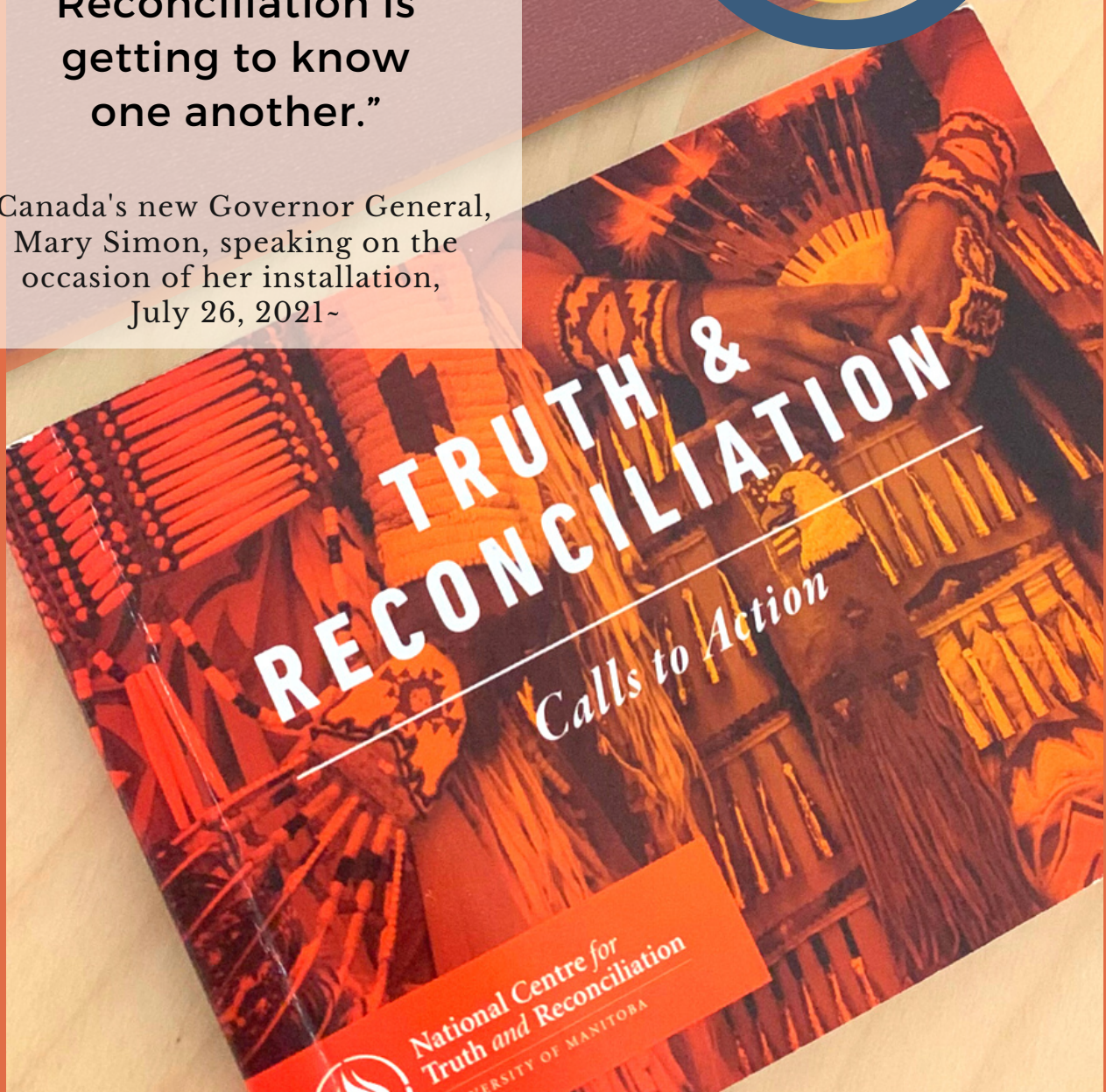


Circles for Reconciliation Inc.

"My view is that reconciliation is a way of life and requires work every day. Reconciliation is getting to know one another."

-Canada's new Governor General, Mary Simon, speaking on the occasion of her installation, July 26, 2021-



2021 Newsletter

Editor: Emily Simon



Canadian History Uncovered

On May 30th, 2021, many Canadians woke up to a new reality for them. The Canada they knew had changed. What happened was the horrendous recovery of 215 unmarked graves at the Kamloops Residential School. This was not news to Indigenous people. The long oral history had told this story for years, and six years ago, the TRC had reported on the existence of such unmarked graves of Indigenous children and stated there were many more not yet recovered.

That day, what had been Indigenous history became Canadian history. The news of the findings changed Canada. Canadian flags flew at half-mast or were removed; statues of revered Canadian leaders were defaced or taken down; shoes reminding all of us of the children were placed on the steps of legislatures; name changes of streets and buildings accelerated; cities cancelled or rethought Canada Day celebrations; public gatherings honouring the children were held across the country; four Catholic churches were burnt to the ground.

Here at Circles for Reconciliation, we wept. We initiated a minute of silence in all our circles, embarked on planting two gardens of orange flowers and reached out to the Chief Rosanne Casimir of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation to offer our condolences.

With the unanimous endorsement of our Board of Directors, we wrote to the Head of the Catholic Conference of Bishops urging the church to invite the Pope to come to Canada to apologize, demanding the church to turn over all the documents that would facilitate identifying the children and to take a much more active, positive, public engagement in reconciliation.

We partnered with Reconciliation Thunder in establishing a #94 in 94 social media campaign, asking Canadians to read one of the Calls to Action each day until September 30th, Orange Shirt Day and a new National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

At the same time, registrations at Circles for Reconciliation (CFR) are increasing at an unparalleled rate. These new registrations are almost entirely from non-Indigenous people from all across Canada who want reconciliation and are willing to commit their time to help bring it about. Although stretched beyond our human and financial resources, we are committed to responding as quickly as we can.

To donate to Circles for Reconciliation please visit:
<https://circlesforreconciliation.ca> and use the red donate button!

Recognition of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation and the Other Continuous Recoveries

It is truly heartbreaking news and is too traumatic for many Indigenous families across Canada. Waves of grief continue to flow through Indigenous communities as they remember their own stories of residential school. However, for non-Indigenous people, action must follow, as Commissioner Murray Sinclair has said "If ever there was a call for Reconciliation, now is the time to respond".



Circle Bed of Flowers - Honouring the Sacred Ones

At this time, Circles for Reconciliation would like to remember the many children who lost their lives at residential schools.

Who are we, and what do we do?

We are a registered charity!

CFR is a non-profit, incorporated, grassroots project, and as of July 1st, 2021, we have received charitable status from the Canada Revenue Agency. We are a full and equal partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

We are a very small organization with only one full-time and four part time paid employees, yet with a very extensive reach across Canada. We have many volunteers that help keep our organization running, some of whom will be mentioned later in this newsletter.

Our major activity is creating circles composed of ten participants (five Indigenous and five non-Indigenous people) led by two trained facilitators (one of whom is Indigenous). Our goal is to create mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, each circle meets once a week for ten weeks. It takes time to create relationships! Currently, there are individuals in 200 communities across Canada who have registered to participate in our circles. So far, we have offered almost 100 of these 10-week circles in five provinces across Canada, close to 30 circles over Zoom. Our expansion is just beginning.

Our circles consist of four main components:

- Opening and greetings
- Discussion of the week's theme
- Sharing time
- Closing

Opening

Our opening time is dedicated to creating a safe, respectful climate for sharing and generally includes the following:

- Land Recognition
- Drumming, song, rattle, smudging (optional)
- Seven Sacred Teachings of the Anishinaabe
- Minute of silence

We encourage creativity from our Indigenous participants. This could include drumming, reading a poem or singing, but we also have recordings to use if desired.

Discussion of the week's theme

There is a short presentation on the day's theme to help educate our participants and *Honor the Truth*. We touch on subjects such as *Treaties*, *The Indian Act*, *The 60s Scoop*, *Meaning of the Land*, *Métis Experience* and many more. Themes on the Inuit experience of colonization are in development.

Sharing time

The majority of time in our circles every week is then spent sharing with one another. In this way, our circles “educate our minds and hearts, as the survivors” urge us to do (TRC Final Report, page 234).

Closing

Finally, we close our 90-minute circle with a vision of Reconciliation presented by the Commissioners. It is an excerpt from the *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* and it touches on six points of Reconciliation and allows us to leave the circle with our heads and hearts ready to continue working on Reconciliation.


Start your journey with Circles for Reconciliation by registering for a Circle on our website www.circlesforreconciliation.ca. Our form gives you an opportunity to add to your general interest in Circle participation by selecting additional training for facilitator or organizer roles. Each is different but a great way to join our path towards reconciliation. **Organizers** are people who want to help organize circles within their area. They help promote our circles and gather people and information on reconciliation in their area. **Facilitators** are provided with extensive two days of training and of resources to run our circles. They moderate our circles and help guide the conversation.

#94in94 Social Media Campaign

When the horrendous discoveries came out in Kamloops, it sparked a reason to advocate and create some change. Jimmy Thunder, an Advisory Committee Member at CFR, heads his own organization, Reconciliation Thunder. CFR has partnered with Reconciliation Thunder in a social media campaign, #94in94, which was launched on June 29, 2021. *Here, we hope to raise awareness of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. We post one Call to Action every day until Orange Shirt Day, September 30th, 2021 (a new National Day of Reconciliation).* There are still so many Canadians who have not read the TRC's 94 Calls to Action, which came out six years ago, and we want to urge individuals to respond personally to at least one of the Calls to Action.

To join the conversation, you can follow us and Reconciliation Thunder on a variety of platforms (see below). There you can also see the Calls to Action posted.

CIRCLES FOR RECONCILIATION

 <https://circlesforreconciliation.ca/>

 @circlesforreconciliation

 @ForCircles

 @CirclesForReconciliation


 Circles for Reconciliation

 Circles for Reconciliation

RECONCILIATION THUNDER

 <https://reconciliationthunder.org/>

 @reconciliationthunder

 @Rec_Thunder

 @ReconciliationThunder

 Reconciliation Thunder

 Reconciliation Thunder

You can also join the email thread to receive updates on one of the 94 Calls to Actions daily before September 30th!

Visit Reconciliation Thunder's website
(<https://reconciliationthunder.org/>) to register!



Calls to Action we are working on

06

AUGUST 2021

A way of assessing our impact is to identify specific Calls to Action that our project addresses.

Call to Action #10, iii:

Education; develop culturally appropriate curricula.

- Our themes are developed and vetted primarily by Indigenous scholars.

Call to Action #14:

Promotion of language and culture

- We have created “Welcome” videos on our website in different Indigenous languages: Ininiw (Cree), Dakota, Michif, Anishinaabe (Ojibwé) Anishiniw (Ojibwe Cree), Dene, and Inuktitut, with more to come.
- We are in the process of translating our posters and pamphlets into five Indigenous languages: Ininiw (Cree), Dakota, Michif, Anishinaabe (Ojibwé), and Inuktitut.

Call to Action #57:

“We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginals, including the history and legacy of residential schools... This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”

- Our circles are being offered in Crown corporations, government departments and to other public servants.

Call to Action #62:

Engaging young people with Indigenous curriculum

- We offer circles in universities, colleges, and we are in the process of creating circles with grade 11 and 12 students across the country.

Call to Action #10, vi:

Engaging parents in the education of their children

- We are offering circles for parents of school children where Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents come together in the schools in the evening for a circle.

Calls to Action #45 and #46:

“creation and maintenance of mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.”

- With the presentation of a theme each week and an extensive sharing period each week, over a 10-week period, these Calls to Action are the very heart of our project.

Call to Action #58:

“We call upon the Pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church’s role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools.”

- We wrote to the Roman Catholic leadership in Canada to urge the church to invite the Pope to come to Canada to apologize.

Call to Action #92:

We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.

What can you do to help towards Reconciliation?



Our first recommendation is, of course, to register for our circles. When you are creating “mutually respectful relationships” in a circle, you are “*practicing* reconciliation” (Italics on practicing in the original document of TRC Final Report). These are key components to Reconciliation.

While waiting to be put into one of our circles, there are other actions you can take to continue your path to Reconciliation. One highly recommended reading is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future. We recommend the following three chapters as essential readings: The History, The Legacy, and The Challenge of Reconciliation. Beginning with the chapter on legacy, each Call to Action is preceded by the background work of the commission that led to that Call to Action.

In our theme, *After the Circles: Practicing Solidarity and Living Reconciliation*, we offer over 30 actions that individuals and/or organizations can take to prompt Reconciliation. Please visit

<https://circlesforreconciliation.ca/gathering-theme-after-the-circles-practicing-solidarity-and-living-reconciliation/>.

Expansion of Circles: Toronto and Elsewhere

While Circles for Reconciliation began in Winnipeg, our first major expansion across Canada occurred in Toronto. Thanks to a grant from the Toronto Foundation, we were able to hire two part time staff. Susan Dowan, our Indigenous Recruiter, and Paula Messina, our Event Coordinator work as a team. We also have an extension of our Advisory Committee in the Toronto area, in both cases, reflecting our balance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The expansion has been a challenge as we had to create a presence and introduce ourselves to the Indigenous communities in the area. COVID-19 complicated matters when we had to lay off our staff from March to October 2020. The team is back and not only working in Toronto but initiating some of our other national programs. Concentrations of registered participants now exist in a number of cities across Canada and a recent grant from the City of Victoria will allow us further expansion of Circles.

Research Report: Executive Summary

08

AUGUST 2021

By: Katelyn Mackenzie, B.A. (hons.), M.A.

As participants will know, we ask for feedback at the end of each 10-week circle. We want to know what you liked best, as well as what you feel could be improved. Here is an Executive Summary of the document. Should you wish to read the full 24-page document, here is the link:

<https://circlesforreconciliation.ca/2021-research-report/>

In the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) the Commissioners state: “Survivors told us that Canadians must learn about the history and legacy of residential schools in ways that change both minds *and* hearts” (TRC Final Report, Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future, page 234). The Commissioners also tell us over and over that reconciliation is above all “creating and maintaining respectful relationships.” That is the vision of our circles. At each circle, we educate participants through the presentation of a different theme each week. The longest part of each meeting is sharing the life experiences of the participants. We ask participants to take part in a circle that lasts 10 weeks, on the premise that creating mutually respectful relationships takes time. We have completed nearly 100 ten-week circles, both in-person and virtual meetings with participants across Canada. Since 2017, at the end of each circle participants are asked to complete our End of Circle Survey. Over 263 participants have completed the survey and provided us with invaluable feedback to improve our program.

Indigenous
Ambassador:
Grace Schedler

Project Coordinator:
Raymond Currie



FINDINGS

Two of the four open-ended questions ask respondents what they liked best about circles and what they felt could be improved. The overarching pattern of responses indicate that participants in circles are very satisfied with the experience. In addition to the very positive comments, we received the pattern of responses to the structured questions that were also very positive.

- 95.5% of participants would recommend circles to others
- 93.1% of participants believe everyone has a chance to share during discussion
- 93.5% of participants felt the sharing was honest
- 92.6% of participants found the overall experience positive

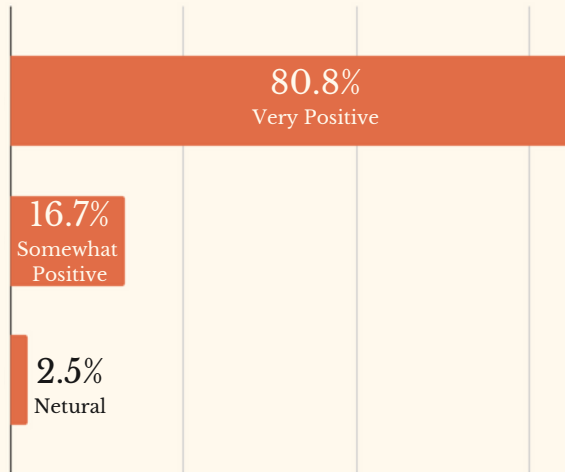
Participants, however, also have some concerns. The most prevalent response is disappointment when participants withdraw from a circle prior to the end of the 10 weeks; A second concern is the sense that there is too strong an academic approach to the presentation of the themes. A number of participants express that simplified themes, guest speakers, and videos would enhance the experience of the circles and engage more participants. A third frequent comment was to the effect that fewer circle meetings may be beneficial for participant engagement and retention. For example, offering seven instead of 10 meetings, but longer in content (2 hours instead of 90 minutes).

In each case, the concerns are being addressed by the Circles team and by a feedback session with facilitators.

~Results as of March 2021~

RESULTS OF OUR SURVEY

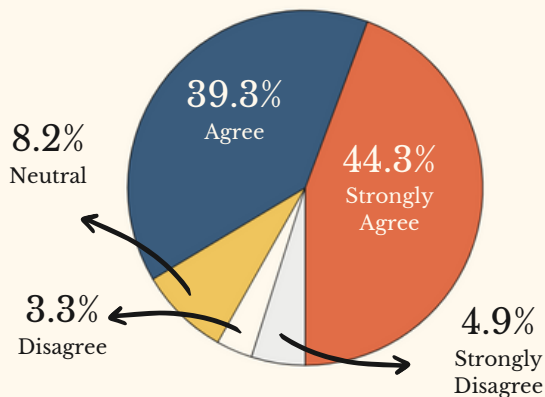
RATE YOUR EXPERIENCE IN CIRCLES



At the end of every circle, we send out a survey to all participants. Below are some results of the survey. There has been very positive feedback from our circles and a strong desire to recommend our circles.

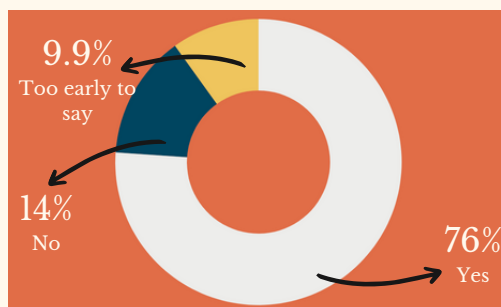
We have a new development coming in the fall of 2021. We are creating circles in French. Our team has been working on translating our documents so we can offer these circles in the fall.

RIGHT AMOUNT OF MEETINGS



The horrendous discoveries of unmarked graves of children from residential schools from across Canada has led to a significant increase in our registrations for circles. Canadians clearly want to see much more action towards Reconciliation. In 2020, we had over 300 registrations for circles, but as of June 2021, we had already significantly surpassed that same number of registrations in under six months. Considering that Indigenous people make up five percent of the Canadian population, they made up almost 30% of our registrations in 2020. However, so far in 2021, while Indigenous registrations have not gone down, non-Indigenous registrations have gone up significantly. We continue to make more partnerships with various organizations to create more circles with First Nations.

CHANGED UNDERSTANDING OR PERSPECTIVE ON RECONCILIATION



~Results as of July 2021~



Katimavik team who volunteered with our organization in June to deliver our English and French posters and brochures throughout Winnipeg.



Photo from our presentation with Manitoba Indigenous Cultural Education Centre! To watch this presentation visit: <https://www.facebook.com/micec.mb/videos/667098021353284>

Effects of COVID-19

The pandemic led to an increase in registrations contrary to what we expected. Our Zoom circles are proving to be quite effective. While our participants clearly prefer in-person circles, they do like the aspect of Zoom circles that allows them to connect with people from across Canada. Our research also found that there is no difference in satisfaction levels between those who took part in In-Person versus Zoom circles.

Much to our surprise, our rural registrations increased and Zoom circles allowed us to reach rural residents where, otherwise, there would not be enough people in a given location to host a circle.

Meet the team

AUGUST 2021

some of our many amazing volunteers!

To get to know our team better, we asked them which Call to Action they are working on.



CLARENCE ENS
WINNIPEG, MB.

non-Indigenous member
of our Advisory
Committee/Circles Co-
facilitator

Calls to Action #71-76, Canada needs to acknowledge its past and present colonial harms and take responsibility for past harms and how these continue to perpetuate inter generational trauma.

**VIANNE
ARTHURSON**
EDMONTON, AB.

Indigenous
Student who
Co-facilitated a
Circle

I became interested in the topic of Indigenous land and found myself wanting to learn more. The land is more than a place, it's where my ancestors walked, holds peace and healing, Indigenous people are spiritually connected to the land. I looked into the meaning of the land and how I can help Indigenous communities, learn more about the land and the connection I have to it.



STEPHANIE NASSIS
TORONTO, ON.

non-Indigenous member
of our Advisory
Committee in Toronto

I am interested in Call to Action #19. My goal is to raise awareness on indicators such as: mental health, suicide, addictions, child health issues and the availability of appropriate health services for Aboriginal peoples.

CORNELL PASHE
PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, MB.

Indigenous Co-facilitator
of Circles

Interested in all 94 Calls to Action



EVVY KLASSEN
ABBOTSFORD, BC.

non-Indigenous Editor of
our themes

I suppose if Action #43 was fully implemented, then most of the other actions would be taken care of.

KELLY FRANCIS
WINNIPEG, MB.

Indigenous Co-facilitator
of Circles

I'm interested in them all but if I had to choose, #53-56. These Calls to Action focus on a National Council for Reconciliation. Progress had been started but has since stalled. This National Council is fundamental to holding government to account on implementing the TRC Calls to Action



Partners

AUGUST 2021

What does it mean to have a partnership? In these cases, it is more than just having an organization host a circle; but it is an ongoing relationship about the development of Reconciliation efforts through circles and other activities.

Some of our partnerships are as follows:

- Brokenhead First Nation
- Canada Life
- Immigration Partner Winnipeg
- Jane Goodall Institute, Uncovering Common Ground Project
- Manitoba College of Social Workers
- Manitoba Department of Indigenous and Northern Relations
- Ontario Association of Social Work (OASW)
- River East School Division Winnipeg
- Roseau River Anishinaabe First Nation
- St. Boniface Archdiocese
- Seven Oaks School Division Winnipeg
- Statistics Canada

A Big Thank You for our Funders!



Foundation



United Church
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OF Rupert's Land



To donate to Circles for Reconciliation please visit :
<https://circlesforreconciliation.ca> and use the red donate button!