

## First Nations: Reconciliation

Open June 22 - August 8, 2016

Repairing relations between First Nations peoples and other Canadians is an urgent political and social issue in Canada today. Now that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has wrapped up, Canadians have an opportunity to thoughtfully consider what reconciliation should look like.

Subject Matter Experts

[John Milloy](#)

Professor Emeritus

Trent University

[David Newhouse](#)

Chair and Professor, Indigenous Studies

Trent University

### Preliminary Discussion: Reconcilable Differences

Discussion Overview

Repairing relations between First Nations peoples and other Canadians is an urgent political and social issue in Canada today. Now that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has wrapped up, Canadians have an opportunity to thoughtfully consider what reconciliation should look like.

[Chris Dummitt](#) • June 28, 2016 at 12:01 pm

Thanks so much for leading things off David and John. I'm looking forward to getting your insights. As a starting point, I'm wondering how hopeful or optimistic people are at this point in time? Has the TRC and the response to it changed anything? Has the change in government made a difference? Is it too early to tell?

• Post Awarded 5 DR

[William Innes](#) • June 29, 2016 at 02:35 pm

It seems that the process of reconciliation needs to start with addressing the future and the past in parallel. First nations need to feel the acknowledgement of the wrongs of the past, and Canada needs to feel the opportunity of a way forward.

• Post Awarded 5 DR

[Hugh Helferty](#) • July 1, 2016 at 12:26 pm

I agree that Canadians must acknowledge past wrongs. But the discussion must not stop there. To me, the key question is how can all Canadians, including First Nations peoples, work together to create a society that enables all to lead better lives. This applies to First Nations peoples and Muslim women, the subject of a future hot topic, and all Canadians. I hope the primary focus of the discussion will be on how we collectively create a better future.

• Post Awarded 15 DR

[William Innes](#) • July 1, 2016 at 02:50 pm

For good reasons the reconciliation process has focused on the past and ensuring we don't repeat these injustices. But I agree with Hugh that our country will not sustain its commitment unless there is a real sense of how we will work together in the future. The First Nations community has a responsibility to articulate its vision of our future together. I would love to hear from them — what are the right priorities, how do we deal with several hundred bands, how are they represented in the political process, how do we provide education and health in remote communities, how do we build accountability at the local and national levels Etc,Etc,Etc. Cindy Blackstock, John Milloy, David Newhouse can we hear from you?

[Cindy Blackstock](#) • July 6, 2016 at 07:41 am

In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that Canada's inequitable provision of First Nations child and family services to 163,000 children on reserves and in the Yukon and failure to properly implement Jordan's Principle ([www.jordansprinciple.ca](http://www.jordansprinciple.ca)) is racially discriminatory and contributes to record removals of First Nations children from their families. The ruling notes that Canada had been aware of the deficiencies in its programs for many years, had solutions to fix the problems and ignored them. Conversations about "capacity building" are often fixated on First Nations so why has so little attention been paid to the government's capacity to end its discriminatory conduct toward First Nations children in light of its egregious failures to do better when it knows better?

• Post Awarded 80 DR

[Cindy Blackstock](#) • July 6, 2016 at 07:44 am

*William Innes wrote on July 1:*

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Hello, the Caring Society has an entire reconciliation program called Touchstones of Hope dedicated to assisting First Nations to reclaim their traditional concepts of healthy children and families and engage with community members and stakeholders to implement a plan to achieve it. It has been used with great success in northern BC, Saskatchewan and in some parts of the United States and Australia and the reconciliation touchstone principles and reconciliation process have been adopted in other sectors such as labour, academia and the corporate sector. Learn more at: <https://fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope>

• Post Awarded 25 DR

[Cindy Blackstock](#) • July 6, 2016 at 07:48 am

*William Innes wrote on July 1:*

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*sense of how we will work together in the future. The First Nations community has a responsibility to articulate its vision of our future together. I would love to hear from them — what are the right priorities, how do we deal with several hundred bands, how are they represented in the political process, how do we provide education and health in remote communities, how do we build accountability at the local and national levels Etc,Etc,Etc. Cindy Blackstock, John Milloy, David Newhouse can we hear from you?*

Check out the Touchstones of Hope for Reconciliation principles and process that was developed for child welfare in 2005 but now applied to other sectors such as labour unions, academia etc. <https://fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope>

We also have 7 free ways for all people of any age to make a difference for First Nations children at [www.fncaringsociety.com](http://www.fncaringsociety.com) Three of the ways to make a difference: Jordan's Principle, Shannen's Dream and the I am a witness campaign are the top recommendations of the TRC

[Rosanna Zerafa](#) • July 6, 2016 at 01:54 pm

I had previously been employed as a Primary Care RN in a Health Care Team on a local Reserve. When I share that our Reserves and many others throughout Canada do not have potable water available, even those not located in remote areas, I am met with disbelief. I wonder how much reconciliation can be accomplished between the government and First Nations when ongoing requests "fall on deaf ears". I am eager to participate but am concerned that this basic human need impacting on health (and child welfare) is being ignored and is mentioned repeatedly in the TRC report.

• Post Awarded 35 DR

[William Innes](#) • July 9, 2016 at 11:50 am

Cindy — thanks for the great references/ideas, and the work which you do in support of aboriginal children. With respect to reconciliation in general, while recognizing that the primary role is with non-aboriginal Canadians, what can/should aboriginal Canadians do to help the reconciliation process move faster in addressing issues which are deeply rooted by history E.g. who speaks collectively for First nations?

[John Milloy](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • July 10, 2016 at 02:10 pm

There are, as the TRC has indicated, multiple sectors for action towards reconciliation - opportunities for groups and individuals, aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples to act within the context of their communities, workplaces, governing and educational institutions. That we do so is for me the top priority. Getting people involved/acting will result in increased interest, knowledge and hopefulness, that as change is realized "ordinary Canadians" can contribute to it. Waiting for there to be grand designs for major sweeping changes [constitutional, economic etc](#) created by the traditional governing class, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, will only create frustration as issues are talked to death and what could be done by the majority neglected. Lets take a lesson from the Syrian refugee campaign. Local people have come together, organized housing, jobs etc. ; and the benefit of that has not only been there for the Syrian families but for those Canadians who acted together who now know each other as they may have not before and are invested in the country to a much greater degree. There is a role in this for government but only in so far as facilitating what local groups will structure to create change be they local aboriginal or non-aboriginal groups and of greatest value - cross cultural groups. We have

already the values that underpin reconciliation what is most needed are ways and means to activate them through community action.

- Post Awarded 85 DR

[John Milloy](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • July 10, 2016 at 02:13 pm

*William Innes wrote on July 1:*

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[John Milloy](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • July 10, 2016 at 02:40 pm

*William Innes wrote on July 1:*

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William: Part of your comment takes me back to the old anglo dialogue about Quebec in the 60s and 70s "what does Quebec want - if we only knew .."- and that is a bit frightening. "The First Nations community has a responsibility ..... to articulate its vision of our future together." You do not need to be an historian to remember that that articulation has occurred over and over again from at least the late 60s on: the rejection of the white paper by the red paper, aboriginal leaders setting out their vision at the post-1982 constitutional conferences to define the nature of section 35 rights and then the massive study of the Royal Commission and the detailed vision set out in its report in 1996. In all three of those instances an aboriginal vision was simply rejected by politicians who offered no alternatives to the status quo and thus no move toward reconciliation. What we need to ask is has non-aboriginal Canada changed. Has the "shock" of our history seen there in the residential schools really made a difference. There is certainly evidence that it has not. The man who stood in parliament and made what he claimed was an apology was so unapologetic for his promotion of the status quo as to actually claim we really had no history of colonialism. He maybe gone from power but those attitudes and those who support them are not. One major first step towards reconciliation is to confront those ideas and the people who cling to them; is for white Canada to articulate a vision of our future together which is truly different, which deals seriously with the principles that have been set out by aboriginal communities in Canada for hundreds of years - the two row wampum, extending the rafters, sharing the land ... Sadly, we will wait a long time for that to happen.

- Post Awarded 40 DR

[John Milloy](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • July 10, 2016 at 02:56 pm

*Rosanna Zerafa wrote on July 6:*

*I had previously been employed as a Primary Care RN in a Health Care Team on a local Reserve. When I share that our Reserves and many others throughout Canada do not have potable water available, even those not located in remote areas, I am met with disbelief. I wonder how much reconciliation can be accomplished between the government and First Nations when ongoing requests "fall on deaf ears". I am eager to participate but am concerned that this basic human need impacting on health (and child welfare) is being ignored and is mentioned repeatedly in the TRC report.*

Rosanna ..... excellent point ....there has been constant deafness. Pleas for clean water, adequate child care policies, the provision of health services, equal funding for aboriginal social and educational services etc do not receive attention/action. The extent they do in the near future may well be a telling barometer of the seriousness of Canada to achieve reconciliation. The change in government has been hopeful [though its hard to believe any government could do worse than Harper](#) but ordinary Canadians can by demanding that leadership listens and acts contribute to progress for real change.

- Post Awarded 10 DR

[Julia McCrea](#) • July 12, 2016 at 04:59 pm

I encourage participants to tune in to the Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly taking place currently in Niagara Falls for perspectives on current demands, and proposals to governments. The proceedings are being Livestreamed.

- Post Awarded 10 DR

[Pascal St-Jean](#) • July 12, 2016 at 08:54 pm

*Julia McCrea wrote on July 12:*

*I encourage participants to tune in to the Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly taking place currently in Niagara Falls for perspectives on current demands, and proposals to governments. The proceedings are being Livestreamed.*

Great idea.

Here is the direct link to the live stream.

<http://livestream.com/accounts/8565664/events/5756048>

[Julia McCrea](#) • July 15, 2016 at 06:58 pm

I went back to the start of this discussion and would like to try to respond to the 3 questions posed by John Milloy: "1) How should we be addressing the impacts of residential schools?; 2) Is the revitalization of First Nations' cultures part of reconciliation?; and 3) What are the roles and responsibilities of non-Aboriginals in the work of reconciliation?"

1) How should we be addressing the impacts of residential schools?; There are several processes underway to identify (many schools and survivors left out still) and compensate residential and day schools survivors financially but what came through loud and clear at the Assembly of First Nations is that the process of identification and compensation has been retraumatizing the survivors and that there is a great need for help for survivors with healing. I have been seeking out resources on successful healing journeys and have suggested 3 books I found valuable so far to the resources section e.g. Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life by Diane Wilson; Finding My Talk: How Fourteen Native Women

Reclaimed Their Lives after Residential School by Agnes Grant and Healing Wounded Hearts by Fyre Jean Graveline. These books are biographies or auto-biographies that detail the historical trauma, the impact and what communities or individuals are doing about or have done about it, and are now moving forward with reclaiming their lives and cultures. Reading books like these is a form of bibliotherapy. Skilled therapists are urgently needed to support survivors. 2) Is the revitalization of First Nations' cultures part of reconciliation? Yes. Governments and individuals citizens should be doing everything possible to support the reclamation of languages, ceremonies, pow wows, sundances, education, traditional governance models, lands, rights ... everything that was banned, denied, removed, suppressed or beaten out of indigenous peoples as part of the genocidal practices of past Canadian governments and their implementers, ...in a respectful manner. 3) What are the roles and responsibilities of non-Aboriginals in the work of reconciliation?" Some of our duties are : To listen and respond in a respectful manner to the requests and demands of indigenous peoples in whatever forums they occur in and to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action; To expedite the response while consulting and engaging indigenous peoples at the community level; To support the long term healing process and journey that we are all needing to engage in as we acknowledge our genocidal history with whatever resources it takes; To accept that some past behaviours by Canadians are not reconcilable; Where possible to take the lead in offering to create, install, repair, fix the basic needed items - clean drinking water, sewage treatment systems, housing, schools, infrastructure yet doing so in a manner that builds the capacity, skills for independence, and jobs skills of youth and adults for the future.

- Post Awarded 30 DR

[William Innes](#) • July 15, 2016 at 08:32 pm

While acknowledging the primary role of non-aboriginals, do you have any thoughts about the roles and responsibilities of aboriginals in moving the work of reconciliation forward. Accommodation seems in our history to have been most effective when there is mutual recognition of the challenges.

[William Innes](#) • July 15, 2016 at 08:59 pm

John you are undoubtedly right that the vision by Aboriginal peoples has been stated often to Governments and those who are drawn to the issue; but in my experience it has yet to be articulated in a way that average Canadians can call it to mind and really feel the need in practical terms. I very much agree with your thought that real progress will be made by working the hard practicalities of reconciliation together , like education funding, clean water Etc. rather than in focusing on a grand design. The good news is that I sense that there is a heightened public sense of the simple injustices of the current situation. The TRC has already had an impact. The Grand Chief of the First Nations at the end of their conference( thank you Pascal for the reference) had an interesting summary of the dimensions of self determination: "our language, our laws, our lands, our peoples, and our identifiable form of government". It would seem that these are the dimensions in which a mutual accommodation with Canada needs to take place.

[How should we be addressing the impacts of residential schools?](#)

[Discussion Overview](#)

Now that Truth and Reconciliation Commission has wrapped up, how will we continue to deal with the legacy of residential schools? Recent efforts of First Nations peoples, governments, churches, scholars,

and others have taken different approaches to addressing the destructive impact of residential school policy.

[William Innes](#) • July 27, 2016 at 10:31 am

I was struck by John Milloy's thought that progress on reconciliation lies not with grand designs but in the acceptance by average Canadians that this must be addressed. I accept that First Nations peoples have expressed to governments/commissions Etc. their vision of their future relationship with Canada; but my sense is that this is not well understood in terms which most Canadians can recall. It seems to me that the awareness which the report of the commission on residential schools has raised needs to be moved forward in substantive areas quickly; Like: -- Including the subject in educational curricula. -- A broad public educational program about the vision of aboriginal peoples for their role/relationship in Canada; in terms which average Canadians can relate to. -- Rapid commitment to a few signal principles which express a change in the status quo; like equal funding for aboriginal education. There would be a lot of work to define how that is implemented, but surely no one could disagree that this is a simple question of justice. Let's get on with it!

• Post Awarded 5 DR

[Chris Dummitt](#) • July 29, 2016 at 05:04 pm

This is a guest post sent in from historian Jim Miller. He'll be hosting a future discussion but for now he had this to say about reconciliation:

WHAT'S ENOUGH FOR RECONCILIATION TO WORK?

What do Canadians need to do to advance the cause of reconciliation substantially?

Are fine words and fancy promises enough to do the job? The four major churches or organizations that ran the residential schools apologized between 1986 and 1998 for what they had done. The Minister of Indian Affairs, Jane Stewart, apologized for the federal government's role in the schools in January 1998, and in June 2008 the then prime minister Stephen Harper apologized for residential schools in a moving ceremony in the House of Commons.

More recently, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed his government to dealing with First Nations on a nation-to-nation basis. That's something First Nations leaders have called for for many years. Or must reconciliation have a substantial material component? Must reconciliation include real redress? If so, what and how much is enough? Will the billions that have been as compensation to residential school survivors in the Common Experience Payment and Independent Assessment Process suffice? Or will reconciliation require meaningful action on a host of issues - from underfunding of reserve schools and childcare programs to the more than a thousand outstanding land claims to the dozens of incomplete treaty negotiations in British Columbia? And scads of issues and programs beyond those. What is required for reconciliation to work? Fine words and nice-sounding promises, or material redress for past injustices and present-day problems? Or all of the above?

What does reconciliation look like as far as you're concerned?

Jim Miller

[Joel-Denis Bellavance](#) • August 2, 2016 at 11:01 am

Pour la première fois depuis longtemps, un gouvernement fédéral est déterminé à faire les investissements nécessaires pour améliorer le sort des peuples autochtones. Le premier budget du ministre des Finances Bill Morneau prévoit des investissements sans précédent dans le logement, l'éducation et autres programmes essentiels pour l'avenir des Premières nations. Ces investissements pourraient bien marquer un nouveau départ dans les relations entre le gouvernement fédéral et les peuples autochtones. Le temps le dira. Mais il est clair que le gouvernement Trudeau entend se donner les moyens de ses ambitions à cet égard. "Ca coûtera ce que ca coûtera", a déjà dit le premier ministre Justin Trudeau dans une entrevue à La Presse. Un discours qui tranche nettement avec celui du passé

[Joanne Riley](#) • August 5, 2016 at 11:04 am

*Joel-Denis Bellavance wrote on August 2:*

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These are all good signs for the road ahead, as you say. It's now all about how those words translate into action that really counts, and at every level - government to local grassroots implementation. Real action will help build the trust that's so badly needed. Action that demonstrates leadership, accountability, visibility and transparency. A tall order for sure.

Can you share the link to the interview with Justin Trudeau?

[Heather Nicol](#) • August 5, 2016 at 03:49 pm

While there is still time over the next few days to add your thoughts to the current discussion, we'd like to thank everyone who has contributed so far to our first Hot Topic on Canadian Difference! At the beginning of next week, the team will rotate the themes and focus the discussion on our next Hot Topic of Gender, in the context of Muslims in Canada. At that point, if you're still interested in joining the discussion on Reconciliation, look for the unmoderated thread that will be open. We look forward to everyone's continued participation!

[Is the revitalization of First Nations' cultures part of reconciliation?](#)

Discussion Overview

Some suggest that the revitalization and resurgence of First Nations' cultures is the most vital part of the reconciliation project. This could involve, first and foremost, an understanding of First Nations land rights and the treaty relationship. More broadly, it could involve making space for the First Nations laws, governments, and economies.

[Julie Davis](#) • July 19, 2016 at 10:21 am

I was born and raised in Australia. When I moved here at age 21 I brought very little with me, but I did bring all of my "dreamtime" books containing fascinating stories and beautiful pictures of aboriginal traditional wisdom. I don't see the same access to Canadian indigenous knowledge in 'popular' culture for youth. Could there be a bridge built through more widespread sharing of cultural traditions and knowledge in literature and art?

- Post Awarded 10 DR

[Julie Davis](#) • July 19, 2016 at 10:32 am

I wonder and worry about how we move forward together when there are different rules and regulations for aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, whether that be the pay structure for teachers (those on reserve are paid much less than those in public schools) or hunting rights (greater limits and restrictions for non-aboriginal Canadians). Is it possible to envision a new way of governing that doesn't give different rights to different Canadians?

- Post Awarded 5 DR

[Terry Petch](#) • July 20, 2016 at 05:32 pm

I believe that the revitalization of First Nations cultures must be addressed separately from reconciliation, although I believe that there will inevitably be an indirect link between the two. Revitalization depends upon developing a consensus about what is "vital" about First Nations culture. While everyone will have varying opinions about this, I believe that in order to ensure that revitalization is successful, the answer must include methods of ensuring that the culture can effectively bridge into the modern world. Isolation will ultimately ensure the failure of any initiative. I believe that many Canadians will share my feelings regarding those aspects of First Nations culture that I have always respected. Spirituality, a deep understanding of the natural world and how to live in balance with it, and a tradition of honour. These aspects are severely lacking from the remainder of Canadian society, and I believe that the development of opportunities to share First Nations culture with the remainder of Canada represents a great mutually beneficial opportunity that can touch all aspects of what revitalization should be. Revitalization should not be viewed as a First Nations objective only, but rather one that can improve all aspects of life across our country. In doing so, we can collectively reconcile with our past, and move together into the future.

- Post Awarded 30 DR

[Chris Dummitt](#) • July 22, 2016 at 03:20 pm

*Terry Petch wrote on July 20:*

*I believe that many Canadians will share my feelings regarding those aspects of First Nations culture that I have always respected. Spirituality, a deep understanding of the natural world and how to live in balance with it, and a tradition of honour. These aspects are severely lacking from the remainder of Canadian society,*

Thanks for this reply Terry. But I wonder if this latter point is true. Wouldn't you say that there is a large movement of Canadians who are reassessing the environmental impacts of our actions? This isn't just amongst indigenous people but amongst many people. In my own small world of academia, I'd say this represents the vast majority of people. So it seems to me more like an overlap between the growing environmental values of a large group of Canadians and areas of traditional indigenous knowledge.

[Chris Dummitt](#) • July 22, 2016 at 03:22 pm

*Julie Davis wrote on July 19:*

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Hi Julie - Yes, this has always been a sticking point and somehow we have to get past it - recognizing the different treaty rights on the one hand (and educating other Canadians about what these are) and then ensuring equality and fairness for all Canadians. So far, it's been a tricky problem.

[Terry Petch](#) • July 22, 2016 at 05:49 pm

*Chris Dummitt wrote on July 22:*

*Thanks for this reply Terry. But I wonder if this latter point is true. Wouldn't you say that there is a large movement of Canadians who are reassessing the environmental impacts of our actions? This isn't just amongst indigenous people but amongst many people. In my own small world of academia, I'd say this represents the vast majority of people. So it seems to me more like an overlap between the growing environmental values of a large group of Canadians and areas of traditional indigenous knowledge.*

Fair point Chris, I've just been exposed to a lot of people who are talking the talk, but not walking the walk. I think that if we can establish common ground with First Nations that incorporates their beliefs and values into a broader strategy for the environment and climate change, we will then have the opportunity to develop action plans that include first nations as principal participants in the process. I think that bringing our worlds together to achieve common goals will also achieve the goals of revitalization and reconciliation.

• Post Awarded 5 DR

[Chris Dummitt](#) • July 23, 2016 at 08:45 pm

*Terry Petch wrote on July 22:*

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Hey Terry - This is a good point. Building alliances for similar purposes. I guess my hope is that, almost on the other end, the same is true for economic development. Of course, this is already happening. I just hope that this is seen as reconciliation too.

[John Patton](#) • July 24, 2016 at 10:25 am

*Chris Dummitt wrote on July 23:*

*Hey Terry - This is a good point. Building alliances for similar purposes. I guess my hope is that, almost on the other end, the same is true for economic development. Of course, this is already happening. I just hope that this is seen as reconciliation too.*

Economic development is crucial to the success of reconciliation. The current landscape across the 600+ first nations groups is very uneven. Some bands are wealthy, employed, running their own business, supporting their own schools and cultural centers. Others are isolated, too small and without the resources or industry, so they rely on the rest of Canada for support. Further there is not a single language or cultural tradition across Canada as illustrated by the difficulties in governance (i.e AFN). Fortunately the attitudes of Canadians and their colonial master prior to 1867 have changed enormously. Today we can view the aboriginal communities as equals in intelligence, DNA (except for a few polymorphous). We can treat cultural differences in the same way we treat differences in the multitude of different groups that inhabit the Canadian landscape. Where we have difficulty is in creating economic equality between the aboriginal communities and the rest.

One of the causes is that we separate these communities on the basis of race, which is in it's self racist. No other cultural group is subject to the Indian act, has special treatment under the taxation system and has a large federal department (and budget) and is separate from provincial education, health care and administration. Of course many do opt out of Indian status and become simply Canadian. Until we find a way to evolve away from special status we will not resolve the problem. I would add that every other cultural group in Canada is allowed to keep and practice their heritage providing it dose not conflict with rule of law.

- Post Awarded 50 DR

[John Milloy](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • July 26, 2016 at 01:56 pm

*Chris Dummitt wrote on July 22:*

*Hi Julie - Yes, this has always been a sticking point and somehow we have to get past it - asymmetrical the different treaty rights on the one hand (and educating other Canadians about what these are) and then ensuring equality and fairness for all Canadians. So far, it's been a tricky problem.*

julie ..... no we need to recognize both treaty rights and aboriginal rights for they are core parts of indigenous identities and are basic constructs of the aboriginal/ non-aboriginal relationship and while chris supports this i do not think it has been tricky - what has been the case is a constant denial of those rights by the political leadership and a desire that aboriginal people become simply citizens like all others. so in my view there has not been an attempt to solve the problem --- what is wrong with an asymmetrical structure?

[John Milloy](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • July 26, 2016 at 02:00 pm

*Chris Dummitt wrote on July 23:*

*Hey Terry - This is a good point. Building alliances for similar purposes. I guess my hope is that, almost on the other end, the same is true for economic development. Of course, this is already happening. I just hope that this is seen as reconciliation too.*

chris ... here i go agreeing with you, however can we begin to discuss what we mean by acceptable economic development and by that i do not mean acceptable re the environment alone but in terms of our social goals.

[Chris Dummitt](#) • July 26, 2016 at 02:00 pm

These are some really important points John. My sense is that these are some of the crux issues - the interplay of race (or community) and equality and economic development. I know that some would say that it isn't about race that it's about treaty rights and relationships. I want to find a space to acknowledge these but also to stick to the points you raise about the dangers of thinking through race.

[Chris Dummitt](#) • July 26, 2016 at 02:03 pm

*John Milloy wrote on July 26:*

*chris ... here i go agreeing with you, however can we begin to discuss what we mean by acceptable economic development and by that i do not mean acceptable re the environment alone but in terms of our social goals.*

Hey John - I think what I was getting to here is the way aboriginal peoples can stand in as exemplary environmentalists but then when First Nations go about signing agreements with resource development companies (for e.g.) some environmentalists will see them as traitors to the cause. I come back to Mazlow's hierarchy of needs. Deal with the basic things first.

[John Milloy](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • July 26, 2016 at 02:13 pm

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*Hey John - I think what I was getting to here is the way aboriginal peoples can stand in as exemplary environmentalists but then when First Nations go about signing agreements with resource development companies (for e.g.) some environmentalists will see them as traitors to the cause. I come back to Mazlow's hierarchy of needs. Deal with the basic things first.*

chris .....there has been an example this which we are familiar eg at Temagami. the point there however was that the environmentalists wanted to lock up the resource and throw away the key. the deep water people wanted development appropriate to their values ie respectful of the environment. the town backed the developers; the government failed to provide leadership and thus we got no settlement at all. indeed market factors forced a solution and now town and band have resource access and use plans that satisfy both sides while leaving the old growth largely untouched. it can be done especially if those determining what the needs are are not long distance toronto/calgary etc based corporations.

- Post Awarded 25 DR

[John Milloy](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • July 26, 2016 at 02:21 pm

John .. in fact special status is a legal fact and a key part - in so far as it rests upon unique aboriginal and treaty rights - of aboriginal identities. the wish that we can evolve away from it is the same impulse that has gotten us into the situation we are in now. the desire to reduce aboriginal communities to the status of other ethnic groups for some sense of equality is simply not a starting point ..... certainly it is the farthest thing from reconciliation. that must begin with accepting the difference that is a fundamental reality of the nature of a bi-cultural nation - aboriginal and non-aboriginal.

[Sherry Telford](#) • July 27, 2016 at 12:12 pm

*John Milloy wrote on July 26:*

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I absolutely agree with your posting, John. I think that Canadians commonly perceive treaty rights as "special rights" without the corresponding understanding of their being "pre-existing rights" or rights derived from an agreement allowing settlers to use Indigenous lands. To quote from the Indigenous and Northern Affairs website, "Starting in 1701, in what was to eventually become Canada, the British Crown entered into solemn treaties to encourage peaceful relations between First Nations and non-Aboriginal people. Over the next several centuries, treaties were signed to define, among other things, the respective rights of Aboriginal people and governments to use and enjoy lands that Aboriginal people traditionally occupied." (<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032291/1100100032292>) Unlike other cultural groups who have settled in Canada, Indigenous peoples had existing occupation and use of lands. I am certainly no expert in when it comes to treaties but it seems to me that, given that settler use of lands in Canada past and present is largely the result of treaties, any call for the elimination of Aboriginal/Treaty rights (a.k.a. "special rights") could, and arguably should, then be interpreted as a call to return lands to their original inhabitants. I'm not advocating for or against this — I'm just trying to consider the implications of the common call to end "special" treaty/Aboriginal rights.

[David Newhouse](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • August 4, 2016 at 07:31 am

I want to return to the original question but before I want to comment: Aboriginal rights exists and are evolving . Treaty rights exist and are being recognized. The Indian act exists and all are part of the constitutional landscape and are part of the governance of the country, albeit somewhat reluctantly. The challenge is to recognize the asymmetry wrt aboriginal peoples. We already recognize different rights for different groups and entities in Canadian law so recognizing and acting upon aboriginal and treaty rights should not be a large leap. The challenge is for us to accept aboriginal difference.

The reality is that indigenous cultures are being revitalized through a variety of means: they won't be the old cultures but will be modern versions of historic cultures. This reinterpretation process which is based upon a political consciousness developed in the 70's will continue given strength by reports such as the TRC and RCAP. A new sense of cultural strength has emerged and is changing our institutions. For example, most universities now have created aboriginal divisions that are based on aboriginal cultures; the health care system now incorporates aboriginal treatment modalities and John Borrows argues that the foundation of Canadian law includes both civil and aboriginal law, a remarkable argument not possible half a century ago. One of the challenges is to move beyond our outdated ideas of what aboriginal culture is and see it in the process of change rather than frozen in glass.

It is this strength that is being used to tackle the problems resulting from the colonial legacy.

• Post Awarded 5 DR

[What are the roles and responsibilities of non-Aboriginal in the work of reconciliation?](#)

## Discussion Overview

Reconciliation can't work if non-aboriginal Canadians don't come to the table. For some, this involves having non-aboriginal Canadians rethink of themselves as settlers.

[Sherry Telford](#) • July 20, 2016 at 05:01 pm

As a non-Indigenous settler Canadian I agree that "Reconciliation can't work if non-aboriginal Canadians don't come to the table." I'd qualify it only by saying that it is not enough to come to the table, we need to do more. Canadian history is marked with examples of non-Indigenous Peoples appearing to come to the table — treaties, agreeing to "Indian Control of Indian Education" in the early 70s, the Kelowna Accord, etc.. There have also been proclamations (e.g., the Royal Proclamation of 1763) and commissions (e.g., the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission). Admittedly these are government officials coming to the table not people at the grassroots ... but the ongoing issue has been a lack of follow through in honouring our agreements and denial that this has been or is the case.

In the Preliminary discussion there was a post that asked, "While acknowledging the primary role of non-aboriginals, do you have any thoughts about the roles and responsibilities of aboriginals in moving the work of reconciliation forward. Accommodation seems in our history to have been most effective when there is mutual recognition of the challenges." In my opinion Indigenous Peoples have been more than accommodating already given the disregard of their rights to land, resources, security of self and self-determination. I have no reason to question their recognition of the challenges. So my main thought regarding the roles and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples in moving reconciliation forward is that I need to say thank-you for persisting in bringing the truth forward despite governmental and legal roadblocks and the trauma of remembering. Thank-you for getting the reconciliation process started and for still being open to reconciliation.

As for settler Canadians, I do think that learning about our past and present is key. As Cindy Blackstock posted previously, the <https://fncaringsociety.com/> is an excellent site. I would also encourage people to sign-up for the TRC Reading Challenge at <http://trcreadingchallenge.com/> as it is a supportive and encouraging way to read the timely, emotionally difficult and very informative report. Without this knowledge, ignorance and division persists.

Finally, I believe that acting upon this knowledge by sharing the learning with others is fundamental whether it be done informally among friends and family or in organized public forums such as this. And, when necessary, we need to challenge the uncomfortable and discriminatory misconceptions that exist. If we stay silent, we allow them to persist. Beyond that, I think we all need to take action in the way that best suits our knowledge, skills and situation.

In short — Listen & Learn, Share & Challenge, Act.

- Post Awarded 5 DR

[William Innes](#) • July 27, 2016 at 10:41 am

I couldn't agree more that the aboriginal peoples have been patient and accommodating beyond reason, and deserve the thanks of all Canadians.-- and the scales of justice say that primary role has to lie with non-aboriginal Canadians. However progress lies in the world of today, and my sense of the world is that despite history, progress will be best made when both parties are invested in the future.

- Post Awarded 5 DR

[Jamie Laidlaw](#) • August 1, 2016 at 09:03 pm

I like to find hitherto unknown tales. It is most important to keep on moving and eschew sitting in fortresses. My Scottish Lowland ancestors saw no way out but to leave as the incoming sheep were raising the rental costs of their poor farms. We came to the backwoods of Upper Canada in 1819. Alice Munro has recorded her version of this in, "The View from Castle Rock".

Perhaps all of us have stories of both exile and belonging. My ancestors clumped together to maintain identity. Over time their lives stabilized. It became possible to reach further into the heartache. To reach in and touch another's heartache perhaps this might be the beginning of reconciliation.

- Post Awarded 5 DR

[David Newhouse](#) (Subject Matter Expert) • August 4, 2016 at 08:30 am

Indigenous leaders have often expressed their ideas about the future. Traditional teachings, like the Haudenosaunee seven generations ethical imperative forces one to consider the future and to act in ways that sustain the world for the future. Indigenous leaders during the treaty discussions expressed deep concern about the future. Reports like RCAP and the TRC and the thousands of studies that document Indigenous conditions all contain an implicit view of the future. Indigenous theory derived from the two row wampum is future oriented in considering the nature of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The issue is whether Canadians are listening and are willing to act in ways that help to create a shared future that includes places of dignity and respect for Indigenous peoples.

Reconciliation requires both individual and collective actions by every citizen. at the individual level, it may be as simple as learning the history, learning about the history of the particular place one lives and then advocating for change, for inclusion of Indigenous voices in community decision making; at the collective level, it means discussion groups and government action that are based upon a different attitude towards Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation also requires changes to Canadian institutions to include Indigenous voices in a systemic manner rather than in an ad hoc after the fact manner.