

News and Resources
Joint Truth and Reconciliation Action Group
December 2023

“If you don't like the news, go out and create some of your own.” - Wes Nisker

Welcome to the December news message from the Joint Truth and Reconciliation Action Group (JTRAG). This issue focuses particularly on resources and channels you can use “to create some good news of your own”.

1. Lunch and Learn All Our Relations Land Trust Dec 5 12:45 for 1:00 p.m.

All Our Relations Land Trust

LUNCH AND LEARN, Tuesday, December 5

Register Now to get the meeting link: [Lunch&Learn: All Our Relations–Land Trusts](#)

Our guest speaker, Dr. Kaitlyn Patterson will describe the final stage of making a dream come true. Seven years ago, and deeply moved by the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, members of Faith United Church dreamed of returning the land on 15 Highway to the Indigenous community. Kaitlyn will describe one of the last big steps – the creation of the All Our Relations Land Trust. You will want to hear how far-reaching this step is going to be, and to celebrate the beginning of opportunities in this community, a community that includes more than humans. A dream becoming reality!

Register now for the December 5 event (see link below). You'll then receive an email with the Zoom link needed to join the meeting. You'll also get a reminder on the morning of the event itself. Share with anyone you feel might be interested and don't hesitate to contact Bill Egnatoff if you have any questions <egnatoff@kingston.net>.

2. First Nations Child and Family Caring Society
(<https://fncaringsociety.com/>)

JTRAG makes an annual contribution to FNCFCS. It has been at the forefront of the recent agreement with the federal government to compensate First Nations children and families who were harmed by discriminatory underfunding of services for Indigenous children and those impacted by the federal government's narrow definition of Jordan's Principle. Here's some more background on FNCFCS.

Our History: Building on the interest of First Nations child and family services leaders to create a national networking organization, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (the Caring Society) was developed at the Squamish First Nation in 1998 at a national meeting of First Nations child and family service agencies. Meeting delegates agreed that a national nonprofit organization was required to provide research, policy, professional development and networking to support First Nations child and family service agencies in caring for First Nations children, youth and families. An interim board was elected and the plan was approved at a second national meeting at Kingsclear First Nation in 1999.

Today: The Caring Society works to ensure the safety and well-being of First Nations youth and their families through education initiatives, public policy campaigns and providing quality resources to support communities.

Using a reconciliation framework that addresses contemporary hardships for Indigenous families in ways that uplift all Canadians, the Caring Society champions culturally based equity for First Nations children and their families so that they can grow up safely at home, be healthy, achieve their dreams, celebrate their languages and culture and be proud of who they are. The Caring Society proudly works with our partners in Canada and around the world to promote the rights of Indigenous children.

3. Statement from the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The statement was released on the 16th anniversary of the United Nations adopting the Declaration. “Sixteen years after the adoption of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UN Declaration\)](#), much more needs to be done to bring these vital human rights standards to life.” Read the full statement: <https://QuakerService.ca/UNDeclaration16>

4. Righting Relations (<https://rightingrelations.org/>)

Our Story: Righting Relations was established in 2015 by the Catherine Donnelly Foundation in response to a demonstrated need for improved supports, resources, and opportunities for capacity building by educators and organizers for social change. Our work centres around Indigenous, immigrant and refugee, and low-income populations - and all of the diversity that these groups encompass - and centering lived experiences to guide and define systemic transformation is key to our mandate.

Over the past five years, we built three key hubs across the country to create regional networks and localized connections that work together to influence change, and in 2020, the network formalized as an autonomous organization, Righting Relations Canada.

Our Oath to Turtle Island: In recognition of the importance of acknowledging that we gather on stolen land, Righting Relations has collaboratively developed an Oath to Turtle Island that outlines our commitment to this land and the peoples who have been its caretakers and defenders for generations.

5. True North Aid | Fall Updates (info@truenorthaid.ca)

Check out the True North Aid fall update below and let us know what you think of their work. In what ways does TNA's work advance truth and reconciliation? What else do we need to be doing?



Project Highlights

Back-To-School 2023

Thank you to everyone who made a donation or collected supplies for this year's "Back-to-School Drive," prioritizing Indigenous students' education and making it our biggest year yet.

True North Aid was able to deliver more backpacks with school supplies than ever before - 2,500 went out to 12 communities across northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The demand for this support continues to grow over time, so please keep us in mind for next year's drive!

Check out our Outreach Manager, Amanda Amesse, on APTN talking about the program [here!](#)



Rollup for The North Wraps Up

True North Aid's Annual [Rollup for the North](#) program delivered 23 pallets of wheelchairs to the most northern communities of Manitoba, with 105 more being prepared to ship in the near future. Thank you to all who contributed towards the gift of mobility!



All Nations Paddles Up Completes Their Annual Tribal Journey



For the second year in a row, True North Aid was proud to support a special cultural reclamation program, [All Nations Paddles Up](#), for their annual tribal journey along the Pacific coasts of British Columbia and Washington State. Youth engaged in ancient nation-to-nation protocol, instilling a sense of pride and purpose throughout their travels.

From Jodi and Michelle, coordinators for All Nations Paddles Up:

“Following the training day, as the canoes depart for the first community that will welcome us, it is amazing to watch the progress of each participant as they become more self-aware, more connected to the others they are travelling with, and more engaged with everyone. There is a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride as we [were] called to shore by the host nation - there is nothing more rewarding than hearing these young pullers recount the day to those standing waiting for our arrival. It is truly amazing.”



This past summer, True North Aid was so excited to support [Wabasca-Desmarais](#) in northern Alberta with their “Reconnecting Our Spirit” Events, bringing people together through cultural teachings and workshops. This also included supporting Indigenous youth in partaking in [N’we Jinan](#) workshops, where youth wrote and recorded their own song, and then were featured in a music video for it. Watch the video above!

Upcoming Projects

Winter Clothing Shipments

True North Aid is preparing shipments of over 800 winter coats with accessories to remote communities across Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nunavut and Ontario this month. Thank you to Brador Fabrics and Capital Movers, along with community champions who will make this possible!

Aandije - Chicken Coops Program

We are always thrilled to announce food security projects that promote self-determination. Working with Treaty #3 and the [Anishinaabeg of Kabapikotawangag Resource Council](#), True North Aid is providing support to communities to begin building and taking care of their own flocks of egg-laying chickens. We look forward to sharing with you in the future the lasting, positive impact this will have on the communities that can take advantage of this resource.

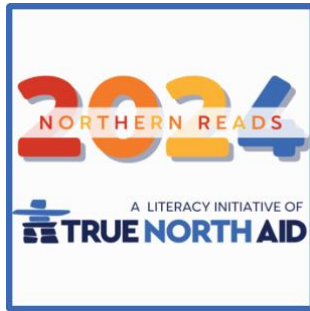
Are you living in a remote community and have an idea or project that you'd like to start or support? Reach out to our Outreach Manager, Amanda Amesse, by email at amanda@truenorthaid.ca or fill out this [form](#).

Upcoming True North Aid Events



Tuesday Evenings starting January 9th, 2024 at 7pm EST (virtual)

True North Aid will host our Settler Discussion Series once a week for four weeks beginning Tuesday, January 9th. In 4 parts we present the truth about Canada's historical and current relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people by addressing the topics of Privilege, Land, Residential Schools, and Allyship in a factual way. Each session is approx. 1 – 1.5 hours long. [Learn more/Register](#)



Northern Reads Literary Event Returns in 2024!

We are excited to enter our 4th Annual ***Northern Reads*** literacy event, partnering with GoodMinds book wholesaler for the second year! Once again, Canadians will be called upon to satisfy the book wish list of a northern and remote community literacy program by purchasing a gift card via GoodMinds and donating it back to True North Aid. And get ready to attend our virtual Indigenous Authors Series that runs one evening each week in February!

Good Ally Program Spotlight

Good Ally Program (GAP) is designed to encourage meaningful collaboration between True North Aid and like-minded Canadians who desire to move forward together in a spirit of reconciliation.

Good Ally partners put learning into action by volunteering with our organization as opportunities become available and/or fundraise toward practical humanitarian initiatives that bring attention to the good work of True North Aid.

Reconciliation Walk 2023 Volunteers



Volunteers gather to hear from Cidalia, a member of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation at Kortright Centre for Conservation, Vaughn, ON, September 29th.

"What an amazing day today! As a volunteer I thoroughly enjoyed today's event. I loved working with the other volunteers. Thank you for this opportunity. The feedback I got from people who experienced the walk was exactly what I expected – they were moved, they learned a lot, it was impactful, it made them want to pursue more information. People said it was very well done and were thankful for the experience. I continue to be impressed with True North Aids' education opportunities around Reconciliation and I promote it in the communities/organizations that I am apart of. Thank you for the work you are doing." Denise - Reconciliation Walk Volunteer 2023

True North Aid is incredibly grateful to the 60+ volunteers who volunteered in a variety of capacities at this year's Reconciliation Walk on September 29 & 30 in honour of Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Originating in Kingston, ON, this year the Walk was also hosted in Vaughn, ON at the Kortright Centre for Conservation, and in Waterloo, ON at Laurel Creek Nature Centre. The Walk was featured on local municipal media platforms inviting community participation. (See article below.)

Encouraged by Indigenous voices who call all Canadians to commit to self-educate, this annual rain or shine event seeks to tell the truth about the legacy of the residential school system in Canada.

We are looking to expand this event to more parts of the country. Would you commit to hosting the Reconciliation Walk in your community next year? Email Katie at gap@truenorthaid.ca for more information.



True North Aid in the News



'Education is the first step': True North Reconciliation Walk comes to Waterloo

The True North Reconciliation Walk gave locals a chance to reflect and remember in a tranquil environment.

SAVE THE DATE | November 28, 2023



For over 11 years, True North Aid has been collaborating with northern and remote Indigenous communities who reach out to us to support their goals and priorities. This [#GivingTuesday](#), we are kicking off our Holiday Campaign and invite you to *Set It In Stone* - your opportunity to make a commitment to Indigenous self-determination and community-led work by making a donation to True North Aid's General Fund. Be a part of the world's largest generosity movement on November 28th!

For Donor Relations and Corporate Partnership inquiries, please reach out to Christine in Regina, SK at christine@truenorthaid.ca or call [306-517-2431](tel:306-517-2431).



Connect with us

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6. JTRAG Facts

As regular readers, we thought you might like to know a bit more about the Joint Truth and Reconciliation Action Group (JTRAG). Here are some key facts:

- Started in 2017
- Three member congregations (Sydenham Street, Chalmers, Faith).
- Two partnering congregations (Edith Rankin and St Mark's Lutheran).
- We welcome new individuals and congregations to join.
- 32 programs since inception.
- 250-300 people engaged annually.
- Monthly self-education sessions for members.
- Free lending library with 100 volumes.
- E-News and Resources published 6 times a year since 2021.
- Financial support annually to Walking the Path of Peace and First Nations Child and Family Society.

7. A Reflection Journal by Kip Ip

Kip Ip, an immigrant to Canada and a member of Sydenham Street United Church offers this reflection on the Indian Residential School system. He invites your comments and feedback.

Introduction: The Indian Residential School system in Canada is a significant chapter in the nation's history, leaving deep scars on Indigenous communities. This reflective journal aims to explore this complex issue, shedding light on its historical context, the policies that governed these institutions, and the profound social and cultural impacts they had. As someone deeply moved by this topic, I will also share my reflections and insights. The journal concludes with a discussion on contemporary challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for fostering a more equitable future.

Historical Background: The Indian Residential School system was established in the early 19th century as a collaborative effort between the Canadian government and Christian churches. The objective was to assimilate Indigenous children into mainstream Euro-Canadian culture. The Mohawk Institute Residential School in Brantford, Ontario, serves as a poignant example of these institutions, having operated from 1828 until 1970.

Reasons for Enforced Indigenous Assimilation: The enforced assimilation of Indigenous peoples was driven by the belief that Euro-Canadian culture was superior and that Indigenous cultures were obstacles to progress. This belief was deeply rooted in colonial attitudes and was used to justify policies that aimed to eradicate Indigenous cultural identities, traditions, languages, and beliefs.

Mechanism for Assimilation: The Role of Residential Schools: Residential schools were seen as an effective tool for achieving this objective. By isolating Indigenous children from their families and cultural environments, these institutions could more effectively indoctrinate them into Euro-Canadian and Christian ways of life.

Involvement of Catholic Organizations: Roman Catholic missionary organizations ran the majority of these schools. These organizations saw their mission as educational and religious conversion, further solidifying the children's detachment from their original cultures.

Policies and Practices: The policies governing these schools were intentionally designed to dismantle Indigenous cultures. Children were forcibly removed from their families and placed into these institutions, often for the entire year. The curriculum focused on Euro-Canadian values and Christianity, while discipline measures were often severe and dehumanizing.

Social and Cultural Impact: The Residential School system has had far-reaching effects on Indigenous communities. It led to the systematic destruction of Indigenous languages, spiritual practices, and social ties. This has resulted in enduring issues such as broken families, loss of cultural identity, and trauma that affects multiple generations. The impact of these schools goes beyond poor education; they have caused significant harm to Indigenous communities.

Failure of Canadian Assimilation Policies: Despite the harsh enforcement of assimilation policies, they were met with steadfast resistance from Indigenous communities. These policies failed in their primary objectives and left a painful legacy that continues to resonate today. The failure of these policies underscores the resilience of Indigenous cultures and the detrimental effects of forced assimilation.

Transition to Indigenous Self-Determination: Since the late 1960s, Canada has started to change its approach from forced assimilation towards fostering self-determination among Indigenous communities. This shift represents a significant step towards recognizing the rights and autonomy of Indigenous peoples. However, the historical trauma inflicted by past policies continues to affect present and future generations.

Personal Reflections: Learning about the Residential School system has been a deeply moving experience for me. It has not only altered my perception of Canadian history but also highlighted the urgent need for societal reform to address past injustices. This knowledge has ignited a desire within me to educate myself and others about this important issue.

Contemporary Challenges: The effects of the Residential School system are still being felt today. Ongoing debates exist about reparations, legal accountability, and how best to address the historical injustices inflicted upon Indigenous communities. Institutions like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada play a crucial role in keeping these issues at the forefront of national consciousness.

Efforts towards reconciliation involve various initiatives, such as Truth and Reconciliation Day. These efforts aim to bridge the divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. However, true reconciliation is a complex process that requires continuous effort from all stakeholders involved.

Lessons to Be Learned: The Residential School system serves as a stark reminder of the devastating impact of cultural insensitivity and forced assimilation. Recognizing these past wrongs is vital for collective healing and building a more inclusive future. The lessons learned from this history can guide us in avoiding similar mistakes in the future.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the Indian Residential School system has had a deeply troubling impact on Indigenous communities in Canada. Recognizing and understanding this history is a prerequisite for fostering empathy, justice, and meaningful reconciliation.

Recommendations for Future Actions

1. Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by systemic inequalities. These inequalities need to be acknowledged and addressed in order to ensure equal

opportunities for all.

2. Systemic racism is a pervasive issue faced by Indigenous populations. A comprehensive strategy at the national level is needed to actively challenge and combat this form of discrimination.
3. The justice system plays a significant role in perpetuating systemic racism. Substantial changes within this system are necessary to proactively counter systemic racism and promote justice for Indigenous communities.
4. Poverty is a pressing issue that disproportionately affects Indigenous communities. Strategies such as implementing a guaranteed basic income can help reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for these communities.
5. Full compliance with legal frameworks like Jordan's Principle and the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is crucial.
 - Jordan's Principle ensures that all First Nations children living in Canada can access the products, services, and support they need when they need them. It is a child-first principle used in public policy and administration in Canada. It is designed to address gaps in government-funded services and discrimination that can result in delay, disruption, or denial of services to First Nations children.
 - The TRC makes 94 calls to action. These calls to action speak to all sectors of Canadian society. They aim to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.

By incorporating these lessons into our actions moving forward, we can work towards creating a more equitable future for all Canadians. REFERENCES¹

Comments/Suggestions

We especially welcome stories, personal reflections and/or resources to share. Please send your ideas and feedback to Michael Cooke at mcooke253@gmail.com.

¹References

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
2. Government of Canada. (2019). Indigenous Services Canada: Jordan's Principle.
3. Canadian Association of Social Workers. (2020). Addressing Inequalities in Indigenous Communities: Position Statement.