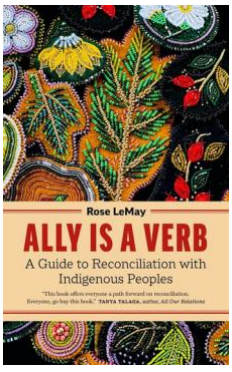
News and Resources: October/November 2025
Joint Truth and Reconciliation Working Group

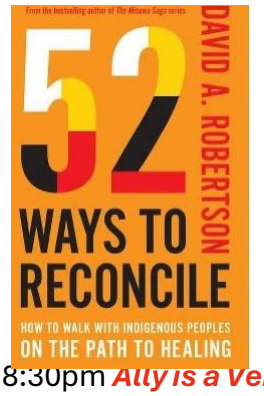
10 Years after the TRC Report

In the October 2025 issue of Broadview magazine, Teresa Burnett-Cole writes that mainline denominations have made measurable progress on completing the calls to action, but the work remains unfinished. The three commissioners offered 10 principles to guide reconciliation efforts, along with 94 calls to action, addressed to governments, churches and the media, and designed to move Canada toward reconciliation. Progress, in general, has been slow: with 15 completed.
Six calls to action were aimed at the churches (Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United Church) that operated residential schools and are parties to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. She notes that the calls contain language that invites other churches to participate. At least two denominations — the Christian Reformed Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada — that did not operate residential schools but have actively embraced the calls by participating in reconciliation efforts. A quick scan of Canadian denominational websites indicates that most churches are addressing Indigenous issues to some degree. In this sense, the TRC has been successful because it has helped raise the visibility of Indigenous issues and the need to engage in intentional reconciliation efforts. But there is still work to do, including around Indigenous spiritual self-determination. The article goes on to provide a summary of where things stand:
https://broadview.org/trc-churches-10-years/

You can also read this assessment in a CBC article published on Sept 30/25.
https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/truth-and-reconciliation-report-10-years-later-bc-1.7647444#

JTRAG hosts new online book club: Advancing Reconciliation





(1) Monday, October 27, 7:00 - 8:30pm ***Ally is a Verb*** Chapters 1-4
(2) Monday, November 17, 7:00 - 8:30pm ***Ally is Verb*** Chapters 5 -7 & notes
(3) Monday, December 8, 7:00 - 8:30pm ***52 Ways to Reconcile***

To register, click here:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/lQ1XkgEER5OMATwxYXZeVw#/registration

Another Reading Resource: Native American Book Club

PowWows.com announces the launch of the Native American Book Club, a rich journey through the rich and diverse world of Native American literature. This group is a space where we can come together to explore Native culture through the power of storytelling. The club will dive into a variety of books each month—everything from historical accounts that highlight Native culture and heritage to captivating fiction written by Native authors. Whether you're already passionate about Native literature or you're just looking to learn more, there's something for everyone here. We've set up a Facebook group where we'll host discussions, share our favorite quotes, and exchange ideas. The group is also where we'll be hosting **monthly book giveaways**, so be sure to check in at the start of each month for your chance to win some exciting reads.

For all whose hearts continue to break as Bill 5 steams forward …

Mara Shaw writes that we all feel the power of story: "Your feet sink into these deep peatlands. Smell the black spruce. Feel the peace. Meet the people of the Attawapiskat...." At the energizing Bill 5 potluck **a group of great writers with commitment, are going to create our own narratives (or stories) and get them published, shared, tictok'd, Instagrammed, filmed, screened, presented at conferences.** Whatever we each of us can do. The public needs to hear from us to reframe the story of alternatives to Bill 5, including Treaty 9 lands, the "need" for critical minerals, the beauty of the people, and much more. On Oct 30, a group gathered to develop stories and, together, determine our strategy for staying connected and accountable to be effective as they work to spark a 1,000 conversations. She says that Doug Ford is promoting a narrative as if the only way forward is by denying Indigenous Rights, environmental and labour laws, municipal autonomy.... she wants to create the REAL story! Also Mara asks you to tell the Ontario government your thoughts on the criteria for Special Economic Zones before Nov. 16th.

One way to begin to learn more about the Government's commitment to northern development associated with the Ring of Fire is to read recent information releases from the Government. These are available on the Ontario government's official website at: https://www.ontario.ca/page/government-ontario Then search "Ring of Fire." A list of 414 items will pop up. You can read down the list and find a number of releases that are informative about the government's intentions and recent actions.

From True North Aid October Newsletter

In September, True North Aid partnered with Indigenous Reflections and delivered over 2,000 backpack kits to 12 northern communities, helping students begin the school year with confidence, pride, and the necessary tools to start their school year off right. Since 2021, True North Aid's **A Good Night's Sleep** project has provided over 1072 bed sets **to** 40+ remote Indigenous communities**,** thanks to our generous partner, **Silk & Snow**. Now, 206 more brand-new beds have been donated by Silk & Snow - valued at over $250,000**.** They are ready to ship to **8 northern communities** in need. The only thing standing in the way is delivery**.** Each bed set includes: A hybrid foam/coil mattress, a platform bed frame, sheet set and pillowcases, a waterproof mattress protector. Because many communities are fly-in only, the cost to deliver a single bed averages $145**.** To donate, go to https://truenorthaid.ca/project/deliver-sleep/

When we come across Native American art, we're not just taking time to appreciate beautiful craftsmanship from a bygone era; we're looking at the embodiment of spiritual connections, cultural identity, and traditions spanning over 13,000 years of human existence. The term "Native American art" may seem straightforward, but it includes a range of creations from hundreds of diverse tribes and nations – each with their own unique artistic expressions that reflect their cultural heritage and relationship with the land.

When we think about Native American art, we should first recognize that many objects created by Indigenous peoples were never intended to be viewed through the Western concept of "art".
Instead, they serve purposes beyond aesthetics – spiritual to communal – and are often inseparable from cultural practices. This is why many scholars now refer to these pieces as "Indigenous," which views these artistic expressions as parts of life that can't be separated from tribal identity.

Unlike Western art traditions that often celebrate individual expression, Native American art is believed to have been a collective experience. They reflected a place as much as they did a shared experience and value. Artists often used materials readily available in their natural surroundings, and these creations allow us to look back at the world as the people saw it then.

Colors and rich symbolism can be found throughout various types of Native American art. However, the colors often change meaning from tribe to tribe, showing just how diverse the Native American people were. Some colors may have represented cardinal directions, while others could relate to gender, life stages, or natural elements.

Another key characteristic of indigenous art is *geometric shapes and patterns*. These are often found in various mediums – from pottery to textiles – and often held deep cultural or spiritual significance when included. Again, these meanings may change from region to region.

How Did Colonization & Forced Assimilation Impact Native American Art? During the 19th and 20th centuries, many artifacts were stolen or damaged during trade voyages and the US government's assimilation policies. These often deprived Indigenous people of their languages, religions, and lands – which ultimately disrupted their artistic traditions.

What Are The Various Types of Native American Art?

Paintings and Visual Records: Perhaps the earliest type of Native American art used paint and other materials to tell stories. Petroglyphs (rock carvings) and pictographs (rock paintings) have been discovered dating back to nearly 3000 BCE – showing that early people used pigments from the natural environment to create symbols and tell stories with impressive artistic style. Native American painting grew throughout history, including buffalo hide, sand painting, and ledger art. Each evolution in the style and purpose of Native American painting and visual art showcased the growth of tribes

and families – and often held both deep spiritual meaning and practical uses (such as ledger art for recording events and interactions with settlers).

Pottery: Native American pottery may represent one of the oldest and most enduring art forms – with a history spanning an incredible 4,500 years. The Zuni, Hopi, and Anasazi originally created pottery for practical cooking and storage purposes, but it naturally became a canvas for their cultural expression. Perhaps the most well-known type of pottery is Pueblo Indian pottery. This type of pottery includes endless variations of texture, color, and form, showing the diversity across Pueblo cultures.

The pottery creation process is incredibly spiritual. Potters often gather materials from their local environment – clay from specific sites and natural pigments from rocks or plants – and use gourds and stones for shaping and polishing. The process was intricate and has been passed down through generations. Perhaps the most celebrated figure in Native American potter is is Maria Martinez of San Ildefonso Pueblo, who in the early 20th century perfected a distinctive black-on-black style that brought new interest into traditional ceramics.

Weaving and Textiles: Another popular style of Native American art is weaving and textile work – art that dates back at least 1,300 years. The Pueblo and Navajo people led the way with intricate weaving and textile work, including rugs, blankets, baskets, and more. The Navajo – now famous for their magnificent rugs and blankets – are believed to have learned weaving from the Pueblo.
The textiles feature geometric designs that are believed to have promoted balance and harmony, which were core values in the Navajo culture. The Navajo weaving and textile work was so impressive that many European settlers traded with the people to gain access to the unique art pieces – which then influenced the styles of their home countries as well.

Beadwork and Quillwork: Quillwork might be one of the oldest and most distinctive Native American art forms and was particularly popular among the tribes of the Great Plains and upper Midwest. This technique involved softening, flattening, and dyeing porcupine quills to stitch into clothing and other items. This process was intensive, often practiced exclusively by women who used mineral and vegetable dyes to create vivid colors and patterns. Traditional designs were often geometric and could also be found in ceremonial dress.

As contact with settlers increased, beadwork also began to increase in popularity.
Beadwork eventually became so integral to Native American culture that many consider it sacred, with strict protocols involved in working with beads. You can often see elaborate beadwork and quillwork represented in clothing worn at powwows, often representing tribal affiliations, family histories, and ancestral connections.

Wood Carving and Sculpture: No retrospective on Native American art would be complete without looking at wood carvings and sculptures. Popular among the tribes of the Pacific Northwest (where cedar trees provided ideal carving material), this art style led to the iconic totem poles and Kachina dolls that are revered today. Towering totem poles served as community storytellers – with intricate carvings that recorded family histories, lineages, and significant events in the people's lives. Each figure carved into the poles held meaning, and the poles were often built and placed in specific spots to be visible to all. The Kachina dolls of the Hopi and Zuni were another wood carving feat. These dolls were carved carefully from wood to represent figures from religion and culture – and were often

painted and used to teach about religions and cosmology. With over 400 different Kachina in Hopi and Pueblo culture, these carvings represent a world of complex spirituality.

Supporting and Appreciating A Legacy of Native American Art: Native American art represents more than just beautiful iconography – it showcases the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous peoples. The artistic traditions have survived centuries of challenge, and now we have the unique privilege to appreciate and reflect on them today. When looking to appreciate and support Native American art, always remember the protections and legality surrounding the art. The Indian Arts and Crafts Act makes it illegal to sell non-Native American-made items as Native American-made, and all dealers should provide written proof of authenticity when dealing with pieces.

It's also essential to respect the history of these pieces – avoiding cultural appropriation and seeking to learn more about the people and histories behind different types of art.
When we can appreciate Native American art on its own terms, we can gain insight into the diversity and wisdom of America's first peoples – lessons that can help us care for one another more creatively today.

On Wholeness: Anishinaabe Pathways to Embodiment and Collective Liberation
by Quill Christie-Peters (Oct 2025)

The book is described as a brilliant exploration of the body as a site of settler colonial impact, centring embodied wholeness as a pathway to our collective liberation. Through reflections on childbirth, parenting, creative practice, and expansive responsibility as pathways to wholeness, Anishinaabe visual artist Quill Christie-Peters explores how reconnecting with the body can be an act of resistance and healing. She shows that wholeness—despite pain and displacement—is not just possible but essential for liberation, not only for Indigenous people but for all of us. In poetic and raw storytelling, Quill shares her own experiences of gendered violence and her father's survival of residential school, revealing how colonialism disconnects us from ourselves. Yet, through an Anishinaabe lens, the body is more than just flesh—it extends to ancestors, homelands, spirit relations, and animal kin. This fierce and enlightening book reimagines the way we understand settler colonialism—through the body itself. *On Wholeness* takes us on a journey that begins before birth, in a realm where ancestors and spirits swirl like smoke in the great beyond.

Education Can Help Canada Heal From Residential School Harms by Kip Ip

Justice Murray Sinclair, who led the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ("TRC"), says education is key to reconciliation (CBC News, 2018). Residential schools caused great harm. Education can help heal by teaching the truth and changing how we teach (CBC News, 2018). The 2015 TRC report listed 94 Calls to Action ("the Calls") and raised awareness of this history (CBC News, 2018). Interest sometimes fades, and many people ask what they can do (CBC News, 2018). The TRC gave Survivors and school staff a national forum to share their stories (CBC News, 2018). Sinclair targeted the Calls at young Indigenous people and at members of the public because the federal government seemed unlikely to act at the time. The Calls give tools to anyone who is ready to act.

Reconciliation is expected because we share this country. People choose the kind of relationship they build with each other (CBC News, 2018). For those who deny the harm, Sinclair advises listening to Survivors, accepting the facts, avoiding false claims, and imagining this happening to one's own family (CBC News, 2018). Taking children to force a new culture always causes harm (CBC News, 2018). Erasing language, traditions, and identity is a form of genocide because it aims to destroy a people (CBC News, 2018). Long-term underfunding and neglect made the damage worse (Milloy, 1999). Early progress on the Calls was limited because governments lacked a clear plan, despite the Calls outlining a plan (CBC News, 2018).

The federal government can use two tools (CBC News, 2018). First, a Royal Proclamation on Reconciliation would set a national plan and require clear federal commitments (CBC News, 2018). The government should co-draft it with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit leaders, set goals and timelines, seek Parliament's endorsement, and publish yearly progress reports that are accessible to all Canadians (CBC News, 2018). Second, a Covenant on Reconciliation would be a shared agreement signed by provinces, territories, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and churches (CBC News, 2018). Each partner would commit to concrete steps that support the Calls. Leaders would establish common principles and targets, require public action plans and annual reports, and establish a joint council to review progress and address issues (CBC News, 2018). People should read the TRC summary, choose one Call to Action, and take action, because reconciliation needs everyone's effort (CBC News, 2018).

Three paths for schools and boards

Tell the truth. Teachers teach age-appropriate history using Survivor stories and local records (Battiste, 2002). Schools embed this truth in social studies, English, science, and mathematics. Teachers use local timelines, maps, oral histories, and documents. Schools invite Elders to open and close classes. These steps reduce harm and build understanding (CBC News, 2018).

Restore languages and knowledge. Boards implement Calls 62 to 64 by funding teacher training and updating curricula (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Schools make Indigenous languages required. Teacher-education programs include Indigenous worldviews, histories, ethics, and protocols. Boards hire and support Indigenous teachers and Knowledge Keepers. Community-based teacher education creates lasting change. It helps students see their identities, families, and languages in school (Morcom et al., 2018).

Build dignity daily. Staff greet students in the local language. Teachers use circle talks to support fair voice. Teachers co-plan lessons with Elders and communities. Teachers assess learning with stories and observations, not only tests. Schools protect time for land-based learning (Battiste, 2002). These actions move practice from awareness to action and strengthen good teaching through active learning, varied assessment, and community ties (CBC News, 2018).

Everyone has a role. Indigenous peoples lead with knowledge, language, and rights (CBC News, 2018). Non-Indigenous peoples act as allies who influence policy, budgets, and daily practice (CBC News, 2018). Educators carry out truth-telling and redesign teaching with Elders (Battiste, 2002). Students gain safety, identity, and voice, and they become the next leaders who carry the work forward (Morcom et al., 2018).

Policies must match actions. Boards link each plan to one Call and report on each term, including the Call, goal, budget, actions, and results (CBC News, 2018). Boards set aside funds for Elders, land-based learning and for-credit language courses. Leaders align money, accountability and culture to support students/communities affected by these issues (Morcom et al., 2018). This approach turns intentions into a public plan to advance the TRC Calls through teacher learning and curriculum change.

I integrate these practices into my teaching. I teach math and my lessons include ratio and measurement, as well as land-based tasks and other topics such as number sense. Students measure a short trail behind the institute and time a steady walk. We use distance and time to find walking speed. We then estimate the time for a three-kilometre walk at that speed. Students record the steps and explain the result in plain words. This approach treats story and experience as valid knowledge (Battiste, 2002). This work answers Sinclair's call to act where we work (CBC News, 2018).

I teach number sense with food and fuel plans. Students plan tea and bannock for a twelve- person gathering by scaling a recipe for four people and checking the cost. Students plan a short snowmobile (skidoo) trip by reading the fuel gauge, checking the map distance, and estimating fuel with a simple litres-per-kilometre rate. We close each session with a talk about safety margins and why Elders plan for weather and ice. This practice keeps math close to land, language, and care for others (Battiste, 2002; CBC News, 2018).

At our institute, we use simple measures because they are easy to gather, easy to explain, and quick to act on, and they honour community voice, reduce workload, and make progress visible (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Morcom et al., 2018). Tutors collect brief student reflections on what they learned and how their views changed. The institute coordinators count for-credit language courses and the number of students who earn those credits. Program leads run short surveys on safety and belonging. Front-desk staff log participation in circles and land time. The institute director tracks hours in community-led teacher learning and the number of sessions co-designed with Elders. The institute publishes a short-term report with these results and the related budget lines (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Morcom et al., 2018).

To conclude, the plan above is guided by Sinclair's framework and carried out by schools and boards with guidance from Indigenous leaders, Elders, and students (CBC News, 2018). The three paths are truth-telling, restoring language and knowledge, and building dignity in daily school life (Battiste, 2002; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Shared roles mean that Indigenous peoples lead with knowledge and rights, non-Indigenous peoples act as allies, educators redesign their teaching with Elders, and students build their identity and voice (CBC News, 2018; Battiste, 2002; Morcom et al., 2018). Policies link each plan to one Call to Action, set budgets, and report results in public (CBC News, 2018). Classroom practices use land-connected tasks, circle dialogue, story-based assessment, and Elder guidance (Battiste, 2002; CBC News, 2018). Simple measures track student reflections, language credits, safety and belonging, land time, staff learning, and Elder co-design, and leaders publish these results with the related budget lines (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Morcom et al., 2018).

This plan follows Sinclair's steps to face the truth, choose a Call, and act (CBC News, 2018). The plan rests on teaching tied to land and relationships, on teacher education built with communities, and on history that warns what not to repeat (Battiste, 2002; Morcom et al., 2018; Milloy, 1999). These choices make reconciliation a reality in what schools teach, how they teach, who teaches, and how funds are allocated.

REFERENCES[1]

Let us know what you think

We invite/need your comments and suggestions. We welcome material from our readers and are pleased to include comments and reflection pieces here as catalysts for more reflection and dialogue. The submissions we include do not represent any official position by JTRAG members or our readers.

[1] Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations.* Prepared for the National Working Group on Education and the Minister of Indian Affairs, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

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Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879–1986.* University of Manitoba Press.

Morcom, L. A., Freeman, K., & Davis, J. (2018). Rising like the thunderbird: The reclamation of Indigenous teacher education. In T. M. Christou (Ed.), *The curriculum history of Canadian teacher education* (pp. 23–40). Routledge.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Calls to Action.* https://nctr.ca/records/reports/