

National Indigenous History Month: Acknowledging, Celebrating and Honouring

By Amanda Labonte, Jenn Rossiter and Sydney Sheloff

[National Indigenous History Month](#) is a time for celebrating the rich and diverse histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples.

As settlers and non-Indigenous persons on this land we have a responsibility to recognize there was a history long before contact. Indigenous Peoples had governance, justice, health care, education, community, food security, and family systems guided by their worldview.



Legislation such as the Indian Act and its policies were designed intentionally to harm and oppress Indigenous Peoples. The Indian Act is still in effect today, an [82 page document](#) that has had some revisions over the years. The Act still directs policy, governance and decisions made about Indigenous Peoples rather than with Indigenous Peoples. Bob Joseph, of the Gwawaenuk Nation, wrote a book *"21 things you may not know about the Indian act: Helping*

Canadians make reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a reality" (2018) that included only 21 of the statutes and/or policies. It is an excellent book to get started on understanding the Indian Act.

The ESPC (Edmonton Social Planning Council) is aware of the devastating impacts colonialism, has had, and continues to have on Indigenous Peoples, and the high rates of discrimination and racism Indigenous Peoples experience today. This is a topic people need to continue talking about, but it is not the whole history or the whole story. Indigenous Peoples have made countless achievements and contributions on this land for time immemorial.

The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) is a crucial document for individuals and organizations to work towards reconciliation. We as a community have a long way to go before achieving reconciliation, and part of our responsibility as settlers and non-Indigenous persons on this land is to engage in and listen to Indigenous culture and history as written, spoken and shared by Indigenous Peoples.

In contribution to National Indigenous History Month and reconciliation here are some resources, written or spoken by Indigenous Peoples. We hope you take time to explore these valuable works and others.

Events and Experiences

Should you be interested in engaging in experiences related to Indigenous histories in Amishkwacyi Waskahikan (Edmonton), we suggest you look at this [list](#) curated by Mackenzie Brown. The list is large and covers events, museums, cuisine, music and much more.

Listen to Podcasts

[2 Crees in a Pod](#) on Spotify is produced and hosted by Terri Sunjtens, Director of Indigenous Initiatives at kihêw waciston at MacEwan University. The podcast is co-hosted by Amber Dion, an

assistant professor at the School of Social Work, MacEwan University. This podcast was nominated for a 2020 Canadian Podcast Award.

[Unreserved](#) on CBCListen is hosted by Rosanna Deerchild from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation. Deerchild in addition to being a radio host is a writer and poet. During the 2020-2021 Unreserved was guest hosted by Falen Johnson, who is from Six Nations Grand River Territory and is also a playwright.

Read a Blog

[Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples](#) writer Bob Joseph is the founder of Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. Joseph writes on several topics including Indigenous histories and untold stories.

Watch a Film:

Tasha Hubbard

Hubbard is an academic documentary filmmaker from Peepeekisis First Nation. Her films explore violence against Indigenous people, including: *Two Worlds Colliding*, a look at the “Starlight Tours,” or freezing deaths, in Saskatchewan, and *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* which follows the family of Colton Boushie as they fight for justice after his death.

We suggest:

Hubbard, T. (Director). (2005). *Two worlds colliding* [film]. National Film Board of Canada.

Hubbard, T. (Director). (2019). *Nîpawistamâsowin: We will stand up* [film]. National Film Board of Canada.

Read Literature by Indigenous Authors:

Billy-Ray Belcourt

Belcourt is an academic and poet from Driftpile Cree Nation. His poetry explores ideas around the queer Indigenous experience, and how Indigenous people deal with pain, violence, and grief, showcasing their resilience.

We suggest:

Belcourt, B.-R. (2017). *The wound is a world*. Frontenac House Ltd.

Belcourt, B.-R. (2019). *NDN coping mechanisms: Notes from the field*. House of Anansi Press Inc.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

Betasamosake Simpson is a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer, and artist. Her work uses Nishnaabeg intellectual practices, as she breaks apart the intersections of politics, story, and song.

We suggest:

Betasamosake Simpson, L. (2017). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. University of Minnesota Press.

Betasamosake Simpson, L. (2020). *Noopiming: The cure for white ladies*. House of Anansi Press.

Glen Coulthard

Coulthard is a Yellowknives Dene associate professor in First Nations and Indigenous Studies and Political Science. In *Red Skin, White Masks*, he “seeks to reevaluate, reconstruct, and redeploy Indigenous cultural practices based on self-recognition rather than seeking appreciation from agents of colonialism.”

We suggest:

Coulthard, G. (2014). *Red skin, white masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition*. University of Minnesota Press.

Michelle Good

Good is a member of Red Pheasant Cree Nation in Saskatchewan and was awarded the HarperCollins/UBC Prize for Best New Fiction in 2018.

We suggest:

Good, M. (2020). *Five little Indians*. Harper Perennial.

Thomas King

King is a writer of Cherokee, German, and Greek descent. He writes about Indigenous history, issues, and story in Canada and America. He pays particular attention to the ways in which policies have eroded Indigenous land and status rights.

We suggest:

King, T. (2012). *The inconvenient Indian: A curious account of native people in North America*. Doubleday Canada.

Dian Million

Million is Tanana Athabascan and a professor in American Indian studies. Million argues that Indigenous oral story telling “told about historical trauma, past and present victimization, and the search for redemption in personal and community healing,” and is therefore a valid form of theory. She also studies the politics of mental and physical health in relation to Indigenous communities and trauma.

We suggest:

Million, D. (2013). *Therapeutic nations: Healing in an age of Indigenous human rights*. University of Arizona Press.

Million, D. (2014). There is a river in me: Theory from life. In A. Simpson & A. Smith (Eds.), *Theorizing Native Studies* (pp. 31-42). Durham: Duke University Press.

Tanya Talaga

Talaga is an Anishinaabe journalist. Her book *Seven Fallen Feathers* investigates the alarming number of deaths of Indigenous youth in Thunder Bay, and how they are related to a legacy of human rights violations against Indigenous people. In *All Our Relations*, Talaga looks at how colonial separation of Indigenous people from their land, communities, and culture, affect social determinates of health and high suicide rates of Indigenous youth. These books are also a call for action, justice, and a better world for Indigenous peoples.

We suggest:

Talaga, T. (2017). *Seven fallen feathers: Racism, death, and hard truths in a northern city*. House of Anansi Press.

Talaga, T. (2018). *All our relations: Finding the path forward*. House of Anansi Press.

Jesse Thistle

Thistle is a Métis-Cree author and professor. His academic work explores Métis history, but he is best known for his recent memoir, *From the Ashes*. In this book, he explores his experiences with the foster care system, describing abuse, addiction, homelessness, racism, and cultural disconnection. He goes on to share how he turned his life around by learning about, and connecting with, his culture.

We suggest:

Thistle, J. (2019). *From the ashes: My story of being Métis, homeless, and finding my way*. Simon and Schuster.

Eve Tuck

Tuck is an Unangax̂ scholar whose research focus is on urban education and Indigenous studies. She focuses on how Indigenous social thought can be engaged to create more fair and just social policy, more meaningful social movements, and robust approaches to decolonization.

We suggest:

Tuck, E. & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1-40.

Chelsea Vowel

Vowel is a Métis lawyer, academic, and author. Her work focuses on language, gender identity, and resurgence. She advocates for Indigenous language preservation, education reform, and Indigenous control of Indigenous education. Her blog, *âpihtawikosisân*, provides primer resources and “myth debunking” on Indigenous topics.

We suggest:

Vowel, C. (2016). *Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues in Canada*. High-water Press.

Vowel, C. (n.d.). Indigenous issues 101. *âpihtawikosisân*.
<https://apihtawikosisan.com/aboriginal-issue-primers/>

Richard Wagamese

Wagamese was an author and journalist from Wabaseemoong First Nation. His books explore Indigenous experiences in Canada; *Indian Horse*, for example, explores residential schools, abuse, racism, trauma, and how they relate to addiction.

We suggest:

Wagamese, R. (2008). *One native life*. Douglas and McIntyre.

Wagamese, R. (2013). *Indian horse*. Douglas and McIntyre.