

# The Community Forum

**Welcome** to The Community Forum, a collection of stories, perspectives, and ideas for action from Forum Community Relations. This Winter Solstice edition offers ideas and resources from our community about reconciliation in an urban context.

A lot has happened in the last year to increase awareness about the need for all of us to take action in order to advance reconciliation and re-story what it means to be Canadian. One area where I've seen a particular surge of interest and momentum relates to municipalities. Whether small towns, rural municipalities, or big metropolitan cities, there seems to have been a collective awakening to the opportunities to advance reconciliation in an urban context.

This edition includes stories and reflections from our community with a specific focus on urban environments, as well as a recap of the resources shared through our popular webinars held earlier this year. As you consider the year ahead and what actions you plan to take to advance reconciliation, we hope these resources help you on your journey.

All my relations,

~ Anne



## Reconciliation in an urban context

By Justin Jimmy

As many people migrate to urban centers during their journey in life, the Indigenous populations can include many different groups from various backgrounds

including First Nations, Metis, and Inuk, among others – my apologies if I missed any others. This creates uniqueness in responding to reconciliation action planning, as the concerns

around inclusion of all cultures and protocols is at the highest importance. In order to move forward with reconciliation, we must build trust, understand the truth, and rely on allyship to move towards actions of reconciliation.

### How do we build Trust...

Trust is foundational in any relationship whether personal, employment, business, or leadership movement

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towards reconciliation.

The pandemic has caused difficulties in this area as we have not been able to come together and meet in person which is key in building relationships. Body language and empathy is not clear in zoom video screens and sometimes it can be difficult to build trust in conversations. To build this trust, the first step is to reach out and establish the dialogue with the Indigenous community, showing great empathy or a desire to be open to learning Indigenous worldviews. By establishing this connection, and by showing a willingness to continue learning, this can create an environment to understand the truth. The passion and the fundamental purpose of building the relationship needs to be clear and purpose driven with alignment to values vs simply ticking a box around ESG(I) – environmental, social, governance, indigenous metric reporting. Ticking the box can only occur through a trusting positive relationship with the indigenous community.

#### ***Where do we start to understand the Truth...***

Ask, ask, ask, and then ask more... Our brains are sponges that can continue to learn more and create linkages in events that we have experienced outside of the Indigenous

worldview.

In order to create positive impact, we need to understand the events that created the need to reconciliation. This can be done by establishing relationships with the Indigenous communities, learning through discussions with elders and traditional knowledge holders within the communities. As previously discussed, trust is key, otherwise knowledge holders may not feel comfortable sharing information.

#### ***Why is Allyship important to move forward...***

As said in the initial discussion, many different culture groups are represented in the urban context and to build upon the momentum in reconciliation, allyship is a powerful approach. Allyship can include understanding and being open to learning new practices, protocols, experience, history, and cultures of various ethnic groups. Again, by building the trust with various ethnic groups, and by understanding the truth in each group in their unique experience, together we can progress towards positive social impact change. Allyship is about being a supportive sounding block, and absorbent sponge of learning new experiences, and by truly working together as one main group moving towards reconciliation.

*Justin Jimmy is Indigenous with Cree heritage from Treaty 6 territory and home community of Onion Lake Cree Nation. He holds a Bachelor of Management and is a CPA candidate. Once achieving this designation, Justin will be among a small group of Indigenous professionals across Canada. Justin also serves as Chair of the Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC), where he strives to engage city leadership to deliver more robust fully inclusive services for the Indigenous community of Calgary. He co-owns the children's products company Just Ezzy Bee Kidz Corp, a small business he recently launched with his wife, Bobbi.*

*Just Ezzy Bee Kidz Corp*



# Stepping Up to Walk Together: my journey with the Indigenous Gathering Place

By Anne Harding

It was March, 2017. A full decade since I started working professionally in Indigenous relations, not to mention the three additional years of learning and volunteering with Indigenous colleagues that started my reconciliation journey in 2004. By 2017 I had worked with over 50 Indigenous communities across Canada, delivered training to over a thousand people, developed national corporate programs to advance reconciliation, and had earned a Master's degree in Corporate-Aboriginal Relations. But it wasn't until that email I got in March of that year that I truly felt 'legit' as a settler working in the space of Indigenous relations.

That email came from my friend and colleague Michelle Fournie, a citizen of the Métis Nation who is now the Manager of the Iniiikokaan Centre at Bow Valley College. We hadn't talked in a couple of years, but she reached out on behalf of a grassroots community group that was calling itself the "Indigenous Gathering Place", inviting me to get involved because she thought I could make a difference. For me, that email was a humbling reflection of the relationships I'd built and the work that I'd done, and I was honoured by the invitation.

Since that email nearly five years ago, the Indigenous Gathering Place (IGP) has and will continue to be the most important volunteer role I will ever have, which is saying a lot for a girl who has averaged 250+ hours of volunteer time annually since she was 16 years old!

The vision for the IGP came from a reconciliation dialogue session in 2014, in which community members were asked the

question "What does Calgary need to advance reconciliation?" The answer: an Indigenous gathering place. It is important to say that this is not a new idea. Many Elders and community leaders have worked on initiatives in the past to build a physical space for Indigenous cultural practice and exchange, and their efforts have laid the groundwork for the current IGP. The Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #21 also talks about the importance of new physical spaces where Indigenous Peoples can gather to connect with culture and heal.



**Call to  
Action #21**

Many people I talk to are surprised to learn that the City of Calgary has over 500 places of worship, but not one of them is specifically intended for Indigenous spiritual or cultural practice. And for sure there are places in the city where Indigenous cultural activities take place, but they are generally through social service organizations that require individuals to have a socio-economic reason to access them.

For many urban Indigenous folks who aren't connected to social service programming, there are very limited opportunities and places to connect with cultural practice and community; not to mention even fewer opportunities and places for non-Indigenous people to connect with Indigenous cultures and peoples to build relationships. An Indigenous Gathering Place will be a space for healing, vibrant cultural renewal and exchange, positive dialogue, and building relations. And for the City of Calgary, it will be a beacon of hope and inspiration for those who follow in our footsteps, and an honouring of those who have walked these paths before us.

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For me, the experience of volunteering with the Indigenous Gathering Place is an embodiment of the unique opportunities and challenges of advancing reconciliation in an urban context. The IGP Society of Calgary is now a registered non-profit society where I sit as a minority settler board member. The organization is committed to working in “ethical space” (if you’re unfamiliar with this term, check out this great 5 minute video from the Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership). So in principle, this means that neither Indigenous nor Western ways of working are dominant but rather that we find parallels and work in both cultures, valuing what each has to bring to making the IGP a reality.



**Video:**  
**Ethical Space**

In practice, though, I’ll share that working in this way is not without discomfort. As a settler who is very aware of our colonial past and the diversity of Indigenous cultures and communities, I bring a hesitation to my work with the IGP. Those who know me know that I’m a “get ‘er done” kind of person and am biased toward taking action and checking things off my list. I recognize this bias is part of my colonial upbringing, founded in western perspectives of what is seen as ‘good’ and ‘productive’. And I know that this trait has indeed been seen as valuable and rewarded in the colonial organizations and companies I’ve been involved with.

The opportunity to actively reflect on this core part of my identity has been a tremendous gift. Because I believe in the importance of the work of the IGP and learning how to work in ethical space, I am able to challenge myself to explore other parts of my identity that were maybe less encouraged to develop: communicating through story (and being okay with the fact that it may take longer and we might not get through everything on our list); prioritizing relationships (though it may not feel as direct and accountable in the way I’m used to); and

inviting Ceremony (though some may not understand or connect with it).

I am a better person because I have had the chance to actively work on balancing different parts of my self. I’m a better parent, partner, and professional because I’m learning that some situations call for a more direct style while other situations call for more patience, reflection, and listening. I am more aware of the interconnectedness and relationships I hold with others, including those in the natural world, which allows me to place myself differently in space and time. I am grateful for these gifts and am committed to continuing to grow into them for the sake of myself, my kids, and my communities.

You may not be a serial volunteer like me, but we are all part of communities, and I encourage you to think about the communities that you’re connected to. Whether that’s a faith community, group of friends, professional association, work colleagues, children’s school or other activities, arts or sports groups, or community service groups, you have influence and opportunity through these connections. Indigenous people, communities, perspectives, and interests are or should be integrated into all aspects of our communities because indigeneity is part of who we are as a country and we all have the opportunity to do more to recognize that, and to work in ethical space.

As a settler serving in an Indigenous-led space, I am keenly aware of not wanting to engage or represent myself inappropriately. I also, however, do not want my own discomfort or hesitation to hold me back from making the real contribution and difference I was invited to make five years ago. I am constantly aware of my privilege and how the world I’m in was intentionally designed to be pretty easy for someone like me to paddle with the current. I am also constantly looking for ways to use that ease and privilege to hold up those who have been set up to paddle against the current for far too long, because I believe that is my responsibility.

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So as you consider the year ahead and the opportunities that you have to take action toward reconciliation in your professional and personal lives, I invite you to look inward to those spaces you already occupy and ask the question “what is needed here to advance reconciliation?” I’d welcome the opportunity to explore the answers with you. Please reach out anytime to explore the answers and paddle together.



Indigenous  
Gathering  
Place



## Reconciliation in an urban context: a settler’s reflection

This reflection comes from Hannele Gordon, Equity and Community Director at Wee Wild Ones & Of the Wild Nature School, and one of Forum Community Relations’ cultural agility coaching clients. To learn more about one-on-one or small group cultural agility coaching, please visit our website.

Before I begin, it is important to introduce myself and the perspective from which I speak. My name is Hannele (in English, pronounced Hanna-lee). I grew up in Robinson Huron Treaty territory, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe Peoples, specifically Batchewana and Garden River First Nations. My maternal ancestry is Finnish and my paternal ancestry is English and Scottish. I’m a cis-gendered woman and my pronouns are she/her. I spent most of my childhood exploring Lake Superior, Lake Huron and the landscape of northern Ontario. I’ve been a visitor in Treaty 7 Territory since 2013, and have only recently begun to identify as a settler.

My life experiences and reconciliation journey have been formed through my social position and intersecting identities. I consider myself in the beginning phase of this path and by no means an expert. I cannot determine what you do, but hopefully, my experience will resonate with you, wherever you are on your journey.

Reconciliation begins with the ‘self’, and in an urban setting, extends to your workplace,



Visit Wee Wild Ones here →

← Cultural agility coaching



community and beyond.

About a year ago, I started the unfamiliar process of learning and unlearning. I learned that privilege is equivalent to swimming in a current, and I have been propelled forward. At the same moment, I unlearned the concept of meritocracy, the belief that accomplishments are solely based on one’s actions. In short, some individuals benefit by swimming with the current while some individuals are disadvantaged by swimming against it.

I explored my understanding of history and learned that knowledge is generated and passed through a system of relationships. Knowledge demonstrates the social, historical and political context in which it was shaped, and does not merely exist as a collection of neutral facts. I then began to unlearn the colonial view of history. Conversations with Indigenous friends, leaders and knowledge keepers as well as diversifying my bookshelf all led me to view history through a lens that was new to me.

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I learned that trusted sources of information are not always reliable. I unlearned language that I had been using to refer to people with marginalized identities and learned new language. I deconstructed colonization and reconciliation then explored their meaning.

Once I started to identify as a settler and unpack what this means, I wondered how I could share my new perspective. I was fortunate enough to have colleagues who were ready to learn and unlearn with me.

There are ample opportunities to explore colonial practices within the workplace and dismantle how they show up on a day-to-day basis. Our leadership team reviewed hiring practices and addressed internal policies. We attended workshops and received consultation on Indigenous Peoples relations training, hiring and retention of Indigenous Peoples and the impact of implicit bias in the workplace.

Our team began to understand the diversity of Indigenous groups in Canada and considered the importance of land acknowledgements. We researched Treaty 7 territory and composed a land acknowledgement, personal to our workplace that honours the Indigenous Nations and communities who created the space in which we now live.

Together, our leadership team explored our individual identities and rethought how we communicated our place in the community. We shared the treaty territory in which we grew up, discussed our ancestry, relationship with the land, and preferred pronouns. This practice is now commonplace and encouraged amongst all employees.

We read the TRC's 94 Calls to Action and identified which elements applied to our organization. We committed to using the Calls to Action as our guiding principles in reconciliation, and we continuously reflect on where we can grow and change, assessing our daily, weekly and monthly actions.

The next phase on our path was to explore reconciliation at the community level. We connected with local businesses and organizations already doing amazing work. We learned from our colleagues and filled gaps in our practices. We shared knowledge, created relationships and expanded our sphere of influence.

We still have so much more to learn related to our selves, work culture and community. As a settler in an urban environment, my path began with self then extended to my workplace, community and back again. This is a lifelong commitment and journey that is each and everybody's responsibility.



**What's one thing that you can do to advance reconciliation in an urban context?**

*Check out this 2 minute video to find out.*



## Bobby's Pick

Colouring it Forward: Blackfoot Art and Wisdom  
by Diana Frost



"I like this book because there's interesting information in it and the pictures are cool. I like that a lot of the pictures look realistic."

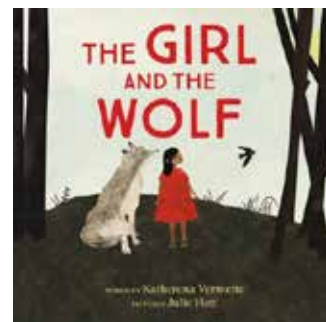
- Bobby Harding, 8 years old

## Allie's Pick

The Girl and the Wolf by Katherena Vermette

"I like it because the wolf is a friendly wolf and not a big bad wolf."

- Allie Harding, 3 years old



Thanks again to Diana from Colouring it Forward for supporting our September 30th learning webinar with free colouring pages from her books!

## Resource Rewind

In 2021, Anne partnered with nine colleagues to deliver two free 90 minute learning webinars, Watch the webinars by scanning the QR codes below and view the accompanying resources on the following pages.



Watch our popular June webinar, Indigenous Perspectives in Reconciliation, and use our infographic (next page) that offers a handy list of 10 tangible actions to take personally and professionally to help advance reconciliation.



In recognition of Canada's first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2021 we hosted a virtual discussion with Indigenous and Settler colleagues about how to support the young people in our lives on their reconciliation journeys.

FORUM PRESENTS

Stepping Stones: supporting the reconciliation journeys of the young people in our lives

Dr. Mike Lockers

Michelle Toussie

Dayna Morgan

Justin Binney

Scott Marlowes

Heeride Gordon

JOIN US ON CANADA'S NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH & RECONCILIATION

Through this 90 minute interactive webinar, our presenters will share experiences and perspectives to support you in navigating conversations with young people about reconciliation, including:

- Listening
- Storytime (ages 2 to 5)
- We're history and comics
- The importance of questions and curiosity
- Allyship and taking action
- Contemporary Indigenous music

30 SEPTEMBER 2021  
12PM - 1:30PM MDT

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER AT:  
<https://www.forum.ca/events/2021>



# 10 WAYS TO TAKE ACTION TOWARD RECONCILIATION

Based on our popular webinar, *Indigenous Perspectives in Reconciliation*, we invite all Canadians to help advance reconciliation and create better communities for us all

By Forum Community Relations

- 1 **RECOGNIZE DIVERSITY AMONG INDIGENOUS NATIONS AND COMMUNITIES**
- 2 **DIVERSIFY YOUR MEDIA**
- 3 **ATTEND AN EVENT OR CELEBRATION, AND SPEND TIME IN ORAL TRADITION**
- 4 **READ THE TRC'S CALLS TO ACTION AND KNOW WHICH CALLS APPLY TO YOU**
- 5 **KNOW YOUR INFLUENCE AND ASK HOW YOU CAN USE IT TO TAKE ACTION**
- 6 **BUY INDIGENOUS**
- 7 **DECOLONIZE. MAKE SPACE TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY**
- 8 **BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND LISTEN MORE THAN YOU SPEAK**
- 9 **VOLUNTEER WITH AND DONATE TO INDIGENOUS-LED OR INDIGENOUS-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS**
- 10 **BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR LEARNING, FOR YOUR ACTIONS, AND FOR YOUR COMMUNITY**

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Learn more at [forumrelations.com](http://forumrelations.com)



# SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE ON THEIR RECONCILIATION JOURNEYS

As a companion to our webinar celebrating Canada's National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, we offer these resources to continue learning and taking action toward reconciliation with the young people in your lives

Curated by Forum Community Relations

- VISIT YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC LIBRARY AND ASK WHAT EVENTS AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE**
- LEARN ABOUT ORANGESHIRTDAY.ORG AND BUY AN ORANGE SHIRT FROM AN INDIGENOUS VENDOR**
- RESEARCH DIFFERENT INDIGENOUS-LED NON-PROFITS AND PLAN TO DONATE OR VOLUNTEER TOGETHER**
- CREATE A BACK POCKET RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN THROUGH RECONCILIATIONCANADA.CA**
- ENCOURAGE YOUNG ADULTS (18-29) TO CONSIDER JOINING YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS FROM CANADIANROOTS.CA**
- SEEK OUT CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS MUSIC FROM CBC AND INDIGENOUS CONTENT FROM CBC KIDS**
- ENCOURAGE CURIOSITY. WHEN A QUESTION COMES FROM A CHILD, TAKE THE CHANCE TO LEARN TOGETHER.**
- TALK OPENLY ABOUT ALLYSHIP AND WHAT IT MEANS TO USE YOUR PRIVILEGE TO HOLD EACH OTHER UP**
- BUILD YOUR RECONCILIATION BOOKSHELF WITH AGE-APPROPRIATE BOOKS BY INDIGENOUS AUTHORS**
- MODEL RECONCILIATION. BE CURIOUS, VULNERABLE, AND KIND. SEEK OUT RELATIONSHIPS WITH HUMILITY AND LOVE.**

#knowbetterdobetter

Learn more at [forumrelations.com](http://forumrelations.com)



# 10 WAYS TO TAKE ACTION TOWARD RECONCILIATION



Based on our popular webinar, *Indigenous Perspectives in Reconciliation*, we invite all Canadians to help advance reconciliation and create better communities for us all

FORUM  
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## 1 RECOGNIZE DIVERSITY AMONG INDIGENOUS NATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

The three recognized Indigenous groups of Canada are First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

Learn more about how to talk about Indigenous Peoples by watching [this short video](#).

Diversify your music collection by seeking artists from different Indigenous Nations.

Some of our favourites are The Jerry Cans, William Prince, Sierra Noble, and Jeremy Dutcher

## 2 DIVERSIFY YOUR MEDIA

Seek out and follow Indigenous journalists to get a more balanced take on current events.

Some of our go-to journalists are [Tanya Talaga](#), [Connie Walker](#), and [Todd Lamirande](#).

Listen to podcasts or shows that discuss Indigenous interests and contemporary experiences.

Some of our favourites are [Unreserved](#), [Red Man Laughing](#), [Unsettled: Journeys in Truth and Conciliation](#), and [Indigenous 150+](#).

## 3 ATTEND AN EVENT OR CELEBRATION, AND SPEND TIME IN ORAL TRADITION

Celebrate National Indigenous History Month in June by attending an in person or virtual event!



And when it's not the month of June, you can still find ways to connect with Indigenous knowledge keepers to learn more. Public libraries and Indigenous student centres at post-secondary will often have public events where all peoples can learn and share.

## 4 READ THE TRC'S CALLS TO ACTION AND KNOW WHICH CALLS APPLY TO YOU

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada released [94 Calls to Action](#) in 2015.

We see this document as a gift to Canada, offering us a path to a different and more equitable nation.

The [Beyond 94](#) website was set up to track progress on each of these calls. Spend some time on the site and notice that over half of the calls have seen little to no action taken.

We believe that every Canadian should be able to see themselves in at least one of the 94 Calls, and ask how their governments, institutions, organizations, businesses and communities are responding.

## 5 KNOW YOUR INFLUENCE AND ASK HOW YOU CAN USE IT TO TAKE ACTION

Consider the different 'hats' that you wear and communities that you're a part of. Are you...

- A parent?
- A sibling?
- Part of a faith community?
- Part of a professional community?
- An engaged citizen?
- In a leadership position?
- Working for an organization that's named in the [Truth & Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action](#)?

All of these roles are part of your personal and professional "spheres of influence". Each one offers the opportunity for you to advance reconciliation through everyday conversations, decisions, and actions.

## 6 BUY INDIGENOUS



As an individual consumer, consider buying gifts, clothes or homewares online from great Indigenous businesses like [Manitoba Mukluks](#) and [Cheekbone Beauty](#) or check out [shopfirsnations.com](#) to find an Indigenous business near you.

If you're part of an organizations that purchases goods or services, check out the [National Indigenous Business Directory](#) from CCAB to see if there are Indigenous vendors who could perform the work you're looking to have done.

## 7 DECOLONIZE. MAKE SPACE TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Explore the assumptions that guide your outlook on the world. When you assume that a particular way of doing things is "better" than another way, ask yourself why you think that. The narratives and experiences we grew up with create a lens through which we see the world.

Challenge yourself to broaden your lens to include Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Consider how the way you operate is structured.

*What parts of your day or your organization could benefit from an Indigenous practice?*



Start each day in gratitude for Creation

Seek consensus for decisions, even if it takes longer

Value relationships over time, money, and property

## 8 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND LISTEN MORE THAN YOU SPEAK

Relationships are at the cornerstone of reconciliation. We will not find a path forward to be a more equitable, productive, and prosperous society unless we know each other well enough to have tough conversations.



"LET US FIND A WAY TO BELONG TO THIS TIME AND PLACE TOGETHER. OUR FUTURE, AND THE WELL-BEING OF ALL OUR CHILDREN RESTS WITH THE KIND OF RELATIONSHIPS WE BUILD TODAY."

- CHIEF DR. ROBERT JOSEPH  
[reconciliationcanada.ca](#)

## 9 VOLUNTEER WITH AND DONATE TO INDIGENOUS-LED OR INDIGENOUS-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS



Volunteering is a great way to build relationships with and understanding about Indigenous Peoples.

If you're not able to offer your time, consider offering other resources and make a donation.

Here are a few of the groups we support (click to learn more about them):

- [Indigenous Gathering Place Society of Calgary](#)
- [Bear Clan Patrol](#)
- [Canadian Roots Exchange](#)



We encourage you to look for opportunities in your local territory so you can build relationships that are connected to the lands around you!

## 10 BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR LEARNING, FOR YOUR ACTIONS, AND FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

It's often said that "what gets measured gets done", so why not bring that same approach to your reconciliation actions?



Consider building a personal and/or professional Reconciliation Action Plan. Like any goal, write down what you plan to do and how you'll know if you've done it.



Reconciliation Canada has printable template for a [Back Pocket Reconciliation Action Plan](#) to keep you on track!

Not sure where to start?  
Pick one item from this list and go from there!

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Learn more at [forumrelations.com](#)



Anne is privileged to live, work, and play in traditional Treaty 7 territory and home of Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3.

Anne is the Owner of Forum Community Relations, a Calgary based consulting company dedicated to catalyzing better communities through Indigenous relations, community engagement, and culturally appropriate facilitation.

Connect with her work at [www.forumrelations.com](#)

