

# RECONCILIATION



In June 2015, the TRC released an Executive Summary of its findings along with 94 “calls to action” regarding reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples. The Commission officially concluded in December 2015 with the publication of a multi-volume report that concluded the school system amounted to “Cultural Genocide”. This term was largely based on the forced assimilation of the Indigenous People across Canada; Highlighted by federal policy meant to “*kill the Indian in the child*”.

## WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) defines reconciliation as the process of “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country.”

Reconciliation is not a new practice. In fact, as you might have already realized, reconciliation is built into the fabric of the treaties in Mi’kma’ki!

We cannot achieve reconciliation without learning about our past and acknowledging the harms that Indigenous peoples have experienced. But we must also take action by working together as a community to understand--and live --our role as treaty people.

What is cultural genocide? “Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things.

Indian Residential Schools operated for more than a hundred years in Canada. With children being taken as young as 4 years old, every aspect of Indigenous families were impacted. Conditions at many of the schools were deplorable, and many children were physically, sexually, emotionally, and spiritually abused. The impacts of all of

this, weighing on one generation after the next, continue to be felt intensely by communities across Canada. Communities are working hard to heal themselves from the deep harm that came from these intergenerational experiences. Residential schools are still new to the learning of many Canadians, which is why it continues to be important to expand the learning of children from their entry into the school system until they leave it.

A startling statistic within the Indian Residential School notes that During World War II 1 in 26 soldiers who served, did not come home to their families. During the Residential school 1 in 25 children who went to these schools did not come home to their families.

The Indian Residential school is just one of many government policies developed to assimilate the Indigenous people of Canada. Other federal laws prevented Indigenous peoples from leaving their reserves, gathering to discuss their rights, going to universities in Canada, or practicing cultural events like dances and songs.

Reconciliation is now part of the mandate of Treaty Education Nova Scotia, where the Provincial government and Mi’kmaq communities agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding that supports and advocates for Treaty Education in every school, every grade, and every class across Nova Scotia, since 2015.

Treaty Education creates opportunities for Nova Scotians to learn about the Mi’kmaq, their inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights, and our shared history. It promotes an understanding of the Peace and Friendship treaties as historical and living documents.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Legacy of Hope:** <http://legacyofhope.ca/>
- **Where Are The Children:** <http://wherearethekid-dren.ca/en/>
- **Mi’kma’wey Debert Cultural Centre:** <http://www.mikmaweydebert.ca/home/sharing-our-stories/indian-residential-schools-legacy-project/>