



# Media Briefing Paper

KAIROS Media Briefing Papers are written to help inform public discourse on key domestic and foreign issues.

March 2016

## Reconciliation begins with education

**KAIROS & Legacy of Hope networks mobilize to advance full implementation of Indigenous history and culture in public schools**



*KAIROS Mass Blanket Exercise  
on Parliament Hill, June 2015.*

“I never knew.”

This comment is often made by Canadians who participate in the [Blanket Exercise](#), an interactive KAIROS workshop that teaches the history of Canada from an Indigenous perspective. They confide that they never knew about the Indian Residential Schools (IRS), which the Canadian government funded and several churches ran for 130 years.

They never knew because the IRS and other impacts of colonization are seldom taught in public schools. Indigenous peoples continue to suffer from the abuses that seven generations of Indigenous children experienced during this national project of assimilation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), KAIROS Canada and the Legacy of Hope Foundation want to redress this legacy. The TRC outlines [94 Calls to Action](#), released in June 2015 after a five year cross Canada consultation process. One of them, Call to Action number 62.1, urges each province to “make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.”

KAIROS has partnered with Legacy of Hope to advance this Call through a campaign called **Education for Reconciliation**. They created a [Report Card](#) on Provincial and Territorial Curriculum on Indigenous Peoples as a baseline to assess progress in achieving reconciliation through education in schools across Canada.



“We applaud the provincial and territorial governments that have pledged their commitment to mandatory curriculum and urge all educational ministries to work with Indigenous educators to fully implement the TRC’s Call to Action #62 as soon as possible,” says Jennifer Henry, KAIROS’ Executive Director.

To date, no province receives top marks. Only Alberta and Saskatchewan receive passing grades. We are encouraged by Alberta’s initiative in ensuring that the residential schools are taught in Grades 4, 7 and 10 Social Studies, and in its public commitment to realizing #62.i, but needs to set deadlines to meet its commitments.

Since November 2015, KAIROS and Legacy of Hope have mobilized their networks to gather signatures on petitions calling on provincial governments to fully implement this call. They will deliver these petitions to the ministers of education and provincial representatives in April.

“We can end the ignorance about our history in one generation if provincial governments ensure that all Canadian students learn about the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada,” says Henry. “If we teach our children the truth, they can be leaders in the critically important work of bringing about reconciliation in our country.”

Education means not only learning a history that many are never taught, but, for non-Indigenous people, unlearning attitudes and behaviours that contribute to intolerance and racism. Canadians and Indigenous peoples were often taught that Indigenous cultures were inferior to those of Europeans.

“As a result of the efforts of our networks, we expect to see vast improvements in our reports cards by the end of 2016,” says Henry.

## **Report Card: Alberta’s Curriculum on Indigenous Peoples**

Currently, there is residential school content in mandatory Grade 4, 7 and 10 Social Studies courses and in an optional Grade 12 Social Studies course. Alberta has made substantial commitments to mandatory courses on the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties and the history of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples for all K-12 students in provincially-run schools. With the appointment of an Acting Assistant Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Learning, the hope is for a coordinated and collaborative approach that will ensure continued work with Indigenous partners. However, there is no definite timeline for implementation and research is ongoing. Alberta leads most provinces in realizing TRC 62.i, but significant work is still required.

### **TRC Calls to Action**

62.1 We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.

For report cards of other provinces, and the assessment criteria, visit: [Report Card: Provincial and Territorial Curriculum on Indigenous Peoples](#)

| <b>ALBERTA</b>                |   |                  |   |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------|---|
| <i>Provincial Curriculum:</i> | <i>Covers residential schools, Treaties and the historic and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples</i> | <i>Mandatory</i> | <i>Taught from Kindergarten to Grade 12</i> |
| <b>Public Commitment</b>      | <b>Good</b>   | <b>Excellent</b> | <b>Excellent</b>                            |
| <b>Actual Implementation</b>  | <b>Needs Improvement</b>  | <b>Good</b>      | <b>Significant Work Required</b>            |

## Resources on Reconciliation

[Indigenous Issues Primers](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)

[TRC Executive Summary of Findings](#)

[TRC Calls to Action](#)

[Strength for Climbing: Steps on the Journey of Reconciliation](#)

[Doctrine of Discovery](#)

[World Council of Churches' Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery](#)

[Analysis and excerpt from the Royal Proclamation, 1763](#)

[Broken Covenant, a film from Mennonite Church Canada,](#)

[Settler Treaty Rights](#)

[Treaties from 1760 - 1923: Two sides to the story](#)

[The Indian Act, 1876, a fact sheet by N. Tidridge](#)

[White Paper \(1969\)](#) [White Paper \(1969\) Summary](#)

## Quotable

"The history of Indian Residential Schools in this country, and what needs to be done to address the legacy of them, is not just something for and about Aboriginal people. As a country, this chapter of our history belongs to all of us. As its citizens, we all own our past, just as we will all own its future." — *Marie Wilson, TRC Commissioner*



"We need to remember those children who never came home, the unmarked graves at the many of the Indian Residential Schools and think about those parents who never knew what happened to their children. This is what you need to be teaching your children, your grandchildren, your great grandchildren. You need to be teaching it in your schools and you need to make it a priority. There's no choice; that every single Minister of Education is implementing the real history of Canada's colonization." - *Ellen Gabriel, Kanehsatà:ke Mohawk Territory, Indigenous Human Rights Activist*



*KAIROS Blanket Exercise.*

[Red Paper \(response to the White Paper\)](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples  
– Highlights](#)

[UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

[Fact Sheet on the United Nations Declaration on the  
Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

[Video presenting the Declaration](#)

[Residential School Resources, Aboriginal Health  
Foundation:](#)

[Residential School Settlement Agreement](#)

[Learning from the Past: Selected Documents of Reconciliation and Apology from Canadian  
Government and Churches](#)

[Government of Canada's Apology to Survivors of Indian Residential Schools](#)

[CBC Aboriginal: Debunking the myth that Canadian schools teach enough about indigenous people](#)