

Truth and Reconciliation Week - Additional Resources

Humans on Mother Earth

What do the words “Anishinaabe,” “Inuit” and “Ininiwak” have in common? On the one hand, they refer to certain Indigenous nations that have lived since time immemorial on what we today call Canada. However, each of these traditional terms also has a simpler, more essential meaning: namely, “people” or “humans.” Indigenous people have always seen themselves first and foremost simply as humans living in harmony with the Earth. They did not consider themselves any more important than the trees, animals or stones with which they shared the land, but rather as custodians who were there to safeguard the fragile natural balance.

Colonization

The arrival of the Europeans and the ensuing centuries of colonization upset this balance, as traditional Indigenous values like reciprocity, respect for nature and community were replaced by greed, natural resource extraction and individualism. Colonization wreaked havoc on the natural world—and with it, Indigenous customs and communities. What we know today as Canada was built on the ruthless exploitation of natural resources, illegal land expropriation and blatant human-rights violations, all with a view to maximizing the profits of large corporations. In other words, the so-called “advanced” and “civilized” European nations systematically dispossessed, killed and enslaved millions in the pursuit of wealth and political power. Yet colonizing entities like France, England and later Canada are often historically held up as models for human-rights protection and democracy. So how did these nations come to justify such acts that were so blatantly lacking in humanity?

Dehumanization

Sadly, one of the pillars of colonization was the dehumanization of non-European peoples. The portrayal of non-Europeans as “savages” who were “not fully human” was used to justify and legitimize everything. Ignoring the humanity of the Indigenous Peoples has allowed Canada to expropriate their lands, imprison them, indoctrinate them and violate their fundamental rights. The films *Hi-Ho Mistahey!*, *Trick or Treaty?* and *Freedom Road* may all tackle different topics, but each exposes the consequences of violating Indigenous human rights. By watching them and completing the related activities, students and teachers will be better prepared to take action and ensure that everyone living on what we today call Canada can enjoy the same rights and freedoms. Indeed, any real and lasting reconciliation depends on it.

About the Author

Joël Tétrault

A francophone Métis from Manitoba, Joël Tétrault currently teaches Indigenous perspectives in the Louis Riel School Division in Winnipeg. A passionate educator, he has worked in education for 18 years, teaching mainly Canadian history, Indigenous perspectives, law and francophone cinema. For Joël, teaching means empowering students and encouraging them to take action to build a society that’s more just and equitable for all.

Teachers are advised to do some preparation before presenting the films and activities in class. Below is a list of terms, readings and videos on some of the essential topics in relation to the Indigenous historical perspective and the effects of colonization.

Terra nullius: "[Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery](#)," Assembly of First Nations

Royal proclamation: [Royal Proclamation of 1763](#), *The Canadian Encyclopedia*

Numbered Treaties: "[The Numbered Treaties](#)," *Canada's History*; clip from the film [nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up](#), Tasha Hubbard

Two Row Wampum Belt: [Wampum](#), *The Canadian Encyclopedia*

Indian Act: [The Indian Act](#), *The Canadian Encyclopedia*; [The Indian Act Explained](#), *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*

Sixties Scoop: [Sixties Scoop](#), *The Canadian Encyclopedia*

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

Residential schools: [Residential Schools Podcast Series](#), *The Canadian Encyclopedia*

Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada's 94 calls to action: [Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada: Calls to Action](#)

Idle No More: "[Being Idle No More](#)," *Cultural Survival*; [Idle No More](#), *The Canadian Encyclopedia*

Indigenous rights/Article 35 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: [Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#), *The Canadian Encyclopedia*

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: [Reclaiming Power and Place](#), "Calls for Justice" section (PDF p. 170-221), *Final Report*, MMIWG