

Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan

2026-2030



Regional Municipality of Niagara (Niagara Region) Land Acknowledgement

Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. These lands are steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hattiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Regional Municipality of Niagara stands with all Indigenous peoples, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.

This plan has been written and guided by First Nation, Inuit and Métis voices. It will steer Niagara Region on the road to reconciliation.

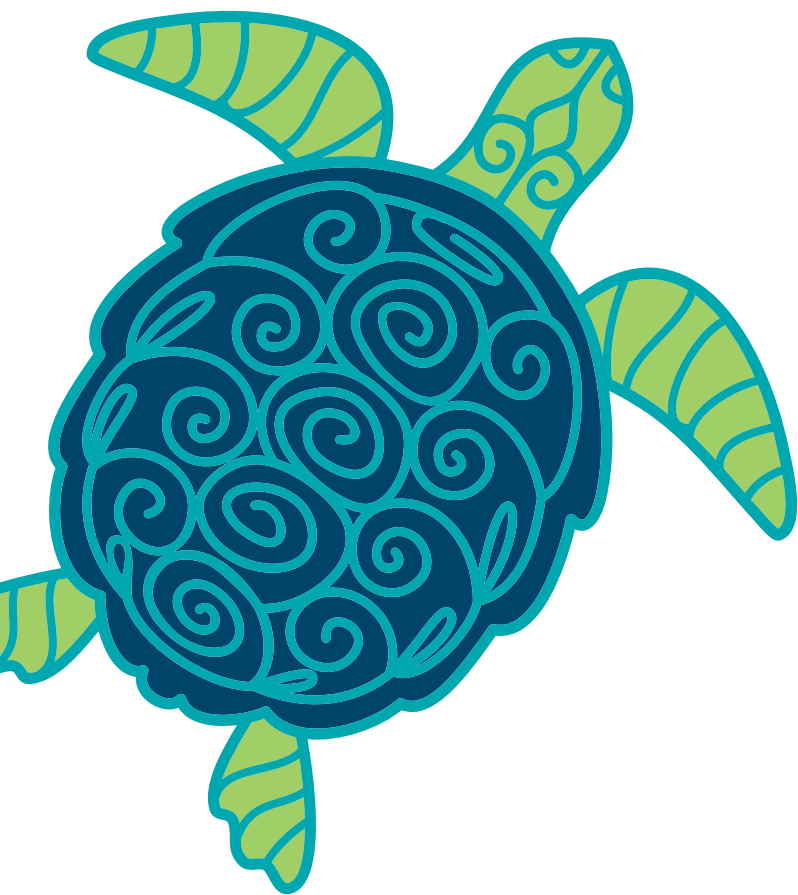


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Introduction

The Niagara Region Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan (the Plan) was developed through joint consultation between Niagara Region staff, representatives from Niagara Indigenous community agencies, and members from the local Indigenous community. The Plan builds on national recommendations published through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) **Calls to Action**¹, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Final Inquiry's **Calls for Justice**², and the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People (**UNDRIP**)³. Two local reports, **Creating Our Way Forward**⁴ and **Mno Bmaadziwin**⁵, produced on behalf of Niagara Region, were the foundation for the development of the Plan.

In June 2022, Niagara Region Council approved a public statement committing the Region to addressing systemic discrimination and anti-Indigenous racism within its institution⁶. This commitment included establishing the Joint Roundtable, as recommended in the Mno Bmaadziwin report. In addition, the Joint Roundtable would contribute to co-developing an Indigenous Action Plan with First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders and communities.

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- 1 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf
 - 2 National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. 2019. Calls for Justice Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls_for_Justice.pdf
 - 3 United Nations. 2007. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf
 - 4 Davis, Kelly Fran. 2019. Creating Our Way Forward – Recommendations for improving Niagara Region Public Health & Emergency Services' Indigenous Engagement. Niagara Region, Public Health. niagararegion.ca/health/equity/pdf/indigenous-engagement-report.pdf
 - 5 Sturgeon, Wendy. 2021. Mno Bmaadziwin – Living the Good and Healthy Life. Niagara Region, Community Safety and Well-Being. niagararegion.ca/about/inclusive-communities/indigenous-engagement.aspx
 - 6 CAO 6-2022 Council Endorsement of a Public Statement and Commitment to Address Systemic Discrimination and Anti-Indigenous Racism pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=27057

Guiding Approach

In developing the Plan, Indigenous voices and perspectives were put first. It used the approach of two-eyed seeing, which combines traditional Indigenous knowledge and teachings with non-Indigenous world views. Listening to Indigenous perspectives directed the community engagement sessions and the content of the Plan.

Purpose

There are three main aims of the Plan.

- Provide inclusive, equitable, and accessible opportunities for all Indigenous peoples in Niagara
- Achieve physical, mental, social and economic well-being for Indigenous peoples in Niagara
- Work towards reconciliation between Niagara Region and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities

Indigenous Representation at Niagara Region

Following the recommendation of the Creating Our Way Forward report, in 2022 two Indigenous staff positions were created at Niagara Region. One position is focused on Public Health and Emergency Services. The second provides support at the corporate level for all departments. Both were filled by individuals who are active members of the local Indigenous community and were instrumental in bringing an Indigenous perspective in the writing of the Plan. Their involvement will continue to be essential for both implementing the Plan and assessing its ongoing progress.

Joint Roundtable

As recommended in the Mno Bmaadziwin report, a Joint Roundtable was created in 2021 as a way to bring together Indigenous community agency leaders with senior leadership from Niagara Region. This working group contributed to the content of the Plan, directed community engagement, and responded to community feedback. The Joint Roundtable met together five times during the development of the Plan. The Joint Roundtable includes the following groups:

- Representatives from local area Indigenous community agencies, including:
 - Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (FENFC) – Executive Director
 - Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle (IDHC) – Executive Director
 - Niagara Peninsula Area Aboriginal Management Board (NPAAMB) – Executive Director
 - Niagara Chapter Native Women (NCNW) – Executive Director
 - Niagara Region Métis Council (NRMC) – Council President
 - Niagara Regional Native Centre (NRNC) – Executive Director
- Chief of Niagara Regional Police Service
- Senior management of Niagara Region (Corporate Leadership Team)
- Niagara Region Indigenous Relations Staff
 - Indigenous Relations Specialist
 - Indigenous Health Specialist
 - Manager of Diversity Equity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Relations

Process to Develop the Plan

There were three key stages to the development of this Plan.

1. Background summary
2. Community engagement
3. Collaboration with Niagara Region departments and strategic plans

Background Summary

The first step to develop the Plan was to conduct background summary and a jurisdictional scan. This included reviewing local, provincial, and national plans relating to reconciliation, Indigenous engagement, and municipal action plans. Municipal actions were identified from the national reports. These actions alongside the recommendations from the local reports (Mno Bmaadziwin and Creating Our Way Forward) were used to form the base ideas for the Plan. The base ideas were brought to the Joint Roundtable who directed the proposed priorities and actions to form the first version of the Plan.

Community Engagement

The first version of the Plan was brought to Indigenous community members for their input. This included representatives from Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The remainder of community involvement in developing the Plan focused on those living within Niagara Region and Indigenous organizations serving the local Indigenous community.

Indigenous community engagement included in-person and online focus groups, interviews, and surveys. There were organized engagements with specific Indigenous organizations involving staff and community members associated with those organizations. There were also general engagements in central locations that were open to all Indigenous community members. As recommended through the community engagement, the Plan was shared with local non-Indigenous community agencies.

Community organizations involved in the review of the Plan include:

- Community Safety Well-Being Committee
- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre Youth
- Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Niagara College – Indigenous Students and Staff
- Niagara Region Métis Council and Citizens
- Niagara Peninsula Area Aboriginal Management Board (NPAAMB)
- Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation

Online and in-person surveys were available and two in-person community events were held where draft versions of the Plan were shared and opened for discussion and comment (July 2024, Sept. 2025).

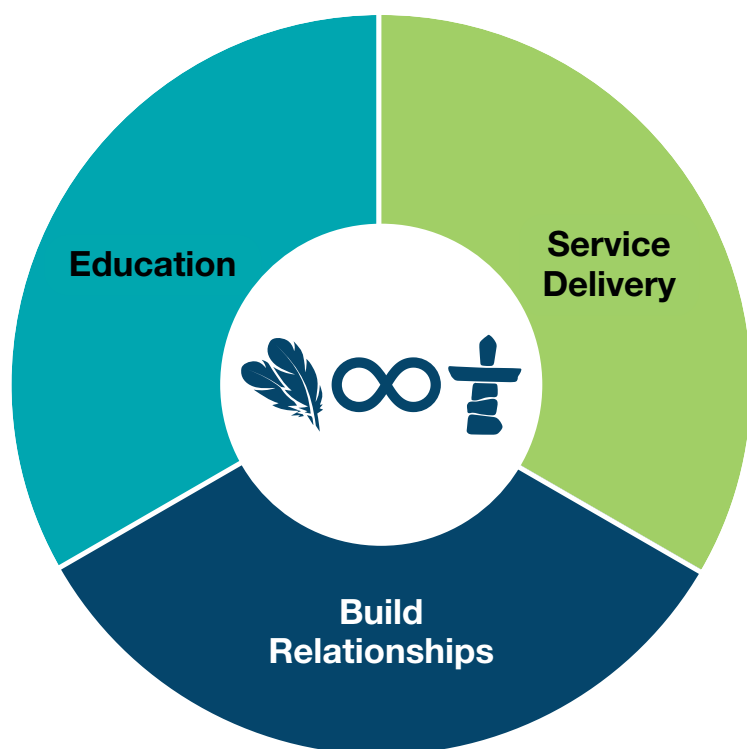
Collaboration with Niagara Region Departments

The content of the Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan has been reviewed by impacted Niagara Region departments. The Plan incorporates input from other Regional initiatives and Plans, as well as recurring themes from community engagement throughout the planning process. This collaboration within Niagara Region builds a greater understanding of ways to better meet the needs of the Indigenous community through its services.

Priorities

The Plan has three connected priorities. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are the heart of the Plan. The Plan will only be successful with the collaboration of Indigenous organizations and

communities in Niagara. Niagara Region must do their work on the path to reconciliation, but success works best when parties work together.



■ Build Relationships

- Keep the principles of the Two Row Wampum. Build stronger relationships on understanding and respect.

■ Education

- Provide relevant and respectful Indigenous training to all staff and Council. Encourage reflection, dialogue and understanding.

■ Service Delivery

- Deliver services that are culturally respectful, inclusive, equitable and accessible. Provide services without bias, racism or discrimination.

Timeline of Activities

The Plan is focused on 2026 to 2030. Activities have been listed as “In Progress”, “Short-Term”, and “Medium-Term”. The “In Progress” activities have already been started based on priorities that came from the community during the engagement process. Short-Term activities

are planned to start between 2026 and 2027. Medium-Term activities will be started between 2028 and 2029. Many activities will be ongoing once they are started and will not have an end date. While other activities will be project-based and have both a start and end date.

1.0 Priority: Build Relationships

Keep the principles of the Two Row Wampum (see Appendix A: Definitions). Build stronger relationships on understanding and respect.

1.1 Establish regular communication between the Indigenous community and Niagara Region

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
1.1.1	Communicate and build connections with the local Indigenous community about Niagara Region programs, services and resources.	In Progress
1.1.2	Support Indigenous community events, including notifying and encouraging staff and council to attend.	In Progress
1.1.3	Provide an annual report of activities and results relating to the Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan.	Short-Term
1.1.4	Hold three Joint Roundtable meetings per year with senior level executives from Niagara Region, Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS) and Niagara Indigenous leaders.	In Progress

1.2 Ensure representation of Indigenous voices within Niagara Region advisory or steering committees is reflective of the local community.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
1.2.1	Promote and increase local Indigenous community representation on Niagara Region advisory and steering committees.	In Progress

1.3 Sign agreements that establish a mutual commitment of respect between Niagara Region and local Indigenous agencies.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
1.3.1	Sign agreements with local agencies. Renew agreements post elections with each new Regional Council.	Medium-Term

1.4 Review and enhance Niagara Region recruitment strategies that attracts, retains, and advances Indigenous people working for Niagara Region.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
1.4.1	Review Niagara Region recruitment strategy to identify gaps, address barriers and promote career opportunities within the Indigenous community.	Short-Term
1.4.2	Establish relationships between Niagara Region Talent Acquisition team and Indigenous community-based career or education promoters.	Short-Term
1.4.3	Participate in Indigenous job fairs at colleges, universities, or in the community.	Medium-Term
1.4.4	Promote opportunities for Indigenous youth work experiences.	Medium-Term
1.4.5	Identify Niagara Region programs with high population of Indigenous clients. Promote key positions through Indigenous networks.	Medium-Term

1.5 Create an inclusive and respectful workplace where Indigenous people feel heard, respected and valued.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
1.5.1	Review Niagara Region human resource policies and procedures to ensure Indigenous staff are satisfied, stay at Niagara Region, and advance in their careers.	Short-Term
1.5.2	Provide space for Indigenous staff to celebrate cultural events, traditions and ceremonies while at work.	Short-Term
1.5.3	Provide support for Indigenous staff to protect their health and well-being through connections to Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and other community leaders, as well as providing time to attend community events as needed.	Medium-Term

1.6 Identify and implement strategies that foster relationships with Indigenous-owned businesses within Niagara Region.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
1.6.1	Create database of local Indigenous businesses and seek to increase opportunities through social procurement process with Niagara Region.	Medium-Term
1.6.2	Educate and increase awareness of Niagara Region formal and informal procurement processes to Indigenous owned businesses.	Medium-Term

2.0 Priority: Education

Provide relevant and respectful Indigenous training to all staff and Council. Encourage reflection and dialogue.

2.1 Deliver cultural awareness training for Niagara Region Council.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
2.1.1	Implement introductory Indigenous cultural awareness training at the start of each cycle of a new Council. Provide ongoing training as required.	In Progress
2.1.2	Create opportunities for Council to attend presentations from Indigenous community organizations and nations.	Short-Term
2.1.3	Implement Call to Action #57 from the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action that focus on intercultural awareness of conflict resolution, human rights and Indigenous anti-racism training for municipal governments.	Short-Term

2.2 Deliver cultural awareness training for all Niagara Region employees.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
2.2.1	Create an introductory level training program that is mandatory for all Niagara Region staff.	In Progress
2.2.2	Work with local Indigenous community agencies or community accepted Elders and / or Knowledge Keepers to create a database of recommended Indigenous trainers, trainings, and resources.	Short-Term
2.2.3	Implement Call to Action #57 from the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action that focus on intercultural awareness of conflict resolution, human rights and Indigenous anti-racism training for municipal governments.	Short-Term
2.2.4	Develop and implement cultural awareness training for Niagara Region staff that is adapted to client-focused service delivery programs.	Short-Term
2.2.5	Provide support for the development and implementation of training within Niagara EMS and Emergency Departments aimed at combating systemic racism against Indigenous communities.	In Progress

2.3 Develop culturally relevant resource materials and make available to staff and Council.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
2.3.1	Implement annual communications plan to educate Niagara Region staff and Council of significant Indigenous dates.	In Progress
2.3.2	Develop and maintain cultural resource materials available to all staff and Council in partnership with Indigenous community agencies, Elders and Knowledge Keepers.	Short-Term

2.4 In partnership with local Indigenous communities increase visibility and inclusion of Indigenous arts, cultures and languages throughout Niagara Region.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
2.4.1	Identify and acknowledge significant locations, events and dates in Niagara that are relevant to the culture, history and tradition of Indigenous people.	In Progress
2.4.2	Develop guidelines for establishing Indigenous gardens on Niagara Region properties.	Short-Term
2.4.3	Develop guidelines for using Indigenous names for new or existing rooms, buildings, or streets.	Medium-Term
2.4.4	Develop guidelines for including Indigenous imagery or art in Niagara Region properties. Work with local Indigenous artists and artisans.	Medium-Term

3.0 Priority: Service Delivery

Deliver services that are culturally respectful, inclusive, equitable and accessible. Provide services without bias, racism and/or discrimination.

3.1 Deliver Niagara Region programs and services that are culturally aware, accessible, and inclusive of a lens of two-eyed seeing when interacting with Indigenous clients.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
3.1.1	Develop a community-based Indigenous advisory circle for Niagara Region staff. Include representation from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.	Short-Term
3.1.2	Develop a process for incorporating an Indigenous lens of two-eyed seeing into programs, services, strategies, policies and procedures.	Short-Term
3.1.3	Work collaboratively with Indigenous partners to identify shared service areas where traditional and Western practices can be integrated, enhancing coordination and reducing service delivery gaps.	Short-Term
3.1.4	Identify and promote opportunities for shared space, joint programs, and staff positions through third party funding (grants).	Medium-Term

3.2 Create culturally inclusive and welcoming environments for Indigenous staff and community members within Niagara Region facilities.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
3.2.1	Develop policies and guidelines to support Indigenous ceremonies and practices on Niagara Region properties.	Short-Term
3.2.2	Develop and implement an audit checklist to evaluate Niagara Region properties for cultural sensitivity and inclusivity for Indigenous staff and community members.	Medium-Term

3.3 Identify priority areas and implement strategies to support community needs, identified health inequities, and determinants of health for the Indigenous community.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
3.3.1	Develop and implement annual work plans with Indigenous organizations to ensure the continued alignment of health strategies with Indigenous community needs.	Short-Term
3.3.2	Advance Niagara Region Public Health Indigenous Health Advisory Circle.	In Progress
3.3.3	Incorporate Indigenous specific actions within Niagara Region strategies.*	In Progress

3.4 Ensure appropriate principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) are used when reviewing or collecting Indigenous data.

Number	Activity Description	Timeline
3.4.1	Develop guidelines for appropriate use of ownership, control, access and possession principles.	Short-Term
3.4.2	Educate staff on ownership, control, access and possession principles and collaborate with Indigenous community agencies to ensure that information and resources are collected, stored, and shared in ways that uphold Indigenous data sovereignty.	Short-Term

*The following are current Niagara Region plans and strategies that incorporate Indigenous specific actions. Feedback received for these strategies was also incorporated into the ReconciliAction Plan. Information was shared between strategies honouring principles of ownership, control, access and possession.

- Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Community Safety Well-Being Action Plan
- Supportive Housing Strategy
- Substance Use Prevention Strategy

Plan Implementation

Responsibility for the Niagara Region Truth Indigenous and ReconciliAction Plan is shared across all Departments, ensuring its integration into the Region's everyday operations and services.

Each activity within the Plan has a designated lead. Here are some examples:

- Indigenous Relations staff – Support Indigenous community events, including notifying and encouraging staff and council to attend
- Human Resources – Participate in Indigenous job fairs at colleges, universities, or in the community
- All departments – Create an introductory level training program that is mandatory for all Niagara Region staff

Each of the Departments connected to the Plan have been consulted during its development. They understand and are committed to their roles and responsibilities to implement the Plan.

Many of the activities also require the collaboration of Indigenous organizations and community members. Some of the key areas that require community collaboration and input include:

- Training and resource development for Niagara Region Council and staff
- Identifying shared service areas and enhancing coordination
- Creating a database of recommended Indigenous trainers and resources
- Developing policies and guidelines to support Indigenous ceremonies and practices

Budget

The budget for implementing the Plan will be incorporated into each Division's annual budget. All centralized activities will be included in the budget for DCAO's Office, the Department that includes the Indigenous Relations Specialist. External grants will be sought for any outstanding budget needs.

Accountability and Measuring Impact

Niagara Region will monitor progress of the Plan on a regular basis. Culturally appropriate evaluation approaches will be used. These will measure impacts and changes from a community perspective. Feedback channels will be put in place to hear from community members throughout the implementation of the Plan.

A communications plan will be developed. This will include annual reporting to the community and Regional Council on the progress of the Plan. Annual updates will be provided to the Joint Roundtable, local Indigenous organizations, at community events, and online.

In Closing

Niagara Region extends sincere thanks to Indigenous community members and partners for their guidance and collaboration. We look forward to continuing this work together in a good way.

Appendix A: Definitions

Cultural Awareness

The understanding and acknowledgment of differences and similarities between cultures, including their unique practices, values and beliefs. It involves recognizing personal experiences, cultural biases and beliefs and how they can influence interactions with others.

Discrimination

Discrimination is when someone is treated poorly because of who they are or what they look like. This could be based on age, skin colour, income, disability, religion, or any aspect of someone's identity. Anti-Indigenous discrimination is when someone is treated poorly because they are, or thought to be, Indigenous. Discrimination can happen between people, when one person treats another person poorly. It can also happen at a systemic level based on policies, processes or rules that create barriers for people to receive the services they need.

Indigenous

The first people of Turtle Island, which includes the land now known as Canada. This includes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit as a collective of the first people.

Indigenous Community

In Niagara this includes Indigenous focused organizations that operate in Niagara such as De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre, Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre, Niagara Chapter Native Women, Niagara Regional Native Centre, Niagara Region Métis Council, Ohsto: Seri Urban Aboriginal Homes, Oonuhseh Niagara Native Homes Inc., and Niagara Peninsula Area Aboriginal Management Board (NPAAMB). It includes Indigenous students and staff at post-Secondary institutions in Niagara and Indigenous community members who work, live in or visit Niagara on a regular basis.

Racism

Discrimination based on a person's perceived race or ethnicity. This could be based on skin colour, clothing, accent, or other identity markers. Anti-Indigenous racism is discrimination associated with the assumption of someone being Indigenous.

Two Row Wampum Belt

An agreement from the 1600s between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch. This agreement was for harmonious relationship. There are two rows of purple wampum beads that represent the two boats of the nations. "In one row is a ship with our White Brothers' ways; in the other a canoe with our ways. Each will travel down the river of life side by side. Neither will attempt to steer the other's vessel." The purple rows are surrounded by three white rows of wampum

beads. These symbolize all the wonderful things that foster a respectful and harmonious relationship, such as respect, kindness, and acceptance. This agreement is still in place today. “Together we will travel in Friendship and in Peace Forever; as long as the grass is green, as long as the water runs downhill, as long as the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, and as long as our Mother Earth will last.”⁷

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada took six years to hear from over 6,750 Indian Residential School survivors. It discovered and revealed the impacts and intergenerational effects on the former students as well as their descendants. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission included 94 Calls to Action. There are actions for all levels of government to make changes to policies and programs to address the harms caused by the residential schools and move towards reconciliation.

Two-Eyed Seeing

Two-eyed seeing is a cultural perspective that combines the strength of traditional Indigenous knowledge and teachings with non-Indigenous world views. It is a guiding principle for decision making and service delivery based on a combined, respectful, and balanced perspective.

Turtle Island

The name many Indigenous nations use to reference what has become known as North America. This is based on a number of Indigenous Creation Stories that tell of how the first people came to live on land that was formed on the back of a great turtle. Turtle Island also references Indigenous teachings that the land is a living entity.

UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration for Indigenous People)

A global human rights document adopted by the United Nations in 2007 to uphold the rights of Indigenous people world-wide. It includes self-determination, self-government, cultural preservation and the right to be free from discrimination. It serves as a framework for governments to align their laws and actions.

In Canada, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act became law on June 21, 2021. Under the Act the government must work in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples.

⁷ Two Row Wampum – Gaswéñdah. 2025. Onondaga Nation Website. onondaganation.org/culture/wampum/two-row-wampum-belt-guswenta

Appendix B: Supporting Documents

Davies, Fran. 2019. Creating Our Way Forward - Recommendations for Improving Niagara Region Public Health and Emergency Services' Indigenous Engagement. niagararegion.ca/health/equity/pdf/indigenous-engagement-report.pdf

Government of Canada. 2022. Fact sheet – The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/fact-fiche.html

Government of Canada. Jordan's Principle. sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1568396042341/1568396159824

National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. 2019. Calls for Justice - Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls_for_Justice.pdf

Sturgeon, Wendy. 2021. Mno Bmaadziwin: Living the Good and Healthy Life, Community Safety and Well-Being. Indigenous Engagements Report. niagararegion.ca/about/inclusive-communities/indigenous-engagement.aspx

Survivors' Secretariat survivorssecretariat.ca/

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf

United Nations. 2007. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf



