



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, held 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.

One reason they never knew is because the IRS and other impacts of colonialism are seldom taught in schools. Indigenous peoples continue to suffer from the abuse that seven generations of Indigenous children experienced during this national project of assimilation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (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 62.i, urges each province and territory 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 Saskatchewan and Alberta receive passing grades. New Brunswick, which has little to no mandatory curriculum that covers Indigenous issues, is one of the provinces with the most work to do to realize #62.1.

Since November 2015, KAIROS and Legacy of Hope have mobilized their networks to gather signatures on petitions calling on provincial and territorial 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 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 in Canada were often taught that Indigenous cultures are 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: New Brunswick Curriculum on Indigenous Peoples

The New Brunswick curriculum does not cover residential schools or other Indigenous issues, although the need to address this gap has been identified. There is a Grade 12 Native Studies course but it is not mandatory. A mandatory online professional development course on cultural awareness is under development and the Ministry of Education has supported the creation of four illustrated children’s books that tell stories of First Nations in New Brunswick.

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

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.

| NEW BRUNSWICK | | | |
|------------------------|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Provincial Curriculum: | Covers residential schools, Treaties and the historic and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples | Mandatory | Taught from Kindergarten to Grade 12 |
| Public Commitment | Needs Improvement | Needs Improvement | Significant Work Required |
| Actual Implementation | Significant Work Required | Significant Work Required | Significant Work Required |

Resources on Reconciliation

[Indigenous Issues Primers](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)

[Summary of the Final Report of the TRC](#)

[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](#)

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

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 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.

[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](#)