

EDUCATIONAL PATHWAY

Level 1





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Thank you to the NETWORK's team, Mikana's team and our linguistic editors for their support and contribution in the creation of this pathway.



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CREATION STORY

For decades, Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, Inuit Nunangat and the Métis Homeland have shared knowledge, personal experiences and cultural ways of living in order to raise awareness about the abusive and oppressive relationship between the colonial state and the rightful stewards of this land. In the beginning, efforts went largely unnoticed. Recently however, as more and more devastating facts surfaced, many non-Indigenous people began reflecting about their role as settlers and asking themselves what they could do. After numerous public inquiries, commissions, official reports, and media reports, the truth has become impossible to ignore. However, unaware of the deep roots of colonialism embedded in their minds and ways of living, many well-intentioned settlers set off on their personal allyship journeys inattentive to the cost of labour associated with having to constantly explain Indigenous realities to non-Indigenous people. It is with this context in mind and in this spirit that the Decolonial Toolbox was born.

In recent years, Concordia University's Office of Community Engagement has worked to cultivate relationships with organizations that centre the leadership and expertise of Indigenous communities. In 2020, Concordia approached Mikana, an Indigenous-led organization with an educational mission to act on discrimination and racism against Indigenous Peoples, and the Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK, a community-led organization committed to improving the lives of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities living in the Greater Montreal area, to form a partnership. From then on, a tripartite collaboration was born.

From this partnership emerged a unified vision to provide opportunities for young Indigenous leaders to consider how Indigenous lives and wellbeing are affected by ongoing colonialism and offer Indigenous-driven solutions to bridge the inequality gap. Our minds were equally convinced of the need to alleviate the burden and emotional labour Indigenous Peoples so often carry when educating non-Indigenous folks.



NAVIGATING THE **PATHWAY**

The Office of Community Engagement, Mikana and the NETWORK have developed the Decolonial Toolbox, which includes a bilingual Educational Pathway that regroups resources for readers interested in learning about Indigenous realities. We recommend for readers to follow this multi-leveled path carefully paved by its creators in order to ensure knowledge progression in the least overwhelming manner. With accessibility and Indigenous expertise as foundational principles, we chose main resources that were free to the general public and Indigenous-written, or resources that respectfully incorporated Indigenous ways of knowing.

Additional resources were chosen to complement and enhance the knowledge gained through the main resources. These additional resources are often lengthier, more specific and sometimes come with a fee. We invite the reader to consider consulting both the main and additional resources. As you navigate through this pathway, we hope you treat the texts that have been chosen with respect and become cognizant of the privilege of engaging with Indigenous knowledge.

At the very core of this pathway is the concept of decolonization. Every resource is a heartbeat giving breath to a living document dedicated to decentering the deep-seated false narrative non-Indigenous people have been taught to believe. Two essential (and perhaps frustrating) realities must be made clear to the reader from the

start - the first is that there is no standard, universally-accepted definition of decolonization or how to go about it, and the second is that despite this, it is the responsibility of settlers to decolonize their minds, relations, knowledge and ways of living.

Do not fret or feel discouraged, dear reader. Our aim is to gradually provide resources, reflection questions and Indigenous expertise to help you understand the complexity of decolonizing and how to incorporate change in everyday life. We hope these stepping stones will guide you as you embark on your personal journeys toward decolonization and meaningful allyship.

NIÁ:WEN
TIAWENHK
CHI-MIIGWECH / MIK8ETC
MIKWETC
NAKURMIK
TSHINASHKUMITIN
WELA'LIN
ᑭᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎ (KINANÂSKOMITIN)
ᑭᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎ (CHINISKUMITIN)
WLIWNI (OLEOHNEH)
WOLIWON

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INTRODUCTION TO INDIGENOUS REALITIES

To begin this educational pathway, we will suggest some basic vocabulary when speaking about Indigenous people.

We want to help you understand why it is important to use the appropriate terminology. Once you familiarize yourself with the terms, we will talk about the notion of territory.

It is important for us to illustrate the distinction between Indigenous Peoples' traditional land and the reserve land on which they were displaced. This will help you understand how colonization disrupted Indigenous Peoples' relationship with the land. In the last sub-section, you will have the opportunity to listen to Indigenous Peoples' expertise.

TERMINOLOGY

Many of the labels given to Indigenous groups throughout history were imposed by Europeans: Indian, Savage, etc. By this process, Indigenous Peoples were stripped of their identities and belittled with denigrating labels.

For this reason, it is crucial to respect the process by which Indigenous groups reclaim their identity, their names, and the terms they use to describe themselves.



How to talk about Indigenous People

CBC Indigenous

In this video, Inuk journalist Ossie Michelin presents a friendly how-to guide on terminology. He explains the difference between the terms Indigenous, First Nation, Inuit and Métis.



A rose by any other name is a mihkokwaniy

Indigenous Issues 101, Chelsea Vowel.

In this online publication, Métis writer Chelsea Vowel explains why the terms used to refer to Indigenous Peoples keep changing and helps us understand the vocabulary used today by Indigenous Peoples when referring to themselves.



Identity

Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada [Métis section, Chapter 1]

This chapter from the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada will help clarify the distinction between métis identity and Métis communities. This atlas was written in collaboration with the Métis National Council.



Lexicon of Terminology

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

This lexicon published by the "Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" contains the definitions for many concepts and terms that are useful for understanding and talking about Indigenous realities.

INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES

You may have heard North America referred to as "Turtle Island." In many First Nations' Creation Stories, it is said that the territory where we live is carried on the back of a turtle. For example, the Kanien'kehá:ka say that the first inhabitants arrived from the sky onto the back of a turtle. They describe it as a big island in the middle of a large body of water.

KEPEK

In this pathway, we have chosen to use the word Kepek to refer to the Province of Quebec. The name Quebec actually originates from the word *kepek* or *kapak*, an expression that means "get off" or "disembark" in Atikamekw Nehirowimowin, Innu-Aimun¹ and other Indigenous languages.

KANATA

In this pathway, the name *Kanata* is used to refer to the country of Canada. The word Canada comes directly from Indigenous Iroquoian languages. In Kanien'kéha (Mohawk), Kanata means "town" or "village".²

In this subsection, we invite you to learn about the history and long relationship that Indigenous Peoples have with the land and to deconstruct colonial concepts of borders and nations.

Native Land

[Native Land Digital](#)

This interactive map is designed to help users identify Indigenous Nations, territories and communities. It includes information on the languages spoken in each territory and the division of Indigenous traditional territories by treaty.

11 Nations Map

[Amnesty International](#)

This map identifies the 10 First Nations and Inuit that live in Kepek. It shows the location of the 55 Indigenous communities. These territories are land that has been colonially delineated by the federal government. It is therefore not necessarily their traditional or ancestral territory.

Territorial Acknowledgement

[Indigenous Directions Leadership Group, Concordia University](#)

This resource was prepared by the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group of Concordia University. It provides a detailed explanation of how to pronounce a territorial acknowledgement for events that take place in Tiohtià:ke, the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) word used to refer to Montreal, and explains its importance.

Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements

[âpihtawikosisân, Chelsea Vowell](#)

In this blog post, Métis writer Chelsea Vowell gives her opinion on territorial acknowledgements. She provides suggestions in order to prevent territorial acknowledgements from being stripped of their power through repetition. See [updated post here](#).

¹ Desjardins, C. *Guide d'accompagnement. Je m'appelle humain.* (2021).

² *The Origin of the name Canada, Canadian Encyclopedia.* (2019)

UNLEARNING COLONIAL HISTORY

The history of Kanata was written by the settlers. Indigenous Peoples, though their bodies and voices, were erased from the narrative. In this section, you will have the opportunity to listen to Indigenous Peoples share their experiences and expertise.



Discovery

Telling our Twisted Histories, CBC Podcasts

In the first episode of Telling our Twisted Histories, host Kaniehti:io Horn asks Indigenous Peoples what the word “discovery” means to them, in order to see how they envision decolonizing the word and to rewrite this part of history from an Indigenous perspective.



Colonization Road

First Hand, CBC Docs

Anishinaabe comedian Ryan McMahon talks about the structure of colonization and the way in which roads were used to displace Indigenous Peoples by invading territory without consent. The documentary also explains the “logic” behind settler colonialism.

Borders

Thomas King



In this short story, Cherokee author Thomas King invites his readers to think about how colonial borders have disrupted the way in which Indigenous Peoples live on their traditional land.

Gifts of the Land | A Guided Nature Tour with Robin Wall Kimmerer

The Commons, Kansas University



Potawatomi botanist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer takes us on a guided tour in the forest. She talks about the land as a teacher, as a caretaker and she explains the relationality that links us to the territory.

Additional Resources

- 📖 **Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada**, Vowel, C. HighWater Press.
- 📖 **The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America**, King, T. University of Minnesota Press.
- 📖 **Our Story: Aboriginal Voices on Canada's Past**, M. Campbell and al., Anchor Canada.
- 📺 **You Are on Indian Land**, National Film Board of Canada.
- 📺 **Meaningful Land Acknowledgements**, Lindsay Brant, Center for Teaching & Learning, Queen's University.
- 📺 **Kabak**, Wapikoni.
- 🎧 **Telling our Twisted Histories**, Terre Innue and CBC Podcasts
- 🎧 **The Border Crossed Us**, All my Relations.
- 📖 **Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada**, Canadian Geographic.



EDUCATIONAL PATHWAY

Level 2





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Foundation of Greater Montréal



DEAR READER,

In the first level of the Decolonial Toolbox, you learned how to speak about Indigenous realities with clarity and respect. That first step was about grounding yourself and sharing mutual vocabulary to **move into more difficult truths and conversations**. With this new foundation, we are ready to continue our journey.

Level 2 takes you into the history of so-called Canada—a **history built on colonial strategies meant not just to control Indigenous Peoples, but to erase them**. For over 150 years, Indigenous Peoples have been subjected to laws and policies that impact every aspect of life: governance, identity, land, culture and family relationships. This history is heavy and painful, but it's also shared. **If you live on these lands, it's part of your story too—and you carry a responsibility to learn it.**

Level 2 begins in 1876 with the passing of the Indian Act and walks you through more than a century of **colonial strategies that continue to shape the present**. Here, dear reader, the residential “schools,” the forced relocation of the High Arctic, the slaughter of Inuit sled dogs, the Sixties Scoop, the Millennial Scoop, and the ongoing violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people, **no longer lives in the past, intentionally hidden, as they were**. They rise to the surface and are exposed for all to witness.

Engaging with this material is not easy. It may stir grief, sadness, guilt, and anger. We encourage you to find support as you navigate through these pages, and to remember that the emotions that surface can be **turned into fuel for action** that is grounded in accountability. **Decolonization is not a destination**. It's a journey of unlearning, relearning, listening and making space for these stories. It is the intentional practice of becoming a better ally, repeatedly.

As you begin this level, we ask you to be open-minded. **This is not only about looking back, it's about understanding the foundations of the present so that together, we can move toward a more just and honest future**. Take your time. Be gentle with yourself and know that this learning is part of a lifelong path of allyship and decolonization.

“You are not responsible for the past. However, now that you are educated, if, in 20 years, you have still done nothing, then yes, you will be responsible.”

Alexandre Nequado, Atikamekw linguist

STATEMENT OF GRATITUDE

In this level, we honour the Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, Survivors, and the families who have shared **their stories and experiences to make this education possible**. Their courage in speaking these truths, despite the ongoing violence of systemic racism and oppression, allows us to learn and work towards meaningful changes. Their voices form the foundation of our understanding, calling us to accountability. As you move through this level, **we ask that you carry their stories with respect and commit to turning this knowledge into action.**



COLONIAL STRATEGIES

When we talk about settler colonialism, we are referring to cases where settlers come to a new territory that does not belong to them in order to occupy it permanently and assert their sovereignty over it.²

Settlers rely on the displacement, elimination and assimilation of Indigenous peoples to gain access to the land. Their oppression becomes a structure; new political and economic systems are put in place to replace Indigenous societies.³ This colonial structure does not come to an end when the adherence to the European metropole ceases⁴ but rather it is an ongoing phenomenon characterized by the continuous occupation of the land.

I WANT TO GET RID OF THE INDIAN PROBLEM...

Our objective is to continue until there is not an Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department...

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT, INDIAN AFFAIRS DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT, 1920.⁵

In this section, we will present examples of colonial strategies that were used to eliminate, assimilate and displace Indigenous peoples:

- * THE INDIAN ACT
- * RESIDENTIAL "SCHOOLS"
- * SIXTIES AND MILLENNIAL SCOOPS
- * DOG SLAUGHTER
- * FORCED RELOCATION TO THE HIGH ARCTIC
- * VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE

² Wolfe, Patrick. *Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native*. *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no 4 (1 décembre 2006): 387-409

³ Kohn, Margaret, et Kavita Reddy. *Colonialism*. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2017.

⁴ Barker, Adam J. *The Contemporary Reality of Canadian Imperialism: Settler Colonialism and the Hybrid Colonial State*. *American Indian Quarterly* 33, no 3 (2009): 325.

⁵ National Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, vol. 6810, file 470-2-3, vol. 7, 55 (L-3) and 63 (N-3).



THE INDIAN ACT

The Indian Act has been structuring the Canadian government's relationship with First Nations for the last 150 years. The law was passed in 1876 to control and govern all aspects of "Indian life". It only applies to First Nations, not to Inuit or Métis. Measures implemented by the Indian Act include:

- **Mandatory residential "school" attendance;**
- **Creation of reserves & Band Councils as a governing body;**
- **Outlawing cultural practices, objects and spaces;**
- **Renaming individuals with European names or numbers;**
- **Revoking First Nations status from women who married a non-Indian.**

The Indian Act received amendments over the years removing some of these measures but the law remains in place today and continues to affect First Nations' human rights.

- **It establishes reserve land as Crown land, which means First Nations are not allowed to own the land that they live on.**
- **It dictates the management of Band Council resources.**

The Indian Act Said What?

Native Women's Association of Canada

This infographic by the Native Women's Association of Canada provides a timeline of the various policies implemented by the Indian Act.



The Indian Act Explained

The Agenda

In this interview, Bob Joseph of the Gwawa'enuk Nation provides an in-depth explanation of many misunderstood aspects of the Indian Act.



The Indian Act: What to do with it

The Agenda

Roundtable between Dr. Suzanne Stewart of the Dene Nation, Professor Douglas Sanderson of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Russ Diabo of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, and Bob Joseph of the Gwawa'enuk Nation. They discuss the reasons the Indian Act is still in place today, and what we should do with this piece of legislation.



Got Status?

Indian Status in Canada, sort of explained

Indigenous Issues 101, Chelsea Vowel

In this blog publication, Métis writer Chelsea Vowel explains how the Indian Act determines who is and who is not recognized as an "Indian" and how these criterias continue to perpetuate gender discrimination.



Additional Resources about the Indian Act

- 📖 **21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act**, Joseph, B. Page Two Books.
- 📖 **Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity**, Palmater, P. Purich Publishing.
- 📖 **The Indian Act: The Foundation of Colonialism in Canada**, Diabo, R. *Whose Land is it Anyway?*, p.22-26.
- 🎧 **The Indian Act 101**, Unreserved with Rosanna Deerchild, CBC Podcasts.
- 🎧 **Is Canada's newest solution to the Indian Act worse than the problem?**, Media Indigena, Ep. #124 and #125.
- 🎧 **Reserve, Telling our Twisted Histories**, CBC Podcasts.



RESIDENTIAL "SCHOOLS"

Residential "schools" were officially imposed by the Canadian government through the Indian Act in 1920 and managed by religious congregations. The first church-run "schools" aiming to "kill the Indian in the child"⁶ was established in 1831.⁷

The *Indian Act* made attendance at these institutions mandatory for all Indigenous children. Approximately 150,000 children were forcibly removed from their families to be assimilated into settler culture. The majority of children experienced physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse, and many died while attending these "schools".

⁶ *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939. Vol. 1. P. 105.*
⁷ *Residential School Timeline, National Center for Truth and Reconciliation.*

We are using quotation marks to express disagreement with the government's use of the word "schools" to designate these institutions.

Additional Resources about Residential "Schools"

- 📖 *Five Little Indians*, Good, M. HarperCollins Publisher.
- 📖 *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Highway, T. Amsterdam University Press.
- 📖 *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School*, Sellars, B. Talonbooks.
- 📺 *Indian Horse*, Campanelli, S. Devonshire Productions and Screen Siren Pictures.
- 👉 *Aboriginal Peoples and Historic Trauma: The processes of intergenerational transmission*, National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.
- 👉 *Residential School Timeline*, Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- 📖 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 6 volumes.



Second Stories – It had to Be Done

Tessa Desnomie, NFB

In this short documentary, two Indigenous women who lived through the experience of residential "schools" share how it profoundly affected their lives.



School

Telling Our Twisted Histories, CBC Podcasts

In this episode, we hear from Indigenous peoples who share their stories and the impact residential "schools" had on the hearts, minds and spirits of their communities.



Grave Concerns

Media Indigena [Ep #269]

The host leads a conversation after the bodies of 215 missing children were recovered in Kamloops, British Columbia. The number of graves recovered has multiplied to over 9,000 and is expected to increase.



Residential School History

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

The NCTR website provides a space for education and dialogue where the truth about residential "schools" is honored and protected for future generations.



My Auntie survived residential school. I need to gather her stories before she's gone

Inendi, CBC Docs

In this short documentary, Anishinaabe activist Sarain Fox gathers the stories of her aunt, a residential "school" survivor.



SIXTIES AND MILLENNIAL SCOOPS

The Sixties and the Millennial Scoops refer to two governmental processes, separate in time but similar in impact, by which Indigenous children were separated from their families and communities without their consent. Between 1950 and 1980 more than 20,000 Indigenous children were removed from their homes, placed in foster care or adopted by non-Indigenous families throughout Canada and other countries such as Australia and Germany.

Many children were stripped of their cultural identity, and experienced emotional, psychological, sexual and/or physical abuse. The Sixties Scoop extended beyond the 1980s and into the Millennial Scoop, as Indigenous children continue to be disproportionately placed in foster care. In Kanata, 52% of children in care are Indigenous.⁷

⁷ *The Sixties Scoop Payoff: Canada's Strategy for Settling Colonialism*, Colleen Cardinal, 60s Scoop Network.



The Sixties Scoop

Stepping Stone series

This document explains how Indigenous children went from being forcibly removed from communities to attend residential “schools” to being removed from families and communities by provincial child welfare agencies.



The Sixties Scoop Payoff: Canada's Strategy for Settling Colonialism

Colleen Cardinal, 60s Scoop Network

In this article, Colleen Cardinal, a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, tells us about the impact of losing her culture. She also recounts the events that led up to a large compensation by the Canadian Government, and the way in which the process reopened old wounds for a lot of survivors.



Cindy Blackstock on Justice for First Nation Children

Warrior Life [Ep #11, 12 and 13]

In this three-part interview, McGill professor and social worker Cindy Blackstock from the Gitksan Nation talks about her work with Indigenous children in care. She also explains the case she recently won before the Human Rights Tribunal, which concluded that the Canadian Government was discriminating against First Nations children.



Child Welfare as an Arm of the Colonial State

Media Indigena [Ep #89]

In this episode of the podcast Media Indigena, host Rick Harp speaks with Sarah de Leeuw about the ongoing crisis of Indigenous child apprehensions in the welfare system.



I was taken from my home and raised as a “nice Jewish girl,” but I’m Indigenous

Becoming Nakuset, CBC Docs

In this short documentary, Nakuset, who was taken from her home in Thompson, Manitoba, and adopted into a Jewish family in Tiohtiá:ke, tells the story of how she reclaimed her Indigenous identity.

Additional Resources about the Sixties and Millennial Scoops

- **Fighting for a Hand to Hold: Confronting Medical Colonialism against Indigenous Children in Canada**, Shaheen-Hussain, S. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- **Ohpikiihaakan-Ohpihmeh (Raised Somewhere Else): A 60s Scoop Adoptee's Story of Coming Home**, Cardinal, C. Roseway Publishing.
- **Birth of a Family**, Hubbard, T. NFB.
- **Daughter of a Lost Bird**, Pepion Swaney, B. Maker Media and Same Land Films LLC.

 **Finding Cleo, Missing and Murdered.** CBC Podcasts, S.2.

 **Ma Steals Larry the Cree Baby, Surviving the 60s Scoop,** *Coffee With My Ma*, Ep #4.

 **Another class action for another lost generation,** *Media Indigena*, Ep #153.

 **Identity lost and found: Lessons from the sixties scoop,** *Raven Sinclair, First Peoples Child & Family Review*.



DOG SLAUGHTER

In the 1950s to the 1980s, the RCMP deliberately killed about 20,000 sled dogs. In Inuktitut, sled dogs are called “qimmiit.” Inuit use qimmiit for transportation and hunting; they are an integral part of their culture and family. The killings of the dogs had an intergenerational impact on the Inuit. Without the qimmiit, Inuit were forced to settle into a sedentary lifestyle because their way of life was cut off.



QTC Final Report: Achieving Saimaqatigiingniq Qikiqtani Truth Commission [p.38-45]

The Qikiqtani Truth Commission was put together after Makivik Corporation called upon the federal government to launch a public inquiry into the killing of sled dogs. Refer to pages 38 to 45 of the final report for a summary of the Commission’s findings.



Echo of the last howl Makivik Corporation

This documentary, produced by Makivik Corporation, is meant to address the issue of the Inuit dog slaughter.



If the Weather Permits Elisapie Isaac, NFB

Artist Elisapie Isaac explores the daily intersection of tradition and modernity in Kangirsujuaq, Nunavik.

Additional Resources about the Dog Slaughter

 **The Right to Be Cold: One Woman’s Story of Protecting Her Culture, the Arctic and the Whole Planet,** *Watt-Cloutier, S.* Amsterdam University Press.

 **Okpik’s Dream,** *Rietveld, L.* Catbird Productions.

 **Sled Dogs,** *Atagutsiaq, I.* Inuktitut Magazine, p.59-63.

 **Regarding the Slaughtering of Nunavik “Qimmiit” (Inuit Dogs) from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s,** *Makivik Corporation*, p.43.

 **QTC Final Report: Achieving Saimaqatigiingniq,** *Qikiqtani Truth Commission*.



FORCED RELOCATION TO THE HIGH ARCTIC

As a means of asserting Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic during the Cold War, more specifically in 1953, the federal government displaced 97 Inuit from their homeland to the High Arctic. Contrary to what they had been promised by the government, the Inuit were not provided with the housing, food, support or services that they needed in order to survive in this new environment. They were not used to the conditions of the High Arctic and had difficulty finding food, water and adapting to these new environmental conditions. Many community members died from this displacement.



Grise Fiord

Quikiqtani Truth Commission [p.21-34]

This report on the community of Grise Fiord explains how the community was founded, the events that led up to the High Arctic Relocation and how the government broke many promises made to the people it relocated. Pages 21 to 34 of the report focus on the years 1950 to 1960, when the relocation took place.



Broken Promises - The High Arctic Relocation

Patricia Tassinari, NFB

This documentary presents how in the summer of 1953, the Canadian government relocated seven Inuit families from Northern Kepek to the High Arctic under false pretenses.



Martha of the North

Marquise Lepage, NFB

This documentary focuses on Martha Flaherty's lived experiences during the Canadian government's Inuit relocation project. This is the only resource you will have to pay for during this pathway.



Additional Resources about the Forced Relocations to the High Arctic

- 📖 **What I Remember, What I Know: The Life of a High Arctic Exile**, Audlaluk, L. Inhabit Media.
- 📺 **One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk**, Kunuk, Z.
- 📄 **QTC Final Report: Achieving Saimaqtigiingniq**, Qikiqtani Truth Commission.
- 📄 **Resolute Bay**, Qikiqtani Truth Commission.
- 📄 **The High Arctic Relocation**, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.



VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE

With the colonial implementation of binary gender roles, Indigenous peoples saw their community roles dismantled. Most notably, the implementation of the Indian Act and other colonial policies eliminated their rights. The stereotyping and sexualization of Indigenous women coupled with their lack of rights led to the general acceptance of the violence affecting them. There is a lot of disagreement on the number of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people that have gone missing, but Indigenous women's groups estimate the number to be around 4,000 from the 1980s to 2012.⁸

⁸ Brant, J. (2017). *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada*. Dans *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.

⁹ *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. (2018). *Lexicon of Terminology*.

TWO-SPIRIT

*"Two-Spirit or two-spirited is used by many Indigenous people for both sexual orientation and gender identity. It is a term to describe Indigenous people who are not limited to the gender binary, and who can move freely between the gendered identities. Two-Spirit describes a societal and spiritual role that people hold within traditional societies, as mediators, keepers of certain ceremonies, transcending accepted roles of men and women, and filling a role as an established middle gender. It is important to note that this is an English language umbrella term and that some Indigenous peoples have multiple recognized genders with their own terms."*⁹



Tina Fontaine Taken the Podcast

In this first episode of Taken the Podcast, Lisa Meeches, an Anishinaabe woman from Long Plain First Nation, sheds light on the story of Tina Fontaine, a 15-year-old girl whose body was pulled from the Red River in Winnipeg in 2015.



SQ Abuse, Women Break the Silence Enquête

In 2015, the TV show Enquête broadcasted their investigation into the sexual violence and abuse of power committed by Sûreté du Québec police officers towards Indigenous women living in Val D'Or.



Alisa Lombard on Forced & Coerced Sterilization Warrior Life, [Ep #38]

Mi'kmaq lawyer Alisa Lombard, who is currently working on a class action suit concerning the forced sterilizations of Indigenous women in Kanata, explains how the practice is a product of colonization.



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada Jennifer Brant, The Canadian Encyclopedia

This article, written by Dr. Jennifer Brant of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, addresses the disproportionate rate of violence experienced by Indigenous women compared to the settler population.

Additional Resources about Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People

-  **Where will Tina Fontaine's Family Find Justice**, *Media Indigena*, Ep #104.
-  **Who killed Alberta Williams**, *Missing and Murdered*, CBC Podcast, S.1.
-  **Rustic Oracle**, *Bonspille Boileau*, S. Nish Media.
-  **Finding Dawn**, *Welsh, C.* NFB.
-  **Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada**, *Level-Harvard, M. and Brant, J.* Demeter Press.
-  **The Break**, *Vermette, K.* House of Anansi Press.
-  **Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report**, *National Inquiry into Missing Indigenous Women and Girls*.
-  **A Legal Analysis of Genocide**, *National Inquiry into Missing Indigenous Women and Girls*.



EDUCATIONAL PATHWAY

Level 3





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OFFICE OF COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT



IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT THE LAND

DEAR READER,

How are you feeling about your journey thus far?

We understand that the unlearning process can be mentally and emotionally taxing. Before embarking on the next stage of this journey, we invite you to take the time to reflect and let go of anything that weighs heavily on your shoulders or in your heart.

While the first part of this educational journey was largely about unlearning some harmful and inaccurate information, the next part will invite you to engage with the Indigenous ways of living by opening your mind to transcend the colonialist framework. You'll be challenged, but our hope is that you will come out of these levels with a new understanding of the history and essence of so-called Canada.

THE LAND AS A LIVING CONCEPT

The next part of your journey begins with the Land. We ask you, however, to forget about any definitions you may already associate with the concepts of land and territory. Instead, we invite you to imagine the Land as a living, breathing entity with which Indigenous Peoples are socially and sacredly involved.



THE LAND SPEAKS ITS OWN LANGUAGE.

SHE TELLS THE STORY OF OUR ANCESTORS.

SHE ACTS AS A PLACE OF GATHERING AND CEREMONY.

THE LAND HAS NO BORDERS AND IMPOSES NO LIMITS ON US.

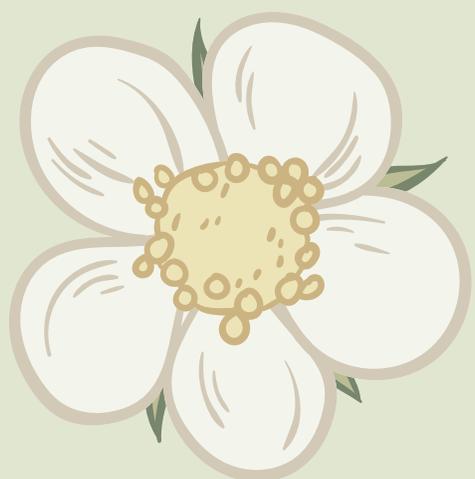
SHE EXISTS SIMPLY AS OUR RELATIVE

SHE IS PART OF OUR IDENTITY.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, Indigenous Peoples lived a life without territorial boundaries. For some communities, home was rarely a fixed place, following the animals, the elements and the seasons, and shaping lifestyles deeply rooted in the rhythms of nature. Indigenous communities have cultivated a reciprocal relationship with the Land. While the Land provided them with food and shelter, they in turn acted as her stewards and protectors.



In fact, the concept of land ownership did not even exist in Indigenous life. In other words, Indigenous Peoples didn't own the Land, they were the stewards of the territory they inhabited. They cared for the Land and maintained the delicate balance between the ecosystems that shared the resources.





WHEN THE LAND STOPS BREATHING

You can probably imagine how the arrival of the Europeans disrupted Indigenous ways of life.

What began as a mutual land-sharing agreement quickly turned into a colonial relationship that devastated the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.

Armed with the Doctrine of Discovery and Western legal concepts, Europeans declared that they had discovered the territories already occupied by Indigenous Peoples, proceeding to assert their control over it. It is now well documented that, although so-called Canada has a sovereign claim to the territory in practice (de facto sovereignty), this sovereignty has not been obtained legally or legitimately (de jure sovereignty). It has simply been affirmed and assumed over time.

After reading levels 1 and 2, you now understand the colonial strategies used



by the Canadian state to eradicate, assimilate or displace Indigenous Peoples while asserting its sovereignty. During this period, the government in place saw the Indigenous Peoples as a hurdle. To gain better access to resources and exploit the Land for profit, the government imposed a massive sedentarization project on Indigenous communities. Whether it was the creation of reserves for the First Nations, forced relocation or sedentarization throughout the North for the Inuit, or the initial dispersal and eventual creation of settlement communities for the Métis, the aim was to contain Indigenous communities to small parcels of land in order to keep them out of the way.

Perhaps the worst consequence of this colonial strategy was the rupture of the relationship between the Peoples and the Land, and the total disruption of the ecosystem that had previously been well protected and respected. Today, Indigenous communities have access to only a fraction of their original territory, and their disconnect from the Land has seriously endangered traditional knowledge, languages and cultures.



LAND AS A SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

Indigenous communities are said to reflect the health of the Land. While Canada continues to ravage and exploit the territory, many communities remain disconnected from their way of life and identity. However, over the years, many of them have resisted and continue to claim their right to self-determination.

Although the narrative surrounding land claims is often framed in legal terms, forcing Indigenous Peoples to use the colonial system in place, it is essential to understand that Indigenous rights to the Land are inherent and ancestral. In other words, land rights are not rights that can be granted; they exist simply because Indigenous cultural identities and practices are inextricably linked to the Land. The Indigenous communities and the Land coexist to foster a reciprocal sacred relationship deeply intertwined with lifestyles that ensure cultural, spiritual, economic and ecological sustainability.

As you navigate through the next levels of this educational pathway, you'll discover several concepts related to self-determination and different models of governance. We ask you to keep in mind that all this is linked to the Land and anchored in it. Because it's always been about the Land.

DECLARATION OF GRATITUDE

Although these levels were written by the Decolonial Toolbox team, they were largely inspired by the work of Indigenous giants who have dedicated their lives to reclaiming **Indigeneity**¹ and educating the public about Indigenous realities. We are deeply grateful to have taken part, directly or indirectly, in the teachings of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Throughout this educational tool, we recognize and honour their work in the hope that their voices will be heard and turned into action. As you navigate this tool, we hope you'll keep the Land you live and play on in your hearts.



¹ Definition: "Considering the diversity of indigenous peoples (...) the system has developed a modern understanding of this term based on the following: Self-identification as Indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member, historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources, distinct social, economic or political systems, distinct language, culture and beliefs, form non-dominant groups of society, resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities."

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Sanaaq

Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk, 2014

INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY



INDIGENOUS LAND STEWARDSHIP AND AUTONOMY

Indigenous Peoples have always been the stewards of the Land we call Canada. The arrival of European settlers greatly disrupted this relationship to the territory and, incidentally, the concept of territorial sovereignty, by forcibly introducing new legal concepts.

To understand **territorial sovereignty** from an Indigenous lens, it's necessary to highlight narratives that share the dynamics surrounding Indigenous Land governance. The resources in the following section reveal the cultural resilience and contemporary struggles that shape the dialogue on Indigenous territorial sovereignty. These narratives span from past Land governance practices to ongoing resistance against encroachments. They challenge colonial frameworks while amplifying Indigenous voices and experiences. By weaving these stories together, we aim to dismantle colonial narratives and deepen understanding of Indigenous territorial sovereignty.



Canadians have been breaking their promises to Indigenous people

CBC Docs

Cree filmmaker Tasha Hubbard explores the history of Treaty Six in this documentary clip. She explains how the Canadian government used hunger and violence to force Indigenous nations on the prairies onto reserves, revealing the broken promises that continue to impact communities today.



What land back means for this reclamation camp

CBC News

Kanien'kehá:ka journalist Ka'nhehsí:io Deer documents the re-occupation of traditional Kanien'kehá:ka land in this article. The piece examines a 341-year-old land grievance and illustrates the growing importance of the Land Back movement for contemporary Indigenous resistance.



Land governance: Past

David Suzuki Foundation

This video explores the history and complexities of land governance through environmental, social, and cultural perspectives. It emphasizes sustainable and equitable land management practices while highlighting Indigenous approaches to territorial stewardship and community-based decision making.



Invasion

Michael Toledano,
Unist'ot'en Camp

This documentary examines the Wet'suwet'en Nation's resistance to the Coastal Gaslink pipeline project. It provides insight into contemporary territorial defence efforts and reveals the contradictions between government reconciliation rhetoric and ongoing colonial practices.



Our Nationhood

Alanis Obomsawin, NFB

This documentary follows the Listuguj Mi'kmaq nation's struggle to protect their traditional lands and resources. Filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin captures their efforts to control logging and fishing activities while asserting their inherent rights to territorial management.



The Power Was With Us: Idle No More

APTN

This two-part documentary examines the history and legacy of the Idle No More movement that began in 2012. APTN captures this Canada-wide uprising's impact on Indigenous rights activism and its ongoing significance for contemporary resistance movements. [Part 2 is here.](#)



I am the Magpie River

Nikan Productions

This film explores efforts to protect Muteshekau Shipu (the Magpie River) through Western legal frameworks. It contrasts the concept of 'legal personality' with the Innu understanding of the river as a living entity deserving inherent protection.

LAND BACK MOVEMENT

The Land Back movement reveals diverse stories that illuminate the profound connections Indigenous Peoples have with their heritage. These narratives delve into themes of asserting rights, environmental stewardship, and reclaiming Ancestral lands. It's not just a journey through history; it's an ongoing call to honour and sustain the deep connections Indigenous Peoples maintain with their roots. Land Back is an ongoing struggle and a vision for the future—a fight for Indigenous rights to self-determination and self-governance.

It is, however, important to recognize that the Land Back movement is not universally claimed by all Indigenous Peoples. Some communities have their own movements and approaches to reclaiming territory that align with their distinct histories, cultures, and governance systems.

Land Back is not only a campaign to claim back the Land, it is also a "political framework that allows us to deepen our relationships across the field of organizing movements working towards true collective liberation."²



Land Back is “not just physical, it’s a conceptual space and what our future can hold on the land, where we can be our entire selves and address violence against our bodies and minds and hearts and spirits.” — Kati George-Jim³

Land Back means “Indigenous peoples confronting colonialism at the root. It’s about fighting for the right to our relationship with the earth. It’s about coming back to ourselves, as sovereign Indigenous Nations.”
– Ronald Gamblin⁴

Land Back is “a call for the return of Indigenous land and resource management (...) the expression and realization of Land Back is self-determined and is locally and even personally specific. It is about more than returning land; it is about the return of Indigenous governance and knowledge systems holistically implemented.”⁵

² NDN Collective, *Hesápa – A LANDBACK FILM*

³ Yellowhead Institute, *#LandBack: What Does It Mean & How Do You Enact It?*

⁴ 4Rs Youth Movement, *LAND BACK! What Do We Mean?*

⁵ Kristi Leora Gansworth (IPCA Knowledge Basket), *Land Trusts and Indigenous Peoples: The Canadian Context*

⁶ Canadian Bar Association *Understanding the Difference between Aboriginal Law and Indigenous Law*



What Is Land Back ?

David Suzuki Foundation

This webpage examines the Land Back movement and its significance for environmental protection. The David Suzuki Foundation emphasizes Indigenous decision-making systems for land stewardship while explaining how Indigenous governance addresses contemporary environmental challenges.



Land Back

Yellowhead Institute

This free online course examines colonial land dispossession policies and Indigenous resistance movements. Based on the Yellowhead Institute's research, it explores contemporary examples of nations reclaiming sovereignty and provides analysis of Land Back strategies.



Land Back Podcast

CBC Listen

Gitxsan investigative journalist Angela Sterritt explores how Indigenous Nations in British Columbia are reclaiming their territories. Each episode examines different community initiatives and approaches to sovereignty, highlighting diverse strategies for land reclamation and self-determination.

PATHWAYS TO SELF-DETERMINATION

In this part of our journey, we will look at the broad concept of self-determination and explore the relationship between the colonial state and Indigenous Peoples through the lens of historical treaties, contemporary claims, international law and the struggles against the colonial state.

Indigenous Peoples have rights based on the fact that they occupied the Land and held governance systems long before the arrival of European settlers. Therefore, the concept of Indigenous rights often includes the right to self-determination, the Land and her resources, as well as the right to maintain Indigenous ways of life.⁶



DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ABORIGINAL LAW AND INDIGENOUS LAW

“**Aboriginal Law** is the body of laws and rulings that determine the constitutional rights of Indigenous People and govern the relationship between them and the State. It is based namely on colonial instruments (Royal Proclamation of 1763, British North America Act of 1867, Constitution Act of 1982, Indian Act) and on the sources of Indigenous law.”





However, this may look different depending on whether Indigenous communities are First Nation, Inuit or Métis. Recognition of Aboriginal Rights may also vary from community to community depending on whether they have historical or modern treaty relationships, or have court-recognized rights.

As will be discussed throughout this level, Indigenous communities, whether First Nation, Inuit or Métis, have been reclaiming their inherent right to self-determination for centuries now. Communities continue to fight for Indigenous rights at the federal, provincial and local levels using three main routes: international law as defined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the **Royal Proclamation** of 1763, as well the court decisions, which includes the **Canadian Constitution** of 1982.

“Indigenous Law is a legal system derived from Indigenous societies themselves. It comes from First Nations communities across the country (such as the Nuu-chah-nulth, Haida, Salish, Tsimshian and Haeltzuk nations) and encompasses the relationship to the land, the spirit world, Creation stories, customs, processes of deliberation and persuasion, codes of conduct, rules, teachings and axioms for living and governing.” ([Canadian Bar Association, 2025](#)).



Indigenous People: Terminology guide

Indigenous Corporate Training

This terminology guide provides essential definitions for Indigenous-related concepts and legal frameworks. Indigenous Corporate Training covers key terms related to self-determination, governance, and rights recognition that are fundamental to understanding contemporary Indigenous politics.



Home on Native Land

RAVEN

This free online course explores colonial policies used to dispossess Indigenous nations of lands and rights. It examines differences between Indigenous and settler legal systems while highlighting how nations use traditional law to protect lands and assert rights.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

At the global level, Indigenous rights are recognized and defended by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)⁶, adopted by the world organization in 2007. This declaration sets out the basic rights of Indigenous Peoples around the world, including the right to self-determination, to the preservation of our cultures and to the management of our internal affairs.

The UNDRIP is the result of decades of advocacy with various colonial, state and international bodies to assert our existence and our rights. Its creation was a major event for the recognition of our Peoples and represents a worldwide tool to defend ourselves against aggression and the violations of our individual and collective rights.



United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

United Nations

This booklet contains the complete text of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted in 2007. It provides the foundational international framework for Indigenous rights, including self-determination, cultural preservation, and territorial sovereignty.



Understanding UNDRIP & Bill C-15

Warrior Life Podcast

Indigenous legal experts discuss UNDRIP's human rights protections and Canada's implementation through Bill C-15. Pam Palmater, Brenda Gunn, and Murray Sinclair examine the domestic legislation's implications and assess the government's commitment to Indigenous rights recognition.

THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION IS A KEY PART OF THE UNDRIP:

Article 3: "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of this right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."⁷

Article 4: "Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions."⁸

⁷ United Nations United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

⁸ United Nations, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Resolution 61/295)



In 2021, the federal government passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, affirming that the UNDRIP has application within Canadian law and obliged Canada to create, in collaboration with Indigenous communities, a national action plan to implement and achieve the objectives of the UNDRIP.⁹ So far, there have been both positive and negative reviews of its putting into practice from Indigenous communities across Canada.¹⁰

“Legislative reform and the implementation of new legislative measures can have a positive impact on the lives and experiences of Indigenous communities, particularly if they re-establish their traditional Anishinabek governance models and implement their own traditional laws and culturally unique frameworks.”

Anishinabek Nation

“For Inuit women, who experience much higher rates of violence and sexual assault than non-Indigenous women, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan represents an opportunity to secure essential commitments to increase the safety of Inuit women, and to address the root systemic causes that allow heinous acts to continue to occur.”

Gerri Sharpe, President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

⁹ Government of Canada, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*

¹⁰ Department of Justice Canada, *Second Annual United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Progress Report*





INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

In this section, we talk about ancestral governance systems, the impact of colonization on them, and the many ways in which our precursors and contemporaries mobilized to ensure that our rights were respected.

Nehiyaw (Cree) writer Emily Riddle points out that traditional governance systems go beyond legal and political frameworks. They encompass social relations shaped by culture and cultural practices. Governance is a way of taking care of one's own. The settlers' imposition of a Western governance system was designed to disconnect Indigenous Peoples from each other, break social bonds, and destroy traditional support networks.¹¹

¹¹ Emily Riddle, *GUTS Magazine (Indigenous) Governance is Gay*



Obey

Telling our Twisted Histories

Kaniehtio Horn and guests explore the colonial concept of "obey" and its absence in Indigenous languages. They contrast Western hierarchical governance with Indigenous systems that emphasize consensus-building, mutual respect, and collective decision-making processes.



The Indian Act vs Self-Determination

Centre for First Nations Governance

This document contrasts Indigenous self-administration under the colonial Indian Act with genuine self-determination. The Centre for First Nations Governance explains the fundamental differences between imposed colonial governance and Indigenous self-governance based on traditional systems.



John Borrows on Indigenous Law: Restoring Legal Traditions and Governance

UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit ILRU

Anishinaabe law scholar John Borrows explains the foundations of Indigenous legal systems and their relationship to Canadian and international law. He discusses gender roles in traditional governance and representation issues in contemporary Indigenous politics and legal frameworks ([More from Dr. Borrows here.](#))

IMPACTS OF COLONIZATION

Before the arrival of settlers, and over millennia, Indigenous Nations had established very distinct decision-making systems where women, elders and two-spirited people played a crucial role. Over the centuries, successive laws, policies and decisions based on a colonial and paternalistic approach¹² have been imposed, such as the Indian Act of 1876, which to this day continues to determine how most First Nations in Canada are governed.¹³

¹² ¹³ *Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Self-government: Learn about Indigenous self-government in Canada*



Abuses of Power: Aboriginal Peoples: Fact and Fiction

Institut Tshakapesh

This educational tool from Institut Tshakapesh debunks common myths about Indigenous peoples in Quebec. It highlights historical and contemporary abuses of power by colonial institutions while providing factual information to challenge widespread misconceptions and stereotypes.



Métis

Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, Canadian Geographic

This atlas section explores Métis governance and political development across different historical periods. Canadian Geographic examines Métis settlements, political activism from the 1950s-1970s, and contemporary governance structures that reflect distinct Métis approaches to self-determination. We recommend the following chapters for understanding self-government from a Métis perspective: [Métis Settlements and Farms](#), [Activism 1950s to 1970s](#), and [Modern Political Life](#).



Indian Act and Elected Chief and Band Council System

Indigenous Corporate Training

This article examines the history of the Indian Act's imposed chief and council system and its ongoing impacts. Indigenous Corporate Training explains how colonial governance structures continue to challenge First Nations' efforts to restore traditional decision-making systems.



Ellen Gabriel on Importance of Traditional Governance

Warrior Life Podcast

Mohawk activist Ellen Gabriel discusses the fundamental differences between traditional Indigenous governance and Indian Act systems. She reflects on how colonial governance structures disrupt traditional decision-making processes, particularly regarding territorial management and community self-determination.



Hungry Days in Nunavut: The Façade of Inuit Self-Determination

Kunuk (Sandra) Inutiq, Yellowhead Institute

This article challenges claims about Inuit self-determination in Nunavut despite the territory's creation in 1999. Kunuk Inutiq explains how colonial structures and external control continue to limit genuine self-governance, revealing the gap between political rhetoric and lived reality.

“Historically, in Manawan, the band council was administered by whites.

I’ve seen photos from the 1950s and ’60s showing the Indian agent participating in a community evening with the Atikamekw. The first Atikamekw employees arrived around 1986.

The first department the Atikamekw managed was Sports and Recreation, then they were able to manage Culture. Although the Band Council councillors and chief were Atikamekw,

the administration of the reserve was carried out by white people from outside the community. Today, most of the Board’s employees are Indigenous, but there are still government auditors who drop in from time to time.”

— ALEXANDRE NEQUADO, ATIKAMEKW LINGUIST

WAMPUM AND ANCESTRAL ALLIANCES

For Indigenous Peoples, wampum belts, necklaces, and treaties are important tools in the struggle to preserve, strengthen, or achieve self-determination.

The wampum is part of the Indigenous oral traditions, while the treaties, drafted by Europeans, reflect Western concepts of land relations. Even today, colonial authorities fail to fully respect treaties, and misunderstandings persist regarding both historic and recent agreements.

WAMPUM

They are objects made from shell beads used from the 17th to 18th centuries to seal agreements between Indigenous Nations. They were then used as diplomatic and political tools with European nations.

The word “wampum” in the singular refers to belts and necklaces made with wampum beads, which are written in the plural.



Wampum – Beads of Respect and Agreement

McCord Stewart Museum

This infographic explains the diplomatic significance of wampum belts and necklaces in Indigenous treaty-making. McCord Stewart Museum explores how these sacred objects functioned within traditional governance structures and continue to represent binding agreements between nations.



Episode 4: Oral history

Richard Hill, *Historica Canada*

Tuscarora Elder Richard Hill shares oral teachings about wampum belts and their significance to Haudenosaunee governance. He discusses the Confederacy's territorial vision and explains how traditional knowledge systems continue to guide contemporary Indigenous politics and diplomacy.



UNCEDDED TERRITORIES

The term “unceded territory” is used to designate territories that have not been sold or acquired by treaty by colonizers. In Kepek, most territories have the legal status of unceded territory. In the rest of Kanata, however, many territories were sold at derisory prices through treaties, including the 11 Numbered Treaties.

TREATIES

A treaty is “a legally binding agreement defining the rights and obligations of the signatories, and is protected by international law. Negotiated and adopted by two or more sovereign nations, treaties are formal agreements used to strengthen and protect the relationship between these parties.”¹⁴

¹⁴ University of Alberta, *Indigenous Canada*



Modern treaties

Land Claims Agreements Coalition

The Land Claims Agreements Coalition offers six free online courses covering modern and historic treaties from Indigenous perspectives. These educational resources examine treaty-making processes, implementation challenges, and the ongoing significance of these agreements for Indigenous self-determination.



The Treaty Map: Indigenous Perspectives on Treaties in Canada

Yellowhead Institute

This interactive digital resource presents Indigenous perspectives on all historical and modern treaties across Canada. The Yellowhead Institute map examines each agreement's negotiation context, implementation history, and ongoing implications for Indigenous communities and territorial rights.



Treaties and the Treaty Relationship

Canada's History

This special issue presents Indigenous perspectives on Canada's foundational Treaties, examining historic and modern agreements from First Nations viewpoints. Contributors explore Treaty-making processes, the ongoing significance of nation-to-nation relationships, and the challenges of interpreting Treaties as living agreements essential to understanding relationships between Indigenous peoples and the Crown.



Trick or Treaty?

Alanis Obomsawin, NFB

Filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin examines the complexity of modern treaty negotiations and their aftermath. This documentary reveals contrasting interpretations between Indigenous communities and government authorities, highlighting ongoing disputes over treaty implementation and Indigenous rights recognition.

Treaty 3: Honouring its truths

Carlie Kane, Canadian Museum for Human Rights

Anishinaabe scholar Carlie Kane provides detailed analysis of Treaty No. 3 negotiations within the broader context of western territorial colonization. She explains how fundamentally different worldviews created translation challenges that continue to complicate treaty interpretation and implementation today.

INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES FOR AUTONOMY AND SOVEREIGNTY

On the political scene, Indigenous People have long been mobilizing to make their voices heard within colonial institutions and to claim their autonomy. Through resistance movements, negotiations and legal action, they fight for the recognition of their ancestral rights, the respect for treaties and the governance of their territories. The demands relate to the issues of political sovereignty, natural resource management, education, child and family services, justice and the right to self-determination. Despite the obstacles, these struggles have led to significant progress, such as the recognition of certain territorial rights, self-government for 43 Indigenous communities, and 2 education agreements covering 35 Indigenous communities.¹⁵

¹⁵ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, *Self-government: Learn about Indigenous self-government in Canada*



Distinct rights: What does it all mean?

Aboriginal Peoples: Fact and Fiction, Institut Tshakapesh

This educational resource clarifies the distinct constitutional rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Institut Tshakapesh explains legal principles, historical foundations, and contemporary challenges related to Indigenous rights recognition, self-determination, and governance implementation.

Timeline

First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission

This timeline documents key developments in Indigenous political organization and autonomy negotiations in Quebec and Labrador. The Commission traces major milestones that led to increased self-governance agreements and the creation of Indigenous-controlled health and social services.

Métis and the Constitution

Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, Canadian Geographic

This resource traces the Métis Nation's long struggle for constitutional recognition as an Indigenous people in Canada. Canadian Geographic highlights the identity politics and legal challenges involved in securing official recognition and the implications for Métis rights and self-governance.

How this family fought to protect Haida Gwaii's land and culture

The Current



This podcast examines generations of Haida resistance to protect their ancestral territories and culture. Matt Galloway explores the 2024 historic agreement that returned stewardship to the Haida Nation and discusses implications for the archipelago's future, including property rights and decolonization efforts.

Wampum belts: the first treaties in North America

CBC Indigenous



This documentary explores wampum belts as North America's first treaty documents, used to formalize agreements between Indigenous nations. CBC Indigenous explains how these sacred diplomatic tools functioned before and after European contact, establishing protocols that predate colonial legal systems.



MODERN TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS



During the first major hydroelectric projects of the Government of Quebec in the 1970s, Indigenous Peoples rose up to demand a seat at the decision-making table. Indigenous communities faced the potential destruction of thousands of acres of territory and the destabilization of traditional ways of life. As Kepek claimed territories inhabited since time immemorial, the Eeyou/Eenou nation of the James Bay region and the Inuit of Nunavik began working together to defend their rights. The Naskapi Nation then signed a similar agreement in 1978, the Northeastern Quebec Agreement.

These movements led to the emergence of modern agreements legally defining the relationship between those Indigenous groups and the Quebec government. The James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, signed in 1975, paved the way for an unprecedented dialogue on land and cultural claims, laying the foundations for official recognition of ancestral rights. Subsequent agreements in Nunavik, as well as the Nunavik Inuit Declaration of 2018, bear witness to the dynamic of self-determination and the persistent will of Indigenous Peoples to forge their future with respect for their traditions and history.



Together We Stand Firm

Cree Nation Government

This documentary chronicles the complex negotiations leading to the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. The Cree Nation Government focuses on Indigenous negotiators' perspectives and strategies during these landmark discussions that established new frameworks for Indigenous-government relations.



So That You Can Stand

Ole Gjerstad

Filmmaker Ole Gjerstad presents the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement negotiations from Inuit perspectives. The documentary includes voices from communities that opposed the agreement, revealing internal debates about rights protection and the complexities of treaty-making processes.



Nunavik

Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, Canadian Geographic

This atlas section examines Nunavik's geography, history, and contemporary Inuit governance structures. Canadian Geographic covers the Nunavik Agreement's implementation, land rights recognition, and community initiatives focused on preserving Inuktitut language and traditional cultural practices within modern governance frameworks.



Nunavik Inuit Pass Significant Self-Determination Resolution

Makivvik

This press release documents progress toward establishing Inuit self-government in Nunavik based on traditional values and governance systems. Makivvik outlines developments following the Nunavik Inuit Declaration, emphasizing cultural foundations and the implementation of internationally recognized self-determination rights.



Modern Treaties in Canada: A One Hour Course

Land Claims Coalition

This comprehensive course examines modern treaties' legal significance and role in Indigenous-Crown relations. The Land Claims Coalition covers negotiation processes, community impacts, and economic implications while highlighting the complexity of contemporary land claims and their implementation challenges.



A Troubling Observation in Quebec

Aboriginal Peoples: Fact and Fiction

This article examines specific challenges facing Indigenous communities in Quebec, focusing on Innu, Naskapi, and Cree Nations' experiences. Institut Tshakapesh highlights ongoing territorial disputes and rights recognition struggles within Quebec's complex legal and political context, emphasizing communities' continued efforts toward territorial control and sovereignty.

