

The Salvation Army in Canada and Indigenous Peoples

A journey of reconciliation

A resource provided by the
Social Issues Committee
and
Territorial Indigenous Ministries
The Salvation Army
Canada and Bermuda Territory



The Salvation Army in Canada and Bermuda has committed to a journey of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada. It is a journey that many churches across Canada are taking.

This booklet provides information and guidance to Salvationists on how to walk this journey of reconciliation and be part of building positive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Together let us seek God's direction and blessing as we move forward in reconciliation and relationship building.



Photo: Pamela Richardson

Contents

A Story.....1

Terms and Definitions.....2

A Brief History of Colonization.....4

Truth and Reconciliation.....6

The Salvation Army and Reconciliation.....9

Moving Forward.....11

Protocols.....13

Sources Consulted.....15



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A Story

“Mom ... Mommy, here?”

I looked up and watched a dark-haired young woman bend low and speak quietly in the ear of a toddler who was the first to enter the row a few ahead of my own. Her tiny ponytail bobbed just barely visible below the back of the pew as she turned and slid to a sitting position, allowing her mother to step in and sit beside her. I found myself admiring the beadwork of her earrings as the woman settled in.

I watched others file in and fill the rows in front of these guests. They filled the row behind, they filled mine. Repeatedly, I watched people glance over at the young woman and her daughter and then sit somewhere else. The little girl caught my eye, her ponytail working desperately to escape from the confines of its ribbon. I was graced with a shy smile before she leaned into her mother and slid down into the pew once again. She was full of energy, no question, which offered poor explanation for the furrowed brows and over-the-shoulder glances laced with chastisement directed their way.

Still admiring the earrings, I found myself reviewing astonishing stories of exclusion and presumption I had been told by my Indigenous friends. My mind involuntarily reviewed my recent learning about communities devastated by the legacy of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, suicide crises among young people and ongoing issues with water, transportation, child welfare and poor quality schools.

Remembering how difficult I found it myself the first time we came, I wondered what barriers this little family may have crossed just to walk in the door on this particular morning.

After watching yet another family jostle their way into a cramped space across the aisle, I “excuse me’d” my way down my own row and stepped in beside the little girl and her mom. The little one’s eyes danced a shy smile in response to my own and after her initial look of surprise, the young woman nodded a greeting. I leaned over, extended my hand and said, “Good morning.” The woman smiled back then, and took my hand.

Take a moment to reflect...

What are some of the thoughts and feelings you had while reading this story?

How might you have responded in this situation?

How has God spoken to you through this story?

Terms and Definitions

Aboriginal peoples: Section 35(1) of the Canada Act (1982) (The Canadian Constitution) states that the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples. As descendants of the original inhabitants of North America, they have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. Also known as Indigenous peoples and First peoples.

Band: A term established by the Indian Act (1876) to identify a group of Indigenous peoples for whom lands have been set apart and money is held in trust by the federal government. Also known as First Nations.

First Nations: A term that has replaced “Indian” in common usage. There are many First Nations in Canada: Innu, Cree, Sauteaux, Ojibwe, Haida, Dene, Mohawk, Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Blood, Secwepmec, and so on. Each has its own governance, history, culture and traditions. Many First Nations use their traditional names according to their own language (e.g., Anishinaabe or Haudenosaunee).



Photo: Pamela Richardson

Indigenous peoples: A global term used to identify Aboriginal peoples in any part of the planet. The term recognizes that peoples who are the original inhabitants of a place, and marginalized by ethnic groups who arrived later, share much in common. The use of the word “peoples” is a recognition of collective rights.

Indian: A term originally used to describe the hundreds of distinct nations of Indigenous peoples throughout North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. It was adopted by the Government of Canada and incorporated into the Indian Act (1876). It is often used in the context of historical government departments, documents, policies and laws. This term is rarely used in other contexts; the terms Indigenous and First peoples are preferred.

Indian Act: A federal legislation first passed in 1876 that sets out certain federal government obligations and responsibilities towards Indigenous peoples and their reserved lands. It has undergone numerous amendments, revisions and repeals. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada administers the Act.

Inuit: Northern Indigenous peoples who have their homelands in Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador), Nunatukavut (Southern Labrador), Nunavik (Quebec), Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories). Inuit were formerly called Eskimo, a derogatory term.

Métis: Originally, people born of or descended from both French and Indigenous parents. Today, the term Métis is adopted by people of mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry. The Métis have their own culture and history.

Oral tradition: The verbal transmission of a people’s cultural heritage, history, stories and accounts passed on from generation to generation through narratives, songs, chants, music, literature and other forms.

Sixties Scoop: A practice occurring between the 1960s and the late 1980s, during which time an estimated 20,000 Indigenous children were fostered or adopted out through the child welfare system to non-Indigenous families within and outside of Canada. As a result, many children lost their family and community, culture, history and Indian status.

A Brief History of Colonization

What was Canada like before first contact?

Canada, the country we know today, was born from the European fascination with exploration, imperialism and colonization that began in the 15th century. However, the history of this land dates back far earlier.

Thousands of years before European contact, Indigenous peoples established societies that developed sustainable economies, advanced political systems, complex spiritual beliefs, and rich, vibrant cultures. Land was and continues to be foundational for the identity of Indigenous peoples.

How did colonization begin?

Northern European explorers first landed on the eastern shores of North America in the 11th century. Several centuries later, the continent was dramatically changed when other Europeans arrived and established settlements. In 1541, French King Francis I commissioned an expedition to North America to inhabit the land and establish law and the Christian faith.

While this settlement did not last, Canada was eventually colonized. Many explorers were commissioned by the French Crown to North America. Exploiting natural resources — namely, furs — required skilled, knowledgeable and independent workers. As a result, Indigenous peoples maintained a high degree of autonomy.

The British also established colonies and large-scale settlements. Agriculture became a primary industry, and significant pressure was put on Indigenous lands. Although land was often purchased from Indigenous peoples, the transfers were frequently coerced with threats of force and other means of illegal transfer.

How was colonization justified?

By British standards, Indigenous peoples were not using the land that is now Canada as productively as possible. As a result, under British laws and British concepts of “possession,” the colonizers believed they had a right to the land where they intended to “improve” it.

Colonizers in North America were guided by two distinct, but often connected, concepts: *terra nullius* and the Doctrine of Discovery.

What is terra nullius?

Terra nullius means “no one’s land.” The concept was used by Europeans arriving in the New World to justify their colonization of Indigenous lands. They argued that Indigenous peoples simply “occupied” the land; they did not own it. Their presence did not void a claim of *terra nullius*.

What is the Doctrine of Discovery?

The 15th century was a time when power was held by both governments and the church. The Roman Catholic Church legitimated control and imperial expansion through a series of papal bulls, or charters issued by the Pope. With these bulls, the papacy granted Indigenous lands to the Portuguese Crown. These documents were used to justify British and French actions in North America and the resulting colonization of the Americas.

In the 1820s, the Doctrine of Discovery was confirmed as a legal convention by the U.S. Supreme Court. Ownership of or sovereignty over the land passed automatically to Europeans by virtue of their having “discovered” it.

How else did colonization affect the Indigenous peoples?

Acts of colonization marginalized Indigenous peoples in a number of ways, and the effects of these acts remain present today. Among the evils of colonization was a residential school system made up of industrial schools, boarding schools and student residences. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up in the 1830s. They eliminated parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural and spiritual development of Indigenous children. In 1884, the Indian Act was amended to include compulsory residential school attendance for Indigenous children under the age of 16. This was part of a larger effort to resolve what was perceived to be the “Indian problem.”

By the 1940s, the government and most missionary bodies determined that the schools were ineffective. Indigenous protests helped to secure a change in

policy leading to the closure of residential schools. However, the last remaining school, located in Saskatchewan, did not close its doors until 1996.

Photo: Public Domain: John Woodruff, Regina, 1908



Truth and Reconciliation

What does the Bible say about reconciliation?

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18 ESV)

The Salvation Army is committed to reconciliation, not as an external imposition, but out of our own deeply held convictions arising from our reading of the Scriptures.

The Bible teaches that due to our sin and rebellion, humanity exists in a fallen state, alienated from our Creator and liable to his judgment (see Romans 3:23; 2 Corinthians 5:10). But God initiated a plan of salvation (“all this is from God”) that would restore our relationship, in which he “reconciled us to himself.” He did this “through Christ,” especially through his death on the cross.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous Christians alike are commissioned with a “ministry of reconciliation” that calls us to share the good news that everyone may “be reconciled to God” (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). And the hope of reconciliation is not limited to our relationship to God. It includes being reconciled with one another: loving our neighbours (see Mark 12:31), being peacemakers in a troubled world (see Matthew 5:9) and supporting those who struggle (see Proverbs 31:20). In short, we are called to be ministers of reconciliation with one another.

However, we recognize that many have been alienated from this reconciling message because of the failure of Christians to live it out. We seek to repent of this with integrity and humility, and to live up to our calling to be reconciled with each other (see Matthew 5:23-24).



Photo: Pamela Richardson

What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada?

The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was a consequence of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (2007), the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. The TRC held the mandate of facilitating reconciliation among former students of residential schools, their families, their communities and all Canadians. The seven goals of the TRC were to:

- acknowledge residential school experiences, impacts and consequences;
- provide a holistic, culturally appropriate and safe setting for former students, their families and communities attending the TRC;
- witness, support, promote and facilitate truth and reconciliation events nationally and locally;
- promote public awareness and education about the residential school system and its impacts;
- create a comprehensive record of the residential school system and its impacts;
- produce a report on the residential school system concerning the following: its history, purpose, operation and supervision; its consequences, including systemic harms, intergenerational consequences and impact on human dignity; its ongoing legacy; and recommendations to the Government of Canada; and
- support commemoration of former students and their families.

How did the TRC accomplish these goals?

Between 2008 and 2015, the TRC travelled across Canada, hosting seven national public events. More than 6,500 witnesses were heard, resulting in a six-volume Final Report. In June 2015, the TRC held its closing event in Ottawa and presented an executive summary of its findings. This summary included 94 Calls to Action to further reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Everyone in Canada is encouraged to read the executive summary of the Final Report and learn more about the history of the residential school system and the repercussions it has on our society today.

What are the 94 Calls to Action?

They indicate that reconciliation requires knowing the truth: Residential schools were only one piece of a systemic effort to absorb or assimilate Indigenous peoples in Canada. Cultural assimilation has left an enduring mark on our society.

They also identify the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for moving from truth to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Of the 94 Calls to Action, only one had a specific deadline. Call to Action 48 was to be completed by March 31, 2016. It called churches, faith groups and inter-faith groups to issue a statement indicating how they will implement the principles, norms and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.

What is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

This Declaration is considered the most comprehensive instrument on rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. The United Nations General Assembly adopted it in 2007. Global in its scope, it was also adopted by Canada. The Declaration repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*. Instead, it offers the following:

- an outline of rights for individuals and collective groups;
- a determination of basic standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of Indigenous peoples;
- an affirmation of the basic rights of Indigenous peoples to education, health, employment and language;
- an affirmation of the rights of Indigenous peoples to remain as distinct peoples and to pursue their own economic, social and cultural development priorities;
- a call for an end to discrimination against Indigenous peoples; and
- encouragement of harmonious and co-operative relations between nation states and Indigenous peoples.

The Salvation Army and Reconciliation

What is The Salvation Army in Canada and Bermuda doing about this?

The Salvation Army was represented in an ecumenical response issued on March 30, 2016.



The Canada and Bermuda Territory also issued its own response, indicating it would be faithful in implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation. The Salvation Army understands that reconciliation “is an ongoing process that acknowledges our past with Indigenous peoples, reframes our current relationships and works toward a future based on dignity and trust.”

The Salvation Army’s response can be summarized in the following themes:

Accessibility: Identify and break down barriers Indigenous peoples face in meeting basic needs and receiving services.

Trust: Develop relationships of mutual respect with Indigenous peoples and groups by a) celebrating the Indigenous presence and expressions within The Salvation Army; b) engaging in partnerships with Indigenous groups; and c) maintaining a commitment to reconciliation, truth and accountability with Indigenous peoples.

Awareness and education:

Find active ways of encouraging Salvationists to understand the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the importance of upholding human rights.

Leadership development:

Develop Indigenous leaders within The Salvation Army.

Women’s equality: Promote and maintain women’s rights and offer ongoing support for Indigenous women experiencing violence.

The Salvation Army encourages all leaders to reach out to local Indigenous communities to open pathways for dialogue. Each of us has a part in this important process of reconciliation.



Photo: Pamela Richardson



Photo: Pamela Richardson

Moving Forward

What's the first step for reconciliation?

The first step is education. Read books and watch documentaries that recount the historic relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Plan to host a book club or offer a movie and discussion night at your corps. Take a look at these resources.

“8th Fire: Aboriginal Peoples, Canada and the Way Forward” – cbc.ca/8thfire. (film)

Cheryl Bear-Barnetson, *Introduction to First Nations Ministry*. (book)

Steve Heinrichs, ed., *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry*. (book)

Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*. (book)

“Reserve 107: Reconciliation on the Prairies” – reserve107thefilm.com. (film and study guide)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children: Canada, Aboriginal Peoples and Residential Schools*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012. (book)

Richard Twiss, *One Church, Many Tribes*. (book)

Randy Woodley, *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity*. (book)

How can my corps get active in building relationships with Indigenous peoples?

Nothing replaces the face-to-face encounter. Consider featuring an Indigenous speaker at your corps. You might be able to find an Elder willing to host a sharing circle for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Building relationships requires that everyone feels safe – safe enough to share and safe enough to listen. This kind of safety is experienced when each person feels they can trust the other person. A feeling of trust develops only when people demonstrate mutual respect. In short, respect leads to trust, and trust leads to safety.

Consider the following guidelines for nurturing respect, trust and a sense of safety.

Pray: Pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Pray for openness to the experiences and perspectives of others. Pray for an attitude of trust and respect, not fear and suspicion. Pray for an attitude of love.

Read the Bible: What is Scripture saying about reconciliation and relationship building?

Make space: Set aside a time and a place where all voices can be heard. Approach the encounter with an attitude of respect and a willingness to learn.

Listen carefully: Hear what people say. Consider that Martha was distracted by her work while Mary was rewarded for listening well (see Luke 10:38-42).

Reflect silently: You may hear stories that provoke deep emotions. Ask yourself: Does what I'm hearing make me ...

- sad or sorrowful?
- angry or bitter?
- challenged?
- encouraged to move forward in hope?

Show humility: Each of us lives in a culture where injustice and discrimination are inflicted on Indigenous peoples. Examine your attitudes toward Indigenous peoples.

Look for opportunities: Ask yourself, "How can I be part of a faithful community that actively respects Indigenous peoples in Canada?" and "How can I journey with Indigenous followers of Jesus?"

Develop partnerships: Contact a friendship centre and ask if members of your corps are welcome to participate in programming or learn from Indigenous peoples there. Locate friendship centres through the National Association of Friendship Centres (nafc.ca/en/friendship-centres).

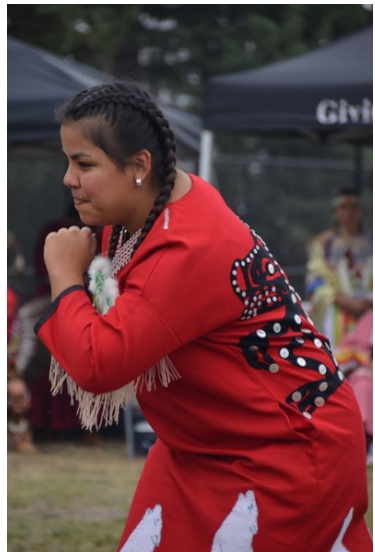


Photo: Pamela Richardson

Protocols

Are there protocols I need to know about?

We live and work on the traditional lands of Indigenous communities. While it is not mandatory to offer an acknowledgment of territory at every worship service, at the beginning of large, formal or special gatherings, an official acknowledgement of traditional territory or “welcome ceremony” may be appropriate.

How do I offer this acknowledgment?

Friendship centres and local band offices can help clarify which land you are gathering on, and which protocol and welcome is most appropriate. You can locate traditional territories through native-land.ca. The corps ministries department has also provided each divisional headquarters with basic information about the territories, treaties and peoples that are encompassed in each division.

A sample acknowledgment

“As we gather, we begin by acknowledging the traditional territory of the Indigenous peoples of this land. For many thousands of years, the _____ peoples have sought to walk gently on this land. We thank them for their hospitality which they showed as they first offered assistance and shared their knowledge of how to live on this land with the first European travellers who came to this region. We acknowledge the First Nations communities in this area, the _____, as they continue to offer hospitality to Canadians who live on this land. May we learn to walk gently with one another with deep respect and honour.”

Who are Elders?

Elders are important and esteemed members of Indigenous communities. They are the keepers of knowledge about Indigenous history, culture and ceremonies. They are also respected as spiritual leaders in the community. They teach through a variety of ways, including prayer, lecture and ceremony. When seeking the teaching of an Elder, it is helpful to know their community affirms them as an Elder and supports their engagement with other communities.

How do I invite an Elder?

Protocol for asking an Elder a question or seeking their input or contribution varies according to culture, such as the Inuit or Long House traditions. Seeking input on protocol for your region can be done through most friendship centres or Indigenous organizations. An honorarium should be presented as an appreciation for what an Elder has shared. In addition, a traditional or symbolic gift may be presented.



Photo: Pamela Richardson

Sources Consulted

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United Nations, "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (2007).

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Photo: Pamela Richardson

For more information on reconciliation and
relationship building go to:
SalvationArmyEthics.org
and
saMinistryResources.ca/indigenous-ministries

Social Issues Committee
and
Territorial Indigenous Ministries

The Salvation Army
Canada and Bermuda Territory

“All this is from God,
who through Christ reconciled us to himself
and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”
—2 Corinthians 5:18 ESV

