

Truth and Reconciliation Part 1 - Life Before the White Man

Purpose: ABW members will discover the history of our Indigenous neighbours, and how attempts were made to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Euro-Canadian culture. ABW members will discuss ways to promote reconciliation.

Preparation: If using the PowerPoint presentation found on the ABW website, you will need a laptop/tablet and a cable cord to attach to viewing monitor. A laptop/tablet may also be used with a projector and screen. The script may also be used without the PowerPoint.

Note: Mi'kmaq (pronounced Meeg mah) refers to more than one Mi'kmaw person; it is never used as an adjective (e.g., *Mi'kmaw First Nation* is proper wording); the term *Micmac Indians* is offensive and should not be used.

Slide 1 Symbols:

- Eagle - First Nations
- Beaded flower - Métis
- Narwhal - Inuit
- Circle - being together in a spirit of reconciliation
- Orange smoke - Indigenous traditions, spirituality and diversity
- Stars - children who never made it home from residential schools
- Pathway – the road to reconciliation



Image: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013251/1534874002459>

Life Before the White Man

Source: <https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/fp/fpz3c01e.html>

Slide 2 Noel Thomas Gennish, Mi'kmaq of Burnt Church, NB, Petition to King George, March 10, 1862

"...for a long time...we had the free use of our lands. Our woods were full of caribous and we could get as many moose and beaver, in fact all kinds of beasts. Our rivers were full of Salmon and we could get plenty of it. We also had plenty of good and sound trees on our lands."

Algonquian-speaking groups, such as the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Beothuk, and Innu have lived in Atlantic Canada for at least 500 generations. All followed similar ways of life based on hunting, fishing and harvesting a variety of wild foods. Indigenous peoples lived near the seacoast, at estuaries, or along rivers, where they fished and collected freshwater resources and marine resources. From spring to autumn, they harvested land mammals, birds, fish, shellfish and other maritime resources. Foodstuffs were dried or smoked, and stored for winter use. In late summer and autumn, people gathered medicinal and edible root plants and various fruits and berries. They harvested rushes, cattails and other fibrous plants to make baskets, bags, mats and other household articles.

The First Nations travelled by river to harvest inland resources and to visit other communities. In late spring and summer, they gathered at co-operative fishing stations and settlement areas. It was a time for travel, sharing and trading, for discussing tribal issues and celebrating marriages. They travelled offshore by canoe to fish and hunt sea mammals and birds. With good weather, they could travel in large sea-going canoes to islands in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. There, they hunted the abundant walrus herds. Long-distance travel by canoe encouraged trade and supported good intertribal relations.

In winter, they moved inland to the shelter of the forest. They relied heavily on foods harvested in summer and autumn. To add to stored provisions, people went ice fishing, and hunted and trapped game. Moose and caribou supplied meat, hides for clothing, and bone and antler used to make a variety of tools. Only the warmest coastal areas, and protected bays in the most southerly parts of the region, remained inhabited throughout the winter. Here people could collect shellfish from the intertidal zone. Frozen rivers and lakes made convenient travel routes between trapping and hunting areas. They also made trips to the seacoasts to hunt migratory marine mammals, especially seals and walrus on the late-winter sea ice.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Indigenous peoples crossed the Gulf of St. Lawrence as far back as 4,000 years ago. Rock valued for stone tools came from northern Labrador and was traded as far south as Massachusetts. Soapstone, quarried in New England, was also traded. It was used to make items, such as bowls, 3,500 years ago.

Today there are fewer resources of the land and sea in Atlantic Canada. First Nations no longer depend on the land for all of their living, although hunting, logging and fishing remain important commercial activities. In recent years, Court challenges by First Nations have led to a reaffirmation of many traditional rights in relation to resource use. This is especially true for the commercial fishery, where increased competition for rapidly diminishing resources has created a growing crisis. Conservation and management issues are critical to the use and survival, of these resources. Atlantic First Nations continue, in partnership with governments, to develop and set up programs for conserving and managing lobster and fish stocks.

Slide 3 Louis-Benjamin Paul in a letter to Queen Victoria, 1841

"I have seen upwards of a Thousand Moons (83 years). When I was young I had plenty: now I am old, poor and sickly too. My people are poor. No hunting Grounds - No Beaver - no Otter - no nothing. Indians poor - poor forever. No store - no Chest - no Clothes. All these Woods once ours. Our Fathers possessed them all. Now we cannot cut a Tree to warm our Wigwam in Winter..."

How Did We Get to Where We Are Today?

Source: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028599/1539609517566>

The Europeans who arrived off the coasts of Atlantic Canada between the 1500s and 1600s were mostly fishermen, who arrived in March and left in October or November. Europeans brought viruses that were not present in Maliseet or Mi'kmaq society before the 1500s. It is estimated that aboriginal communities lost from 50 % to 90% of their original population.

Soon after fishermen began fishing off the East Coast, they began trading with local Mi'kmaq. The Mi'kmaq exchanged furs and skins for such European goods as knives, hatchets, cloth, thread,

mirrors, beads, and tobacco. Knives were useful tools, which were quickly integrated into family life. So too were muskets and cloth. To acquire these items, families needed to trap furs in greater quantities than they had ever done before.

Slide 4 The Doctrine of Discovery

Source: <https://www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-terra-nullius>

The *Doctrine of Discovery* was the principle used by European colonizers starting in the 1400s in order to stake claim to lands beyond the European continent. Land was considered *terra nullius* (vacant land) if Christians had not yet occupied it. Such vacant lands could be defined as “discovered” and as a result sovereignty, title and jurisdiction could be claimed. In doing so the *Doctrine of Discovery* invalidated the sovereignty of Indigenous nations and gave Christians the right to subjugate and confiscate the lands of Indigenous peoples.

Slide 5 Peace and Friendship Treaties

Source: <https://www.rcaanccirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028599/1539609517566>

Great Britain's interest in trade lay at the foundation of the series of treaties negotiated with the Mi'kmaq, the Maliseet, and the Passamaquoddy. The treaties were mainly concerned with one thing: to establish a durable alliance between the British and the region's aboriginal communities and to abolish any relationship with the French.

- The 1726 Treaty – became the basis for later treaties
- The 1749, 1752 and 1760/61 Treaties – in response to wars between the British and French
- The 1778 and 1779 Treaties – in response to American rebellion against British rule

Slide 6 The 1726 treaty was composed of two separate documents. The Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy signed one document, termed *the articles of peace and agreement*, which contained the promises made by each of the three communities to **not molest the British settlements**. The second document, often referred to as *the reciprocal promises*, contained **promises made by the British not to molest the communities' fishing, hunting, planting and other lawful activities.**

Until the late 1750s, the Mi'kmaq remained allied with France and during periods of British-French conflict, many communities chose to side with the French against the British. The treaties of 1749, 1752, and 1760/61 were negotiated to reaffirm the peace after periods of war. The 1749 and 1752 treaties reaffirmed the 1726 treaty. **The 1752 treaty also formalized a commercial relationship giving the Mi'kmaq of the area free liberty of hunting and fishing and free liberty to sell skins, feathers, fowl, fish, etc. within the Province.** It would seem therefore that both the British and the Mi'kmaq considered the 1726 treaty to form the basis of their relationship.

The last treaties were signed in 1778 and 1779. Agents from the United Colonies (later known as the United States) were attempting to enlist the support of both the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet in their rebellion against British rule. A treaty with the Maliseet was signed in 1778, and in 1779 **each of the Mi'kmaq communities reaffirmed their treaty relationship with the British on the basis of treaties signed in 1760/61.**

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Canadian federal government negotiated a series of treaties with **western** Indigenous Peoples. Those treaties, often called the numbered treaties,

involved **the surrender of aboriginal lands** to the federal government. In exchange, communities received some form of **compensation**, including the provision that separate reserves would be established for them. Such provisions were not part of the treaties signed with the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq. **In Atlantic Canada, the land remains *unceded*.**

Slide 7 Creation of Reserves

Source: <https://www.rcaanccirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028599/1539609517566>

In the early 1780s, American colonists who remained loyal to the British Crown came to Canada, creating a new dynamic in the relationships between the colonial governments and the aboriginal communities. There was a **gradual erosion** of the meanings given to the treaties. Both the Mi'kmaq and the Maliseet, however, continued to believe that the treaties formed the basis of their relationships with settler governments.

Over the next two hundred years, both communities petitioned governments to reconsider their policies in light of the legal regime created by the treaties. They were particularly concerned that **governments had failed to honour agreements** regarding the protection of fishing, hunting, and planting grounds and pointed to the fact that most of their people were impoverished.

Though governments refused to honour the treaties, they did agree to create reserves. These reserves were established throughout much of Atlantic Canada in the 19th century but the reserves were usually too small and the land too infertile to support a large population. In general, the reserves were placed in areas traditionally used by the indigenous community. However, this was not always true, particularly in Nova Scotia where disputes over land were often settled in favour of white settlers.

Slide 8 Discussion:

- What was life like before the arrival of Europeans?
- Why did the Europeans feel they could exploit the First Nations people?
- What was the result of European settlement on the First Nations?
- How might things have been different if the colonial governments had continued to honour the *Peace and Friendship Treaties*?
- Scripture reading: Genesis 1:27; Galatians 3:28

Optional Activities:

- Learn about a First Nation near you (see websites below).
- Contact a First Nation and invite someone to your group to talk about their culture or to demonstrate their arts and crafts. For example, the Mi'kmaq make beautiful baskets, beadwork and quillwork.

First Nations in New Brunswick (Mi'kmaw; Maliseet; Passamaquoddy)

- **Mi'kmaw First Nation** <https://www.cbu.ca/indigenous-affairs/mikmaq-resource-centre/mikmaw-band-councils/mikmaw-bands-in-new-brunswick/>

- **Maliseet (Wolastoqey) First Nation** <https://wnnb.wolastoqey.ca/rdccc/>

- **Passamaquoddy First Nation** <https://qonaskamkuk.com>

First Nations in Newfoundland and Labrador (Mi'kmaw; Innu)

- **Mi'kmaw First Nation** <https://www.cbu.ca/indigenous-affairs/mikmaq-resource->

centre/mikmaw-band-councils/mikmaw-bands-in-newfoundland/
- **Innu First Nation** <https://www.innu.ca>

Mi'kmaw First Nation in Nova Scotia <https://www.cbu.ca/indigenous-affairs/mikmaq-resource-centre/mikmaw-band-councils/mikmaw-bands-in-nova-scotia/>

Mi'kmaw First Nation in Prince Edward Island <https://www.cbu.ca/indigenous-affairs/mikmaq-resource-centre/mikmaw-band-councils/mikmaw-band-sin-prince-edward-island/>

Slide 9 Part 2 - The Need for Truth and Reconciliation

Slide 10 After Confederation (1867), there was a push to **assimilate** First Nation peoples into Euro-Canadian society. The Indian Act of 1876 and the creation of Residential Schools had a devastating effect on the First Nation peoples, destroying their culture, their language, and their self-worth.

Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, 1887

The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.

Slide 11 The Indian Act, 1876

Sources: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-act>
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/colonization-and-immigration>

The *Indian Act* (1876) consolidated earlier colonial laws, attempting to control and assimilate First Nations peoples into Euro-Canadian culture. (It did not include Métis or Inuit peoples.) The *Indian Act* is the principal law through which the federal government administers status, local First Nations governments and the management of reserve land and communal monies. The *Act* has been amended many times over the years to do away with restrictive and oppressive laws, yet it has had historic and ongoing impacts on First Nations cultures, economies, politics and communities. Dispossessed of their lands, traditional economies, and the traditional foods that had sustained them, their immune systems were compromised. It has also caused inter-generational trauma, particularly with regards to residential schools.

What did the *Indian Act* take from the First Nations?

- defined status; women lost status if they married anyone other than a treaty Indian
- required males to read and speak English or French and have an English or French surname
- controlled land and education and movement when leaving reserves
- outlawed native festivals, ceremonies and dances
- prohibited hiring of lawyers or bringing land claims against government without government approval
- Sixties Scoop (1960s) - after Residential schools began closing, children were often taken from homes and placed in foster care or adopted
- prohibited voting in federal elections until 1960

Slide 12 Indian Residential Schools (1880s-1990s)

Source: https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_residential_school_system/

Residential schools were set up by the Canadian government and administered by churches with the nominal objective of educating indigenous children, but also the more damaging objective of indoctrinating and assimilating them into Euro-Canadian and Christian ways of living. Children were forcibly removed from their homes and many never returned. The residential schools were only one part of the history of colonization in Canada, but their impact was massive. Those who survived, as well as their families, continue to endure inter-generational trauma.

Slide 13 Wallace Labillois, Mi'kmaq Elder, New Brunswick

"We have survived Canada's assault on our identity and our rights.... Our survival is a testament to our determination and will to survive as a people. We are prepared to participate in Canada's future - but only on the terms that we believe to be our rightful heritage."

Slide 14 Righting a Wrong

Sources: *The Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullius* by Shreya Shah

[https://www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-terra-nullius](https://www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-terra-nullius;); *The Doctrine of Discovery* https://caid.ca/doc_dom.html

In order for reconciliation to happen, there has to be **awareness** of the past, an **acknowledgment** of the harm that has been inflicted, **atonement** for the causes, and **action** to change behaviour. Canadian institutions must change their continued belief in the *Doctrine of Discovery* and the concept of *terra nullius*.

- In 1981, the UN ruled that Canada was in breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in 2007 the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognized that doctrines such as the *Doctrine of Discovery* are not legally valid and that the continuation of colonialism is a crime, which violates the Charter of the United Nations.
- In 1982 the newly repatriated Canadian Constitution recognized and affirmed Aboriginal title and treaty rights, making governments obligated to consult with Indigenous peoples on outstanding issues.
- The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) determined the concepts of the *Doctrine of Discovery* and *Terra Nullius* were factually, legally, and morally wrong. The Commission stated that these two concepts keep Indigenous peoples from assuming their rightful place in Canada.
- In 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada stated "the doctrine of *terra nullius* never applied in Canada, as confirmed by the Royal Proclamation of 1763." Nonetheless, the *Doctrine of Discovery* has influenced court rulings in Canada and the ways in which Aboriginal titles are defined. When Indigenous communities challenge the Crown's title to lands, the government and courts claim the "underlying title" (i.e., the *Doctrine of Discovery*) of the Crown as the basis of their ownership of these lands.
- In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Call to Action #47 "call[ed] upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the *Doctrine of Discovery* and *terra nullius*, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that

continue to rely on such concepts.” Without the *Doctrine of Discovery*, the current status quo of colonial control over Indigenous peoples would no longer exist. Indigenous sovereignty and jurisdiction will need to be defined so that a new relationship can then be established based on the reconciliation of Indigenous sovereign rights with Crown rights.

- In 2016 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled unanimously that the legal definition of “Indian” as laid out in the Constitution, includes Métis and non-status Indians; it did not grant status to Métis and non-status Indians but helped facilitate possible negotiations over traditional land rights, access to education and health programs, and other government services.
- In 2017 an amendment to the *Indian Act* enabled more people to pass down their status to their descendants and reinstate status to those who lost it before 1985.
- In 2019 an amendment to the *Indian Act* restored status to women and their offspring who lost status before 1951.

Slide 15 Some things to consider:

Taken from articles at <https://www.cbmin.org/walkingtogetherinagoodway/>

- A disproportionate number of First Nations men and women are in our prisons. Why?
- Dr. Daniel Zacharias (Acadia Divinity College), who is Indigenous, believes there are three main reasons his people silenced their heritage: Canada’s assimilationist policies; a response to racial discrimination; and, the belief that to be an authentic follower of the Christ meant forsaking your culture and adopting another.
- We have grown up in a culture and an economy that, at least in part, has been built on the backs of the land’s first inhabitants, making us beneficiaries.
- Reserve property cannot be sold on the open market so never increases in value, meaning there is no incentive for doing home improvements. Entire extended families live in many of these houses because First Nation people have a deep value for sharing. Things break down much faster when houses are overcrowded. When we see houses on reserves that are dilapidated, we make a judgment about the people who live there.
- We often hold uninformed opinions and judgments about indigenous practices, places, legends, artifacts, etc.

Slide 16 Excerpts from *A Formal Apology On Behalf Of Canadian Baptist Ministries*, October 21, 2016

Today, I come humbly to this place, on behalf of Canadian Baptist Ministries. Before we seek to Reset the Relationship, as this conference is named, allow me to apologize before God and to you, our Indigenous brothers and sisters, both personally and collectively. I am mindful that I cannot apologize for others’ acts without admitting my own shortcomings. As a community of God’s people, we admit that too often we have not been or done what we could or should have, to live and act justly. To you, our neighbours, our sisters and brothers who have been hurt, directly or indirectly by our actions and inaction, we ask your forgiveness...

Attitudes and acts of arrogance, entitlement and greed compelled many who settled here in Canada to assume ownership of lands that were not theirs to take, to occupy territories that were unceded and to formulate and sign treaties which were tilted in their own favour. The trust and goodwill of our Indigenous peoples were further abused when we failed to honour the treaties...

We put up walls when we should have opened doors. These practices have created a context wherein Indigenous peoples in this land today experience disproportionate poverty and

oppression, the result of which are negative stereotypes, high rates of mental and emotional illness, suicide, violence against women, substance abuse and intergenerational pain.

Slide 17 Excerpts from *Undoing the Damage* by Dan Kelly

Source: <https://agoodway.cbmin.org/walking-together-in-a-good-way/>

(Dr. Dan Kelly has served as Principal of Okanagan Bible College and is a former Professor of Missions at Ontario Theological Seminary. He has also served as a missionary among North American Indians.)

The history of Christian mission among North American Indians is not a happy one...It seems likely that the early missionaries to the Indian people, and in many cases their modern counterparts, simply have not understood the monumental worldview shift necessary for the Indian person to move from his or her belief system to total allegiance to Jesus Christ. And they have muddied the water by often demanding allegiance to European cultural values as well...The Indian person has little positive to look back on as he considers what the gospel has had to offer. A dominant "Christian" culture has had a severe impact on all of the old values, belief systems, ways of life, and family patterns.

The paternalistic practices of the past are simply not tolerated today. An aggressive and extremely capable leadership elite is emerging among both status and non-status Indians...The potential, of course, was always there, [but] we Euro-Canadians have been conditioned by the concept of cultural evolution, and so we have come to see ourselves as culturally superior to the non-white.

There is still a need for cross-cultural missionaries, but they must be culturally sensitive people whose primary orientation is to the natives. They must be people who avail themselves of first-rate cross-cultural training, who respect all that is good in native culture, who accept that God is no respecter of persons (or cultures), and who, with Paul, are ready to become "all things to all people, that by all possible means, some might be saved." But missions must be prepared to allow the potential for leadership to develop in the native church to the same degree that is developing in the areas of politics, business, and education.

Slide 18 Truth and Reconciliation

Source: <https://agoodway.cbmin.org/walking-together-in-a-good-way/>

(Cheryl Bear is a singer/songwriter and Indigenous speaker from the Nadleh Whut'en First Nation community (Bear Clan) in northern British Columbia. She has also served with CBM.)

What gives me hope is to see change happening in my lifetime. Today no one would tolerate a sign saying, "No Indians Allowed" on a public building. But sometimes these signs still exist in the hearts of Canadians. We have work to do to raise awareness of Indigenous worldview, culture and values because reconciliation starts in learning of the people whose land we are on.

Reconciliation is not a destination. It's a journey that will last our lifetime and generations to follow. There is always prep time for a trip, contingent on the length and difficulty. This is where we are right now within Canadian history. We still have a lot to learn about the Indigenous perspective of history and Christianity, and also about Indigenous worldview, culture, values, and spirituality. Misunderstanding in Canada about these things is rampant. Many non-Indigenous people say to me, "I have never heard of the Residential Schools." Those words come from

educated, thoughtful, good-hearted Christians in churches across Canada and this is only one example among many misunderstandings. “You don’t know what you don’t know” ... and let’s follow that acknowledgment with, “Now that you know, how then shall we live?”

Slide 19 *Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God shows no favouritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. Acts 10:34-35*

Discussion:

- What are some of the stereotypes that exist regarding First Nation peoples?
- Why is it necessary for us to learn about and acknowledge what has taken place in the past?
- How do we move towards reconciliation?
 - **learn** the truth; **repent** of stereotypical and racist attitudes; **act** with understanding and compassion
 - Scripture: James 2:1-13

Atlantic Baptist Women thanks Jeanette Denton for compiling and sharing this program.