



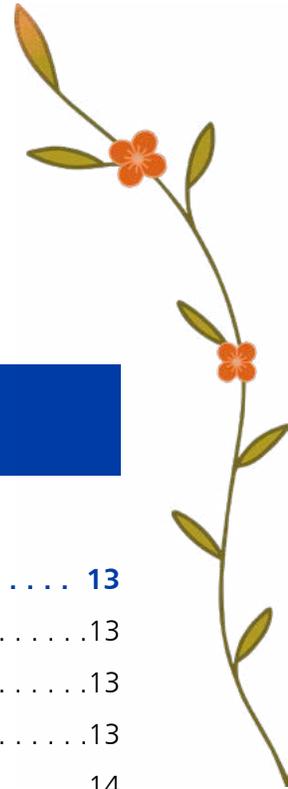
Co-operative Housing
Federation of Canada

Building better relationships: A reconciliation toolkit

chfcanada.coop    @chfcanada



Contents



Building better relationships: A reconciliation toolkit

Introduction	1	Reconciliation through a Healing Relationship	13
Reconciliation and housing Co-ops.	1	Building a relationship	13
Truth	3	Learn about residential schools.	13
Truths of our past.	3	Art.	13
Truths of our present	4	Story: Bain Housing Co-op	14
Reconciliation	5	Reconciliation through Action for Change	16
Truth and Reconciliation Commission	5	Dismantling racism.	16
Principles of reconciliation	5	Support work being done.	16
Where to start	7	Helpful tools for organizing	18
Reconciliation through Knowing and Honouring	8	Charter to guide our collective work	18
Land and treaties	8	Glossary	20
UNDRIP	8	Resources	22
Story: Kaslo Gardens.	9		
Reconciliation through Good Process	11		
Land acknowledgement	11		
Taking direction from the Indigenous community	11		
Protocols: Elders and Knowledge Keepers	11		

Cover art by *Nalakwsis*, based on a photo of Alex Laidlaw Co-op in Ottawa, Ontario





Introduction

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) helped Canadians see and hear a more honest account of our history. But it did not leave us there. The TRC also outlined a process that would support reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. In doing so, it called on all Canadians to participate in this important work.

With this toolkit, CHF Canada is answering a mandate from its member housing co-ops across Canada to help support housing co-ops to engage in reconciliation. This toolkit is designed to do just that by

- explaining what reconciliation is and why it is important
- outlining how the TRC guides us towards reconciliation (*Principles of Reconciliation and Calls to Action*)
- providing insights on what housing co-ops can do to engage in meaningful ways.

Also included are some resources and tools to help you on your way, including a glossary, draft charter (for groups wanting to work together on reconciliation) and a list of books, films, videos and other resources.

Reconciliation and housing Co-ops

The relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada has been, and continues to be, troubled. Reconciliation is important as it acknowledges the harms of our history, recognizes the impact that history continues to have in the inequalities and injustice that are present today, and works to build just and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people going forward. Reconciliation is about making a future we can be proud of.

There are many reasons for housing co-ops to engage in reconciliation. Some of these reasons can be linked to the *Co-operative Values* and *Co-operative Principles*. Three of the Co-operative Values are **equity**, **equality** and **solidarity**. These values fully support the work of reconciliation.

The seven Co-operative Principles (in bold below) also connect housing co-ops with reconciliation work.

First, through the democratic process the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada called for support that would enable more active engagement in reconciliation (**Democratic Membership**). As a collective group you have to work toward reconciliation to be important and you want to do that work in a good, meaningful way.

Housing co-op members own and control housing (**Member Economic Participation, Democratic Membership**) in an environment of inequality and injustice. Housing is just one area where Indigenous people and communities face significant disparities. Over 20% of urban Indigenous people live in core housing need while 1 in 15 urban Indigenous people will experience homelessness. Of those Indigenous people who have housing, 23% live in unsuitable housing and 20% live in housing that is in need of repair.¹

¹ chra-achru.ca/indigenous-housing-caucus-day-highlights-report-2018

Co-operatives recognize they live within and among communities and work for the betterment of those communities (**Concern for Community**). This work can include the work of reconciliation, with efforts to build better, more sustainable and just relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Co-operatives also build solidarity and support, and work with other co-operatives (**Co-operation among Co-operatives**). In the spirit of reconciliation, this includes building that solidarity and support among Indigenous and non-Indigenous housing co-ops.

Finally, co-operatives are a space for education and training (**Education, Training & Information**) for both members and the public. Reconciliation calls us to be engaged in education and dialogue. Housing co-ops can use this co-operative principle, and the capacity for member and public education, to support reconciliation.



Four Feathers Housing Co-operative, London, Ontario



Truth

Reconciliation must be based on knowing and naming the truths of our collective history and present reality. This includes the harms and violence of the past, the legacy of that harm and violence, and the continued harm and violence that occurs today throughout Canada.

April White, from Four Feathers Housing Co-op in London, explained that as a bookkeeper, she thinks about reconciliation in accounting terms. “You can’t reconcile your accounting without first having the facts (truth).”

Non-Indigenous Canadians are called to learn these truths. This means doing your own learning and research to understand the past and present.

Truths of our past

- **Pass system** – Between the 1880s and 1940s, First Nations people living on reserve had to apply for and be granted a travel document authorized by an Indian agent to leave the reserve. This was a means for controlling the movement of First Nations people and preventing gatherings, ceremonies or mobilized resistance. Decades of restricted movement left a huge impact on Indigenous culture, economies, societies and families. It also fostered distrust in Canadian government and systems.
- **Inuit ‘dog tag’** - Inuit names were replaced by numbers in a 1929 federal government labelling strategy after complaints about the Inuit not bearing Christian names. The strategy lasted for decades, with one initiative requiring Inuit people to wear metal ID tags (resembling dog tags).
- **Indian Act** – The Indian Act is a Canadian federal law that governs Indian Status, bands and reserves. It was created in 1876 as a means to facilitate assimilation, setting regulations and restricting the rights of First Nations people and communities, authorizing the Canadian federal government to regulate and administer the affairs and day-to-day lives of registered Indians and reserve communities. It imposed structures (like band councils and reserve land) and restricted or made illegal traditional forms of governance (hereditary chiefs), ceremony (sun dance, potlach), the gathering of three or more Indigenous people, and Indigenous people’s ability to access the court or lawyers. While the Indian Act has been revised over the years, it continues to exist today.
- **Metis scrip** – The government did not allow the Metis to participate in the numbered treaty making process throughout Western Canada. Instead it asked individual Metis people to claim their land title through a system the government created called Metis scrip. The system was intentionally confusing, slow and legally complex, thereby disenfranchising the Metis of their land rights in order to support white settlements throughout the Prairies. A 2013 Supreme Court decision recognized that the government failed to distribute land to Metis people.
- **Residential schools** – Active in Canada from the 1890s to the 1990s, residential schools were an intentional effort by the government to assimilate Indigenous children who were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to live at the schools. Along with being punished for expressing one’s Indigenous culture or language, malnourishment, sexual and physical abuse, torture, lack of medical care and neglect were common practice at the schools. Residential schools were pre-dated by day schools, which had a similar intent and practice and began in the 1830s.

- **Forced relocation** – Numerous Indigenous communities have experienced forced relocation. For example, in 1953 an Inuit community was forcibly removed from Inukjuak and relocated to Ellesmere and Cornwallis Island. The federal government wanted to secure northern territory during the Cold War. Adequate support for the community was not provided.

Truths of our present

- There are significant **health gaps** between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. The tuberculosis rate among Inuit people is 290 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous people in Canada. Youth suicide rates are nearly six times higher for First Nations youth. The life expectancy of non-Indigenous people in Canada is longer, in some cases 15 years longer.
- There are many Indigenous children involved in the **child welfare system**. In Manitoba 90% of the children in the system are Indigenous.
- A disproportionate number of **Indigenous women and girls have been murdered and/or are missing**. More often than for non-Indigenous women, their cases go unsolved and family members receive poor treatment from police.
- Federal funding for **First Nation education** amounts to only 70% of the funding non-Indigenous children receive through the provinces. This means First Nations children receive 30% less funding for their education.
- Visibly Indigenous people in Canada receive daily **racial discrimination and harassment**. This includes being followed in stores, questioned at banks, being denied access to housing, and being threatened or disrespected while waiting for a bus. These daily acts cause stress, pain, embarrassment, shame and fear. They happen to children, youth, adults and elders.



Members attend a dinner at the N'Amerind Friendship Centre in London, Ontario, during CHF Canada's 2019 Annual Meeting.





Reconciliation

At its core, reconciliation is about relationship. The TRC explains that reconciliation means “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people in this country.”

Reconciliation is a process of being together in a new and better way. It sounds easy, but it will feel confusing, complex and difficult to figure out. It will be a hard, evolving process, but can also be a beautiful and liberating process.

Reconciliation is not about guilt, shame or blame. It is about acknowledging the destructive systems and harm of our collective past. It’s also about understanding how those destructive systems operate today and then creating new systems, new ways of relating, and understanding based on respect.

Reconciliation is about healing the past and creating a new, more honourable future.

“Reconciliation isn’t an act of pity, it’s Canada going through a process of healing itself.”

*Kevin Lamoureux
MP, Winnipeg North*

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established with two purposes, to inform Canadians about Residential Schools and their impact and to guide Canadians through a process of reconciliation. The work of the TRC (including videos and reports) is now housed at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

In order to support the reconciliation process, the TRC created the Principles of Reconciliation (see below) and 94 Calls to Action.

Principles of reconciliation

The Principles of Reconciliation are important! They provide a foundation for any reconciliation work and can be used to guide your work.

“The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada believes that in order for Canada to flourish in the twenty-first century, reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canada must be based on the following principles....”

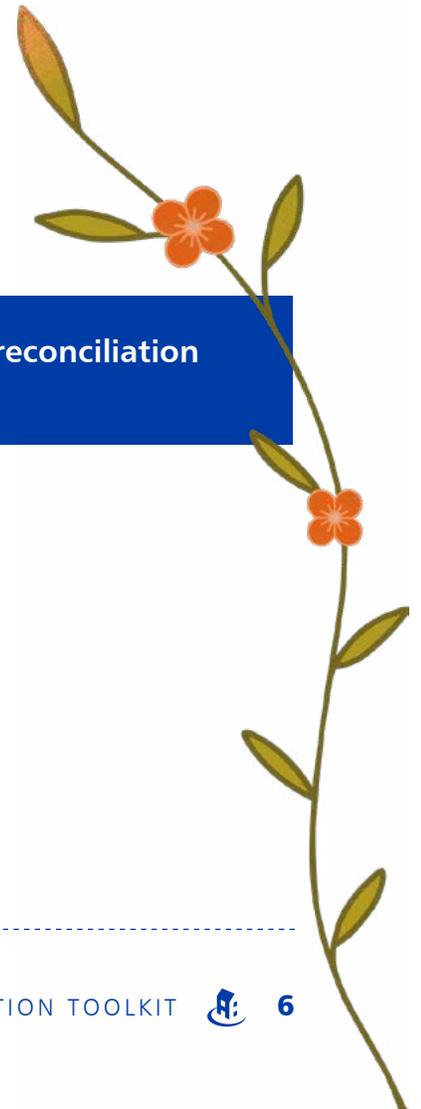
1. *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.*
2. *First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.*
3. *Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.*

4. *Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.*
5. *Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.*
6. *All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.*
7. *The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.*
8. *Supporting Aboriginal peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.*
9. *Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.*
10. *Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.*

These principles of reconciliation can be grouped into four aspects of reconciliation:

- Reconciliation through Knowing and Honouring
- Reconciliation through Good Process
- Reconciliation through a Healing Relationship
- Reconciliation through Action

The remainder of this toolkit is an invitation to work through reconciliation in these four ways.





Where to start

When working with others to engage in meaningful reconciliation, you can start by:

- Calling together those within your housing co-op who want to work collectively at reconciliation. Remember that reconciliation work is for all of us, including non-Indigenous Canadians. Don't assume Indigenous co-op members will participate.
- Discussing what reconciliation means to you and building a common understanding. Be clear about who you are (what perspective you bring) and about your intentions. (For an example of reflection or discussion questions see the [Kitchen Table Guide for Reconciliation](#))
- For non-Indigenous people or groups, always considering how you will act from a place of allyship. This includes deep listening, amplifying the voices of Indigenous communities and taking direction from Indigenous communities. Approaching work in this way is generally not the norm, as it takes focus and effort.
- Reviewing the four aspects of reconciliation (below) and consider how you will engage with reconciliation in a holistic way. Plan, act, reflect on how things went and what you learned. Then plan again!

Realizing that our work toward reconciliation happens in layered and complex ways, it seems overwhelming. It's important to start somewhere, learn as you go and build on what you're doing.

But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived

your life differently if only you had heard this story.

You've heard it now.

*Thomas King
Indigenous writer*

Remember: You will make mistakes along the way! Reconciliation is not about being perfect, it's about being humble, being good listeners and making amends when we misstep.

Remember: Continue to learn about the historical truths and current realities faced by Indigenous peoples. This ongoing learning will help ground you in why reconciliation work is so important.



Reconciliation through Knowing and Honouring

(See Principles of Reconciliation #1, #2 and #10)

The first two Principles of Reconciliation are based on using UNDRIP as a framework for reconciliation and ensuring collective and human rights, treaty rights and constitutional rights are honoured. This includes recognizing First Nations, Inuit, and Metis as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples. To work towards reconciliation means knowing whose traditional territory we are on, learning about rights that are currently not being respected and finding ways to respect those rights.

We are also called to ensure there is sustained public education and dialogue about Indigenous rights and our shared history (including residential schools).

Land and treaties

Learn about the territory you're on through a map tool designed by [Native Land](#). (For more information on different treaties, try [this link](#).)

If you are located on land that has no treaty, it's often referred to as unceded, meaning Indigenous title to the land was never surrendered. However even with a treaty, land was not surrendered. Instead agreements were made around its usage.

UNDRIP

What is UNDRIP?

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP) is an international human rights instrument. Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, it constitutes "the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous people of the world."

Explore: Flip through a few of the rights outlined in UNDRIP. What do you notice? What's your reaction?

What does using UNDRIP as the framework for reconciliation mean?

At its core, UNDRIP is about basic human and collective rights. It includes rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health and education. UNDRIP calls on us to honour these rights, prohibits discrimination against Indigenous peoples, and recognizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain their own cultures, institutions and traditions while pursuing development that meets their needs and hopes.

Reconciliation is about understanding the rights outlined in UNDRIP and working to ensure those rights are respected.²

² For more see cbc.ca/news/canada/north/implementing-undrip-bc-nwt-1.5344825





STORY: Kaslo Gardens

Kaslo Gardens Housing Co-op is located on the unceded Coast Salish Territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil Waututh peoples in Vancouver. Kaslo Gardens explored how the co-operative values around civic engagement and community could be lived out at their co-op to support reconciliation. Through that process the co-op engaged more directly with learning. They want to follow that learning up by looking at policies and practices co-ops could employ to support reconciliation.

Knowing and Honouring: Kaslo Gardens hosted a Kairos blanket exercise, a panel discussion and youth workshop on the inter-relation between co-operatives, the co-operative economy and reconciliation.

Good Process: Kaslo Gardens partnered with Indigenous leaders to organize a Kairos blanket exercise, panel discussion and youth workshop. These events were opened to the larger co-operative community to engage co-ops in exploring policies and practices that could be employed within co-ops (such as social procurement of Indigenous services).



Kaslo Garden Housing Co-operative undertook a powerful Kairos blanket exercise as part of its reconciliation efforts.

Ideas for **Knowing** and **Honouring**

Hang a plaque that acknowledges the people and territory of the land you're located on.



Display maps or information of the Indigenous communities in your region, territory or province. If displaying cultural information about Indigenous peoples ensure this is done in a respectful way.



Research and share (plaque, website, gathering) history of how your housing co-op was developed, and how it accessed the land it is located on.



Host learning opportunities (speakers, films, discussions) to learn more about UNDRIP, treaties and Indigenous peoples and nations.



Seek out and promote opportunities to learn about residential schools that are happening within your community (presentations at other organizations or public libraries, film screenings, etc.). Coordinate a group of members from your housing co-op to attend a community event together.



Start a reading group. Read and discuss non-fiction (TRC report or MMIWG report) or fiction by Indigenous authors.



Do your own individual learning by committing to reading several books each year by Indigenous authors or registering for online learning courses, like [Indigenous Canada](#).





Reconciliation through Good Process

(See Principles of Reconciliation #6, #7 and #9)

When it comes to reconciliation, how we do what we do can be just as important as what we do.

We have a shared responsibility in creating and maintaining a respectful relationship. Good process is about acting in ways that build respectful relationships. The way we work will require trust building, investment or sharing of resources, and accountability.

It will be important for Indigenous ways of knowing and doing to inform reconciliation work, and that is why we will look to Elders and Knowledge Keepers, while ensuring that we honour and respect their time and contributions.

Land acknowledgement

Land acknowledgements are one way of honouring our relationship and responsibilities. They are most honourable when they accurately acknowledge whose territory you're gathering on while also explaining what you're doing to work towards reconciliation.

CHF Canada has developed a [tool to help you design your land acknowledgment](#). And for further thoughts around land acknowledgements, see resources from [NativeLand.ca](#).

Taking direction from the Indigenous community

In doing things differently, it will be critical that non-Indigenous communities and groups take direction from the Indigenous community. This direction can include Indigenous community representatives informing or advising housing co-op reconciliation work; or housing co-ops following through on direction given through the [TRC Calls to Action](#), the [National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#), and/or the [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#).

When we seek direction and guidance from Indigenous Communities, Indigenous Organizations, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, or Indigenous activists or organizers, their time and knowledge should be recognized.

Protocols: Elders and Knowledge Keepers

It's critical to recognize that Indigenous peoples across Canada are not all the same. They are different nations with different protocols. Do your own research to find out what protocols are important to the communities you are engaging with or the events you are attending (see [online resources](#) or ask people!).

For example, if you're making a request of an Elder or Knowledge Keeper provide a gift and/or tobacco at the time of your request. Offering tobacco is important protocol for many First Nations and some Metis communities, while country food or other gifts can be offered to Inuit Elders. Also ensure their time and knowledge is acknowledged (this often includes a monetary gift).

Ideas for **Good Process**

Develop a land acknowledgement that reflects the Indigenous peoples and territory you're located on and explain your work towards reconciliation. Use your land acknowledgment at housing co-op meetings and gatherings. Continue to adjust and adapt the acknowledgment as your work evolves.



Find ways to share the resources you have. Lend your space or human resources (volunteers) to an Indigenous organization or reconciliation initiatives.



Find advisors from the Indigenous Community with whom you can build a relationship. Through these relationships, seek guidance and feedback on your reconciliation work.



Consider the purchasing and decision-making processes of your co-op and how they could support reconciliation (see Call to Action #92).



With humility and respect, take time learn the protocols that are important in your territory, particularly as they relate to relationships or gatherings you may engage in.



Always have **food!**



Reconciliation through a Healing Relationship

(See Principles of Reconciliation #3, #6 and #9)

Reconciliation is the work of all Canadians, and it's the work of making a broken relationship better. This requires trust building, accountability, joint efforts and an investment of resources. This is not short-term work, but rather long-term relationship building.

Reconciliation will also require healing from and addressing past harms. This means learning about and being honest about our shared history, and commemorations of the past harms that were part of that history.

Building a relationship

What does it mean to build a good relationship? When a relationship is broken, it often means **doing the work to build trust**. We trust those who listen, those who show up, those who do what they say they will do, those who name hard truths or harm, and those who own their mistakes while remaining in a relationship.

Learn about residential schools

The TRC showed us that Canadians have been denied an accurate account of the shared history between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. It's critical that we learn this history as a way of healing our relationship.

The TRC process produced numerous resources, reports, videos, images, stories and statistics, now located at the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#).

Art

Art can be a great way to commemorate our history and invite a new future. Art can support healing, conversation and learning. It can also involve a process that builds partnership and community.



STORY: Bain Housing Co-op

Bain Apartments Housing Co-operative Inc in Toronto created **the Honour Canoe**, a community art project that commemorates the work of the TRC and honours all those affected by the residential schools system. The canoe is displayed on the grounds of the co-op and is covered in artwork designed by Cree artist Les Harper and painted by the community. It's also a garden, planted with healing plants. The marker stone beside the canoe explains its purpose. Since completing the Honour Canoe, Bain co-op members have been hosting learning opportunities for their co-op and surrounding communities.

Healing the Relationship: The Bain Canoe Project is a community art project that commemorates residential schools and the children who were forced to attend. It was launched through a celebration that brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from the co-op and the larger community.

Good Process: The project was organized by The Bain Honour Canoe Crew, a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members from the co-op and surrounding community. A Cree Knowledge Keeper and former co-op member, Pauline Shirt, acted as guide and consultant on the project. The relationship with the Knowledge Keeper created connections to the larger Indigenous community, including the artist who worked on the project, and dancers and community members who attended the dedication celebration. Bain used its own resources (people, time, fundraising) and access to funding to support the project.

Knowing and Honouring: The Bain Honour Canoe Crew has organized different education opportunities for co-op and community members to learn about our shared indigenous/settler history, treaties and rights. This included hosting a Kairos blanket exercise followed by a series of three monthly learning gatherings.



Bain Housing Co-operative's Honour Canoe, honouring all those affected by the residential schools system.

Ideas for the **Healing Relationship**

Get to know the First Nations, Inuit and/or Metis communities near you.

Attend community celebrations or gatherings. Drop off coffee and muffins at a band office or Indigenous organization. Come to the relationship as a learner, wanting to build a trusting and respectful relationship.



Host viewings of videos or films about the Residential Schools and their legacy, such as "[We Were Children.](#)"



Organize a [Kairos blanket exercise](#) at your co-op.



Partner with Indigenous community members to organize an art project.



Form a reading group around the TRC Executive Summary Report.

Read it in sections, having discussions at each phase or use a reading guide (see Manitoba Harm Reduction Network's [TRC Reading Guide](#)).



Seek out a residential school survivor educator and ask if they can do a session with your co-op.



Learn some basic words in the Indigenous language(s) from the territory you're on.



Organize events around important dates like:

June – National Indigenous History Month

June 21 – National Indigenous Day

September 30 – [Orange Shirt Day](#)





Reconciliation through Action for Change

(See Principles of Reconciliation #8, #11 and #12)

Ongoing legacies of colonialism continue to this day and show up as Indigenous people's lack of access to education, health, child welfare, justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity. Indigenous cultures and languages have also been intentionally harmed through the colonial process. Reconciliation is work that closes the discrepancies that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and ensure that Indigenous cultures (including knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols and connections to the land) and languages can thrive.

Dismantling racism

Both the TRC and the recent **MMIWG Inquiry** show us that the inequality experienced by Indigenous peoples and communities are driven by systemic racism. We are called to learn about how systemic racism works and how we can transform it in ourselves and our organizations (see Call to Action #92).

Support work being done

There are all kinds of organizing, particularly Indigenous led organizing, taking place around the inequalities Indigenous people and communities face. This organizing often relates to Calls to Action (see Calls to Action #6–12 around education; #18–20 around health; #1–5 around child welfare; and #25–42 around justice).

Research what work is being done in your community, be it around health, education, justice or land rights. Use your resources and skills to support and highlight the work Indigenous leaders and activists are engaged in.

Ideas for Action

Designate one or more units within your housing co-op for Indigenous families (ensure your co-op is actively working to understand how to build a safe and welcoming environment for Indigenous members).



Take active steps to include Indigenous families in your housing co-op's intake process, and to consciously remove barriers to their success in obtaining a unit within the co-op.



Conduct a review of your advertising, application process, member orientation, and policies to see where they could be more welcoming and supportive of Indigenous people and communities and remove unintentional colonial biases.



Host a fundraiser for a local Indigenous organization.



Host a workshop on dismantling racism.



Show your support at protests or marches that are working to create change around the gaps Indigenous peoples and communities face.



Regularly promote the work of local Indigenous leaders (including youth leaders) through your co-op's social media.



Choose a topic within the Calls to Action (education, health, justice, etc.) that addresses a gap where you want to promote change. Host learning opportunities around that topic, highlight and support the work of local activists, and write to your government representatives to ask about progress on related the Calls to Action.



Lend your space to an Indigenous organization to support their cultural work, like language classes, beading groups or pow-wow clubs. Provide your space at no cost and even provide some refreshments!



Helpful tools for organizing

Charter to guide our collective work

For housing co-ops, one way to engage in reconciliation is by working collaboratively with members of your co-op in a committee or working group.

Truth and reconciliation work is hard work. It can feel complex, sensitive or daunting. While working collaboratively, it helps to create the proper relationship—or a way of working together that can not only keep you focused but also build common understanding and help navigate through challenging moments.

Consider the charter below as a sample. Adapt and adjust to make it work for your co-operative and its collaborative work!

Reconciliation Charter: Working through the Right Relationship

We are committed to working together to support Truth and Reconciliation.

We know...

- Our understanding of reconciliation will evolve as we learn and build relationships. This is exciting!
- We will make mistakes. We won't always know what to do, and we may sometimes feel overwhelmed.
- Reconciliation is about building relationships that are different from the current relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. We will be stretched to think and act in different ways.
- Our shared history is full of harm and mistrust. It is important to know these truths. It will take time and effort to build trusting relationships.

We will...

- Speak from an open-hearted and truthful place.
- Listen to others with kindness and an open heart, pausing and being curious when we hear things that challenge or confuse us.
- Be committed to learning and listening, knowing that our ideas, feelings, knowledge and actions will evolve.
- Take guidance and direction from the Indigenous community. This could be urban Indigenous people involved in Indigenous organizations or activism, Elders and Knowledge Keepers or Indigenous community representatives or governments.
- Be kind and generous with each other in difficult or tense moments. This includes not assuming the intentions or needs of others, being curious and keeping in touch.

- Have courage to try things, make mistakes and learn from our experiences. When we do make a mistake, we will own it (apologize, take responsibility), be accountable to others and be kind to ourselves as we commit to building good relationships.
- Be open to new and different ways of doing things, particularly in Indigenous spaces or when guided by Indigenous advisors.
- Be focussed on creating change that allows respectful relationships to develop. This can involve taking responsibility and acknowledging privilege. It does not involve blame, guilt or shame.



Kairos blanket exercise.





Glossary

Indigenous/Aboriginal

These are umbrella terms that include First Nations, Inuit and Metis people, who are the original inhabitants of Canada. When referring to a specific nation(s), it's best to use a more specific term identifying that nation.

First Nations

Indigenous people of Canada, who are not Metis or Inuit. There are 634 First Nations in Canada (from 11 major groups), and more than 60 distinct languages. Given this diversity, there are vast cultural and social differences among First Nations. A First Nations person or family may have status (they and their community are governed by the Indian Act) or be non-status. They may live on or off reserve.

Inuit

Indigenous people whose homeland is Inuit Nunangat, the land, water and ice of the Arctic region of Canada. Inuit is the Inuktitut word for "the people" and an Inuit person is called an Inuk. There are eight main Inuit ethnic groups and five dialects in the Inuktitut language.

Metis

An Indigenous nation that developed after European contact. The Metis nation's homeland and traditional territory covers parts of what is now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario. The Metis language is Michif.

Elders

Are important and highly respected members of communities. A traditional Elder is someone who follows the teachings of their ancestors, having attained a high degree of understanding of their culture (teachings, ceremony, healing practices). They can be asked to share teachings around culture, tradition, healing, language, ceremony and history or to give advice or guidance.

Knowledge Keeper

This is a person who follows the teachings of their ancestors and carries ceremony or teachings. They can be called upon to share those teachings or ceremony. Traditionally, in many First Nation and Metis communities the role of Knowledge Keepers is to preserve and practice the knowledge of the community.

Assimilation

Assimilation is the process of irradicating one group's culture (language, religion, beliefs, ways of being, practices, etc.) for the purpose of them to becoming indistinguishable from the dominant group. Canada legislated the assimilation of Indigenous peoples through the Indian Act and Indian Residential School system to intentionally assimilate and "civilize" Indigenous peoples throughout Canada.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is when a foreign nation/entity occupies the territories of others and creates a permanent or long-term settlement on the land. However, it is not just an historical event, it's an ongoing way of being and relating. Along with physical settlements, it includes narratives (stories), ideas and practices that support the settlement (such as legitimizing genocide or stolen land) and holds the systems, culture and knowledge of the settlers as preferred or more valuable.

Settlers

Describes Canadians whose ancestors immigrated to Canada. The term also acknowledges the privileges settlers benefit from through ongoing colonialism. This doesn't include the descendants of people of colour who came to Canada unwillingly (such as slaves).

Systemic Racism

Systemic racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred or discrimination. It is a system of oppression (and advantage) based on race. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices. One example is Indigenous children's education being funded at 70% the amount of non-Indigenous children's education. Participation in systemic racism can happen consciously or unconsciously and intentionally or unintentionally.

Treaties

Treaties are nation to nation agreements. In Canada, there are numerous Indigenous treaties between the Crown and various Indigenous nations. These treaties are constitutionally recognized agreements where Indigenous nations agree to share access to land in exchange for payments and promises. For Indigenous people, treaty making was a sacred act, usually involving ceremony, that marked the relationship and its commitments. Historically and presently, many treaty promises have not been kept by the Crown and the Government of Canada. Some Indigenous groups were left out of treaty making, including the Metis.

Unceded Territory

Often, land where Aboriginal Title has neither been surrendered nor acquired by the Crown and there were no treaties signed is referred to as unceded territory. With this definition, most of the land in British Columbia (95% of the land base or close 900,000 square kilometres) is unceded. There is also unceded territory in the Maritimes, Ontario and Quebec. In places where treaties were signed, land was not necessarily ceded to the Crown, but agreements were made to share the territory in some way. Therefore, many describe territories with treaty as unceded as well.





Resources

Videos and films

APTN Series: First Contact aptn.ca/firstcontact

CBC Series: Eighth Fire youtube.com/watch?v=cb9f2L2u_JQ

Indian Horse indianhorse.ca

We Were Children amazon.com/We-Were-Children-Tim-Wolochatiuk/dp/B07FQ15SB3

Colonization Road cbc.ca/firsthand/episodes/colonization-road

nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up cbc.ca/cbcdocspov/m_episodes/nipawistamasowin-we-will-stand-up

Finding Dawn youtube.com/watch?v=f-0Z-UoQ3VY

Real Injun sundancenow.com/films/watch/reel-injun/7ecae4db55fab5ff

Visit the NFB and view their collection of Indigenous-made films: nfb.ca/indigenous-cinema

Books

Seven Fallen Feathers, Tanya Talaga houseofanansi.com/products/seven-fallen-feathers

21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act, Bob Joseph chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/21-things-you-may-not/9780995266520-item.html

Unsettling the Settler Within, Paulette Regan ubcpres.ca/unsettling-the-settler-within

Life Among the Qallunaat, Mini Aodla Freeman uofmpress.ca/books/detail/life-among-the-qallunaat

The Inconvenient Indian, Thomas King chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/the-inconvenient-indian-a-curious/9780385664226-item.html

Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada, Chelsea Vowel chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/indigenous-writes-a-guide-to/9781553796800-item.html

The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, Rebuilding the Economy, Arthur Manuel, Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson, and Ronald M. Derrickson chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/the-reconciliation-manifesto-recovering-the/9781459409613-item.html

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants, Robin Wall Kimmerer chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/braiding-sweetgrass-indigenous-wisdom-scientific/9781571313560-item.html

Fiction

The Break, Katherena Vermette houseofanansi.com/products/the-break

Kiss of the Fur Queen, Tomson Highway penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/79881/kiss-of-the-fur-queen-by-tomson-highway/9780385258807

Indian Horse, Richard Wagamese chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/indian-horse/9781553654025-item.html

Split Tooth, Tayna Tagaq penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/534654/split-tooth-by-tanya-tagaq/9780143198055

This Accident of Being Lost, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson houseofanansi.com/products/this-accident-of-being-lost

For more book suggestions visit Indigenous Reads next150.indianhorse.ca/challenges/indigenous-reads

Books for children and youth

Fatty Legs, Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton 49thshelf.com/Books/F/Fatty-Legs3

What's My Super Power, Aviaq Johnston chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/whats-my-superpower/9781772271409-item.html

You Hold Me Up by Monique Gray Smith orcabook.com/You-Hold-Me-Up-P1321.aspx

I Am Not A Number, Jenny Kay Dupuis and Kathy Kacer secondstorypress.ca/kids/i-am-not-a-number

Shin-Chi's Canoe, Nicola Campbell chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/shin-chis-canoe/9780888998576-item.html

I Know Here, Croza, Laurel houseofanansi.com/products/i-know-here

When We Were Alone, David Alexander Robertson and Julie Flett portageandmainpress.com/product/when-we-were-alone

Podcasts

The Henceforward thehenceforward.com

Finding Cleo (CBC) cbc.ca/radio/findingcleo

Media Indigena: mediaindigena.com

White Coat, Black Art: cbc.ca/player/play/1167944259546 episode 'The hardest conversation we can have': The San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety program confronts racism in health care

