



Circles for Reconciliation

2025

NEWSLETTER



Another year has come and gone! Here we are again with our 2025 Newsletter and its new events and challenges. On focusing on the positive notes for our organization through all its financial challenges, there are several wonderful people, supporters and funders who assisted in the continuance of reconciliation efforts!

First are the volunteers that keep the reconciliation journeys alive with all their hours, commitment and dedication to the circle events. Without our core volunteer team and Facilitators who are volunteers this work would be stalled for most non-profits who are struggling across the many service sectors. The second group are the core sub-contractors who work mostly after regular business hours in this very hard reality of Canada's history with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Creating the Talking Circles come with putting together participants who will be facing hard realities and difficult topics to discuss in new groups and dispelling old information and misconceptions. Of course, the individual donors who take the time and their hard-earned money to support the organization. There are the 2025 funders that provide the grants: From the Ground Up (Province of Manitoba), the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund, the Winnipeg Foundation and we must not forget the huge gift from Canada Life! You should know that in this pool of monetary and a food supporter are others who help with the continuing the National Indigenous Peoples Day Community Barbeque; Assiniboine Credit Union, Honoring Indigenous People (HIP Rotary Club, Downtown Winnipeg), Johnston Group, Manitoba Hydro, Red River Coop, the Northwest Company (Value Lots Discount Centre Discount Centre), Old Dutch Potato Chips, and Pitblado.

We know that they are on our website, but they truly deserve more recognition than a logo and social media. Our readers tend to still read hard copy and we are cognizant of their dedication to reconciliation efforts! Without all of the individuals and organizations, reconciliation has not become a buzz word. It is a living and breathing entity, think of things in your natural environment. It is extremely difficult to start a non-profit with all its hoops and steps-just like hoop dancing.

Note from the Editor

As we reflect on 2025, it is impossible to ignore a quiet shift taking place across the reconciliation landscape. In many spaces, reconciliation has been softened, sidelined, or treated as a completed chapter rather than an ongoing responsibility. We have seen reduced public urgency, shrinking grant opportunities, and a growing shift in institutional commitments. At the same time, more troubling issues have become visible including the rise of identity fraud, increased polarization, and the re-emergence of residential school denialism. These realities are not separate from our work; they are precisely why it remains necessary.

Reconciliation was never meant to be a trend or a funding cycle. It is relational, long-term, and often uncomfortable. When attention drifts, misinformation and division fill the gap. When education slows, harmful narratives gain ground. The quiet erosion of support for reconciliation work is dangerous not because it is loud, but because it is subtle.

While there is no Cree, Dënë, or Michif word for reconciliation, *Kwaayesh Aashtaayaahk* / *Kwayskahstahsoowin* / *Ēta nīdet Ēta Ēghēdēleda há* are Indigenous concepts that speak to the responsibility of “setting things right”, not only externally in systems and relationships, but internally within oneself and one’s community.¹ Though expressed in different Indigenous languages, these teachings share a common grounding: living in a right relationship, restoring balance where harm has occurred, and standing with integrity and accountability. They emphasize that reconciliation is not passive or symbolic; it is active, relational work that requires truth-telling, humility, and sustained commitment. To set things right means acknowledging history honestly, honouring Indigenous laws and identities, and moving forward in a way that restores harmony rather than deepens division. These principles remind us that reconciliation is a continuous practice, one that calls each of us to align our actions with justice, respect, and collective responsibility.

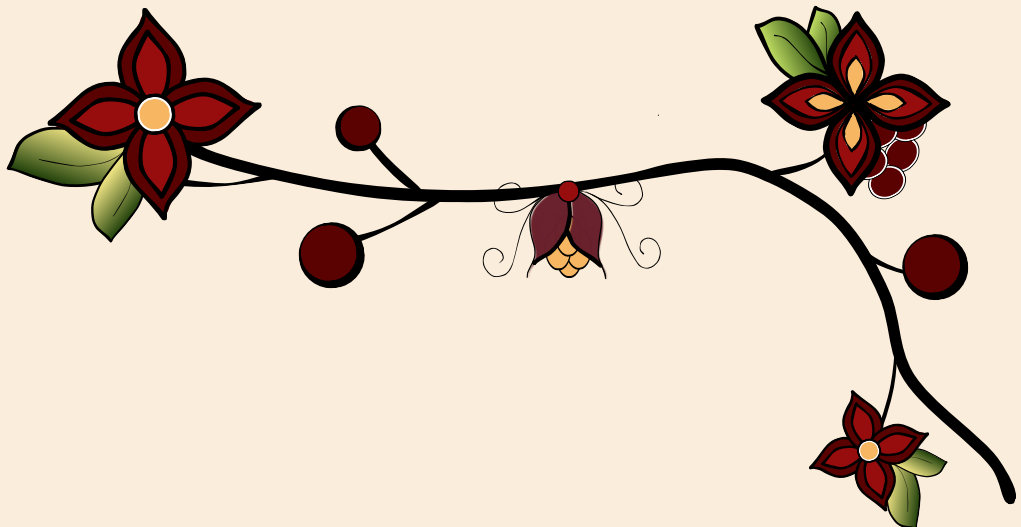
Note from the Editor cont.

Every Circle conversation continues to model something different, respectful dialogue, accountability, shared learning, and building relationships. Each facilitator trained, each participant who completes a Circle, each person who shows up to learn demonstrates that this work still matters deeply. The steady growth of our waitlist and requests for presentations reminds us that people are seeking meaningful spaces for engagement.

As we move forward, we celebrate the positives while remaining attentive to the broader context shaping this moment. We are committed to strengthening our programs, expanding access, supporting Indigenous leadership, and creating pathways for deeper learning. Reconciliation requires persistence, especially when it feels less visible.

1. Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. (2023). Kwaayesh Aashtaayaahk – Michif / Kwayskahstahsoowin – Cree / Ĕła nideł Ĕła Ĕghēdēleda há – Dēnē: Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (“MN-S”) and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (“UNDRIP”) Position Paper. <https://metisnationsk.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/MN-S-UNDRIP-2023-Position-Statement-Privileged-Confidential.02-14-23.v3.pdf>

– Leena Tetrault, Editor



The Path to Each Circle

At any given time, Circles for Reconciliation (CFR) is working behind the scenes with approximately 10-20 organizations and communities to prepare for future circles. This involves ongoing conversations, relationship-building, sharing information, coordinating timelines, training, and thoughtfully assigning facilitators. Many of these partnerships remain unseen by the public, as organizations are only featured on the website once they have a set date to moving forward on their reconciliation journeys.

These planning efforts require a significant investment of time and care from the entire CFR team. From this perspective, what stands out most is the intentionality behind every step, ensuring that each circle is not only well-organized, but also balanced, respectful, and safe for meaningful dialogue. The constant monitoring of circles at different stages reflects a deep commitment to participants and to the integrity of the process. It's a reminder that reconciliation is not just about the circles themselves, but the thoughtful, often invisible work that makes those spaces possible.



Participant Testimonial

“I must tell you I was very surprised how emotional I became while sharing. It stirred up emotions in me as I reflected on my past relationships with my indigenous friends from the past..

I’ll continue to advocate for reconciliation and the lost and forgotten indigenous people that are impacted by homelessness, urbanization and the justice system.

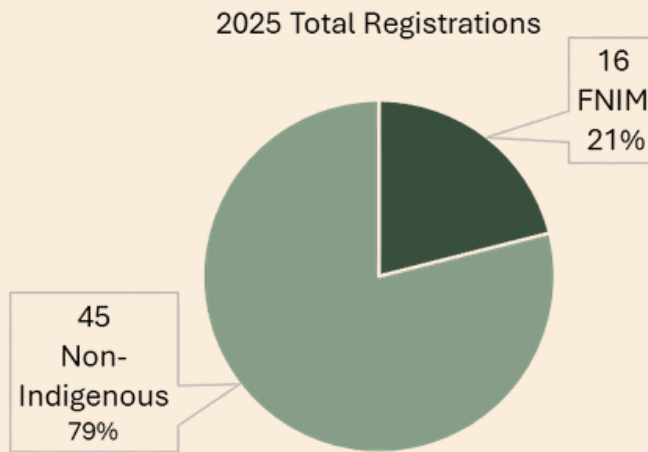
Thank you for all that you do to help the healing process and making the world a better place.”

– L. A.

2025 Progress Snapshot

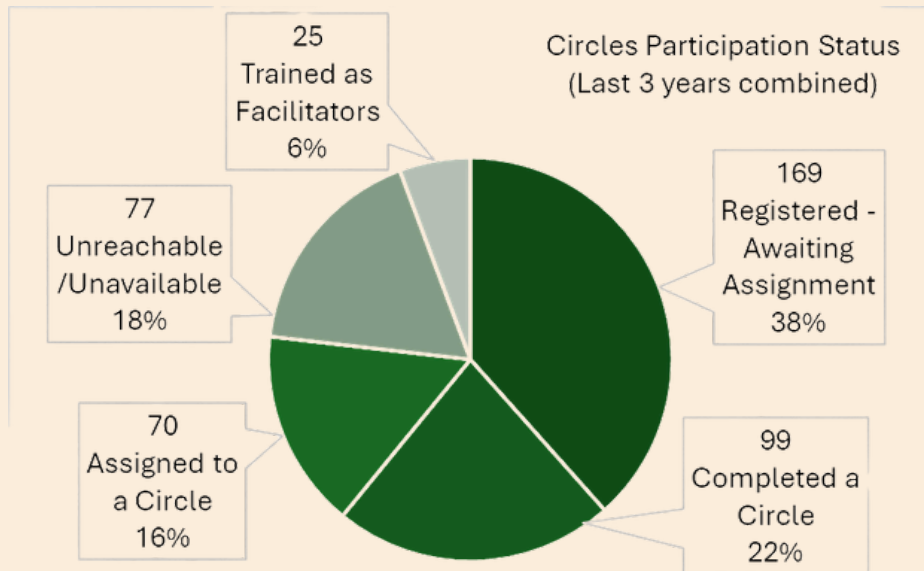
2025 Total Registrations

Since our founding, CFR has continued to grow as a space where people commit to learning, listening, and building relationships across difference. Total registrations reflect more than numbers, they represent individuals who have taken a first step toward understanding and building relationships. Tracking overall participation allows us to see the widening reach of Circles and the sustained interest in reconciliation work over time.



Talking Circles Participation

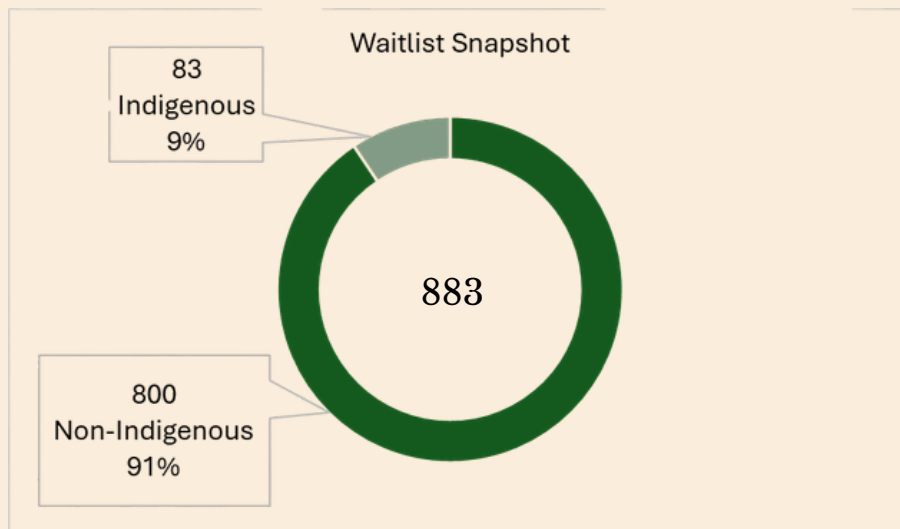
Registration is only the beginning. Circle participation data helps us understand how people are moving through the journey; from signing up, to being assigned, to completing a Circle, attending webinars and presentations, and in some cases, stepping into facilitator roles. These figures give us insight into where momentum is building and where additional support and capacity are needed to ensure participants can fully engage in meaningful dialogue.



2025 Progress Snapshot

Talking Circles Waitlist Snapshot

Our waitlist tells an important story about both opportunity and urgency. The number of individuals waiting to participate reflects a strong desire for deeper engagement in reconciliation conversations. At the same time, it highlights the need to expand facilitator capacity and program offerings so that those ready to begin their Circle experience can do so in a timely way.



Facilitator Growth

In 2025, CFR strengthened its foundation by training nine new facilitators, five FNIM and four non-Indigenous participants. This balanced growth reflects the shared responsibility at the heart of reconciliation work. By expanding our facilitator community, we are increasing our capacity to host meaningful dialogue, respond to the growing waitlist, and ensure that more participants can move from registration into active Circle conversations.

Webinar Engagement

In 2025, CFR hosted three public webinars that deepened learning and community engagement. The National Healing Forests Initiative (March 21) welcomed 31 ticket holders, Calls for Justice with Jessica Paley (September 26) had 22 tickets purchased, and Calls for Justice with Sandra Delaronde (December 5) had 24 tickets purchased and 47 attendees. These gatherings create accessible entry points into reconciliation by connecting participants to Indigenous knowledge holders, legal and policy conversations, and land-based healing perspectives. Webinars also allow us to reach people who may not yet be ready to join a Circle but are seeking education and reflection. Moving forward, we aim to expand digital offerings, increase promotion beyond our existing network, and build stronger pathways from webinars into active Circle participation.

2025 Participant Survey Snapshot

Overall Experience

Feedback on the Circles experience was largely positive, with 86.4% of participants describing their experience as somewhat or very positive. While a small number of participants expressed discomfort with the historical content and archival images presented, these responses reflected the challenging nature of engaging with difficult truths and histories that are an important part of the learning process.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very positive	14	63.6%	63.6%	63.6%
Somewhat positive	5	22.7%	22.7%	86.4%
Very negative	2	9.1%	9.1%	95.5%
No response	1	4.5%	4.5%	100.0%
Total	22	100.0%		

Participant Comments

Participant comments highlighted the importance of Circles as spaces for openness, healing, and meaningful connection. Many participants valued the opportunity to engage in honest conversations without fear of judgment, with one individual sharing that they appreciated “having a format that allowed me to ask question[s] without the fear of judgement or feeling stupid.” Others described the Circles as “a healing space” and “a place that is open,” emphasizing the welcoming environment created by facilitators and fellow participants. Several comments also reflected the deep emotional impact of the experience, with one participant describing it as “a healing human experience that renewed my soul and spirit and purified my thoughts and emotions.” The desire for more opportunities like this was also clear, as participants noted that these conversations “have the power to heal and connect others and ourselves,” while another stated simply, “It should be obligatory.”

2025 Participant Survey Snapshot

Recommending Circles

Participants also expressed strong support for the Circles program, with 90.9% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would recommend participation to others. Many shared an interest in attending additional Circles, with one participant even commenting that “It should be obligatory.” These responses highlight the meaningful impact and value of this work.

In addition, 59% of participants reported that their involvement in a Circle changed their understanding of reconciliation. While 18.2% said their perspective did not change, this may reflect that many participants already entered the program with a strong commitment to reconciliation and a desire to engage in this work.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	1	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%
Neither agree/-disagree or unsure	2	9.1%	9.1%	13.6%
Agree	5	22.7%	22.7%	36.4%
Strongly agree	14	63.6%	63.6%	100.0%
Total	22	100.0%		

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	13	59.1%	59.1%	59.1%
No	4	18.2%	18.2%	77.3%
Too early to say	1	4.5%	4.5%	81.8%
No response	4	18.2%	18.2%	100.0%
Total	22	100.0%		

Events

National Indigenous Peoples Day (NIPD) Community BBQ

Circles for Reconciliation was honoured to host its annual National Indigenous Peoples Day (NIPD) Community BBQ, a gathering rooted in relationship-building, shared learning, and the ongoing work of reconciliation. It is a special day to recognize and celebrate the histories, cultures, and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, while also reflecting honestly on the responsibilities we share moving forward.

The community BBQ was hosted at Sergeant Tommy Prince Place in Winnipeg's North End, and brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members, community resource agencies and collaterals, families, partners, and supporters in a welcoming space grounded in respect and connection. Through food, conversation, and attendance, the event reflected our core belief that meaningful reconciliation happens in relationship when people come together, listen deeply, and engage with one another in good faith.



This year's gathering featured a community barbeque offering hotdogs and hamburgers free of charge to all attendees, ensuring the event remained welcoming and accessible to families and community members of all ages. The celebration also included a lively jiggging competition that highlighted Métis cultural expression and brought participants and spectators together in shared enjoyment. In addition, dozens of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community-based vendors, artisans, and exhibitors were present; showcasing artwork, crafts, services, and information. Thus, creating opportunities for learning, connection, and support for local Indigenous businesses and organizations.



We are grateful to the CFR Facilitators, community members, Gonzaga Middle School, Indigenous knowledge holders, the RCMP in bringing their teepee, the RBC team, St. John's Library, and volunteers who contributed their time, energy, and care to the gathering. Their presence and leadership are what gives this event its meaning and spirit.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to creating spaces that support honest dialogue, strengthen relationships, and centre Indigenous voices and experiences. The 2025 National Indigenous Peoples Day Community BBQ stands as one moment within a much larger journey, one that calls all of us to continue learning, listening, and acting together in the spirit of reconciliation.



Tabling Events

We Are All Treaty People

Two of our team members were honored to attend at The Forks, the *2025 We Are All Treaty People celebration*, a community-centered event focused on strengthening understanding of the Treaties and our shared responsibilities as people living on Treaty land. The celebration brought together families, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, educators, and community organizations in a welcoming space that emphasized learning through relationship, culture, and lived experience. Through culture, conversations, and activities, the event highlighted that Treaties are not just historical agreements, but living commitments that continue to shape how we relate to one another today.

Our participation in this event reflects CFR's commitment to community engagement, dialogue, and relationship-building as foundations for reconciliation. Connecting with community members, sharing stories, and supporting spaces of learning and reflection are central to our work. The We Are All Treaty People celebration created an opportunity to come together in a spirit of respect and belonging, reinforcing the importance of collective responsibility, mutual understanding, and ongoing community-led efforts toward reconciliation.



2025 State of the Province Address

Circles for Reconciliation Co-Founders Ingrid Dowan and Grace Schedler were present at the 2025 State of the Province address delivered by Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew on December 9, 2025, in front of more than 1,200 business and community leaders. The annual address is an important forum for elected officials to outline government priorities, progress, and vision for the year ahead.

As an organization deeply committed to advancing reconciliation in Manitoba through education, dialogue, and Indigenous–non-Indigenous relationship building, CFR attended with the hope of hearing concrete commitments and reflections on reconciliation in the province. This was especially significant given that Premier Kinew holds the role of Minister responsible for Indigenous Reconciliation in addition to his duties as premier, a position intended to signal the importance of that work within government.

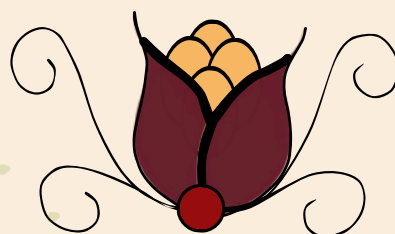
While the address touched on a range of economic development initiatives, including the announcement of a new Manitoba Crown-Indigenous Corporation to support major trade and infrastructure projects, the word reconciliation was not mentioned once in the speech.

The absence of any substantive reference to reconciliation, Indigenous families, or the ongoing impacts of colonialism is striking. This omission stood in contrast to both the symbolic and practical expectations many community members and reconciliation advocates had for an address delivered by a government that has publicly stated its commitment to Indigenous engagement and healing.

For CFR, the experience highlighted a profound reality: reconciliation cannot be treated as an abstract value or a checkbox in political rhetoric. It requires ongoing, visible, and substantive acknowledgement and action, not only in targeted portfolios but across all levels of governance and policy. The silence around reconciliation in such a high-profile speech made clear that the work of educating, advocating, and keeping these issues front and centre in public discourse remains as urgent as ever.

CFR remains committed to engaging with government, community partners, and the public to ensure that reconciliation is woven into the fabric of everyday decision-making. Our organization recognizes that political leadership plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding and priorities, and will continue to pursue a renewal of partnership, accountability, and meaningful progress on reconciliation across Manitoba.

These concerns and observations are also reflected in the findings of the 2024 Path to Reconciliation Report, released by the Government of Manitoba. The report outlines the province's stated commitments, progress, and ongoing gaps in advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Examining this report provides an important lens through which to evaluate whether public commitments are being matched by meaningful policy actions. This report can be read on the Government of Manitoba website here: [ptr-act-annual-progress-report-2023-2024.pdf](#)



Webinars

Growing Together w/ The National Healing Forests Initiative

Circles for Reconciliation, long time partner-in collaboration with The National Healing Forests Initiative, hosted the *Growing Together: Healing Communities Through Reconciliation and Land* webinar, which brought together national community members to explore how land-based spaces could support healing, reconciliation, and relationship-building. Held on Friday, March 21, 2025, the event highlighted the powerful ways in which nature, culture, and community came together to promote understanding and to repair relationships harmed through colonization. This event was also hosted on Zoom, which made it accessible to participants from many regions.

The session featured keynote speakers and co-founders of The National Healing Forests Initiative, Peter Croal and Patricia Stirbys. They shared the vision behind Healing Forests and the growing network of communities that had embraced the initiative across the country. The Healing Forests Initiative creates community-led spaces, such as St. John's Park, dedicated to healing and reconciliation, rooted in Indigenous knowledge and environmental stewardship. These forests offer natural sanctuaries where individuals, families, and communities can reflect on the past, foster understanding, and promote healing.

Healing Forests were shaped by local communities in collaboration with Indigenous leaders. They often included walking paths, educational signage, ceremonial areas, and gathering spaces, helping people connect to the land and to one another. These sites honoured the experiences of Residential School Survivors, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people, and all those affected by colonial policies, while also nurturing hope and renewal for future generations.

Circles for Reconciliation expresses gratitude to all who attended, listened, and engaged in these important conversations, and looks forward to continuing to highlight initiatives that strengthen relationships, promote healing, and nurture communities in the spirit of reconciliation.

Growing Together emphasized that reconciliation was not only a social or political process, but also a land-based and relational one. By creating intentional spaces in nature for ceremony, learning, and reflection, Healing Forests helps communities move forward together, grounded in respect for the land and guided by Indigenous knowledge.



CIRCLES FOR RECONCILIATION
THE NATIONAL HEALING FORESTS INITIATIVE

GROWING TOGETHER:
HEALING COMMUNITIES THROUGH
RECONCILIATION AND LAND
WEBINAR

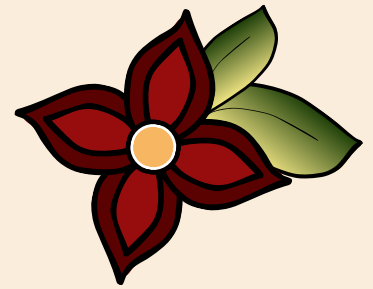
KEYNOTE SPEAKERS &
NATIONAL HEALING FORESTS INITIATIVE CO-FOUNDERS:
PETER CROAL PATRICIA STIRBYS

The Healing Forests Initiative creates community-led spaces for healing and reconciliation, rooted in Indigenous knowledge and environmental stewardship. These forests offer natural sanctuaries where people can reflect on the past, foster understanding, and promote healing. Shaped by local communities in collaboration with Indigenous leaders, Healing Forests include walking paths, educational signage, and areas for ceremony, helping to connect people to nature and support the reconciliation process.

FRIDAY
MARCH 21, 2025
11:45 AM - 1:30 PM. CST
LIVE ON ZOOM

REGISTER ON EVENTBRITE
EVENT REGISTRATION FEE:
\$25.00
For a group rate, email
info@circlesforreconciliation.ca

@circlesforreconciliation



Calls for Justice with Jessica Paley

On Friday, September 26, 2025, we were grateful to welcome Jessica Paley, Indigenous Engagement Coordinator with the City of Winnipeg, as the speaker for our second webinar of the year. Her presentation focused on the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), offering participants an opportunity to deepen their understanding of these critical recommendations and their relevance in everyday reconciliation work.

Jessica shared both professional insight and personal perspective, speaking as an intergenerational survivor of the Residential School system. She brought a powerful voice to the discussion, emphasizing the importance of recognizing historical and ongoing impacts of colonial systems while also highlighting pathways toward meaningful change.

In addition to her role with the City of Winnipeg, Jessica sits on the collective table for Giganawenimaanig, a collaborative initiative focused on addressing systemic issues related to the safety and well-being of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. She spoke about the importance of collective responsibility, partnerships, and accountability in advancing the Calls for Justice, reinforcing that reconciliation requires sustained effort across all sectors.

Participants left the webinar with a deeper appreciation of the Calls for Justice as not only a set of recommendations, but as urgent and actionable steps that call on individuals, organizations, and governments alike. CFR is grateful to Jessica for sharing her knowledge, experience, and leadership, and for guiding such an important conversation.



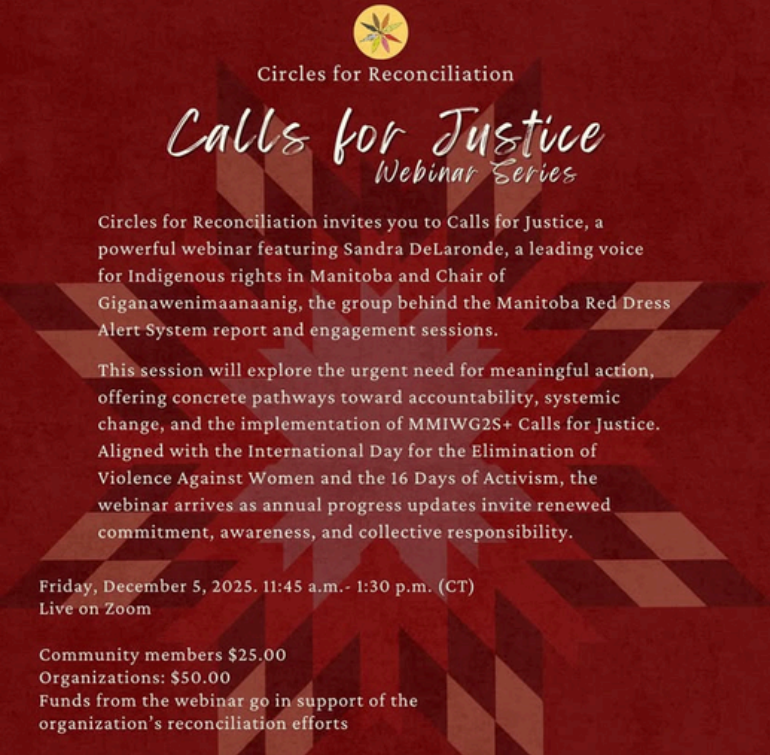
Calls for Justice with Sandra DeLaronde

CFR was honoured to host a second Calls for Justice webinar featuring guest speaker Sandra DeLaronde, a respected leader and advocate amplifying Indigenous voices in Manitoba. The session focused on the urgent need for meaningful action on the Calls for Justice arising from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S+), and invited participants to consider practical pathways toward accountability and systemic change.

Held on Friday, December 5, 2025, the webinar was offered live on Zoom, allowing community members, service providers, students, and organizational representatives to join from regions across the country. The timing of the event was intentional, aligning with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism, a period dedicated to global action to end gender-based violence. The webinar coincided with annual updates on the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice and renewed collective focus on progress made, responsibilities yet unmet, and the work that remains ahead.

Sandra DeLaronde shared insights rooted in community experience, advocacy, and long-standing commitment to justice for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. Participants were invited to reflect on how colonial systems continue to shape safety, policy, and daily life, and how the Calls for Justice provide not only recommendations, but obligations for governments, institutions, communities, and individuals. The discussion emphasized that action must be sustained, relational, and grounded in Indigenous leadership.

The Calls for Justice webinar provided an opportunity not only to learn, but to recommit. Participants left with a call to advocate within their own communities and institutions, centre the voices of Survivors and families, and move forward with intention toward safety, justice, and systemic change.



Circles for Reconciliation

Calls for Justice
Webinar Series

Circles for Reconciliation invites you to Calls for Justice, a powerful webinar featuring Sandra DeLaronde, a leading voice for Indigenous rights in Manitoba and Chair of Giganawenimaanaanig, the group behind the Manitoba Red Dress Alert System report and engagement sessions.

This session will explore the urgent need for meaningful action, offering concrete pathways toward accountability, systemic change, and the implementation of MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice. Aligned with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the 16 Days of Activism, the webinar arrives as annual progress updates invite renewed commitment, awareness, and collective responsibility.

Friday, December 5, 2025. 11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. (CT)
Live on Zoom

Community members \$25.00
Organizations: \$50.00
Funds from the webinar go in support of the organization's reconciliation efforts

Social Media

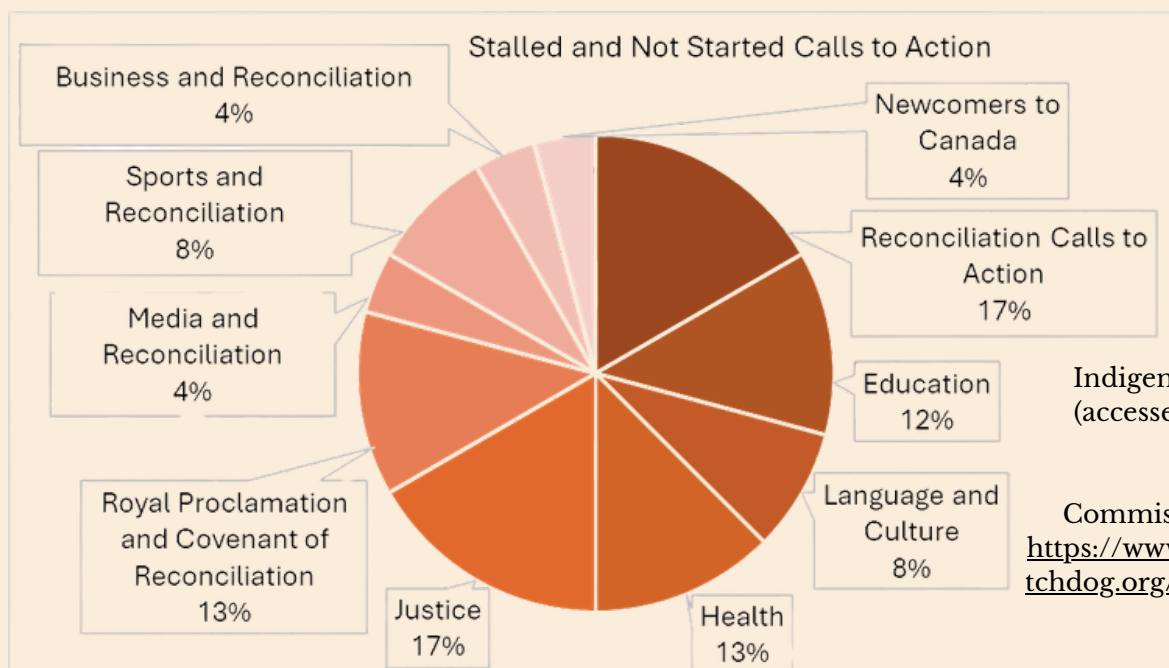
The Unanswered Calls

Leading up to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day, we created and shared a series of posts titled “The Unanswered Calls” as an effort to draw attention to the stalled and not started Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as highlighted by Indigenous Watchdog. The series highlighted that, years after the release of the Final Report, many Calls remain unimplemented or only partially addressed, and that real reconciliation requires accountability and sustained action.

Posted across Facebook, Instagram, and www.circlesforreconciliation.ca, the *Unanswered Calls* series presented clear, accessible summaries of selected Calls to Action (CTAs) alongside reflections on why they matter. Each post encouraged viewers to learn about the Calls, share the information, and consider how individuals, communities, organizations, and governments can take responsibility for change. By bringing the Calls forward in an accessible way, the series created space for deeper understanding rather than allowing them to be lost in broad policy discussions.

The series emphasized that the CTAs are not recommendations, but **legal and moral** obligations grounded in human rights. They arise from the voices of families, Survivors, and communities who continue to experience violence, loss, and systemic neglect. Unanswered Calls underscored colonial violence is ongoing and that inaction carries real consequences.

In all, this series served as both a reminder and a challenge: reconciliation cannot move forward while the Calls to Action remain unanswered.



Indigenous Watchdog.
(accessed 09/25/2025).
The Truth and
Reconciliation
Commission of Canada.
<https://www.indigenouwatchdog.org/calls-to-action/>

CBC Interview

In September, for Indigenous month, the CBC News Weekend Morning Show (Manitoba) with Nadia Kidwai selected our organization for an opportunity to speak publicly about its work and the ongoing need for meaningful reconciliation in Canada. In the interview, were Dami Cole, Project Coordinator, Leena Tetrault, Social Media Coordinator and other team member, Ingrid Dowan, who emphasized that Circles for Reconciliation seeks to move beyond surface-level gestures and acknowledgements to address the deep-seated trauma created by more than 150 years of colonial policy. She spoke about the kidnapping of children into residential schools, and how that legacy continues to shape families, communities, and daily life today.

During the interview, CFR explained how the Circles themselves work and how they have evolved over time. Each circle is intentionally structured to ensure equality, safety, and relational respect. There are between 29 and 31 discussion themes, originally written and donated by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis scholars, which we are grateful for their time and commitment. It was noted that these in all fairness there were written when the project first began in 2017. These themes were written at a university academic level, and our Facilitators who are volunteers play a key role in helping participants interpret, personalize, and work meaningfully to engage with the material. Over the past few years, CFR has begun to move some of the Themes to audio/video in the way of storytelling done for hundreds of years. They too, are being updated with today's changes.

The interview also highlighted the organization's work to confront "internationalized" stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. Dami, who immigrated from Nigeria, shared that he had been warned to be very careful of Indigenous people before ever meeting any. Moreover, Leena recounted the story of a woman who was told by immigration officials in her home country not to move to Manitoba because of its high Indigenous population. These stories illustrated how prejudice is exported globally, not just formed locally. The interview emphasized relationships and conversations are tools to interrupt fear-based narratives and shift mindsets from "*us versus them*" toward a shared "*we.*"

We also addressed the broader climate of reconciliation work in Canada, expressing concern that reconciliation has become a political and social buzzword while real support for community-level work is declining. She warned that funding for reconciliation initiatives is “dropping off the map fast,” placing hardship on organizations initiating grassroots, relational work. A major barrier, she noted, is that many Canadians remain unfamiliar with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and its 94 Calls to Action. CFR has responded through public education campaigns such as its *The Unanswered Calls* series, drawing attention to Calls to Action that have stalled or never been implemented.

The philosophy behind CFR was also discussed. The Circles are not designed as debating spaces. Instead, they are grounded in active listening, confidentiality, safety, and mutual respect. Participants are encouraged to share openly, reflect on their own assumptions, and sometimes shed tears while discussing difficult topics. Despite the gravity of the work, humour is welcomed as a way to protect the soul and spirit.

Ultimately, the interview emphasized the organization’s belief in a ripple effect. Each Talking Circle involves ten participants in equal representation of non-Indigenous and Indigenous, led by two trained Facilitators in partnership, and the impact extends far beyond the group itself. Participants carry their learning into families, workplaces, and communities, slowly transforming relationships and conversations. CFR expressed hope that this work will continue to grow and it will be handed over to the next generation, who will carry reconciliation even further.

Watch the interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGtdEhxH_7E&t=28s



Fundraising

Cupcakes for a Cause

Our grassroots organization was selected as the beneficiary of Cupcakes for a Cause, a fundraising initiative hosted by Red River Co-op. Through this generous effort, throughout the month of September, \$2.00 from every six-pack of orange cupcakes sold at Red River Co-op locations were donated to CFR in support of ongoing work to build respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. In total, \$1,200 was raised, helping subsidizing community Talking Circles.

Cupcakes for a Cause brought together community spirit, kindness, and sweetness, quite literally. By purchasing cupcakes, community members were able to contribute directly to reconciliation education, dialogue circles, and programming that supports understanding and relationship-building. The initiative demonstrated how small, everyday actions can collectively make a meaningful difference.

We extend our heartfelt expresses to Red River Co-op for its leadership and generosity, and to everyone who participated by purchasing cupcakes or spreading the word. Support from community partners like Red River Co-op helps ensure that CFR can continue offering circles, webinars, and special Circle events that foster learning, respectful relationships, and connection.

Cupcakes for a Cause also serves as a reminder that reconciliation grows through community support, shared effort, and care. Each cupcake represented not only a sweet treat, but a commitment to ongoing conversation, respect, and the work of reconciliation efforts.



CanadaHelps - Giving Tuesday

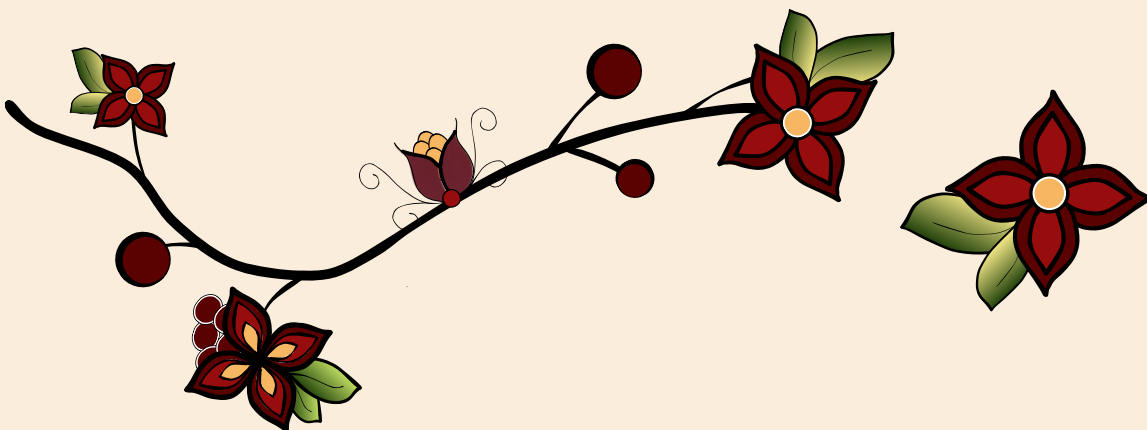
Circles for Reconciliation extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who donated through CanadaHelps as part of Giving Tuesday.

Giving Tuesday is a global day of generosity that follows Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Rather than focusing on shopping, Giving Tuesday invites people to give back to their communities through donations, volunteering, and acts of kindness. It is a day dedicated to supporting organizations that are creating positive change and building stronger, more compassionate communities.

Through this initiative, and your generosity, a total of \$1,540 was raised, directly supporting CFR's programs, including Talking Circles, Journey Ones, webinars, and community initiatives that bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together in respectful, relational spaces. Your contributions help us continue our mission of creating Circle events.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who chose to support Circles for Reconciliation through CanadaHelps, whether by donating, sharing our posts, or encouraging others to give. Your generosity strengthens our work and reminds us that reconciliation is truly a community effort.

Thank you for standing with us, for your trust, and for helping ensure this work continues.



Circle Bed of Flowers

Across Canada, more than 130 residential schools operated between the 1870s and 1997 as part of a government policy designed to assimilate Indigenous children and separate them from their families, languages, and cultures. Over 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were forced to attend these institutions, where many experienced neglect, abuse, and cultural loss.² While the 2021 confirmation of 215 unmarked graves at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School brought widespread public attention to these realities, Indigenous communities had long shared knowledge of missing children and unmarked burial sites. Since then, additional discoveries across the country have continued to surface, renewing grief and underscoring the lasting impacts of the residential school system. Acts of remembrance remain essential in honouring the children who never returned home, and in acknowledging this ongoing legacy. Readers who wish to learn more about the locations and histories of these institutions can explore the Indian Residential Schools Interactive Map, which provides historical information and geographic context for residential school sites across the country: [Indian Residential Schools Interactive Map](#)

Investigations into unmarked graves have continued to reveal difficult truths about the residential school system and its lasting impacts. The confirmations have reopened wounds and highlighted the deep trauma carried by Survivors, families, and communities. At the same time, this truth-telling has also created space for healing and accountability. Honouring the children who were lost affirms their lives, their spirits, and the love that continues to surround them.

The Circle Bed of Flowers emerged in 2021 in response to these revelations, becoming a living memorial dedicated to the children who never returned home. Created as a space for reflection and remembrance, the garden has continued to stand in 2025 as a symbol of care and community responsibility. It has been planted and maintained over the years by a CFR staff member alongside volunteers and neighbours, whose ongoing efforts ensure the space remains vibrant and respected. The continued upkeep of the garden reflects a commitment to memory, healing, and respect, offering a place where the community can gather, reflect, and honour those who were lost.

2. Miller, J.R. (2024, January 11). Residential schools in Canada. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools>

Unfortunately, in recent years, residential school denialism has become increasingly visible in public discourse. This form of denial attempts to minimize, question, or erase the experiences of survivors and the documented history of abuse, neglect, and death within residential schools. Circles for Reconciliation firmly condemns residential school denialism in all its forms. Denial causes renewed harm to survivors, families, and communities by undermining their truths and lived experiences, and it blocks the path toward genuine reconciliation. The Circle Bed of Flowers stands as a clear, living rejection of denialism, a reminder that the children existed, that they were loved, and that their stories must be honoured rather than erased, exemplified by the white stone in the garden marked with “the sacred ones” in Dakota.

In 2025, the Circle Bed of Flowers remained much more than a garden. It represented a commitment to remember, to mourn, and to move forward with honesty. The ongoing care of the flower bed showed that remembrance is not a single moment but a continued act, one that supports reconciliation grounded in truth, respect, and compassion.



Sponsors

We extend our deepest gratitude to our sponsors, who allow for us to keep Circles at no cost to participants.

Miigwech, Marsi, Máhsí, Qujannamiik, kinanāskomitin, and thank you to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative, Canada Life, FrancoFonds, Government of Manitoba-From the Ground Up, the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund, the Toronto Foundation Clayton Gyotoku Fund, and the Winnipeg Foundation

