

# News and Resources: March 2025 Joint Truth and Reconciliation Working Group

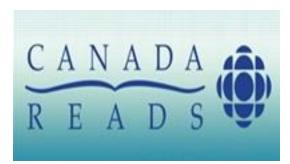
#### JTRAG 2ndAnnual Pancake Supper raises \$3K for All Our Relations Land Trust

Thank you to all the JTRAG supporters who organized and came to the second annual Pancake Supper on Tuesday March 4 in support of All Our Relations Land Trust (aorlt.ca) It was a wonderful gathering of allies of the Land Trust, a great opportunity for fellowship, conversation and food, for all ages. A special thanks to Chalmers United Church for hosting this event. The monies raised will fund a transportation fund to help people, especially youth, get to the land and participate in the programs. We look forward to next year's event and encourage readers to think about organizing similar events in your community. If you build it, they will come!

A Two-Spirit Journey by Ma-Nee Chacaby, with Mary Louisa Plummer, has been voted Canada's must-read book for 2025.

Over four days of lively debate, moderated by nine-time host Ali Hassan, five

celebrity panellists championed their chosen Canadian books that speak to the theme, 'One Book to Change the Narrative.' Each day of the competition, one book was eliminated by the panellists until Chacaby's acclaimed book was crowned the winner, in a broadcast that was available on CBC Radio, CBC TV, CBC Listen, CBC Gem, CBCBooks.ca, and YouTube. The winning book's champion is Shayla Stonechild, a Mètis and Nehiyaw Iskwew (Plains Cree Woman) from



Muscowpetung First Nations. She is a successful podcaster and wellness advocate. In her memoir, A Two-Spirit Journey, Ma-Nee Chacaby, an Ojibwa-Cree lesbian who grew up in a remote northern Ontario community, tells the story of how she overcame experiences with abuse and alcohol addiction to become a counsellor and lead Thunder Bay's first gay pride parade.

"'A Two-Spirit Journey' winning Canada Reads is an unexpected and beautiful gift. Mary and I want to thank everyone who joined us on this journey and made it possible, especially our friends and loved ones, and the wonderful staff of the University of Manitoba Press and Canada Reads. We really appreciate all of the readers and the other writers that also joined us on this journey. Most of all we are grateful to Shayla Stonechild for choosing the book and championing it so well! We hope the book will inspire other people to tell their stories, especially First Nations elders who have so much to share. I encourage everybody to just enjoy your life today and remember to love yourself."

#### Trudeau made reconciliation an issue for all (The Globe and Mail 29 Mar 2025)

This Globe editorial argues that while one of the biggest issues in this federal Selection campaign will be the future of Canada's historic relationship with the U.S. Canadians must not lose sight of an even older relationship: the nation-to-nation one with Indigenous peoples. Justin Trudeau described that relationship as the most important one to Canada. The editorial says that Mr. Trudeau contributed more to reconciliation than any prime minister in Canada's history. The article cites these key actions:

- Recognition of Aboriginal title over most of the islands of Haida Gwaii in B.C.
- A \$8.5billion deal with 133 Ontario First Nations to reform child and family services after the Assembly of First Nations rejected a nationwide \$47.8-billion offer last fall.
- A \$570-million compensation agreement with Cumberland House Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan for unfulfilled treaty benefits
- A self-government agreement for the Musqueam Indian Band in B.C., among others.
- In 2016, the government launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- A devolution agreement gave Nunavut more control over its own resources.
- 147 long-term drinking-water advisories were lifted.

#### On the other hand, it notes:

- Though Mr. Trudeau vowed to end all advisories altogether by 2020, 35 remain in 33 communities, after many missed deadlines.
- The Liberals did not take responsibility, with Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu claiming in 2023 that they were simply unaware of the magnitude of the challenges.
- The vast majority of the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action remain unfulfilled; the ones that have been achieved were predominantly low-hanging fruit, such as the creation of a National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.
- A 2018 promise to end tuberculosis among the Inuit by 2030 is well off track.
- His government spent too long fighting residential school survivors and advocates for First Nations children in court.
- Bill C-61, the First Nations Clean Water Act, will die on the order paper because Mr. Trudeau prorogued Parliament for a Liberal leadership race.

The editorial concludes by saying that Trudeau's impact on the politics of the issue may be his most enduring legacy. Policy on achieving reconciliation has now become an expectation for any mainstream federal campaign in Canada. Liberal Leader Mark Carney has yet to detail specific policy on reconciliation, but he has announced \$253M of infrastructure investments in the North and has called a nationwide child-welfare deal a "priority." Mr. Trudeau deserves credit for moving Canada forward on the long path to reconciliation more than any prime minister before him. But in the campaign ahead, and in the many years to come, Canadians must not lose sight of the significant work that still lies ahead.



# North of North is a Canadian comedy television series that premiered on CBC, APTN, and Netflix in 2025.

Siaja, a young <u>Inuk</u> mother in the small fictional <u>Arctic</u> community of Ice Cove who tries to reinvent herself after a spontaneous and extremely public exit from her marriage with the town's golden boy in a tiny, tight-knit Arctic town. She must navigate the unpredictable, and often hilarious, highs and lows that come with relationships, motherhood, a new job, and finding her own way. Watch on CBC GEM.

#### Tearfund's "Bring back the Buffalo Project

Partnering with an Indigenous ministry called Loko Koa, the project's aim is to facilitate the return of the buffalo to the traditional lands of the Prairies' First Nations. The goal of this project will be to build sustainable buffalo herds on First Nations' land. It will help restore cultural identity and provide food for the participating nations. For more details, see https://tearfund.ca/bringbackthebuffalo/



#### **Hiawatha First Nation Pow-Wow**





# Kairos offers a Jubilee Book Study - *The Serviceberry; Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

#### 3 Tuesdays from 7pm to 8:30pm EDT - April 22, 29 and May 6



Dive into a transformative journey with our book study on The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World by Robin Wall Kimmerer. This engaging series intersects with the themes of Jubilee 2025, exploring the profound connections between economy, ecological debt, and Indigenous traditions. From the gift economy to the principles of "storing our meat in the bellies of our brothers," we will delve into alternative economic models that promote sustainability and community. With Indigenous guest speakers, we will examine how these concepts resonate within the Canadian context, addressing contemporary issues such as tariffs and economic justice. Let's learn together how to foster a more equitable and reciprocal relationship with the land and each other.

Register Now



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# LodgePole Arts Alliance

LodgePole Arts Alliance is a charitable not-for-profit governed by an Indigenous Council from across Canada and hosts virtual monthly meetings for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous supporters.

#### **Upcoming Events**

<u>Kingston Canadian Film</u> <u>Festival</u> - February 26 -March 2, 2025

Come find our booth!

<u>March of the Museums</u> with Kingston & Area Association of Museums, Art Galleries & Historic Sites - March 11 - 13, 2025

Make and take home some seed balls!

National Indigenous Presenters Gathering -October 6 - October 9, 2025

#### Stay in Touch!



www.facebook.com/LodgePoleArtsAlliance



www.instagram.com/lodgepoleartsalliance



shekon.aanii@lodgepolearts.ca



(613) 484-9019



### **Community & Storytelling**

Our mission is to build an Indigenous-owned, operated, programmed and animated land-based cultural creative centre on the Eastern edge of the Dish with One Spoon territories (Frontenac biosphere).

The centre will serve as a creative industries incubator for local to international Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and culture sector entrepreneurs.

LodgePole Arts will program arts and culture workshops, teaching sessions, conferences, festivals and performances.

We are currently pursuing the purchase of Lemoine Point Farm in the Collin's Bay region of Katarokwi (Kingston) to be the future home of the cultural creative centre.



## Listen to Jesse Wente's take, from an Indigenous worldview, on the current hostilities with America...

Rev. Catherine Elsdon encourages you to listen and think about what it means to feel betrayed by treaty partners, to foster cultural resistance and resilience, and more.... There is a shorter version for the radio edit, and a longer version available online as well. https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-1349-commotion-with-elamin-abdelmahmoud/clip/16126285-boycotting-america-meaning-cultural-resistance-canada



#### In Canada, education holds the key to reconciliation

Read this article by Murray Sinclair (Globe and Mail September 20, 2024) shortly before his death.

When I was 12, my family gave me a set of encyclopedias called The Book of Knowledge – alphabetized tomes containing hundreds of topics. For a young Indigenous boy growing up poor on the Red River in Manitoba, I was fascinated by the information about civilizations around the world. I learned about foreign cultures, world wars and different religions. I recall being particularly interested in what was going on in the Middle East and Africa at the time.

I remember, too, searching for me. I sort of found something in the book marked with an "I," in a short section titled "Indians." It was fraught with stereotypical photographs and vague, general information about tribes – mostly those in the United States. Frankly, the section wasn't really about Indians at all, but how they were footnotes in the great American story of conquest for land and power.

In no other volume was there mention of anyone who resembled me, my home, or the people and history that surrounded me. I recall reading the sections about the history of the First World War and the Second World War, because my father, uncle and brother all enlisted. I looked in the section on Catholicism – my grandmother and I faithfully attended mass many times throughout the week (alongside a virtual all-Indigenous congregation). But still nothing. I read the entirety of a very long (and boring) section on Canada. There was no mention of Indigenous peoples at all.

My experience in the classroom was not much different. I did very well in school and skipped several grades. I also excelled at athletics (winning Athlete of the Year in Grade 12 – still my greatest achievement). But what I learned in the classroom about Indigenous peoples, their histories and contributions to Canada, was the same as what I'd found in the pages of those encyclopedias: virtually nothing.

I felt that, despite my success, my education lacked relevance. In fact, I would say my success came at a price because in every part of my school experience, I learned that Indigenous peoples – and I, as a result – were irrelevant. I was taught to believe in the inferiority of Indigenous people and in the inherent superiority of white European civilization. In order to get the grades that I did, I was compelled to repeat that unconscious mantra.

The education system of my youth did not teach us to respect Indigenous people because it never told us anything about the Indigenous presence in this country, or the humanity of Indigenous people. In public schools, we were all educated to be the same, and if we rebelled, resisted or rejected that process, we were weeded out – or we weeded ourselves out. Of the Indigenous students I started grade school with, few graduated from high school. Even my brother and sister dropped out.

Though I and others succeeded in that system, it was not without cost to our own humanity, and our sense of self-respect. Schooling for Indigenous students was, and in many ways still is, traumatic, leading to the legacies Indigenous communities still grapple with today.

I grew up in an area just north of the city of Selkirk, Man., which was originally the southern part of our reserve community called St. Peter's. In 1907, at the encouragement of local farmers and civic officials, the government of Canada unjustly and illegally forced our community to leave and move a few hundred kilometres north to what is now Peguis First Nation. The land was then given to farmers and new settlers while hundreds of our families had to give up everything they spent generations building. They had to start life anew.

My grandfather tried to make a living in our new northern home for a short while before returning, settling our family on a riverbank plot he was able to buy because he was a fisherman and boat builder. Growing up, I heard whispers of this story, but it was only once I became a lawyer that I realized the injustice, violence and genocide of it all.

Reflecting back, virtually the entirety of my "learning" experience – not just educationally, but institutionally – was designed to keep me from knowing Indigenous peoples, histories and cultures. What I did learn, if anything, was incorrect, biased and downright harmful. As I became a lawyer, judge and eventually a Canadian senator, I learned that it wasn't just me who was raised in ignorance; it was every single Canadian as well.

A chronic, national and systematic erasure of Indigenous peoples has sanitized versions of Canadian colonization and history and has led to a profound misunderstanding of the contributions Indigenous cultures and communities have made to Canada from the past into today. Education has perpetrated some of the worst harm in our national history, creating damaging public attitudes and facilitating brutal, divisive policies. For instance, mainstream Canadians see the dysfunction that exists in many Indigenous communities, but have no idea how that happened, what caused it, or how governments, taxpayers and laws contributed to that reality through such actions and policies as residential schools. Indigenous peoples have experienced the worst parts of these actions, but Canadians have also been hurt by being coerced, manipulated and ultimately misled by the idea that Canada has travelled a just, inclusive and civilized path.

At the same time, if education got us into this mess, it will be education that will get us out of it. Education holds the key to reconciliation. All students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, need to learn that the history of this country did not begin in 1534, or even with the arrival of Vikings centuries earlier. They need to learn about the Indigenous nations and governments that Europeans met; about their rich linguistic and cultural heritage; and about what they felt and thought as they dealt with such historic figures as Champlain,

LaVerendrye and the representatives of the Hudson's Bay Company. They need to learn why they negotiated treaties and that they negotiated them with purpose and integrity and in good faith. They need to learn why Indigenous leaders and elders now fight so hard to defend those poorly worded treaties, and why they have been ignored by consecutive generations of Canadian settlers and governments. They need to learn about what it means to live, work and thrive alongside Indigenous nations.

All children need to know their personal story – and particularly how every single one of us, Indigenous and Canadians, are implicated in each other's lives. We all need to know the stories of our families, our parents and our grandparents, our direct and indirect ancestors, and our real and mythological villains and heroes. The educational systems of this country bear a large share of the responsibility for the current state of affairs – but can also fix what has been broken.

What our education systems need to do is this: They must commit to teaching Indigenous and Canadian children – our children – how to speak respectfully to and about each other in the future. It begins with teaching them the truth about our history. Knowing what happened in the past – and how it continues to shape the present day – will lead to understanding. Understanding leads to respect. Reconciliation is about respect.

We also must not lose sight of the importance of ensuring that, firstly, Indigenous children are given an opportunity to develop their self-respect. That, of course, must come first because reconciliation can never take place without justice. I am pleased to see so many schools and their brave teachers, administrators and parents pick up this mantra and start to raise what is quickly becoming the most culturally competent and capable generation in history in this country.

A large part of this educational journey includes the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation on Sept. 30. On this day, all of us have an opportunity to build relationships with each other – and most importantly with the survivors of Canada's residential school system. Without the advocacy and determination of survivors, we would not have a day to reflect and walk together – or even a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. When this day was first envisioned, it was intended to be a day of listening, learning and discussion – for Canadians to take a day out of their lives to engage in a process of change. Then, afterward, to take their thoughts and desired actions and implement them for the rest of the year – because reconciliation is not a one-day affair.

It will likely take as many generations as it took to create the damage in the first place to reverse, heal and build a country we can all be proud of. Reconciliation begins for each of us with one very simple concept – a goal that Indigenous peoples have always sought with newcomers: I want to be your friend, and I want you to be mine. When you need me, I'll have your back, and when I need you, you'll have mine. This was an idea reflected in the events at first contact, in the treaties, and occurs now in days like the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. It is a message simple to hear but deeply significant and complicated, and it will take a lot of work to implement it fully.

Yes, our country's history is complicated and it is not always easy to review, but no one makes it better by ignoring it or glossing over it; you make it better by helping one another,

by learning and unlearning, and by resolving to be better. We must not abandon each other on this journey, no matter how hard it is; we need each other more than ever in the days ahead as climate change, conflict over economies and resources and global wars will challenge us more than ever. We are going to be in this country together for a long time. My ancestors knew that. But my ancestors believed, as do I, that we can walk together on this road, friends forever, without surrendering our sense of self.

Quite frankly, Canada's treatment of <u>Indigenous peoples</u> is nothing in which this country can take any pride. But, I sense that we are on the cusp of something special as this country begins to come to terms with our history, and all of us – particularly young people, who desire and want change and are evoking it more than ever – are on the leading edge of that. Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and the 94 Calls to Action in 2015, I have been inspired by the public reaction to what we said, and I have been inspired by the efforts of many segments of society to make things better.

I hope that all of us realize that we are not just the bearers of the burdens of history, but also the beneficiaries of our new awareness. We are not just inheriting the painful legacy of the past, but inheriting the awareness and knowledge of why and how things happened and, thus, the responsibility to do something about it. Armed with that knowledge, I and so many of our ancestors now look to you to continue the conversation of reconciliation that we have begun. We are looking to Canadians to join with their Indigenous relations and move this country of ours into a new and truthful sense of itself – to shed the cloak of pain and shame, and to walk together into a future where our children will be able to talk to and about each other in a more respectful way.

This is not a time for the timid. It is a time for the daring. I invite you to join in this challenge. I invite you to move forward and write a new book of knowledge for the future. Let us dare to live greatly together.

Culturally Responsive Education: Bringing Indigenous Culture to Canadian Lessons for Better Indigenous Student Engagement Kip Ip (2025.02.20)

Indigenous students struggle in school due to a lack of cultural representation. This leads to disengagement and high dropout rates. Integrating Indigenous perspectives improves engagement and success. Kanu (2006) states, "Native students in the integration class significantly outperformed their counterparts in the regular class on social studies exam scores" (p. 138). The integrated class had an 88.2% pass rate, compared to 44% in the regular class. This proves culturally relevant teaching boosts achievement. Many schools still follow colonial frameworks. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) state, "Schools and classrooms are failing to meet the needs of Indigenous students" (p. 941). Lessons focus on European history and ignore Indigenous contributions – making students feel invisible.

Superficial inclusion does not work. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) explain, "Schools rely on 'essentializations, meaningless generalizations, or trivial anecdotes" (p. 942). They fail to address systemic racism, sovereignty, and self-determination. As a tutor at the Indigenous Students Centre, I see this disconnect daily. Students ask why history highlights European explorers but omits Indigenous leaders. However, in my tutoring, when I integrate

Indigenous stories to shift away from this focus, engagement increases. In mathematics, using examples like counting fish caught traditionally sparks interest.

Success Through Cultural Integration: When students see their experiences reflected, they engage more. Real-life examples make lessons relevant. In mathematics, I use counting fish from a traditional story to teach numbers. Research shows that connecting lessons to students' lives improves engagement (Kanu, 2006). Some students reflected that understanding mathematics through cultural stories helped them see its value. Respecting students' knowledge builds confidence. Kanu (2006) states, "His positive attitude, high expectations for students, and respectful interactions with all students, especially Native students helped them succeed" (p. 136).

Creating safe spaces encourages participation and deeper learning (Kanu, 2006). Individual students shared fishing stories. I used these to teach science. This built trust and engagement. Elders make learning meaningful. Guest speakers help Indigenous students feel proud of their heritage (Kanu, 2006). At the tutoring center, an elder spoke about traditional medicines. This blended science and culture. Students asked thoughtful questions. They showed excitement in discovering how Indigenous knowledge connects to modern subjects. Circles foster inclusion. Indigenous learning emphasizes collective discussion. This strengthens participation and engagement (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Some students who rarely spoke in class became more confident in these discussions. They felt valued and included.

Barriers to Responsive Education: As a tutor, I see many barriers that make it hard to support Indigenous students. Schools lack Indigenous books and materials. Kanu (2006) states, "The biggest single issue has been the lack of appropriate resources for students" (p. 141). Many textbooks ignore Indigenous perspectives. I have to find extra resources online, often without success. Some students asked, "Why don't we have books about our people?" Schools need more funding for Indigenous-authored resources (Kanu, 2006). Some educators do not see Indigenous content as essential. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) state, "Schools and classrooms are failing to meet the needs of Indigenous students" (p. 941). Colonial teaching methods still dominate. I've met teachers who say, "I don't have time for culture. I need to teach the curriculum."

Resistance makes it harder to implement change (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Education remains Eurocentric. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) explain, "Schools reinforce whiteness as the norm" (p. 942). This makes Indigenous students feel undervalued. History lessons focus on European explorers while ignoring Indigenous leaders. Individual students told me, "School is not for people like me." Systemic bias makes students feel excluded (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Standardized tests exclude Indigenous knowledge. This makes learning feel irrelevant. Kanu (2006) notes, "Students struggle to see themselves in the curriculum" (p. 138). Individual students asked, "Why do I need to learn this? It is not about my people." I help them prepare for tests while adding cultural connections. Balancing both is difficult (Kanu, 2006). Many Indigenous students juggle work and family responsibilities. This affects attendance. Kanu (2006) found, "Financial pressures make it harder for students to focus" (p. 137). Some students missed tutoring because they had to work. Individual students said, "I want to study, but I need to help my family." Schools need

flexible schedules and extra support (Kanu, 2006).. Schools need better resources, teacher training, and policy changes.

Pathways to Inclusive Learning: Schools must integrate Indigenous culture into education rather than forcing students to conform. Indigenous perspectives should be included in all subjects, not just added to. Kanu (2006) found, "Students in an integrated class had an 88.2% pass rate, compared to 44% in a regular class" (p. 138). In tutoring, I use traditional fishing counts to teach mathematics. This makes lessons relevant. Science could include Indigenous plant uses. History could highlight Indigenous leaders (Kanu, 2006). Many educators lack cultural knowledge. Kanu (2006) notes, "A teacher who attended workshops and engaged with Native education became more effective" (p. 135). My students say teachers often misunderstand Indigenous culture. Individual students recalled a teacher assuming traditional dances were just for fun. Proper training would help teachers integrate culture into lessons and build trust (Kanu, 2006).

Schools should work with elders and use Indigenous-authored materials. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) stress, "More explicit and sustained attention must be paid to tribal sovereignty and self-determination" (p. 943). At the Indigenous Students Centre, elders enrich learning. They teach traditional fishing, blending history and science. Schools should consult communities and use culturally relevant resources (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Hands-on learning, storytelling, and community projects improve engagement. Kanu (2006) found, "These methods help students connect with lessons" (p. 136). I use storytelling in tutoring, like a fishing tale for problem-solving. Schools should apply similar methods—mathematics through counting traditional items, science through plant studies

Many schools lack Indigenous books and materials. Kanu (2006) states, "Funding for student resources is essential to ensure that Native students receive a level of education equivalent to their non-Native peers" (p. 141). I see students struggle with outdated textbooks that exclude Indigenous content. Schools need funding for Indigenous-authored books and educators to make learning inclusive (Kanu, 2006). Integrating Indigenous knowledge, training teachers, engaging communities, adopting Indigenous teaching methods, and increasing funding will create an inclusive system. Schools must act now to ensure Indigenous students feel valued and succeed. <sup>1</sup>

#### Let us know what you think

We invite your comments and suggestions. We welcome material from our readers and are pleased to include comments and reflection pieces here to stimulate reflection and dialogue. The submissions we include do not represent any official position by the JTRAG membership or our readers.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> References

Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth: A review of the literature. Review of Educational Research, 78(4), 941–993. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308323036">https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308323036</a> Kanu, Y. (2006). Getting them through the college pipeline: Critical elements of instruction influencing success among Native Canadian high school students. Journal of Advanced Academics, 18(1), 116–145. <a href="https://doi.org/10.4219/jaa-2006-345">https://doi.org/10.4219/jaa-2006-345</a> Who We Are: The Members of the Joint Truth and Reconciliation Action Group