

ON CANADA PROJECT

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Samanta Krishnapillai at Founder@OnCanadaProject.ca

**I am a settler,
and I stand in
solidarity with
the Indigenous
Peoples of the
land now called
Canada.**

I recognize my role as an individual in the work of reconciliation with Indigenous people. I commit to doing the work and to learning more.

www.OnCanadaProject.ca/SettlersTakeAction

The remains of **215 Indigenous children killed in a Residential School in B.C. were found in May 2021**, with thousands more still unaccounted for. Over seven generations of Indigenous people continue to feel indescribable effects of personal and intergenerational trauma to this day. This is not just a historical issue; it is also a current issue.

For all of us in Canada, this moment should be one of national grieving.

We as settlers need to own that; we need to sit with the discomfort of our country's actions. We have to accept that while we might not be directly responsible, we still greatly benefit from colonialism in Canada. We need to understand that we can love this country and know it needs to be better.

Our government has a responsibility to do better, **but so do we**. We can't just mourn; we need to do more, individually as settlers and collectively as a country.

We all have a part to play in Truth & Reconciliation, and since our country isn't stepping up, **then we, the people, must.**

A CLOSER LOOK

REMAINS OF
215 CHILDREN
ARE FOUND AT
BC RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOL



CONTENT WARNING

THIS POST DISCUSSES WRONGFUL
DEATH & ABUSE SUFFERED UNDER
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

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What Happened:

- A mass grave was found on May 27th, 2021 at a residential school in British Columbia that contained the remains of 215 Indigenous children.
- Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation is working with museum specialists and the coroner's office to establish the causes and timings of deaths - which are currently not known.
- The death of these children and the mass grave were never documented by the school's administrators.
- Some of the children found are as young as three years old.

Worth Noting:

The children in residential schools were under the 'care' of school staff, the Churches, and the Federal Government, who are all responsible for killing and abusing the children.

The landmark Truth and Reconciliation Report, released in 2015, called Residential Schools "**a systematic, government-sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples**".

A CHEAT SHEET ON RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS IN CANADA

- Residential schools were initially run by Catholic & Protestant Churches, but by 1880 the federal government fully embraced and funded the Residential School System as part of the Indian Act.
- From 1863 to 1996 over **150 000 children were forcibly removed** from their families and placed in these 'boarding schools'. **That is seven generations of Indigenous people over course of 150 years.** Many children never returned home, and those who did suffer from unimaginable trauma.
- The **explicit intent** was to separate these children from their families and cultures, in an effort to quote: "**kill the Indian in the child.**"
- In 1920, the Indian Act made attendance at Indian Residential Schools compulsory for Treaty-status children between the ages of 7 and 15.
- The schools were often underfunded and overcrowded. The quality of education was substandard. Children were **severely mistreated, degraded, and abused.**
 - The odds of a student dying at these schools were 1 in, 25, which is greater than the 1 in 26 odds of a Canadian soldier dying in WWII.
 - Meanwhile, 1 in 5 students suffered from physical and sexual abuse.

Response from Indigenous People

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSSS) released a statement and wants to see the Federal Government and the Catholic Church be held responsible for this.



Lucas Brown Eyes @LucasBrownEyes ·

Last week it was discovered that they are forcibly putting in IUDs into Native kids under 10, this week they discovered 215 bodies of Native kids under a school. These are issues that are person to me and so many of us.

It's so dangerous just being a Native child.



Don Wilson @heiltsuk_paleo ·

As a son of a residential school survivor, the discovery of 215 children's graves in the Tk'emlups residential school grounds chilled me to the bones. How many more at other RS grounds elsewhere will be found? I just want to hug every FN person I know. [#Allmyrelations](#)



PINE

@PDSBIndigenous

Don't think that the atrocities facing Indigenous children is a thing of the past, they aren't. Inequitable education, continuing racism, the foster care system, inequitable healthcare are all happening. If you're truly outraged about the 215, then fight for our youth now as well

Response from Indigenous People



Bannock Thee Hammock

@BannockHammock

1996. That's when the last residential school closed

I graduated in 1995 from one of them.

Don't tell me or anyone else that this was a long time ago.



Alicia Elliott

@WordsandGuitar

It's important when talking about what happened to the 215 Indigenous children to remember to use active terms instead of passive ones. No "children died at residential school." That's a rhetorical sleight of hand to avoid responsibility. Teachers and administrators killed them.

The government of Canada killed them. The church killed them. Don't forget the deliberate actions taken or deliberately not taken which led to these babies, some as young as 3, never getting home to their parents, families and communities. Assign responsibility for those choices.

Response from the Canadian Government



Justin Trudeau  @JustinTrudeau
Officiel du gouvernement - Canada



The news that remains were found at the former Kamloops residential school breaks my heart - it is a painful reminder of that dark and shameful chapter of our country's history. I am thinking about everyone affected by this distressing news. We are here for you.

It is outrageous for the government to call it "history" considering the lives of Indigenous people in this land we now call Canada, continue to be systemically oppressed, discriminated against, and ignored.

We are still very much in a dark and shameful chapter of our country's history.

There has been no formal apology from the Roman Catholic Church or the British Crown for their role.

Response from Settlers



theBurlyChef
@theBurlyChef

As a white man I have a complicated relationship with Canadian history. But we had a tragedy where we lost sixteen kids a few years ago and the nation thankfully came to a standstill to mourn.

We just found 215 kids in a forgotten grave and I don't see the same pause.



Nora Loreto @NoLore

A normal country would declare several days of mourning after a mass grave of children was discovered.



Naheed Dosani  @NaheedD

Would Canada react differently if the remains of 215 white children were discovered?



Amit Arya
@AmitAryaMD

Welcome to Canada, where the remains of 215 Indigenous children are found at a former Kamloops residential school, but leaders struggle to accept that systemic racism is real and tell us that the use of the word "genocide" is controversial.

Our Thoughts

This story leaves us feeling disgusted and angry with the knowledge that 215 children were **killed and left in a mass grave** at a school that was **designed to systematically** tear them away from their heritage, communities, and way of life.

We're nauseated by the thought that while these 215 remains were found, **there are so many more children who never returned home**, and their families will forever be seeking closure.

We're livid that the mainstream media and several politicians talk about residential schools as if it is part of ancient history.

When, in fact, **the last residential school closed in 1996**, and the effects of residential schools have resulted in **severe personal and intergenerational trauma** still felt to this day.

When, in fact, Canada continues to separate Indigenous children from their families to this day **under the guise of the child welfare/foster system**, where Indigenous children are hugely overrepresented.

Your Next Steps

Yes, the Government, Church and Crown have many steps to take in reconciliation, but so do those of us whose ancestors are not original to this land (aka settlers on this land).

Many of us **were not taught** about the true history of Canada, including our country's treatment of Indigenous people, in school and it might feel too late or overwhelming to learn now.

Many of us who are either recent immigrants or children of recent immigrants may have complicated feelings around this because **we are grateful for the opportunities** Canada affords us and our families.

But here's the thing, we can love Canada **and** acknowledge its flaws & failures. We can love Canada **and** want our country to be better.

During the month of June, the project is going to be taking the time to learn more. **We are hoping you'll join us** because while it may feel daunting, we must recognize that as settlers, **we all have a responsibility to do the work to learn more about, advocate for and reconcile with the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island**, now known as Canada.



www.OnCanadaProject.ca/SettlersTakeAction

Your Next Steps

Learn About Whose Land You Live On

Remember Land Acknowledgements? Take it a step further by actually learning about whose traditional territories you live on. Check out **Native-Land.ca** for an interactive map.

Do Your Research

Now that you know whose traditional territory you live on, the next step is to actually learn about the Indigenous People who were the land's original caretakers. Google them, look up not only their history but what current issues their communities face are and how you could help.

Read the Truth and Reconciliation Report

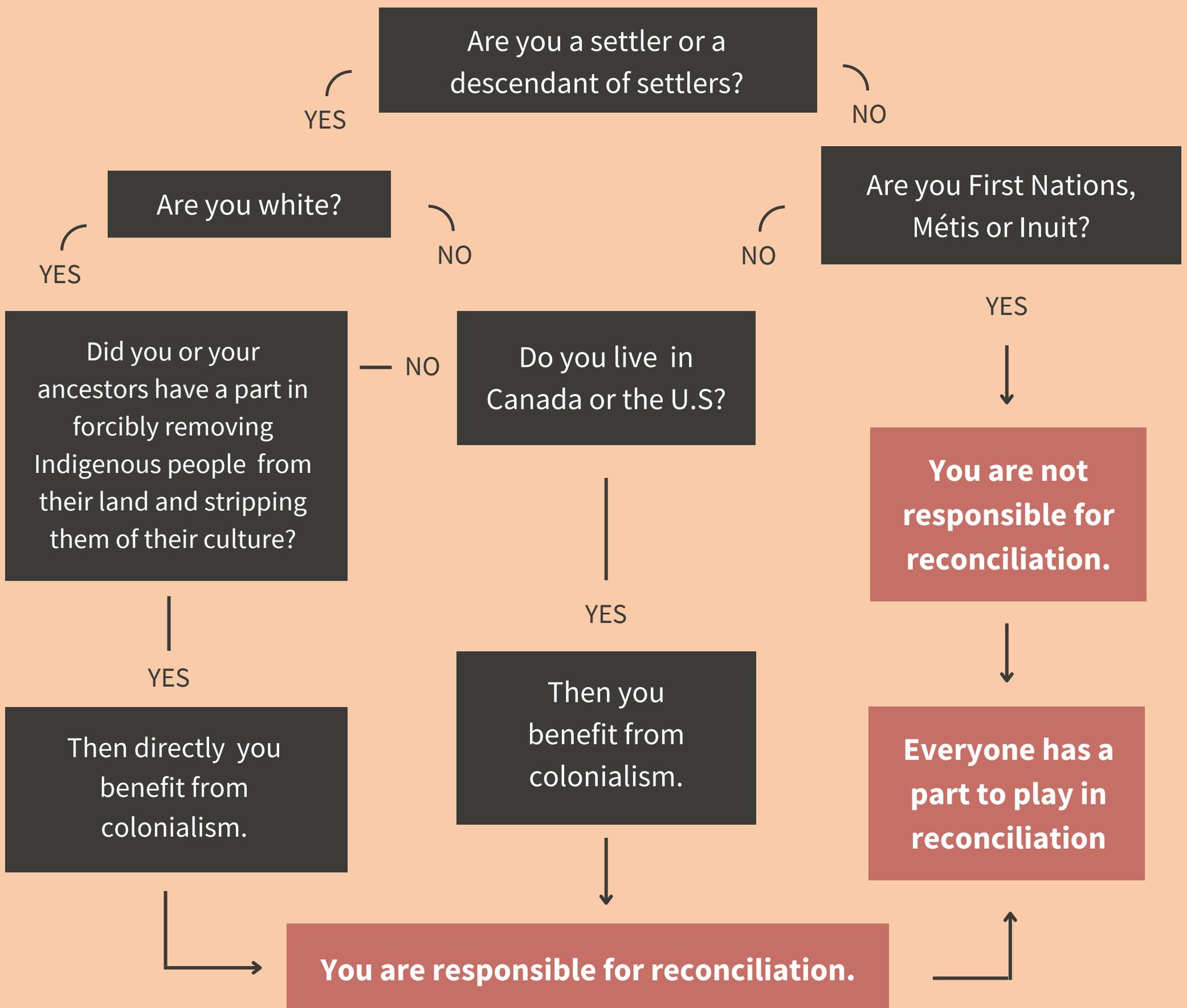
Take a look at the recommendations made by the landmark report released in 2015 and it's **94 calls to actions**.

Connect with your Elected Officials

Tell them to stop talking about how much they care and to actually take action. Ask them directly what they are doing to make a change.

Check out www.OnCanadaProject.ca/SettlersTakeAction for more

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RECONCILIATION?



www.OnCanadaProject.ca/SettlersTakeAction

A CHEAT SHEET

ON RECONCILIATION

Q: What is reconciliation?

A: It's about establishing a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canadian settlers. For this to happen, there must be awareness of the past and acknowledgement of the harm inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.

This means that we must actively work to overcome inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous (settler) communities.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) **have identified principles, calls to action, and concrete solutions** for reconciliation.

These include (to name a few):

- Acknowledging and recognizing that Canadian policies have created many social problems in Indigenous communities;
- Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into Canadian education when teaching settlers about First Peoples;
- Recognizing that as a non-Indigenous person, you are benefiting from a colonial system that deprives Indigenous peoples of their land and rights;
- Listening and learning from Indigenous people - don't offer solutions or try to "empower" Indigenous people;
- Respecting and celebrating Indigenous spaces, knowledge and culture.

www.OnCanadaProject.ca/SettlersTakeAction

A CHEAT SHEET

WHAT IS A SETTLER

Settlers are any of us who live and work on this land that was stolen from Indigenous people. We all have a responsibility to **do the work to learn more about, advocate for, and reconcile with** the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.

It might instinctually feel like settlers in Canada are white people or descendants of colonizers - but that's actually not true. **All non-Indigenous folk** in Canada are responsible for reconciliation because we **benefit** from the fact that this country was colonized.

Colonization might have happened in the past, but the colonial mindset exists within the roots of all our existing systems and structures in this country, which results in present-day ramifications. This is why we as settlers must **stand in solidarity** with the Indigenous people of Canada and work at reconciliation both individually and as a country.

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List of people responsible for reconciling with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada:

- Federal Government
- Catholic and Protestant Churches
- The British Crown
- RCMP
- White Settlers
- Non-Indigenous People of Colour
- Recent Immigrants
- Permanent Residents

In short, if you live in Canada and are not Indigenous, you have a responsibility to do the work to **learn more about, advocate for** and do the work of **reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island**

www.OnCanadaProject.ca/SettlersTakeAction

SETTLERS TAKE ACTION

HOW TO MAKE THIS MOMENT OF MOURNING A MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

7 Ways Non-Indigenous folk can Take Action and Stand in Solidarity with the Indigenous People after 751 more unmarked graves have been found.



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It was announced on Thursday, June 24, 2021, that **751 unmarked graves** were found at **Marieval Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan**, likely **belonging to children**. This government-funded school, like many others, was designed to strip Indigenous children of their languages, cultures, identities and ultimately "take the Indian out of the child."

This brings the recent findings of children buried in unmarked, unreported graves at Residential Schools to **over 1000**. This is compounded by our knowledge of more than **4100 children who died in residential school who have already been identified**, a finding which in itself is unacceptable.

Painfully, this is likely not going to be the last of the findings, and we likely will never be able to account for the thousands of Indigenous children that never came home.

This news alone is horrific, but there is also **ongoing systemic violence** against the Indigenous people of this land that continues **to this present moment**. Indigenous people are still suffering from personal, intergenerational trauma *and* systemic oppression and violence.

We ask that you read this twice. Sit with the discomfort. Feel the weight of it. We cannot collectively work towards reconciliation without individually accepting the Truth.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Report was published **over 6 years ago**, outlining **94 Calls to Action**, meant to advance reconciliation and bridge the systemic gaps faced by Indigenous people, and yet we've seen **minimal to no progress** on it from our governments.

We love this country, but respectfully, we do not trust our elected officials to actually take meaningful action. **We do**, however, **trust and believe in you**, our community. Over this past year, we've built a relationship with each other, and we genuinely believe **the change our country needs lies in our generations, in people like all of us**.

We cannot wait for our leaders to take action. Even the most well-intending leaders are beholden to the **colonial structure** that is the Canadian system of government and a party system that is often focused more on winning re-elections than they are on the people they are being elected to serve.

Standing in solidarity **cannot be performative** in nature. We need to take action and sustain solidarity, **even when it is difficult**, until all 94 Calls to Action from the TRC are met.

We can do better than our history. We can meet the Indigenous people of this land with the compassion and solidarity they deserve. We can do this in a continuous and ongoing way. We can refuse to let our leaders and the media move on from this moment.

Your Next Steps

1. Learn About Whose Land You Live On

Remember Land Acknowledgements? Take it a step further by actually learning about whose traditional territories you live on. Check out **Native-Land.ca** for an interactive map.

2. Do Your Research

Now that you know whose traditional territory you live on, the next step is to actually learn about the Indigenous People who were the land's original caretakers. Google them, look up not only their history but also the current issues their communities face are and how you could help.

3. Read the Truth and Reconciliation Report

Take a look at the recommendations made by the landmark report released in 2015 and its **94 Calls to Action**.

Your Next Steps

4. Connect with your Elected Officials

Tell them to stop talking about how much they care and actually take action on the 94 Calls to Action from the TRC. Ask them directly what they are doing to make a change.

5. Be Public About Your Solidarity

The more non-Indigenous people take action and become vocal about their solidarity with the Indigenous people of this land, the more likely we are to create sustainable change. The more likely we will peak and hold the interest of politicians so that they radically shift the way they take action around this.

Amplify Indigenous voices on your social media, lend your support to the causes and bills they care about, and share your findings from Native-Land.ca. Do more than has been done by those before us.

6. Create Momentum Online

Hashtag **#SettlersTakeAction** to help start a movement around this moment.

Your Next Steps

7. Solidarity Against Canada Day 'Celebrations'

We acknowledge that after the past year, being able to gather on a holiday is a necessary part of our individual well-being. As a result, gathering on July 1st (in a COVID-safe way) may feel necessary.

However, we invite you not to celebrate but rather simply observe Canada Day as we believe this should be a period of national mourning.

We invite you to join us in **wearing black or orange** on July 1st in solidarity with the Every Child Matters campaign and **active resistance** against the typical *'thoughts and prayers'* response from elected officials.

An On Canada Project community member pointed out that, on average, Canadians spend about **\$91 on fireworks** on Canada Day. Regardless of how much you personally spend, if you are financially able to, we invite you to **donate \$91** (or what you can) **to The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS).**

Donate to the IRSSS at: www.irsss.ca



Mental Health Resources

Support is available for anyone affected by the lingering effects of residential schools, and those who are triggered by the latest reports. The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSSS) can be **contacted toll-free at 1-800-721-0066.**



Take Action

Are you a Settler who wants to take action? Want to unlearn some history? Find helpful resources and ways to take action on our website:

www.oncanadaproject.ca/SettlersTakeAction

About Us

The On Canada Project launched on June 1, 2020, to address the gaping inequities in pandemic-related communications.

We've since grown to use our conversational, credible, compassionate and critical lens to talk about a variety of issues facing our country and the people who live in it.

Our goal is simple; we want to make it easy for Millennials and Gen Z in Canada to engage in public discourse, we want to make it easy for them to take action and champion change.

Why? Because we love Canada, but we also know that it's an imperfect nation with many social inequities, and we want it to be better. We do this work because we want to make it easier for folks to practice active allyship and champion change.

The best thing about us? We're a ragtag team of your friendly neighbourhood nerds and active citizens - 170 internet strangers that volunteer, some full-time, to make this project possible. We're grassroots, Millennial and Gen Z led, volunteer-based. Our executive leadership is comprised of a diverse group of women-identifying folk between the ages of 21-31 who have never met in real life. Our project is currently self-funded but accepting financial contributions.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

The On Canada Project project is self-funded and made up entirely of young Millennials and Gen Z volunteers.

If this free resource guide has been helpful and you want to help our team continue to bring a **conversational, critical, credible** and **compassionate** lens to information sharing in Canada, please consider financially contributing to our work.

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[ONCANADAPROJECT.CA/CONTRIBUTE](https://oncanadaproject.ca/contribute)

EVERY DOLLAR HELPS US KEEP DOING THIS WORK.



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