



Towards holistic reporting: An Indigenous-Centered Framework for Measuring Canadian Reconciliation Progress

A proposal for the National Council for Reconciliation in Canada, submitted by the Institute for Economics and Peace

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I, the undersigned, **Fiona Nicholson**, candidate for the MA degree in International Relations declare herewith that the present thesis titled "Towards holistic reporting: An Indigenous-Centered Framework for Measuring Canadian Reconciliation Progress" is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography.

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Vienna, 05 June 2025.

Fiona Nicholson

Table of Contents:

Executive Summary: Page 3

Introduction: Page 3-5

Current Reconciliation Efforts and Reporting Mechanisms: Page 5-9

IEP's Role and Expertise: Page 9-10

Positive Peace Framework: Page 10-15

Two-Eyed Seeing Approach as a Theoretical Framework: Page 15-16

Methodology and Logistical Considerations: Page 16-19

Value and Impact: Page 19-21

Conclusion and Next Steps: Page 21

Bibliography: Page 22-27

Executive Summary

This report proposes creating a comprehensive index quantifying Canadian reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities through the lens of Positive Peace. By leveraging the expertise of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), the Canadian government can develop a report with actionable, sustainable recommendations to guide both ongoing and future reconciliation commitments. Aimed at consolidating data reports across government agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations, this single report will provide a holistic understanding of the state of reconciliation in Canada. Our report will focus on where reconciliation is working, amplifying the voices of those communities and using their successes as models to replicate. Based on our evidence-driven methodology, this proposed report will provide insight into which institutions, structures and attitudes contribute to achieving meaningful reconciliation, identifying positive developments and opportunities for further progress. We propose creating this report in partnership with the National Council for Reconciliation to ensure our research design reflects Indigenous priorities, grounded in the Two-Eyed Seeing approach that integrates Indigenous and Western knowledge systems.¹

Introduction

The Canadian government has committed to renewing its relationship with Indigenous peoples, framing reconciliation efforts as a dedication to the “recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership.”² These efforts seek to address centuries of historical injustice and systemic marginalization, which have had profound effects on the culture, health, and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada. As part of this commitment, Canada has developed a range of reports, policies, and frameworks aimed at addressing this marginalization and fostering meaningful progress in reconciliation.³ Despite continued investments, significant challenges persist in their successful implementation. Indigenous peoples continue to face stark socio-economic disparities as compared to non-Indigenous Canadians, including inequitable healthcare access, food insecurity, substandard housing conditions, and significant gaps in education and employment.⁴ While the government has established multiple reporting mechanisms to track reconciliation efforts, data is published in disparate forms with inconsistent metrics. As a result, there is no coherent, unified policy report that consolidates this information into a standardized framework. It remains a challenge to systematically analyze the effectiveness of reconciliation efforts and opportunities for further progress. Several reports from the Auditor

¹ Cheryl Bartlett, Murdena Marshall, and Albert Marshall, "Two-Eyed Seeing and Other Lessons Learned Within a Co-learning Journey of Bringing Together Indigenous and Mainstream Knowledges and Ways of Knowing." *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* 2 (2012): 331-340. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-012-0086-8>

² Department of Justice Canada, "Principles Respecting the Government of Canada's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples." Government of Canada. Last modified September 1, 2021. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/principles-principes.html>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Indigenous Services Canada, "An Update on the Socio-economic Gaps Between Indigenous Peoples and the Non-Indigenous Population in Canada: Highlights from the 2021 Census." Government of Canada, Last modified October 25, 2023. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1690909773300/1690909797208>

General of Canada to the Canadian federal departments emphasize the need to improve its monitoring system for Indigenous reconciliation efforts, repeatedly condemning them for not “meaningfully engag[ing] with First Nations to satisfactorily measure and report on whether the lives of [Indigenous] people ...were improving.”⁵

This report proposes contracting IEP to consolidate reconciliation-related data from federal departments, not-for-profit organizations, and academic institutions into a substantive report. This proposed report will examine Indigenous communities across Canada and assess their relationship with the Canadian government. Our framework composes eight interrelated pillars of peace, derived from their strong statistical correlation to sustainable peace and development.⁶ Using these pillars, we will identify the factors that contribute to fostering sustainable, mutually beneficial progress with Indigenous communities.⁷

We propose the development of this report in partnership with the recently established National Council for Reconciliation (NCR), an independent council mandated to monitor and evaluate progress on reconciliation initiatives.⁸ As the NCR is not fully operational and is still developing its administrative structure, IEP can provide its immediate analytical capacity to assist the NCR in fulfilling its mandate. IEP’s established positive peace framework offers the NCR a rigorous, data-driven framework that could accelerate its ability to monitor progress. As researchers, we want to recognize our positionality as non-Indigenous engaging in Indigenous reconciliation research. We commit to a collaborative research approach guided by Indigenous leadership. By partnering with the NCR, we will use their guidance in developing a data framework that authentically reflects Indigenous priorities and methodologies. We will ensure this is an ongoing, reciprocal relationship throughout all stages of research design, data collection, and knowledge dissemination. This process will be grounded in a two-eyed seeing approach, an integrative framework combining Indigenous and Western knowledge systems.⁹

⁵ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, "Report 5—Socio-economic Gaps on First Nations Reserves—Indigenous Services Canada," in 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2018), https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201805_05_e_43037.html.

⁶ Institute for Economics and Peace, "Positive Peace Report 2024" (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2024), <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PPR-2024-web.pdf>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "National Council for Reconciliation Act Becomes Law, a Positive Step Toward Fulfilling Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." Government of Canada, May 1, 2024.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs/news/2024/04/national-council-for-reconciliation-act-becomes-law-a-positive-step-toward-fulfilling-calls-to-action-from-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission.html>

⁹ Cindy Peltier, "An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing: Indigenous Research Methods With Participatory Action Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 17, no. 1 (2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918812346>

In the following sections, this proposal will briefly outline Canada's reconciliatory commitments and current reporting mechanisms from both government agencies and independent organizations to track its progress. It will then introduce our positive peace model and its methodology, highlighting its value in filling the existing gaps in reporting on reconciliation efforts. It will also discuss how our proposed report will partner with the NCR and employ a two-eyed seeing approach. It will ultimately discuss the logistics of the report's administration and considerations for its successful implementation.

Current Reconciliation efforts and reporting mechanisms

The Canadian government's efforts to advance reconciliation involve building a renewed relationship with Indigenous peoples by addressing past harms, supporting the development of strong and healthy communities, and promoting self-determination and prosperity.¹⁰ The government designates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as its official roadmap for these commitments, with its 94 Calls to Action aimed at guiding this process.¹¹ The TRC was established in 2008 as one of the mandated aspects of the Residential School Settlement Agreement, with the intended function of documenting the abuses experienced at the schools and their intergenerational impacts on Indigenous communities. Through its compilation of testimonies, in 2015 the commission released 94 calls to action to address the systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples and the legacy of the residential school system. These actionable policy recommendations encompass a range of issues related to Indigenous welfare, including educational programs, language and cultural rights, healthcare access, justice in the legal system, and historical commemoration.¹²

Canada has also endorsed the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, claiming that its tenants will be entirely consistent with the Canadian Constitution and laws.¹³ This includes rights to autonomy or self-government, cultural preservation, and the right to informed consent before the approval of any action related to the development or exploitation of resources.¹⁴ It also calls for redress of any measures that fail to comply with obligations to

¹⁰ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "The Reconciliation Journey." Government of Canada. Last modified February 7, 2025. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1651868378940/1651868435684>.

¹¹ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada." Government of Canada. Last modified December 12, 2024. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525#chp2>.

¹² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada" (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

¹³ Department of Justice Canada, "Backgrounder: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act" Government of Canada. Last modified December 10, 2021. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/about-apropos.html>

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly, "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, September 13, 2007, A/RES/61/295, https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

safeguard Indigenous rights. The government has asserted that these reports provide a framework for its reconciliation policies to drive fundamental change in its renewed relationship.¹⁵ To monitor its progress in implementing these commitments, the Canadian government has established several mechanisms to report on the implementation of these commitments.

This is a non-exhaustive list of government monitoring mechanisms:

1. Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action: A web page providing information on the federal government's implementation progress of the 94 Calls to Action.¹⁶
2. Community Well-Being Index: A statistical measure comparing the socio-economic well-being between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities using education, labour force, income, and housing indicators over forty years.¹⁷
3. Annual Reports to Parliament: Annual monitoring of key initiatives, investments, and challenges delivering services to Indigenous peoples in that fiscal year.¹⁸
4. Modern Treaties Implementation Report: An annual overview of the Canadian government's progress in implementing modern treaties and self-government agreements with Indigenous communities.¹⁹
5. Specific Claims Database: A database that monitors the status and progress of Indigenous claims against the federal government related to treaty rights, land management and resource administration.²⁰

As of March 1, 2025, merely 14 calls to action have been completed.²¹ While there are several plausible reasons for this stagnation, systemic barriers such as a lack of sustained political will, unclear resource allocation, and inadequate accountability mechanisms have hindered meaningful change.²² One of the key contributing factors to these challenges is the lack

¹⁵ Department of Justice Canada, "Backgrounder: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act" <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/about-apropos.html>

¹⁶ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action." Government of Canada. Last modified November 13, 2024. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524494530110/1557511412801>.

¹⁷ Indigenous Services Canada, "The Community Well-Being Index." Government of Canada. Last modified September 26, 2024. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100016579/1557319653695>.

¹⁸ Indigenous Services Canada, "Annual Report to Parliament 2023." Government of Canada. Last modified October 25, 2023. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1689946940359/1689946961213>.

¹⁹ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Implementation of Modern Treaties and Self-government Agreements." Government of Canada. Last modified November 8, 2019. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1573225148041/1573225175098>.

²⁰ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Specific Claims." Government of Canada. Last modified February 5, 2025. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100030291/1539617582343>.

²¹ Indigenous Watchdog, "TRC Calls To Action Status: March 1, 2025." Indigenous Watchdog. March 1 2025. <https://www.indigenouswatchdog.org/2025/03/05/trc-calls-to-action-status-may-13-2022/>

²² Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby, Calls to Action Accountability: A 2020 Status Update on Reconciliation" Yellowhead Institute. December 2020. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/yi-trc-calls-to-action-update-full-report-2020.pdf>

of comprehensive and culturally relevant reporting mechanisms on its implementation progress.²³ Firstly, there appears to be no single mechanism that integrates all aspects of the government's commitments into a clear, engaging report. The current state of monitoring reconciliation and Indigenous well-being in Canada is fragmented across many departments.²⁴ The variety of reports has resulted in varying methodologies, timelines, and definitions of what constitutes effective progress. Evaluating the government's progress on its commitments and strategically identifying gaps for opportunity remains challenging.

Upon examining each mechanism, significant limitations become apparent. The government's webpage on delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action offers a high-level overview of its completion rate rather than comprehensive insights on their progress or efforts to facilitate sustainable change.²⁵ The Annual Reports to Parliament on reconciliation focus on different annual initiatives each year, with varying reporting methods across different reports. These reports provide snapshots into short-term projects, as opposed to a longitudinal view of progress. Both the Modern Treaties Implementation and Specific Claims Database focus on the legal and bureaucratic processes involved in negotiation and do not provide a nuanced analysis of how these claims relate to broader reconciliation efforts. The Community Well-Being Index is the most comprehensive measure of Indigenous socio-economic conditions. However, it has been criticized for omitting several key aspects of well-being that are important to Indigenous peoples, including self-determination rights, language rights and cultural ties.²⁶ The Auditor General of Canada has repeatedly highlighted these shortcomings in existing reporting mechanisms, urging a more detailed analysis of reconciliation progress, improved data collection methods, and meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities to ensure their priorities are reflected in these mechanisms.²⁷

Many non-governmental organizations have attempted to fill in these gaps by analyzing the systemic barriers that hinder meaningful progress. These organizations, largely Indigenous-led, have provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of Indigenous communities with reconciliation. They provide analysis into what constitutes genuine reconciliation to Indigenous peoples and recommendations for meaningful engagement with communities.

²³ Alex Chernoff and Crystal Cheung, "An Overview of the Indigenous Economy in Canada." Bank of Canada, October 31, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.34989/sdp-2023-25>.

²⁴ First Nations Management Board, "The roadmap project: Chapter two: Closing the economic data and statistics gap" First Nations Financial Management Board, May 2022. https://fnfmb.com/sites/default/files/2022-05/roadmap_project_chapter2_data_stats_gap_final.pdf

²⁵ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action." Last modified November 13, 2024.

²⁶ Alex Chernoff and Crystal Cheung, "An Overview of the Indigenous Economy in Canada." October 31, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.34989/sdp-2023-25>.

²⁷ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, "Report 5—Socio-economic Gaps on First Nations Reserves—Indigenous Services Canada," 2018 https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201805_05_e_43037.html.

Mechanisms developed by non-governmental organizations:

1. Calls to Action Accountability Report/Calls to Action Updates (developed by the Yellowhead Institute and Indigenous Watchdog): These reports provide independent monitoring of the Canadian government's progress in implementing the 94 calls to action. These reports track the status of each recommendation, analyze the quality of their implementation, and highlight patterns in the government's lack of meaningful engagement.²⁸
2. Reconciliation Report Card (developed by the Assembly of First Nations): These report cards assess the federal government's progress on its commitments across various policy areas, highlighting its achievements and failures. Policy areas include: self-determination and self-government rights, resource revenue sharing, justice system reform, and climate action.²⁹
3. Reconciliation Barometer (developed by the Frontier Centre): This public opinion survey poll tracks public perceptions about reconciliation in Canada from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.³⁰
4. Land Back Reports (developed by the Yellowhead Institute): These reports track Indigenous land reclamation efforts and analyze the Canadian government's federal land return policies.³¹
5. An Overview of the Indigenous Economy in Canada (developed by the Bank of Canada): This overview describes the institutional barriers to economic participation, including in the labour market, the business sector, access to finance and the state of infrastructure.³²

While these independent reports do fill in some gaps, they also face limitations with their data collection and funding. These resources do not have the institutional backing of government data collection processes and often rely on small-scale reporting or editorials. Further, as these are independent organizations, they do not have the same influence on government policies and may lead more to awareness-raising rather than direct policy change. While these sources are valuable for highlighting discrepancies in reconciliation initiatives and the lived realities of Indigenous communities, these mechanisms are also constrained.³³

²⁸ Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby, "Calls to Action Accountability: A 2023 Status Update on Reconciliation" Yellowhead Institute. Accessed March 30, 2025. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/trc/>

²⁹ Assembly of First Nations, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action Report Card 2024: Annual Assessment of Government Progress" (Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations, 2024), <https://afn.bynder.com/m/2fb4a0c35e36cfb2/original/TRC-Report-Card-2024.pdf>.

³⁰ Canadian Reconciliation Barometer, "Canadian Reconciliation Barometer: 2022 Report." Vancouver: Canadian Reconciliation Barometer, December 2023. <https://www.reconciliationbarometer.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CRB-2022-Report-2023-12-07-FINAL.pdf>

³¹ Yellowhead Institute, "Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper" (Toronto: Yellowhead Institute, October 2019), <https://redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/red-paper-report-final.pdf>.

³² Alex Chernoff and Crystal Cheung, "An Overview of the Indigenous Economy in Canada." Bank of Canada, October 31, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.34989/sdp-2023-25>.

³³ First Nations Management Board, "The roadmap project: Chapter two: Closing the economic data and statistics gap" First Nations Financial Management Board, May 2022. https://fnfmb.com/sites/default/files/2022-05/roadmap_project_chapter2_data_stats_gap_final.pdf

There remains an urgent need for a more robust, coordinated reporting mechanism that integrates Indigenous priorities into its framework. As the Auditor General of Canada states, “measuring and reporting on progress in closing socio-economic gaps would help everyone involved—including Parliament, First Nations, the federal government, other departments, and other partners—to understand whether their efforts to improve lives are working.”³⁴ Comprehensive reporting would provide Canadian governments with the data necessary to establish where progress is being made, evaluate its strategy, and refine its policies to advance its efforts.³⁵ This would enable more effective resource allocation and ensure that investments are streamlined to target tangible improvements for Indigenous communities.³⁶ Integrating Indigenous priorities into its framework would also ensure its strategies are responsive to their specific needs, and signal to Indigenous communities its commitment to their equal partnership.³⁷

In 2024, the Canadian government enacted legislation to establish a National Council for Reconciliation, fulfilling Call to Action 53 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This council is an independent, Indigenous-led organization aimed to advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.³⁸ The federal government has vowed to provide data and annual reports to assist in tracking progress toward reconciliation. The government has also provided the council an endowment of 126.5 million dollars to support its initial operations. With this data compilation, the council is responsible for recommending measures to coordinate reconciliation in all sectors of Canadian society and by all governments in Canada.³⁹

IEPs role and expertise

This is where the IEP assumes a pivotal role. As an organization dedicated to analyzing the conditions that contribute to sustainable peace and flourishing, we are uniquely positioned to bolster this national endeavour. By partnering with our organization, the NCR can leverage our analytical resources on data-driven peace research to accelerate its mandate. Our research methodologies have been rigorously tested and adopted by leading intergovernmental organizations including the United Nations, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and

³⁴ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, "Report 5—Socio-economic Gaps on First Nations Reserves—Indigenous Services Canada," https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201805_05_e_43037.html.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Alex Chernoff and Crystal Cheung, "An Overview of the Indigenous Economy in Canada." <https://doi.org/10.34989/sdp-2023-25>.

³⁸ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "National Council for Reconciliation Act Becomes Law, a Positive Step Toward Fulfilling Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." Government of Canada, May 1, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs/news/2024/04/national-council-for-reconciliation-act-becomes-law-a-positive-step-toward-fulfilling-calls-to-action-from-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission.html>

³⁹ Ibid.

the OECD.⁴⁰ Our think tank's expertise in developing robust metrics to measure complex social phenomena perfectly complements the Council's mandate. IEP brings international credibility and objectivity that will strengthen NCR's assessment process.

As an organization, we have significant experience applying our peace-building frameworks to diverse cultural contexts. IEP has conducted positive peace workshops in several regions worldwide, including Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas. In these workshops, we have been adamant about tailoring our methodology to adhere to local contexts and priorities. As Steve Killea, IEP's founder, wrote in his novel *Peace in the Age of Chaos*, IEP rejects the current Western approach of imposing solutions rather than understanding "the way local systems operate, people's beliefs and their encoded norms, and then tailoring the humanitarian intervention to fit the circumstances."⁴¹ We consider partnering with the NCR for their guidance not merely as a moral obligation, but as a fundamental priority for our report. A report on sustainable peace must capture authentic Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems to be effective. We firmly believe in developing a report that addresses reconciliation priorities as defined by Indigenous communities themselves. We are confident we can develop a culturally adaptive report that adheres to Indigenous values while maintaining analytical rigour.

The Positive Peace Framework

The cornerstone of our approach is our Positive Peace Index. This framework is a comprehensive measure of the underlying attitudes, structures and institutions that create and sustain peaceful societies. Positive peace describes an optimal environment under which human potential can flourish.⁴² Based on empirical research of over 24,700 data series, indices, and attitudinal survey variables, we have identified eight interconnected pillars of positive peace. Our positive peace pillars are derived from global comparative data with the strongest statistical relationship to levels of peace within countries.⁴³

⁴⁰ Institute for Economics and Peace, "Positive Peace Report 2024" (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2024), <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PPR-2024-web.pdf>.

⁴¹ Steve Killea, "Cultural Differences Matter for Humanitarian Interventions" Institute for Economics and Peace. Accessed March 30, 2024. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/culture-differences-that-make-a-difference/>

⁴² Institute for Economics and Peace, "Positive Peace Report 2024" <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PPR-2024-web.pdf>.

⁴³ Ibid.



Figure 1: Positive Peace Implementation Guide⁴⁴

Our eight pillars are interconnected and interact with one another, forming a systemic approach to peace. This dynamic framework enables a more nuanced understanding of peace, understood as a relationship or communication flow.⁴⁵ Our framework recognizes that

⁴⁴ Institute for Economics and Peace, Positive Peace Implementation Guide (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2024).

<https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Positive-Peace-Implementation-Guide-web.pdf>

⁴⁵ Vision of Humanity, “Positive Peace Report 2020 Summary and Key Findings” Institute for Economics and Peace. Accessed March 30, 2025.

<https://www.visionofhumanity.org/positive-peace-report-2020-summary-and-key-findings/>

sustainable peace cannot be reduced to its parts or isolated elements.⁴⁶ Instead, each pillar is thought of as mutually determining one another, operating non-linearly to interact with one another. Each pillar of positive peace comprises three corresponding attitudes, institutions, and structures, resulting in 24 interconnected data sets that create and sustain peaceful societies. Weighted proportionality to their statistical relationship to internal peacefulness, these weighted indicators are then combined to form the overall positive peace score.⁴⁷

We propose adapting our eight pillars to assess reconciliation progress across a diverse sample of Indigenous communities in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups. Data sets will be weighted based on their statistical relevance to reconciliation outcomes, as identified through collaborative Indigenous consultation.⁴⁸ Each community will receive a subsequent scoring based on the compilation of data across all pillars and indicators.⁴⁹ It is crucial to emphasize that this score is not designed to rank or evaluate Indigenous communities against each other, but rather as a performance indicator for the federal government's implementation of its reconciliation commitments. The variations in scores between communities will highlight disparities in government support and implementation efforts, rather than differences in community achievement. By analyzing the underlying factors of peace that have proven effective in advancing reconciliation efforts, this report can identify which pillars have been implemented effectively, and where there are significant gaps that require substantive action.⁵⁰

While each of these pillars will be recalibrated with the NCR to ensure Indigenous priorities are at the forefront, we have prepared a preliminary framework to serve as a starting point for collaborative refinement. Each of the underlying factors of peace we selected directly relates to Canada's reconciliation commitments: corresponding to specific TRC Calls to Action⁵¹, articles from UNDRIP,⁵² or both. By aligning our framework with these established commitments, we can systematically identify disparities between government commitments and the lived realities of Indigenous communities. This report can serve as an assessment tool and an accountability mechanism for progress. This initial framework serves as a reference for the scope and capabilities of our research team.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Institute for Economics and Peace, "Positive Peace Report 2024", <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PPR-2024-web.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Daniel Shapiro, "Reconciliation Systems Design: A systematic approach to collective healing in post-conflict societies" *Harvard Negotiation Law Review*. 26:193 (2021), 240.

A Systematic Approach to Collective Healing in Post-Conflict Societies"

⁵¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada", 2015.

⁵² United Nations General Assembly, "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 2007.

Our preliminary framework:

1. Well-functioning government:

- a) **Self-government implementation:** Implementation of self-government agreements and Indigenous autonomy over decision-making (TRC Call to Action #45, Article 3 & 4 of UNDRIP)
- b) **Indigenous legislative influence:** Mechanisms for meaningful consultation and consent on legislation affecting Indigenous communities, including procedures for redress (Article 11.2 & Article 19 of UNDRIP)
- c) **Representation in Canadian government:** Representation of Indigenous leadership in federal, provincial and municipal government bodies (Article 18 of UNDRIP)

2. Equitable distribution of resources:

- a) **Equitable funding for Indigenous child welfare services:** Investment into the quality of care for Indigenous children in welfare services; implementation of the Jordans Principle: no delay or denial in care (TRC calls to action #1-5, Article 14 of UNDRIP)
- b) **Infrastructure and services parity:** Investment in essential infrastructure and services including housing, health services, water systems, and telecommunications (TRC calls to action # 18-24, Article 21 & 23 of UNDRIP)
- c) **Resource revenue sharing:** Equitable financial compensation for resource extraction ventures or development projects (Article 28 of UNDRIP)

3. Free flow of information:

- a) **Indigenous education in the curriculum:** Incorporation of Indigenous education into Canadian curriculum, including history and legacy colonial impact, Indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary contributions of Indigenous communities (TRC calls to action #62-65)
- b) **Access to government data/proprietaryship over data:** Accessibility and availability of government data on Indigenous communities and reconciliation initiatives; right to maintain and control intellectual property concerning Indigenous communities (TRC calls to action #55, Article 31 of UNDRIP)
- c) **Indigenous media representation:** Meaningful representation of Indigenous peoples/stories in mainstream media, Indigenous-led media presence (Article 16 of UNDRIP, TRC calls to action #84-86)

4. Good relations with neighbours:

- a) **Legal Tradition Recognition:** Recognition and implementation of Indigenous legal traditions in modern treaty and land claim negotiations (TRC call to action #45)
- b) **Level of Trust:** Perception of trust between Indigenous communities and surrounding municipalities/organizations (TRC call to action #45)
- c) **Intercultural competency training:** Quality and reach of training programs on intercultural competency for the Canadian public (Article 15 of UNDRIP, TRC calls to action # 23, 24, 27, 28, 63, 84, 92)

5. High levels of human capital:

- a) **Skill development:** Investment into skill development and vocational training for Indigenous peoples (TRC call to action #7)
- b) **Educational attainment:** Programs to improve education attainment levels for Indigenous students, including developing culturally appropriate curricula (TRC call to action #6-17)
- c) **Sports Programs:** Access to sports programs that reflect traditional sporting activities; athlete development programs; implementation of protocols to reduce barriers to sports participation (TRC calls to action #87-91)

6. Acceptance of the rights of others:

- a) **Justice system reforms:** Implementation of justice system reforms addressing systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples (TRC calls to action #25-42)
- b) **Perception of belonging:** Perception of inclusion and acceptance into the Canadian public; including gender considerations and specific attention to the safety, security, and justice for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.⁵³ (Article 44 of UNDRIP, Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls).⁵⁴
- c) **Cultural revitalization:** Rights to practice and revitalize cultural traditions and customs; including Indigenous language rights (TRC calls to action #13-17, Article 11 of UNDRIP)

⁵³ Due to space constraints, this proposal does not extensively delve into the disproportionate gender-based violence that Indigenous women experience in Canada. However, we acknowledge this as a fundamental aspect of reconciliation that would be fully integrated into our comprehensive report, incorporating Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Each of these pillars can be recalibrated specifically for gender considerations. Any credible reconciliation framework must center Indigenous women's justice as critical to meaningful progress.

⁵⁴ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, "Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls," June 2019, https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf.

7. Low levels of corruption:

- a) **Transparent negotiations:** Transparency and fairness of consultation and negotiation processes, adherence to 'free, prior and informed consent' (TRC calls to action #92, Articles 19 & 32 of UNDRIP)
- b) **Legal transparency:** Transparency on legal opinions the Canadian government/courts develop on the scope and extent of treaty rights; transparency on legal actions brought against Indigenous peoples (TRC calls to action #25, #51)
- c) **Financial transparency:** Clarity and transparency into the allocation of funds into Indigenous program funding (TRC Call to Action #55, Article 39 of UNDRIP)

8. A sound business environment:

- a) **Support for Indigenous-owned businesses:** Implementation and quality of program and policies that promote Indigenous entrepreneurship and business ventures (TRC call to action #92, Article 39 of UNDRIP)
- b) **Equitable hiring programs:** Implementation and quality of Indigenous hiring programs; equitable access to jobs and training opportunities in corporate sectors (TRC call to action #92, Article 17 of UNDRIP)
- c) **Protection of traditional economic activities:** Implementation and quality of policies that safeguard traditional economic practices and their vitality, including hunting and gathering rights (TRC call to action #92, Article 20 of UNDRIP)

Two-Eyed Seeing Approach as a theoretical framework

As a non-Indigenous-led organization engaging in research on Indigenous communities, we commit to developing a research methodology that reflects Indigenous priorities. Our methodology will be informed by a Two-Eyed seeing approach, a concept coined by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall on the integrative use of both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems.⁵⁵ This guiding principle in quantitative research advocates for embracing the strengths of both epistemologies and weaving them together to enrich research outputs.⁵⁶

There has been a growing recognition of the distinction between Indigenous and Western epistemologies and research design methods. While Indigenous knowledge systems vary across different communities, commonalities include a shared emphasis on land stewardship and

⁵⁵ Cheryl Bartlett, Murdena Marshall, and Albert Marshall, "Two-Eyed Seeing and Other Lessons Learned Within a Co-learning Journey of Bringing Together Indigenous and Mainstream Knowledges and Ways of Knowing." <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-012-0086-8>

⁵⁶ Ibid.

relational understandings of the connections between humans, nature, and material objects.⁵⁷ As Blackfoot scholar Leroy Little Bear explains, space and energy are major referents for Indigenous metaphysical realities, with all existence considered animate and in flux. In contrast, time is the primary referent for Western metaphysical realities, with events viewed as sequential or through cause-and-effect relationships.⁵⁸

These worldviews have implications for research methodologies, with Western researchers often isolating variables through categorical processing.⁵⁹ Indigenous research principles, however, often involve multidimensional circular webs of data or interconnected systems. As one of the leading scholars on Indigenous research methodologies, Shawn Wilson, argues, “any [Indigenous research] analysis must examine all of the relationships or strings between particular events or knots of data as a whole before it will make any sense”⁶⁰ While our initial design was not developed cognizant of Indigenous methodologies, it does represent similar principles of relational research and holistic reasoning. By adopting a systems thinking approach, our methodology aims to provide a more holistic understanding of peace and societal development.⁶¹ We believe that effective peacebuilding strategies recognize the interconnectivity of complex social phenomena, where change in one part of the system affects the whole. By adopting this perspective, we aim to identify patterns and interdependencies that traditional linear thinking might otherwise miss.⁶²

IEP’s Positive Peace framework has been commended by Indigenous communities for its holistic design, as demonstrated in its application during a consultation with Pasifika communities in Sydney, Australia.⁶³ Many participants connected their traditional Indigenous methodologies with elements of our positive peace framework. Examples were shared about the circular configuration of the village system within the Pasifika cultural context and our web of interrelated pillars.⁶⁴ While our design was effective in this context, we do not assume that this methodology is directly applicable to Canadian Indigenous contexts. We are committed to adapting our model based on ongoing collaboration with the National Council for Reconciliation, ensuring that our approach incorporates the specific epistemological frameworks of Canadian

⁵⁷ Jeremy Klaszus, “Leroy Little Bear On Blackfoot Metaphysics And Climate Change” Sprawl Calgary, April 30 2022. <https://www.sprawlcalgary.com/leroy-little-bear-climate-change>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Laura Elizabeth Reimer, “Indigenous Principles and Communication Strategies: Extending Lederach to design research for and as conflict resolution” in *Communication and Conflict: Local to Global Engagements*. Edited by Thomas Matyok and Peter Kellet, (Lexington Books: 2016), 32.

⁶¹ Vision of Humanity, “Positive Peace Report 2020 Summary and Key Findings”, 2025.

⁶² Shawn Wilson, “What is Indigenous Research Methodology?” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 25:2 (2001), 176. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234754037>

⁶³ Institute for Economics and Peace, “Matavai Cultural Arts Centre Positive Peace Workshop” Institute for Economics and Peace. Accessed March 30, 2025. <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/case-study/matavai-cultural-arts-centre-positive-peace-workshop/>

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Indigenous people. Nonetheless, we do believe our holistic web design resonates with Indigenous methodologies and can provide valuable insights about reconciliation when adapted to local priorities.

Methodology and Logistical Considerations

We recognize that Indigenous communities have a fraught history with Western scientific paradigms that have often been imposed without cultural sensitivity or consideration of Indigenous knowledge systems. For a concrete operationalization of a Two-Eyed Seeing approach that moves beyond theoretical acknowledgment, we will develop protocols at the project's outset to maintain equal Indigenous participation at every level. We commit to adhering to the principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession), a principle for non-Indigenous researchers interacting with Indigenous data.⁶⁵ We acknowledge that Indigenous communities should have control over data collection processes in their respective communities, and should control how this information is stored, interpreted, or shared.⁶⁶ We will establish clear data protocols with the National Council for Reconciliation, ensuring they maintain full agency over their data. We will draft a memorandum of understanding to ensure specific roles and shared authority between both organizations. Jointly, we will establish a research design committee with equal representation from both organizations to finalize our methodology, validate our findings through Indigenous knowledge systems, and develop joint policy recommendations. Our collaboration can also include monthly oversight meetings, knowledge-sharing circles, or any mechanism that the NCR sees fit.

Our preliminary proposal is a one-year mixed-methods research effort to quantitatively assess reconciliation commitments across consenting groups of Indigenous communities. We anticipate that this timeline may need to be reevaluated depending on the finalized framework. We are prepared to develop a flexible approach, with key milestones to be finalized jointly with the NCR. We will analyze trends over 10 years to identify communities that have maintained consistent levels of positive peace or have experienced significant improvements. This longitudinal study will help distinguish between temporary fluctuations and sustained systemic changes. Our data collection strategy will combine existing datasets with new targeted research to ensure comprehensive coverage of all our indicators. We recognize that some government data may not be publicly accessible. We will pursue data-sharing agreements with relevant government departments to access necessary information, with the NCR's assistance.

⁶⁵ Donna Fier and Rob Hancock, "Answering the Call: A Guide to Reconciliation for Qualitative Social Scientists." Canadian Public Policy 42, no. 3 (2016): 358. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/canapubpolianal.42.3.350>

⁶⁶ First Nation Information Governance Centre, "The First Nations Principles of OCAP" First Nations Information Governance Centre. Accessed March 30 2025. <https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/#:~:text=Standing%20for%20ownership%2C%20control%2C%20access,to%20First%20Nations%20data%20sovereignty.>

Some of these indicators will also require qualitative data on perceptions. This is where we can leverage input from non-governmental organizations and academic sources to provide this crucial information. By incorporating perspectives from Indigenous-led organizations, community advocacy groups, and academic research, we will ensure our assessment extends beyond government statistics to capture lived experiences. These qualitative insights reveal dimensions of reconciliation that quantitative measures alone cannot detect, such as levels of trust, cultural safety, and community well-being. Through structured interviews, surveys, and collaborative research partnerships, we will gather robust perceptual data that contextualizes statistical findings and deepens our understanding of reconciliation dynamics. Once we have finalized our indicators across all eight pillars, we will work closely with the NCR and community representatives to determine how each priority will be weighted in our final composite scoring index.

While a comprehensive assessment of all Indigenous communities across Canada would be ideal, several practical constraints necessitate a strategic sampling approach. Acknowledging vast historical grievances, we understandably anticipate that some Indigenous communities will be hesitant to engage with our initiative.⁶⁷ While the NCR may be able to facilitate some connections with communities, we recognize that we may not receive consent from all Indigenous communities. As outlined by OCAP, we are committed to proceeding only with communities that have granted their explicit informed consent to participate.⁶⁸ We will establish community liaisons from each participating Indigenous community to facilitate ongoing consent, information exchange, and transparency throughout the research process, ensuring that the project remains focused on Indigenous priorities.⁶⁹

Moreover, while we will leverage a compilation of resources, data availability varies significantly across Indigenous communities. As mentioned, we can fill gaps with alternative assessments with insights from independent Indigenous-led organizations and academic resources. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that some communities may still lack sufficient information for meaningful inclusion in our analysis. We recognize that in some instances, our alternative data sources may not be able to compensate for the systematic exclusion of some Indigenous communities in Canadian government data. These data gaps are particularly prevalent for off-reserve Indigenous people, urban populations, non-status Indigenous peoples, and homeless populations.⁷⁰ While our methodology does attempt to overcome these limitations, we acknowledge that the lack of appropriate government data remains a fundamental constraint

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Janet Smylie and Michelle Firestone, “Back to the basics: Identifying and addressing underlying challenges in achieving high quality and relevant health statistics for indigenous populations in Canada” *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, 31:1 (2015): 70. <https://doi.org/10.3233/SJI-150864>.

of our research. We will defer to the NCR's expertise to determine appropriate participation and how to highlight these communities in our final report.

However, to ensure a representative sample that considers the complexities of the Canadian Indigenous landscape, our sampling of communities will be geographically diverse, inclusive of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, balanced between urban Indigenous populations and reserve communities, and representative of different treaty relationships with the Canadian government.

Our final report will have the following deliverables:

1. A unique, data driven composite measure of reconciliation across Indigenous communities
2. A 25–35-page analysis on the conjunction of attitudes, institutions, and structures that have sustained positive engagement between Indigenous communities and the Canadian government
3. Three in-depth case studies of successful reconciliation efforts
4. Policy recommendations based on this empirical evidence with actionable recommendations for government stakeholders

Throughout our report, we will include infographics, graphs and charts to ensure our data is clear and visually engaging.⁷¹ We will discuss with the NCR opportunities to include Indigenous artwork, stories, and perspectives that contextualize the quantitative findings.⁷² We could also incorporate narrative elements into our case studies to honour Indigenous art and storytelling traditions.⁷³ Beyond the formal report, we can discuss alternative opportunities to present our findings to Indigenous communities across Canada, through community-specific summaries of relevant insights for each participating region. This can be coordinated through our community liaisons, to ensure that our gatherings reflect local language and communication preferences.

Our Value and Impact

1) Standardized, Comprehensive Metrics

By developing standardized metrics that represent Canada's reconciliation commitments, our report ensures consistent evaluation across diverse Indigenous communities. Translating

⁷¹ Institute for Economics and Peace, "Dynamic Data Dashboards" Institute for Economics and Peace. Accessed March 30, 2025. <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/consulting/dynamic-data-dashboards/>

⁷² Veronica Johnny, "Arts and Culture" Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada. Accessed March 30, 2025. <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/arts-and-culture-2/>

⁷³ Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, "Oral Traditions" Canadian Geographic. Accessed March 31, 2025. <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/oral-tradition/#:~:text=All%20traditional%20Indigenous%20stories%2C%20including,be%20carried%20over%20through%20time.>

complex data into a quantitative scoring format allows for systemic analysis, revealing patterns and trends in the data. While our methodology does include some qualitative measurements, we recognize that the quantitative composite index may seem detached from the realities of Indigenous communities. However, as our goal is to provide a clear, streamlined report, we feel that quantitative assessment offers distinct advantages for reconciliation efforts. By developing empirically based recommendations, we can objectively identify where reconciliation efforts have been meaningfully implemented and devise practical strategies for advancing reconciliation goals. Many Indigenous scholars have noted significant value in evidence-based analysis for Canadian reconciliation, provided that its methodology is aligned with Indigenous priorities.⁷⁴ Numerical data can effectively translate complex realities to Western policymakers. As Fier and Hancock discuss in their paper on quantitative reconciliation, a valuable contribution from non-Indigenous researchers is the “creation, digitization, compilation of datasets that can be used by Indigenous communities for policy development and evaluation.”⁷⁵ We aim to fill this fundamental gap by leveraging the persuasiveness of statistical rigour.

2) Engaging policymakers and the Canadian public

Our reporting mechanism provides government stakeholders and the Canadian public with accessible, compelling narratives on reconciliation. Our eight pillars of peace are statistically associated with higher gross domestic product growth (GDP), higher levels of well-being, ecological performance, and higher levels of resilience.⁷⁶ Employing these metrics strengthens the Canadian government's rationale for continued investment. This report will demonstrate that reconciliation is not solely a moral obligation, but a strategic investment that can advance Canada's long-term social cohesion and economic vitality. With streamlined recommendations through this report based on a credible data framework, the Canadian government can inform its broader reconciliation strategies for mutual benefit. For the Canadian public, an eight-pillar taxonomy is more digestible than the current fragmented reporting mechanisms, making reconciliation progress more transparent and understandable to the average Canadian citizen.

3) Action-based policy recommendations

Our approach of highlighting the communities where reconciliation efforts are working creates practical blueprints for action that can be adapted and implemented in other contexts. Focusing on the positive aspects of reconciliation is not intended to downplay the significance of the disparities that continue to exist. It aims to highlight the communities that have successfully navigated systemic barriers and identify the policies that have enabled them to achieve meaningful progress. The majority of current reporting mechanisms outline deficits of reconciliation commitments. While it remains highly relevant to underscore failures of

⁷⁴ Donna Fier and Rob Hancock, “Answering the Call: A Guide to Reconciliation for Qualitative Social Scientists.”, 357.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Institute for Economics and Peace, “Positive Peace Report 2024”, 2024.

implementation, identifying successful tools that contribute to sustainable peace can guide constructive change.⁷⁷ Our addition of case studies of meaningful reconciliation programs also demonstrates that reconciliation is an achievable goal for government stakeholders, provided they align with Indigenous priorities.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This proposed report offers a transformative accountability mechanism for reconciliation initiatives across Canada. Our collaborative partnership will ensure that reconciliation reporting is comprehensive, nuanced, and grounded in both Indigenous priorities. We welcome the opportunity to refine this proposal to align with the Council's priorities and vision. Upon acceptance of this proposal, our immediate next steps would include formalizing the partnership with the NCR, establishing our joint research committee, and finalizing budget allocations from the government endowment for our personnel and data collection role. Our research can provide clear, meaningful insights into the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, offering a path toward genuine reconciliation. Through this strategic partnership, we can transform how reconciliation commitments are measured, understood and implemented across Canada.

⁷⁷ Daniel Shapiro, "Reconciliation Systems Design: A Systematic Approach to Collective Healing in Post-Conflict Societies", 198.

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