



Reconciliation Education

This resource was created on the ancestral and traditional Unceded Indigenous territory of the ʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and selílwitlh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations, in what is currently called Vancouver.

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1. Terminology & FAQ

1.1 Important Terms

[This list of terms comes from a Force of Nature document, created by volunteers studying Indigenous History at SFU.]

1. **Indigenous:** The current most widely accepted term used to refer to the first peoples of the world. In Canada, Indigenous is inclusive of Métis, First Nations and Inuit peoples.
2. **Unceded:** Land that has never been surrendered: either through a signed treaty, or winning over in battle. 95% of British Columbia is Unceded, which means that the majority of occupied land has been stolen and is occupied illegally, according to Canadian laws.
3. **Colonialism:** An ongoing phenomenon initiated by theft of Indigenous territory, resulting in the overruling of land by uninvited settlers.
4. **Sovereignty:** The ability to express full control of a territory, and to have full autonomy over how it is governed.
5. **Reserve:** A fragment of land that is federally owned, allocated to a particular nation. Reserves were originally established to contain Indigenous peoples and keep them separate from the rest of Canada.
6. **Indian Act:** Enacted by the Canadian federal government, and defines who is considered “Indian”. Many indigenous peoples are deprived of their rights because they may not meet the governments’ definition of who is given “Indian”.
7. **Treaty:** A way in which land claims can be settled. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples had oral treaties with other nations. According to Indigenous Scholar Chelsea Vowel, “mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and non-interference are at the heart of many Indigenous nations’ treaty making process” (Indigenous Writes). Treaties initiated by settlers were often used to deceive Indigenous peoples into signing away their land to European settlers.
8. **Truth and Reconciliation Commission:** A list of 94 calls to action established by residential school survivors in order to bear witness to the lived atrocities

endured by Indigenous children in Canada, and recommendations to foster respectful and healthy relationships with people going forward.

9. **UNDRIP:** The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples enacted to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples across the worlds. Officially adopted in Canada, but it is not ratified in any legislation meaning it is not legally binding. To have a better understanding of the process and the breakdown of UNDRIP in Canada please read [this article by the Fraser Institute](#).
10. **Residential School System:** A system initiated by the Canadian government that forced Indigenous children to leave their families and communities to attend a boarding school where they were not permitted to speak their traditional languages or observe any cultural practices. Many children were abused and sexually assaulted, and some even passed away while at residential school. The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996.
11. **Sixties Scoop:** Described by Chelsea Vowel as “adoption as cultural annihilation” (Indigenous Writes). Throughout the 60s, Indigenous children were taken from their families by child welfare workers because they deemed Indigenous parents as unfit. Thousands of Indigenous children were therefore raised without learning anything about their languages or culture, and were therefore unable to pass along any of their ancestry to their own children.

1.2 Different Terminology

What are the differences between how people refer to Indigenous people? How do you know what term to use in what situation?

It's important to note that Indigenous bands/communities are heterogeneous, diverse, and culturally and traditionally unique. Typically, Western Colonial Settlers group them together and treat them as being the same or homogenous, or simply as the 'other'. It's dehumanizing, and is equivalent to saying French and English people are the exact same, because they both live on continental Europe. This is part of deconstructing the narrative that surrounds our cultural understanding of the term Indigenous Peoples.

It is always useful to use the accepted terms, but you should always ask the preference of the individual from Indigenous Peoples you are speaking to for their

preferred title. You should always go with what someone calls themselves. This will require some research. That can be done by searching a website for the group you're meeting with (if there is one) or searching them up on social media. You may find info there that lets you know what they prefer. Even if you do research and prepare for a meeting with a representative from an Indigenous Peoples community, you may not always get it right. That is okay so long as you show effort to actively listen and address individuals by their preferred title.

Indigenous Peoples

“The most widely preferred term to use. However, it is important to remember that Indigenous Peoples is not one specific culture, but rather a descriptor for a category of cultures. Many Indigenous individuals preferred to be described by their specific nation, whenever possible.” ()

The following terms and descriptions were taken from the Indigenous Corporate Training Inc website from July 20th 2016.

Aboriginal peoples

“This phrase is now mostly used in legal documents, since it is the collective noun used in the *Constitution Act of 1982* and includes the Indian (or First Nations), Inuit and Metis Peoples.

While everyone is different, most First Nations prefer the phrase Indigenous instead of Aboriginal. Learn more by reading this article: [Why We Say “Indigenous” Instead of “Aboriginal”](#) (Indigenous Corporate Training Ince, 2016)

First Nation(s)

“First Nation is a term used to identify Indigenous peoples of Canada who are neither Métis nor Inuit. This term came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the term “Indian” and “Indian band” which many find offensive.

Caution:

- ❖ If used interchangeably with Aboriginal Peoples as some First Nations people don't like the term Aboriginal Peoples.

- ❖ If used interchangeably with First Nations as some may have more preference for Indigenous Peoples, for example First Nation communities in Ontario have expressed publicly and politically that they prefer Indigenous Peoples.” (Indigenous Corporate Training Ince, 2016)

A couple of notes on punctuation:

- ❖ Always capitalize Indigenous, Aboriginal, First Nation, Inuit, Métis as a sign of respect the same way that English, French and Spanish are capitalized.
- ❖ Avoid using possessive phrases like “Canada’s Indigenous Peoples” or “our Indigenous Peoples” as that has connotations of ownership. Perhaps, go with “Indigenous Peoples of this land / of Turtle Island”. Turtle Island refers to all of continental North America.
- ❖ We’re not sure why, but the plural possessive for First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, Aboriginal Peoples does not generally use the apostrophe so you won’t see, for example, “First Nations’ land”. (Indigenous Corporate Training Ince, 2016)

1.3 Frequently Asked Questions:

[This list of FAQs come from a Force of Nature document, created by volunteers studying Indigenous History at SFU. They have been expanded upon by the BTCEA mentors].

1. Why do people acknowledge territory at the beginning of events or meetings?
 - a. It is always important to acknowledge that settlers are merely visitors on Indigenous territory. In Vancouver, our hosts are the ʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sel̓ilwílulh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. This is oftentimes taken to be a large step of reconciliation by businesses, groups or governments, but it is only a small part. To acknowledge territory and not take any further action towards the TRC 94 calls to action is, to put it simply, tokenism.

2. What if an Indigenous community does not agree with a project, campaign or initiative?
 - a. It is always important to always engage in community consultation, especially in Indigenous communities where so much has already been taken. Not all Indigenous communities will agree with what you are doing with campaigns or in the environmental movement, but their insight, opinions and knowledge may help establish a stronger initiative. When possible bring your local Indigenous Peoples to the table, but be aware this may add additional burden to them. For more further information, find a local organizer's story about how they handled this situation for further guidance below.
3. What is Intergenerational Trauma?
 - a. Trauma inherited by the descendants of Indigenous Peoples who have undergone traumatic events such as residential schools. Trauma can be easily passed down from generation to generation.
 - b. To understand more about this psychological field of study, [please read this article](#). A better understanding for the Indigenous Peoples of Canada can be found within the TRC.
4. How are environmental issues related to Indigenous issues?
 - a. Indigenous communities are often disproportionately affected by the adverse effects of climate change, and therefore, suffer more. This does not mean they will always agree with campaigns and initiatives within the movement. *Do not use this as a generality.* As a result, it is important that Indigenous Peoples are engaged in environmental movements because of their lived experiences.
 - b. For more details on times when Indigenous Peoples in BC disagreed on environmental and social justice campaigns please read about these articles:
 - i. Tsawwassen Mills - [Article 1](#) and [Editorial 1](#), [Article 2](#)
 - ii. Riverview Hospital - [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#), and [Article 3](#)
 - iii. Wet'suwet'en - [Article 1](#) [Article 2](#), and [Article 3](#)
5. What are some of the responsibilities of settlers on Indigenous territory?
 - a. While there are many responsibilities of settlers, some of them may include: building relationships with local Indigenous partners,

supporting Indigenous initiatives, educating oneself of the ongoing effects of colonialism, and advocating for Indigenous rights.

6. What does Land Back mean?
 - a. Read [this article](#) for an explanation.
7. What does Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) mean and why is it important?
 - a. FPIC is an important part of reconciliation. It means to establish participation and consultation of Indigenous Peoples before using their land or resources for economic or developmental means within any Indigenous Peoples territories.
 - a. The United Nations and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) defines, FPIC as a principle that is protected by international human rights standards, which states: “all peoples have the right to self-determination’ and – linked to the right to self-determination – ‘all peoples have the right to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development’” (United Nations, 2016). They also created a six step process to ensure all projects follow FPIC. [Find more information on the UN’s website here.](#)

For more information, [please read the Calls to Action within the TRC.](#)

2. Being an Ally

2.1 How Can you Decolonize Your Work?

- ❖ Join reconciliation training and workshops.
- ❖ Help with Indigenous-led campaigns: Pull Together, Site C Dam, etc.
- ❖ Territory acknowledgements.
- ❖ Reposting articles and actions on social media.
- ❖ Ensure you are always passing the mic and lifting others up. Do not take the spotlight away from the Indigenous Peoples or other Peoples of Colour. Ask yourself: are you sharing the frontline people? Whose voices are you uplifting?
 - An example: [Autumn Peltier](#)

An example of how to handle conflicts between Indigenous Peoples and local environmental activists:

“My team, the Tri-Cities team with Force of Nature, were actively searching for local solutions to climate change for our campaign. While we had relational meetings with allies in our community, we found a prominent issue that came up a lot was the Riverview lands. Many of our allies were not just active in environmental issues, but in social ones as well, and the riverview lands were currently under a land claim from the Kwikwetlem First Nation. The Kwikwetlem First Nations want to take back their land to develop it and build their own hospital for the Nation, as well as condos and other important infrastructure. The land currently has a large mental health facility on it run by Fraser Health and the Provincial government. Many of our allies are actively protecting the hospital, since it houses so many people. We’ve been approached by our allies to help support them in this endeavor, their campaign to save the hospital, but we have continued to decline over and over again. We had many discussions as a team about this, and we realized that if we want to properly decolonize our work, we have to walk the walk. We would not help our allies, regardless if it ruined relationships, as we viewed helping them as actively working against the local First Nations. In these instances, it is not always clear cut when we should be involved, and when we shouldn’t. Actively decolonizing our work and furthering reconciliation as a team are important things we need to build into what we do together.”

2.2 How to Be An Ally to Indigenous Peoples

- ❖ Being an ally without asking for anything in return.
- ❖ Asking First Nations for help can be problematic.
 - There is an emotional burden anytime you ask them to explain something to you that is easily searchable online.
 - There is an emotional burden if you ask, “what can I help with?” as they often get approached by many groups, governments and community members with good intentions.
 - Do not ask, do your research and find ways to help without being a burden if the project doesn’t potentially impact Indigenous Peoples.
 - Once you have a project planned that could potentially impact Indigenous communities, or if you are unsure, it is best to set up a meeting with potentially affected Indigenous communities, by explaining that you would like their opinions and thoughts on a specific project or topic. You should **NOT** go ahead and implement your own project activities just based on a bit of research online, especially if the project could adversely impact Indigenous Peoples. That is why it is important to always have proactive thinking and ask yourself, if your project activities are likely to impact Indigenous Peoples in a negative way. Also, you and your team should be prepared for the case that Indigenous communities do not agree with the proposed project and would propose small or large changes/modifications. In fact, they may prefer that you and your team do not implement the project at all. That is OKAY! It is part of respecting Indigenous communities and voices.
- ❖ Asking TO help can also be a burden.
- ❖ That means SHOW UP even if you’re unsure if you’re needed.
 - Follow Indigenous Peoples on social media, follow newsletters, stay up to date by checking their website. Show up to events when there are calls to action, write letters and sign petitions when asked. Amplify voices by sharing on social media.

- Be aware of the spaces you are invited to by following Indigenous Peoples online. This sometimes means not interfering in a movement run by Indigenous Peoples, because to participate may mean Indigenous voices are drowned out or lost. If there is a specific call to action on social media or in a newsletter, then you know you are welcome to join the space, discussion or event..

Allyship Tool Kit (made by Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK):

[Indigenous Ally Toolkit](#)

More resources:

- ❖ [Indigenous Solidarity Guidelines](#)
- ❖ Indigenous Solidarity Best Practice [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) and [Part 2](#)
- ❖ Read this article: [Decolonizing together](#) by Harsha Walia

3. Reconciliation Team Exercise

Purpose

- To educate your team on the importance of reconciliation within environmental work.
- To find different ways you can include reconciliation in your project.

Outcome

- To have clear actions you can take to begin reconciliation either personally or with your team.
- To know the names of the Indigenous Peoples in your community, and some learn some of their history.

Breakout groups

Decide how you would like to best begin educating your team on reconciliation. You can base this off of how much time you have together, or based on everyone's collective capacity. You can either breakout into groups during a meeting and learn together, or have people take on action items and bring it back to everyone as a recap. The explanation below is based on doing this in a team meeting format.

Break into groups of 3 or more for each topic. Research using the PDFs or websites, and answer the list of questions and reflections. Recap your findings as a team after 30 minutes.

❖ TRC Calls to Action

- Read through the [Calls to Action](#).
- Decide which area's you can tackle and include in your team.
- Decide which area's you can include in your project.
- Decide which area's you have capacity for but are outside your project.

- List the reasons how you can do so, is it: Norms, Allies, Relationship-building, More Education, Decision Makers, Showing up at Events and Indigenous Peoples Actions, etc.
- What action items would the team need to take on to make these happen.
- Feel free to use the tactics guide to help guide each action, if they are more intricate, or if you are stuck.

❖ **Your Local Indigenous Peoples**

- Learn about why land acknowledgements are so important with these links and jot down the main reasons why it's important to say them:
 - <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/>
 - <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/territorial-acknowledgements-indigenous-1.4175136>
- Research using this educational website to find who your local Indigenous Peoples are by typing your location in the search bar: <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/>
- Go to each of the websites listed to find more information about each Indigenous Peoples. Try to answer these questions:
 - What is happening in the community right now? Are there any projects that your team can help with? (i.e. rallies to show up in support, letters to write to local officials or petitions to sign)
 - What are they, when, and how can you be involved?
 - How much capacity will this take your team?
 - What action items would the team need to take on to make these happen?
 - Feel free to use the tactics guide to help guide each action if they are more intricate, or if you are stuck.
 - Give some information on their history, land, culture, language or governance.
 - If it is available, try to learn how to properly pronounce the Indigenous Peoples name.
 - Write it down phonetically so your team members can learn too

❖ **Disagreements Between Environmental Campaigns and Indigenous Peoples in BC**

- Learn about a few different campaigns that were in conflict with Indigenous Peoples and didn't have clear "good" solutions.
 - Tsawwassen Mills - [Article 1](#) and [Editorial 1](#), [Article 2](#)
 - Riverview Hospital - [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#), and [Article 3](#)
 - Wet'suwet'en - [Article 1](#) [Article 2](#), and [Article 3](#)
- For each conflict, answer these questions:
 - Who are the parties involved and what are their different views?
 - What are the contented issues going on?
 - Why is there no right answer?
 - How do you make decisions on this complex issue?

After you are done researching and discussing amongst the smaller groups, bring you answers and discussion answers to the rest of the team. Have each group go and explain what they discovered. Discuss the different possible actions or conflicts that arose with the rest of the team. Make clear actionable steps to move forward with further more research or by moving forward as an ally.

4. Further (un)learning & References

4.1 Further (un)learning

Learning about decolonization (and unlearning our ingrained colonial worldviews) is a continual learning process. Here are some resources to guide further learning:

- ❖ [Decolonizing together](#) by Harsha Walia is a critical article for learning about what decolonizing is, how it relates to other struggles for justice, and what settlers can specifically do to work towards it.
- ❖ The [4Rs Youth Movement](#) is “a youth-driven initiative to change the country by changing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people”. They have curated lists of resources to help Canadians learn more about Indigenous people and decolonization.
 - [List of videos](#)
 - [List of podcasts](#)
 - [List of music](#)
 - [List of articles / readings](#)
- ❖ [List of resources about Indigenous resistance](#) from the Catalyst project
- ❖ [Interview with Leanne Simpson about the #idlenomore movement](#)
- ❖ Learn more about the Wet'suwet'en land defence movement with the links and resources in this guide: [Resources to become more educated as a Wet'suwet'en supporter](#)

Instagram accounts to follow:

- ❖ @futureancestors
- ❖ @coastprotectors - Indigenous-led group opposing construction of Trans Mountain pipeline
- ❖ @dakotabearofficial
- ❖ @wetsuweten_checkpoint
- ❖ @raven_trust
- ❖ @wcelaw
- ❖ @bipocliberation
- ❖ @diablorisingtide

- ❖ @takaiya.blaney
- ❖ @siiamhamilton
- ❖ @ndncollective
- ❖ @indigenousclimateaction
- ❖ @tapioca_starch
- ❖ @decolonizemyself
- ❖ @decolonialatlas

4.2 References

Free Prior and Informed Consent – An Indigenous Peoples’ right and a good practice for local communities – FAO, (2016, October 14), United Nations.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/publications/2016/10/free-prior-and-informed-consent-an-indigenous-peoples-right-and-a-good-practice-for-local-communities-fao/>

Indigenous Peoples terminology guidelines for usage, (2016, July 20), Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.

<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-peoples-terminology-guidelines-for-usage>