



National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Declaration from Urban Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Youth in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver



(September 30, 2023) - September 30th, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation which coincides with Orange Shirt Day, memorializes Indigenous children lost to the residential school system and honours survivors, their families and communities who continue to grieve. Learning and commemorating the truth of our history is an essential part of the reconciliation pathway to a new relationship. Commemoration of this tragic and painful history must be undertaken in a good way with meaningful and continuous engagement on positive actions.

Constructive reconciliation must be built on the nine Principles of Reconciliation set out in 2016 by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The principles provide a framework for healing and peace, as well as harmonious and cooperative relations. Action #66 of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action states:

We call upon the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and establish a national network to share information and best practices.

Justice will not be served until this initiative has been fully supported and:

- all 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have been implemented;
- the distinctions-based approach has been ended;
- the full meaning of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is reflected in federal and provincial laws;
- the true spirit and intent of the Treaties is honoured; and
- all the children in unmarked Indian Residential School graves have been identified and repatriated.

Aboriginal Life in Vancouver Enhancement Society is based on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples – Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, Kwikwetlem, Tsawwassen, Katzie, Kwantlen, Qayqayt, and Semiahmoo Nations. Our mandate is to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural, health, and general well-being of Indigenous peoples within the Coast Salish territory. We work with a place-based framework to develop inclusive and holistic actions to support off-reserve Indigenous individuals, families, and extended families in British Columbia.





Principles of Reconciliation



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada believed that for Canada to flourish in the 21st century, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canada must follow these principles:

- The United Nations' "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" provides the framework for Reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.
- First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.
- Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public Truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.
- Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Indigenous peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.
- Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.
- All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.
- The perspectives and understandings of Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge-Keepers about the ethics, concepts, and practices of Reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.
- Supporting Indigenous peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the Reconciliation process are essential.
- Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust-building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.
- Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples to Canadian society.