

Progress on Implementing Calls to Action

Indian Residential Schools were part of a shameful and racist colonial policy that removed Indigenous children from their communities and denied them their families, language and culture. The trauma and intergenerational trauma inflicted on Indigenous Peoples by these institutions have had lasting impacts that continue to this day.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established to find the truth and identify the painful and lasting impacts of residential schools. The TRC spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada and heard from more than 6,500 witnesses, including survivors. The TRC brought to light the truth about what took place at residential schools and its effects on survivors and generations of family members.

In 2015 the TRC released its final report and 94 Calls to Action. The Calls to Action provide a roadmap for all levels of government, organizations and individuals to take concrete steps toward reconciliation. The Government began working collaboratively with partners from the beginning to implement the Calls to Action.

Concrete progress will require significant and sustained investments by the federal government and from its first budget forward, this Government has made historic investments in closing social, economic and health gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, which are linked to implementation of many of the Calls to Action. They include:

- o \$8.4 billion Budget 2016
- o \$3.4 billion Budget 2017
- o \$5.0 billion Budget 2018
- o \$4.5 billion Budget 2019
- o \$5.6 billion Fall Economic Statement 2020
- o \$18 billion Budget 2021.

In 2015 the Government of Canada responded to the decades-long advocacy from families, survivors and grassroots organizers, and Call to Action 41, and began a detailed pre-inquiry process across the country and in 2016 launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual plus (2SLGBTQQA+) people.

Some key examples of the Government's ongoing commitment to advancing progress on the Calls to Action include when, in March of 2016, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations went to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and announced that Canada is now a full supporter, without qualification, of the *United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. She also affirmed Canada's commitment to adopt and implement the Declaration in accordance with the *Canadian Constitution*, demonstrating concrete progress toward Call to Action 43.

In 2016, the government [provided the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation \(NCTR\) with \\$10 million](#) in a single one-time payment in response to Call to Action 78; funding to support them in establishing a national archive of information related to residential schools.

Canada has demonstrated concrete progress in the ongoing implementation of Call to Action 29 through the settlements of the Anderson (Newfoundland and Labrador Residential Schools), Sixties Scoop (Status Indians and Inuit) and McLean (Federal Indian Day Schools) litigation and recent announcement of the agreement to partially settle the Gottfriedson (Indian Residential Schools Day Scholars) litigation. These settlements balance individual compensation for past harms with forward-looking investments in healing, wellness, education, language, culture, heritage and commemoration to support survivors, their families and communities.

We acknowledge that work remains to be done and are committed to continuing ongoing discussions with survivors, their counsel, Indigenous leadership and provinces and territories to address the remaining litigation.

In March 2019, the Government of Canada supported the University of Victoria's Indigenous Legal Lodge with \$9.1 million, responding to Call to Action 50. Further funding to support Call to Action 50 was announced in May 2021, which provided \$10 million over five years to 21 projects to support renewed legal relationships with Indigenous Peoples that will advance the development, use and understanding of Indigenous laws.

On June 21, 2019, Parliament adopted *an Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, which affirms the inherent right of self-government and Indigenous jurisdiction in relation to child and family services and supports the implementation of Call to Action 4.

An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages was passed on June 21, 2019, which supports the reclamation, preservation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages in Canada and [advances the meaningful implementation of Calls to Action 13, 14, and 15](#).

The Government of Canada remains committed to working with partners to advance all 94 Calls to Action and to implement the 76 under federal or shared jurisdiction. Currently, **more than 80 per cent of the Calls to Action under federal or shared jurisdiction are completed or are well underway**.

Through months, and in some cases years, of sustained work we have seen significant milestones on the implementation of a number of the Calls to Action in recent weeks.

On June 3, 2019, when receiving the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that was called for in Call to Action 41, the Prime Minister committed the Government of Canada to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) to respond to the Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice in partnership. The work on the NAP was led by more than 100 Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people who brought their experience, knowledge, strength, dedication and passion to its

development. The [plan was released in a public ceremony on June 3, 2021](#). At the same time, the Government released the Federal Pathway *to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People* as its contribution to the NAP. The Federal Pathway is one component of the much broader National Action Plan and describes our current and future efforts across government to end this national tragedy and is supported by concrete investments in Budget 2021 to address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. On June 3, 2021, Parliament adopted Bill C-5, which legislates a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, to honour survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure the public commemoration of the tragic history and legacy of residential schools, implementing Call to Action 80. This bill received Royal Assent on June 3, 2021.

On June 9, 2021, the Government of [Canada announced an Agreement-in-Principle](#) to partially settle the Gottfriedson litigation, making further progress on Call to Action 29.

Introduced early in the 43rd Parliament, Bill C-8, which amends the [Oath of Citizenship](#) to recognize and affirm the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, was adopted by Parliament on June 10, 2021, implementing Call to Action 94 and received Royal Assent on June 21, 2021. Now that Bill C-8 has received Royal Assent, the updated citizenship guide will be released shortly, making further concrete progress on implementing Call to Action 93.

On June 14, 2021, the Government of Canada announced the [first appointees to the new Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages](#) responding to Call to Action 15. Also on June 14, 2021, the Government announced that [Indigenous people can now reclaim their traditional names on passports](#) and other government identification, making significant concrete progress on Call to Action 17.

On June 16, 2021, Parliament adopted Bill C-15 to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in Canada, as called for in Call to Action 43, and it received Royal Assent on June 21, 2021. That legislation contains a requirement, with a two-year deadline, to create an Action Plan to achieve the goals of the Declaration, as called for in Call to Action 44. Additionally, Bill C-15 also includes a specific perambulatory clause, which repudiates concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous Peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, making progress on Call to Action 47.

Calls to Action 71-76

Thousands of children were sent to Residential Schools and never returned home to their families and communities. The families were often provided with little to no information on the circumstances of their loved one who had gone missing or had died or the location of their burial. The loss of children who attended residential schools is unthinkable and we must ensure that all Canadians know how this terrible policy is affecting families and communities today.

Our hearts remain heavy as we hear of remains found in the area of former residential schools near a number of Indigenous communities. Our thoughts are with the communities as they mourn those innocent souls from their communities and others who did not return home. Canada remains committed to supporting Survivors, their families and communities through their healing journeys and is supporting communities by providing funding to create a historic record of children who died at residential schools, locate their final resting places, and commemorate and memorialize these lost loved ones.

Call to Action 71 is directed at provinces and territories and calls upon all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies that have not provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada their records on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these documents available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR).

In 2018, the government provided \$500,000 to the NCTR to assist them in commencing the development of a national student death register, in support of Call to Action 72. The work of the NCTR has progressed significantly but there is more to do. Over the next two years, Canada will provide \$2.6 million to the NCTR to continue the development of the National Student Death Register.

The government is also providing up to \$800,000 to the NCTR for work on an on-line cemeteries and burial site register, as called for in Call to Action 73.

Call to Action 76 provides key principles to be applied when implementing Calls to Action 73-75. These principles mandate the development of strategies be led by impacted Indigenous communities, that information shall be sought from survivors and Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous protocols must be respected. In keeping with Call to Action 76, during the summer and fall of 2020, the Government of Canada engaged with Indigenous organizations, provinces, territories, the NCTR, culture and heritage professionals, including archaeologists in 16 national, virtual engagement sessions to receive direction on how to design the delivery of funding and support to implement Calls to Action 73-75 based on the principles set out in Call to Action 76. The results of the engagement developed the guidance that the work be Indigenous-led, community-based, survivor/family-centric and culturally sensitive and that the funding should be flexible to support gatherings, ceremonies, research, archaeological expertise and commemoration. The Government has made available \$27.1 million to support communities with this difficult work. We are actively working with communities across

Canada about how best to support them in finding their lost children, including how they can access that funding and also the expertise and assistance of other government departments. There are also resources available for health supports and other services to assist communities as they navigate through this incredibly difficult time.

Moving Forward

Addressing the legacy of Federal Residential Schools is at the heart of reconciliation and a renewal of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples who attended these institutions, their families and communities, and all Canadians. The Government of Canada is taking action on the priority areas that have been identified by First Nation, Inuit and Métis partners. We remain committed to achieving all Calls to Action under federal or shared jurisdiction and Budget 2021 outlines the new investments we are making to achieve further progress toward implementation, as well as the transformative positive change for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Budget 2021 includes a historic, new investment of over \$18 billion “to improve the quality of life and create new opportunities for people living in Indigenous communities.” This includes investments in support of Calls to Action that address issues such as child welfare, education, health, language and culture, justice and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Specific investments include:

- Child welfare (Calls to Action 1-5):
 - \$73.6 million over four years to support the implementation of the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*.
 - \$1 billion over five years and \$118.7 million ongoing to increase funding under the First Nations Child and Family Services Program.
- Education (Calls to Action 1-6):
 - \$2.5 billion over five years to support Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care.
 - \$177 million over two years to support Indigenous post-secondary students and institutions during COVID-19.
- Language and Culture (Calls to Action 13-17):
 - \$275 million over five years and \$2 million ongoing to support the efforts of Indigenous Peoples in the reclamation, revitalization and strengthening of Indigenous languages as a foundation for culture, identity and belonging.
 - \$14.9 million over four years to support the preservation of Indigenous heritage.
 - \$108.8 million over two years to reestablish and revitalize Indigenous cultural spaces.
 - \$40.1 million over three years to support the Indigenous Screen Office and ensure Indigenous Peoples can tell their own stories and see themselves reflected on-screen.
- Health (Calls to Action 18-24):
 - \$126.7 million over three years, beginning in 2021-22, to take action to foster health systems free from racism and discrimination where Indigenous Peoples are respected and safe.

- o \$598 million over three years to support a Distinctions-Based Mental Wellness Strategy.
- Justice (Calls to Action 25-42):
 - o \$74.8 million over three years, beginning in 2021-22, to improve access to justice for Indigenous people and support the development of an Indigenous justice strategy to address systemic discrimination and the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the justice system.
 - o \$861 million over five years, beginning in 2021-22, and \$145 million ongoing to support culturally responsive policing and community safety services in Indigenous communities.
- MMIWG (Call to Action 41):
 - o \$2.2 billion over five years and \$160.9 million ongoing to respond to the national tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- UNDRIP/supporting self-determination (Call to Action 44):
 - o \$31.5 million over two years to support the co-development of an Action Plan with Indigenous partners to implement Bill C-15, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

Our Government has remained focussed on the sustained and consistent action required for continued concrete progress, and we will continue to do so.