls for the media to report Indigenous stories from an unbiased perspective.

Here in BC, Indigenous youth are acting to protect traditional territories that have been impacted by resource extraction. One youth exclaimed, “We are trying to make sure that future generations will still be able to depend on the land for resources.” In the media, these youth are being referred to as “protesters,” “unlawful citizens” and “squatters”.

The mainstream media contributes to negative stereotypes by only covering the traumatic, negative and inflammatory stories that affect Indigenous communities. This coupled with normalized bias is a fertile ground for racism to grow.

Here in Surrey, SUILC hosted a two-day forum on Anti-Indigenous racism in Surrey and its impacts on the community.

Myths & Misconceptions

The following section is from Kory Wilson’s Pulling Together, with permission.

Find the full resource here: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/back-matter/appendix-c-myth-or-fact/>

Where do Myths Come from?

Although the situation is improving, far too many Canadians do not know the real history of Indigenous people, their histories, cultures or the current issues they face.

There are many reasons why:

- Years of government policies have worked to assimilate Indigenous people into mainstream Canadian society.
- Reserves have isolated First Nations people from Canadian society.
- Very little is taught about the true history of Canada and Indigenous people.
- Film, television, and media often perpetuate Indigenous stereotypes

For an educational video on some of the stereotypes Indigenous people face see <https://www.coursera.org/lecture/aboriginal-education/8th-fire-episode-2-its-time-dY3WR> 6:39



Sequoia Marchand, Syilx and Cherokee

Myth or Fact

- 1. Indigenous Peoples never had written languages.** That's a myth! European and Asian writing systems are only one way of transmitting information in visual symbols, but there are others. Indigenous Peoples have used symbols and a variety of markings to communicate and tell stories. Totem poles, petroglyphs, and pictographs are examples of visual language.
- 2. Indigenous Peoples do not pay any taxes.** That's a myth! All Indigenous Peoples are required to pay taxes like all other Canadians. This includes all income, federal, provincial, and municipal taxes, as well as taxes for goods and services bought off reserve. The only exceptions are for people recognized by the federal government as "Status Indians." They do not have to pay:
 - income tax if they earn 60 per cent of their income on a reserve
 - provincial or federal sales tax if they purchase goods or services on reserve or have them delivered to the reserve
- 3. Everything that happened to Indigenous Peoples "happened so long ago that they should just get over it."** That's a myth! Indigenous Peoples are still dealing with the effects of colonization. Considering that Indigenous Peoples were almost eliminated by diseases introduced from settlers, those who were resilient and survived now experience ongoing impacts on their quality of life, identity, cultural expression, and traditional practice. For example, the Indian Act still controls many aspects of First Nations people's lives and limits the ability for First Nation communities to self-govern. Until 1951, it was illegal for First Nations people to gather in groups of more than three, leave a reserve without a pass, hire a lawyer, own property, or practise their culture. It has only been since 1982, with an amendment to the Constitution, that the legal status of First Nations women was no longer determined by who they married. The last Residential School in B.C. closed in 1984, so even those who did not attend the schools still suffer from the ongoing legacy of pain, loss, and racism.
- 4. Indigenous Peoples are all the same.** That's a myth! Indigenous Peoples and communities across Canada are very diverse in language, culture, and traditions. There are over 200 First Nation communities across B.C. They speak more than 36 distinct languages. In the 2016 Census, 270,000 people in B.C. self-identified as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit. This number does not include First Nations people on reserve, as many reserves were not included in the census. Depending on where you are in the province, cultural practices and traditions will differ from one another.

To see a video of Indigenous awareness training go to <https://www.coursera.org/lecture/aboriginal-education/8th-fire-episode-2-its-time-dY3WR> 23:28

5. **Indigenous cultures were very primitive.** That's a myth! Indigenous Peoples have complex cultures and systems of governance, commerce, trade, and agriculture that thrived for thousands of years before settler contact. Even though numerous peace treaties were established in eastern and central Canada, the settler government would not recognize or validate these strong systems and approaches. For instance, B.C.'s Governor James Douglas negotiated agreements with First Nation communities on Vancouver Island, but subsequent governors nullified these agreements.
6. **Indigenous Peoples get free university education and free housing.** That's a myth! Some First Nations people are eligible for post-secondary education funds, if they are a Status Indian and if their First Nation community has enough federally allocated money to fund all or part of their post-secondary education. Many Indigenous people receive no help from their communities or the government when pursuing post-secondary education. As for free housing, each First Nation negotiates with the federal government to access funding to build homes on reserve, and the First Nation then secures mortgages for the homes. Tenants make payments to the First Nation to repay the mortgage. If a tenant does get subsidized help with their housing, this is because they have a special low-income status. Even if a tenant pays off the mortgage, the house is not in their name and they cannot sell it.
7. **Indigenous Peoples have more problems with addiction and crime than other people.** That's a myth! As a population, Indigenous people are more likely to face addictions and are over-represented in the criminal justice system, but this is not because they are more criminally inclined or because their bodies are more susceptible to addictions (though this was thought to be the case by scientists and many people for decades). The reasons for the increased likelihood of addictions and over-representation in the criminal justice system are multiple and result from a combination of influences related to colonization. These include lack of recognition of their cultures, traditions, and languages; government policies; racism, discrimination, and stereotyping; breakdown in family structure; poverty; isolation; and residential schools, cycles of dysfunction, and intergenerational trauma. In large cities, there are more police officers in poor neighbourhoods. If Indigenous people are poorer than most Canadians (and statistically they are), then they are more likely to come into contact with police officers or the criminal justice system. In addition, once in the criminal system, Indigenous people face further discrimination as a result of lack of understanding and cultural differences that lead to institutional bias and racism. They are therefore more likely to be convicted and given longer sentences.
8. **Indigenous youth were not affected by Residential Schools or colonization.** That's a myth! Colonization has had a lasting effect on Indigenous communities, including breakdown of the family structure, poverty, depression, addictions, intergenerational trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Indigenous youth must overcome many social and economic barriers in order to break this harmful cycle. Many Indigenous people continue to experience racism – sometimes direct and intentional and sometimes in the form of uninformed opinions, misunderstandings, and prejudice. This affects their ability to live healthy and productive lives.
9. **Indigenous Peoples don't want to get along with the government and be a part of Canada.** That's a myth! Indigenous Peoples are already part of Canada and want the federal government to recognize their autonomy and rights as distinct peoples, as stated in the Constitution. Indigenous Peoples have been unfairly treated in Canada – from having their lands and territories unlawfully taken to government decisions made on their behalf without consultation.

To see a video of an Indigenous awareness training go to <https://www.coursera.org/lecture/aboriginal-education/8th-fire-episode-2-its-time-dY3WR> 23:28

Indigenous Brilliance

Celebrating Indigenous Role Models in Surrey

Many Indigenous people today are reclaiming their Indigenous identity. They are articulate, educated, creative like their ancestors. They are continuing to find ways to reimagine Indigenous identities that blend traditional ways of being with modern times. These role models ground their work in their ancestral ties. Often, the media exposes traumatic stories, which can cause a negative perception of Indigeneity. In this section, we hope to uplift the Indigenous Brilliance that exists here in Surrey BC.

Alanaise Goodwill - Anishnaabe



Dr. Alanaise Goodwill is Anishinaabe from Sandy Bay First Nation and holds a PhD in psychology. She currently teaches at Simon Fraser University at the Surrey Campus. Alanaise is a scientist-practitioner and educator in Counselling Psychology. Her work aims to decolonize mental health practices by addressing serious manifestations of colonial violence such as gangs and gender based violence. As one of very few Indigenous Registered Psychologists in British Columbia, she maintains active service within several Indigenous communities as well as her teaching duties

Alanaise redeveloped the First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling Program at Brandon University in the emerging field of Indigenous Psychology. She has also written curriculum for some of Canada's leading educational institutes. "Alanaise works in the areas of identity reclamation, collective healing and restitution from damaging colonial processes including Indian Residential schools. Her work has attracted the attention of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, where she served as advisory for child and youth mental health, 2009-2012"

Alanaise is passionate about language revitalization and weaves language in her family and group counselling methods. This is innovative work, that has not been witnessed in either field of language revitalization or in counselling psychology.

Jay Simeon - Haida First Nation

Jay Simeon is a Haida carver and father residing in Surrey for the past 10 years. Jay was born into the Kaawaas branch of the Sdast'a.aas Eagle clan. Jay's Mother is Blackfoot from Brocket Alberta. Jay has been recognized as a leader in Haida art and has been mentoring other artists for 16 years. In 2011, Jay received the Fulmer Award in First Nations Art in BC. Jay's first teacher was his father, Eric Simeon. Jay started carving at a young age with supplies he found around the house. At 14, Eric introduced Jay to his Aunt Sharon Yeltatzic from whom he started his artistic journey with.

Simeon apprenticed under his aunt, Haida Artist Sharon Hitchcock when he was fourteen and learned jewellery-making with Dwayne Simeon. He continued studying Northwest Coast design through books and visits to museums. Jay's work has been shown in galleries across North America.

"He is an accomplished carver in multiple scales and mediums and it is in his jewellery that he has established himself at the forefront of Northwest Coast design. His work in gold, silver, bone and argillite incorporate a variety of techniques in order to create some of the most intricate and beautifully carved jewelry in the Northwest Coast art world. His care for detail, coupled with a strong ability for design, makes him among the best and most exciting work of his generation."

Jay notes the tension he feels by being an urban Haida. He says that the access to new tools and the galleries has provided many opportunities. However, Jay longs to be back on the land in his home territories.



Guuj sdang (Two Wolves) Panel
Jay Simeon (Haida)
Red Cedar, Acrylic



Moon Pendant
Jay Simeon (Haida)
Yellow Cedar, Abalone

Len Pierre - Katzie First Nation

Len is a Father, Coast Salish Consultant, public speaker, educator, cultural practitioner and spiritual gangster. With a background in adult education and cultural knowledge systems, Len aims to decolonize and transform corporate systems, approaches, policies, and curriculum content in any professional discipline.

Len is a fierce advocate for Indigenous health rights in the areas of the overdose crisis, cultural safety, decolonizing substance use and addiction and promoting Indigenous worldview to create positive impacts in the area of Indigenous health access.

Len states that Indigenous people have been severely impacted by the following colonial events.

Residential School

60's Scoop

Land Theft

In a time of Truth & Reconciliation, Len believes that the need to bridge the Indigenous and non-Indigenous realities has never been greater. With a focus on recentering Indigenous knowledge and values, he provides educational lectures, workshops and consultation services to any willing service provider.



Lyn Daniels - Kawacatoose First Nation



Lyn is passionate about decolonizing education. Lyn holds a Doctor of Education degree at UBC in Policy and Educational Leadership. Her thesis focused on Indigenous college student's memories of public education. She has studied the comparisons that exist between the Indian Residential School system and the public school system. This has allowed her to showcase the present day experiences of Indigenous students within present day education, and highlight colonial based educational policy.

While working with several BC school districts and the Ministry of Education, Lyn has been an administrator, a coordinator, and a consultant in Aboriginal Education. Currently, she is the Director of Instruction, Aboriginal Learning in Surrey Schools. In and out of her role, she advocates for equity amongst Indigenous leaders and the building of strong partnerships. By building partnerships within communities and across school districts, Lyn aims to create clear pathways to post-secondary for Indigenous students.

Indigenous Resurgence

“Indigenous lands and waters are the strength of our beings and therefore the heart of Indigenous resurgence

- Crystal Smith

Resurgence or revival of Indigenous identity is a growing movement across Turtle Island. By starting with the reclamation of Indigenous culture, nations can break the cycle of poverty and begin healing from the impacts of colonization. This process begins on the land, a key component of Indigenous identity and ways of living. Leanne Simpson writes “now, then, and forever, the fight is for the land. The land, and all it has to teach, to give, and all it demands.” This movement is led by a tidal wave of youth, Indigenous peoples are rising in areas, including, health, education, law, and politics.

Acts of Indigenous resurgence began at contact. Under British rule, potlatches and ceremonies were outlawed; however, Indigenous peoples continued practicing them in secret. When the Residential School system began, some families hid their families in the forest, evading the Indian Agents and the RCMP. In 1969, when Pierre Trudeau introduced the White Paper, a piece of legislation aimed to fully assimilate Indigenous people into dominant society, it was rejected by the Indigenous community. In response, the Indian Association of Alberta, led by Harold Cardinal, entered the House of Commons in full regalia, with drumming and singing, to present the Red Paper. The Red Paper outlined that original treaties had been signed with the British Crown and was the foundation for self-governance and self-sufficiency within Canada. Ryan McMahon, host of the popular podcast on Indigenous issues, Red Man Laughing states “It is critical to note that regardless of the treatment of Indigenous people in Canada. Indigenous peoples are still willing to come to the table on a Nation to Nation framework”

Here, on Kwantlen first Nation, Chief Marliyn Gabriel honours the Elders in her community that - despite their traumatic experiences in residential school and with discrimination, they have developed teachings to educate children in elementary and highschools in Langley BC. These Kwantlen Elders are passionate about educating the next generations so that the atrocities of the past do not continue.

Closing

Thank you for the time you took to read this resource. In his address to teachers, parents and community members at Rideau High School in Ottawa Senator Murray Sinclair spoke about the important role newcomers to Canada play in the process of reconciliation. He stated,

“What is the role of adult newcomers to Canada in the ongoing work of reconciliation if they are not connected to this history? If you feel connected to the future of this country, and if you feel responsible for the future, then you need to care about reconciliation, for the sake of the future of this country.”

-Senator Murray Sinclair



Hanna Dexel-Poitras, Jaylen Dexel-Poitras, Jamie Dexel-Poitras (N'kakamplux), and Presley Poitras (Haida and Syilx)



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