



# Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples: A Holistic Approach

Toolkit for  
**Inclusive Municipalities**  
in Canada and Beyond



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



CANADIAN  
COMMISSION  
FOR UNESCO

With the support of the

International Coalition  
of Inclusive and  
Sustainable Cities – ICCAR

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*The Canadian Commission for UNESCO helps Canadians share knowledge locally and globally in order to create better societies and build peace in the minds of everyone. To do so, the Commission facilitates cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, communication and information to address some of the most complex challenges facing the world today. With its initiatives and networks, CCUNESCO supports the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other UNESCO priorities. The Commission operates under the authority of the Canada Council for the Arts.*



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# Introduction

Advancing reconciliation is part of the broad mandate of the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (formerly the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination – CCMARD). Signatory municipalities of the Coalition are committed to strengthening their policies and programs in a number of areas of municipal responsibility including service delivery, employment, housing and cultural activities. The implementation of these objectives can directly contribute to advancing reconciliation.

In Canada, as of May 2019, nearly 80 municipalities have joined the Coalition. The Coalition itself is part of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR, an initiative launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2004 to promote efforts by cities around the world to address racism, xenophobia, discrimination and exclusion.

Members of the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities advance initiatives to:

- establish policies to eradicate all forms of racism and discrimination
- improve their practices to promote social inclusion
- promote human rights and diversity

A survey of Canadian municipalities conducted by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) in 2017 identified a need for additional information to help municipalities learn about and respect the rights of the Indigenous population, both collectively (peoples) and individually (people), including those who live in municipalities.

This publication is in part a practical tool and resource to respond to this need. It includes a brief overview of Canadian-Indigenous relations and the call for reconciliation in this context. It provides definitions of common terms, and identifies additional reading and resources. It is also partly inspirational. Municipalities have generously shared their stories, practical advice and promising practices in order to encourage others to take action. A holistic approach to Indigenous-municipal relations is presented to support cross-cultural understanding.

We hope that this publication encourages dialogue, learning, consensus-building and collaborative action in pursuit of inclusion, justice and, ultimately, reconciliation.

**Sébastien Goupil**  
Secretary-General  
Canadian Commission for UNESCO



**“Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country.”**

– Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada<sup>1</sup>

UNESCO's Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples reaffirms its commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its mandated areas.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Let's Talk About Reconciliation, initiative for public libraries aims to encourage participation by Canadians who are not directly involved in the reconciliation process or who are not exposed to Indigenous history and cultures. These cross-country dialogues aim to strengthen relations between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities by creating a space where the two communities can interact with each other in a spirit of openness and mutual discovery.



# Background

The destructive history of Canadian policies on Indigenous peoples has been described in major national studies over the past several decades. Most recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) concluded in its 2015 report that since Confederation, Canada's Indigenous policies had the effect of eliminating Indigenous governments; ignoring Indigenous rights; terminating treaties; and causing Indigenous peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious and racial entities in Canada.<sup>2</sup>

Ongoing disparities are “reflected in the intense racism some people harbour against Aboriginal peoples and in the systemic and other forms of discrimination Aboriginal people regularly experience in this country.”<sup>3</sup> These consequences have been compounded by a lack of respect by non-Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples and a loss of self-respect and pride in themselves by Indigenous peoples.<sup>4</sup> The timeline below highlights some important historical events that have contributed to our need for reconciliation.

## ? Did you know

The terms ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Indigenous’ refer to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples collectively. ‘Indigenous’ is the more commonly used term following the adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*. The term ‘Indigenous peoples’ is used when referring to nations, and the term ‘Indigenous people’ is used when referring to Indigenous individuals.

First Nations is a collective term referring to Haida, Blackfoot, Cree, Maliseet, and others. Individual communities are referred to as a First Nation. It is respectful and recommended to refer to the specific nation by the name the nation or community uses to describe themselves (i.e. traditional names).

The term Inuit, an Inuktitut word meaning “the people”, is the collective term for those individuals and their future generations who are party to one of the Inuit Comprehensive Agreements. An individual member of this community is an Inuk.

The term Métis does not include everyone of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry. The Supreme Court (*R. v. Powley*, 2003 SCC 43) determined that Métis are those who self-identify as Métis, have an ancestral connection to a historic Métis community, and are accepted by that modern community.

Other terms have come and gone out of favour over the years. These include ‘Indian’, ‘Eskimo’, ‘Half-breed’, ‘Native’, etc. However, some of these terms are used in legislation, like the *Indian Act*, or even the *Constitution of Canada* – for example, section 35(2), which defines “aboriginal peoples of Canada” to include “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada”. These terms remain in use, therefore, but should only be used when citing a quote or when referencing the specific legislation.

# ● Historical Events

This is a timeline of some key historical events and/or interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Developing a joint history timeline is a great way to learn about each other.

Municipalities and Indigenous partners may wish to work together to develop a local history timeline. It is a great way to start a conversation and get to know each other a little better.

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               | Indigenous histories are recounted from time immemorial – that is, from the time of ancestral histories beyond memory. Oral traditions recount stories of origins and other important cultural knowledge (For example: Sky Woman falls, Wîsahkêcâhk and the flood, Sedna, Glooscap frees the water). These stories also remind us that First Nations and Inuit were self-governing and exercised exclusive control of all territory now called Canada. |
| 1000          | Norse establish settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 1400s         | Europeans explore the Americas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1455 and 1493 | Papal bulls authorize European nations to seize Indigenous lands in the Americas and enslave the peoples they find there                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 1500s         | Further travels by Europeans and encounters with new Indigenous nations result in foreign diseases infecting Indigenous peoples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1534          | France claims ownership of New France                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1537          | Papal bull acknowledges Indigenous peoples are human and forbids their enslavement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1574-1778     | Frobisher's search for the Northwest Passage to Asia constitutes first known contact with Inuit                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1600s         | Commercial fur trade attracts more Europeans to Canada                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

Continued on next page



|                      |                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1700s                | Métis emerge as a distinct culture                                                                                                       |
| 1763                 | British Royal Proclamation requires treaty with Indigenous nations prior to settling in their territory – this remains the law in Canada |
| 1771                 | First Moravian Mission established among Inuit at Nain, Labrador                                                                         |
| 1812                 | War with the United States; Six Nations Confederacy and British jointly repel attacks                                                    |
| 1867                 | Confederation                                                                                                                            |
| 1869                 | 10,000 Métis in Red River (now Winnipeg) form a Provisional Government                                                                   |
| 1870                 | First Residential Schools open                                                                                                           |
| 1871-1921            | Canada negotiates the numbered Treaties                                                                                                  |
| 1874 and early 1900s | Métis are issued scrip for money or land                                                                                                 |
| 1876                 | First Nations peoples restricted to reserves ( <i>Indian Act</i> )                                                                       |
| 1884-1951            | Potlatch and other traditional gatherings and customs are banned                                                                         |
| 1885-1951            | First Nations peoples required to obtain a pass from the Indian Agent to leave the reserve                                               |
| 1885                 | Métis and First Nations men executed, including Louis Riel (Battle at Batoche)                                                           |
| 1903                 | First RCMP posts established in the Arctic                                                                                               |
| 1927-1951            | First Nations banned from hiring lawyers to pursue claims against the government                                                         |
| 1941                 | Canada issues Inuit with numbered identification discs to use in place of their names                                                    |



**1953-1955**

Inuit forcibly moved to High Arctic to reinforce Canadian sovereignty – many die

**1969**

White Paper issued by federal government recommends repealing the *Indian Act* and assimilating all Indigenous people – sparks Indigenous political activism and creation of national Indigenous organizations

**1982**

Constitutional amendments include recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights

**1996**

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report lays out strategy for redressing Indigenous rights but the advice is not acted on by Canada

**1996**

Last Residential School in Canada closes at Gordon First Nation in Saskatchewan

**1999**

The new territory of Nunavut is created

**2007**

Canada apologizes for Residential Schools

**2015**

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report concludes that Residential Schools attempted cultural genocide and issues 94 Calls to Action

**2016**

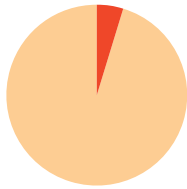
Canada endorses UNDRIP without qualification and establishes the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

**2019**

*Indigenous Languages Act* tabled in Canadian Parliament Simultaneous translation of Indigenous languages offered in House of Commons for first time

The social and economic costs within Canadian society of these policies and events have been enormous. High rates of suicide, homelessness, unemployment and death within the Indigenous communities are the tragic human measure of colonial and assimilationist policies. Many Canadians are shocked when they learn about the destructive effect of colonialism on Indigenous communities over the years. It challenges cherished ideals about Canada as a nation. Changing the status quo means giving up old ideas, replacing control with collaboration, and learning new ways of looking at the world.

## ● Demographics



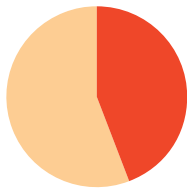
- ▶ Indigenous peoples comprise approximately **4.9%** of the Canadian population.



- ▶ Over **977,000** First Nations, 587,000 Métis, and 65,000 Inuit.



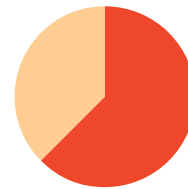
- ▶ There are more than **70** Indigenous languages, 30 of which are spoken by more than 500 speakers.<sup>5</sup>



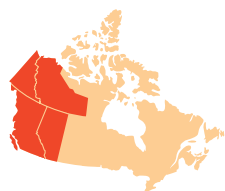
- ▶ **44.2%** of status First Nations peoples live on reserves.



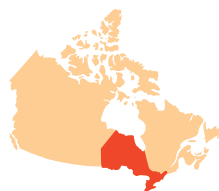
- ▶ **62.6%** of Métis live in urban settings.



- ▶ **72.8%** of Inuit live in Inuit Nunangat.



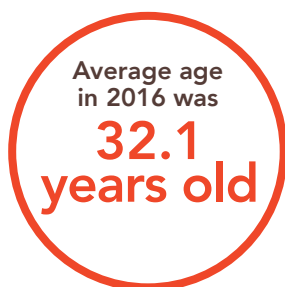
- ▶ More than **50%** of the total population of First Nations peoples live in the four western provinces.



- ▶ **24.2%** of First Nations peoples live in Ontario. Ontario also reports the largest population of Métis people.



- ▶ **Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver and Toronto** have the largest number of Indigenous residents.



### Debunking myths, misconceptions and stereotypes

There are many myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes circulating about Indigenous peoples. A common impression of the 'typical Indigenous person' is of someone who does not pay taxes, gets free education, lives on a reserve, and is unemployed. These stereotypes damage Indigenous peoples and relationships with non-Indigenous people.

1

#### Truth

Most Indigenous peoples pay the same taxes as other Canadians, except for certain exceptions for status First Nations peoples who live or work on reserves, less than 1% of the total Canadian population.<sup>6</sup>

3

#### Truth

More than half of status First Nations peoples live off-reserve and most of them live in urban centres.<sup>7</sup> Inuit and Métis do not have reserves.

2

#### Truth

Only status First Nations children living on reserves get some funding from the federal government to attend local schools. Inuit, Métis and status First Nations peoples living off-reserve receive no such funding. Some Indigenous students also receive federal funding to attend post-secondary school, but not all students who wish to attend receive funding.

4

#### Truth

There are more than 43,000 Inuit, Métis and First Nations business owners in Canada and Indigenous businesses contributed \$12 billion to Canada's economy in 2016.<sup>8</sup>

## ● Rights and Calls to Action

The legal framework for the protection of Indigenous rights includes Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. It also includes binding legal commitments, like the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*, and Treaties signed over the centuries. Supreme Court of Canada decisions have clarified these rights and interpreted the Treaties.<sup>9</sup> In 2016, Canada joined the global community in adopting the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*. The Declaration describes the agreed-upon minimum standard of rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. A review of these documents is necessary to understand the legal context in Canada.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) challenged Canadians to adopt a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. They recommended a nation-to-nation approach. The TRC urged giving up colonial policies and taking a new approach based on *10 Principles of Reconciliation* and *94 Calls to Action*. Reconciliation addresses the deep structural problems in terms of the way land, resources, money, education, housing and health care are distributed in this country, which undermine our collective wellbeing. The overall task is to build a new relationship with Indigenous peoples. It will take the effort of all Canadians to contribute to holistic changes in the way we live, work and govern ourselves.

### The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

It describes both individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. The document sets out principles and commitments that UN Member States agreed to support, including Indigenous rights regarding:

- sovereignty
- culture
- identity
- religion
- language
- health
- education
- environment
- territory

UNDRIP is the most advanced and comprehensive declaration on Indigenous peoples' rights: its 46 articles describe specific rights and actions that governments commit to in order to protect these rights. The "right to be free of discrimination" is one of the four main themes of the Declaration.



### Reconciliation

"[T]he term 'reconciliation' implies that the parties were once whole, experienced a rift, and now must be made whole again. But in colonial settings, this is not the case. The relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples in Canada was one of nations encountering nations, where one gradually oppressed and marginalized the other. Indigenous peoples never agreed to the denial of their sovereignty, cultures or identities. Thus, in the Canadian context, reconciliation must refer to 'transformative' as opposed to 'restorative' reconciliation."<sup>10</sup>



# What Municipalities Can Do

Municipal governments (defined here to include all forms of local government including townships, counties and regional governments) are taking up this challenge. They are adopting new policies and ways of working, learning about Indigenous peoples across Canada, developing mutually beneficial agreements with local Indigenous communities, and sharing services developed through collaborative initiatives.

Municipalities are encouraged to reflect upon all 94 Calls to Action and consider how they can advance implementation. Of the 94 Calls, five specifically refer to municipal governments, and another four call on “all levels of government” to take particular action. As a starting point, these nine Calls to Action can provide a focus for municipal action, although there are many more areas where municipalities can support action.

With their capacity to bring the national reconciliation effort home to the local level, municipalities are not only critical partners. They have the capacities to be leaders in reconciliation through an authentic and inclusive dialogue with Indigenous peoples and governments.

“The TRC was a six-year undertaking, engaging thousands of Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians. Through this multi-year process, the TRC laid out what must be done. The second stage of the journey to reconciliation begins by determining how to implement the Calls to Action. Since the TRC process began in 2009, municipalities have seen significant changes in how we understand the issues and relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples that live in our cities, resulting in new and revitalized relationships with local Indigenous leaders and organizations.”<sup>11</sup>

## **Calls to Action Related to Municipalities**

- N° 40 – Establish Indigenous-specific victim programs and services
- N° 43 – Adopt and implement UNDRIP
- N° 47 – Reject concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and land
- N° 57 – Educate municipal public servants and develop skills in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism efforts
- N° 64 – Require denominational schools to provide comparative religious studies including on Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices
- N° 75 – Protect Residential School cemeteries
- N° 77 – Provide records of Residential Schools to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
- N° 87 – Provide public education on the history of Indigenous athletes in Canada
- N° 88 – Take action to support the development of Indigenous athletes

## ● Engage with Indigenous communities and individuals in various areas of municipal work

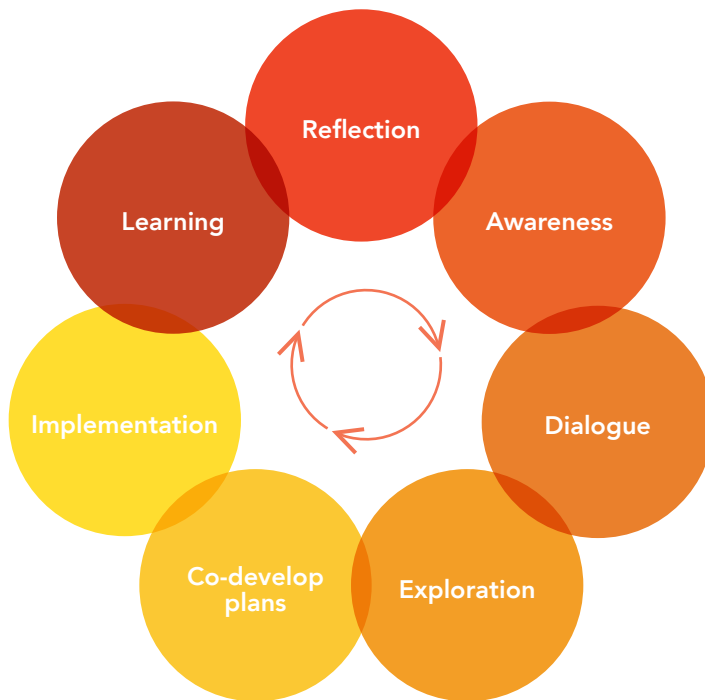
Consider the host of local issues for which municipalities are responsible – land-use planning, economic development, affordable housing, clean drinking water, policing and justice, fire and emergency response – and how these touch on the rights and interests of neighbouring Indigenous governments and Indigenous people living in towns and cities. Municipalities are encouraged to engage with Indigenous people living within the municipality, to ensure that the municipality is inclusive of all residents and serving their needs. In addition, municipalities should strengthen relations with neighbouring Indigenous communities and governments in whose traditional territories the municipality is located.

Municipalities can be good neighbours by sharing their plans and priorities, discussing possible new infrastructures, and offering to share services with Indigenous communities or purchase services from them. Working together may prove challenging, but imagine the new opportunities for cost savings, jobs and economic development, improved levels of service, and better land management and environmental protection, among others!<sup>12</sup>

### **The Power of the Arts and Culture**

CULTURAT is an ambitious and innovative social project that mobilizes the general public, socioeconomic groups, the media and Indigenous communities of Abitibi-Témiscamingue, QC, towards the beautification of the territory through the arts and the creation of attractive and welcoming public spaces. It also encourages the knowledge, consumption and appreciation of local and regional cultural and artistic richness. Coordinated by Tourisme Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the initiative celebrates the heritage of local First Nations and promotes relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. As of May 2019, 62 municipalities, 7 band councils and 17 organizations have signed the CULTURAT charter. Many school boards, businesses and citizens in the region are also showing their support for the initiative.

## ● Learning and growth: a model



**Successful collaboration** can be built through a process of ongoing **learning** and sharing. Municipalities can start the process by learning everything they can about Indigenous peoples and their rights. Educate yourself, your staff and elected officials, and your community about historical facts, different Indigenous cultures, and legal rights. **Reflect on** and **understand** how your municipality can improve its own policies, practices, procedures and institutional values to achieve fully respectful relationships. Once you understand the basics, **reach out** to your Indigenous neighbours and start to build a respectful relationship based on a true appreciation for each other that will evolve over time. With a **respectful dialogue** underway, communities can **explore** a host of issues on which they might collaborate. Finally, communities can **co-develop plans** to address these issues and work together on their **implementation**. Knowledge, awareness, respect, and appreciation will build over time as we take on new ideas, processes, and relationships. This is a cyclical and evolving process. Bring an open mind and an open heart, and be ready to challenge yourself and your preconceptions.

### June 21 - National Indigenous Peoples Day

The day is marked by festivals, traditional dances, singing, pow-wows, storytelling, and more. As a municipality, you can host and take part in the celebrations. Need some ideas? The [Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada](#) and [Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada \(CIRNAC\)](#) websites offer plenty of ideas of interest for municipalities and their partners. The website also offers tips to promote your June 21 event. The [Celebrate Canada](#) program also provides funding opportunities for community celebratory events for which municipal governments are eligible.



### The Media and Reconciliation

Your local media have a role to play in the reconciliation process. [Reporting in Indigenous Communities \(RIIC\)](#) offers a guide and checklist. The information is organized into three areas of reporting where journalists face challenges when producing news stories about Indigenous peoples: (i) At the Desk – how to research and pitch stories; (ii) In the Field – how to gather information for these stories; and (iii) On the Air – how to present stories about Indigenous peoples.<sup>13</sup>



# Successful Strategies

Reconciliation is a complex issue and will take time. Identifying tangible opportunities for success along the way will help keep motivation high as you move through the stages of understanding, collaborating, and advancing meaningful knowledge and practices around reconciliation.

Here are some ideas for easy wins.

## 1

### Understanding

- ✓ Learn at work – Workshops, online training and guest speakers, including Indigenous speakers, can help introduce the topics and get people talking. Topics might include:
  - Indigenous peoples and Canada
  - Human rights and Indigenous rights
  - Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and Calls to Action
  - Protocols of place
- ✓ Provide training to senior leadership and management, service providers and frontline workers.
- ✓ Learn the culture and history of the Indigenous peoples in your area, such as by attending events and listening. Indigenous peoples in Canada have diverse worldviews that are reflected in the cultures, languages and ancestral knowledge of their communities. The Inuit are different from the First Nations and Métis and there are many variations among First Nations. For example, the Mi'kmaq from the East Coast are quite different from the Blackfoot of the Prairies.

Katzie First Nation provides a Katzie 101 training to the council and staff of the City of Pitt Meadows, B.C. to better inform them about Katzie history, culture and current realities. Have you considered inviting local Indigenous communities, Elders or organizations to speak with your municipal officials?



## 2 Collaborating

- ✓ Organize discussions and meetings with local Indigenous community representatives; this can help with forward momentum and build the foundation of new relationships and potential partnerships.
- ✓ Invite Indigenous women, youth and Elders to your meetings to ensure you address everyone's perspectives, issues and concerns.
- ✓ Consider hiring a facilitator who is experienced in working with Indigenous communities to help ensure protocols are met for all participants, common goals are established, and difficult moments or conflicts are mitigated.
- ✓ Establish a group of representatives, including Indigenous representatives, who are able to meet regularly, set and work on achievable goals, and keep the collaboration moving forward.
- ✓ Join the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.
- ✓ Support dialogue between municipal departments and branches such as local police authorities and Indigenous peoples to identify opportunities for training and improved relations.
- ✓ Consider reaching out to research centres or networks to inquire about data or statistics that the municipality alone cannot generate.
- ✓ Inquire if your provincial or territorial municipal association provides support to municipalities for implementing UNDRIP, the TRC's Calls to Action, or training for municipal officials. Is reconciliation a topic at their next annual meeting?
- ✓ Work with local chambers of commerce, training organizations or schools, universities, and colleges to develop programs that could contribute to train Indigenous peoples – especially youth – to fill local job vacancies.
- ✓ Work with service-providers and local organizations to ensure access to housing for Indigenous peoples within the municipality and to help address poverty reduction.

The Town of Hearst and the Constance Lake First Nation in Ontario have been working together on various projects. In 2016, they worked together to develop a joint mining-readiness strategy to prepare themselves to benefit from a new graphite mine. In 2018, they signed an agreement to share solid-waste management services.

### 3 Advancing

- ✓ With partnerships established, identify short, medium- and long-term collaborative projects.
- ✓ Prioritize reconciliation within municipal planning. This can assist in generating activities and successes. Indigenous communities and municipalities struggle with limited resources, including financial, human and technical supports. These topics should not be avoided or minimized but may constitute important discussion and action points that require solutions.
- ✓ Continue to build on your knowledge and capacity to engage effectively with Indigenous peoples.

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish, NS, the Eastern-Straight Regional Enterprise Network and Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation have been working together since 2016 to strengthen collaboration and build a more resilient local economy. As a result of discussions, Paqtnkeke and the Municipality have signed a historic friendship

agreement; are making joint applications for renewable-energy projects; are sharing services and land-use planning; held a joint green-energy workshop; and are planning a regional economic development forum between First Nations and local governments.

### ? Did you know

Did you know some First Nations, Inuit and Métis are responsible for local governance, including the operation of municipalities? In the Northwest Territories there are only two Indian Act Reserves, and other local settlements are operated through self-government agreements or designated authority of various First Nations. In Alberta, the Métis Settlements General Council manages eight settlements established by Alberta under the Métis Settlements Act. Inuit, as the dominant population in Nunavut, as well as parts of Northern Québec and Labrador, also govern their own municipalities or settlements.

### Newcomers and Reconciliation

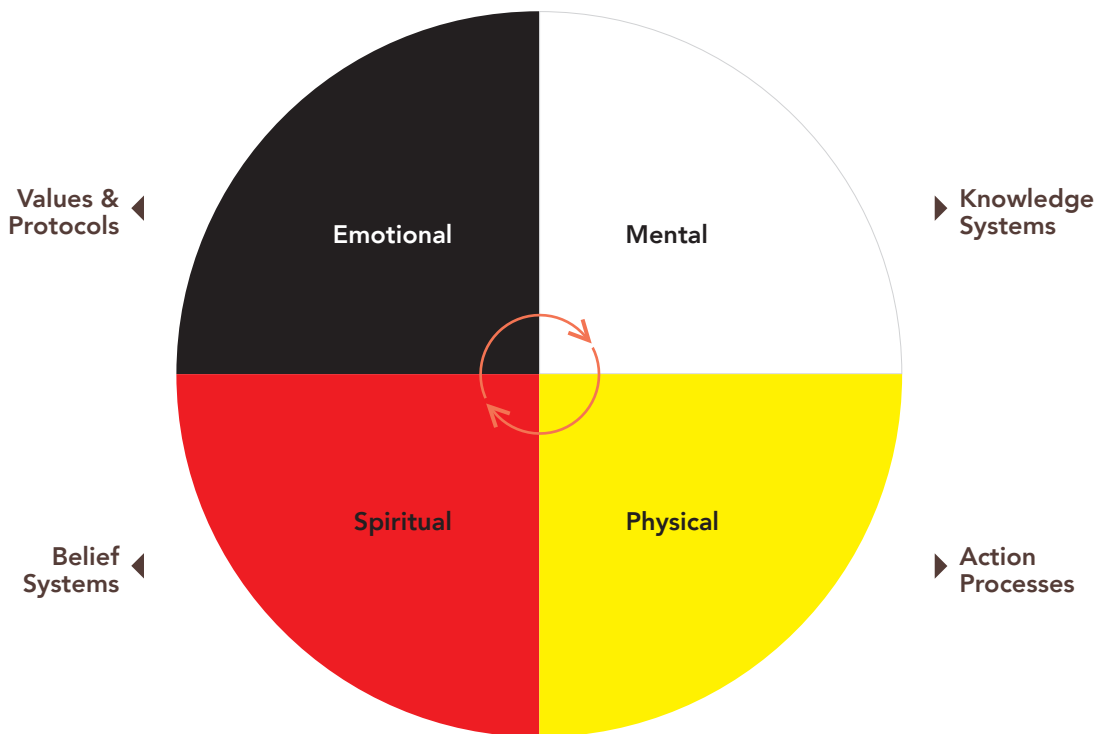
Identify opportunities to create and continue dialogue to build stronger relationships between new Canadians and First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in your community. You could for example host a dialogue circle involving newcomers and Indigenous peoples and feature discussions and topics significant to the contributions and history of Indigenous Peoples, the history and legacy of Residential Schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and treaties and the treaty relationship.<sup>14</sup>



# Reconciliation in Practice – A Holistic View

A holistic view of reconciliation honours many Indigenous worldviews and can provide a useful framework for systemic change. A holistic approach considers four interconnected areas – mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. This section offers some examples of how municipal initiatives designed to lead to reconciliation are progressing in each of these four areas. If we address each area in our reconciliation journey, we can begin to generate the

systemic changes we aim to achieve. The graphic below shows one example of how municipalities can think about the four interconnected areas. In this graphic, Knowledge Systems are linked to the Mental Domain; Action Processes are linked to the Physical Domain; Belief Systems are linked to the Spiritual Domain; and Values and Protocols are linked to the Emotional Domain.



## ● Knowledge Systems

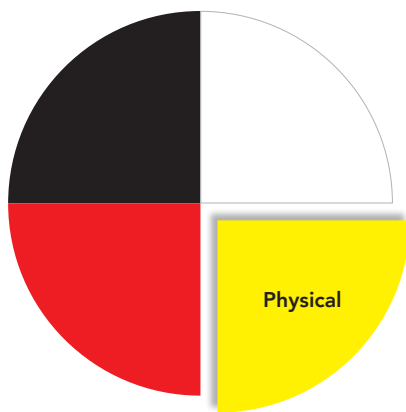


Many municipalities are exploring the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP to consider how these might be implemented locally. Some municipalities have prepared for reconciliation by creating new policy, establishing new government departments, and creating new staff positions. An important part of the process is for municipalities to work jointly with appropriate First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments, communities, organizations and individuals to develop plans and strategies supporting reconciliation.

- The **City of Calgary, AB**, is supported by the Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee, which serves as an advisory committee to City Council. The Committee operates with a 10-Year Strategic Plan and reports annually to City Council on its achievements. Their work has resulted in three significant documents to advance reconciliation in partnership with the **Kainai Nation**, **Siksika Nation**, **Wesley Nation**, **Chiniki Nation**, **Bearspaw Nation**, **Tsuut'ina Nation**, and **Piikani Nation**. The White Goose Flying Report is the City's response to the TRC Calls to Action. The Indigenous Policy Framework and the Indigenous Policy documents describe the local First Nations' history and landscape prior to treaty and the importance of these in the City's planning and decision-making processes.
- The **City of Lethbridge, AB**, and the Lethbridge Indigenous Sharing Network have created a Reconciliation Implementation Plan (2017-27) that was unanimously adopted by City Council. The plan was developed in partnership with the **Kainai Nation** and the **Piikani Nation**.
- The City Council in **Vancouver, BC**, designated Vancouver as a City of Reconciliation and began initiatives to begin healing and forging new relationships. A Framework for City of Reconciliation was adopted, focusing on cultural competency, strengthening relations, and effective decision-making at the corporate level (within the overall service provision). Council also adopted the City's response to 27 TRC Calls to Action, identifying 41 City initiatives under three themes: Healthy Communities and Wellness; Achieving Indigenous Human Rights and Recognition; and Advancing Awareness, Knowledge and Capacity.
- The **City of Prince George, BC**, has adopted a Reconciliation Framework which contains corporate strategies based on the UNDRIP, recommendations from the TRC, and the City's Commitment to the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities.

- The **City of Toronto, ON**, with support from the Aboriginal Affairs Committee (soon to be Indigenous Affairs Committee) and a recommendation from the Urban Indigenous Community of Toronto, established the Indigenous Affairs Office in 2017. The IAO strives to strengthen the City's relationship with Indigenous communities and advance reconciliation. While the City remains committed to embedding the responsibility for Indigenous priorities across City divisions, the IAO will provide more focused and coordinated leadership on Indigenous affairs. This office builds on Commitments to Indigenous Peoples as well as existing work.
- In 2018, the **City of Montréal, QC**, created a new position, Commissioner of Indigenous Affairs, to lead the development of Montréal's reconciliation strategy, help implement the principles of UNDRIP, provide training to elected officials and staff, and advise the Mayor and Council about reconciliation.

## ● Action Processes



Reconciliation involves multiple partners working in a positive relationship, with a willingness to collaborate. Successful partnerships often lead to policy development, tangible actions and greater understanding of diverse values and protocols.

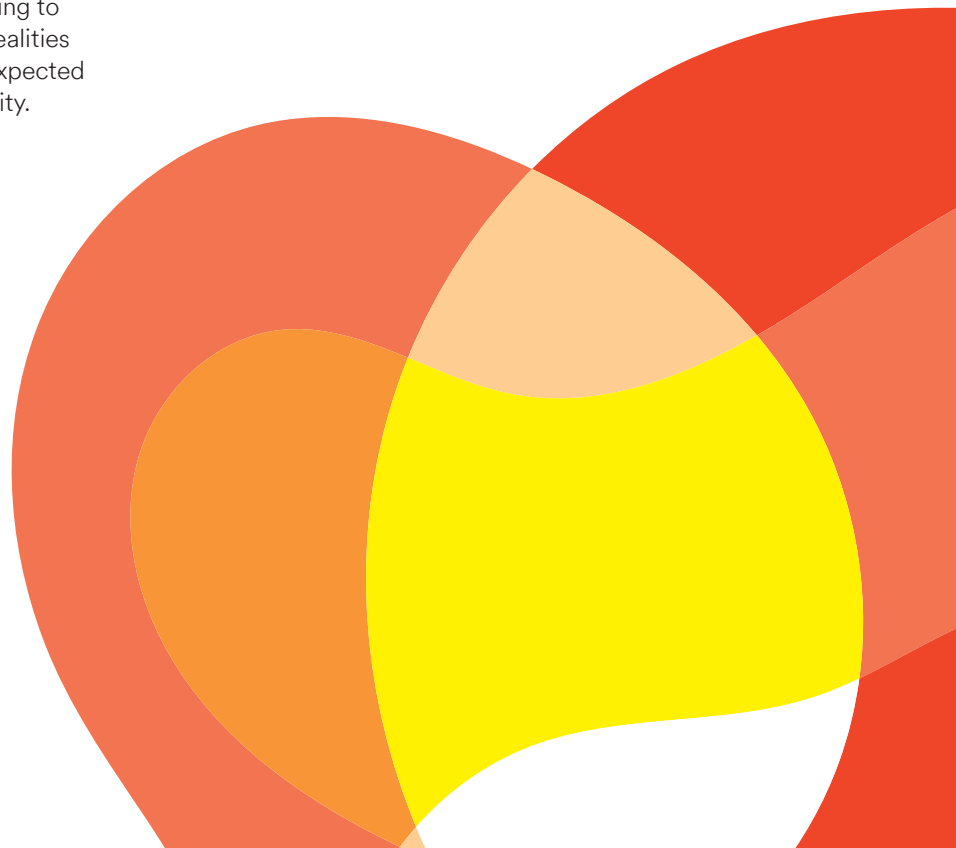
- The **City of Saskatoon, SK**, has identified Reconciliation, Inclusion and Diversity as one of its key areas of focus and released a strategic Response to the TRC. The City of Saskatoon, Office of the Treaty Commissioner, Saskatoon Tribal Council and Central Urban Métis Federation Inc., along with 54 supporting organizations, launched an initiative known as Reconciliation Saskatoon. These organizations joined together to further a citywide conversation about the process of reconciliation, provide opportunities for transformative experiences at events, and inspire citizens to engage in calls to action.
- The Burnaby Village Museum in **Burnaby, BC**, has worked with local First Nations to launch a series of cultural presentations in which local **Coast Salish** community members share knowledge about various aspects of their culture and history. Coast Salish content is also included in programs that the Museum and School District host for K-12 students.
- The mayor of **Sept-Îles, QC**, invited the Chief, an Elder and community members from the **Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam** to his swearing-in ceremony. They have held council-to-council meetings and established two joint working committees – one on reconciliation and one on infrastructure and other files.
- The **City of Victoria, BC**, has a Witness Reconciliation Program with the **Songhees and Esquimalt Nations** that reflect traditional Indigenous witness journeys as a means of identifying and advancing reconciliation activities

and processes. This program also began a City Family that includes City Council members, Indigenous advisors and City staff; all meet regularly to imagine ways of creating everyday awareness of the history, present and future of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations within the city.

- The **City of Red Deer, AB**, City Council passed a motion in 2015 to address five TRC Calls to Action and, in 2017, signed a Protocol Agreement with the Urban Aboriginal Voices Society. The Protocol represents the shared commitment between the voices of the Aboriginal community in Red Deer and the City of Red Deer to share in the vision to create a strong, engaged community that embraces its diversity, improves well-being, and maintains a good quality of life. It is guided by the principles of equity, leadership, collaborative action, and participation and diversity when making decisions, developing plans and implementing actions on issues of common concern.
- The Val-d'Or First Nations Community Mixed Police Station - PPCMA (Quebec) encourages a community approach to maintaining peace, order and public safety by intervening as second-line responders. The PPCMA offers support and assistance to patrol officers of the **Sûreté du Québec de la MRC de La Vallée-de-l'Or** through teams composed of police officers and social workers who can, for example, direct vulnerable, intoxicated or homeless persons to appropriate services.
- Some municipalities and Indigenous governments have adopted formal collaborative governance structures that support their capacity to share and work together. Examples include the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government, QC, and the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional Government, BC. The latter consists of a federation of municipalities and four treaty First Nations. Another example is Pitu'paq, a volunteer collaboration between five First Nations and five municipalities established in 2001; the group meets monthly to address the environment of Bras d'Or Lakes, Cape Breton, NS.
- Collaborations often lead to formalized agreements that form the basis of subsequent specific projects. The **Town of Temiscaming, Municipality of Kipawa, QC**, and **Eagle Village First Nation** signed a Friendship Accord. **Pitt Meadows, BC**, and **Katzie First Nation** signed water, sewer and fire agreements as well as a Friendship Agreement. The **Town of Hearst, ON**, and **Constance Lake First Nation** signed a Sustainable Development Agreement to cooperate on solid-waste management while improving the environment, reducing costs, and establishing a base for future relations. **Edmundston, NB** and **Madawaska Maliseet First Nation** have signed a Joint Friendship Accord.
- Economic initiatives are taking shape among municipalities and Indigenous communities. The **Town of The Pas, MB**, **Regional Municipality of Kelsey, MB**, and **Opaskwayak Cree Nation** signed a Friendship Accord and jointly pursue economic development initiatives. Together, they also published an investor-attraction brochure and launched an investor-attraction website. The **City of Edmonton, AB**, and **Enoch Cree Nation** signed a Memorandum of Understanding based on government-to-government relations and are working together to explore community economic development, housing, transit, green energy and co-management of a provincial park. **Halifax, NS**, is working with the **Mi'kmaq Sport Council of Nova Scotia** to host the 2020 North American Indigenous Games; thousands of people are expected to attend events across the Halifax Regional Municipality and at **Millbrook First Nation**.
- The **City of Pitt Meadows, BC**, included Katzie names for their public meeting spaces at City Hall. **Powell River, BC**, in collaboration with **Tla'amin Nation**, has developed a waterfront recreation space that includes Coast Salish language on all signage. Municipalities such as **Sept-Îles, QC**, **Fort Smith, NWT**, and **Whitehorse, YT**, have added Indigenous local languages to certain stop signs. The **City of Toronto, ON**, has changed the official signs for several of its major streets, to Anishinaabemowin and Mohawk language names. The **City of Winnipeg, MB**, developed a poster with "welcome" in many local Indigenous languages that businesses are invited to display in their premises.

- **Nine Quebec municipalities** and the *Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec* (**Native Friendship Centres**) joined forces to address Indigenous urban issues. Three meetings were organized between the Mayors from these nine municipalities and representatives from local Native Friendship Centres. The outcomes include the signing of a *Mutual Commitment to Improve the Living Conditions of Aboriginal People* (2017) and the adoption of a joint Action plan (2018) to bring people together and secure services for Indigenous peoples in urban settings. In 2016, as part of this process and to continue the dialogue, the **Union des municipalités du Québec** established a Joint Committee on Urban Aboriginal Issues. Participating municipalities are **Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Maniwaki, Montréal, Roberval, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, and Val-d'Or**.
- In 2018, the **City of Montréal** hosted the First Summit of First Nations and Municipalities on Reconciliation, organized in collaboration with the **Union des municipalités du Québec**, the **Fédération québécoise des municipalités** and the **Assembly of First Nations Québec-Labrador**. More than 50 mayors from Quebec municipalities and half of the Chiefs of First Nations in Quebec attended. Among the commitments taken by parties were promotion of collaborative good practices between municipalities and First Nations, and collaboration to offer training to elected officials about the history and realities of Indigenous Peoples. The Summit is expected to be held yearly in a Quebec municipality.

2019 is the International Year of Indigenous Languages. Supporting Indigenous-language speakers, educators and champions in the revitalization and maintenance of Indigenous languages is one way that we can all work towards reconciliation. Check out the Indigenous Languages in Canada Reference Sheet published by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to learn more about what your municipality can do to support Indigenous languages.



## ● Spiritual Beliefs



Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities enjoy social gatherings. Sharing food, storytelling, dance, art, music and traditional knowledge are an important way to learn about Indigenous cultures. Opening up opportunities for Indigenous peoples to share their worldviews and perspectives within the municipal landscape can help break down barriers and increase learning experiences.

- The event KWE! Meet with Indigenous Peoples aims to present the 11 Indigenous Nations in Quebec to the public. The event's program includes shows by Indigenous artists, discussions on the issues faced by Indigenous communities, short films, workshops on traditional knowledge, demonstrations of arts and crafts as well as meeting people. The event is organized by the **Huron-Wendat Nation**, the host Nation, and the **Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador** in collaboration with different partners including the **City of Québec**.
- The **City of Medicine Hat, AB**, is planning a reconciliation-awareness event as part of Raising the Curtain: A Celebration of Diversity and Inclusion. In addition, the City's Arts and Heritage Advisory Board has set a goal to facilitate reconciliation through arts, heritage and cultural activities.
- **Oakville, ON**, has developed a trail and information system featuring a series of 13 plaques containing stories and information relating to land, water and sky, developed in partnership with the **Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation** and other Indigenous community members.
- In **Ottawa, ON**, Pimisi Station along Ottawa's new light rail transitway has been designed to incorporate an Algonquin cultural theme, reflecting both the historical and contemporary cultural significance of the Algonquin people.
- **Cochrane, AB**, hosts the Cochrane Community Awards, including an Equity & Inclusion Champion Community Award. It has garnered a lot of attention, with all nominees acknowledged at a sold-out awards ceremony. Having community faces and people who can tell a story about the positive impacts they are having in a community often brings a new humanity to situations or issues that can help to dispel myths, assumptions and stereotypes.
- The **City of Winnipeg, MB**, developed a Smudging Standard which allows traditional ceremonies such as smudging in City facilities. Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff can thus embed traditional cultural practices in events and meetings, as well as for personal self-care.



## ● Values and Protocols



An important consideration in every municipality is the recognition of the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. Acknowledging Indigenous peoples and territories reaffirms the foundation of reconciliation relationships. Inclusion committees, campaigns and education initiatives can also be an important part of reconciliation efforts by integrating Indigenous values and protocols.

- The **City of Vancouver, BC**, uses appropriate protocols that respect the traditions of welcoming, blessings and acknowledgement of the unceded territory of the **Musqueam**, **Squamish**, and **Tsleil-Waututh**.
- The **City of Winnipeg, MB**, Citizen Equity Committee published a card acknowledging “Treaty 1 Territory, and the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree and Dakota as well as the Birthplace of the Métis Nation and the Heart of the Métis Homeland.”
- The **City of Sept-Îles, QC**, has participated in sport and cultural events at the invitation of **Innu TakuaiKAN Uashat mak Mani-Utenam**. They are also working together to address environmental concerns of both communities.
- Inclusion committees and campaigns form an important part of reconciliation efforts and can integrate Indigenous values and protocols. The social policy of the **Town of Cochrane, AB**, established the municipal responsibility of upholding the TRC Calls to Action; it acknowledges the need to redress the legacy of Residential Schools and advance reconciliation, with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework. The entire Town of Cochrane Management team is participating in a year-long Indigenous training curriculum to support the Call to Action.
- The **City of Ottawa, ON**, has a Reconciliation Action Plan and an Aboriginal Working Committee (AWC) that strengthen relationships between the City and the Indigenous community. The AWC is a partnership between the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, representing Indigenous service providers, the City of Ottawa and other community partners. The AWC has adopted a culturally-centred working model that reflects urban service priorities of the Indigenous community including culture, health, housing, education and employment.
- In **St. Albert, AB**, the Community & Social Development Department initiated the It Starts With Me campaign for creating Welcoming & Inclusive Communities. The campaign helped City staff and residents reduce misinformation and dispel myths and stereotypes. Other projects of the municipality include the creation of a Healing Garden, educational programs for schools and the community, museum exhibits, street signs in English and Cree, and interpretive signage in Cree, English and French. Numerous KAIROS Blanket Exercise events have been held for residents, teachers and youth.

- There are a number of education initiatives supporting reconciliation by municipalities and other organizations. The **Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, AB**, has identified 23 TRC Calls to Action for consideration, engaged with Indigenous partners, and hosted TRC engagements with municipal employees and the public. The Municipality offers Aboriginal Awareness and TRC training, which provide information to learn about Indigenous history, colonialism, residential schools and the TRC. The training increases employee knowledge about Indigenous history, intergenerational trauma, continued challenges Indigenous people face, and strategies to move forward in building trust and positive collaborations with local Indigenous communities and governments.
- In **Saskatoon, SK**, the Building New Relationships program assists those working with newcomers to become more informed about First Nations peoples and the treaties that form the foundation of the Canadian Constitution. The Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) developed a two-day 'train the trainer' program to help build relationships with First Nations' peoples and learn about their history and traditional culture. The City's *I am the Bridge anti-racism public education campaign* had citizens share their experiences with racism and ways to eliminate it.

This video is showcased on the city website, social media and [YouTube](#) – in keeping with the City's commitment to respond to the TRC Calls to Action, as well as the Strategic Plan (2013-23) goal to enhance relations with Indigenous organizations through the development of educational opportunities. The City also collaborated with the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre (SICC) and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) to develop the First Edition of *ayisīnowak: A Communications Guide*. The Guide is intended to assist City employees build successful partnerships with First Nations, Métis and other Indigenous organizations by providing a basic outline of Indigenous understandings and governance systems.

- The **City of Vancouver, BC**, has implemented Cultural Competency workshops and online training modules for all levels of staff in service areas. The training has raised understanding and appreciation of Indigenous history and culture, including the impacts of the Residential School systems and related issues for staff that work and interact with Indigenous clients, co-workers, communities and suppliers. In addition, Vancouver has issued *First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers* to offer information about Indigenous peoples in the region.



# Do's and Don'ts

## Do construct reconciliation initiatives together with Indigenous communities!

### Knowledge Systems

- ✓ Do educate municipal personnel about the local Indigenous cultures, read the applicable treaties, and watch and read Indigenous news
- ✓ Do discuss similarities and differences together among municipal and Indigenous governance systems
- ✓ Do find points of agreement and build consensus
- ✓ Do take time to read the Truth and Reconciliation Report and its Calls to Action
- ✓ Do consider taking an online course on Indigenous peoples, cultures, history, etc.
- ✗ *Don't assume the treaties are ancient history and have no legal authority*

### Action Processes

- ✓ Do attend public events hosted by Indigenous communities and organizations and invite Indigenous peoples to municipal events
- ✓ Do hold regular Council-to-Council and staff-to-staff meetings to set and work on achievable goals, and keep the collaboration moving forward
- ✓ Do share and discuss plans for the future with Indigenous governments and organizations
- ✗ *Don't make plans that affect Indigenous communities without involving them from the outset*

### Belief Systems

- ✓ Do understand that spiritual practices are part of Indigenous culture and business relationships
- ✓ Do develop partnerships that will be long-term
- ✓ Do imagine possibilities for positive outcomes and keep an open mind
- ✓ Do respect Indigenous spiritual and historical sites
- ✗ *Don't assume all Indigenous peoples or nations are the same*

### Values and Protocols

- ✓ Do be respectful in thought and behaviour
- ✓ Do ask Indigenous representatives about appropriate local protocols
- ✓ Do communicate honestly and openly
- ✓ Do be patient and understanding about punctuality – Indigenous leaders and communities may take longer to reach decisions or may not be able to attend pre-scheduled meetings owing to other obligations

**Don't give up after the first try – building trusting, respectful relationships takes time.**

## ● Tools and resources

Contact the [Federation of Canadian Municipalities](#) for helpful tools, including:

- [\*Pathways to Reconciliation\*](#)
- [\*First Nations – Municipal Collaboration Programs\*](#)
- [\*Stronger Together: A Toolkit for First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Partnerships\*](#)
- [\*Service Agreement Toolkit\*](#)
- [\*Solid Waste Management Toolkit\*](#)
- [\*First Nation-Municipal Land Use Planning Tool\*](#)
- [\*Templates for and examples of collaboration agreements and service agreements \(i.e. fire, water\)\*](#)

Check out what your [provincial/territorial/municipal organization](#) or [human rights commission](#) are doing in this regard. They may have additional resources. Some examples include:

- The [\*Union of BC Municipalities\*](#) identifies a host of resources for municipal-Indigenous reconciliation
- The [\*Alberta Urban Municipal Association\*](#) offers toolkits, guides and examples
- The [\*Association of Municipalities of Ontario\*](#) offers webinars on Indigenous issues
- The [\*Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec\*](#) publishes *Aboriginal Peoples – Fact and Fiction*, an educational tool designed to promote a better understanding of the realities facing Indigenous peoples



# Featured Municipalities

The following section features only some of the many municipalities across Canada that are doing innovative work on reconciliation.

## Winnipeg, Manitoba

The **City of Winnipeg** has taken a unique approach to advancing reconciliation through the creation of an Indigenous Accord that has already been signed by over 80 businesses and organizations. The Accord includes a commitment by signatories to reconvene and report annually on their own reconciliation progress and future goals. The City's Indigenous Relations Division (IRD) provides key leadership and advice to civic programs, services and initiatives, while advancing work on the TRC's Calls to Action. As such, City employees can now participate in Indigenous training courses as part of reconciliation. Winnipeg's Indigenous Youth Strategy, Oshki Annishinabe Nigaaniwak, is designed to provide Indigenous youth with positive opportunities related to employment, literacy and recreation through culturally-appropriate programs and supports. The IRD partners with other civic departments to develop internships, scholarships, camps and other recreation programs. These and other accomplishments of the IRD can be found in the City's Partner Goals & Progress Report.

The City also has an 11-member Citizen Equity Sub-Committee (CEC), under the newly established Human Rights Committee of Council (HRCC), mandated to advise the Mayor and Council on issues of equity and diversity. The CEC developed Winnipeg's Know Your Neighbours Guide and other publications, including an Indigenous Leadership Invitation protocol, approved by Indigenous leaders, to guide City officials on how to effectively and respectfully invite First Nations and Métis leaders to attend events. In that light, Maria Morrison, former Coordinator of the Citizen Equity Committee,

is concerned with the toll that reconciliation initiatives can take on Indigenous individuals and communities. While the benefits of non-Indigenous peoples learning about Indigenous cultures enhance social relationships, Indigenous community members have expressed fatigue and emotional stress from repeatedly discussing their colonial oppression experiences or being expected to speak for all Indigenous peoples. Ms. Morrison believes that some of the challenges faced by municipalities in developing and implementing reconciliation initiatives can be mitigated with committed leadership, clear and measurable objectives, and accountability mechanisms.

**"Reconciliation is messy. When you start, it may feel like it is getting worse instead of better. Ripping off the bandage opens ugly wounds. If you can do it, there will still be a scar, but it may not hurt so much anymore. We took the bandage off in Winnipeg. Keep trying!"**

– Maria Morrison

## Whitehorse, Yukon

The **City of Whitehorse** has been actively advancing relationships with Indigenous peoples for several years. The Moving Forward Together report features municipal and First Nations' leadership, and several of the TRC Calls to Action as areas of focus. The City's advisory committee for the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities was established to advise City Council and Administration on ways to eliminate racism and discrimination in the development, implementation and operations of the City's plans, policies, services and facilities.

The Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the City adopted a Declaration of Commitment to further strengthen the relationships among the three governments. The City proclaimed a National Indigenous History Month to honour contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The City also includes acknowledgement of First Nation traditional territories in electronic signature blocks; has added Southern Tutchone on welcome and traffic signs; and promotes Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än artists. The City made it mandatory for staff to complete the Yukon First Nations 101 course offered by the Yukon College. So far nearly 200 employees have taken the course.

As noted by Jocelyn Curteanu, Whitehorse City Councillor, after having addressed many of the TRC Calls to Action for municipalities, the City has shifted focus to relationship-building and ongoing respectful communication and partnerships. The Mayor and Council hold regular intergovernmental meetings with each First Nation to keep the lines of communication open and discuss mutual concerns and initiatives. Councillor Curteanu believes that reconciliation is a journey that starts with an honest acknowledgement of our history, a sincere desire to do better, building trust, and finding common ground to collaborate.

**"Commitment and patience are key. We must remain flexible and work to accommodate [Indigenous peoples'] needs."**

– Jocelyn Curteanu, Councillor

## Montréal, Quebec

The Indigenous presence in Montréal has grown by 177% since the early 2000s. An inhabited and gathering place for First Nations for thousands of years and currently home to the largest Inuit population outside Iqaluit, Montréal has developed a process of reconciliation as part of a government-to-government dialogue and co-construction with the Indigenous community.

The City of Montréal committed itself to reconciliation on National Indigenous Peoples Day in 2016. In 2017, to honour its history and 375th anniversary, while beginning a new chapter in the city's relationship with Indigenous peoples and governments, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador in partnership with the City, DestiNATIONS and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO hosted an event celebrating the 10th anniversary of UNDRIP. This included hoisting the new city flag that now incorporates a white pine tree, the "Great Tree of Peace" from the Haudenosaunee culture.



In 2018, the City appointed Councillor Marie-Josée Parent to the Executive Committee, with special responsibility for culture and reconciliation. The first appointee to the position, Ms. Parent is of Mi'kmaq and Acadian heritage and is the first Indigenous city councillor elected in Montréal.

The City also hired a Commissioner of Indigenous Affairs, Marie-Ève Bordeleau. Her role includes leading the development of Montréal's reconciliation strategy, developing awareness training for City staff and officials and advising the Mayor and Council about reconciliation and the implementation of UNDRIP. Importantly, this position came with a budget for training and supporting the Commissioner's mandate. Ms. Bordeleau works with local Indigenous communities and organizations to define reconciliation priorities together and develop solutions for their success. She recommends communities meet

at the government-to-government level, taking time to understand each other's needs, vision and expectations. She suggests that if issues are beyond the capacity of the municipality, working with additional levels of government may help develop interconnected solutions.

**Montréal hosted the inaugural First Nations and Municipalities Summit on Reconciliation, bringing together mayors and First Nations' chiefs from across Quebec. "There was a lot of talk... about concrete actions versus symbols, like naming parks, restoring truth, restoring different versions of history. And for me, the two work in concert with one another."**

– Valérie Plante, Mayor

## Val-d'Or, Quebec

The City of Val-d'Or has taken steps to address local racism and discrimination against Indigenous peoples. In 2015, it signed a cooperation agreement with surrounding Anicinabe communities and the Grand Council of the Crees. In 2016, the City created the Committee against Racism and Discrimination, which produced an overview of racism in Val-d'Or (*Aperçu de la situation du racisme à Val-d'Or*) in 2017. The same year, Val-d'Or adopted UNDRIP. The City has participated in meetings of Quebec municipalities and Native Friendship Centres each year since 2016. In 2018 they joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and adopted an action plan on racism, with input from Indigenous communities. Val-d'Or received the 2016 Collective Intelligence Award award from the municipal healthcare network, the *Réseau québécois des villes et villages en santé* (RQVVS). This award acknowledged the efforts of the City to respond quickly to complaints by local Indigenous peoples about racism. The Réseau also invited the City to share their experience with others.

Val-d'Or has adopted an unequivocal and firm political commitment to engagement with the Indigenous population, assigned a municipal employee to the reconciliation portfolio, pooled the efforts of community stakeholders, and promoted ongoing communication. Results include restored trust, new connections, and a general change of attitude in the population. These efforts have attracted outside attention and provided leadership for others.

**Val-d'Or has adopted four paramount values: perseverance, patience, humility and ambition. "It means persevering even in the face of adversity and uncertainty, allowing time for things to fall into place, acknowledging our mistakes and inexperience, and lastly, not being afraid to dream or think big – and then deploy the energies needed to turn dreams into reality."**

– Paul-Antoine Martel, City of Val-d'Or  
Liaison Officer





# Conclusion

Transformation of social structures will take time and involve many different approaches. Indigenous communities make up less than 5% of the population of Canada, yet their involvement in reconciliation efforts by municipalities is crucial. Building new relationships is the work that lies ahead. Reconciliation will require open hearts and open minds, and a willingness to look at the world in a way that is more alert to, and respectful of, Indigenous peoples, and their rights and interests. It means honouring treaties and other commitments; it means acknowledging past harms and making a commitment to healing; it means changing the way we interact and the way we think about each other. Communities will benefit from courage, forgiveness, leadership and dedication. How will your community embrace reconciliation?

***“Reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share”<sup>15</sup>.***

– Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
of Canada



# Endnotes

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