



Like the TRC, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is another important act that can aid the facilitation of truth and reconciliation in Canada. UNDRIP is a declaration that stresses the human rights of Indigenous peoples and the importance of protecting and promoting Indigenous culture, identity, self-determination and meaningful participation in the democratic process. The declaration also outlines principles to guide nations' interaction with Indigenous peoples, its specific obligations and responsibility to foster positive relationships. Though this global accord was adopted by the majority of the general assembly a year before the formation of the TRC, Canada and four other countries voted against this declaration in 2007.

The Canadian government released a statement saying that this was an aspirational document but was opposed as it "contains provisions that are fundamentally incompatible with Canada's constitutional framework." Additionally, the government of Canada was concerned how this declaration could impact existing land disputes and resource development. However, in 2016 Canada's official position altered under the leadership of a new prime minister. As part of the liberal campaign platform, Justin Trudeau pledged to repair Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples by enacting "the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, starting with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

Though UNDRIP is not legally binding, legislation like bill C-262 has been proposed to ensure that the laws of Canada correspond with UNDRIP. Combined, the support and implementation of the TRC's recommendations and UNDRIP has begun to impact various facets of Canadian society and will further promote change in other areas including museums. Historically, the museums of Canada have primarily focused on the settler history of Canada and have disregarded the importance of, or unrealistically represented the histories of Indigenous peoples. As a result, museums suggest that the Indigenous experience is of less value and significant aspects of Canadian history are consequently ignored.

To address this discrimination, the TRC created two calls to action regarding museum policies and practices to facilitate the creation of exhibitions that promote reconciliation. Ry Moran, the Director of the National Research Centre for the Truth & Reconciliation Commission, aptly stresses the importance of museums and fulfilling the goals presented by the TRC:

Museums play a critical role in sharing history and providing context and meaning to this history. . . Our [Indigenous] history has not always been accurately told in this country. . . While there is much good work underway, I think the biggest challenge for museums moving forward will be to authentically represent Indigenous voices inside museum spaces. This demands close partnerships with Indigenous peoples and the space for them to share their own stories in the way they feel the most appropriate.



Undoubtedly, museums have the power to facilitate change and can meaningfully encourage truth and reconciliation in their communities and beyond.

Like other organizations, the Estevan Art Gallery & Museum has primarily valued and focused on the settler narrative of Canadian history in the past. For example, the content of our exhibitions was based on Eurocentric perspectives and neglected the value and importance of the Indigenous oral tradition. Consequently, we have presented an incomplete and biased interpretation of Canadian history.

To begin to authentically represent Canada's diverse history and follow the TRC's recommendations, we have updated the practices, objectives and purpose of our museum. Basics such as exhibition planning, content development, research practices, object selection and object interpretation were redeveloped. To show our commitment to change, we have transformed our second floor space into an exhibition that attempts to authentically represent the Indigenous peoples of Canada's history. In the exhibit we are re-evaluating events in Canadian history and focusing on the Indigenous perspective. Furthermore, the content of our exhibit will be based on ethnohistory which is a historical approach that "incorporate[s] Indigenous voices into the historical narrative, using oral history, artwork, material cultural, archeological evidence, and etymology as source material"



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By implementing these changes we hope to create an exhibit that better reflects Canada's complex and culturally diverse history. We plan to include local Indigenous communities as collaborators and partners to begin forming positive relationships and opening lines of communication. Though the content might present uncomfortable truths for our local (settler) population, it is our priority to represent the Indigenous perspective and highlight the "ongoing nature and impact of colonialism". Overall, we hope at the Estevan Art Gallery and Museum to promote truth, reconciliation and revitalization in our community of southeastern Saskatchewan and beyond.

north west mounted police museum

wood end post historical site

The NWMP Wood End Post serves to collect, preserve, research, exhibit, and interpret objects that best illustrate the arrival of the North West Mounted Police to the Estevan area in the summer of 1874 on the Trek West, to 1892. Priority is given to objects associated with the North West Mounted Police, important events, periods, episodes, and personalities in Estevan and surrounding area.

More recently, the museum included history from the Métis and First Nations’ communities as they also were part of the reason for the NWMP to come West. Furthermore, the NWMP used Métis and First Nations guides and scouts during the trek west, and the museum now recognizes their contribution to the history of the NWMP and Estevan area.



Origins of the North-West Mounted Police

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Truth, though simply defined, alters over time and is not always simple to facilitate or foster. As we grow and develop as a nation, so does our understanding of the past. Our understanding of history needs to change and reflect a history that was once ignored but is now simply unknown. Specifically, in Canada, as past atrocities and generational trauma is exposed, Canada’s settler population must face its history of colonization and racism. As our perception of Canada’s history begins to evolve, the framework necessary to foster truth and reconciliation within Canada has begun to be established.



North West Mounted Police Wood End Post

The name Wood End was very suiting - seeing as the post was basically the end of their natural supply of wood, due to prairie fires. Wood End was a common resting ground where supplies could be refurbished and wood could be gathered for the rest of the journey. The post was located where the Boundary Dam is now.

One of the first changes of significance in the 21st century was the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Founded in 2008, the TRC was created in conjunction with the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to “guide Canadians through the difficult discovery of the facts behind the residential school system”. Though only a short term project, “the TRC was also meant to lay the foundation for lasting reconciliation across Canada”. Consequently, the TRC’s final report in 2015 listed ninety-four changes that needed to occur to incite healing and equality in Canada. The recommended calls to action

to child welfare, education, language and culture, health, justice and reconciliation. Though an important first step and resource, the calls to action were not feasible without the support and commitment of the Canadian government which was not immediate.

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museum introduction

Re-evaluating Canada's history with a focus on Indigenous perspectives

The EAGM would like to thank the following organizations for their support:

