

**Courage My Friends Podcast Series VII – Episode 2**  
**Truth and Reconciliation: How Is Canada Doing?**

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**ANNOUNCER:** You're listening to *Needs No Introduction*.

*Needs No Introduction* is a rabble podcast network show that serves up a series of speeches, interviews and lectures from the finest minds of our time

**RESH:** How far has Canada progressed in meeting the 94 Calls to Action set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission nine years ago? How must we understand Reconciliation and who gets to define it? What about Indigenous Reclamation of identity, rights, and sovereignty? And how do we move beyond apology and acknowledgement toward true, meaningful, and just Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada and perhaps beyond?

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**COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER:** Welcome back to this podcast series by rabble.ca and the Tommy Douglas Institute at George Brown College and with the support of the Douglas Coldwell Layton Foundation.

In the words of the great Tommy Douglas...

**VOICE 1:** Courage my friends, 'tis not too late to build a better world

**Ashley:** This is the Courage My Friends Podcast.

**RESH:** Welcome to episode two of this season's Courage My Friends podcast, *Truth and Reconciliation. How is Canada Doing?* I'm your host, Resh Budhu.

At the start of National Truth and Reconciliation Week, we are pleased to welcome Research Director of the Yellowhead Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University, Eva Jewell, and Director of Education, Outreach, and Public Programming at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Kaila Johnston.

We discuss Canada's progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, the need to push beyond the comfortable and perhaps superficial understandings of reconciliation and toward a reconciliation that is meaningful, lasting, and true to the vision of Indigenous Peoples.

Eva and Kaila, welcome. Thank you so much for joining us.

Eva, you are faculty and Research Director of the Yellowhead Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University. Tell us about the Institute and your work.

**EVA:** Yeah, so Yellowhead Institute generates critical policy perspectives that support Indigenous jurisdictions. We do a lot of analysis work, policy analysis work

from Indigenous perspectives, which has historically been a perspective that is suppressed and widely misunderstood in Canada.

And so we work to that end with a wide network of experts, practitioners from around the country, from many different Nations, across First Nations, Métis, and Inuit backgrounds and identities. So the work we do supports Indigenous jurisdiction.

**RESH:** And Kaila, you are joining us from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. So tell us about the Centre's mandate and your role.

**KAILA:** The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, we're the permanent safe-home for all the statements, documents, materials gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Here at the Centre we work with a network of partners, supporters, to continue to expand this collection, as well as promote ongoing research and learning. And so if we take a look at the different components of our mandate: We are here to serve survivors and families, to ensure they have access to their historical records. We're here for educators and their students, so they can bring this material into the classroom. We're here for researchers to dig deeper into the mysteries that exist. And we're also here for the general public. It is to ensure that this history is never forgotten or repeated and that we can help foster healing and reconciliation by providing access to this content.

**RESH:** And just to continue with you, this episode will be airing during National Truth and Reconciliation Week and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is core to its organizing. What is this week about?

**KAILA:** Truth and Reconciliation Week can be really boiled down to the starting place in 2020, where we developed a single day's worth of programming during the COVID 19 pandemic to ensure we could get some education out into community.

That event was so successful that the following year we were able to expand to a full week. The main focus being providing virtual content for students grades 1 to grade 12.

Since that time we have grown even further. In addition to that virtual content students will have access to, both pre-recorded videos and hybrid sessions, we have also added a live Youth Empowerment event that happened just yesterday here in Winnipeg on September 18th.

We had about 6,000 students join us for some learning about the histories of Residential Schools from Residential School survivors, but also performances and speakers to talk about *Mino-pimatisiwin* or what the good life means to them. In addition to that, we also have a publication with Canada's history that we do every year.

And in addition to that, based upon last year's success with adult education, lunch and learns, we've added again, 5 adult education, lunch-and-learns that are open to the general public this year.

**RESH:** Right. And as you said, both the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation and Truth and Reconciliation Week are outcomes of the historic Truth and Reconciliation Commission that ran from 2007 to 2015 with which you also worked, I believe, Kaila. So just for added context for those who perhaps don't know, could you give us a brief overview of the purpose or work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

**KAILA:** When it comes to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it's first important to recognize where it came from, which is the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which was approved in 2006 and implemented that year.

So the agreement states that the harms and abuses were committed against many of the children who attended Residential Schools, and this agreement was formed to establish a fair, comprehensive, and lasting resolution. So part and parcel of that was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which received \$60 million to conduct work over a five year mandate. They had a one year extension.

And their main responsibilities were to tell Canadians what happened at Residential Schools, honour the lives of former students and their families, and really create a permanent record of the Indian residential school legacy and impacts.

**RESH:** And the Residential Schools, again, were those church-run, government directed and funded so-called schools, that were really about, you know, taking Indigenous children.

I think it was, was it like 150,000 Indigenous children forced into these schools and quite a number of them never returning. Have I got that right?

**KAILA:** You are correct. You got those numbers right on.

**RESH:** Yeah. And that ran for about a hundred years in Canada. I think the last one closed down in 1996. So that's fairly recent history.

And the Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded with 94 Calls to Action. Eva, what are the Calls to Action about?

**EVA:** Yeah, so as Kaila pointed out over the course of the five years that the TRC was hearing testimony from survivors there were many findings that came out of those testimonies.

And from those findings, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission developed Calls to Action that would seek to address the legacy and the impact of Residential Schools, as well as some of those systemic issues that are still present in Canadian

institutions like child welfare, the health system, the education system, the justice system.

And all of these systems impact Indigenous Peoples in a certain way because of that residential school system. Because of the impacts, the socioeconomic impacts, the spiritual cultural harms that happened in those schools, all impacted Indigenous Peoples intergenerationally in very complex and profound ways.

So the 94 Calls to Action really seek to make clear to these institutional structures what needs to change in order for there to be equity in these systems or more justice, fairness, and a level playing field, I guess one could say for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

So of the 94 Calls to Action, there are two categories:

The first one is Legacy, and that is really addressing the aspects of Canadian institutions that are still actively harming Indigenous Peoples, right? That still have the legacy of colonial violence within them.

So, for example, child welfare composed the first 6 Calls to Action. And Cindy Blackstock reminds us that the first six Calls to Action deal with child welfare because that is the site of the harm of Residential Schools and that children were taken from their families and placed into so-called "care" of the Residential Schools.

And so that is an ongoing legacy that the family system in Indigenous communities was broken 150 years ago. Several generations of families have been disrupted. And so we see then as a consequence of that, many more Indigenous children in the child welfare system. It's a complex issue, but it's also a pretty straightforward one. That family dynamics were systemically changed and harmed as a result of Residential Schools and that impacts ongoing generations of Indigenous families.

And so the Calls to Action in that sector seek to call upon child welfare systems for reform, for more culturally appropriate approaches to child welfare, for control by First Nations, Métis, Inuit organizations to have control over their own organizations. And also to attend to the discriminatory funding that exists in these child welfare systems.

And each of those Calls to Action in the Legacy portion deal with, like I said, the ongoing issues that exist in health and education and in justice.

For example, there are still discriminatory funding practices that exist in the education sector. So like on-reserve schools receive far less funding than a provincial school. And so the Calls to Action make recommendations, first of all, saying that each of these sectors should provide annual reports about the funding that exists and make plans to close the gap for Indigenous Peoples in those particular areas.

The Calls to Action really lay out recommendations for there to be further work to be done in these areas. So, in that way, they outline just the beginning steps for Reconciliation, or the changes to systemic issues.

Now, the last 94 Calls to Action deal with various aspects of reconciliation. In Canadian law the repudiation of things like the Doctrine of Discovery, which is still implicit within Canadian law. Apologies from various church groups, you know, a Papal apology and so on.

And there's also work to be done by the public sector. Things like more education for civil servants or for law students or for post secondary students. Support for language programs. Commemoration of Residential Schools and of survivors or a student death register. There's all these different things that need to be attended to as a result of Residential Schools and to advance progress on Reconciliation in Canada.

**RESH:** Right. Thank you for that.

Kaila, what are your thoughts on Canada's progress on Reconciliation so far? How are we doing?

**KAILA:** Quite honestly we use the Yellowhead Institute to inform the information we provide to the public. So when it comes to the status of the Calls to Action, I utilize Yellowhead Institute, CBC Beyond 94, Indigenous Watchdog, as well as the Government of Canada's website, to stay up to date as to what Calls to Action have been completed, what hasn't been completed. And really as outlined by the reports, it's been the low hanging fruit or the easy Calls to Action that have been addressed to date. And where we saw the most action was right after the Tk'emlúps announcement about unmarked burials. Since then, we really haven't seen any sort of major push or a means from government bodies to address the Calls to Action.

A lot of the work that I have seen is through grassroots organizations and others who've been working away at the Calls to Action. But with that there are a number of things that are of concern when it comes to the Calls to Action that the Yellowhead Institute outlines in kind of the five biggest barriers to addressing it, and I completely agree as to the five biggest barriers that are identified, as well as to the kind of major observations being used as a checklist.

And it's the low hanging fruit, or those easy Calls to Action that have been accomplished. While it's the harder, more difficult ones that require real structural changes, are the ones that are lagging behind.

**RESH:** And just for, again, further clarification, when you're talking about the burials, for those who don't know could you just briefly tell us what that's about?

**KAILA:** Of course. So if you take a look at the TRC's final report, there is actually a volume solely dedicated to missing children and unmarked burials that talked about

this issue prior to the 2021 May announcement, where the Tk'emlups group had announced on the media after information had been leaked that there were 250 unmarked burials located at the former site of the Kamloops Residential School.

Now, we have known that there are sites like these all across Canada. But that's when a lot of national and international attention really focused on this. And since then, we have seen a number of announcements made by a variety of communities conducting their own research and work around missing children and unmarked burials and trying to identify all the different sites where children may have been buried or located.

One of the biggest challenges is, of course, these sites were unregulated. So, once someone has passed away, once that residential school closed, there was no one left behind to take care of that site, or even ensure that information that there are children buried there got passed on. Which is a real risk when we see development in some of these other locations which could potentially continue to cover up or conceal these places.

And there's a lot of work still needing to be done. The TRC had identified about 144 sites across Canada, but we estimate there's one to three unidentified sites per recognized school, not even accounting for sites connected to unrecognized Residential Schools, Indian hospitals, sanatoriums, or other institutions that may also have children or individuals buried there.

**RESH:** And again, this is just such a tragic history and that we still have such a lag on this again is adding insult to injury.

Now last year on the eighth anniversary of the Calls to Action, the government of Canada issued the very promising statement that, "Over 85% of the Calls to Action involving the government of Canada are now completed or well underway."

However, and as Kaila has just spoken to, also last year, the Yellowhead Institute, in their annual Calls to Action Accountability Report, a report you co-authored Eva, announced that they would end reports on government progress due to, well, a lack of government progress. So, to go more into this, Eva, why? What were your findings?

**EVA:** Yeah, so going back to that statement by the Canadian federal government, I think the "well underway" portion of that quote is doing a lot of the heavy lifting. So 85 percent of those being completed are] well underway right?

We've only accounted for, a few of the Calls to Action completed by the federal government. Of the 13 or now, I guess, 14 completed, only a handful of those are by the federal government. The others are by church groups, faith groups. One is like just ongoing, as long as there's ongoing funding to APTN [Aboriginal Peoples Television Network] for example, that one will continually be, complete, right? Just to provide a bit of an analysis on what the federal government means when they say that these Calls to Action are well underway.

This is why we started doing the work that we did, because we noticed that outlets like CBC or even the AFN or the Canadian government would consider even the discussion of Calls to Action as being some sort of progress or some sort of measurement toward completion.

And after many, many years, you know, I'm an intergenerational.. I grew up on a First Nation. I grew up with my family being involved in politics. And just hearing about this my whole life about the ongoing promises and never seeing the results at the community level in the material forms in our First Nations communities, myself and my colleague, Ian Mosby decided that we were going to just provide a very straightforward metric that would say, are these Calls to Action complete or are they not? Because many of the Calls to Action have many moving parts to them.

They are structural in form. Meaning that they call upon changes to structures that might take a while, that might take a long time. Things like producing an annual report on the funding disparities between on-reserve and off-reserve education for children, right? And so that's, apparently a very difficult thing to do by the federal government. But the federal government can strike a committee and say that they're looking into it and then call that progress.

And we saw in our analysis that that was the overwhelming majority of their reporting on the Calls to Action, were about looking into it, right? And so that "well underway" is, like I said, doing a lot of heavy lifting in the federal government's reporting.

And so we felt it was really important to provide a more critical higher standard of expectation that was arm's length at Yellowhead Institute, and that's what we did every year. And we didn't realize how when we released the first few reports, we really didn't know that the project would take off in the way that it did.

I'm a scholar at Toronto Metropolitan University. My colleague is a historian at the same university. We are both faculty members. We teach, we research, we do service at the university, but also to the communities that we're close to. You know, for me, , for my own First Nation community. And for my colleague, he also has commitments to other communities. And we felt that over the years, we were writing these critical reports that each year left us, like, really exhausted and feeling very, you know, cynical. And I think if you're really somebody who's looking analytically at these things and you've got, like myself, background experience of actually living and being in a First Nation community and coming from a family of survivors and so on. It's not really the work I want to do and make my entire career.

I'm really interested in reclamation, right? I'm really interested in supporting my community and reclaiming who we are, reclaiming our strength and leaning into our existing strengths, as Anishinaabeg people, that's where I come from. I come from Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, which was host to the second ever residential school, by the way.

So we have a lot of work to do on our end of things. And so I started to really realize in the project that there are two aspects of reconciliation that other scholars like Rachel Flowers and Tracy Lindbergh have pointed out.

The first is for Canadians. They have to reconcile with themselves and with what their country has done. And that is work that I think, you know, is really important for Canadians to do and it relies a lot on Indigenous intellectual labor.

And then there's the work that we have to do as Indigenous Peoples as communities as Nations, right? Because we are politically distinct Nations, and that is reclaiming, recreating our world through our language practices, our cultural practices, our political practices, repopulating our political systems that were destroyed by Residential Schools.

I'm more interested in the latter project. That's where I want to put my intellectual energy, my emotional energy. Not in the kinds of projects that are really about lamenting the lack of progress of a state that has no interest in the reclamation of my people's political distinction, right?

Canada has a real interest in the eradication of Indigenous Peoples and Nations. That's why the Residential Schools existed and anything that they're doing now to reconcile is really just about saving their moral image.

Again, the Indian Residential School Agreement, the Survivors Society and the TRC did not come out of Canada's own moral clarity about the wrongs that they had committed.

It came out of a very real threat of the largest class action lawsuit in Canadian history. Canada was going to be hit with a massive lawsuit if they didn't do something about it.

So reconciliation I think it has its utility, in a lot of ways, but the work that we were doing at Yellowhead Institute was a very large undertaking. It was a big endeavor and we decided to step away from it, maybe not forever, but at least for a little while while I attend to my other work.

**RESH:** Absolutely.

And just to go into a bit more, the findings that of the 94 Calls to Action at that time, only 13 had been completed, 33 in the proposal stage, 24 in progress, 20 not started. Going back to this idea that you know, the few that have been completed, is sort of the low-hanging fruit, the more visible, maybe perhaps the easier ones to do.

Eva, when you're talking about the way that reconciliation is being understood within the larger society, that the more institutionalized reconciliation is into mainstream and policy discourse is reconciliation, therefore in danger of becoming more of a buzzword, more rhetoric than action?



**EVA:** Absolutely, and it already is. We are seeing a shift now from reconciliation, which survivors, I think the most hopeful of survivors had envisioned as the Canadian public and the Canadian government as ending the harm, the ongoing harm that still happens in our communities. It is now shifted into what we heard as economic reconciliation.

So it's been co-opted by industry. It's been co-opted by federal governments to bring Indigenous Peoples into this kind of neoliberal arena and having there be more opportunities for us to participate in a capitalist society. That's not what reconciliation is.

Reconciliation is about ending systems of harm. And one of them, one of the systems of harm is capitalism, right? And one of the systems of harm is neoliberalism, is settler- colonialism, right?

And so true reconciliation, as was envisioned and is envisioned, I think, by many critical Indigenous people, is the end of those systems. But the way that it's rhetorically understood by the Canadian state - and this is why I think, you know, I go back and forth on the utility of reconciliation- is that it's really now more about Indigenous Peoples reconciling with the systems that continue to harm us and to just be more well adjusted to these systems that are seemingly terminal systems that cannot be changed.

And so, like I said, with capitalism, so now it's economic reconciliation: bring Indigenous Peoples into the market and have them participate more freely as business owners.

That's not reconciliation. Reconciliation is stopping the harm.

**RESH:** Right. So it's more assimilation, that we're talking about through those.

**EVA:** Absolutely!

**RESH:** Yeah. Kaila, from your work on the TRC and now the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation, how should we - and I want to bring you in on this as well - how should we understand reconciliation?

**KAILA:** When I do presentations, and I talk to groups, I'd like to explore reconciliation at different relationship levels from the big picture with our nation, our different systems, legal system, health care, the social structure and economy, to community-based neighborhood schools and workplaces, to the smaller systems of individuals, families, relationships.

Oftentimes, we are focusing on the big picture because that is where the change is most needed. As already mentioned, we need to change the systems in order to prevent that harm from continuing. However, if we take a look at reconciliation in

some of these smaller areas, as I mentioned, some of those grassroots areas, we see a lot of pockets of good things happening.

And so for me, it's a little bit difficult to try to balance the cynicism that is valid in that we are not seeing change happen fast enough to some of those smaller kind of pieces that really bring hope and inspiration.

So, as mentioned, you know, taking a look at reconciliation for non-Indigenous versus Indigenous people, Indigenous communities, and what does that look like. And seeing that language and cultural reclamation, for instance, reclaiming that identity.

Residential Schools were really good at eliminating our ability to say: This is who I am. This is where I come from. This is where I belong. And a lot of the programs and content that I've seen that has been really beneficial or useful are those programs that really aim to support communities and individuals reclaiming that.

So when it comes to is reconciliation possible? I suppose it really depends on that definition as to what is reconciliation. So I like the fact that it's subjective and my definition could change or be different from your definition. We can kind of build something that represents what reconciliation means.

But as already mentioned, it has been co-opted. It has been misused and abused to manage reputations. And I find there are a lot of communities, Indigenous communities and survivors who are resistant to what's known as the R words, like Reconciliation and Resilience, which are these outside lenses looking in on communities rather than the communities themselves being able to drive or create the definition or vision of what this looks like to them.

**RESH:** There does seem to be a tangle, and not an innocent tangle, but a tangle over how we define these terms. And really, the importance of people being able to define their own liberation is, you know, very key to liberation struggles, certainly with Indigenous Peoples, certainly with all peoples who have been struggling for their liberation.

But something else you said the difference between change from the top-down, which can be very different from change from the bottom-up, that grassroots organizing and change, which cannot be discounted.

**KAILA:** Yes. Yeah.

**RESH:** Yeah So much of our, the human rights that we enjoy now really came from people organizing at the grassroots.

Now, Eva, Kaila had begun to talk about the major challenges that face reconciliation that came out of the Yellowhead report. Could you go into what some of those challenges are right now?

**EVA:** We identified five barriers to reconciliation over the years of our analysis. We established them kind of early on because it was evident, early on in our analytical work, what was going on here. And we added a few over the years, but essentially they've stayed pretty steady through the years whenever you look at what is going on, what are the barriers.

One of them is Paternalism. And that's the ongoing paternalistic attitudes and behaviors of politicians, but also bureaucrats. The former Crown and Indigenous Relations Minister Mark Miller had noted, as he was leaving his position, that he really had tried to advance a lot of the Calls to Action, but that he had found the most challenges from within the institution.

And there were a lot of things that Mark Miller did that, you know, a lot of these figures who take up these colonial positions are controversial, but I genuinely, saw Mark Miller really trying, you know, his position. And so for him to say at the end, like, you know, I really tried harder, but I couldn't make a lot of the change happen because of our own institutional barriers, it was really interesting and kind of reified our suspicions about what was happening or our analysis, I should say.

We have this structural anti-Indigenous discrimination that's going on. Canada asserts legal myths, like the Doctrine of Discovery, which one of the Calls to Action seeks to call upon the Supreme Court to repudiate.

Now the Supreme Court says, Well, it's not truly a legal doctrine, you know, the Doctrine of Discovery, meaning that, Canada is in the possession of the Crown or the British, because just by virtue of being "discovered" and that's rooted in myths of white supremacy and so on.

But those actually form the implicit grounds or basis of Canada's rulings in favour of Canada's jurisdiction over Indigenous people. So there's this implicit anti-Indigenous discrimination that exists in Canadian law. And this has many consequences.

This dispossesses Indigenous Peoples of their lands. And then there's this ongoing manufactured poverty of Indigenous Peoples through the systemic oppression of First Nations specifically through the Indian Act. Right. Why does the Indian Act exist? A colonial law meant to mandate and control every aspect of First Nation life that exists because somebody out there said, It's my right to rule over you.

And that was you know, the British Crown, right? So that's rooted in anti-Indigenous discrimination. And that is the cause of so many funding disparities that we see that lead to systemic barriers and so on.

So a lot of these Calls to Action, they don't say things like dismantle the Indian Act, but they point to certain structures and call upon shifts and changes within Canadian society.

Another one we saw was the public interest, right? So policy makers and Canada's legal teams use the interests of the non-Indigenous Canadian public to kind of shore up their inaction for a lot of the change that is needed for First Nations specifically.

One thing that we saw in the child welfare battles that were happening between First Nations Caring Society and Canada was Canada refusing to settle for the vast amounts that were required to settle, right?

What we saw last year when the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered Canada to pay out \$40 billion as a result of the systemic inequities and discrimination that existed for First Nations children and child welfare systems. And Canada refused to settle or to come to the table in some instances, because it was saying that that was simply too much money to have to pay. And that the Canadian public would be impacted if there were justice for Indigenous Peoples or justice for First Nations children.

Another one we saw was that there's insufficient resources that are earmarked for meaningful reconciliation.

So, while there's no shortage of promises, you know, the Liberal government promised in 2015 to fully implement, by the way, this is fully implement all of the 94 Calls to Action. But there's ongoing and rampant funding inequities. So that means that as long as there continues to be less investment in First Nations and Indigenous life more broadly, there will not be reconciliation.

And then the final barrier we saw was that reconciliation became exploitative or performative. So we just talked earlier about reconciliation shifting to meaning economic reconciliation, which is really worrisome because that shifts it into more of an assimilatory tone rather than true reconciliation of really coming to understand the history of this country or understand settler colonialism as a structure and how that impacts Indigenous Peoples in ways that are still ongoing today, right?

So that would be kind of what we would expect reconciliation to mean, but it's shifted now to become more performative as a box to check as an assimilatory measure.

**RESH:** Right, and thank you for that. So essentially what we're talking about is a real need to deal with the structures, the underlying structures of this.

And as you said, capitalism and capitalism, of course, was fueled by colonialism. And colonialism is the overwhelming structure that we're talking about.

Now, last year, the government went on to say, and just to continue with that earlier quote, "We are making progress to change the colonial laws, policies, and institutions that continue to exist in many parts of our society".

Kaila, are we seeing any of these types of structural changes coming from the top? We talked about changes coming from the bottom, but are you seeing changes

coming from the top in terms of beginning to dismantle these structures of colonialism?

**KAILA:** Not particularly, no.

So the example I'll give here that speaks directly to point four, the underfunding is this past July, the federal government cut funding for residential school searches from \$3 million to a cap to \$500,000. Which is going to significantly impact those communities doing this work because it is an expensive work and there really is no means to identify what or how much money it could potentially take based upon this.

Another huge challenge is the number of experts for instance. There's only so many experts available in Canada who could tentatively analyze the data that's coming out to speed up this work.

Or another really good example is for communities that had Catholic Residential Schools supported by French priests and nuns and groups such as that their records are in French. Those records will need to be translated. Here at the NCTR we don't have the budget or means to support the translation of all those documents, even though it's very much needed.

And so with that, we have all these promises dedicated to finding and identifying all of these children who died or went missing that the government supports our work and we see this reduction or a pulling back. And so generally we saw a swing in one direction after the Tkemlúps Announcement, but now enough time has passed that it's not sitting on people's minds or shoulders. And so we're seeing a swing in the opposite direction where they're clawing back promises, funds and support in some cases.

**RESH:** Is this in danger of undoing some of the work, the very important work that has been accomplished by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the Calls that have been achieved so far?

**KAILA:** I will say when it comes to, say, for instance, that definition of reconciliation, the TRC defined it as a means of establishing and maintaining respectful relationship. So although there's been work towards rebuilding that relationship, incidents or actions like these definitely cut away at that rebuilding of trust. Which means we're less likely to see that engagement or that respect component when it comes to that rebuilding of relationships or if that's that perspective from communities on what is reconciliation, while the government is reneging on that responsibility or what is expected of them.

When it comes to a lot of the work that I have seen out there. I will say I'm really reported out. We know a lot of what the challenges are, and we're not seeing the ability to address that from communities.

Communities are coming forward with solutions with answers, yet those are being ignored, pushed away as a means of being unable to fulfill those promises because they're too lofty. It's going to be too expensive to be able to do this.

I have some bad news for folks, and that is the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement was not the only settlement agreement. There have been a number of others that have come afterwards and there are still more to come.

So there is a lot that the governments will have to address in those coming years. One of the newest ones that's coming through are the Home Boards or Billeted Students who were sent to attend public schools from far off destinations in urban settings and the harms that that has caused.

And so there is a lot that needs to be addressed and I think it would be a delusion to think that after one or two of these settlement agreements that Canada has kind of brushed its hands and said we've addressed reconciliation or we're well on our way to addressing reconciliation when there's still so much outstanding.

**RESH:** Right. Now, Eva, you had said that the government's approach to the Calls to Action seems more about, again, managing Canada's public image, not stopping structural harms. Are we somehow stuck in the Acknowledgement and Apology phase of reconciliation? And if we are, how do we begin to unstick ourselves? What needs to be done to start pivoting forward?

**EVA:** Yeah, so I think it gestures back to what Kaila was describing about all these settlement agreements that are yet to come. Just to point out that the last estimate of what Canada owes Indigenous Peoples in various land claims, just land claims, these aren't even payments for harms or underfunding discrimination and so on, is \$72 billion dollars. That's the just conservative estimate of what is owed to First Nations people, not even including Inuit or Métis.

And really what this boils down to is Canada's system of underfunding Indigenous life, chronically underfunding Indigenous life. And so we have to go back to the beginning of this country when Canada formed its colonial institutions. When Canada formed reserve systems and placed First Nations peoples in these places. And Métis and Inuit have their own experiences to different effects under different legislations. But I could say the majority of Indigenous life is being concentrated onto small pieces of land, ethnically cleansing Canada and parts of Canada for the use of settlers, and then chronically underfunding and subjecting Indigenous Peoples to conditions of genocide.

And this is at the core of Canada. This is the core function of Canada. All of the resources extracted to form the wealthy you know, GDP as an economic system of Canada is extracted from Indigenous lands. And Indigenous people see none of that economic benefit. And if they do it's peanuts, right? It's not enough to fund or to remedy the profound impacts and social issues that emerge from a population that has been subjected to genocide.

So reconciliation, when we're really talking about it, implicates a lot of other different systems. It's not just the Residential Schools. And that's why we say it's ongoing. That's why we say these are issues that continue to exist in the systems and the structures. And that's why something like economic reconciliation is deeply worrying. Because maybe it's just about businesses you know, or corporations or extraction companies wanting to give First Nations a few more peanuts on top of the benefit agreements that they might have or something like that.

We are at risk of understanding reconciliation as just a mere land acknowledgement when we don't recognize the deeper and broader issues at play that compose the injustice that Canada continues to propagate.

**RESH:** And recent history I mean, history bears you out and recent history bears this out as well. When the United Nations passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or UNDRIP in 2007, Canada was one of four settler colonial states that initially refused to sign, the others being the U. S., Australia, and New Zealand. However, the following year, 2008, the then Harper government did issue the federal apology for the residential school system, which in itself was a major step. But again, we have this idea of acknowledgement and apology, but little done on the front of policy and rights, though eventually we did sign on to the UNDRIP in 2016, which is one of the completed Calls to Action.

Kaila, why is UNDRIP so important to reconciliation?

**KAILA:** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in its final report, outlined that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the framework for reconciliation. And what they meant by that is, a framework is one where our political legal systems, education, religious institutions, the corporate sector, civil sector, all function in a way that are consistent with the rights enshrined within that document.

By adopting the document, the government is tentatively making progress to achieving consensus with the minimum standards necessary for survival, dignity, well being of Indigenous Peoples.

Now one thing that needs to be said, and it has already been said a little bit earlier in the show, is there's a crucial, crucial role non-Indigenous peoples play in supporting reconciliation and it's to undergo their own process.

And there's an internationally accepted principle of justice. When a crime is committed, the victim must be protected from that crime being repeated. Now, when that crime is genocide, the guarantee of non-repetition requires the state to address the underlying beliefs and structures that have led to the destruction or the targeting of this group.

In our case, it means addressing the belief that is prevalent across Canada, that Indigenous Peoples cultures are unworthy of dignity and respect. It also means that we have to accept that when Indigenous Peoples communities make decisions, that they're able to say no when the federal government, provincial or territorial

government, municipal government tries to impose decisions upon them that are supposedly for their own good.

Now, this really all sounds very simple, but it requires people to accept a fundamental change to the status quo. And that's really difficult to achieve. And I will say throughout the the work that I've done over the past 10 years, I have seen a change where the younger generations, my grade two students are more understanding, empathetic, and open to these discussions. That they are very forward-looking and wanting to understand what's happened in the past in order to continue to move forward for the future. Compared to some of the older generations, which are still very resistant, defensive, and reactionary when confronted with very distressing information which they are unwilling to accept or believe. They're so grounded or rooted in the status quo that they're unwilling to make any changes because it doesn't directly impact or affect them. And so there's this difficult piece that I see that we're currently experiencing.

But for me, working here at the Center, what's so hopeful is those younger generations. That some of the challenges that we see that we're hopefully instilling our core values and principles that we would like to see our future leaders to embody and that that is when we're able to really engage in that process with leaders who are open, understanding, empathetic and wanting to address these issues. And that it's widespread and not just single individual pockets of it.

But, of course, that takes time. And what survivors don't have is time. We are seeing more and more passing away every day. And so we hear things like we likely won't see reconciliation in our generation, but we hope to see by supporting our youth today that they're able to continue this journey we started.

Even if it's not something we can see or that I might be able to see fully achieved and I will say I don't believe it's fully achievable; I think it's always this work in progress that requires that commitment piece. Where if you're not addressing it, if you're not actively working on it, well it's fallen on the wayside, it's stalled, and, we're not embodying those responsibilities expected of us.

**RESH:** Yeah, absolutely. And as you said, those in power will take the time that those who are powerless don't tend to have.

And again, we have so many examples now of young people really taking the lead when it comes to things like climate, going beyond the federal government to the international. Years ago, I remember Shannon Koostachin from Attawapiskat, who was one of the leaders, or the young leaders of bringing the dire educational situation facing Indigenous children to the International and it was at that level that they said this is totally unacceptable. And then our government began to react to it.

Canada's impact on Indigenous Peoples also extends beyond Canada. For example, our global mining operations disproportionately impacts Indigenous Peoples here, but also around the world. Canada's stance on the Palestinian people, who last December the Assembly of First Nations overwhelmingly recognized as an



Indigenous people, after a ceasefire motion brought forward by Dr. Wilton Littlechild, who was previously also one of the commissioners on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Eva, how do we reconcile Canada's commitment to reconciliation here when compared to our impacts on Indigenous populations globally?

**EVA:** Well, I think this is the heavy lifting that needs to be done by the Canadian public, by the Canadian government.

There are many parallels to the systems that oppress Palestinian people and the systems that have oppressed and do oppress First Nations peoples like an apartheid system, right? You know, one of Canada's greatest imports is the apartheid system. It goes to South Africa and then it influences other, unjust systems around the world. And that's first developed by Canada through the Indian Act. These are things that the Canadian public needs to reconcile what they need to reckon with it. And need to, I think make active measures to understand it more broadly, more widely and to make changes.

Now, earlier we talked about those big structural changes that need to take place and Kaila pointed out the important work that happens at the community level. And I just want to highlight that here because in a Toronto riding that Julie Dzerowicz is the MP of, the constituents of that riding had protested and lobbied their MP to make statements that are in support of the Palestinian people and in support of ceasefire, and supporting Canada's statements and urging a ceasefire at the international level. And the constituents won. So that organizing at the community level is so critical, so important to swaying the elected leadership who want to serve their constituents and they want to get back in, right?

So I think there's those kinds of glimmers of hope that we see the way that direct action and political organizing at community level can impact and change positions at the federal level.

But I think a lot of Canadians are drawing those parallels, are seeing the similarities between the oppression that other groups around the world face and the kind that Canada has propagated itself.

And in fact. I think a lot of new generations, like Kaila had said, are seeing that and understanding that. And that's who gives me hope as well as my students are drawing those parallels and seeing the global system and the local system of Canada.

**RESH:** Kaila, as we move into Truth and Reconciliation Week, which will be followed by the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, or Orange Shirt Day, on September 30th, how can we continue to push this country toward meaningful reconciliation?

**KAILA:** When it comes to how do we continue to advance reconciliation, I find what a lot of people struggle with is looking at the Calls to Action and being unable to see themselves in there because it is targeting those various government levels. And what I really liked about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry and their final report were the 231 Calls for Justice.

They had service-based ones, government-based ones, they had distinction-based ones for the Inuit, Métis as well as Two Spirit people. And then they had eight calls specifically directed at all Canadians. And the advice I often give is that the burden to do all 94 Calls to Action doesn't fall on a single individual's shoulders.

However, what we can do is take a look at those 22 thematic topic areas, find that topic area that is your passion. What is your interest? What's your focus? And then think about the Calls to Action in that area. And if you don't see it in the Calls to Action, look to the Calls for Justice, look at the declaration, look at these guiding documents meant to address these outstanding issues, and then use your passion. Use your network. Use your connections. Use your interest to be able to spread that education and awareness.

I'll say when it comes to our reconciliation efforts about the majority of it is education awareness. The last two components are really educate and teach others and then work towards addressing historical injustices and present day wrongs.

So what's standing out to you? What's in your local community? What's areas where you can have that influence or impact, whether it's in your workplace, at your school, or other interest groups, for instance. And being able to share resources that work for you, stuff that's interested you. And really put a shine or a focus on addressing some of those misconceptions or myths or stereotypes that exist out there.

So it's using what you have, the resources that have worked for you, and spreading it to others.

**RESH:** Thank you. Eva, same question to you. How can we, in the settler colonial state of Canada, begin to realize true reconciliation?

**EVA:** Yeah, and so I just want to support everything that Kaila said and add. It also is in your home and how you raise your children, how you have a relationship with your family and friends, what your expectations are and in your social relationships.

One way that settler colonial mores and values like competition and dominion and power and individualism and all that, one way that that gets reproduced is in our expectations of our relationships, right? And so there's this idea called social reproduction that every day we reproduce the system and participate in the system as well.

And none of it is by fault of our own. But they are informing our behaviors and our value systems. Maybe if you're telling your kids to go out and get a good job, you

know, what does that mean? What does it mean to be a human being in relationship with the earth? Maybe that's no longer a narrative that we want to be telling ourselves. Maybe we need to think of alternatives, right?

So my advice is to really think about the way that we perpetuate the narratives that serve the system daily. What are we doing to buy into that system? And how can we exit that system or think otherwise.

**RESH:** Absolutely. Kaila and Eva, thank you so much. It's been a pleasure.

**EVA:** Thank you so much for having us.

**KAILA:** Thank you.

**Resh:** That was Kaila Johnston, Director of Education, Outreach, and Public Programming at the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation.

And Eva Jewell, Research Director of the Yellowhead Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University.

And this is the Courage My Friends podcast. I'm your host, Resh Budhu.

Thanks for listening.

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