



# WE ALL LIVE ON INDIGENOUS LAND: **Building Trusted Relationships in Canada's Immigration Process**

Written by: Laura Corrales, Jon Farrell, Grace Lee, Kaitlynne Lowe, Jennifer Schine and Amrit Sehdev



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# Acknowledgements

In this report, we seek to build upon the work already being done in communities across Canada. We would like to thank: the community experts – elders, Indigenous leadership, settlement and refugee organization representatives, newcomer community members, and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), who generously shared their time and knowledge through interviews, group sessions and an online public opinion survey. This report is a culmination of what we learned from these individuals and communities, and it would have not been possible without their contributions. Thank you to the Public Policy Forum (PPF) and Action Canada's executive team, staff and advisors for their support and mentorship, and for connecting us to community experts; our Reviewers Council, who provided critical input; and a special thank you to our Action Canada mentor, Daniel Jean, for his insight, intellectual rigour and kind-hearted listening.

This project was undertaken through the generous support of the Action Canada Fellowship, a leadership development program and national policy engagement initiative implemented in partnership with PPF and Action Canada. The views, opinions and positions expressed are those of the authors and do not reflect the perspective of PPF, Action Canada or the Government of Canada.

In this report, the term “Indigenous Peoples” is used to reference First Nation, Inuit and Métis Peoples living in Canada. The terms “Aboriginal Peoples” or “Indian” will appear from sources such as the Government of Canada, which is in the process of changing the terminology it uses, except for legal documents. We also use the term “reconciliation” in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), TRC Calls to Action, and government priorities focusing on reconciliation, and recognize that this term has many different meanings. We defer to the TRC's definition of “reconciliation” in this report, “to the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.”<sup>1</sup>



Scenes from our visit to the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre and Yukon.  
From left to right: Jon Farrell, Grace Lee, Kaitlynnne Lowe, Daniel Jean,  
Laura Corrales, Amrit Sehdev, Jennifer Schine

# Executive Summary

## WHAT WE KNOW

The policy theme of the 2021/2022 Action Canada Fellowship was **Immigration**, an important and relevant policy topic shaping Canada's future. One month before our fellowship began, a national truth and reckoning broke across the country and around the globe. In May 2021, the world learned that 215 unmarked graves were discovered on the grounds of a former Indian residential school in the territory of Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation (Kamloops, B.C.), exposing an undeniable history and a national tragedy. Knowing that immigration and national truth and history cannot be separated, we asked ourselves: **How do newcomers learn about Indigenous Peoples, cultures and lived experiences?**

With Calls to Action 93 and 94, the TRC emphasized that newcomers' awareness of Canada's truth and history is an area where action is required. They called upon the federal government to update the citizenship guide and test, and to replace the oath of citizenship. With Action 93 well underway and 94 completed though, the question remains what can be done outside of and beyond the citizenship process. We reflected on the importance of knowing our national history and asked: **What does not knowing do to our country, our national identity and our future history? How can our government go beyond the TRC's call to actions?**

## OUR GOAL

With newcomers representing nearly 22% of the population<sup>ii</sup> and the country's plan to welcome 1.2 million new residents by 2023,<sup>iii</sup> immigration will continue to shape Canada's landscape, including the country's journey towards reconciliation<sup>iv</sup>. Many Indigenous leaders recognize the importance of educating newcomers about their roles and responsibilities as people living in territory. **This report explores how newcomers learn about Indigenous Peoples' histories, cultures, and lived experiences when coming to Canada. It also explores what Canadians can learn from newcomers.** Our hope is to highlight the important work and relationship building that is already being done in Canada, engage with authentic dialogue, build better understandings and stronger relationships with each other, and **provide policy recommendations that can enhance newcomers' understanding of Canada's truth and history.**

## OUR APPROACH

Our approach to research and learning is grounded in a web of cross-community relationships. With a focus on the settlement phase, we engaged with over 30 representatives of settlement services, refugee organizations, Indigenous leaders, newcomers, and government agencies across Canada. From communities in Yukon, Vancouver, Calgary, and Montreal, to the role of the arts and foundational documents like *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* (2011), our research presents a compilation of the innovative work that is happening on the ground and across the country. Case studies are presented to highlight the opportunities, challenges, and current practices in the field. In addition, our public opinion survey received 474 newcomer responses across the country. We are grateful for our Reviewers Council, made up of Indigenous and newcomer advisors.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

**As citizens and residents of these lands, we all have the responsibility to know our shared truth and history, and yet newcomers who arrive in Canada have very few opportunities to learn about Indigenous Peoples' cultures and lived experiences.**

We were inspired to see the diverse range of organizations that are engaging Indigenous and newcomer communities across Canada. During our time in Yukon, we listened to First Nations and community leaders about Yukon's reconciliation efforts, including education for newcomers on First Nations history and culture. We learned about the collaborative work of the *Vancouver Dialogue Project* (2010 to 2013) and the *First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers* (2014). We also heard from settlement organizations like the Calgary Centre for Newcomers and Montreal's Refugee Centre on their efforts to work with Indigenous communities on integrating awareness and relationship building programs as part of the settlement process. Other examples include grassroots efforts like the Indigenous-Refugee Movement, and performance artists Ayumi Goto and Peter Morin, who explore how cultural knowledge and history inform the human experience of place and our perceptions of others.

## WHAT WE HEARD

We heard that truth-telling needs to be central to the work in Canada and part of our national identity for all Canadians, including newcomers. Indigenous leaders emphasized the need to go beyond the TRC and the urgent need for dialogue to build stronger relationships between Indigenous Peoples and newcomers. Community leaders highlighted the importance of cultural safety training for all staff involved in immigration, as well as other challenges like funding, resourcing and collaborations between all actors. We were challenged to think about the implications of new legislation such as the *United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

Through cultural similarities, shared trauma and other experiences, newcomers can become allies and develop strong connections with Indigenous communities. However, our public opinion survey showed that only 15% of respondents were aware of Indigenous issues upon arrival. From the remaining 85%, 53% of respondents stated that their awareness had increased marginally or significantly more after arrival. However, only 23% of respondents know the name of the First Nations' territory they currently live on, even though 78% of respondents have lived in Canada for over five years. 37% of respondents received resources as part of their immigration process, but less than 20% highlighted the citizenship guide, and less than 30% identified settlement services agencies as contributing to their learning of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.



**Reconciliation is not a single act, nor does it have an end date. It is a lifelong journey of healing, respect and understanding... I have seen how Canadians are committed to reconciliation. Indigenous Peoples are reclaiming our history, stories, culture and language through action... Together they are walking the path towards reconciliation. We must turn the guilt we carry into action. Action on reconciliation.**

— *Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, Speech from the Throne, Nov. 23, 2021*



## CALL TO ACTION

Building on existing work, we offer recommendations on how to support relationship building and truth telling between newcomers and Indigenous Peoples. Our intention is to further the work surrounding the education of Indigenous Peoples' histories, cultures, and lived experiences for newcomers. We believe that the lack of a synchronous effort is no longer acceptable, and that there are sufficient tools and case studies to follow for significant improvements in this area. Our recommendations are included below and outlined in more detail in the Recommendations section.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY TABLE

GOAL	#	RECOMMENDATION	Federal (IRCC)	Immigration Departments	Settlement Services	Newcomers	Communities & Individuals
Centre Indigenous Peoples and histories in agencies through training, technology and inclusion	1.1	Provide Indigenous cultural safety training for all staff.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	1.2	Utilize online educational programs to improve accessibility to resources on Indigenous Peoples.	✓	✓	✓		
	1.3	Invest resources to empower Indigenous organizations and Indigenous consultants.	✓	✓			
	1.4	Hire more Indigenous immigration officers to support newcomers.	✓	✓			
Increase Indigenous participation and understanding within immigration policy-making	2.1	Issue a pledge outlining the department's commitment towards reconciliation.	✓	✓			
	2.2	Develop specific organizational action plans to advance Indigenous rights.	✓	✓			
	2.3	Co-create with Indigenous organizations a consultative mechanism for immigration policy decisions.	✓	✓			
	2.4	Government funding of settlement services to include programming for Indigenous history.	✓	✓			
	2.5	Provide compensation for time that Indigenous leaders invest into shaping immigration policy.	✓	✓			
Enhance newcomers education on Indigenous Peoples' histories, cultures and lived experiences	3.1	Update the citizenship study guide and improve through newcomer feedback.	✓	✓			
	3.2	Develop a standard 'Newcomer Course' with a focus on Indigenous Peoples' history, cultures.	✓	✓			
	3.3	Centralize work to create a stand alone 'First Peoples Guide for Newcomers'.	✓	✓			
	3.4	Ensure content is co-created with Indigenous organizations and settlement organizations.	✓	✓			
	3.5	Identify opportunities in immigration process to embed education about Indigenous Peoples.	✓	✓			
	3.6	Use UNDRIP as a starting point to guide relationship building with Indigenous Peoples.	✓	✓			
Increase indigenous awareness in settlement services	4.1	Incorporate discussions on Indigenous histories as part of language classes.			✓		
	4.2	Establish a conference to connect settlement service organizations and share best practices.			✓		
	4.3	Prioritize experience-based learning, relationship building, opportunities for dialogue.			✓		
	4.4	Use UNDRIP as a starting point to guide relationship building with Indigenous Peoples			✓		
Enhance Indigenous awareness through community engagement and self learning	5.1	Learn the names of the traditional territories they reside on and closest residential school.				✓	✓
	5.2	Attend local Indigenous celebrations				✓	✓
	5.3	Visit your local Aboriginal Friendship Centre.				✓	✓
	5.4	Read books from Indigenous authors.				✓	✓
	5.5	Read UNDRIP, TRC, MMIWG.				✓	✓
	5.6	Support local Indigenous businesses				✓	✓

# Introduction

In the spring of 2021, our Action Canada cohort met virtually for the first time. Here, we were given the public policy theme that we would explore over the next 10 months: **Immigration**, an important and relevant policy theme shaping Canada's future. Composed of six second-generation immigrants, settlers, and newcomers, our task force began our work by asking each other about our own backgrounds, privileges, histories, and stories. We quickly learned a lot about each other: where we were born, the lands we consider home, the circumstances that brought us or our ancestors to what is now known as Canada, the privileges that were given to us or our families upon arrival, and how we have each benefited from these circumstances and histories. Through this process, we began to question what it means to be Canadian.

Our fellowship began one month after a national truth and reckoning broke across the country and around the globe. In May 2021, the world learned that 215 unmarked graves were discovered on the grounds of a former Indian residential school in the territory of Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation (Kamloops, B.C.). There had long been oral accounts of unmarked graves at schools from survivors (documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada), but this was the first time a major burial site had been discovered in Canada. Over the following months, thousands more unmarked graves would be discovered throughout the country, exposing an undeniable history and a national tragedy.

For our group, it was not possible to ignore the recent revelations in our country. We felt compelled to ask what it means to be Canadian in a broader, deeper way because immigration and learning about this national truth and history cannot be separated. We agreed that we needed to engage, educate, and walk alongside each other through these difficult conversations. More importantly, we needed to listen to Indigenous leadership and newcomer communities to understand how we tell our truth and history across Canada.

Building from previous Indigenous and newcomer research, including *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* (2011), we began to talk with settlement services, refugee centres, and Indigenous and newcomer communities across Canada. Passionate and informed people gave us their time and energy, and generously connected us to other appropriate individuals to interview. We heard over and over that **truth-telling needs to be central to the work in Canada and part of our national identity for all Canadians, including newcomers.**<sup>v</sup>

We also heard that Canada's reputation and identity does not include the historic wrongs and damage caused to Indigenous Peoples, and the legacy of inequalities still experienced by Indigenous Peoples today. When arriving in Canada, newcomers have very few opportunities to learn about Indigenous histories, cultures and lived experiences, and many newcomers do not understand that they are arriving in unceded or treaty territories; that Canada is, in fact, colonized land.<sup>vi</sup>

These lands and waters, now known as Canada, have been home to people from diverse cultures since before foreign settlement, and Canada's future will continue to be shaped by immigration. Over the next three years, Canada has a goal to welcome 1.23 million new permanent residents into the country.<sup>vii</sup> How can our country create opportunities for those newly arrived residents to understand the histories, cultures, and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples? What type of intercultural exchange currently exists in Canada, and how can we support and create authentic dialogue that contributes towards building new and stronger relationships of solidarity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada?

In her TEDxVancouver Talk (2017), Indigenous urban planner Ginger Gosnell-Myers reminds us that "we are forging a path of forgetting, not remembering and not learning. We are at the cusp of our new national shame if we let this moment pass us by." **This report explores how newcomers learn about Indigenous Peoples' histories, cultures and lived experiences when coming to Canada. It also explores what Canadians can learn from newcomers.** Throughout our conversations, we heard that

newcomers have a lot to offer when it comes to the national journey of demarginalization and recognition of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. There are many actions that have taken place over the last 150 years and longer, a history that we all have a responsibility to know.<sup>viii, ix</sup> We the authors are not experts in matters of decolonizing relationships nor do we identify as Indigenous. We do not know how to solve this local and national issue, but we're eager to learn and passionate to use this channel of

Action Canada. **Our hope is to highlight the important work and relationship building that is already being done in this sector, to engage with authentic dialogue, build better understandings and stronger relationships with each other, and to provide policy recommendations that can enhance newcomers' understanding of Canada's truth and history.**

“

**...Twenty years ago, I became a Canadian citizen and one of the things that wasn't made clear to me... was that when we took that oath [of allegiance] we would become party to the Treaties that were signed. We were given this very uplifting lecture on the rights of Canadian citizenship but what was excluded was [information] on our responsibility and obligations as now being parties to these Treaties**

—Ali Kazimi, *Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*

”

# Methodology and limitations

Our approach to research and learning is grounded in a web of cross-community relationships. Many of our interviews and survey subjects were connected to the Action Canada program, including Action Canada Fellows and advisors, invited speakers or other collaborators. The connection to Action Canada was important to establish trust and connect with participants. However, we also wish to highlight the potential bias when drawing from members of the same policy program.



Limited time and budget meant we faced challenges to authentically engage Indigenous advisors to guide this research project. The pandemic also meant that we were unable to connect with individuals in person (aside from the two study tours), but online tools enabled us to connect with individuals across Canada. The timing of the rediscovery of graves at residential schools across the country and the disproportionate impacts on communities from the COVID-19 pandemic also meant that many Indigenous people are already at maximum capacity. We are grateful for the Indigenous individuals who contributed to this research through interviews, and we received support from Indigenous leaders as reviewers for drafts of our deliverables. But this project would have benefited from a more formal advisory board of Indigenous people and newcomers with a truly collaborative community approach.

We decided to focus on specific jurisdictions and cases to highlight opportunities, challenges and practices to connect newcomers to Indigenous Peoples, communities, histories and cultures. We also chose to focus on the period of newcomer settlement instead of pre-arrival or citizenship. We identified that settlement services in Canada have an important role in developing connections with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and newcomers. It is not our expertise to comment on what specific content should look like for educational programming related to Indigenous histories and cultures. And so, we focus on practices and approaches to develop programming and highlight initiatives and organizations already doing this important work.



This report is the product of many minds, as noted in the acknowledgements. We gathered and analyzed information from a number of sources, including:

- Semi-structured telephone/online interviews with 30 representatives of settlement and refugee organizations; newcomer and Indigenous leaders, planners, artists and community members; and government agencies;
- Discussions that took place in-person during our first study tour in Yukon, including Yukon Immigration Office, Yukon Regional Chief, and settlement services in Whitehorse;
- An online public opinion survey with 474 total responses received from newcomers. The survey was promoted through email and social media; available from Nov 22 to Dec 6, 2021. Respondents self-identified as newcomers. ([questionnaire available here](#));
- A review of existing data and documents, especially Cultivating Canada;
- Case studies of Yukon, the City of Vancouver, Calgary (Centre for Newcomers) and Montreal (the Refugee Centre) to focus the scope of our analysis;
- Discussions with Action Canada and Public Policy Forum (PPF) staff in formal meetings, informal conversations, and review and comment on our proposal and drafts of this report; and
- A Reviewer Council made up of external individuals who identify as Indigenous, newcomers, or technical experts that provided critical feedback on this report. Reviewer Council members that consented to share their identities are listed here.

## LIST OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

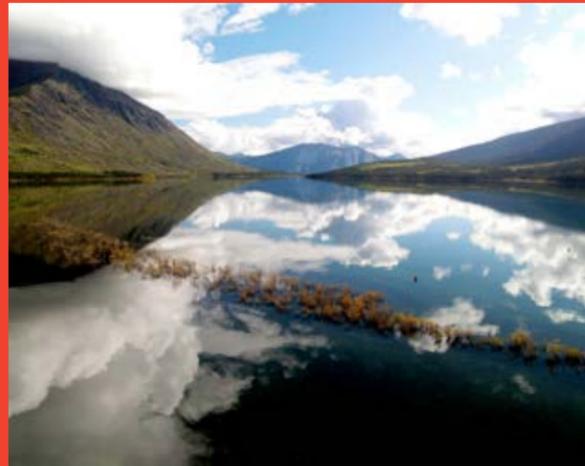
- **Abdulla Daoud:** Executive Director, Refugee Centre Montreal
- **Alec Attfield:** Director-General, IRCC
- **Anila Lee Yuen:** President & Chief Executive Officer, Calgary Centre for Newcomers
- **Ashok Mathur:** Dean of Graduate Studies, Ontario College of Art & Design University, and Cultivating Canada Lead Editor
- **Ayumi Goto:** Diasporic-Japanese Performance Artist
- **Erica Bourdon:** Academic Chair, School of Academic and Skill Development, Yukon University
- **Fraser Valentine:** Assistant Deputy Minister of Settlement and Integration, IRCC
- **Heldden Byumvuhore:** Immigration Consultant
- **Jonathon Driscoll:** International Student Advisor, Yukon University
- **Justin Ferbey:** Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Yukon Government
- **Kamala Todd:** Metis-Cree community planner, educator, curator and filmmaker
- **Kory Wilson:** Executive Director, Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships, BCIT and author of City of Vancouver First Peoples Guide
- **Kluane Adamek:** Assembly of First Nations' Yukon Regional Chief
- **Marius Curteanu:** Director for Yukon Immigration Office, and staff at the Yukon Immigration Office.
- **Meghan Skarnulis:** Instructor and Academic Support Case Manager, Yukon University
- **Mehron Torrans:** Policy Analyst, IRCC
- **Mike DeGagné:** CEO, Indspire
- **Muzna Dureid:** Founder, Indigenous – Refugees Movement
- **Peter Morin:** Tahltan Nation artist, author, curator and professor at the Ontario College of Art and Design
- **Chief Dr. Robert Joseph:** Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada
- **Sophie Anderson:** Indigenous Immigration Officer, Yukon Immigration Office
- **Suzanne Blackjack:** Director, Yukon Multicultural Centre
- **Tatheer Ali:** Senior Policy Analyst, IRCC
- **Tosh Southwick:** Yukon University, former Associate Vice President Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation

## REVIEWERS COUNCIL MEMBERS

- **Mike DeGagné:** CEO, Indspire
- **Geordie Hungerford:** CEO, First Nations Financial Management Board
- **Odette Auger:** Indigenous freelance reporter
- **Ginger Gosnell-Myers:** Environics Institute, Fellow
- **Tawheeda Wahabzada:** Data and Policy Specialist, Open Data Watch
- **Joshua Regnier:** UVic Joint Degree Candidate, Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders

# The Importance of Knowing Our Shared Truth and History

**We all have the responsibility to know our shared truth and history.** This is especially true if knowing the truth is uncomfortable or painful. We need to ask ourselves what does *not knowing* do to our country, our national identity and our future history?



In 2015, the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada \(TRC\)](#)<sup>x</sup> concluded that residential schools were a program of cultural genocide, and that at least 7,403 Indigenous children died while attending residential schools, many from mistreatment or neglect. The last of the 139 residential schools<sup>xi</sup> closed in 1996, after operating for nearly 165 years.<sup>xii</sup> Government sanctioned harms against Indigenous Peoples went well beyond the residential schools; the destruction of Indigenous traditional governance systems and languages, taking children from families, stolen ceremonial objects, and the forced displacement of communities onto postage-stamp-sized reserves are all part of Canada's history and

shape our current realities. Most people in Canada remain unaware of this history, including recent immigrants. The lack of formal education Canadians receive about these atrocities has been limited or non-existent.<sup>xiii, xiv, xv, xvi, xvii</sup> Ignoring our history and how we got to where we are will further marginalize Indigenous Peoples and communities, increasing societal disparities.<sup>xviii</sup> Ignoring our history not only distorts our understanding of Canada, but hurts all Canadians.

Nearly 20 years before the TRC, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) emphasized the need for improved education about “history and present circumstances” of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, specifically noting immigrants as a key population.<sup>xix</sup>

## Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) Recommendation 5.4.12

The Commission recommends that the federal government ensure that the history and present circumstances of Aboriginal Peoples are communicated to immigrants and to persons becoming Canadian citizens.<sup>xx</sup>

## NEWCOMERS WITHIN THE TRC FINAL REPORT

Canada has welcomed over 15 million people since Confederation<sup>xxi</sup> and newcomers represent nearly 22% of the population.<sup>xxii</sup> On average, 60% of new immigrants become citizens within five to nine years upon arrival, which is a key marker of integration, allowing them to vote, run for political office and improve their job opportunities. In October 2021, the Government of Canada released its Immigration Levels Plan for 2021 to 2023 with a goal of welcoming 1.2 million new residents by 2023<sup>xxv</sup>, equivalent to 3% of the country's current population. Newcomers will influence the country's journey towards building more respectful and healthy relationships with Indigenous Peoples and cannot be left outside of the conversation. Newcomers become active members of Canadian society, holding political and economical power. They will also emerge as leaders in our society — in 2021 alone, four members of cabinet were immigrants themselves.

Indigenous leaders recognize the importance of newcomers understanding their role and responsibilities in the national journey towards the truth of our shared history and addressing current inequities. [Chief Dr. Robert Joseph](#), Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada shared with us during an interview that if newcomers and ordinary people do not engage in this process there might still be problems in our society even if we solve all the 94 calls to action. He stated that **if we do not nurture relationships between Indigenous and newcomers, we might end up with another Indigenous Canada conflict at different levels.**

Similarly, the TRC highlighted newcomers' awareness of Canada's truth and history as an area where action from the government was required, and it made two calls to action directed to newcomers to Canada. We heard from IRCC about the work undertaken to update the oath of citizenship and citizenship guide with content on Indigenous Peoples. But there is still work to do beyond these calls to action.

## Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

**93.** We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the national Aboriginal organizations, to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools.

**94.** We call upon the Government of Canada to replace the Oath of Citizenship with the following:

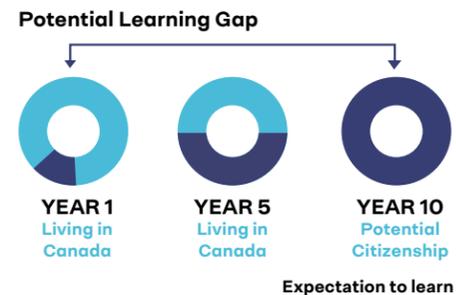
*“I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.”*

“We can only find peace when the other side of the equation (when Canadians including newcomers) begin to understand what Reconciliation means. We have to be ALL in it together. It's WE, the people, that have to change this world.”

— *Chief Robert Joseph, Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada, interview date Nov. 10, 2021*

”

Our interview participants emphasized that these calls to action are situated in the context of the citizenship process, which takes place late in an immigrants' journey, hence neglecting the potential positive role newcomers can play during their path to citizenship. **Most immigrants go through the citizenship process after five to nine years of living in Canada, and the other 40% will never go through this process, or do so after 10 years in the country.**<sup>xxviii</sup> Children under 18 years are not required to take the citizenship test, further highlighting the need to go beyond the TRC calls to action.



Newcomers and Indigenous leaders told us that taking action towards calls to action 93 and 94 is progress, but is only the starting point. We need more to equip newcomers with the necessary tools and knowledge to understand Canada's colonial impact on Indigenous Peoples and their inherent rights. While an updated citizenship guide and revised oath are part of the solution, research shows that newcomers can adopt inaccurate information and harmful attitudes towards Indigenous Peoples as they receive little to no education and orientation to the histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples after their arrival to Canada; this has the potential to perpetuate existing harms.<sup>xxix</sup>

In September 2021, we attended the inaugural [Annual Action Canada Lecture on Reconciliation and Public Policy](#) in Yukon by Dr. Mike DeGagné, President and CEO of Indspire. He stated that **“the TRC does not call us to act in a specific way. It points out deficiencies in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.”** The TRC states that **“finding common ground as Treaty people<sup>xxx</sup> involves learning about the history of Aboriginal Peoples and finding ways to build stronger relationships of solidarity with them.”<sup>xxxi</sup> There is an urgent need for more dialogue between Aboriginal Peoples and new Canadians.<sup>xxxi</sup>** The TRC calls upon all levels of government, educational and religious institutions, civil society groups, and all Canadians to work together.

“

**[Education about Indigenous Peoples] could be in the pre-settlement package; there could be more in the citizenship test. The more newcomers know about Indigenous people the better and, well let's face it, all employees of the department of immigration and all Canadians need to understand the place and space of Indigenous people**

— *Kory Wilson, Executive Director of Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), Interview date Nov. 16, 2021.*

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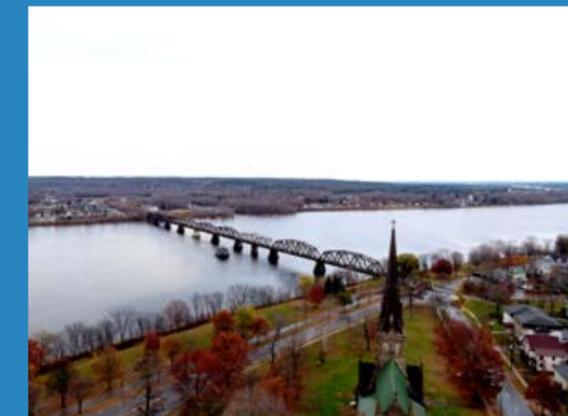
## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: UNDRIP AND THE UNDRIP ACT

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#) is an international commitment emphasizing the “urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> In June 2021, the Government of Canada enshrined the Articles of UNDRIP into legislation with the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#). **This means that all Canadian legislation must align with the articles outlined in UNDRIP.**<sup>xxxiv</sup> These legal documents outline international and national commitments, as well as some guiding principles.



**As it relates to public education, UNDRIP and UNDRIPA mandate that:**

- “Indigenous Peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.” (Article 15.1)
- “States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the Indigenous Peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among Indigenous Peoples and all other segments of society.” (Article 15.2)
- “States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.” (Article 19)



# Understanding Immigration Trends in Canada

Canada has one of the highest rates of newcomers out of OECD countries,<sup>xxxvi</sup> including resettling the highest number of refugees globally.<sup>xxxvii</sup> [The Provincial Nominee Program](#) is the second-largest economic immigration pathway. In 2019, the Provincial Nominee Program admitted over 20% of all permanent resident admissions to respond to the provincial/ territorial labour market needs.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

[Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada \(IRCC\)](#) is responsible for managing the settlement and integration of newcomers and follows the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2001)*.<sup>xxxix</sup>

According to the [Departmental Plan 2019-2020](#), IRCC offers many programs in partnership with settlement service providers through grant or contribution agreements. There are nearly 500 settlement services supported by IRCC to deliver programming. Nearly 80% of IRCC's approximately \$1.4 billion budget supports settlement programs across nearly 500 organizations. IRCC regularly engages the provinces, territories, and municipalities to deliver coordinated services to newcomers.

“  
Immigration is continuous and Indigenous people are not going away. Everyone needs to know the truth about each other.”

— Kory Wilson, Executive Director of Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), Interview date Nov. 16, 2021.

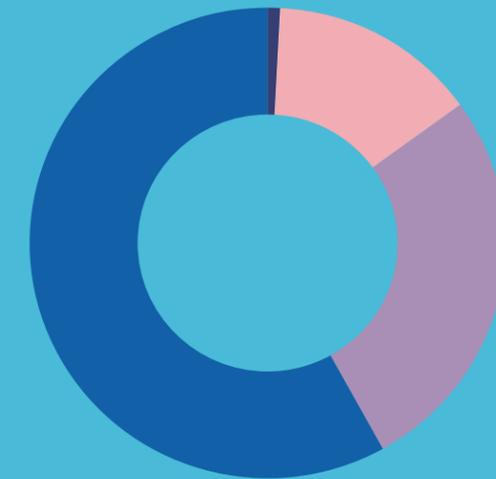
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## Where Do Immigrants to Canada Settle?

New permanent residents by census metropolitan area, 2019

Canada Admits Permanent Residents Under 4 Main Categories



Source: Government of Canada

# Newcomers' Perspectives

As part of our research, we conducted a public opinion survey of newcomers to explore how they learn about Indigenous Peoples' histories and cultures when coming to Canada. This public opinion survey received a total of 474 newcomer responses across the country. This work identifies a significant gap in the knowledge level of newcomers about Indigenous Peoples in Canada. It also reveals that local settlement services can help increase knowledge levels. A number of opportunities are identified, including the need to grow the number of settlement service agencies that focus on Indigenous Peoples' cultures, promote local settlement services agencies, and improve the Canadian citizenship guide.

## SURVEY DATA: NEWCOMERS' AWARENESS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND COMMUNITIES

Our survey respondents were recruited through email and social media. Respondents self-identified as newcomers, and we achieved representation from all provinces and territories.

Our team created a [Google form survey](#) available between Nov. 22 to Dec. 6, 2021. We received a total of 474 survey responses. A level of screening and validation of the data was done to identify duplicates or invalid entries.

### Main insights from the survey include:

- **Only 15%** of respondents up on arrival were aware of issues like **residential schools, missing and murdered Indigenous women, land back claims and systemic racism**. Of the remaining 85%, 42% stated that their awareness had increased marginally after arrival, and only 11% said they have learned significantly more after arrival;
- **Only 23% know the name of the First Nations' territory where they currently live on**, even though 78% of respondents have been in Canada for over five years; and
- **Over 70%** of our respondents were "somewhat familiar" with the term "reconciliation" in reference to Canada and Indigenous Peoples.

### With respect to awareness of Indigenous Peoples and culture,

- **55%** of respondents indicated that they received their education primarily through news and media;
- **45%** of respondents indicated that they had read reports (e.g., TRC Report, and the Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG));
- **42%** of respondents had directly interacted with Indigenous Peoples and communities;
- **37%** of respondents received resources as part of their immigration process; and
- **Less than 20%** of respondents highlighted the Canadian Citizenship guide.

### The role of settlement service organizations in building awareness of Indigenous Peoples and culture

- **Over 80%** of participants in our survey indicated that they **engaged with a settlement services organization** as part of their immigration process; however, less than 30% of these individuals identified settlement services agencies as contributing to their learning of Indigenous Peoples in Canada;
- **Approximately 70%** of those that did learn from their **settlement services, rate themselves a 4 or 5 out of 5 on their current knowledge of Indigenous Peoples** in our country, compared to less than 50% for those that didn't receive learning from a settlement service;<sup>xii</sup> and
- **Not every newcomer uses settlement services and some newcomers** do not know that they are available. **70%** of our survey respondents who did not connect with settlement services, said they did not know about the services. Among the respondents **who did know of the services, about 25% said that they did not know how to use the services.**<sup>xiii</sup>

## EDUCATION FOR NEWCOMERS ABOUT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HISTORIES AND CULTURES

Many people we interviewed conveyed that education about Indigenous Peoples' histories and cultures are important throughout a newcomer's journey to Canada. This includes information provided to attract immigrants and throughout the pre-arrival, settlement, and citizenship process. Whether a newcomer is a temporary worker, international student, permanent resident, refugee, or asylum seekers, each type of newcomer has a different set of experiences to enter Canada and immigrate. In our public opinion survey, nearly 40% of newcomers voiced that education about Indigenous Peoples should be included as part of the application process to immigrate to Canada. This includes what is taught about "life in Canada" when deciding to come to the country.

Nearly 30% of respondents indicated that education should be a part of the settlement processes, followed by 25% that said such education should be done during citizenship. Many respondents agreed that education about Indigenous Peoples' histories and present-day cultures in Canada is important. We agree that education about Indigenous Peoples and communities should be embedded throughout the entire immigration process; however, we have chosen to specifically focus on the settlement period as an educational opportunity.<sup>xiiii</sup> The settlement process looks different for every newcomer, but local settlement organizations are uniquely situated to connect newcomers to local Indigenous communities. Integrating Indigenous-centred programming as part of the settlement process recognizes the ongoing learning necessary to educate oneself about Canada's colonial impacts while emphasizing

the importance of relationship building. In addition, Newcomers may need support to engage with these topics once they arrive in Canada, especially given the emotional and traumatizing nature of colonization in Canada and its lasting legacies. It is important to understand that newcomers are often going through a lot of stress as they immigrate to Canada. This education may not always be a priority and should be available as an ongoing process focused on relationship building.<sup>xliv</sup>

**Survey Responses: How do you think Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) can improve the integration of Canada's history in relation to Indigenous Peoples into the immigration process?**

"Be more real about what happened, and in what ways were Indigenous Peoples forced into colonizers' ways. Celebrate Indigenous Peoples today, show newcomers that Indigenous Peoples are urban, young, creative and much more."

— Newcomer Survey Participant

"We need to be open listeners and learn from the people and their stories. We should have mandatory classes taught by Indigenous Peoples with the focus on what the history on the land that you are immigrating to and living on"

— Newcomer Survey Participant

"Teaching Canadian history in ESL classes would be a great way to start"

— Newcomer Survey Participant

"Mandate to educate those who are involved in the process from the "Canadian side", including settlement workers, recruitment agents, RCICs, university recruiters"

— Newcomer Survey Participant

# An Opportunity to Build Relationships and Learn

Often left out of the dialogue, newcomers bring vital learnings from their native countries that can expand binary perspectives and build solidarity and a combined strength among marginalized groups of people across the country.

## AN EMPATHETIC VIEW

Before arrival in Canada, newcomers may not be aware of the intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous Peoples in this country and may hold a false impression that Canada is unblemished. Once immersed in their new communities, newcomers might discover that there is a lot to learn about the histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples with whom they share the land. Newcomers have the potential to form an empathetic view towards Indigenous Peoples in relation to their own histories and feel motivated to participate in the dialogue of reconciliation and positive change.



**“Many immigrants believe that ‘I’m coming to Canada and things are better here’ and then you realize that things might be better for you maybe or for some people, but Indigenous peoples were treated terribly... there is a lot of shared history of understanding that makes it very easy [for refugees and immigrants] to have these conversations and go deeper very quickly.”**

— *Anila Lee Yuen, CEO of the Centre for Newcomers in Calgary, interview date Nov. 16, 2021.*

**“How is it that our histories...[have] so many similarities in terms of violence? The violence of slavery is the violence of destruction in Aboriginal communities... These are societies that are shaped by violence... so we have a lot in common... How do we reconcile? How do we have those difficult conversations that say that you are implicated in my struggle? You have privileges that I don’t. You have an education that I was not privy to... This is a safe place for us to really have those difficult conversations.”**

— *Akua Benjamin, who came from the Caribbean, with its history of slavery, Summary of the Final Report of the TRC*

**“As an Indian, we have a similar history of colonization. Coming together and sharing stories about the horrible past and exchanging ideas of what we can do to move forward from the intergenerational trauma. We also have so many aftereffects of colonialism and I feel like we should come together to break that chain. And of course to educate other settlers on the racism that people still face so we can try our best to make it less.”**

— *Newcomer Survey Participant*

**“I found that often international students or racialized students were very invested and engaged in this because it’s something that they could connect to and engage with in some way. They knew these histories from their own countries, not identical stories by any means, but they could understand quite frankly the histories of colonial oppression”**

— *Ashok Mathur, Editor Cultivating Canada and Dean of Graduate Studies at Ontario College of Art & Design University, interview date Oct. 22, 2021.*

## INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Unfortunately, connections and mutual understandings are also formed because of intergenerational trauma. Indigenous Peoples in this country have experienced very specific intergenerational traumas associated with residential schools, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, social and family services (e.g., The Sixties Scoop), and much, much more. Some newcomers can draw on similar experiences associated with colonial oppression in other parts of the world. Ashok Mathur, lead editor for [Cultivating Canada](#), discusses a similar concept of connection through intergenerational trauma associated with colonial oppression.

## CULTURAL SIMILARITIES

Certain settlement services agencies have noticed the formation of relationships between newcomers who participate in activities with Indigenous Peoples in Indigenous communities. Often, a bond is established organically because of certain cultural similarities with family, elders, traditions and spirituality. Anila Lee Yuen, CEO of the Centre for Newcomers in Calgary, talks about the connection that can occur over collective cultures versus Western individualism.

**“Because a lot of newcomer cultures... are collective cultures that highly esteem their elders, there’s a lot of intuition that comes to it that doesn’t need to be learned in terms of protocol; even the way we recognize families as collective cultures is similar.”**

— *Anila Lee Yuen, CEO of the Centre for Newcomers in Calgary, interview date Nov. 16, 2021.*

## SHARED LEARNINGS

Some interview participants remarked that countries such as New Zealand, South Africa and Germany could offer lessons for Canada to increase awareness and education about our country's history and treatment of its own people, including Indigenous Peoples. Some survey respondents also highlighted learnings from their home countries that could contribute to national efforts to recognize Indigenous histories and cultures. These responses emphasize the unique role newcomers play in such national conversations. Many respondents who share similar experiences with colonization especially felt they could contribute to this conversation in Canada.



**“Yes in some ways as we dealt with the ongoing reparations of the Holocaust and learning about the historical atrocities. It’s not the same context but perhaps we can find some truths in these processes... we can learn from. However, I’d suggest to look towards the Indigenous communities and learn from them and their traditions and elders.”**

— Newcomer Survey Participant

**“There are endless similarities between the heritage and culture of India and Indigenous Peoples in Canada and I believe sharing those similarities will bring us closer.”**

— Newcomer Survey Participant

**“Australia is very similar [to Canada] in the way their Indigenous Peoples were treated and continue to be treated [which was] surprising to me at first purely because Canada kept it so ‘hidden’”**

— Newcomer Survey Participant

**“Coming from Brazil where Indigenous [People] had suffered and continue to suffer from the colonization mindset, I completely relate to the situation in Canada. There is an urgent need to recognize and address the mistakes we made in relation to Indigenous Peoples in Canada and in the world.”**

— Newcomer Survey Participant

**“Mexican Indigenous Peoples are incredibly talented and have also suffered injustice due to colonization. Moreover, they haven’t gone through a robust reconciliation process (if any) and continue to be discriminated against. The stories I could share are ones of beauty and pain.”**

— Newcomer Survey Participant

## REFUGEES’ UNIQUE EXPERIENCE AND CONTRIBUTION

**“We have to understand Canada’s history, especially if it is a dark one, to ensure that it becomes a more prosperous country and a stronger society. If we are not learning about it and we are not helping to solve its issues, then we are part of the problem. Canada still has a lot of areas to grow.”**

— Abdulla Daoud, Executive Director and Co-founder of The Refugee Centre, interview date Nov. 10, 2021

Different ethnocultural groups experience different forms of stigmatization, marginalization and racism based on unique historical circumstances. Our interviews and opinion survey responses showed that many felt **a significant opportunity rests with newcomers and Indigenous Peoples to raise awareness and fight discrimination.** We learned from community leaders that refugees, despite being subjected to trauma, economic disadvantages and marginalization, are often champions of human rights and motivated to take action to improve conditions for marginalized populations in our country. We learned that refugees’ unique experiences can *strengthen* relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Abdulla Daoud, Co-Founder of Refugee Centre in Montreal, took the initiative to provide educational resources about Indigenous Peoples’ history for the refugee community, and Muzna Dureid, Founder of the Indigenous – Refugees Movement, created a safe space for candid conversations and relationship building among these two groups. Both of them identified a gap in the refugee population, who often have limited knowledge about the history and the current realities of Indigenous Peoples and how they are treated in Canada. Both leaders believe that the shared experiences of stigmatization, trauma and resilience can empower refugees to contribute toward building a more prosperous future where both marginalized groups can thrive. However, they recognized that despite refugees’ sharing of learnings from their home countries and their desire to foster positive impact, this community faces real economic and systemic limitations upon arrival. As a priority, Canada needs to provide refugees with the necessary resources to feel supported, so that they have the space to contribute to this dialogue.

## City of Montreal: The Refugee Centre

The [Refugee Centre in Montreal](#) offers educational resources and information during the orientation process to refugees by introducing Indigenous history through a centralized service platform: [“AlloCanada.ca”](#).<sup>xiv</sup> The website provides centralized information on Indigenous Resources on Canada’s Colonialist History, how to be an ally for Canada’s Indigenous communities, the TRC, and how to learn about the Indigenous land you are on.

The Refugee Centre has made intentional efforts to bridge refugee and Indigenous communities. Asylum seekers can relate to Indigenous communities as they too have been forcibly displaced. Experiencing such dispossession brings a unique insight into Canada’s colonial history.

**“As community leaders, we do not want refugees to fall into a path or societal structure that helps oppress Indigenous communities. We cannot represent asylum seekers in court preaching human rights, and at the same time not preach it for the population of this land. It is a matter of consistency”**

— Abdulla Daoud, Executive Director and Co-founder of The Refugee Centre, interview date Nov. 10, 2021

## City of Montreal: Indigenous-Refugee Movement

Muzna Dureid, who noticed that refugees don’t have the same opportunities to go deep into the history of Canada, is the founder of the [Indigenous-Refugees Movement](#), a workshop-based platform that aims to bring both groups together to learn and converse about reconciliation, Indigenous history and culture. She mentions that so long as refugees don’t have the correct information and knowledge about history, they’re going to feed the circle of stigma and stereotype. Her movement serves also as a platform to find ways to work together and support each other to overcome stigmatization, racism and build the future together.

**“The core concept of the Indigenous-Refugees movement is that both groups are stigmatized in society, traumatized, and also uprooted from their lands. There are a lot of similarities in their realities and their futures”**

— Muzna Dureid, founder of Indigenous-Refugee Movement, interview, Nov. 18, 2021

## ART AS A POWERFUL MEANS OF INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

Art as a means of important intercultural exchange between Indigenous, racialized, and diasporic communities came up throughout our research. Performance artists Ayumi Goto, who self-identifies as a Japanese-diasporic performance apprentice, and Peter Morin, Tahlitan First Nation artist, author, and curator, have been collaborating since 2013. They use art to bring together different cultures and raise awareness about Indigenous realities while performing in non-conventional spaces.

Ayumi and Peter were compelled to collaborate after attending a TRC hearing. They “felt non-Indigenous Peoples of colour were not properly included in the hearing processes and conversations around reconciliation and focused too narrowly on relations between Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian government.”<sup>xlvii</sup> Their first project, “this is what happens when we perform the memory of the land”, was performed during the 2013 TRC’s Quebec National Event. Other work includes: “How do you carry the land?” (2018) and “Hair”, a performance where hair was a literal and metaphorical reference point for residential schools.

From the duo, we heard how challenging it is to speak to the truth of traumatic experiences, which inspired Ayumi to turn to performance as a means of expression. They emphasized how important it is to find ways to come together that are not mediated through whiteness and explore how newcomers can contribute to this dialogue in many ways outside of mainstream imagination.

“

**Canada privileges and prioritizes Indigenous and white conversation. For me, a transformative moment was Ayumi sharing with me that her (Japanese) mom also wants to know what’s going on.**

—Peter Morin, *The Star Vancouver Article*, July 12, 2018

**People who are new to the land (and) racialized... how do they enter into that traumatic interaction of colonization between Indigenous and white settlers? It’s very difficult to know how to be part of that story without being lumped into one or the other side.**

— Ayumi Goto, *The Star Vancouver Article*, July 12, 2018

”



Peter Morin with Ayumi Goto, this is what happens when we perform the memory of the land, 2013. Documentation of performance. Photo: Ashok Mathur

## INHERITED HISTORY AND RESPONSIBILITIES: CULTIVATING CANADA

Advisor Mike DeGagné pointed us towards *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* (2011), the third volume in a series of publications with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Published over 10 years ago, this work brings newcomers’ perspectives into the broader conversation and complex notion of reconciliation in a national landscape.



This collection of stories addresses how communities — immigrants, racialized, “new” Canadians, and other minority groups — relate to the intricacies of reconciliation as a concept. For our group, this collection came as evidence of the importance of educating both

Canadians and newcomers to Canada about Indigenous history and culture. Artists, writers, and academics explore their artistic practice, consider responsible action and radical thinking to broaden relationships with land, environment, communities and the nation-state. This volume focuses on “migrant/new Canadian

perspectives, but with an understanding that **such viewpoints need to be aware of what has come before them—specifically, Aboriginal populations and the history of the land that is determined not by colonizing definitions, but by pre-Contact awareness.**”

We had the opportunity to talk with Ashok Mathur who brought new perspectives on how newcomers learn about Canada’s history. One such consideration is “inheritance and responsibility”. According to Ashok, “[when coming to Canada] newcomers are inheriting something that is already wholly formed. They are inheriting the Crown system, which means everything from education, to land, to possession, and government systems; it’s important to [reflect on inheritance including the past].”

*Cultivating Canada* is a living testament to the journey of building new and better relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada. It also explores how artistic practice helps to imagine new ways for newcomers to engage with Canada’s truth and history.

“

**As a non-Indigenous, uninvited guest, I am careful to proceed respectfully and humbly in the long process of building a peaceful society in the face of the immense violences that I, and anyone who lives on this land, have inherited.**

— Rita Wong, *Cultivating Canada Contributor*, page. 86

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# Listening to Success Stories

Chief Dr. Robert Joseph mentions above that as Canadians, we cannot underestimate the act of listening. The principles that are going to create change and address reconciliation are the basic values of respect and deep listening.

This is what our group learned during our first Action Canada Study Tour in Yukon. In these rural territories, our ears opened to sound, and we realized the importance of listening to the land and each other. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Whitehorse was the immediate and profound presence of the Yukon First Nations, evident throughout the city. Indigenous self-determination is not “hidden” under colonial forgetting and layers of concrete, and commercial buildings. In Whitehorse, present-day First Nations’ cultures and governance systems are on full display, proudly presented, and integrated into the architecture, history, and story of the city.

We were able to move forward because of the generosity shared with us from multiple First Nation members in Yukon. We met Justin Ferby, Deputy Minister with the Department of Economic Development during our visit to the Carcross Tagish First Nation. We connected with Dr. Mike DeGagné, former president of Yukon University, and Chief Kluane Adamek, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Yukon Regional Chief. From the immigration and settlement

perspective, we met with Suzanne Blackjack, who shared her own experience and input on the settlement services provided to newcomers in Whitehorse. Marius Curteanu, Director of Yukon’s Immigration Office shared information about initiatives such as mandating the Yukon 101 course for newcomers.

Whitehorse represented both the challenges of educating newcomers about First Nation histories and lived experiences as well as the innovative solutions happening in the territory. From this experience, we wanted to learn from other case studies, identifying successful programs as inspiration.

“**As survivors, we have, by the thousands, told our truth, told our stories. And for the first time in all my 82-years, I feel that Canadians are listening. And it’s going to be the same process with the newcomers. We have to find ways to educate them. And I think that as a part of their orientation to coming to Canada, they should know a little bit about the Indigenous Peoples... They were the first here and they have their own worldview and cultures, just like the newcomers. And that our goal is to make sure newcomers understand that.**

— Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada, interview date Nov. 25, 2021.

”

## YUKON: EDUCATING NEWCOMERS ABOUT FIRST NATIONS

As our week-long tour in Whitehorse came to an end, we recognized the uniqueness of Yukon and wondered if it could inspire other communities. Canada has a lot to learn from the Yukon First Nations about cross-cultural dialogue, the presence of First Nations in the immigration process, and setting the terms and curriculum for newcomers on their own history. In addition to the above conversations, we were able to interview Megan Skarnulis, Jonathon Driscoll and Erica Bourdon from Yukon University, and Tosh Southwick, former Associate Vice President of Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation at Yukon College (now Yukon University); all of whom helped us better understand how Yukon developed a first of its kind approach to educating newcomers about First Nations’ culture and lived experiences.

In partnership with the 14 local First Nations, Yukon University created Yukon 101, an online course that provides education about the history and culture of the Yukon First Nations.<sup>xviii</sup> This course (created in 2016) also includes how to communicate respectfully with First Nation individuals and communities.<sup>xlix</sup> The four-hour program, delivered by the University’s Northern Institute for Social Justice (NISJ), provides a broad understanding of six key aspects of Yukon First Nations: history, heritage and culture, governance, residential schools, contemporary topics and world views. **Today, Yukon is the only territory or province that requires immigrants to take this course as part of their settlement process after arrival, free of charge.**

The Yukon Immigration Office ensures that newcomers complete the Yukon 101 course. As one of Yukon’s largest employers, First Nations’ corporations have leveraged the nominee program to bring the much-needed workforce to the territory, making education on First Nations’ history and culture even more relevant and important for newcomers to thrive upon their arrival. The Yukon Immigration Office is also expanding its efforts to include First Nations perspectives into immigration.

**For the first time, at least in the territory, the office has an Indigenous Immigration Officer.**

Yukon has a unique context: 11 of the 14 First Nations have self-government agreements to make their own laws and run their own services and programs. “[Together Today For Our Children Tomorrow](#)” was the policy paper that paved the way for the negotiation of Yukon Final and Self-Government Agreements. The Umbrella Final Agreement (1993) is a framework for negotiating the individual Final Agreements. This introduction to Yukon challenged our group to look for other exemplary examples that could be used across the country.

**“The core competency programs are aimed at building greater understanding and awareness of the 14 Yukon First Nations in Yukon. This is vital, because if you graduate from Yukon College and/or live and work anywhere in the Territory, you will be interacting with Yukon First Nations people and working with Yukon First Nations governments and organizations.”**

— Tosh Southwick, IRP Founding Partner and former Associate Vice President of Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation at Yukon University, interview date Oct. 26, 2021.

**“[this work] is highlighting Yukon as a model, where I don’t think this is happening everywhere [else], but I think that it is an interesting point to say: ‘this is great, we need to acknowledge that; [but] is this enough in the times we are in?’ and not to presume what the solutions are but to offer recommendations as to how this could be strengthened”**

— Chief Kluane Adamek, Yukon’s Regional Chief, interview date Sept. 10, 2021.



Thanks to the generosity of the people we interviewed in Yukon, we learned about an inspirational success story in the City of Vancouver and were introduced to community leaders Kamala Todd, Indigenous Planner and Filmmaker, and Kory Wilson, Executive Director of Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships at British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). Kamala's and Kory's visionary leadership led to the implementation of the [Vancouver Dialogue Project](#) (2010 -2013) and the [First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers](#) (2014).

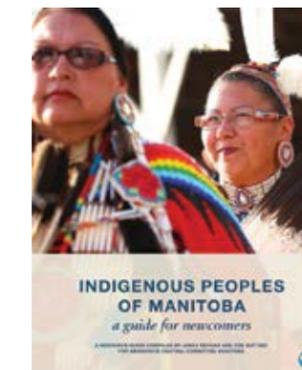
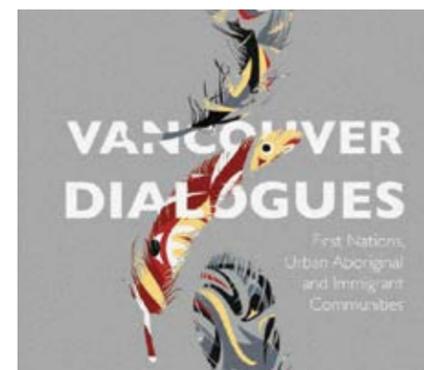
**“The point of the guide is to make sure newcomers understand the truth...That we’re not a dead and dying people. We are alive, it’s our land. Also the guide dispels the myths that many [newcomers] have learned about Indigenous people through various books and lessons in their countries.”**

—Kory Wilson, Executive Director of Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), Interview date Nov. 16, 2021.



**“[In the early 2000s] an Elder said [to me]; ‘it is a real problem that people who come here still don’t learn about whose land this is, or the history and our current realities’. So they get inserted right into these degrees of ignorance, racism and erasure that Indigenous Peoples experience. He identified that meeting people...when they’re first coming to these lands, and making sure they know whose lands they are coming to is an important meeting and learning point. So I carried that with me.”**

—Kamala Todd, Indigenous Planner and Filmmaker, Interview date Nov. 25, 2021.



The **Vancouver Dialogue Project** was the first of its kind, and through dialogue circles, community research, cultural exchange visits, an intergenerational program, a neighbourhood storytelling project, and a youth summit, the City of Vancouver prioritized building relations between newcomers and Indigenous communities. From this project, the [Welcome to our Homelands](#) video was born. Written, directed and edited by Kamala, the video and accompanying [study guide](#) serve as an entry point for further learning.

From these projects, a clear need for educational materials about Indigenous Peoples for newcomers emerged. The City of Vancouver created the [First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers \(2014\)](#), the most comprehensive newcomer guide in Canada with information about the three local First Nations in Vancouver: the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. It provides an overview of the relationships between the Government of Canada and First Peoples, and ways for newcomers to learn more about Indigenous Peoples in the community.

The guide is a valuable resource available through local organizations, including settlement agencies like the [Vancouver Immigration Partnership](#), the Vancouver Public Library, and ESL language centres. It became a key initiative under the Welcoming Communities Project in 2013 and was supported by the Province of British Columbia Immigration Integration Branch. **The city prioritized funding and resources in order to make the newcomers’ guide a reality.** It is evident that by prioritizing the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, the city was able to find creative ways to bring the immigrant and Indigenous communities together. Inspired by Vancouver’s Guide, the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada created the [Indigenous Peoples of Manitoba Guide \(2017\)](#) for newcomers. This demonstrates how similar resources can be developed and scaled in different jurisdictions across the country.

## FUNDING CHALLENGES AND THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

We heard that funding was vital to start these initiatives, but what truly made these projects come alive was their collaborative approach. These projects were built on trust and in partnership with local First Nations, urban Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, settlement organizations, community, cultural and faith groups, and city and provincial governments. This collaborative approach was a key ingredient to their success.

The community leaders that we interviewed mentioned that there is an opportunity to do similar work across Canada if governments provide the support needed. The work done in places like Vancouver can serve as a foundation and model for other jurisdictions to replicate across the country. Kory Wilson developed most of the guide under the creative commons, which allows others to leverage and benefit from this work. She states that the guide serves as a template with nation-wide information, which can be adapted by different regions to include the truths and histories of local Indigenous communities. She emphasizes the **benefits of a centralized approach, funded by the government, to do this work instead of a piecemeal, grant-based application process. Then, we can work together to maximize resources.** Kory explains how the efficient management of resources from a centralized body could help scale this work:

**“Because there are common truths regardless of where you are in Canada, so it can be national, then there are common provincial truths, and then there are common local truths.”**

— *Kory Wilson, Executive Director of Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), interview date 16 Nov. 2021.*

## CALGARY CENTRE FOR NEWCOMERS: CO-CREATING SOLUTIONS

Anila Lee Yuen is the CEO of the Centre for Newcomers, a settlement service organization based in Calgary, Alberta. She believes that understanding Indigenous history is an important part of national identity. Inspired by the TRC Calls to Action, Anila led the Centre for Newcomers to be one of the first settlement organizations to work closely with Indigenous communities as part of their newcomer settlement programming.

Anila used IRCC funding to pilot programming to bring newcomers and Indigenous communities together. Their programs include: community visits to a sundance ceremony, a collective kitchen to share Indigenous and newcomer food recipes, and the introduction of Indigenous history modules during mandatory English language training for newcomers. The organization also conducts an eight-month training program for their staff with local Indigenous communities.

Anila emphasized that effective reconciliation programming and training is done through experience-based learning and relationship building. It is important for staff and newcomers to experience Indigenous spaces, share food, and learn about Indigenous history from the Elders Council, to build relationships between newcomers and Indigenous communities.

**“The motivation for starting the reconciliation program is that as global citizens we are stewards of understanding Canadian society and therefore Indigenous communities. We have to recognize that as part of Canadian society we are part of the problem, part of colonization, as the settlers that also came.”**

—*Anila Lee Yuen, CEO of the Centre for Newcomers in Calgary, interview date Nov. 16, 2021.*

**“It is difficult for settlement service agencies to take reconciliation work as a priority because it competes with other priorities and limited funding. That's the biggest challenge, was finding the right staff and board members that understand why this issue is important and spearhead it. Not many people know about Truth and Reconciliation, residential schools, Indigenous issue”.**

—*Anila Lee Yuen, CEO of the Centre for Newcomers in Calgary, interview date Nov. 16, 2021.*

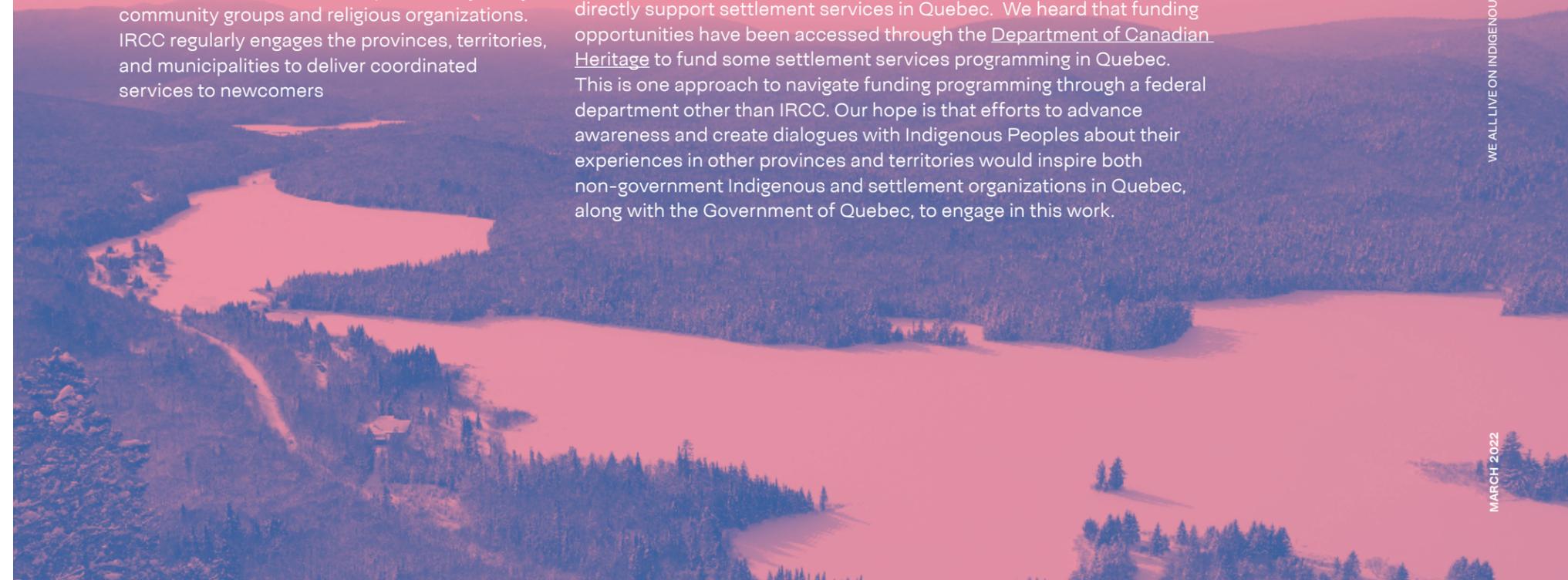
# The Role of Settlement Services

The goal of Canada's Settlement Program is to support newcomers to participate in social, cultural, civic, and economic life.<sup>iii</sup> IRCC defines settlement as “a short period of mutual adaptation between the newcomers and the host society” where the government provides services to newcomers.<sup>iiii</sup> Settlement services organizations across Canada implement programming to support newcomer integration to the community using funding from IRCC. The services provided include housing, education, healthcare, transportation, banking, groceries, community activities, finding a job, language and skills classes, social activities, and more.<sup>iv</sup> Some settlement organizations may focus on refugees or asylum seekers, but many organizations serve newcomers broadly. Settlement services are also provided by many community groups and religious organizations. IRCC regularly engages the provinces, territories, and municipalities to deliver coordinated services to newcomers

## FUNDING MODELS

Settlement services in Canada are funded by multiple levels of government but IRCC is the primary funder. IRCC and a settlement services organization enter into a five-year agreement. We heard from IRCC about a special innovation fund that can be accessed by settlement services organizations to pilot new initiatives outside the five-year funding cycle. **In the last call for proposals, programming relating to Indigenous awareness and relationship building was included. However, it did not outline standards or support from IRCC, with the responsibility to develop such programming falling on the settlement services organizations.** This is a challenge for settlement organizations that may not have the existing relationships and resources to develop such programming.

Settlement services organizations in Quebec are different from the rest of the country, as the Government of Quebec has jurisdiction for economic migration, including selection and integration. There are limits to this; for example, due to the [Canada-Quebec Accord](#), IRCC does not directly support settlement services in Quebec. We heard that funding opportunities have been accessed through the [Department of Canadian Heritage](#) to fund some settlement services programming in Quebec. This is one approach to navigate funding programming through a federal department other than IRCC. Our hope is that efforts to advance awareness and create dialogues with Indigenous Peoples about their experiences in other provinces and territories would inspire both non-government Indigenous and settlement organizations in Quebec, along with the Government of Quebec, to engage in this work.





# Recommendations

The section below highlights learnings from the people we interviewed, surveyed, and the resources we read to bring newcomers and Indigenous Peoples together with a focus on relationship building and truth-telling. Many people are leading the way in this area, and our group seeks to highlight the existing work that is happening. We suggest how decision-makers involved, such as IRCC, can support and resource a national implementation of this programming for all newcomers to Canada. Designated funds for this programing can ensure that organizations of all sizes and capacities have the ability to implement initiatives. We present these recommendations as a set of goals, with discrete activities to follow. Finally, we should mention that this is not an exhaustive list of recommendations, rather the key learnings we have gained through exploring this topic.

Moreover, we focus on the IRCC as this department is the key entity within the federal government responsible for immigration policy to: 1) include more Indigenous perspective and history as highlighted in the [IRCC Departmental Plan for 2020-2021](#); 2) implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act; 3) work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to advance their rights as outlined in the [Office of the Prime Minister Mandate Letter](#) issued on Dec. 16, 2021. This includes engaging with the Government of Canada Action Plan regarding UNDRIPA.

We heard from many interview and survey participants about the role of settlement services to create programming and build relationships with Indigenous Peoples. While IRCC offers policy and funding support, each settlement service organization creates and implements its own programming. Settlement services will need to build authentic relationships with Indigenous Peoples and it will be important to share learnings and experiences between settlement organizations.

Our intention is to support and enhance the work of everyone involved in the education of Indigenous Peoples' histories, cultures, and lived experiences for newcomers. We believe that the lack of a synchronous effort from a federal level is no longer acceptable and that there are sufficient tools and case studies to follow for significant improvements in this area. It is our belief that the way forward includes authentic, and respectful relationships led by a self-governing Indigenous process within the IRCC, creating and recommending updates to curriculums, and policies pertaining to newcomer education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX

GOAL	#	RECOMMENDATION	THEME	Federal (IRCC)	Immigration Departments	Settlement Services	Newcomers	Communities & Individuals
<b>Centre Indigenous Peoples and histories in agencies through training, technology and inclusion</b>	1.1	Provide Indigenous cultural safety training for all staff, leveraging existing resources and materials developed by Indigenous organizations, Indigenous consultants, and post-secondary institutions across Canada (TRC Call to Action 57 and 92).	Training	✓	✓	✓		
	1.2	Embrace and utilize online educational programs to improve accessibility to resources on Indigenous Peoples' histories, cultures, and lived experiences, such as those developed by post-secondary institutions and other organizations. This improved online access should communicate information on local Indigenous communities whose land newcomers are settling on.	Technology	✓	✓	✓		
	1.3	Invest resources to empower Indigenous organizations and Indigenous consultants to ensure that subject matter experts shape the educational curriculum offered to newcomers by settlement agencies.	Compensation	✓	✓			
	1.4	Hire more Indigenous immigration officers to support and interact with newcomers in their settlement process. Support settlement organizations to follow suit in hiring Indigenous staff.	Decision-making Power	✓	✓			
<b>Increase Indigenous participation and understanding within immigration policy-making</b>	2.1	Issue a pledge outlining the department's commitment towards reconciliation (as defined by the TRC), and how it intends to go beyond calls to action 93 and 94 to advance Indigenous rights, including incorporating reconciliation as a core value to drive change, accountability, and participation across the organization. This pledge should be updated on a regular basis to demonstrate progress and identify new goals, as well as respond to relevant parts on the Action Plan to implement UNDRIP.	Accountability and Transparency	✓	✓			
	2.2	Develop within the departments' plans and priorities for each fiscal year specific actions to advance Indigenous rights as an organization (e.g., increase Indigenous representation within the department's decision-making roles, implement a policy for land acknowledgements, develop a supplier diversity policy, hire and train Indigenous students). This can include actions taken under the Action Plan to implement UNDRIP.	Department Goals	✓	✓			
	2.3	Co-create with Indigenous organizations a consultative mechanism for regular decision-making on immigration policy with regular and formal communication with Indigenous organizations across the country.	Decision-making Power	✓	✓			
	2.4	Evolve the criteria for government funding (e.g. IRCC) of settlement services to include mandatory programming pertaining to Indigenous culture and history for newcomers. Programming should include opportunities for dialogue and cultural exchange. IRCC should offer support by providing a roster of Indigenous organizations and Indigenous consultants in each jurisdiction that can support the settlement services organization to develop programming.	Funding and Programming	✓	✓			
	2.5	Provide compensation for the efforts and time that Indigenous leaders invest into shaping immigration policy.	Compensation	✓	✓			

## RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX (CONTINUED)

			Federal (IRCC)	Immigration Departments	Settlement Services	Newcomers	Communities & Individuals
<b>Enhance newcomers education on Indigenous Peoples' histories, cultures and lived experiences</b>	<b>3.1</b>	Update and publish the citizenship study guide as soon as feasible to reflect Indigenous Peoples' histories, cultures, and lived experiences. We know this work is currently underway at IRCC. In addition to publishing the revised citizenship guide, there should be a mechanism in place to evaluate the entirety of the citizenship guide with feedback from newcomers and Indigenous Peoples, and a process to improve the guide over time.	Accountability	✓	✓		
	<b>3.2</b>	Sponsor the development of a standard 'Newcomer Course' with a focus on Indigenous Peoples' history, cultures, and lived experiences, which can be then adopted and refined for different jurisdictions.	Funding and Programming	✓	✓		
	<b>3.3</b>	Resource and centralize work to create a stand alone 'First Peoples Guide for Newcomers' that could be used as a template by jurisdictions across Canada. The Guide should provide the foundation of National truths and provincial and territorial truths. The City of Vancouver Guide is an example of this. This must be co-created with Indigenous groups and informed by an advisory committee of Indigenous leaders and newcomers.	Funding and Programming	✓	✓		
	<b>3.4</b>	Ensure that above content suggested is co-created with Indigenous organizations and settlement service organizations to ensure authenticity of content and uptake across settlement services.	Decision-making Power	✓	✓		
	<b>3.5</b>	Identify additional opportunities within the immigration process, such as the application period, to embed additional education about Indigenous peoples, histories, and cultures in more areas of the immigration process. This also includes looking at the information about Canada that is advertised to potential immigrants.	Funding and Programming	✓	✓		
	<b>3.6</b>	Use UNDRIP, UNDRIPA, and other relevant governing documents as a starting point to guide relationship building with Indigenous peoples	Relationship Building	✓	✓		
<b>Increase indigenous awareness in settlement services</b>	<b>4.1</b>	Incorporate discussions on Indigenous communities and histories as part of language classes (e.g. English and French).	Programming			✓	
	<b>4.2</b>	Establish a conference to connect settlement service organizations to each other and to share best practices, especially about increasing newcomer awareness of Indigenous peoples, histories, and realities in Canada.	Knowledge-sharing			✓	
	<b>4.3</b>	Prioritize experience-based learning, relationship building, opportunities for dialogue and cultural exchange, and economic development in Indigenous communities.	Programming			✓	
	<b>4.4</b>	Use UNDRIP, UNDRIPA, and other relevant governing documents as a starting point to guide relationship building with Indigenous peoples.	Relationship Building			✓	
<b>Enhance Indigenous awareness through community engagement and self learning</b>	<b>5.1</b>	Learn the names of the traditional territories they reside on and the closest residential school.	Self-learning				✓ ✓
	<b>5.2</b>	Attend local Indigenous celebrations - National Indigenous Peoples Day, National Truth and Reconciliation Day event (Orange Shirt Day) for example.	Community Engagement				✓ ✓
	<b>5.3</b>	Visit your local Aboriginal Friendship Centre and see the types of events and activities offered.	Community Engagement				✓ ✓
	<b>5.4</b>	Read books from Indigenous authors.	Self-learning				✓ ✓
	<b>5.5</b>	Read UNDRIP, TRC, MMIWG.	Self-learning				✓ ✓
	<b>5.6</b>	Support local Indigenous businesses.	Community Engagement				✓ ✓

# Areas to Explore Further

Through exploring this topic, many people we interviewed, survey respondents and reviewers shared insights on opportunities for further exploration.

- Impacts on Indigenous peoples due to immigration trends, past present and future
- How immigration has been used by colonial governments as a tool to displace Indigenous communities, and the impacts this has had on Indigenous Peoples and communities across Canada
- Implications for political power of Indigenous peoples in Canada
- Role of governments in supporting the revitalization of Indigenous cultures and languages
- Economic implications for Indigenous communities resulting from immigration
- How improved education about Indigenous histories, cultures, and communities can be improved across Canadian society, including public education, workplaces, and community organizations.

# About the Authors

**Laura Corrales** was born and raised in Colombia's capital, Bogotá, home of the Muisca (Chibcha) People. With both her parental and maternal families from Colombia's coast, Laura is proud of her Caribbean roots and heritage. Since 2016 she has lived in the unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation and calls Tiohtià:ke/ Montréal home, where she lives with her husband. Laura is a sustainability professional passionate about youth engagement, social intrapreneurship, and empathetic leadership.

**Jon Farrell** was born and raised in St. John's on the island of Newfoundland, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people and the ancestral homeland of the Beothuk people. He is a fifth generation Newfoundlander of Irish descent, an engineer and energy sector leader. He now resides with his wife and two daughters in Fort McMurray, Alberta, in Treaty 8 territory, the traditional home of the Cree, Dene and Métis peoples.

**Grace Lee** is a second-generation Korean-Canadian and grew up in the beautiful city of North Vancouver, British Columbia, the unceded territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam Nations. She currently lives in Ottawa, Ont., the territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People, as a Foreign Service Officer at Global Affairs Canada. She is proud of her roots and representing Canada abroad.

**Kaitlynn Lowe** is a third-generation Canadian raised in Courtice, Ont. on the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. Her maternal great-grandparents immigrated from England following the First World War. Several generations have lived in Western Canada and Quebec on her paternal side. Currently living in K'jpuktuk/ Halifax on the unceded traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq, in Nova Scotia, she works as a researcher at the MacEachen Institute for Public Policy and Governance at Dalhousie University.

**Jennifer Schine** is a fourth-generation Vancouverite, born in the unceded territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam Nations, where she currently works as a consultant and sound artist. Her mother's family immigrated to Canada from Scotland/England in the early 1900's. As Ashkenazi Jews, her father's family fled what is now Belarus at the turn of the last century and settled in the territory of the Lenni-Lenape, also known as New York City, NY.

**Amrit Sehdev** is a second-generation Indo-Canadian, born and raised in Toronto, home to the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat people. He has been fortunate enough to see these lands, coast to coast, through education and providing care to those living in urban and rural areas.

## ANNEX A: USE OF TERMS

- **Reconciliation:** We use the [TRC's](#) definition of reconciliation in this report, “to the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.”
- **Colonization:** [The Cambridge Dictionary](#) defines colonization as “the act of sending people to live in and govern another country”, encompassing the actions of the French and British Governments to colonize Turtle Island (i.e. North America), or what would become Canada.
- **Decolonization:** The process to undo the violence and oppression due to colonization, including within systems.
- **Settler-Colonialism:** Canada is a settler-colonial nation and was formed in a process of colonization to establish settlers to gain political and economic power. Settler-colonial countries assume “that the settler state has the right to control who enters its territory and who can become a member of its territorial polity” disregarding Indigenous laws and governance.<sup>1</sup>
- **Settlement:** IRCC defines settlement as “a short period of mutual adaptation between the newcomers and the host society” where the government provides services to newcomers. The goal of Canada's Settlement Program is to support newcomers to participate in social, cultural, civic, and economic life (IRCC, 2019, Settlement Program).
- **IRCC:** Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada, the department of the Federal Government responsible for overseeing immigration into Canada.
- **Indigenous Peoples:** refers to Indigenous populations in Canada, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.
- **Newcomer:** General term to describe people born outside of Canada currently living in Canada for a variety of purposes not related to tourism, such as immigrants coming to work or study in Canada, temporary foreign workers, migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers, and immigrants reuniting with family.
- **Treaty people:** People living on land covered by historic and modern treaties. As a treaty person, one is responsible to uphold the rights and obligations outlined in the treaty. Not all land in Canada is covered under a treaty.
- **Truth:** We recognize that “truth” can be subjective and use “truth” in this report to refer to the truth of the lived experiences and histories of Indigenous Peoples across Canada. Specifically, we refer to truth as the truth of Indigenous Peoples that has been suppressed from public collective memory.

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