



News and Resources: September 2025 Joint Truth and Reconciliation Working Group



Sign for Sauble Beach was switched to Saugeen Beach on Canada Day ([Andrew Lupton](#) · CBC News · Posted: Aug 28, 2025)



Over the Canada Day long weekend, this sign replaced a decades-old one that read 'Welcome to Sauble Beach.' The sandy piece of Lake Huron shoreline has been a tourist draw since the 1920s but has been at the centre of a legal dispute over the interpretation of an 1854 treaty between the Crown and the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation. (Michelle Both/CBC News)

The chief of an Ontario First Nation says he's looking forward to a future free from legal battles after the Supreme Court announced Thursday it won't hear an appeal of lower court decisions that confirm the band's ownership of a disputed piece of beachfront.

"It's like a breath of fresh air, like when you're holding your breath waiting for something to happen, and then it finally happens and then you can breathe," said Chief Conrad Ritchie of the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation. "It means that the court has upheld our treaty as agreed upon by the treaty partners."

The Supreme Court of Canada, in its decision released Thursday morning, dismissed a leave to appeal that was filed by the local municipality and a handful of landowners who both stand to lose property. The case involves a disputed section of Lake Huron shoreline located three hours northwest of Toronto that was ceded to the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation in a treaty signed in 1854. The strip of beach made headlines earlier this summer when the sign that welcomes visitors to the town of Sauble Beach was removed by members of Saugeen First Nation. A new sign reading "Welcome to Saugeen Beach" emerged in its place.

In 2023, an Ontario Court of Appeal ruling granted the First Nation possession of the section of beach that includes land owned by the Municipality of South Bruce Peninsula and lots owned by a handful of private landowners.

As is usually the case, Canada's top court did not post reasons for its decision to dismiss the appeal. South Bruce Peninsula Mayor Jay Kirkland had hoped Canada's top court would hear the case. He told CBC News that past court battles and the sudden sign switch have created a confusing fog over ownership of the beach. Kirkland spoke to CBC News before the Supreme Court announced it wouldn't hear the appeal. He declined to comment Thursday, saying he'd have more to say after a council meeting next week.

Ritchie said the decision means Saugeen First Nation can move ahead with plans for improvements spelled out in a beach management plan. He said the plan had been in limbo while the courts clarified ownership. It's unclear where the decision will leave landowners of the disputed section of beach, which includes the municipality. Some of the land owners' family members bought lots on the beach in the 1950s and '60s. Ritchie suggested they could seek compensation from the federal government. "The courts have recognized Indigenous ownership of land that was wrongfully patented and sold to private settlers."

Kirkland said he's regularly asked what the sign change will mean for the future of Sauble Beach, a town that since the 1920s has drawn crowds of summer tourists to its clear blue waters and pristine sandy shoreline. Sauble Beach remains the official name of the town.

The conflicting claims [stretch back to a survey of the beach](#) that was done in 1855, a year after the Crown signed the treaty that set aside reserve lands for Indigenous people in the area. In its 2023 decision, the Ontario Court of Appeal agreed with Saugeen First Nation that the survey incorrectly left out 2.2 kilometres of shoreline from land that was promised them in the treaty.

In their submission to the Supreme Court, the municipality and landowners argued the lower court decisions will dispossess them of property that was "acquired lawfully and in good faith." They further argued the Saugeen/Sauble case was a chance for the Supreme Court to clarify how competing interests should be addressed in similar land disputes involving Indigenous groups in Canada. They say the case-by-case approach is creating a disjointed process. "[This case] underscores the risks of imposing novel, judge-made solutions that, while well-intentioned, risk sowing uncertainty and unpredictability at the core of Canada's system of private landholding," their submission read.

Nuri Frame, a lawyer representing the Saugeen, argued the case doesn't have wide-ranging implications for other land disputes involving Indigenous groups. Instead, he said, the case is limited to how the language that defined the reserve lands in the 1854 treaty is interpreted.

The beach, located in the municipality of South Bruce Peninsula, has been a summer tourist draw for decades. (Amanda Margison/CBC News) "This is not a case about Aboriginal title," Frame told CBC News. "It is a case about ensuring the treaty boundaries that were expressly agreed to in 1854 are reflected on the ground and that Saugeen's reserve lands are maintained in the form that was agreed to in the treaty. "This is about whether or not the Crown is able to dispossess the Saugeen of reserve

land that was promised to them." Kirkland hopes the town and Saugeen leadership can still find a way to work together to share the beach. Ritchie said public access to the beach won't change following the top court's decision.



B.C. divided about UNDRIP

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds British Columbians largely divided over this commitment from their province, the only in Canada to have signed on to UNDRIP. Overall, two-in-five (39%) say this commitment is necessary as a step toward reconciliation, while slightly more (44%) say UNDRIP goes too far in limiting provincial authority over land and resources. The tension between Indigenous title claims and private property has been on display this summer after the B.C. Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling affirming the Cowichan Tribes' Aboriginal title to roughly 800 acres of land in Richmond. The province swiftly appealed, warning of potential ripple effects for private land titles across B.C.

On the question of what role Indigenous groups should have in public land use decisions, views are similarly complex. Just one-in-five (18%) say Indigenous governments should be involved in shared decision-making *and* have a veto, but 34 per cent say they should share in decision-making and leave final authority to the provincial government. A further one-quarter (26%) support meaningful consultation but no role in decision-making, and one-quarter (23%) say Indigenous groups should be treated the same as others in the province.



Most Canadians think the country is making progress on reconciliation: poll

By [The Canadian Press](#) Published: July 26, 2025

Most Canadians believe the country is making good progress on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, a new poll from Leger suggests. "The extent to which people feel progress on reconciliation is being made has an important bearing on how they feel about the country," said Jack Jedwab, President/CEO of the Association for Canadian Studies, which commissioned the poll.

The survey of 1,580 respondents was conducted between June 20 and 22. A margin of error cannot be associated to the survey because online polls are not considered to be truly random samples. Forty-seven of the respondents self-identified as Indigenous. Jedwab said that small number and the lack of regional breakdowns of the numbers means the poll should be interpreted with caution.

But the poll still shows where Canadians are 10 years after the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was released, he said. "There's several attempts to measure progress on reconciliation by virtue of the extent to which we, collectively, have met the conditions of the various calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation (Commission's) report," Jedwab said. "But we're not really taking, up to now, the pulse of Canadians in terms of whether or not they feel progress is being made. "It's sort of a proxy for helping us understand how Canadians feel about their relationships."

55% of poll respondents said they believe Canada is making good progress on reconciliation, but their answers vary widely between age groups — 40 per cent of respondents aged 18 to 24 said Canada was making progress, while 67 per cent of respondents 65 and older said the same.

Jedwab said he was surprised to see such a large number of respondents reporting progress, given the many issues in the Crown-Indigenous relationship still unresolved. "The survey suggests there's

something to build on with respect to the relationship, with respect to reconciliation and with respect to how people feel about the country,” he said.

The survey also asked whether Canadians trust other Canadians — the vast majority of respondents said they do. But respondents aged 18 to 24 reported being the most trusting of others, at 77 per cent, while those aged 35 to 44 were the least trusting at 52 per cent. Roughly six in ten non-Indigenous respondents said they trusted Indigenous people. Reported trust in Indigenous people is highest in Nova Scotia (71 per cent) and Ontario (64.3 per cent) and lowest in Saskatchewan (38.3 per cent), P.E.I. (43.8 per cent) and Manitoba (44.8 per cent).

The survey also suggests respondents who said they are proud of Canada’s history are more likely to report Canada is making good progress on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, at 68 per cent. Of those who reported they’re not proud of Canada’s history, just 39.3 per cent said they believe Canada is making good progress.

Pride in Canada’s history seems to be strongly correlated with the age of respondents. Just 36 per cent of respondents aged 18 to 24 reported feeling proud of that history, while 78 per cent of those 65 and older said the same. Francophone youth reported being more proud of Canada’s history (59 per cent) than anglophones (35 per cent) — a finding Jedwab said he was surprised by, given the persistence of the province’s separatist movement.

Jedwab said while the poll found most Indigenous respondents reported feeling pride in Canadian history, it can’t be taken at face value because the sample size was so small. “There’s a need to actually pursue further research in this area to get a better idea of how Indigenous Peoples feel.” “We need to be more attentive to that diversity in terms of drawing conclusions about the views of Indigenous Peoples ... We do need to better understand what the nature of the relationship is right now, how people feel about whether progress is being achieved or not and how we go forward together.”



Indigenous Definition: How To Use It Correctly and Related Terms To Avoid

From June 26/25 issue of newsletter@powwows.com (see Paul G - PowWows.com)

What does “indigenous” mean? In the U.S. [Indigenous Peoples’ Day](#) is celebrated across on the second Monday in October and is an official city and state holiday in various localities. The holiday celebrates and honors Native American people and commemorates their histories and distinct cultures.

“Indigenous” describes any group of people native to a specific region. In other words, it describes the people who lived in a given region before colonists or settlers arrived, defined new borders, and began to occupy the land. Some examples of indigenous peoples include:

- the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Australia
- the Māori peoples of New Zealand
- the Inuit peoples of the Arctic in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland
- the Sámi peoples of Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Russia’s Kola Peninsula

Are “Indigenous” and “Native American” Interchangeable?

It’s important to recognize that the term “indigenous” is more inclusive than the term “Native American.” Since a person or group of people can technically be indigenous to anywhere, the term “indigenous” doesn’t just mean *indigenous* to North America.

Terms like “indigenous peoples” or “indigenous land” typically refer to Native American people or land acknowledgments. The more specific term “Indigenous American” carries the same general meaning as “Native American” since both terms describe the original inhabitants of North America. In conclusion, “indigenous” and “Native American” are *not* the same thing since Native Americans are merely one sub-group of indigenous peoples. Therefore, the two terms are *not* interchangeable.

When is “Aboriginal” More Appropriate? “Aboriginal” means people living in a region “from the earliest time.” So it’s, more or less, interchangeable with “indigenous.” Nowadays, the term is seldom used, so unless someone explicitly expresses a preference for this term, you may want to opt for “indigenous peoples.” If you do use this term, use it as an adjective rather than a noun. For example, “aboriginal land.” And again, it’s best to use a more specific name, such as “Inuit people” or “Inuit language,” whenever possible.

Important Factors to Consider:

- There’s no single correct term to use.
- Always consider someone’s personal preference.
- No one person speaks for all indigenous people.
- Use the specific name of their nation or tribe whenever possible.

Indigenous-Related Terms to Avoid: While it’s important to know and understand the ‘indigenous’ definition and how to correctly use the term, it’s equally helpful to know which words *not* to use. Here’s a list of related words that are generally best to avoid:

Native: While an indigenous person in the U.S. might refer to themselves as “Native,” it’s generally best to avoid using the term “Native” as a noun. Also steer clear of the plural form —“Natives” — which tends to carry negative or racist connotations.

Indian: Referring to Indigenous Americans as “Indians” is inaccurate. “Indian” describes someone from the country of India. The only reason the word was ever used to describe Indigenous Americans is because when Christopher Columbus landed in North America, he thought he had sailed to India (oops). However, consider that some Native Americans do still identify as Indians. That’s their choice, and it should be respected.

Injun: “Injun” is a spelling representing the early American English colloquial pronunciation of [Indian](#). However, the term is generally considered offensive today as it’s used to mock or impersonate Native Americans’ or early settlers’ heavily accented English.

Eskimo: People in many parts of the Arctic consider “Eskimo” a derogatory term because it was widely used by racist, non-native colonizers. Most people prefer other terms. The most commonly used is “Inuit,” which means simply, “people.” The singular, which means “person,” is Inuk. Of course, as with so many words saturated by the crimes of colonialism, there’s no consensus on usage of the term

“Eskimo.” Many Native Alaskans still identify as Eskimos, in part because the word “Inuit” isn’t part of the Yupik languages of Alaska and Siberia. The best decision is to altogether avoid the term “Eskimo.”

Redskin: The term “Redskin” has historically been used as a racial slur against Native Americans. If you’ve been following the news, you probably heard about the high-profile name change of [Washington’s NFL franchise](#), which long used the “Redskins” moniker. In July 2020, after significant financial pressure from sponsors pulling out of partnerships, the Washington Redskins announced they would officially change their name. While some criticized the move as purely financially motivated, others lauded the change as the correct decision, regardless of the rationale for making it.

Spirit Animal: Though it might seem harmless to call a sloth your “spirit animal,” referring to animals or people as such appropriates indigenous traditions and culture by making them into jokes. So if you aren’t indigenous, it’s best to avoid saying you have a spirit animal.

Tribe: Again, hijacking the term “tribe” to describe your group of non-native friends, even playfully, falls in the same territory as “spirit animal.” Even if you don’t mean to be offensive, this constitutes a form of cultural appropriation, and it’s best to avoid it.

Savage: European settlers called Native Americans “savages” because they viewed them as less than human. For that reason, the term carries connotations of white supremacy, and it’s best to drop this term from your vernacular to avoid causing harm to those around you.

Squaw: This one’s a no-brainer, but we have to include it because, remarkably, the term is still in use in certain parts of the U.S. “Squaw” is an ethnic and sexual slur that dates back hundreds of years. The term refers to a Native American woman’s genitalia, thus sexualizing and objectifying Native women in a humiliating fashion. It also serves as a painful reminder of how European settlers once used Native female bodies in whichever way they pleased. Embarrassingly, there’s a town called [Squaw Valley](#) in California that’s—for obvious reasons—been under pressure to change its name.

Costume: You might think you’re complimenting someone dressed in traditional regalia by saying “I love your costume!” In fact, the opposite is true. The clothing worn by Native Americans during dances and other ceremonies is “regalia.” Calling it a “costume” implies that they’re dressing up as someone else—the way someone might on Halloween—when in fact, they’re paying homage to their own ancestral histories and traditions.



Wildfire Relief in Manitoba

In July, True North Aid launched the Emergency Wildfire Relief Fund to support remote northern communities evacuated due to wildfires. Key partners were the Rotary Club of Winnipeg and Strini Reddy, whose deep connections with First Nations helped ensure aid reached those most affected in Winnipeg. The Fund provided essentials like hygiene items, infant care supplies, bedding, cooking equipment, playpens, and toys. Evacuees from Garden Hill, Wasagamack, St. Theresa Point, Tataskweyak, and Nisichawayasihk received timely support that brought comfort, dignity, and a reminder they were not alone.



Good Answers to Thorny Questions about Reconciliation

by Kingston, Ontario's Joint Truth and Reconciliation Action Group (JTRAG)

Q: Why is it my responsibility to reconcile with Indigenous peoples? All of the abuses occurred before I was born. Perhaps I was even born in another country.

A: First of all, some abuses are still ongoing. For example, Neskantaga First Nation in northern Ontario has been without clean water since 1996.

Second, Canada prospered for generations as a result of unfair treatment of Indigenous people. Today, non-Indigenous people live on real estate from which First Nations were relocated. Property occupied by First Nations and Métis was surveyed and granted to Whites. Immigrants, but not Indigenous people, were given sections of Prairie land to cultivate. We gave control of all natural resources to the Provinces and we micromanaged Indigenous people's use of their tiny reserves. We allowed them to be crowded out of fishing and hunting on public land. We drowned their lands with reservoirs as we constructed dams and canals. Given this history, the least that should be done is to equip Indigenous people to share in Canada's prosperity going forward.

Non-Indigenous Canadians owe much to Indigenous peoples, but we also have much to gain from reconciliation with them. Indigenous culture has many beautiful teachings and traditions to share, many relevant to Canada's climate, night sky, and species. Indigenous empowerment will likely result in more habitat protection, and cleaner air and water.

Q: What's done is done. Indigenous people were on the losing end of a conflict. We don't go back in time to redraw borders, do we?

A: For the most part, Indigenous people did not fight settlers in what is now Canada. After first contact in the East, First Nations allied with French or British colonial governments and became valued scouts, soldiers, and suppliers of fur. Europeans representing their Kings and Queens made treaties with Indigenous people, which the Indigenous accepted in good faith. The honour of the Crown, the honour of Canada, and the rule of law is at stake. At Confederation, Canada assumed responsibility for "Indians and lands reserved for Indians". This implies a fiduciary duty to Indigenous peoples, as affirmed by the Supreme Court.

Q: Isn't the best thing for Indigenous people to assimilate with mainstream culture?

A: Indigenous people have the right, like other Canadians, to live out their values and culture. Many find strength in their traditions. Their legal rights to treaty promises or to unceded lands should be honoured. Canada's mainstream culture is unique, a fusion of Indigenous, French, British, and other cultures. It can be further enriched by greater exploration of the traditions and teachings of Indigenous peoples.

Q: Doesn't the government already spend billions on Indigenous peoples?

A: For most of Canada's history, the government spent very little on Indigenous peoples. Still today, Canada spends very little on Indigenous people who live in cities and on non-Status or Métis peoples.

The amount that Canada owes Indigenous people due to dispossession, willful disregard of treaties, willful disregard of Aboriginal Title, mismanagement of Band money, abuse of children in residential schools, and discrimination against people living on reserve cannot be calculated.

Money spent on Indigenous health, education, family support, job readiness, and entrepreneurship is a good investment for Canada. In 2016, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board estimated that eliminating the education, employment, and other gaps between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Canadians would improve Canada's GDP by 28 billion dollars.

Q: Can the government afford to provide what Indigenous peoples require?

A: The government cannot afford to keep Indigenous communities in poverty. Having so many Indigenous Canadians' physical and mental health, educational achievement, entrepreneurship, and employment rates below average means lost opportunities for the Canadian economy. Besides that, shortchanging Indigenous people makes future legal settlements more costly and is a source of national and international embarrassment.

Q: If they want to live a traditional life, why do they need money?

A: Wildlife, forests, and streams have been disrupted by agriculture, industry, ever-expanding cities and our recreational "cottage" culture, making a traditional life difficult and costly. Not all Indigenous people want to live a traditional life, but whether they do or not, they have distinct legal rights which must be respected.

Q: Why should so few people have claim over so much land?

A: Except for the Iroquoian societies of the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes, Indigenous peoples were nomadic to some degree. They moved within large territories in order to hunt, fish, and gather in a sustainable way. If Indigenous people had retained title to these lands, if they had been able to engage in trade and business as equals, and if they had not suffered so much from epidemic diseases and residential schools, there would be many more Indigenous people alive today.

Q: Why should Indigenous people get free houses? No one is giving me a free house.

A: Indigenous people do not get free houses. Bands do receive grants to build housing, which is then rented out to families, but there is still a huge deficit of housing. In 2019, 25% of houses on reserve were in "deplorable condition", and overcrowding was a common problem.

In 2016 there were 56,230 units of band-owned housing on reserve, the reserve population being about 305,600 people. As stated above, band-owned units are rented out to Band members, though rent may be difficult to collect.

Q: Why don't Indigenous people move away from remote areas where economic development is hopeless?

A: In some cases, First Nations and Inuit were moved to their current remote locations by the government, so it seems a bit rich to tell them to move. Many Indigenous people have indeed moved away from their home communities. In 2021, 44% of Indigenous people lived in large urban areas. 59% of First Nations with Registered or Treaty Indian Status lived off-reserve. There are several reasons Canada should want its North populated: to protect its borders, to bolster its claims of sovereignty, to have citizens observe conditions on the ground, to have citizens protect habitat and wildlife, and to benefit from local wisdom about the land and climate.

Q: Why should Indigenous people get free postsecondary education? No one is giving me a free postsecondary education.

A: Actually, your postsecondary education, unless offered by a private college, is heavily subsidized by your provincial government (or, in the case of Territories, the federal government). Bands receive money for their postsecondary students, but it is not sufficient to fully cover costs for every student. First Nations students with Registered or Treaty Indian Status who do not live on reserve also receive money for postsecondary. In 2015-6 this amounted to \$415 per Status Indian living off-reserve.

Q: Why should First Nations get tax breaks?

A: Only First Nations with Registered or Treaty Indian Status get tax breaks, and these are in force only on reserve or for items purchased for life on reserve. Many First Nations members are too poor to pay income tax anyway. The earliest treaties, such as the Two-Row Wampum and Treaty 3.5/The Simcoe Deed imply that First Nations will be able to conduct their business without interference. In fact, their business has been greatly interfered with; tax-free status seems an appropriate compensation for this interference and is a way to foster economic development on reserve.

Q: Why are reserves associated with cheap gas, cigarettes, cannabis and alcohol?

A: Bands have been able to use legal grey zones in order to offer these goods at a discount. Not everyone on the reserve is happy about these businesses. It has been difficult for bands to attract customers to other businesses on reserve.

Q: How do we know that money won't be wasted by corrupt Band governments?

A: Financial management has a learning curve. Bands have been learning how to go "from managing poverty to promoting economic development"¹. Not only white people get to make mistakes. The federal government micromanaged reserve finances until the 1970s, and some would say they still do. Bands, which are mostly small communities numbering in the hundreds, face an immense amount of paperwork in order to receive grants from Ottawa. Most Bands submit their audited financial statements and statement of remuneration of staff, and these can be found on the web under [First Nation Profiles \(aadnc-aandc.gc.ca\)](https://aadnc-aandc.gc.ca). First Nations hold democratic elections at least once every four years.

¹ quoting Jeff Loucks, Councillor, Hiawatha First Nation

Q: Isn't it true that money won't fix the social problems in Indigenous communities?

A: All communities have social problems, and all communities seek government money to pay for nurses, social workers, educators etc. For Indigenous communities, many of which are in remote areas and have a shortage of housing, it is especially difficult to recruit nurses, social workers, and educators, while the need is great due to the intergenerational trauma present in the community.

Q: Don't Indigenous communities have high rates of substance abuse?

A: Substance abuse exists in all communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, but it is much easier to hide your addiction when you have wealth, a large home, and a supportive family.

There is a high rate of substance abuse in many Indigenous communities due in part to intergenerational trauma caused by dispossession, poverty, racism, and residential schooling. Indigenous communities are doing a lot to prevent, discourage, and treat substance abuse. Many reserves ban alcohol and narcotics.

Q: Regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, aren't many of them prostitutes who chose high-risk behaviour?

A: High-risk behaviour is associated with childhood trauma, and there is a lot of intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities. Indigenous women who move to the city are especially vulnerable to prostitution because of pimps and others who con them. Predators choose victims they believe are weak and whose deaths are less likely to be noticed or investigated.

There is a lack of safe transportation outside of urban centres. Bus and train service between remote communities should be reinstated. Welcome centres should operate in cities for Indigenous newcomers and students boarding in the city.

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