THE TRUST GAP – IDEA STARTERS

RECONCILI-*ACTION*

MEANINGFUL APPROACHES TO DECOLONIZING ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

THE CONTEXT

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report in 2015, along with 10 Principles of Reconciliation.[i] These principles act as guideposts for undertaking the work of decolonization and reconciliation in Canada and uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as "the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society." [ii]

As we work to address the dark actions and genocide perpetrated upon the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples through colonization, a new relationship between settlers and Indigenous Peoples must be established that is mutually beneficial for all parties, based on respect, and acknowledges past actions, transparency, and trust.

How can institutions and organizations build trust and demonstrate meaningful leadership as they undertake decolonization and Indigenization initiatives?

WHY IT MATTERS

While there has been some progress towards reconciliation and decolonization across sectors, there have also been stumbling blocks and many of the Calls to Action remain stalled or have not started.[iii] Existing commitments to reconciliation are also increasingly at risk as institutions and organizations reduce diversity, equity, and inclusion in times of financial hardship.[iv] However, a strong institutional focus on the complexities of reconciliation can also create space for knowledge sharing, allow for emergent innovation, and further build institutional confidence and trust.

It is also becoming increasingly evident that reconciliation will not only lead to more equitable economic outcomes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, but for the broader Canadian economy as well. According to the National Indigenous Economic Development Board, there is a potential $27.7 billion annual contribution that fully mobilized Indigenous labour contribution to Canada's GDP.[v] This work is integral to building a prosperous and inclusive future for everyone who calls Canada home.

WHAT WE KNOW

The pace of progress has been slow and limited.

- Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, many institutions and organizations have developed policies and documents outlining their commitments to reconciliation. However, as of 2022, only 13 of the 94 Calls to Action have been completed.[vi]
- While the need to redress concerns in truth-telling and reconciliation has existed since the beginning of colonialism, it is only recently that these issues have entered Canadian consciousness broadly, with the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation recognized as a federal holiday in 2021.[vii]
- Reconciliation is taking many forms across Canada and is often loosely defined. Decolonization and reconciliation include economic empowerment, Indigenous sovereignty, learning and un-learning, and, at its centre, establishing an equitable framework for sharing prosperity in Canada. As many institutions and organizations begin or continue, this work, sharing knowledge and building trust will allow this work to move more quickly and at a broader scale.

SPOTLIGHTING ACTIONS & SUCCESSES

Indigenous Watchdog

The Indigenous Watchdog acts as a repository, providing updates from news stories and reports on issues beyond Reconciliation, including drinking water advisories, food insecurity, housing, suicide prevention, treaties and land claims, and the environment.

Yellowhead Institute

The Yellowhead Institute is a research and education centre based at Toronto Metropolitan University and produces research reports, papers, lectures, and courses relevant to reclamation of Indigenous land and life. These organizations are focused on accountability and progress, and great places to build an understanding of why the Calls to Action are important, how to interpret them, and how to action them.

Post-Secondary Progress

One sector where Reconciliation work has been transformative is in post-secondary education. In addition to TMU establishing the Yellowhead Institute—itself, an innovation in the sector—other institutions have also been making progress in this space for some time:

- OCAD University has had an Indigenous Education Council in place since 2008 and has developed an Indigenous Student Centre aimed at supporting the academic, cultural, social, and environmental needs and well-being of Indigenous OCAD U students. Additionally, OCAD U continues to conduct Indigenous Faculty Cluster Hires, developed an Indigenous Visual Cultures Bachelor of Fine Arts program, and includes Indigenous specific services in their Admissions and Recruitment office. Reconciliation is embedded into OCAD U's latest Academic Strategic Plan.
- Centennial College has established an Indigenous Reconciliation and Healing (The Eighth Fire) department aimed at implementing the college's Indigenous Strategic Framework. The work this department does at Centennial has been recognized with a Gold Medal of Indigenous Education Excellence in 2016 and is guided by the college's Aboriginal Education Council and Aboriginal Education Steering Committee. The college has also conducted Indigenous Faculty Cluster Hires as a part of their equitable hiring practices.

KEY TERMS

Reconciliation:
The process of establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada, with an awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes and action to change behavior.[viii]

Decolonization:
The process of deconstructing colonial ideologies of the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches. Decolonization involves valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and approaches and rethinking Western biases or assumptions that have impacted Indigenous ways of being.[ix]

Indigenization:
A process of naturalizing Indigenous knowledge systems and making them evident to transform spaces, places, and hearts. This involves bringing Indigenous knowledge and approaches together with Western systems.[x]

RECONCILIATION ACTION PILLARS

The following pillars have been identified as Reconciliation Action Pillars for CivicAction and have been adapted from Ontario Power Generation's Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan.[xi] The content of these pillars is informed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Principles of Truth and Reconciliation. These pillars can become a framework to explore accountabilities within organizations, and can act as a roadmap for reconciliation work:

- **Leadership:** Commit to reconciliation as a journey and track progress on accountability with metrics and targets around commitments.
- **Relationships:** Build positive and mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous communities and peoples based on respect and understanding.
- **People:** Create an engaged and inclusive workforce that reflects the broad diversity of Indigenous communities and peoples across our organization.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Advance economic reconciliation with Indigenous communities and businesses through meaningful engagement, collaboration, and partnership with an aim to provide avenues for economic opportunity for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.
- **Urbanization and Environment:** Be a trusted partner and ally in advancing reconciliation in the urban environment, including allyship in addressing challenges facing our region's urban Indigenous population.

NOTE: This document is intended to provide general background and spotlight actions and innovations in the space. It is not intended to be a complete or definitive set of facts about the topic. Wherever possible, sources have been cited. We apologize for any errors or omissions.

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THE TRUST GAP – IDEA STARTERS

BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES *WITH* COMMUNITY

BUILDING SAFE & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL

THE CONTEXT

Toronto is considered among the top ten safest cities in Canada[i] — but the reality across the Toronto region paints a very different picture. We are seeing increasing threats to safety in our streets, our transit, our schools and places of worship, causing heightened anxiety. Automobile theft is at a record high. Systemic prejudice and racism remain serious factors, along with the acknowledgement that safety can mean very different things depending on your gender, sexual orientation, race, age, or ability.

The challenge of building safe communities is multi-layered, multi-dimensional, and complex — and it requires many scales of collaboration to address the root causes. **How can we collectively work to (re)build trust and safety for communities across the GTHA?**

WHY IT MATTERS

In a 2021 report, the Canadian Civil Liberties Union (in partnership with community-serving organizations across Toronto) called for the need to think about community safety more inclusively**.** [ii]

Given that a sense of safety is often directly dependent on factors that impact levels of social inclusion, this conversation requires us to also look at interventions that tackle homelessness, mental health, food insecurity and other social determinants of health to reverse downward social inclusion trends in our region.

WHAT WE KNOW

Systemic racism and prejudice remain deeply prevalent issues.

- Between 2019 and 2020, there was an 80% increase in police-reported hate crimes. The Black population was targeted the most, followed by Southeast Asian, Indigenous and South Asian.
- Younger and lower-income residents express much lower levels of trust and confidence than most Toronto residents; Black Torontonians also consistently express lower levels of social trust, as do those who identify as LGBTQ2S+.[1]
- The proportion of people that say others can be trusted increases among people that are seniors, homeowners, university educated and have higher incomes.
- Anti-Black racism is still the reality for many in Toronto. Black Ontarians are 3-4x more likely than non-racialized Ontarians to be street checked by police and are 20x more likely to be fatally shot by police compared to White residents.[iii]

The mental health crisis in our communities has not been sufficiently addressed.

- According to the Toronto Police Service Public Safety Data Portal, 15.4% of all reported Use of Force incidents in 2020 were mental health-related.[iv] The data suggested in the TPS' Race and Identity-Based Data Collection (RBDC) strategy also indicated that there were differences in Use of Force related to race: Black, South Asian and East/Southeast Asian people were more likely to experience higher uses of force compared to White people.
- According to a survey conducted by the City of Toronto to inform the SafeTO Plan in March 2021:
  - Only 53% of Toronto residents were satisfied with their current state of well-being.
  - 52% indicated a lack of stable housing; 46% indicated lack of crisis mental health supports; and 43% indicated lack of economic opportunities as barriers to well-being in their neighbourhood.
  - 27% were impacted by a violent crime, of which 38% indicated that they felt they did not have access to support.
  - Mental health (49%), housing and homelessness (46%), crime (42%), discrimination and racism (41%), and community violence (35%) were identified as the most important well-being issues in neighbourhoods.

Social cohesion and trust are on the decline.

- The 2022 Toronto Social Capital Study found that more residents are reporting to have fewer close friends or family members to rely upon.[v]
- Fewer residents are participating in recreational groups such as sports or religious/cultural affiliated memberships.[1]
- Those with lower social capital scores (smaller social networks, lower civic engagement, less civic engagement and social trust) are less likely to trust that government agencies are intended to provide them with support in hard times.[1]
- Public perception of the police dropped, with 56% of the population in 2022 expressing a high level of confidence with the police, compared to 65% in 2018.

SPOTLIGHTING ACTIONS & SUCCESSES

SafeTO: Toronto's Ten Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

The City of Toronto adopted SafeTO in July 2021, a ten-year plan to advance community safety and well-being. By working collaboratively across sectors, the plan seeks to address root causes of lack of safety across communities. The plan is driven by the idea that communities that experience more inequity related to social determinants of health experience more harm, trauma and violence. By investing in a systems-level and people-first approach, SafeTO aims to advance community safety and increase overall well-being for people in Toronto.

Social Planning Toronto: Safety Networking Development Pilot

From January 2021 to January 2022, Social Planning Toronto (SPT), in partnership with City of Toronto's Community Safety and Wellbeing Unit and Community Crisis Response Program (CCPR) worked together on the Safety Networking Development Pilot. This program was developed to build on and enhance capacity at a community level to support local leadership and mobilization to address community violence. SPT's role was to support safety networks, tables and committees across Toronto by hosting training, providing resources and delivering community-designed initiatives. As a result of this partnership model, members of the safety network were able to conduct safety audits, build community trust, deliver workshops and increase youth and senior engagement. From this pilot, four key recommendations were identified to support this work: provide supports and resources, co-design with community, build capacity with an anti-oppression lens and build knowledge, confidence and interdependence with peer spaces.

KEY TERMS

Anti-oppression:
Recognizing the impact of power and inequality in the ways that we work and intentionally combatting these.

Systemic/institutional racism

Patterns of behaviour, policies, or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for racialized persons. These policies, practices, or behaviours often seem neutral but effectually exclude racialized individuals. [vi]

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