



ASSEMBLY OF SEVEN  
GENERATIONS

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# Meaningful Connections through Commemorations

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**Keywords:** Assimilation, Awareness, Bureaucracy, Balance, Collaboration, Community, Commemoration, Detriment, Discomfort, Education, Ethics, Genocide, Gratitude, Integrity, Justice, Learning.

# Acknowledgement

We want to say a big thank you/chi Miigwech to the Indigenous youth who trusted us with their information and believe that we will collectively create the changes needed for meaningful and impactful commemoration along side the City of Ottawa, the Algonquin Working group and the local Indigenous community.

We also want to send a big thank you/chi Miigwech to the City of Ottawa's Cultural Development and Initiatives Team for seeing how vital the voices of Indigenous youth are in advancing true Reconciliation.

# Introduction

The goal of this report is to ensure that the municipality that resides on unceded Algonquin territory has the ability and awareness to move forward with pursuits of restoring relations with the Indigenous communities in an ethical way.

The significance of this report is evident to the Indigenous communities navigating life as a minority on their own lands; hopefully the City of Ottawa sees the urgency and follows through on its promises to uphold everyone's well being in all 24 wards and to the Indigenous communities that have provided them with these statements.

# Methodology

As with all research or engagement conducted by A7G, there are seven ethical standards that A7G follows that have been defined by Indigenous youth themselves.

These seven ethical requirements and the ways in which they were honoured are as follows:

- 1. Accessibility:** Transportation costs were covered for participants, the location was in an accessible building with ramps and elevators, accessible language was used as well as explanations for terms, A7G helpers were on standby to offer supports.
- 2. Indigenous youth developing and leading research:** Indigenous youth make up the facilitator team, editing and writing team and content for the report was provided entirely by Indigenous youth participants.
- 3. Holistic approaches:** Traditional medicine were provided throughout the day as well as an opening from the Algonquin youth, A7G helpers were checking in on participants and were available as supports, facilitators debriefed and followed up where needed, the day was followed by a community feast to celebrate and care for each other.

## Ethical Research Engagement with Indigenous Youth: Seven Requirements

From the Indigenous Youth Voices Report 1  
A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and By Indigenous Youth  
Indigenous Youth Voices Research Team: Gabrielle Fayant, Michel, Brittany Mathews, Michel, Carrington Christmas, M'khuu, Erin Donnelly, Hada, Andrea Auger, Olyvia

In partnership with the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, Indigenous Youth Voices conducted community-based research and released a report on the topic of conducting research with and for Indigenous youth. The final report, *A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and By Indigenous Youth*, offers a path towards rethinking and reshaping research that is meaningful, respectful and inclusive of Indigenous youth. This fact-sheet summarizes seven requirements for conducting ethical research with Indigenous youth.

**"When done in a respectful and meaningful way, research has the potential to uplift Indigenous youth and can be used for the betterment of communities."**

### 1. Accessibility

**CONTENT:** Research must be accessible, from the initial stages of the project to the dissemination of results. Research needs to be developed and delivered in language that is accessible for Indigenous youth. This includes Indigenous languages and language that is not simply written in academic terms.

**SUGGESTIONS**

- Create a plain language glossary of terms
- Work with youth to create relevant messaging and content using mediums that resonate with them

**PARTICIPATION:** Researchers have a responsibility to work with Indigenous youth to identify and overcome barriers that prevent meaningful youth participation. Some of these barriers include transportation, child care, and fair compensation for the time and energy Indigenous youth spend.

**SUGGESTION**

- Ensure that research proposals include a youth participation budget for food, transportation, honoraria/pay etc.

This fact-sheet was created in partnership with IVY as part of Yellowhead Institute's 2020 Call for Collaboration  
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### 2. Indigenous Youth Developing and Leading Research

Research must work in ways that uplift Indigenous youth and build their communities. As much as possible, research must be beneficial to the resurgence of Indigenous cultures, ceremonies, languages and stories. Researchers have a responsibility to work with youth to change narratives.

**SUGGESTIONS**

- Make space to include Indigenous youth as collaborators with clearly defined roles, not just subjects of research. Co-create the research process from designing the methodology to interpreting the results. This might mean letting go of preconceived ideas and some control!

### 3. Holistic Approaches

Research must include the entire community and be inclusive of the diversity found within Indigenous communities. Indigenous youth indicated that researchers have a responsibility in ensuring that Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ youth, as well as Elders, children, youth and families all need to be meaningfully included.

**SUGGESTIONS**

- Ask youth for guidance on who should be involved in the research and the best ways to meaningfully involve them in the research process.
- Ensure that all involved in the research feel safe and supported in participating; this includes support and follow-up for youth after meetings and after the research process is complete

### 4. Indigenous Youth Defined Research Ethics

Research must uphold the respect, safety and dignity of Indigenous youth as defined by youth themselves. While the ethics that provide the baseline for this are found in such documents as the Tri-Council Policy Statement, research ethics must be defined by the youth themselves with respect to their distinct needs.

**SUGGESTION**

- Develop a consent-based process with Indigenous youth at the start of your research. Youth should feel they have control and jurisdiction over the process, including the ability to stop the research process entirely if need be.

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### 5. Reciprocity

Relationship-building and a sense of reciprocity must be the cornerstone of research. Indigenous youth made it clear that researchers must have a sense of responsibility and accountability that extends beyond the limitations of a specific research project. This includes building trusting and meaningful relationships before research begins to ensure that relationships are maintained past the end of the research. Indigenous youth see this as an important mechanism in ensuring that researchers begin to value and define youth for their resilience and successes.

**SUGGESTION**

- Build trust by spending time with the community members to learn about them as well as the community, participating in community activities and/or ceremonies (if invited to do so), etc.

### 6. Community-Led and Culturally Specific

Research must include the capacity for communities to lead and define the research themselves. Relying on "distinction-based" approaches does not honour cultural specificity nor the diversity of youth experiences found within First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. Research must be led by trusted researchers and conducted in a culturally specific manner as defined by the community. Elders and Knowledge Holders should be respected and valued for the specific knowledges they hold.

**SUGGESTION**

- Take the time to learn about the culture and language of the community from youth, Elders and Knowledge Holders.

### 7. Support the Implementation of TRC Call to Action 66

Indigenous youth have indicated that the best way to contribute to building capacity with Indigenous young people is by supporting the implementation of TRC Call to Action 66. Multi-year funding and support for grassroots Indigenous youth organizations is integral to the wellbeing of Indigenous youth.

**SUGGESTION**

- Read the report by Indigenous Youth Voices, *A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66*

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- 4. Indigenous youth-defined research ethics:** Participants were able to control the flow of the day and jump in where they felt needed, participants will also be involved in approving the final draft of the report.
- 5. Reciprocity:** All participants were provided with a small honorarium (\$150) for their time as well as a small gift. However, a larger honorarium is recommended for future engagement considering many youth are students, unemployed or underpaid and to also support the cost of living.
- 6. Community-led and culturally specific:** For this engagement, two Algonquin leads were hired to support with outreach and Algonquin inclusion in the report, all participants were heard and acknowledged while sharing during the engagement session including perspectives from their own Indigenous cultures and nations.
- 7. Support the implementation of TRC 66:** Ongoing research and engagement led by Indigenous youth constantly goes to support the ongoing call for TRC 66 to be implemented.

For this report, A7G and the City of Ottawa held an in-person consultation with urban Indigenous youth from A7G (Inuit, Anishinabeg, Omushkegowuk, Mohawk, to name a few), Algonquin youth from Pikwakanagan and Algonquin youth from Pikwakanagan and Kitigan Zibi that are a part of Anishinabe Odjibikan.

During the session, participants introduced themselves to each other as well as their community and pronouns, representatives from the City of Ottawa presented on their current action plans and engagement sessions as well as outcomes from the Algonquin Working Committee. After all information was provided to the participants, participants asked questions and brought up existing concerns with statues and plaques within the City of Ottawa and one main brainstorming question was asked to every participant which was: What does commemoration mean to you as an Indigenous youth?

In this session, participants were also encouraged to share lived experiences with their consent. Lived experiences were honoured and respected as much as possible in this space.

# What Does Commemoration Mean from a Colonial Perspective?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines commemoration as “something that is done to remember officially and give respect to a great person or event”. The City of Ottawa has defined Commemoration as “Collective Memory” which can be further expanded on as the efforts of remembrance of evolving history for future generations. Yet, the commemoration (statues, plaques, parks, etc) that is found around the City of Ottawa is often one-sided and filled with colonial bias. This includes but are not limited to the following examples at City Hall, Confederation Park, and Parliament Hill.

## Ottawa City Hall

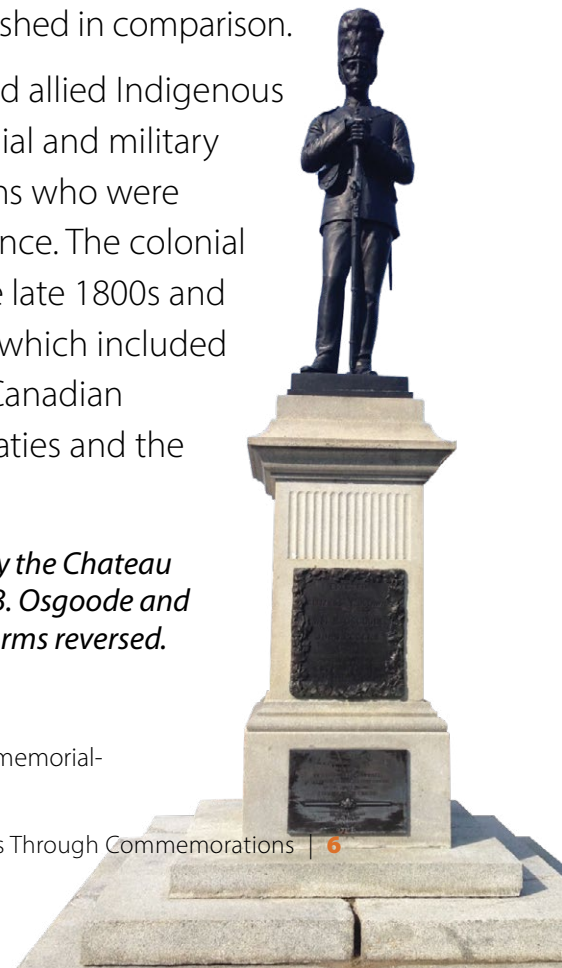
At Ottawa’s City Hall alone there are two statues that Indigenous youth flagged as problematic, the Sharpshooter Memorial and the 150 Confederation Statue, which imply a biased narrative toward Indigenous peoples while the acknowledgement of the Unceded and Unsurrendered Lands of the Anishinaabeg Algonquin Peoples is very small and diminished in comparison.

The Sharpshooter Memorial is very offensive to Metis and allied Indigenous groups from the Plains. This Memorial glorifies the colonial and military violence towards the Metis and other Indigenous Nations who were defending their homelands during the Red River Resistance. The colonial violence experienced by Indigenous peoples during the late 1800s and early 1900s is better known as the clearing of the Plains which included the first use of the Gatling gun on unarmed civilians in Canadian history, forced starvation into signing the numbered treaties and the removal of Indigenous peoples from their Lands.

*Installed originally in Major’s Hill Park, on the site now occupied by the Chateau Laurier. The monument includes the portraits of Privates William B. Osgoode and John Rodgers, and the bronze figure of a Guardsman, resting on arms reversed. A memorial service is conducted every year at the monument.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ottawamilitarymemorialstour.wordpress.com/northwest-rebellion-memorial-sharpshooter-statue>





*The 1885 Northwest Resistance had a deleterious impact upon the Prairie Métis. Without question, the Battle of Batoche (the concluding battle of the 1885 Northwest Resistance) was Western Canada's Plains of Abraham. It ensured that an Anglo-Protestant-led settler society would impose its dominance on the Canadian Prairies for several generations. Whether they participated or not, the outcome for First Nations and Métis peoples in Western Canada would be bleak. First Nations were forced to stay on reserves, and would only be allowed to leave via the infamous pass system. Their children were sent to residential and day schools to be assimilated.<sup>2</sup>*

—*Atlas of Indigenous Peoples of Canada*

While the Sharpshooter Memorial is large and clearly visible, the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation plaque and commemorative artwork containing text of the Honouring Statement at Marion Dewar Plaza, Ottawa City Hall is much smaller without any protection, or light often leaving it to be mistreated during any events/activities held at City Hall in comparison. One Indigenous youth mentioned how it was squished between two vendor food trucks during Poutine Fest and not visible or readable at all.

150 Confederation Statue is a concern and trigger to many Indigenous peoples. For Indigenous peoples, the Confederation of Canada brought on violent assimilation and genocide tactics, from what is now called the Clearing of the Plains, starvation and military use of weapons on unarmed civilians, to name a few. Confederation is not seen as a celebration for many Indigenous peoples. While Canadians honour the 150<sup>th</sup> milestone, truth of how Canada was formed must also be given to the public.

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2 <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/aftermath-of-1885>



*That's predictable because Canada is still deeply invested in its colonial narrative, which is how it has the audacity to follow the TRC report with a celebration of 150 years of violent, colonial invasion on Indigenous land, and pretend that the findings of the TRC were somehow an anomaly and not truly a part of the foundation of Canada as a colonial state.*

—*Torontoist*<sup>3</sup>

## Confederation Park

Across the street from City Hall, is Confederation Park on the corner of Laurier and Elgin Street. Holding space for two Commemorative Statues that have incorrect and harmful language to the Indigenous Peoples it is meant to be paying tribute to.

The Kwakiutl Totem with a plaque quoting “*Donated by the Native Indian People of British Columbia to commemorate the centenary of union of the province of British Columbia with Canada, July 20, 1871*” followed with the credits to the artist “*Mr. Henry Hunt of the Kwawkewith Indian Band.*” This site was installed in 1971. When researched further on the Government of Canada website, it states “This totem pole is located on Slater Street, in Ottawa, at the edge of Confederation Park. It is the work of Kwakiutl artist Henry Hunt. In 1971, the province of British Columbia donated this work of art to commemorate the centennial of its entry into Canada.”

Upon further investigation, we could see that the word “Kwakiutl” is considered a misnomer. They prefer the name *Kwakwaka'wakw*, which means “**Kwak'wala**-speaking-peoples.”<sup>4</sup>

*Kwakiutl Totem, Confederation Park, Ottawa*

<sup>3</sup> <https://torontoist.com/2017/04/audacity-canada-150-lie-designed-erase-legacy-genocide>

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwakwaka%CA%BCwakw#cite\\_note-8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwakwaka%CA%BCwakw#cite_note-8)



Totem poles are of strong significance to Indigenous nations on the West Coast. As outlined in the Canadian Encyclopedia: “A totem pole or monumental pole is a tall structure created by Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples that showcases a nation’s, family’s or individual’s history and displays their rights to certain territories, songs, dances and other aspects of their culture. Totem poles can also be used as memorials and to tell stories.”

A major concern with this totem pole is that there seems to be a disconnect with the carver’s community and family and the true story of this totem pole and what it signifies has been lost.<sup>5</sup>

## Parliament Hill

Algonquin Anishinabeg have stated for generations that the area and waters around Parliament Hill are the sacred and ancient burial grounds of their ancestors for thousands of years however it was not until the recent uncovering of a knife (*mokoman*) that was uncovered while doing renovations of the Parliament Building that governments began to take notice and the fact that Ottawa is Algonquin territory can no longer be contested.<sup>6</sup>



*Knife discovered during renovations at Parliament Hill, believed to have been used by the Algonquin people (THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO-Public Services and Procurement Canada)*

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5 <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/totem-pole#:~:text=A%20totem%20pole%20or%20monumental,memorials%20and%20to%20tell%20stories>

6 <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/knife-found-under-parliament-to-be-returned-to-algonquin-nations-in-historic-move-1.5626455>

# What Are the Impacts of Colonial Commemoration?

The definition of History is that of a continuous, systematic narrative of past events as relating to a particular country, period, peoples, etc. Meaning that history is an ongoing action in which we have the power to use our positions to create an equal and accurate adaptation to what we bare witness to as a society.

**Historical trauma** refers to traumatic experiences or events that are shared by a group of people within a society, or even by an entire community, ethnic, or national group. Historical trauma meets three criteria: widespread effects, collective suffering, and malicious intent. Historical Trauma Response (HTR) can manifest as substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, violence, and difficulty in emotional regulation. —GoodTherapy®<sup>7</sup>

In the following quote from the Issue *Unsettling Ottawa* published by Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, there is a highlight on the need of reform in policy and legislation for a healed future:

*My point of departure was a critique of settler colonial constructions of cities like Ottawa. I have argued that the normalized ways of knowing that erase Indigenous histories, geographies and agency in relation to the urban should not be considered innocent oversights, but are central to a deliberate politics of dispossession and disappearance. Academic, state, and everyday discourses thus need to move beyond Ottawa as we know it by engaging Indigenous communities, ontologies, and politics. This is key for advancing decolonial spatial imaginations and social justice.*

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/Understanding\\_Intergenerational\\_Trauma](https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/Understanding_Intergenerational_Trauma)

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS RELATIONS IN CANADA

This is an abbreviated timeline of decrees, Acts, policies, reports and events that have shaped Indigenous history in Canada.

### 1763 ● The Royal Proclamation

Signed by King George III giving limited recognition of title to Indigenous communities and providing guidelines for negotiating treaties on a nation-to-nation basis.

### 1876 ● Indian Act, 1876

Consolidation of Indian policies

### 1953 ● Inuit relocation

The federal government forcefully moves Inuit from Inukjuak in northern Québec to Ellesmere and Cornwallis Islands

**1982 ●  
Canadian Constitution Act, 1982**  
Aboriginal and treaty rights (s.35) entrenched in the supreme law of Canada

**2008 ●  
Formal apology**  
Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivers the formal apology to residential school survivors and their families

**2019 ●  
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry**  
Report published

● **1400s**  
**Doctrine of Discovery**  
A means of legitimizing the colonization of lands outside of Europe.  
Christopher Columbus arrives in the Americas

● **1867**  
**British North America Act** (now known as *Constitution Act, 1867*)  
Colonial responsibility for Indigenous peoples and lands is transferred to the new federal government

● **1885**  
**Northwest Rebellion**  
Métis and their allies lead the five-month Northwest Resistance against the federal government in what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta

● **1960s**  
**The Sixties Scoop**  
Thousands of Indigenous babies and children are taken from their families and placed in boarding schools or foster homes of middle-class Euro-Canadian families

● **1996**  
**The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**  
Report recommends a public inquiry into the effects of residential schools

● **2015**  
**Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada**  
Report published

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. [www.ictinc.ca](http://www.ictinc.ca)

In Anishinaabe teachings, the medicine wheel is a common symbol used for reflection, highlighting a focus on the need for balance within the mind, body, spirit, and emotions. Using the medicine wheel as a tool of reference; we can further unpack the context of our shared history on these lands, which subsequently has caused a partition between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

From the 1400s into the late 1800s, European settlers who once promised allyship went on to create systems to oppress and assimilate Indigenous communities with the creation of the *British North American Act* and the *Indian Act* being historically tragic moments for relations between Indigenous Nations and European settlers. These Acts allowed, what is now called Canada, to afflict traumas and genocide onto multiple generations via Residential Schools, Day Schools, Sixties

Scoop, Millennium Scoop and forced relocation to name a few; with Indigenous youth being the main target to these maltreatments and which continue to this day.<sup>8</sup>

Education held up to proper standards would be the process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally preparing children for mature life; yet the purpose of the Residential/Day Schools were made to “Kill the Indian within the child” by whatever means necessary, altering the chemicals in their brain of those who survived the attempt of genocide, and their kin to follow.

*Physiological theories focus on predisposed **genetic** or **biological** factors to explain the transmission of trauma across generations. Some recent theories propose that biological risk factors can include “toxic **stress**” caused by a child’s environment. This type of problem can contribute to actual changes in the child’s brain development due to abnormal levels of cortisol, dopamine or serotonin, which can affect a child’s future ability to process stressful conditions. This leads to heightened activity levels and can have an effect on concentration and learning abilities (see **Specific Learning Disabilities**). Children dealing with such conditions are described as having limited abilities to self-soothe or regulate their behaviours while under stress. There are also epigenetic theories that suggest maternal stress can impact a child’s in-utero development, ultimately affecting the function of their genes. According to these theories, genetic conditions can predispose an individual’s negative response to stress, and these conditions can be passed on to future generations.<sup>9</sup>*

The effects of stored trauma can trickle down within our genetics in various ways manifesting into poor mental health, poverty, and other illnesses. Especially, when you do not have the capacity, resources or basic services to break the cycles of traumas: often leading for Indigenous peoples’ last

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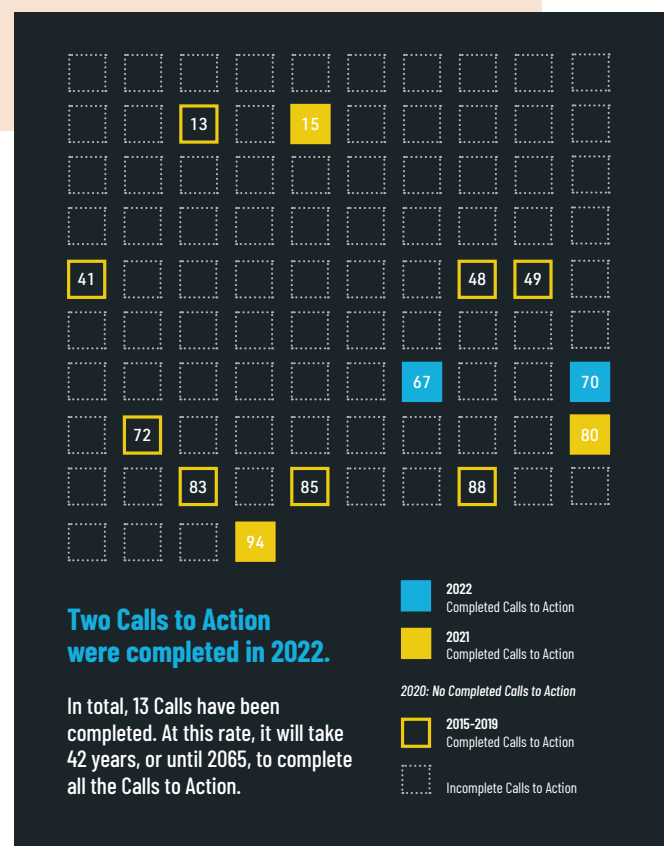
8 <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/a-brief-timeline-of-the-history-of-indigenous-relations-in-canada>

9 <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/intergenerational-trauma-and-residential-schools>

resort to ending this pain through committing suicide. This is evident in the statistics provided by the Canadian Government, and in this following quote from the 2016 Mental Health Survey by Statistics Canada:

*From 2011 to 2016, the suicide rate among First Nations people (24.3 deaths per 100,000 person-years at risk, roughly understood as number of deaths per persons per year) was three times higher than among the non-Indigenous population (8.0 deaths per 100,000 person-years at risk). Among First Nations people living on reserve, the suicide rate was about twice as high as that among those living off reserve.*

According to the Yellowhead Institute in 2022, only 13 TRC Calls to Action have been completed. This slow progress sends an uninspiring message to Survivors and the descendants of Survivors and Indigenous peoples continue to lose hope in seeing justice in their lifetime at this rate. In addition to the slow moving progress on implementing the TRC Calls to Action, a majority of the completed Calls to Action have been symbolic and not structural.





## Trauma Denied

*The Armenian Genocide, during which the Ottoman Turkish Empire massacred 1.5 million Armenians in 1915, is an example of historical trauma that has often been either minimized or denied outright. In fact, the mass murder of Armenians, Assyrian, Greek, and other Christian and religious minority populations of the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1923 has yet to be acknowledged as a genocide by the Turkish government. It can be especially challenging to cope with an injury while you are still fighting for its acknowledgment a century after it was inflicted. Additionally, due to this lack of formal recognition, Armenian survivors find it difficult to trust non-Armenian mental health professionals with their history and pain.*

—GoodTherapy®<sup>10</sup>

*All the efforts of genocide have been solely administrated by the Canadian government and the church: whether it be forced assimilation, segregation and the Indian Residential School system. Our current education system to this day shows little information about the true history of colonialism and almost no information on the traditions, teachings, and ways of living for the Indigenous peoples, furthering erasure, and ensuring a learned bias and continued mistreatment of Indigenous peoples. While the sole efforts to restore balance, peace and a sense of culture and identity has been exclusively made by and for the Indigenous communities affected by these tragedies.*

Elected politicians (at any level of government) are in the same position of power as their predecessors who created oppressive policies and Acts, such as *The Indian Act*, Residential School policy and discriminatory underfunding of Indigenous children in child welfare, to name a few. Time and time again Indigenous peoples have clearly laid out solutions and ways forward and

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/Understanding\\_Intergenerational\\_Trauma](https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/Understanding_Intergenerational_Trauma)



Indigenous children and youth continue to suffer from the short sightedness of colonial governments. In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Report outlined a direct and strategic path forward however like the TRC Calls to Action, the majority of recommendations were never implemented. Canadians, including citizens in Ottawa and Ottawa's leadership, need to make courageous moves because there is a cost to all to maintaining status quo.

*The report centred on a vision of a new relationship, founded on the recognition of Aboriginal peoples as self-governing nations with a unique place in Canada. It set out a 20-year agenda for change, recommending new legislation and institutions, additional resources, a redistribution of land and the rebuilding of Aboriginal nations, governments and communities. Recognizing that autonomy is not realistic without significant community development, RCAP called for early action in four areas; healing, economic development, human resources development, and the building of Aboriginal institutions. The Commission's implementation strategy proposed that governments increase spending to reach \$1.5 billion by Year 5 of the strategy, and \$2 billion in the subsequent 15 years. The report argued that the additional investment over 20 years would save money in the long term.*

—*The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1 Cost of the Status Quo – Today and Tomorrow**<sup>12</sup>

<b>Cost of the Status Quo</b>	<b>Cost (\$ billions)</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2016</b>
Cost to Aboriginal People	Forgone earned income	5.8	8.6
	Income taxes forgone	-2.1	-3.1
	Financial assistance from governments	-0.8	-1.2
	Net income loss of Aboriginal people	2.9	4.3
Cost to Governments	Expenditures on remedial programs	1.7	2.4
	Financial assistance to Aboriginal people	0.8	1.2
	Government revenue forgone	2.1	-3.1
	Total cost to governments	4.6	6.7
Total cost of the status quo		7.4	11.0

<sup>11</sup> <https://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/EB/prb9924-e.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100014597/1572547985018>

As the truth is exposed about Canada's true history, there is a growing group of deniers of historical facts. As the TRC confirmed Residential Schools did inflict genocide on Indigenous children and youth in particular, it is important that we outline the ten stages that make a classification of genocide with the completing factor being denial.<sup>13</sup> The continued erasure of Indigenous peoples from education, sacred sites and represented in commemoration is a form of denial.

**DENIAL:** *Denial is the tenth stage that always follows genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres. The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims. They block investigations of the crimes and continue to govern until driven from power by force, when they flee into exile. Leaders of the genocide continue to deny the crime unless they are captured, and a tribunal (special court) is established to try them. The best response to denial is punishment by an international tribunal or national courts. There the evidence can be heard, and the perpetrators punished. Tribunals or international courts must be created. They may not prevent the worst genocidal killers, but at least some mass murderers may be brought to justice.*

The City of Ottawa has a chance to redeem the trust and respect of the Indigenous peoples by reassessing the narrative they share and revitalizing it to include the good, bad and ugly of the actions that made Canada to what it is today. The precedence of discriminatory bills and short-term solutions instead of taking accountability only implicates the public's quality of living, and furthers the severe socio-economic disposition of Indigenous peoples.

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<sup>13</sup> [https://genocidededucation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ten\\_stages\\_of\\_genocide.pdf](https://genocidededucation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ten_stages_of_genocide.pdf)

By not addressing the core reasonings to the disconnect of Indigenous peoples to the rest of Canada would mean to consciously choose genocide over restoration. This is detrimental to the healing of communities and the most ethical way to create a better future for the next seven generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples here on Turtle Island.<sup>14</sup>



<sup>14</sup> <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/How-Do-You-Like-Your-Reconciliation-YI-TRC-2022-1.pdf>

# Commemoration Defined *By and For* Indigenous Youth

When asked what commemorations looks and feels like to Indigenous youth, participants told us that commemoration means the following:

- **Commemoration is Holistic and Interconnected**

The definition of holistic is: “characterized by the belief that the parts of something are *interconnected* and can be explained only by reference to the whole.” For this context, participants were clear that commemoration cannot just live in the past, must also reflect the entire scope of history and should move the public towards action to address systemic inequalities and racism currently experienced by Indigenous peoples in Ottawa through all areas of governments and institutions.

Commemoration cannot solely remember the past without acknowledging the present realities and make commitments to the future protection and restoration of Indigenous cultures, practices and language especially those of the host Algonquin Nation.

Commemoration must not only acknowledge the past but must acknowledge the current realities of Indigenous peoples. Some examples:

- Aboriginal Veterans’ Monument celebrates Indigenous veterans and their sacrifices however does not acknowledge the pain and trauma that Indigenous veterans have endured such as enfranchisement, PTSD and lack of healing support once they returned from war or deployment.

- **Commemoration is a Fundamental and Living Practise**

For many Indigenous Nations, commemoration is a fundamental part of their cultures, ceremonies and way of living. Whether it be annually or seasonally, there are many events and ceremonies that are dedicated to honouring and remembering loved ones, historical events and the land.

Participants expressed the need for the City of Ottawa to support special events such as round dances, feasts and/or ceremonies that Indigenous communities hold and organize.

Indigenous youth also need access to crafting supplies, land to harvest materials and resources to design and create traditional clothing, drums, rattles and other cultural items. The City of Ottawa and its partners should utilize its resources to support Indigenous youth to reclaim and restore their cultures that have stolen through colonization as a bare minimum starting point.

- **Safety and Protection Must be Prioritized**

Any form of commemoration to honour Indigenous peoples, histories and cultures that are created and erected must also be protected. Due to the long history of colonization which created generations of violence against Indigenous peoples and communities, racism toward Indigenous peoples is still an everyday experience and this also includes ill feelings towards commemoration that honours and celebrates Indigenous peoples.

As stated previously, existing Indigenous plaques and statues are poorly lit, seen as an afterthought and very small in comparison to plaques and statues that highlight anti-Indigenous sentiments. Indigenous youth felt strongly that this did not invoke feelings of reconciliation by the City of Ottawa.

Additionally, if commemoration for Indigenous peoples is place-based and living, future commemorative ideas must have to consider the safety of the Indigenous peoples that would be using them or visiting them.

- **Commemoration Must Be Accessible – i.e. revitalising resources (language, land, culture)**

If a commitment is made by the City of Ottawa to advance meaningful and ethical commemoration with Indigenous youth, those commitments must be accessible to Indigenous youth themselves. Existing funding structures created by the City of Ottawa have no oversight by Indigenous youth therefore there is no accountability of how funding is spent to

address the needs and concerns of Indigenous youth locally and with existing funding structures youth have little to no feasible way to access resources that are created for them.

Language around commemoration is often heavily influenced by academia via historians and archaeologists, which makes understanding simple concepts of commemoration hard to access especially for Indigenous children and youth. Language must be accessible to those who do not use English as their first language as well.

Indigenous youth want to be able to utilize land in order to practise their cultures today. Often times, youth are told they will have access to land and/or space however it is often land that is far away, needs to be rented or comes at a cost. Indigenous youth need land and spaces that are easily accessible by bus and that has some flexibility in terms of usage.

- **Ceremonies Must Be Respected**

Indigenous youth are simply not able to practise their ceremonies due to bureaucratic red tape, underfunding and lack of resources. Some examples:

- **Sacred fires:** For many Indigenous such as the Algonquin Anishinabeg and many others, sacred fires are an integral part of their commemorative ceremonies and events. However being able to light a sacred fire in Ottawa is extremely challenging. In some instances, youth were just denied and in some instances, the fire department had to be called and a fire could not be lit for more than an hour or two. In some Indigenous traditions, a sacred fire would be lit for four days when someone had passed. Bylaw officers and fire permits may seem minuscule in the grand theme of things however these colonial policies have impacted the way urban Indigenous folks had to grieve their loved ones.

In addition, whenever a sacred fire is lit, a trained and skilled fire keeper takes care of the fire until it is extinguished. By enforcing bylaws and

fire fighters on standby, the skills and knowledge of the firekeeper is devalued and questioned, further perpetuating systemic racism on Indigenous peoples.

- **Smudging in buildings:** A common experience almost every Indigenous person who uses smudge has experienced is being asked if their traditional medicine is “weed” or “marijuana” or simply being told they are not allowed to smudge in a building. In some experiences, this is a landlord accusing smudging of leaving a cigarette smell or an employer not allowing an Indigenous staff to use smudge as self-care.



# Recommendations

1. Correct any errors in existing plaques and statues around Ottawa such as the Sharpshooter Memorial, to ensure an accurate depiction of history is stated.
2. Protect sacred sites, such as ancient burial sites identified by Anishinabeg Ojibikan.
3. Support the work of Anishinabeg Ojibikan from protection to funding to navigating municipal, provincial and federal barriers to conducting their work.
4. Respect and protect existing statues and plaques that have been led and designed by Indigenous peoples by providing proper lighting, place setting and visibility.
5. City of Ottawa in collaboration with the National Capital Commission to make a Bylaw to fine those who deface, desecrate and steal from sacred sites and archaeological sites defined by the Algonquin Nation and Anishinabeg Ojibikan.
6. Establish an Indigenous youth working group to make recommendations and engage with the Algonquin Working Group.
7. Establish an official vetting process with the Algonquin Working Group to ensure cultural practices, histories and future opportunities are not appropriated by groups fraudulently claiming Indigenous identities.
8. Allocate funds to support ongoing work of Indigenous youth, especially Algonquin youth, who are hosting commemorative events and gatherings such as Anishinabeg Ojibikan and Assembly of Seven Generations.
9. Provide City of Ottawa space at no cost for round dances, pow wows, feasts and other cultural events. Groups and organizations seeking no cost should be known to the local Indigenous community and Algonquin Working Group.

10. Allocate funds to the Caring Society to support their work on National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and their Reconciling History work including Reconciliation History Tours.
11. Allocate funds for permanent Reconciling History Tours all year long especially within downtown Ottawa.
12. The work of commemoration moving forward must be rights-based. Some TRC Calls to Action that have been identified for the City of Ottawa to respond to are:
  - Education (12) (ECE)/62/64
  - Training for Public Servants (57)
  - Youth (66)
  - Museums and Archives (67)
  - Monuments (71–76)
  - Commemorations (79–83)
  - Business (92)
13. Fire Response and Bylaw Officers must have cultural sensitivity training before interacting with the public on items such as sacred fires or smudging.
14. Designate land for Indigenous youth to utilize for ceremony (sacred fires and sweatlodge) and land-based activities (tanning hides, harvesting medicines, gardening, etc) that is accessible by OC Transpo and is easily accessible to book under the guidance of the Algonquin Working Group and Indigenous Youth Working Group.
15. Rename parks, roads, streets and significant buildings, especially those names that are inaccurately celebrating those that have harmed Indigenous peoples. Rename such places to Algonquin Anishinabeg place names and/or historical Indigenous figures and leaders.

# Closing

To come to a clear understanding of commemoration, it would mean there is an acknowledgement that Canada is directly linked to Confederation and the system we live in is an aftermath of colonialism by the monarchy.

To ethically showcase the collective memory of Canada's Capital, would mean to drop the predisposing narrative of the history of these lands only being colonial. The act of remembering is an ongoing action in which we have the power to use our positions to create an equal and accurate adaptation to what we bare witness to as a society. The argument of lack of content available is no longer an issue or excuse. The age of technology has allowed Indigenous peoples to share their voice and side of history providing context to the original livelihood of Turtle Island. Now the City of Ottawa needs to ensure these stories are being amplified far past the platforms of social media and into policy and legislation for a healed future.

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