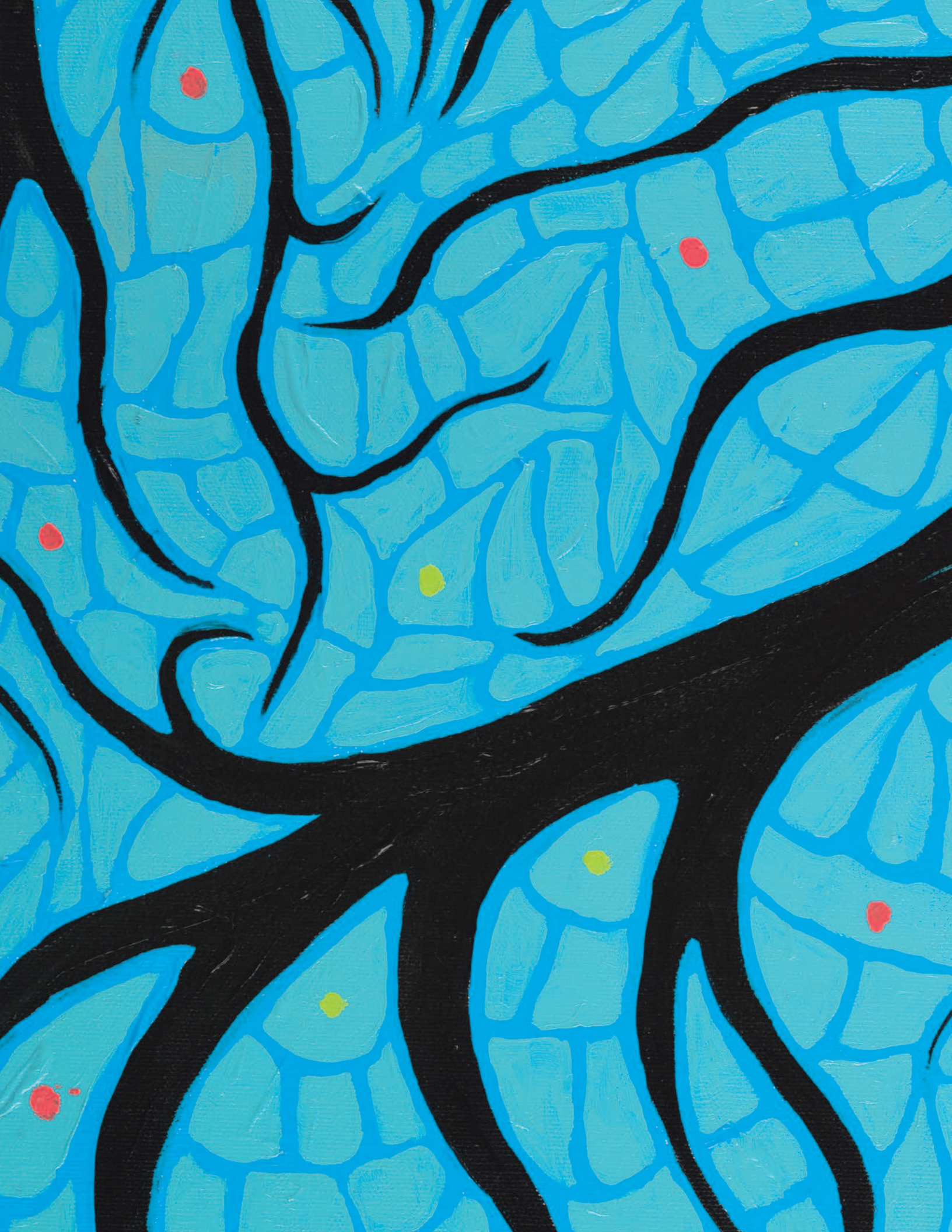




# The Journey Together

Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation  
with Indigenous Peoples



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# The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation With Indigenous Peoples

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“Our traditional teachings speak to us about our connection to each other as we move throughout creation, Mino Bimawdiziwin. In order for true reconciliation to happen in this time, we must acknowledge and honour this extended family relationship and our collective commitment to doing things in the best way, thinking seven generations into the future. In taking this walk together we have the knowledge to build a solid foundation for a partnership based on the highest values of respect and kindness. We must fulfill our mutual responsibilities in this spirit of unity.”

— *Elder and advisor Shelley Charles, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation*

“All Canadians must now demonstrate the same level of courage and determination, as we commit to an ongoing process of reconciliation. By establishing a new and respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, we will restore what must be restored, repair what must be repaired, and return what must be returned.”

— *Excerpt from ‘What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation,’ 2015*



# Message from the Premier

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**Indigenous peoples** are the original occupants of this land. Europeans first traversed modern-day Ontario around 400 years ago and relied on the generosity and kindness of Indigenous people to survive and establish a permanent presence. In 1763, the British Crown officially recognized the original occupancy of Indigenous peoples with the Royal Proclamation. Early treaties were negotiated and signed with the intent of creating mutual benefits. One hundred forty-nine years ago, Canada was founded as an independent nation.

In 2016, all of this can feel distant — a past disconnected from our day-to-day lives. What happened just seven generations ago can seem to have occurred in an entirely different world. Yet we know that the past is never just the past. We know that history is always shaping our present.

For some of us, this history paved the way to our 21st century prosperity. The treaties granted us land to live on and cultivate and water to drink. The investments and inventions of previous generations created our rising standard of living and the growing guarantee of social justice. With every generation came the opportunity to build on the past and create a better life.

For Indigenous people in Ontario, this same history created a very different reality. Despite the promise of the early treaties, including the Two Row Wampum of respectful Nation to Nation relationships, Indigenous people became the target of colonial policies designed to

exploit, assimilate and eradicate them. Based on racism, violence and deceit, these policies were devastatingly effective. They disempowered individuals and disenfranchised entire communities.

When Canada became an independent country in 1867, the legacy of violent colonialism only gathered momentum. From coast-to-coast-to-coast, the residential school system removed Indigenous children from their homes to systematically strip away their Indigenous languages, cultures, laws and rights. Children were physically, emotionally and sexually abused. Many died.

As a mother and grandmother, these heart-breaking stories are hard to hear. But for generations of Indigenous people in Canada, these stories were their lives. And the horrors they endured were at the hands of the very governments that had promised to be their partners. As Premier, I apologize for this past and for the harm it continues to cause in the lives of Indigenous people today.

Canada's residential schools are closed now, but they have been closed for not even one generation. The echoes of racist and colonial attitudes that underpinned their operation are still with us. So too are the echoes of a society-wide, intergenerational effort of cultural genocide, which reverberate loudly and painfully in the lives of Indigenous people today. Across nearly every measure of a person's quality of life and access to opportunity, there

exists a disturbing gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This is the gap created by a country that abused, betrayed and neglected its Indigenous peoples. It is a gap that swallows lives and extinguishes hope. For a long time, the voices of Indigenous peoples crying out for justice could not be heard across this yawning gulf. For a long time, Canada did not want to hear them. But Indigenous peoples are resilient. It is thanks to this resilience that we are now walking the journey of reconciliation together.

In 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Residential Schools finished gathering testimony from the survivors of residential schools and issued its final report. I want to thank the Commission and all the survivors who participated for helping illuminate a dark past, for honouring all those who lost their lives and for pointing the way forward. Together you have brought us to a hopeful moment in our shared history. After generations of silence, we are finally connecting this past to the injustices and realities of the present and taking actions to build a better future.

Ontario has already taken positive first steps to build partnerships based on mutual respect and shared benefits. With this report, we reiterate our commitment to continue the journey of reconciliation, through specific initiatives designed to bring meaningful change to the lives of Indigenous people and

communities. We will continue to walk hand-in-hand with Indigenous partners, and build trusting, respectful and mutually beneficial relationships.

The duty owed to Indigenous partners is enshrined in our laws and in our values as Canadians. There is no more denying the past or hiding from the truth. It is time to get to work and do our part to create positive change in the lives of Indigenous peoples. And while this is our present task, we know that one day it will be history — a part of the past that shapes the world of our grandchildren and their grandchildren. With the actions we are taking together today and every day in the future, we will build a country that lives up to its laws, its values and its reputation as a force for good in the world. We will reach across generations to undo the harm caused by our past and build a society where future generations can live in peace and harmony on the land we now share. Walking this journey together, we will not fail.

*Chi miigwetch; nia:wen; marsi; thank you.*



**Kathleen Wynne**  
Premier of Ontario

# Message From Minister Zimmer

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**I am so pleased** to be able to join Premier Wynne and fellow ministers in sharing our commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. And I am proud to say that the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is changing its name to become the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. The new name more accurately reflects the transformations underway within our government and across the province.

Ontario regrets our country's dark past where the residential school system tore First Nations, Métis and Inuit families apart and inflicted generations of trauma on entire communities. The residential school era is a terrible time in our collective history, and one that must never be forgotten. We now have the opportunity to come together to create lasting change through reconciliation — not only through words, but also through our actions.

By addressing the legacy of residential schools, we can ensure their terrible history is remembered. Today's children must grow up with a shared understanding of our true history so that they may make informed decisions for our collective future together.

This document details new initiatives, approaches and partnerships, with Indigenous peoples and their leaders, designed to close

gaps and remove barriers. It is part of our ongoing commitment to collaborate on improving social, economic and health outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

In supporting Indigenous culture, Ontario is working to provide the resources and space for Indigenous languages, traditions, teachings and governance to thrive.

In reconciling relationships, Ontario and Indigenous peoples must work in partnership, as we walk this journey together.

I commit to living the true intent of reconciliation by engaging with Indigenous families across the province to provide supports, so they can continue to build resilient communities, raise new generations of confident leaders, and make Ontario a place we are all proud to call home.

*Chi miigwetch; nia:wen; marsi; thank you.*



**David Zimmer**  
Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs







# Introduction

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**Before Canada** became a country, Indigenous peoples helped settlers survive. But relationships that began with the promise of partnership were soon set aside by actions that caused real pain and suffering to generations of Indigenous peoples. Colonialism and racism soon dominated and drove systematic attempts to wipe out Indigenous languages, culture and tradition — nothing less than cultural genocide.

Residential schools became a gruesome manifestation of these policies. For more than one hundred years, Indigenous children in Canada were forced to attend government-funded, church-run residential schools. One goal of the schools was to assimilate Indigenous people by weakening cultural and familial ties. Residential schools robbed Indigenous children of their identity and culture. Those who attended were taught from the perspective of colonial settlers who denigrated Indigenous culture and tradition. Indigenous people were left without

a firm sense of their place in the world. This loss of identity was the goal. And the lived experience of many children was even darker, with thousands of children suffering from mental, physical and sexual abuse at the hands of those charged with their care.

Many never made it back home.

In Ontario, 18 schools took in children between the ages of five and 14. These institutions were in operation from the opening of the Mohawk Institute in Brantford in 1828 until the closure of the Stirland Lake High School/Wahbon Bay Academy (located in Stirland Lake) in 1991. In all, at least 462 children died while attending residential schools in Ontario and an unknown number remain listed as missing.

Ontario regrets that survivors, their children and entire communities continue to suffer. The legacy of residential schools can be seen in the youth still forced to leave their communities to continue their education, children and adults





in such despair that they see taking their own lives as the only way out, Indigenous children taken into care with alarming frequency and Indigenous women who are many times more likely to suffer violence than other women.

In 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, with a mandate to educate Canadians on the deplorable conditions of the residential school system, to document experiences of the survivors and their families and to guide and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

In June 2015, the TRC released its Executive Summary, which included 94 recommendations,

or 'Calls to Action,' directed to governments, churches, organizations and all Canadians. In December 15, 2015, the seven-volume TRC Final Report was released. In it, residential schools were referred to as cultural genocide.

The work of the Commission and the bravery and resilience of survivors who shared their experiences serve as an important catalyst for change, but Ontario's reconciliation with Indigenous peoples does not begin or end with the release of the TRC's Final Report. Working with Indigenous partners, Ontario has laid the groundwork, but we know we must continue to act on the TRC Calls to Action if reconciliation is to be advanced further.

In partnership with the federal government and Indigenous communities, municipalities, the private sector and all Ontarians must

move forward in partnership on the path to reconciliation. We must take action. We must address the legacy of residential schools. We must close gaps and remove barriers that Indigenous people face. We must create a justice system that is culturally relevant and responsive. We need to support Indigenous culture. We need to reconcile relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Residential school survivors, their families and communities and Indigenous leaders have worked tirelessly to preserve our shared history and change our collective future. This shared work is carried forward under the long shadow of a dark time in our province's history, but with the hopeful light of a true commitment to first build and then walk the road to reconciliation, together.

Working with Indigenous partners, Ontario is taking action by:

**Understanding the Legacy of Residential Schools** — We will ensure that Ontarians develop a shared understanding of our histories and address the overt and systemic racism that Indigenous people continue to face.


**Closing Gaps and Removing Barriers** — We will address the social and economic challenges now faced by Indigenous communities after centuries of colonization and discrimination.

**Creating a Culturally Relevant and Responsive Justice System** — We will improve the justice system for Indigenous people by closing service gaps and ensuring the development and availability of community-led restorative justice programs.

**Supporting Indigenous Culture** — We will celebrate and promote Indigenous languages and cultures that were nearly lost after generations of Indigenous children were sent to residential schools.

**Reconciling Relationships with Indigenous Peoples** — We will support the rebuilding of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through trust, understanding and respect.

Ontario plans to invest more than \$250 million over the next three years on programs and actions focused on reconciliation, which will be developed and evaluated in close partnership with Indigenous partners. This is in addition to a number of initiatives already underway across government and at the federal level. This commitment represents an initial step on the journey of reconciliation. Together with Indigenous partners and the federal government, Ontario will continue to work to achieve real and measurable change for Indigenous communities, charting a path toward a brighter future for all. 🌍



**“Intergenerational trauma is real and alive in communities deeply affected by residential schools. You can’t attempt cultural genocide for 140 years, for seven generations — and not expect some very real fallout from that.”**

*— Joseph Boyden, Ontario Métis author and advocate*





# Understanding the Legacy of Residential Schools

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**In order to move forward** on this journey together, we must first have a solid understanding of where we have been. That understanding must encompass residential schools themselves and the society that turned a blind eye to them over generations.

Residential schools were designed to separate children from their families, to weaken cultural and community connections, and to assimilate Indigenous peoples so that they ceased to exist as distinct social, cultural, legal and racial communities in Canada. Imagine entire communities robbed of their children, and schools that had cemeteries instead of playgrounds. Imagine a place where laughter was as rare as the sound of Indigenous languages in the hallways. Imagine being told your language and your spiritual beliefs were savage and forbidden. These are part of the legacy we must understand and address if we are to move

ahead. The experiences and consequences of the residential school system harmed Indigenous cultures, communities, families and individuals and led to intergenerational trauma.

These injustices have done enormous damage not only to Indigenous people and communities, but to the very fabric of our nation. When these systemic injustices are perpetuated across generations by indifference or neglect, it undermines the very foundation of a just and equal Canada.

Working with Indigenous partners, Ontario is committed to teaching coming generations about our shared history and ensuring that survivors and communities are the ones sharing these stories. Children in Ontario must be given the opportunity to effect change and work to build a better province. This can only happen if we equip them with the truth of our entire history.



### **New Commitments**

Up to \$20 million over three years to address the legacy of residential schools, including up to \$1.4 million in 2016-17 to support the revitalization of the Mohawk Institute Residential School.

### **Residential Schools Monument**

Ontario will work with Indigenous organizations to establish a commemorative monument in Toronto — dedicated to residential school survivors — as a site of learning, healing and reconciliation.

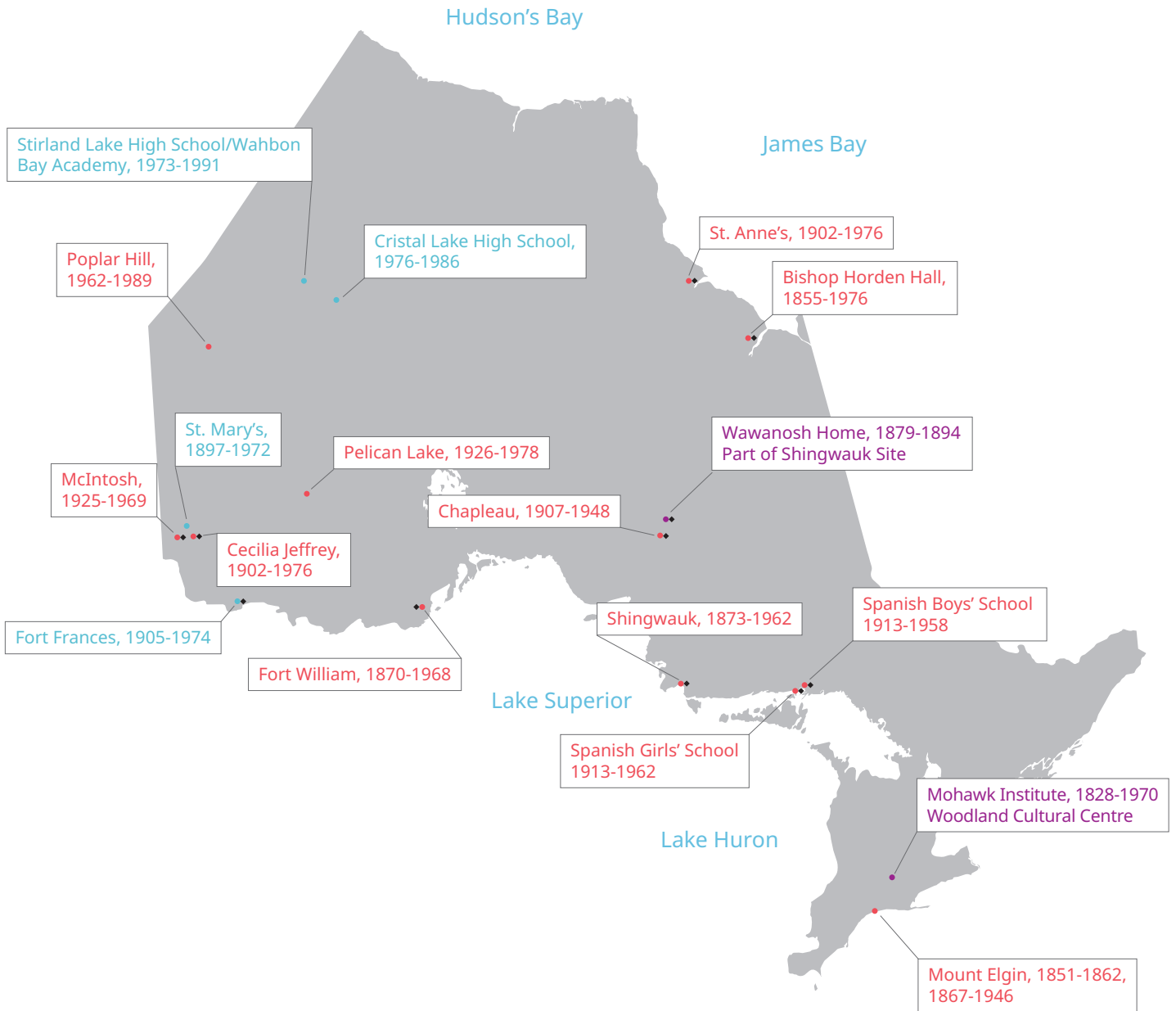
### **Missing Children, Burials & Residential School Records**

The Province will provide death and other relevant records of “lost children” who attended residential schools to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and work with the

federal government and Indigenous communities to find cemeteries and burial sites on residential school properties. Remains will be returned to Indigenous communities when requested and/or memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers will be arranged.

### **Reclaim Indigenous names**

Indigenous children were forced to take Christian or non-Indigenous names while they were attending residential schools. Ontario will work to waive fees so that Indigenous people can reclaim their traditional names. A new feature of name registration will also help parents and individuals honour Indigenous traditions by accommodating the use of single names, which would appear on provincially-issued documents such as birth and marriage certificates.



\* The schools identified on the map are federally recognized residential schools

### **Save The Evidence: Mohawk Institute Residential School Interpretation Centre**

Ontario will work with Indigenous partners toward the restoration and development of an interpretation centre, which will tell the story of the approximately 15,000 students who attended the Mohawk Institute Residential School from 1828 to 1970. Restoring one of Ontario's oldest residential schools will help educate Ontarians about the history of residential schools.

### **Indigenous-Informed Anti-Racism Strategy**

Ontario will engage with Indigenous communities on the development of an Anti-Racism strategy that fights racism against Indigenous people throughout Ontario. The strategy will support Indigenous-led approaches to engage youth in dialogue about racism, stereotypes and respectful engagement. In addition Ontario will develop an Indigenous public education and awareness campaign that will be aligned with the broader province-wide multi-year anti-racism public education and awareness strategy.

### **In Progress**

There are already several important initiatives and programs in Ontario that seek to address some of the legacy of residential schools. These include the development of programs so that all Ontario public service employees receive **mandatory cultural competency training** on Indigenous cultures, worldviews, issues and history, including treaties and residential schools.


Earlier this year, the Province released *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women* supported by \$100 million in new funding over

three years. The new strategy focuses on raising awareness of and preventing violence; providing more effective programs and community services that reflect the priorities of Indigenous leaders and communities; and improving socio-economic conditions that support healing within Indigenous communities.

With funding support from five Ontario ministries, Indigenous partners and service providers will continue to design and deliver the **Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy**. The strategy supports culturally appropriate solutions to improve healing, health and wellness in communities across Ontario.

Ontario will also find ways to support Indigenous communities in culturally appropriate ways by engaging with them to ensure that provincial strategies meet their unique needs. For example, Ontario will engage with Indigenous partners to design culturally appropriate initiatives as part of a provincial Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) strategy.

Education remains a key component of reconciliation. Through the **Initial Teacher Education Program**, accredited teacher-education programs offered by Ontario's faculties of education are required to provide mandatory Indigenous content. The Province is also working with Indigenous partners to enhance the Ontario curriculum in order to support **mandatory learning about residential schools, the legacy of colonialism and the rights and responsibilities we all have to each other as treaty people**. As part of the comprehensive strategy, Ontario is also working with partners to create curriculum-linked resources and develop supports that will build educator capacity. ●



**“The legacy of the schools continues to this day. It is reflected in the significant educational, income, and health disparities between Aboriginal people and other Canadians — disparities that condemn many Aboriginal people to shorter, poorer and more troubled lives.”**

*— Truth and Reconciliation Final Report, volume 4, pg. 3*



# Closing Gaps and Removing Barriers

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# 42%

of the Indigenous population is under 24 years old. *Source: National Household Survey, 2011 (Statistics Canada)*

**Stemming from** the intergenerational trauma inflicted by residential schools and Canada's colonial legacy, Indigenous people, young and old, face challenges most Ontarians can't imagine. There is a glaring disparity in outcomes for Indigenous communities and the rest of Ontario. Research and lived experiences show direct links between the residential school system and the gaps Indigenous people face in their well-being, safety and success. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommended making progress toward reconciliation by closing these gaps.

Ontario has made it a priority to improve social, economic and health outcomes for

Indigenous peoples, by working in partnership with local communities.

Following the release of the TRC Final Report, Ontario continues to work with Indigenous partners and the federal government to develop policies and programs that reduce and eliminate these gaps and barriers.

### **New Commitments**

Up to \$150 million over three years to close gaps and remove barriers, including \$3.5 million in 2016-17 in life promotion support and \$2.3 million in 2016-17 in new mental health and addiction supports.

# 5x — 7x

Suicide rates are 5-to-7 times higher for First Nations youth than for non-Indigenous youth. *Source: Health Canada, 2006*

### Life Promotion Initiatives

Working with First Nation communities, Ontario will support culturally based suicide prevention strategies for children and youth, and provide crisis intervention, as needed. The funding, under the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, will support holistic response and prevention teams that focus on Indigenous approaches to suicide prevention.

Under the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, Ontario will also increase support to Nishnawbe Aski Nation for crisis coordination through four additional coordinator positions and a flexible crisis fund when crises, such as suicides, occur.

### Child Care and Family Programs

To help promote healthy child development and support family well-being, Ontario will expand five existing child and family programs on-reserve. Working with Indigenous and federal partners to identify needs, the funding will also make more child and family programs available in more communities. Ontario will also help increase the number of off-reserve licensed child care spaces and culturally relevant programming for children and families. Programs will be delivered by urban Indigenous organizations working with municipal child care services. These investments are a step

toward a broader child care and early years strategy for Indigenous communities in Ontario and are connected to the government's vision where children and families are supported by a system of responsive, high-quality, accessible and increasingly integrated programs and services. These initiatives also align with Ontario's approach to transform and integrate child and family programs through Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres, which include a focus on ensuring programs meet local community needs.

### Indigenous Mental Health & Addictions Treatment and Healing Centres

In partnership with Indigenous communities and the federal government, Ontario will establish up to six new or expanded Indigenous Mental Health & Addictions Treatment and Healing Centres, both on- and off-reserve. The centres will provide care using a combination of traditional healing and clinical care.

# 82%

 — on-reserve First Nations

First Nations youth — 

# 76%

82% of on-reserve First Nations adults and 76% of First Nations youth perceived alcohol and drug abuse to be the main challenge currently facing their community. *Source: 2008/10 Ontario Regional Health Survey*



### **New Mental Health and Addictions Supports**

Ontario will invest new funding into mental health and wellness programs and services to help stop the cycle of intergenerational trauma. These investments will be guided by collaborative partnerships and active engagement with Indigenous partners, and will include the dedicated Indigenous engagement process under Phase 2 of the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Ontario will also explore the development of a Centre of Excellence for Addictions and Mental Health in Northwestern Ontario.

### **Prevention Initiatives for Youth in Remote First Nation Communities**

Through recreation-based programming, the Province will work with remote high-need Indigenous communities to identify community priorities for children, youth and families. Since 2014, the government has worked with community partners to develop programs that help Indigenous children and youth grow up healthy and reach their full potential. These programs are currently in Pikangikum First Nation and under development in Sandy Lake First Nation and will expand in up to two additional remote First Nation communities.



**“Reconciliation should open that door to say, ‘Now is your opportunity to learn everything there is to know about us, so that your people understand.’ You don’t have to believe what we believe in. We’re not looking to take over. We’re simply looking to try to bring ourselves into some kind of balance because we’re not in balance.”**

*— Iehnhotonkwas Bonnie Jane Maracle, educator and strategist,  
Wolf Clan, Mohawk Nation at Tyendinaga Territory*



### **Action Plan for Social Emergencies in Remote First Nations**

Working in partnership with First Nations and the federal government, Ontario will develop an action plan for remote communities, so that we are able to respond quickly to social crises in Northern First Nation communities. Ontario will host a Summit on Social Emergencies with First Nations and the federal government to help determine jurisdictional responsibilities moving forward.

### **Classification of First Nation Schools Within the Education Act**

Ontario will explore the possibility of creating a new classification for First Nation/federally operated schools. This could enhance collaboration between the provincially funded education system and First Nation schools to help build greater capacity (e.g. professional development and learning resources) in First Nation schools.

### **In Progress**

Ontario is working with Indigenous partners to close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students through programs such as **Elementary Summer Learning** and the **Aboriginal Education Strategy**. In 2015, Ontario announced \$97 million in funding over three years for Indigenous post-secondary education and training. Ontario is working with Indigenous partners and post-secondary education stakeholders in developing a stand-alone **Aboriginal Institutes Policy** to incorporate Indigenous-owned and -controlled post-secondary institutes into Ontario's post-secondary education and training system.

Working with Indigenous partners, Ontario is investing in affordable housing for Indigenous people living off-reserve and is committed to working with Indigenous partners to develop an **Indigenous Housing**

**Strategy**. The Province is also working with the federal government to encourage increased funding for housing infrastructure on-reserve.

Ontario is delivering on its commitment to address critical health inequities and improve access to culturally appropriate health care services in Indigenous communities. **The Ontario First Nations Health Action Plan**, with a \$222-million investment over three years, and \$104.5 million in ongoing investments thereafter, will increase primary care, public health and health promotion; senior care and hospital services; and life promotion and crisis supports. While it is focused on the North, the plan includes opportunities for investments across Ontario, working with partners in key areas such as home and community care, primary care and diabetes prevention and management.

The Province also supports **Aboriginal Health Access Centres** that offer a blend of traditional Indigenous approaches to health and wellness, primary health care and health promotion programs in a culturally appropriate setting.

Closing the achievement gap for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth is a major focus of **Ontario's Indigenous Child and Youth Strategy (OICYS)** across the full range of child and family services. As the Province's approach to improving outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth and reducing the number of Indigenous children and youth in child protection and youth justice services, it is a whole of government framework for how to design and deliver services for young people. The shift to community-driven and -delivered, prevention-based services is supported by many of the initiatives in this report as well as by the \$80-million Family Well-Being program — part of Ontario's **Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women Strategy**. ●





# Creating a Culturally Relevant and Responsive Justice System

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**Clear links have been established** between the overrepresentation of Indigenous people involved in the justice system and Indigenous communities' experience with residential schools. Indigenous offenders feel a deep alienation behind the bars of correctional institutions just as they (or their parents or grandparents) felt inside the walls of residential schools. These institutions are places where racism is common.

In order to counter the pervasive and lasting effects of the residential schools, Ontario acknowledges that meaningful changes to the justice system are necessary. These changes require the closing of service gaps for Indigenous victims and accused through the provision of culturally relevant and appropriate services. In addition, actions must be taken that clearly recognize the value and legitimacy of Indigenous legal principles, legal systems, autonomy and cultures.

## **New Commitments**

Up to \$45 million over three years to create a culturally relevant and responsive justice system including \$200,000 in 2016-17 in Gladue expansion.

## **Indigenous-Specific Victim Services**

Ontario will partner with Indigenous organizations to create more victim services programs specifically for Indigenous peoples. A broader, more comprehensive approach to services for Indigenous victims will help address their unique needs and ensure that supports are more accessible.

## **Expand the Indigenous Legal Principles and Systems Project**

Indigenous communities have their own legal principles and systems that were disrupted as a result of colonization. These systems must be respected and revitalized, and Ontario's legal system must adapt to incorporate Indigenous legal principles. Ontario will expand the Indigenous Legal Principles and Systems Project, including an Indigenous Language Court pilot project. Indigenous language courts may help break down language barriers that exist in Northern communities and increase access to justice. This expansion will support Indigenous communities in enhancing Indigenous voices and capacity with respect to the administration of justice.

## **Restorative Justice Programs**

The provincial government will increase funding to Ontario's nine Community Justice Programs. Community Justice Programs focus on healing and cultural restoration and provide alternatives to incarceration. Ontario will also work with Indigenous communities and organizations to pilot restorative justice programs for enforcing band bylaws in order to help make communities safer.

## **Expand the Gladue Program**

Ontario will increase the number of Gladue report writers and Gladue aftercare workers. Ontario will also host a "Gladue Summit" with Indigenous organizations to identify service gaps and ensure consistent program delivery. The desired outcome of these initiatives is to



# 2.4%

Aboriginal population in Ontario in 2011.  
*Source: Data from Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey and 2006 Census, and AANDC Ontario Region*

reduce the incarceration rate of Indigenous people and increase the use of restorative justice.

### **Indigenous Bail and Remand Program**

Working with Indigenous communities and organizations, Ontario will develop culturally appropriate programs that provide comprehensive support to Indigenous people accused of crimes, as well as community supervision to Indigenous people released on bail. Indigenous Bail and Remand Programs will be piloted in eight different communities across the province.

### **Cultural Supports Within the Correctional System**

Ontario will enhance healing services and cultural supports for Indigenous inmates in custody and offenders under community supervision. Healing services and cultural supports will be designed and developed in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations. Culturally responsive healing services and supports assist inmates and offenders in reclaiming Indigenous values and beliefs as part of a restorative process that supports reintegration and helps reduce the likelihood of future criminal activity.

### **In Progress**

Ontario continues to engage with Indigenous partners to develop options to address Indigenous overrepresentation in the correctional system, guided by the **Correctional Services**


# 13.7%

In 2014-15, Indigenous people represented 13.7% of all institutional admissions. *Source: Ministry of Community Safety and Corrections Services, Offender Tracking and Information System, 2014/15*

**Transformation Strategy**, which includes providing more culturally responsive programming to those in the system. As well, through the **Strategy for a Safer Ontario**, Ontario is working with First Nation communities to create a provincial framework for First Nation policing to ensure more equitable, sustainable and culturally responsive policing for First Nation communities.

Ontario is also working with Indigenous community partners to address the issue of overrepresentation by focusing on prevention, diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration of Indigenous youth in the justice system. Centres for Indigenous youth provide culturally responsive programming, such as healing circles and drumming programs. In 2009, the Province opened the **Ge-Da-Gi Binez Youth Centre** in Fort Frances. This secure facility is the first of its kind in Canada, dedicated to rehabilitating Indigenous youth in conflict with the law. Operated in partnership with Indigenous and social service agencies, programs include traditional teachings, Indigenous history, cultural ceremonies, as well as education, anger management and life skills programs.

Ontario also supports the **Mee Quam Youth Residence**, a 10-bed detention/custody program located in Cochrane and operated by the Ininew Friendship Centre. ●



**“Residential schools inflicted profound injustices on Aboriginal people... [the] pattern of disproportionate imprisonment and victimization of Aboriginal people continues to this day. The continued failure of the justice system denies Aboriginal people the safety and opportunities that most Canadians take for granted. Redress to the racist and colonial views that inspired the schools, and effective and long-term solutions to the crime problems that plague too many Aboriginal communities, call for the increased use of Aboriginal Justice, based on Aboriginal laws and healing practices.”**

— *Excerpt from ‘Executive Summary:  
Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’*







# Supporting Indigenous Culture

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# 5%

of Indigenous people in Ontario identify an Indigenous language as their mother tongue.  
*Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey*

**One of the most insidious** mandates of the residential school system was the destruction of unique Indigenous cultures. In the TRC Final Report, cultural genocide is described as the “destruction of structures and practices that allow a group to continue as a group.” The Indigenous children who were forced to attend residential schools had their self-identity ripped away. Just like the hair on their heads that was cut and sheared off, languages and cultures were robbed. Without their culture, people become vulnerable. Despite the efforts of colonial governments over three centuries, the work of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities ensured their cultures survived, but those who attended residential schools lost touch with their languages and cultures and in turn could not teach their children.

Through both ongoing and new initiatives, Ontario will partner with Indigenous communities to support Indigenous culture, including the promotion of Indigenous languages and public awareness, the inclusion of Indigenous worldviews and supporting excellence through athletics.

### **New Commitments**

Up to \$30 million over three years to support Indigenous cultural revitalization.

### **Indigenous Cultural Revitalization Fund**

Confidence in one’s abilities requires a foundation of pride and respect for one’s heritage. Indigenous youth need every opportunity to learn about and embrace their proud heritage and cultural traditions — opportunities





**“There was a time when our people were criminalized, abused and ridiculed when speaking Anishinaabemowin but our language survived. We shouldn’t forget that. Use it as strength to go forward.”**

*— Susan Blight, language activist, academic and artist,  
Couchiching First Nation, Treaty #3 territory*





**6,070**

Indigenous children and youth under age 25 and younger speak an Indigenous language

**3,690**  
live on-reserve

**5,840**  
are First Nations

**3,150**

Indigenous children and youth under age 25 living on-reserve in Northern Ontario speak an Indigenous language

**10,945**  
live on-reserve

**4,275**

Indigenous children and youth under age 25 living in Northern Ontario speak an Indigenous language

**16,005**

Indigenous people in Northern Ontario speak an Indigenous language

robbed from many of their parents and grandparents through the residential school system. The Fund will support cultural activities in Ontario's Indigenous communities, including on-reserve and in urban centres, with the goals of revitalizing cultural practices, raising awareness of the vitality of Indigenous cultures in Ontario and promoting reconciliation. The Fund will help Indigenous communities and organizations to deliver cultural programming and services, as well as build relationships with non-Indigenous audiences and institutions. It will focus on community-driven projects, especially those that connect children, youth, families and Elders in order to build community cohesiveness, well-being and identity.

### **Support for Indigenous Languages**

Language is the foundation of culture. Indigenous peoples have a strong tradition of oral histories that must be supported by a new respect for, and understanding of, Indigenous languages. This includes hosting an Indigenous languages symposium with Indigenous partners and educational stakeholders to review current programs, determine gaps and identify community priorities and the supports needed to support Indigenous languages.

The symposium would provide Indigenous partners and educational stakeholders with the opportunity to discuss the role and mandate of an Indigenous Languages Secretariat, which could lead to an Indigenous Languages Revitalization Strategy and fund initiatives related to language revitalization.

### **Youth Cultural Camps**

Ontario will support cultural camps in Indigenous communities that build youth leadership and promote awareness of traditional knowledge and languages through daily hands-on activities.

### **Ceremonial Garden**

The Province will work with Indigenous partners to create a medicine garden on government-owned property in Toronto. This outdoor space will provide traditional medicines for ceremonial purposes, an expanded learning environment for members of the Ontario public service and space for Indigenous ceremonies for staff and visitors.

### **In Progress**

Recognizing the importance of sports in developing leadership skills and self-confidence, the **Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator** initiative brings sports, recreation and physical activity programs to remote and isolated First Nation communities. As well, Ontario is supporting the Aboriginal Sport & Wellness Council of Ontario to host the **2017 North American Indigenous Games**, the largest sporting and cultural gathering of Indigenous peoples in North America.

Ontario also supports Right to Play's Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) program. With partners in 49 First Nation communities and urban Aboriginal organizations across Ontario, the program delivers tailored programming that is safe, fun, educational and culturally appropriate.

Indigenous cultures must continue to play a central role in both educating the wider population and building community. The first provincial **Culture Strategy** will soon be released and Ontario is engaging with Indigenous communities about their cultural priorities. The strategy will identify goals and actions to support Indigenous arts and culture. ●

# Reconciling Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

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**The Truth and Reconciliation Commission** described the reconciliation process as a means to rebuild relationships. Healthy relationships require respect, honesty and a strong understanding of identity. This has not always been the case between Ontario and Indigenous peoples.

Ontario will take action to support reconciliation province-wide, work in collaboration with Indigenous partners and acknowledge the Crown's unique relationships with Indigenous peoples.

## **New Commitments**

Up to \$5 million over three years to support reconciling relationships with Indigenous peoples.

## **Leading by Example**

To demonstrate Ontario's long-term commitment and efforts toward reconciliation, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs will become the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Recon-

ciliation. The Ontario Public Service will also take active steps to apply a model of reconciliation in its daily business:

- Reflecting the term 'Indigenous' in government ministries and programs, where appropriate,
- Acknowledging treaties within ministers' statements, the Public Service Oath of Office and government-issued documents,
- Working with partners to determine how the advice of youth and Elders could be incorporated into government decision making,
- Discouraging the use of names that are considered offensive to Indigenous people in organizations funded by the government,
- Translating government documents into Indigenous languages where feasible.



### **Resource Benefit and Resource Revenue-Sharing Opportunities**

Ontario will engage with Indigenous partners on approaches to close socio-economic gaps and enhance participation in the resource sector by improving the way resource benefits are shared with Indigenous communities. This work will consider how to advance resource benefit-sharing opportunities, including resource revenue sharing in the forestry and mining sectors.

### **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**


Many of the principles reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) are consistent with Ontario's approach to Indigenous relations and reconciliation, which is rooted in a commitment to establish and maintain constructive, co-operative relationships based on mutual respect that lead to improved opportunities for all Indigen-

ous peoples. Ontario will work in partnership with Canada and Indigenous partners as the federal government moves forward on its national plan to implement UNDRIP, and will take a strong, supportive and active role in considering policy options to address UNDRIP.

### **Strong National Partnerships**

In recent years, Ontario has benefitted from the support of Indigenous partners to take a strong national leadership role on issues of importance to Indigenous people. Ontario supported the efforts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and with its 10-point plan, joined with partners to call for a national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

Ontario is encouraged by new efforts by the federal government to revitalize its relationship with Indigenous leaders and communities. We need to work with federal and Indigenous partners to build on these efforts to make real



“At first, as a survivor of residential school, I didn’t really agree with the word ‘reconciliation’ because of going to residential school and the abuse that I received. I don’t think it was my responsibility to reconcile especially to the church. But as I grew older and being encouraged by my wife, I’m starting to understand what reconciliation is. It’s not only individual but it’s to come to understand how you can make change from the wrong that was done. So, I think to me that’s what reconciliation is: to be able to come to terms with the wrong that was done but also that you want to do something good.”

— Andrew Wesley, Cree Elder and residential school survivor





change in the lives of Indigenous people. Stronger partnerships must lead to real results that help end violence against Indigenous women, improve health care and education and lead to a greater understanding of the important role of treaties in our country's history.

### **In Progress**

Last summer, the Chiefs of Ontario and the Government of Ontario signed a historic **Political Accord** to guide the relationship between First Nations and the Province. The Accord affirms that First Nations have an inherent right to self-government; that the relationship between Ontario and the First Nations must be based on respect for this right; and that the parties are committed to working together on issues of mutual interest. Ontario is also working through its **Treaty Strategy** to facilitate dialogue between Ontarians and Indigenous partners on revitalizing treaty relationships and promoting public awareness

of treaties. These actions build on Ontario's efforts to reconcile relationships with Indigenous leaders and communities.

Through the **Ontario-Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Framework Agreement** signed in 2008 and renewed in 2014, Ontario and the MNO agreed to advance reconciliation between the Crown and the Métis people through actions including the Métis Voyageur Development Fund, announced with MNO in 2011; the declaration of 2010 as the Year of the Métis by the Ontario Legislature; and the passage of the Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act in the Legislature in December 2015.

Signed in 2015, the **Ontario-Anishinabek Nation Master Education Framework Agreement** shows the commitment of Ontario and Anishinabek First Nations to support First Nation students' education in both Anishinabek First Nation schools and in provincially funded schools. ●





## Next Steps

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**Ontario has begun a journey** of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples — one that we are taking together.

Ontario regrets that governments stood by as abuse was committed, and as policies designed to assimilate Indigenous peoples were pursued. We understand that these actions marginalized Indigenous communities and created gaps and barriers in social, economic, education and health outcomes still felt today.

The attempted cultural genocide that is the legacy of residential schools has produced debilitating intergenerational consequences. It is a dark chapter in our shared history. We cannot change any of that past, but by unearthing and truly understanding its impact, we give ourselves the power to change the future.

Thankfully, we have the opportunity to make change. Through ongoing work, as well as new commitments outlined in this document, Ontario is determined to address the ongoing impacts of residential schools, close gaps, remove barriers, create a culturally relevant and responsive justice system, support Indigenous culture and reconcile relationships with Indigenous peoples. This is another step forward toward reconciliation, not the end of the journey. There is much work to do, together with Indigenous partners and all Ontarians, to make meaningful change.

Ontario is committed to publicly report on progress on these initiatives. Specifically, the

Province will submit available information related to improving outcomes for Indigenous peoples in the areas of health, employment, education and justice to the National Council for Reconciliation — based on a Call to Action made by the TRC.

Ontario has already taken preliminary steps in response to the TRC's report to establish a solid foundation built on ongoing partnerships and understanding with Indigenous peoples. We are working with Indigenous partners on policies and programs that reflect the spirit and intentions of the TRC. We are taking steps to ensure Indigenous voices are heard within government, including in policy and decision-making.

Now is the time to come together and to acknowledge the hard truths of our past. Now is the time to renew our commitment to live together on this land based on principles of trust, mutual respect and shared benefits.

Through Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, we reaffirm our commitment to truly acknowledge our dark past, to support survivors, and to give voice to communities impacted by the residential school legacy. This is a journey to reconciliation that we must walk together, with the federal government as partners and with Indigenous partners guiding the way. This, too, can be a part of our ongoing legacy. ●



“This is what I have seen in my lifetime. From 1950, when we weren’t allowed to do anything and couldn’t even get off the reserve, to 2015, everything has been changing and going in a good direction. I believe all of Canadians are going toward the good life; I think they’ve been very influenced by Indigenous people, particularly in the last 40 years, on questions of the environment, on questions of their humanity, on questions of democracy.... It is greater and greater democracy that is going to create the conditions for the good life in this country. So, we’ve been heading that way for a long time. We just have a lot of issues to clear up; there’s a lot of old shoes in the closet.”

— *Sto:lo/Métis Elder and author Lee Maracle*



## Donald Chrétien



Donald Chretien, of the Ojibwa Nation, is originally from Nipissing First Nation. His career as an artist has spanned 30 years. He began his work in commercial illustration,

but it was 2004 when he became interested in learning about his Ojibwa heritage. The result of this awakening is a deep commitment to his community and spirituality. He presently

travels to schools as part of the Aboriginal Artists in Schools project that is sponsored by the Ontario Arts Council. In March 2016, ten of Donald's original pieces were purchased by the Archives of Ontario. Donald's work is also exhibited on several sites across Turtle Island. This includes a massive 80-foot installation piece for the Vancouver Olympics titled 'Mother, Friend, Small Bird' which is on permanent display in Vancouver's Pacific Coliseum.

## Fred Cattroll



Fred Cattroll was born and raised in Ottawa. He is proud of his Cree heritage and still has family in South Indian Lake, Manitoba. Fred has more than 35 years of experi-

ence in the art of creating images. His photography is well known for its intimate human touch that document the human aspect of the people, places and events that make up Canadian culture. Fred was the photographer

for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with the responsibility to photograph the proceedings of the Commission's work, which occurred in seven locations across Canada. He was also the photographer for the Assembly of First Nations delegation that travelled to Rome to photograph the historic meeting with Pope Benedict XVI. Fred's work is also in the collection of the National Gallery, Canadian Museum of Photography, the National Arts Centre and the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

## Fresh Art & Design Inc.

Fresh Art & Design Inc. is an award-winning, Indigenous-owned communication design firm based in Toronto. As visual storytellers, they bring their client's message to life

through the use of compelling imagery and the written word. Clients range from the largest blue chip corporations to the smallest non-profit organizations.



*Tree of Life* by Donald Chrétien, 2013 © Copyright

The ever-growing tree of life with its branches spread from east to west, the top to the north and roots to the south. It provides a link between the heavens, earth and underworld. It roots itself in the underworld, its trunk passes through the natural world

and ascends up into the sky world. Otter and Bear were chosen to push the first Tree of Life pole (Grandmother Cedar) from the Earth's Centre through the surface, forming the first channel of communications between Above and Below.

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