

Moving Forward

*Carrying out recommendations set out in the
Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report*

Fall 2019

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1. Introduction

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) is an independent body that was established to provide former students of Indian residential schools and anyone affected by the legacy of those schools with an opportunity to share their individual experiences in a safe and culturally-appropriate manner.

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Marie Wilson and Chief Wilton Littlechild were appointed as TRC Commissioners in June 2009. Over the next six years, gatherings and hearings took place across the country with residential school survivors.

In December 2015, the TRC released its Final Report, titled Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, which you can download at https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf . The TRC also developed a summary of its key recommendations, available at https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf, as part of its six-volume report. All these documents and others are available from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation website at <https://nctr.ca/>.

On June 5, 2015, the Government of Saskatchewan issued a statement following the release of an earlier summary final report from the TRC. Since the statement's release, the government has had initial discussions with Indigenous leaders on the TRC report and how we can move forward together. (Visit <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/june/05/commission-report> to read the entire statement.)

2. Ongoing Work with First Nations and Métis People

Some of the Government of Saskatchewan's strategies that are already well underway include the Child Welfare Transformation Strategy, Disability Strategy, Education Sector Strategic Plan and actions on violence prevention.

3. Indigenous Peoples and Saskatchewan's Plan for Growth

Saskatchewan's *Plan for Growth*, along with several other interministry strategies, aligns with many of the TRC's Calls to Action outlined in the report, including plans to:

- **Sustain growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people** – through initiatives that will improve education and employment outcomes, as well as those that engage First Nations and Métis people in economic development; and
- **Meet the challenges of growth** – by increasing the number of child care spaces and increasing the number of First Nations and Métis people in our workforce.

The Plan for Growth also focuses on securing a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people. Work flowing out of the plan includes:

- improving K-12 and post-secondary education results for First Nations and Métis people;
- supporting the healthy growth and development of children;
- supporting strong families and communities where children can grow and thrive;
- transforming child welfare;
- developing restorative and culturally-responsive justice approaches; and
- enhancing community safety planning.

View the *Plan for Growth* by visiting <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/budget-planning-and-reporting/plan-for-growth>.

4. Interministry Strategies and the TRC

The following list highlights the work that the Government of Saskatchewan – along with its ministries, Crown corporations and agencies – is doing that aligns with the TRC's recommendations:

Supporting reconciliation in Saskatchewan schools – *Resource walkthrough webinars for teachers*

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the Ministry of Education developed an online resource (called Supporting Reconciliation in Saskatchewan Schools) to support educators in learning and teaching about the legacy of residential schools and reconciliation. This resource is available in English and French and allows for collaboration and sharing of reconciliation resources and projects across the province. The website can be accessed through the link on the Saskatchewan curriculum website or directly at www.reconciliation.edonline.sk.ca. This space will continue to grow and evolve as resources are identified and experiences are shared.

Gaining experience through the road of life – *Indigenous Apprenticeship Program*

The Ministry of Highways (formerly Highways and Infrastructure) works with Indigenous groups to eliminate education and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians through two programs – the Indigenous Apprenticeship Program and Indigenous roving crews.

The ministry has partnered with Indigenous agencies to offer an Indigenous Apprenticeship Program since 2003. The program allows participants to obtain their journeyman status and gain valuable work experience.

The Roving Crews program began in 2006. The crews are composed of seasonal employees who assist with culvert replacement, surfacing and other road maintenance. The program offers meaningful on-the-job training for those eager to get their foot into the road construction industry.

The ministry is committed to continuing its work with various Tribal Councils and Indigenous institutes, like the Gabriel Dumont, to find candidates for both programs. To date, about 20 per cent of the more than 250 participants have gained term or permanent employment.

Supporting inclusive policy, program and operations in the justice system – *Creation of the Elders Forum*



Over 30 members of the Elders Forum pose on a grassy plain.

The Ministry of Justice supports the Elders Forum, which includes male and female Elders representing the cultural and linguistic Indigenous groups in the province. Ministry officials meet with the Elders three or four times a year to discuss policy, program, and operational matters. The Elders Forum was created in fall 2012.

The relationship between the ministry and the Elders is important. The Elders gift the Ministry with advice and cultural teachings. They draw upon lifetimes of personal experiences, professional training, and community work to provide unique insights into the concerns, issues, and strengths of Indigenous peoples and communities. This helps officials understand Indigenous perspectives and incorporate new ideas into programs and policies.

According to Elder Julie Pitzel, the Elders Forum is "an example of government working towards reconciliation with [Indigenous] people in this province." She feels the ministry is concerned about the over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system, and the Elders Forum is an inclusive way to design future programs and policies that will have meaningful impacts for Indigenous people.

The opportunity to spend time with the Elders is also important to ministry staff. For example, Barbara Tomporowski says, "I have learned so much from spending time with the Elders. I feel a sense of peace when I am with them, and really appreciate their patience and insights."

For more information, contact Rhonda Hueser, Director of the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Courtworker Program, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, at 306-953-3651 or rhonda.hueser@gov.sk.ca.

Feeding the future – *Building horticultural capacity across Saskatchewan*

The Ministry of Agriculture Crops Specialists have had the opportunity to work closely with Indigenous producers to build horticultural capacity across Saskatchewan. The development of greenhouses allows producers to extend the growing season and reduce the risk of loss due to weather, while providing fresh, locally sourced nutrition.

Saskatchewan Polytechnic is in the process of developing a potential horticulture course with the intention of supporting the Indigenous Food Security Curriculum. The proposed program includes a strong greenhouse component for potential producers. The course is being developed with the assistance of multiple Ministry specialists with expertise in bees, fruits, vegetables and greenhouses.

Supporting Indigenous post-secondary education initiatives – *4 Seasons of Reconciliation*

An important priority of the Ministry of Advanced Education is to advance reconciliation and take action that will build the ministry's capacity to support Indigenous post-secondary education initiatives across the sector.

The ministry has purchased a two-year licence to deliver the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation, an online multi-media course which will be made available to all ministry employees. The 4 Seasons of Reconciliation (which can be found online at <https://www.reconciliationeducation.ca/en-ca/>) was produced by Cazabon Productions under the guidance of the First Nations University of Canada's Indigenous Advisory Circle and features Indigenous contributors throughout the education units. Subject areas include:

- Indigenous perspectives on colonialism;
- pre-contact history, Treaties;
- residential schools;
- the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- Indigenous relations;
- reconciliation; and
- restitution.

The online course includes PowerPoint presentations, videos, films, quizzes and a completion certificate. Advanced Education's sector partners, Saskatchewan Polytechnic and the University of Regina, are also providing this resource to their staff and students.

Supporting northern Indigenous youth through culture – *Ducharme Elementary School's culture camp*

Government Relations helped support Ducharme Elementary School in La Loche to hold a culture camp from January 23 to February 4, 2019. Sixty Grades 5 and 6 students participated in the camp, which was held at Dupree Lake, Saskatchewan.

The event assisted youth to connect with Elders and cultural teachings while learning survival skills. Elders led the cultural activities. Students learned how to net fish from the ice, filet fish, snare and skin rabbits, catch animals in traps, collect water from the lake, build a fire, snowshoe and track animal footprints. Elders also taught students about their history and culture through storytelling.

Using Bullets