

The Greatest Social Justice Issue in Canada

At the root of so much of our country's relationship with Indigenous Peoples was and is an attitude of cultural superiority.

It started with the Doctrine of Discovery and Doctrine of Terra Nullius, was strengthened by the bad faith and violation of the Peace and Friendship treaties, was legalized by the creation of the Indian Act and the birth of the Indian Residential Schools Era, and persists in the modern Indigenous rights and title disputes, resource extraction projects, and the socio-economic discrimination in health, education and social services.

The institutional racism is pervasive. The social inequality and racism is pervasive. The ignorance and indifference is pervasive.

Relationship Road Map

① First Contact between Europeans and First Nations

Two Row Wampum between Haudenosaunee and the Dutch (and later the British) which evolved into the covenant chain relationship

↳ 2 canoes travelling parallel and equal paths respecting each other's direction and not interfering ⁱⁿ each other's way of life

↳ 3 rows of beads between the canoes are rich in symbolism, each representing peace, power and righteousness - the values needed to sustain the NATION to NATION relationship

② The Peace and Friendship Treaties (Atlantic Canada, Québec, and Ontario)

↳ essentially military alliance agreements

↳ 1763 Royal Proclamation - recognized pre-existing rights to land as inherent
- territory ceded only with consent and only to the Crown

↳ 1764 Treaty of Niagara - confirmed the principles embodied in the Royal Proclamation

- solidified the alliance between the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and the British (Ontario)

③ Numbered Treaties 1 to 11 (Praries)

↳ Treaty 3 Case Study - "we have one mind and one mouth. It is the decision of all of us."

Chief Saagachiwe

- "give us one of your sons and your daughters, we will give you one of our sons and daughters."

↳ documented that the British spent 2 years negotiating and before signing they brought a copy of Treaty 2 to sign which was more to the liking and advantage of the British

↳ the Paypom Document is an original set of notes made for Chief Powasson that details the original, comprehensive, and fair agreement between nations

④ No Treaties Signed in British Columbia

↳ no longer necessary for First Nations to be military allies as threat from the United States disappeared so European settlement proceeded without treaty-making and relied on the Doctrine of Discovery, Conquest, and Settlement

⑤ The British North American Act (BNA Act) and section 91(24)

↳ the federal government has jurisdiction over "Indians and lands reserved for the Indians."

⑥ The Indian Act and the Indian Residential Schools Era

↳ a clear and ongoing violation of the Crown promise/duty honour the treaties

↳ a clear and ongoing, violent tool of colonization

↳ removed economic opportunity – removed freedom of movement/mobility to leave the reserve
– removed access to markets and government permission

↳ paternalistic in nature – regulated and controlled First Nations' lives in every detail

↳ empowered the residential school era – the framework only repealed in late 2014
– documented physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural harm
– documented as a cultural genocide
– 2013 Article by Ian Mosby documenting nutritional experiments conducted by federal government scientists on under-nourished Indigenous children

⑦ Flashpoints – Standoffs, Blockades and Crises

↳ a toxic relationship that divides First Nations and Non-First Nations, communities and a country

⑧ The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1999-2000)

- ↳ the Commission's recommendations form the basis of any start to meaningful reconciliation between Canada and its First Peoples
- ↳ a vision of a new relationship founded on the recognition of First Peoples as self-governing nations with a unique place in Canada
 - a new Royal Proclamation
 - recognition of an Aboriginal order of government
 - replacement of the Indian Act & the federal department of Indian Affairs
 - creation of an Aboriginal parliament
 - expansion of the Aboriginal land and resource base
 - recognition of Métis self-government, land, and rights
 - initiatives to address social, education, health and housing needs, including authority over child welfare

⑨ Aboriginal Rights and Title Claims and the Canadian Courts (1970s to Modern Claims)

⑩ Canadian Prime Minister Apologises on Behalf of the Government of Canada for the Indian Residential Schools Era (2008)

⑪ UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008, endorsed by Canada in 2010)

⑫ Idle No More and the Common Call for Escalating Action around the big 6

- ↳ ① Repeal Bill C-45 which infringes environmental protections and Aboriginal treaty rights
- ↳ ② proportional representation and consultation on Indigenous collective rights issues like resource extraction / environmental protection
- ↳ ③ respect the UN Declaration recognition of the principle of free, prior, and informed consent and respect for Indigenous Peoples right to say no to economic development on their territory
- ↳ ④ stop the policy of extinguishment of Aboriginal title to land as set out in s. 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act and recommended by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
- ↳ ⑤ honour the spirit and intent of the historic treaties and officially repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery and the Doctrine of Terra Nullius as the justification of the seizure of Indigenous lands and wealth
- ↳ ⑥ actively resist violence against women and hold a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls

⑬ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Report (15 December 2015)

↳ 94 recommendations have been handed down to begin our journey on the path to reconciliation in Canada