

14 Enacting Reconciliation

Chapter Outline

This chapter examines reconciliation and the challenges associated in attempting to make this a reality. As the chapter points out, this task will require a change in the way Canadians think and governments operate if reconciliation is to become a reality.

The chapter begins with an overview of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It includes discussion of why the TRC was created, its mandate, and the result of the TRC. It is demonstrated that the truth part of the process has been provided through the evidence of the Commission. The chapter then turns to a discussion of colonialism. Through a number of examples, the author demonstrates that colonialism is not just a historical matter but continues unabated in forms of resource extraction under the protection of the state the non-return of Indigenous lands.

The chapter goes on to examine issues of recognition, remorse, restitution, and reconciliation. Truth is a necessary but insufficient condition of reconciliation, and for reconciliation to take place, change needs to occur. The most important changes are power relationships, institutions, and specific and continuing actions. In other words, more than simple truth telling is needed. The chapter warns that there is a danger that Canadians have assumed that the TRC has accomplished reconciliation and that it is now time to “just get over it.” The author argues that in order for reconciliation to take place there is a need not to renew the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canadians but rather embark on a new relationship.

The chapter concludes by arguing that there is a need to question and examine claims of reconciliation closely. The author argues that this is a key time and opportunity for all living in Canada to do better than the settler-state status quo.

Learning Objectives

- To recognize the role purpose and outcome of the TRC
- To acknowledge colonialism as both a historical and contemporary issue
- To acknowledge forms of colonialism occurring today
- To recognize what is need for reconciliation to become a reality
- To determine how a new relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada can be constructed in order to result in reconciliation

Study Questions

1. Why was the TRC created?
2. What was the outcome of the TRC?
3. Are there differences between historical and contemporary forms of colonialism?
4. Is truth needed in order for reconciliation to take place? Why or why not?
5. Why do some Canadians ask, “why can’t they just get over it?”
6. Why do some Canadians believe that the TRC resulted in reconciliation?
7. What can non-Indigenous Canadians do to help make reconciliation a reality?
8. What can governments in Canada do to help make reconciliation a reality?
9. What can Indigenous people do to help make reconciliation a reality?
10. Why should we be cautious about government claims that they have attained a level of reconciliation?

Additional Resources

Readings

Asch, Michael, John Borrows and James Tully eds. 2018. *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler relations and Earth Teachings*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Miller, J.R.. 2018. *Residential Schools and Reconciliation: Canada Confronts Its History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Manuel, Arthur. 2017. *The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, rebuilding the Economy*. Toronto: James Lorimer.

Nichols, Joshua. 2019. *A Recognition Without Recollection? An Investigation of the Foundations of Aboriginal Law in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Niezen, Ronald. 2017. *Truth and Indignation: Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Websites

Beyond 94: Where is Canada at with reconciliation? <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/beyond-94-truth-and-reconciliation-1.4574765>

This site provides an updated tracking of the TRC’s 94 calls to action

The Road to Reconciliation <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/the-road-to-reconciliation/>

From the Indigenous Peoples Atlas, this site provides an overview of reconciliation in Canada.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada <http://www.trc.ca/>

This website provides access to the TRC and includes findings, documents, reports and a wealth of other information.