PROGRESS ON REALIZING THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION'S CALLS TO ACTION – JUNE 2024

Overview

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) annually assesses progress towards the full implementation of the <u>Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 94 Calls to Action</u>, released on June 2, 2015. This report card tracks progress made since June 2023.

This year, only one Call to Action (CTA) was found to be completed. On April 30, 2024, Bill C-29, An Act to Provide for the Establishment of a National Council for Reconciliation, received Royal Assent, in response to CTA 53. While CTA 53 calls upon the government to establish a National Council for Reconciliation, Bill C-29 failed to fulfill key elements of the Call to Action on funding and appointments of the Board of Directors.

Nine years after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) final report and three years following the first discovery of 215 unmarked graves on the site of a former residential school, the government has failed to demonstrate a successful and meaningful implementation rate of the TRC's CTA. The stagnation of the federal government's implementation of the 94 Calls to Action shows a lack of commitment toward reconciliation between Canada and First Nations Peoples. The AFN continues to advocate for the complete implementation of the 94 Calls to Action in support of Survivors, families, and First Nations across Turtle Island.

Recent government reports from the Correctional Investigator of Canada and the Auditor General demonstrate that the current approaches are ineffective. Despite significant federal investments in recent years, there have been no commitments to systemic changes that would address the multigenerational impacts of Indian Residential Schools and colonial policies. Both funding and actions are necessary to create meaningful change.

Looking ahead, all levels of government have an opportunity to commit to systemic change and build on the recommendations from the Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites, which will be released later this year. Reclamation, revitalization, and alignment of First Nations laws with the current Canadian legal landscape are crucial for addressing the systemic barriers First Nations Survivors and families experience. The Final Report from the Special Interlocutor is slated to provide comprehensive recommendations for a new legal framework that will enable First Nations Survivors and families to find truth and justice while serving as a catalyst to reinvigorate efforts to implement the CTAs.

"It is essential for Canada, the Catholic Church, and all other agencies to accelerate their actions to fully implement all of the Calls to Action that embody reconciliation and demonstrate meaningful steps toward repairing the devastating harms to First Nations Peoples caused by colonialism and the Indian Residential School system. What has been achieved so far is by no means sufficient; it will take generations and commitments from all governments and institutions to make meaningful change for First Nations to heal and live equitably in all aspects of life. Systemic change is vital to begin addressing the damage caused by colonialism, including economic disadvantage, racism and inequity for First Nations in Canada."

—National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak

METHODOLOGY

The AFN tracks the implementation of the TRC Calls to Action by assessing the AFN's advocacy and joint work with the Government of Canada related to the implementation of the Calls to Action. Additionally, the AFN utilizes the following resources to analyze and monitor progress:

Indigenous Watchdog





- CBC News Beyond 94
- Yellowhead Institute 2023 Status Update
- Government of Canada

Where action on a Call has been undertaken, the AFN utilizes the following system to track its progress:



Full implementation of the Calls to Action often requires substantial resources to ensure First Nations are meaningfully included, based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination, and good faith. Where progress was undertaken, but efforts have not resulted in meaningful advances as defined by First Nations, little to moderate progress is reported. If there are significant steps backward or significant stalls in progress, the level of progress is downgraded and reported on. This report card identifies advancements made since June 2023, adding to AFN's advocacy and analysis since the TRC Calls to Action release in 2015.

Steps Forward June 2023-June 2024:

- Child Welfare Legislation: The Supreme Court of Canada issued a landmark decision on An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth, and families, unanimously endorsing the federal government's approach to recognizing and upholding First Nations jurisdiction over child welfare.
- First Nations Child and Family Services Final Settlement Agreement for Compensation: The Federal Court of Canada issued a decision to approve a Final Settlement Agreement totaling over \$23.34 billion, to compensate more than 300,000 First Nations children and families who experienced discrimination through the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and narrow application of Jordan's Principle.
- Medical School Training Curricula: The Association of Faculties of Medicine committed to providing education
 and training to health care professionals on the specific health needs of Indigenous people. Additionally, the
 Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing released a strategic plan through 2028 to prioritize decolonization and
 indigenization among Canadian nursing students, graduates, and faculty.
- Investments in Healthcare Reform: Indigenous Services Canada committed to a new distinctions-based health legislation to improve access to high-quality and culturally relevant health services. Budget 2023 included an investment of nearly \$200 billion over ten years to improve health care in Canada, with \$2 billion earmarked for the new Indigenous Equity Fund.
- National Council for Reconciliation: On April 30, 2024, Bill C-29, An Act to Provide for the Establishment of a
 National Council for Reconciliation, received Royal Assent, implementing Call to Action 53. Although still viewed
 as a positive and successful action, the process to pass the legislation was lengthy, input from the AFN was not
 incorporated into the final legislation, and the legislation fails to meet key elements in Call to Action 53.



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Steps Backward June 2023-June 2024::

- Federal Correctional System: In October 2023, Dr. Ivan Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada, released his latest annual report examining the procedures and policies of Correctional Services Canada. The report reveals that the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in federal prisons has intensified to crisis levels over the past decade.
- First Nations and Inuit Policing Program: In March 2024, the Auditor General of Canada released its report on the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program (FNIPP). It found that Public Safety Canada is mismanaging the program, resulting in millions of dollars going unspent. The report also highlighted significant gaps in Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) coverage for First Nations under Community Tripartite Agreements, despite accepting the funding intended to support these positions, leaving First Nations underserved.
- Document Release: On July 20, 2023, the Senate Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples released a report titled, "Honouring the Children Who Never Came Home: Truth, Education and Reconciliation." The report identifies the Federal Government, Library and Archives Canada, various Roman Catholic entities, and the governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories as failing to comply with CTA 77 by not releasing all documents in their possession relating to residential schools.
- National Residential School Student Death Registry: Although the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation has
 received funding to create a National Residential Schools student death registry, it has not obtained the necessary
 death records of Indigenous children in the care of residential schools from most chief coroners and vital statistics.
- **Newcomers to Canada**: In partnership with Indigenous Peoples, the Department of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada revised a study guide, study materials, and a new citizenship kit for newcomers. Nearly four years later, the federal government is still struggling to announce the completion of the revised Citizenship Guide.



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Moderate progress was made in this area. On February 9, 2024, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth, and families (Bill C-92) is "constitutionally valid" after hearing arguments in December 2022. The AFN was aranted intervenor status in the case and defended First Nations rights at the Supreme Court of Canada. On October 24, 2023, the Federal Court of Canada approved a Final Settlement Agreement, totaling over \$23.34 billion, to compensate more than 300.000 First Nations children and families who experienced discrimination through the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and the narrow application of Jordan's Principle. However, the number of First Nations children in care has not yet decreased. Neither the federal government, provinces, nor territories have prepared and published annual reports on the number of First Nations children in care.



Moderate progress was made in this area. In November 2023, Indigenous Services Canada committed to new distinctions-based health legislation to improve access to high-quality and culturally relevant health services. In a mandate letter from the Minister of Indigenous Services, there was a commitment to implement Joyce's Principle fully and to co-develop the distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation. Budget 2023 included an investment of almost \$200 billion over 10 years to improve health care in Canada, with \$2 billion allocated for the new Indigenous Equity Fund. The Government of Canada has established 14 co-development tables with Indigenous partners to develop meaningful dialogue and engagement in the creation of new legislation.

Regarding CTA 24, the Association of Faculties of Medicine committed to providing education and training to health care professionals on the specific health needs of Indigenous people. An ad hoc committee on Indigenous Health was formed, along with a Network on Indigenous Health, to discuss strategic issues and advise the Association of Faculties of Medicine's Board of Directors. In November 2023, the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing released a strategic plan that will continue to 2028, aiming to prioritize decolonization and indigenization among Canadian nursing students, graduates, and faculty. In December 2023, the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing publicly apologized for historical and contemporary harms related to nursing education against Indigenous peoples.

Education (6-12)

Moderate progress was made in this area. Bill C-273, which addresses the repeal of section 43 of the Criminal Code, has been stalled since May 19, 2022, despite recommendations from the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child to repeal this section. As of May 2024, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has only signed 10 Regional Education Agreements across Canada under the Education Transformation policy and has failed to further any new Regional Education Agreements in the last two federal budgets. The federal government has not addressed the backlog of First Nations post-secondary education students and has only increased the number of students funded in the Post-Secondary Student Support Program by 7% since 1996. Moreover, the federal government has not developed a joint strategy to eliminate all education gaps, particularly in education infrastructure, where funding has decreased despite half of First Nations schools being overcrowded and in need of major repairs or replacement.

Justice (25-42)

Little progress was made in this area. In January 2021, the Minister of Attorney General was mandated to develop an Indigenous Justice Strategy to address systemic discrimination and the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the justice system. This work will be undertaken in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous partners, provinces, and territories. Justice Canada completed two waves of engagement throughout 2023.

In November 2023, Dr. Ivan Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada, released his latest annual report examining the procedures and policies of Correctional Services Canada. The report reveals that the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in federal prisons has intensified to crisis levels over the past decade. Dr. Zinger investigated the condition of Indigenous corrections and discovered that Indigenous-run healing lodges only received .62 cents on every dollar. Dr. Zinger called for a national decarceration strategy and the redirection of funds from federally-run to Indigenous-run programs.

In March 2024, the Auditor General released its report on the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program (FNIPP). The report found that Public Safety Canada is mismanaging the program, resulting in millions of dollars going unspent. The report also highlighted significant gaps in Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) coverage for First Nations under Community Tripartite Agreements, despite accepting the funding intended to support these positions, leaving First Nations underserved.

Language and Culture (13-17)

Moderate progress was made in this area. Despite the passage of Bill C-91, An Act Respecting Indigenous Languages (Bill C-91) and recent commitments to ongoing funding for Indigenous languages, funding for First Nations languages remains unstable and insufficient. The AFN estimates that \$3.8 billion is required over the next five years to support First Nations languages, yet current commitments only provide approximately \$425 million. Funding intended to support First Nations-led initiatives through the Indigenous Languages Component consistently fails to meet the demand. In 2023-24, it was estimated that approximately \$86 million in eligible First Nations projects were unfunded. Additionally, in 2024-25, funding has declined compared to the previous fiscal year, further widening the gap. These funding levels contradict the purposes of Bill C-91, which aims to ensure adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding. Delays in implementing the interim First Nations Languages Funding Model also hinder First Nations control over their languages. Furthermore, the establishment of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages and a dispute resolution process has also been delayed.

Settlement Agreement Parties & the United Nations Declaration (48-49)

Little progress was made in this area. On March 30, 2023, the Vatican formally repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and declared that the papal bulls did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of Indigenous peoples and were never considered expressions of the Catholic faith. On July 27, 2022, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops requested the Vatican to issue a statement on the Doctrine of Discovery, which they had already repudiated in 2016 with "The Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullius: A Catholic Response." The Church Parties to the Settlement Agreement, including the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Roman Catholic Entities Parties to the Settlement Agreement, the United Church of Canada and the Jesuits of English Canada, have all formally repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius.











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Moderate progress was made in this area. On June 22, 2023, one year after C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDA) received Royal Assent, the federal government released the UN Declaration Action Plan. The UN Declaration Action Plan includes 181 important measures that reflect priorities and proposals identified by First Nations, Inuit and Métis and aims to implement topics covered in Canada's UNDA.

Additionally, on March 29, 2023, the Government of Northwest Territories introduced Bill-85, The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act. Northwest Territories Premier Caroline Cochrane stated that this legislation on Indigenous rights "gives teeth" to laws requiring the territorial government to consult with Indigenous groups.

Royal Proclamation & Covenant of Reconciliation (45-47)

Little progress was made in this area. The federal government has neither created a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation nor formally repudiated the concepts of the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius. A subcommittee of the All-Parties Table to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement continues to draft a Covenant of Reconciliation. On April 14, 2023, the Vatican responded to Indigenous peoples' demands and formally repudiated the "Doctrine of Discovery"; however, no level of government has taken similar action.

National Council for Reconciliation (53-56)

Moderate progress was made in this area. Bill C-29, An Act to Provide for the Establishment of a National Council for Reconciliation, reached Royal Assent on April 30, 2024. The National Council for Reconciliation (NCR) is expected to provide independent oversight and accountability regarding government action on the implementation of the 94 Calls to Action and will also serve as a mechanism to advance and promote reconciliation between the Crown and First Nations. Bill C-29 is criticized for lacking a long-term, multi-year funding commitment and for the Government of Canada's power in selecting 9 of the 12 members of the proposed National Council making the final version of this legislation fall short of the entirety of CTA 53.

Museum & Archives (67-70)

Significant progress was made. Calls to Action 67 and 70 have been completed by the Government of Canada. As for CTA 69, the "Indigenous Heritage Action Plan" released in 2019 by Library and Archives Canada addresses principles highlighted in UNDRIP and the UN Joinet-Orentlicher Principles. In 2023, archives, libraries, and documentary heritage institutions will receive \$1.5 million to fund 38 projects under the Documentary Heritage Communities Program, 11 of which were for Indigenous documentary heritage projects.

Education for Reconciliation (62-65)

Little progress was made in this area. Funding through the Post-Secondary Partnerships Program has not increased over the last ten years, with an average of \$15 million annually available to First Nations institutions on a proposal-based approach, despite growth in the First Nations population. Furthermore, only 82% of the 634 First Nations have access to elementary or secondary school programming within their community, leaving more than 14,000 students without access. Progress on CTA 62 has stalled, with Ontario removing Indigenous Science Frameworks from its curriculum in 2022. However, on July 20, 2023, provincial and territorial Ministers of Education approved the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) Indigenous Education Plan, which responds to CTA 63 and aims to contribute to the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages. CTA 64, calling for denomination schools to teach courses on Indigenous spirituality, has not started.

Youth Programs (66)

Moderate progress was made. The Government of Canada deleted references to the Indigenous Youth Council and their mandate from its official website, with no explanations provided for these deletions or updates on the status of the Indiaenous Youth Council. The Government of Canada has committed \$301.4 million over two years starting in 2023-2024 through the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS) program, which includes \$54 million for the First Nations and Inuit Employment Strategy. In November 2023, a report titled "Celebrating Leadership in Indigenous Education" was released outlining what the Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples heard from eight Indigenous youth leaders who spoke to curriculum changes, improved teacher training, and additional funding commitments to support Indigenous students.

Equity in the Legal System (50-52)

Little progress was made in this area. Several significant cases involving Indigenous rights and jurisdiction were concluded in 2023. In the Bill C-92 Reference case, the Supreme Court of Canada justices unanimously (8-0) upheld the legislation to be constitutionally valid. Bill C-92 grants full jurisdiction over child welfare to Indigenous communities and stakeholders. Additionally, in June 2023, the Restoule Case was settled out of court, resulting in 21 Robinson-Huron Treaty communities receiving \$10 billion in compensation for unpaid annuities dating back to the signing of the Treaty. In a similar suit, the Robinson-Superior Treaty communities are awaiting the release of the Supreme Court decision on their Treaty annuity case that was appealed earlier in the year by the Ontario and federal governments.

Missing Children and Burial Information (71-76)

Moderate progress: was made in this area. A Special Interlocutor was appointed to coordinate the government's response to the unmarked graves that were identified at several former residential school sites. The Special Interlocutor hosted six national gatherings focused on affirming Indigenous data sovereignty, community control over knowledge and information, supporting the search and recovery of missing children, addressing trauma in the search and recovery of missing children, upholding Indigenous laws, and holding a special session for northern voices. The mandate of the Special Interlocutor is extended to the Fall of 2024 when the final report and recommendations for a legislative framework for missing children from former residential school sites will be released.

Although the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation has received funding to create a National Residential Schools student death registry, most chief coroners and vital statistics office have not provided the necessary death records of Indigenous children in the care of residential schools.











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Church Apologies and Reconciliation (58-61)

Moderate progress was made in this area. On July 25, 2022, Pope Francis delivered an apology in Maskwacis, Alberta, on Treaty Six territory, at the site of the former Ermineskin Indian Residential School. The Pope apologized for the behaviour of "some individuals" within the church rather than for the Roman Catholic Church itself. In March 2024, the Pope made statements about returning Indigenous artifacts held in the Vatican Museum and allowing access to residential school records held in Church archives, though no further actions have been taken to implement these statements.

The Indigenous Reconciliation Fund, a federally incorporated not-for-profit charity with a Board of Directors, was created and is responsible for approving projects related to reconciliation. These projects are intended to focus on healing and reconciliation for communities and families, culture and language revitalization, education, community building, and dialogues for promoting Indigenous Peoples.



Newcomers to Canada (93-94)

Little progress was made in this area. Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), received Royal Assent on June 21, 2021. The Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada revised a study guide, study materials, and a new citizenship kit for newcomers in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. Nearly four years later, the federal government is still struggling to announce the completion of the revised Citizenship Guide.



Commemoration (79-83)

Moderate progress was made in this area. In June 2022, Bill C-23, An Act respecting places, persons and events of national historic significance or national interest, archeological resources and cultural and natural heritage was tabled in the House of Commons. Bill C-23 modifies the composition of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to include three new positions for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit representatives. Dedicated to the designation and protection of federally owned historic places, Bill C-23 aims to strengthen the voice of Indigenous Peoples in determining the people, places, and events considered to be of national historic significance and interest in Canada. However, Bill C-23 has stalled in the House of Commons since its last review on March 21, 2023.

Training for Public Servants (57)

Moderate progress was made in this area. The federal government introduced a non-mandatory "Indigenous Learning Series" for all public service employees, though not all the course content aligns with the specific "actions" identified in CTA 57. This includes the history of First Nations peoples, Canada's history of residential schools, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights and laws, and Indigenous-Crown relations. The Canada School of Public Service developed a curriculum for federal public servants, available in-person and through an app, focused on reconciliation and the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. However, the curriculum is not mandatory across federal services, and initiatives vary significantly in their implementation within policies or training aspects. The AFN strongly recommends that relevant federal departments and agencies, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada, provide effective and ongoing education and training to their employees on historical and current context of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The AFN also recommends targeted education and training on rights-based fisheries for those employees directly and indirectly working with First Nations to prevent conflicts over fisheries management.



Business & Reconciliation (92)

Little progress was made in this area. In June 2022, a National Indigenous Economic Strategy was released, developed by over 20 Indigenous organizations. The strategy outlines approaches for Indigenous economic development, targeting Indigenous entities and communities, all levels of government, corporations, and non-Indigenous organizations and institutions. The corporate sector has neither collectively adopted UNDRIP nor formally committed to management-level training on UNDRIP or the legacy of residential schools. There has been minimal follow-up activity, particularly considering the numerous Indigenous protests across the country in relation to free, prior and informed consent, the duty to consult, and environmental impacts. Additionally, minimal long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects have been observed, with most benefits appearing only during the initial construction phases.



Significant progress was made in this area. CTA 84 and CTA 85 have been completed. Many journalism initiatives and training programs continue across various institutions across Canada; however, making these programs mandatory for all students, including content on the role media has played in depicting Indigenous peoples and its contribution to racism, has not been achieved. No progress has been made on CTA 86.



Little progress was made in this area. On July 20, 2023, the Senate Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples released a report titled "Honoring the Children Who Never Came Home: Truth, Education and Reconciliation." The report identified the Federal Government, Library and Archives Canada, several Roman Catholic entities, and the governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and the Northwest Territories as failing to comply with CTA 77 by not releasing all documents in their possession relating to residential schools.



Sports & Reconciliation (87-91)

Significant progress will was made in this grea. The 10th North American Indigenous Games were held from July 15-23, 2023, in Kjipuktuk (Halifax) and Millbrook First Nation, Nova Scotia, bringing together 756 Indigenous Nations to participate and compete. Provincial funding for the event was minimal, with the majority of funding coming from the federal government. The 2024 Artic Winter games took place in Mat-Su, Alaska, on the traditional lands of the Dene'ina' and Ahtna Dene from March 10-16, 2024, where many Indigenous athletes competed in the eleven events. The 50th Annual Little Native Hockey League tournament was held in Markham. Ontario, in March 2024 with over 250 teams and approximately 4000 Indigenous athletes from across Ontario competing in a week-long, all-Indigenous tournament.

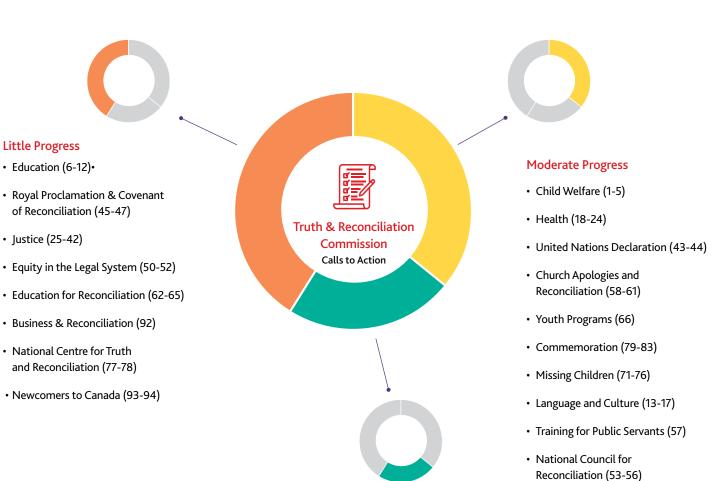
Despite the Government of Canada announcing the recipients of the Tom Longboat Awards, which celebrates outstanding contributions of Indigenous athletes in Canada, there has been no progress on public education regarding the contributions of Indiaenous athletes.





Assessing Completion Progress by Category

Below is a diagram that illustrates the AFN's assessment of progress in each category of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.



Significant Progress

- Museum & Archives (67-70)
- Media & Reconciliation (84-86)
- Sports & Reconciliation (87-91)
- Settlement Agreement Parties & the United Nations Declaration (48-49)