

Sharing Prosperity:

An Introduction to Building Relationships for Economic Reconciliation in Ontario

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We wish to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the invaluable contributions of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) Indigenous Advisory Committee members and the CCAB Research team, who provided key insights to ensure this resource is grounded in Indigenous knowledge and experience.

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Aboriginal

Primarily a legal term used in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* to describe the first inhabitants of what is now known as Canada (including their inherent rights), encompassing First Nations (see “Indian” below), Métis, and Inuit Peoples. This term may also be used in organizational names and as a self-descriptor by Indigenous people, but it is increasingly becoming an outdated term for settlers to use outside of legal contexts.

Constitution Act, 1982

A foundational legal document enshrining the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada’s Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the existence of Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

An initiative to ensure positive corporate community, social, and environmental value and impact related to social purpose, sustainability, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) approaches (see “ESG” below).

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

Organizational values and initiatives to ensure the fair representation, participation, treatment, and support of people of different races, ethnicities, abilities, genders, sexual orientations, and other identities.

Duty to consult and accommodate

The legal obligation to consult with (and potentially accommodate) Indigenous Peoples in any instance where Indigenous and Treaty rights may be impacted, which has been affirmed and clarified by various Supreme Court rulings (e.g., [Haida](#), [Taku River](#), [Mikisew Cree](#), [Little Salmon/Carmacks](#), [Rio Tinto](#)).

Economic reconciliation

A framework by which to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples focused on meaningful, equitable economic opportunities and outcomes, covering a range of actions by businesses, governments, and individuals.

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG)

A framework to assess corporate performance and impact related to sustainability and ethical practices.

First Nation

One of the three distinct Indigenous groups in Canada, however it does not appear in the *Constitution Act, 1982* (see “Indian” below). There are 133 distinct First Nations communities in Ontario, making up 14 Nations and four distinct Peoples.

Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)

A principle to ensure Indigenous Peoples (and other affected groups) can meaningfully and willingly make decisions about projects that will impact them, without any coercion, intimidation, or manipulation, in advance of any project activity, and with adequate, fulsome information about the project.

Indian

A legal term used to describe First Nations people, such as in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* and the *Indian Act*. Some First Nations individuals may have “Indian Status” under the *Indian Act*, which entitles them to some government benefits, programs, and services. While some Indigenous Peoples may use this term as a self-descriptor, it is considered **derogatory** for settlers to use it outside legal contexts.

Indian Act

A federal law governing the legal and administrative relationship between Canada and First Nations, which continues to subjugate and marginalize First Nations people and rights, including through exclusionary social, cultural, and economic policies.

Indigenous

The current global standard term to describe the original inhabitants of a territory, recognizing their distinct cultures, histories, languages, territories, political and economic structures, and inherent rights.

Indigenous Procurement Policy

A strategy to promote the equitable inclusion of Indigenous suppliers in organizational procurement processes, which can include setting targets, preferences, or requirements for the procurement of goods and services from Indigenous-owned businesses.

Inuit

One of the three distinct Indigenous groups in Canada recognized under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The Inuit homeland, Inuit Nunangat, is comprised of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories, Nunatsiavut in Labrador, Nunavik in Quebec, and Nunavut.

Métis

One of the three distinct Indigenous groups in Canada recognized under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, who are descendants of European settlers and First Nations people (primarily Cree and Anishinaabe).

Native

A term to describe Indigenous Peoples that is becoming increasingly outdated for settlers to use, though it may be used in organizational names and as a self-descriptor by Indigenous people.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

A strategic organizational framework to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, which could include specific initiatives, goals, and actions to address historical and ongoing injustices, foster respectful and mutually beneficial relationships, and promote Indigenous rights and self-determination.

Residential “schools”

An assimilative government-sponsored, religiously-based initiative that forcibly removed Indigenous children from their families for over a century, with the last institution closing in 1996. Quotations are used around the word “schools” to recognize these institutions as sites of abhorrent and rampant emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, cultural genocide, and death, rather than places of learning and support.

Settler

A neutral term describing any non-Indigenous person whose ancestors settled in a land inhabited by Indigenous Peoples. While this term has recently become politicized, it is simply a way to describe non-Indigenous people, their relationship to the territories where they live, and importantly, the ways in which they have and continue to benefit from the legacy and ongoing impacts of colonialism. However, settlement implies an active choice, and as such, there is important nuance to this term, for example when considering the distinct experiences of refugees and the descendants of enslaved people, who were forcibly brought to these lands and/or displaced from their home territories.

Sixties scoop

The forced removal of Indigenous children from their families from the 1960s to 1980s by child welfare authorities (although these practices continue today), which often placed the children in non-Indigenous foster or adoptive homes and served to continue the legacy of residential “schools,” in particular as it relates to the loss of Indigenous cultures, languages, and community connections, in addition to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse.

Treaty

A formal agreement outlining the rights, responsibilities, and relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the federal and provincial governments. Historic treaties were signed between 1701 and 1923 to establish peaceful relations and coexistence, but were used to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands, rights, and self-determination. Modern treaties or comprehensive land claims began in 1975 to provide similar rights and obligations over lands that were not covered by historic treaties.



I. Introduction

Overview

Taking action on economic reconciliation has tremendous value for Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses alike, enabling opportunities for shared economic prosperity and long-term business success. Indigenous businesses generally define success not only in terms of economic gains, but also as it relates to positive social impact on community well-being, cultural preservation, and the enduring prosperity of current and future generations.

Countless reports have underscored the benefits of [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) (DEI) initiatives related to organizational performance, financial indicators, and the broader economy¹. Similarly, companies are increasingly recognizing the value and importance of adopting [environmental, social, and governance](#) (ESG) goals to evaluate corporate impact and risk from a holistic, responsible, and sustainable perspective². While economic reconciliation is certainly connected to both DEI and ESG approaches, it is critical to ensure that reconciliation initiatives are distinct corporate efforts that recognize the unique, inherent, ancestral rights and customary responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples.

The Indigenous economy is strong and growing, making economic reconciliation an urgent business imperative for shared prosperity.

Indigenous businesses contribute nearly \$50 billion annually to Canada's GDPⁱ, with estimates of up to \$100 billion in potential contributions with appropriate and equitable supportⁱⁱ. There are over 75,000 Indigenous-owned businesses and entrepreneurs across the countryⁱⁱⁱ. Beyond GDP and business growth, the [National Indigenous Economic Strategy](#) (NIES) clearly outlines the collective value of closing the Indigenous socioeconomic gap, including strengthening Indigenous Peoples and economies, addressing historic labour gaps, strengthening supply chains, attracting foreign investment, building project certainty and success, expanding purchasing power, increasing profitability, demonstrating strong, inclusive leadership, and ensuring sustainable economic growth^{iv}.

The ongoing systemic exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from social and economic opportunities, including dispossession from their lands, resources, cultures, and languages, has led to disproportionate rates of poverty, intergenerational trauma, and poor access to critical physical and social infrastructure (e.g., water, housing, healthcare, education, connectivity, etc.). This is a moral failing on the parts of public and private institutions, and it is the responsibility of settler governments and organizations to redress these historic and ongoing injustices.

¹ For example, the OCC's [She-Coverly Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#).

² Until recently, Indigenous Peoples have largely been grouped under the "S" (social) category in ESG approaches, however there is a [growing movement](#) to include a distinct "I" (Indigenous) category to ensure the recognition of Indigenous rights and interests are a fundamental component of corporate strategies.

About This Resource

This document is intended as an introductory resource, providing non-Indigenous organizations and businesses with an overview of opportunities to advance economic reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Ontario. This resource offers foundational knowledge and practical guidance on fostering mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous people, businesses, and communities. It briefly addresses several topics, such as historical context, Indigenous rights, unique characteristics and challenges facing Indigenous businesses, and meaningful opportunities for engagement, in addition to centralizing relevant resources and reports for additional learning and capacity-building opportunities.

Emphasizing respectful communication and inclusive business practices, this document sets the stage for a more comprehensive resource to follow, which will explore different strategies for implementing economic reconciliation initiatives across industries.

Economic Reconciliation Initiative

Businesses across Ontario are increasingly recognizing the value of advancing reconciliation, building mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous Peoples, and supporting stronger Indigenous economic outcomes. Yet, many are unsure where to start or how to do so meaningfully. Moreover, different businesses are at various stages of their reconciliation journey.

The Economic Reconciliation Initiative is a partnership between the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) to help build capacity across Ontario's business community to advance economic reconciliation, reflective of [Call to Action 92 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#). As a founding partner of the Initiative, CCAB provides critical support, data, and guidance to strengthen the Initiative outcomes and deliverables. However, the Initiative is ultimately OCC-led, recognizing the importance of non-Indigenous, settler organizations in taking accountability and advancing economic reconciliation.

Through a phased, iterative approach to allow for ongoing learning, evaluation, and adaptation, the Economic Reconciliation Initiative includes:

Actions to Date

- **Indigenous Advisory Committee:** to provide strategic guidance and direction, composed of Indigenous business and other leaders who have a diverse range of experience, expertise, and representation.
- **Resource Part One (this document):** to provide context, identify information gaps, highlight why the project is important, outline the project goals, and set the foundation for the rest of the project.

Next Steps

- **Engagement/Data Collection:** with Indigenous communities, businesses, and CCAB and OCC members to identify gaps, needs, case studies, and best practices.
- **Resource Part Two:** a practical resource/guide that includes case studies and best practices in Indigenous partnership building from across Ontario's business community.
- **Launch Event:** to promote the final resource and build connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses in Ontario.

To build internal capacity, the OCC is also pursuing **Indigenous cultural competency and safety training** and exploring opportunities to provide training options to our membership (see **Appendix B** ➤ for current training opportunities available). The OCC recognizes that reconciliation is an ongoing process of learning and action and looks forward to continuing to build on this Initiative in the future.

Learn more about opportunities to engage with the Initiative as a partner and/or participant by visiting the [Economic Reconciliation Initiative webpage](#).



II. Message from OCC

As the indispensable partner of business in Ontario, the OCC strives to apply an inclusive, equitable lens to all its work. Recent examples of this include our policy reports on the [gendered economic impacts of COVID-19](#), [access to capital for diverse entrepreneurs](#), and [modernizing procurement in Ontario](#), as well as the [Discover Ability Network](#) program, which supported the economic inclusion of people with disabilities.

However, significant gaps remain, including action to advance economic reconciliation and Indigenous economic inclusion. Non-Indigenous businesses across Ontario increasingly recognize both the social and economic value of fostering productive, meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities and businesses and are looking to the OCC to support initial and ongoing steps to understand their roles and responsibilities in building mutually beneficial partnerships.

Many Indigenous leaders have identified the need for Truth before Reconciliation can take place. To that end, as a non-Indigenous, settler-led organization, we must bring a deep level of humility and self-reflection to the table and take accountability for our (in)action to date. The potential shared prosperity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses, communities, and nations has largely been left on the table as a result of the ongoing legacy and impacts of colonialism. This includes the role that the business community has and continues to play in the systemic marginalization and exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from social and economic opportunities, from education, employment, procurement, and access to capital to economic development and revenue and resource sharing.

To realize the fulsome benefits of shared prosperity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, settler organizations like ours must commit to continuous learning and reflection on the true history and present-day realities of colonialism and early, often, and ongoing engagement with Indigenous Peoples. It is grounded in this approach that the OCC commits to undertaking this ambitious and important initiative in partnership with CCAB, with the full support of its Board of Directors. This work is both reflective of our core values and key to putting those words into action.

It is critical to underscore that reconciliation is not about “checking a box” but rather committing to a continual process of learning and action. There are many dimensions to advancing economic reconciliation, and while it may be tempting to look for “the answer,” there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Through this initiative, the OCC will highlight opportunities for businesses of all sizes, industries, and regions to strengthen their capacity around economic reconciliation. However, it will ultimately be up to individual organizations to apply these best practices, while doing the work to better understand local Indigenous contexts, histories, communities, and priorities.

Many valuable resources already exist in this space that have been developed by Indigenous leaders (see Appendices B and C). Through this Initiative, the OCC is not seeking to reinvent the wheel, but rather fill gaps, amplify Indigenous voices, and highlight key learnings and action items in the Ontario context. We look forward to both the process and outcomes of this work and invite you to join this important initiative, regardless of where you are on your reconciliation journey.

Sincerely,

OCC Board of Directors



III.
Message from CCAB

The Economic Reconciliation Initiative is a partnership between the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB). This partnership recognizes the importance of non-Indigenous organizations taking accountability and advancing economic reconciliation, while understanding that meaningful partnerships and sustainable change must be led by Indigenous people.

Partnerships such as this can have a significant economic impact. They boost procurement from Indigenous businesses, address supply chain issues for non-Indigenous entities and allow for stronger connections with Indigenous communities. The end result is an improved collective understanding with fewer gaps.

This Initiative will help CCAB and its members reach a broader audience of Ontario businesses and advocates who can facilitate real contracts and partnerships between CCAB and Chamber members. It also extends the reach of other programs and initiatives, supporting lasting and substantial change.

This is an opportunity for Ontario businesses to take a leadership role in economic reconciliation, as detailed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #92. This call urges corporate Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework and apply its principles, norms, and standards to their corporate economic reconciliation initiatives and core interactions involving Indigenous Peoples, their lands, and their resources.

We look forward to more, similar partnerships that provide concrete actions on reconciliation and motivate more businesses and corporations to engage in this journey. Together, we can promote economic growth for all, one business at a time.

Sincerely,

CCAB Board Chairs



IV.
Indigenous Peoples in Ontario

Indigenous Peoples have stewarded the land of Turtle Island (now known as North America) since time immemorial. While there is tremendous diversity both within and between Indigenous groups, Indigenous Peoples also share many common experiences, values, and worldviews. Indigenous Peoples possess inherent rights to self-determination, self-governance, and sovereignty, which include the right to administer and operate their own political, legal, economic, social, and cultural systems outside of the constructs of federal, territorial, provincial, and municipal colonial frameworks and laws^v.

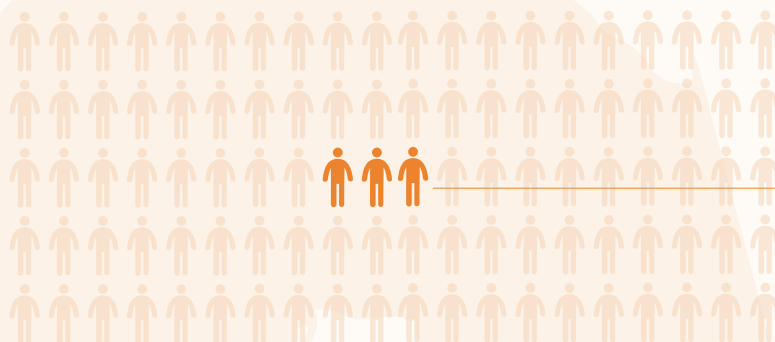
Indigenous Peoples have the inherent right to self-determination, which includes the right to self-governance under their own laws, external to federal, provincial, or municipal legislation.

Ontario is home to the largest Indigenous population in Canada (406,585 people)



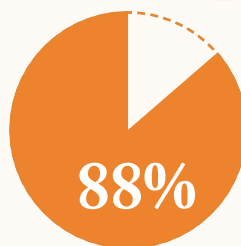
23% of Indigenous Peoples in Canada live in Ontario

Indigenous Peoples make up **3%** of the provincial population



- 251,030 First Nations
- 134,614 Métis
- 4,310 Inuit

Indigenous populations continue to grow rapidly



88% of Indigenous people live off-reserve in urban, rural, and remote settings across the province^{3, vii}

³ For a variety of reasons, Indigenous people may not be accurately represented through current government data systems (e.g., Census data). As a result, some Indigenous people feel that such information severely underrepresents the accurate size and composition of Indigenous populations throughout Canada.

First Nations

There are 133 First Nations communities located across Ontario, with distinct languages, cultures, histories, laws, territories, governance systems, economic systems, and citizenship requirements^{viii}. Each First Nation has its own local governance structure, which can include an elected Chief and Council system (governed by the *Indian Act* and thus ultimately accountable to the federal government) and/or traditional governance systems (e.g., community leadership, clan leaders, hereditary chiefs)^{ix}. In addition to these varying approaches to community-level governance (which can include different election cycles and terms and influence economic priorities and approaches), First Nations in Ontario are politically organized under five regional organizations⁴, alongside independent and unaffiliated First Nations⁵, with province-wide political coordination and advocacy led by the [Chiefs of Ontario](#)^x.

Métis

Métis people descend from the offspring of First Nations women and European men from a specific period in colonial history (thus, Métis is not a “catchall” to describe any Indigenous person of mixed ancestry). Today, the Métis are a distinct group of Indigenous people in Ontario, with unique histories, cultures, language, and territory. The [Métis Nation of Ontario](#) (MNO) is the primary governing body for Métis people in Ontario, though it does not represent all Métis in the province⁶. At the local level, MNO citizens are also represented by 31 chartered community councils^{xi}.

Inuit

Ontario is home to the largest Inuit population outside of the Inuit homeland of Inuit Nunangat^{xii}, which is comprised of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories, Nunatsiavut in Labrador, Nunavik in Quebec, and Nunavut. The Inuit have unique cultures, histories, and languages. In Ontario, [Tungasuvvingat Inuit](#) (TI) provides culturally supportive services and advocates for urban Inuit^{xiii}. At the local level, organizations such as the Toronto Inuit Association provide language, employment, and wellness services and promote Inuit culture^{xiv}.

Urban Indigenous Communities

With most Indigenous Peoples in Ontario living outside of their home communities and territories, the Friendship Centre movement has been critical to providing Indigenous people in urban, rural, and remote areas with a wide range of culturally based, self-determined services. The [Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#) (OFIFC) represents the collective interests of 29 Friendship Centres in cities and towns across the province^{xv}.

⁴ Anishinabek Nation, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, Grand Council Treaty #3, Mushkegowuk Council, and Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

⁵ Mohawks of Akwesasne, Six Nations of the Grand River, and other Independent First Nations.

⁶ For example, the Red Sky Métis Independent Nation represents Métis in the Robinson Superior Treaty area in Northwestern Ontario.

Indigenous Identities

It is important to note that Indigenous identities continue to be subject to the evolving political, legal, and socioeconomic landscape between Indigenous Peoples and the Government of Canada. From early contact and treaty-making to the *Indian Act*, residential “schools,” the *sixties scoop*, and the *Constitution Act*, successive governments continue to exert undue and illegitimate control over Indigenous identities and, as a result, Indigenous rights. These acts of assimilation and genocide have disconnected many Indigenous people from their communities, cultures, languages, and histories. As such, definitions of identity must ultimately be left to individual communities and nations, who may each have unique approaches to determining membership and/or citizenship.

Organizations are strongly encouraged to learn more about local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, histories, and governance, which is fundamental to building respectful and mutually beneficial relationships. Learn more about the distinct and unique Indigenous Nations, communities, language groups, tribal councils, political organizations, and economic development corporations in Ontario, as well as national and regional Indigenous economic organizations in [Appendix A](#) ➤

There is tremendous diversity among and between Indigenous Peoples. Learning about the unique culture and history of one community does not equate to understanding those of other communities or nations.

Relationship-Building and Engagement: An Intersectional Distinctions-Based Approach

Relationship-building and engagement are essential to advance reconciliation, reflecting the foundational treaty principles of Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Renewal^{xvi}. The term “[distinctions-based approach](#)” was developed by the Government of Canada to acknowledge the specific rights, interests, priorities, and concerns of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples^{xvii}, and can be a useful framework by which to pursue relationship-building and engagement with Indigenous Peoples.

However, it is equally important to recognize the limitations of this framework and apply a broader, more holistic approach that acknowledges the multiple intersectional diversities, distinct experiences, and compounding layers of marginalization experienced by Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous women, 2SLGBTQQA+ Indigenous people, and urban Indigenous communities^{xviii}. Learn more about Indigenous diversity and intersectionality in [Appendix C](#) ➤

Terminology Best Practices

Using appropriate and accurate terminology is critical to building meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples based on mutual understanding and respect. As noted above, Indigenous Peoples are not a monolith and individual people, communities, and nations may have different terminology preferences based on their individual and cultural histories and contexts. At the same time, language is imperfect and constantly evolving, so it is important to stay engaged and open to ongoing discussions and reflect on guidance shared by Indigenous Peoples.

With that in mind, some current terminology best practices for settlers include^{xix,xx}:

- ✔ **Use culturally appropriate language:**
 - Indigenous⁷, when referring to First Peoples in general.
 - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, when referring to the three distinct Indigenous Peoples in Canada.
- ✔ **Where possible, use nation and/or community names** to avoid pan-Indigenous approaches that overlook unique, diverse individual and cultural identities (e.g., Kanienkagen is Six Nations of the Grand River in the Haudenosaunee language).
- ✔ **Always capitalize** the words “Indigenous,” “Chief,” and “Council” and the names of Indigenous nations (e.g., Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation), people (e.g., Anishinaabek), and languages (e.g., Anishinaabemowin), as you would Toronto, Canadians, and English.
- ✔ **Always include diacritical marks** (e.g., Métis).
- ✔ **Use plural language** to acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous Peoples (unless speaking about a specific community, person, etc.). The term “Peoples” is used when speaking about multiple groups (e.g., Anishinaabe, Chippewa, and Haudenosaunee Peoples); the term “people” is used when speaking about a specific group or individual.
- ✔ **Use present tense** to acknowledge the ongoing presence of Indigenous Peoples and present-day realities of colonialism (e.g., Toronto *is* home to many diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, the *ongoing* legacy and impacts of colonialism).
- ✔ **Avoid possessive language** (e.g., our, Ontario’s) when describing Indigenous Peoples to avoid undermining Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty, and in particular, as it relates to ancestry that is not claimed by the speaker. Similarly, **avoid colonial identifiers** (e.g., Indigenous Ontarians/Canadians), as some Indigenous people may not identify with these markers.
- ✔ **Use the term “partner” and/or “rights-holder”** rather than “stakeholder” when referring to Indigenous Peoples, especially in an engagement context, to recognize the importance of their key and distinct roles as rights-holders in helping shape and develop the project, program, policy, etc., as opposed to being one among a potential list of other stakeholders.

Learn more about terminology in the [Glossary](#) ➤

⁷The term “Indigenous” is the current global standard in terminology. It was developed and adopted by Indigenous leaders in the 1970s after the emergence of Indigenous rights movements around the world as a way to identify and unite their communities and represent them in political arenas such as the United Nations. However, as diverse peoples with different experiences, perspectives etc., different Indigenous people may or may not prefer to use the term “Indigenous.” Other terms may be used in specific contexts, such as organizational names (e.g., Ontario Native Women’s Association) and legal terminology (e.g., Aboriginal rights, *Indian Act*), or as self-descriptors by Indigenous people.

We Are All Treaty People

Treaties are important agreements that govern Indigenous-Crown relationships and must be honoured according to the foundational principles of Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Renewal^{xxi}. These nation-to-nation agreements specify the rights and responsibilities of sovereign First Nations and the Crown. Some treaty agreements include annuity payments for Indigenous Peoples as a means of sharing in the prosperity and wealth gained from resource revenue in their territories.

Ontario is covered by more than 40 treaties and other land agreements, many of which are pre-confederation treaties^{xxii}. Following Confederation, these agreements were entered into with the federal and provincial governments (as representatives of the Crown). Despite these agreements being made under international law, the disregard and neglect of the treaties and agreements by federal and provincial governments resulted in the forcible displacement and dispossession of the territories and inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario (and across Canada), which continues to impact Indigenous Peoples' socioeconomic opportunities and outcomes today.

The Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius were used as legal and moral justifications to dispossess Indigenous Peoples from their lands and undermine their inherent rights to sovereignty and self-determination. These concepts continue to inform current federal, territorial, provincial, and municipal laws and policies.

Early treaties (e.g., the [Covenant Chain](#), [Peace and Friendship Treaties](#)) were focused primarily on peaceful coexistence, shared prosperity from natural resources, and military alliances, but did not include land ownership. In fact, land ownership is a fundamentally colonial concept, in stark contrast to many Indigenous worldviews that emphasize land stewardship, sharing, and conservation of resources.

The [Royal Proclamation of 1763](#) set out the constitutional framework for Crown-Indigenous treaty relationships, ostensibly recognizing Indigenous land rights, while at the same time claiming Crown dominion and sovereignty over the land and thus providing the legal foundation for the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous lands. The legacy of the Royal Proclamation continues to shape Canadian law and policy, as federal and provincial governments have not honoured treaty agreements and have neglected their responsibilities to Indigenous treaty partners.

For example, the *Indian Act* was designed to prohibit First Nations from proceeding with legal actions to enforce their rights. Despite the introduction of [Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982](#), which enshrines Indigenous and treaty rights in Canadian law^{xxiii}, Indigenous Peoples continue to seek justice for treaties that have been broken and dishonoured through litigation and/or negotiations.

Treaty Territory and Unceded Land

In contrast to treaty lands, unceded territories were never covered by treaties or other land agreements, and thus remain subject to dispute between Indigenous Peoples and the Crown. For example, most of Eastern Ontario is the unceded territory of the Algonquins of Ontario, who are currently in [negotiations](#) with the Governments of Canada and Ontario to establish a modern treaty or land claim agreement to provide certainty about the use and management of the territory^{xxiv}.

Canada's capital, Ottawa, is situated on the unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.

The Robinson Huron Treaty: A Significant Legal Case

The [Robinson Huron Treaty](#) is one example of a treaty that has not been honoured by the Crown, with significant ongoing repercussions for Indigenous Peoples, as well as governments and the private sector. It covers Anishinaabe territory, a vast, mineral-rich area in Northern Ontario that is home to 21 First Nations communities. In 1845, the Crown began issuing mining permits to settlers in the territory, despite the territory being under the complete jurisdiction and control of the Lake Huron Anishinaabek Peoples. Following four years of conflict, the Robinson Huron Treaty was signed in 1850, recognizing the growing value of the territory's resources and setting out a framework for the Anishinaabek Peoples to equitably benefit from this newly extracted wealth. The treaty included an augmentation clause to increase the annuities paid to the Anishinaabek Peoples if the resource extraction revenues grew^{xxv}.

Since the treaty was signed in 1850, the annuity has only increased once (from \$1.70 to four dollars per person in 1875), despite staggering gains in the mining of the territory (which has generated a total of \$330 billion in revenue as of 2021)^{xxvi}. Following over a century of attempts to seek back-owed compensation, the Robinson Huron communities have recently championed their cause through provincial and federal courts. To date, a \$10 billion settlement (to be shared between the provincial and federal governments⁸) has been proposed to address past annuities, with ongoing negotiations underway to determine payments going forward^{xxvii}.

The Robinson Huron Treaty legal case sets an important precedent for honouring treaty relationships between First Nations and the Crown, while also illuminating the private sector's role in upholding treaty rights.

⁸ Federal and provincial governments set aside contingency funds for these types of [settlements](#).

As we will explore further below and in the subsequent resource in this Initiative, the failure to uphold treaty rights and obligations has serious financial, operational, and relationship-building implications for governments and businesses alike. For businesses, this can include project delays, cancellations, increased costs and resources, legal challenges, regulatory intervention, investment uncertainties, reputational damage, and broken trust. As such, organizations are strongly encouraged to learn the true histories and present-day realities of the treaties and territories upon which they live and work, including [ongoing land claims](#) and negotiations, as a foundation for meaningful partnership building.

Learn more about the Treaty and Traditional Territories in Ontario in [Appendix A](#) ➤

Indigenous Business and Entrepreneurial Data



Like the general Indigenous population, the Indigenous economy in Ontario is diverse and growing. As with any industry partnership, understanding the landscape, priorities, and challenges facing Indigenous businesses is essential to building strong relationships. Some key Indigenous business data include:

- Indigenous businesses contribute nearly \$50 billion annually to Canada's GDP^{xxix}, with estimates of up to \$100 billion in potential contributions with appropriate and equitable support^{xxx}.
- Ontario has the second most Indigenous-owned businesses⁹ in the country (3,526), yet they make up only 0.7 percent of ownership share in the province^{xxxi}.
- Most Indigenous-owned businesses in Ontario are owned by men (69 percent)^{xxxii}, though the number of women-owned Indigenous businesses is increasing faster than men-owned ones¹⁰ (+3.3 percent and +2.2 percent, respectively)^{xxxiii}.
- Like the general Indigenous population, Indigenous business owners are younger than non-Indigenous business owners^{xxxiv}.
- Most Indigenous businesses in Ontario are small, operating as a sole proprietorship (47 percent) or partnership (22 percent), with nearly two-thirds (65 percent) operating without employees^{xxxv}.
- 59 percent of Indigenous businesses in Ontario are located on reserve^{xxxvi}.
- Indigenous businesses in Ontario span many industries, including the service sector (63 percent), secondary industries such as retail and transportation (23 percent), natural resources (7 percent), and construction (6 percent)^{xxxvii}.

⁹ Generally, a business must be majority Indigenous-owned and controlled (at least 51 percent) to be considered an Indigenous business.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada does not include data on gender diverse-owned Indigenous businesses.

The [National Indigenous Economic Development Board](#) estimates that ensuring equitable education, employment, and economic development opportunities for Indigenous Peoples would lead to an increase of \$27.7 billion (1.5 percent growth) in Canada's GDP each year^{xxxviii}.

Barriers Facing Indigenous Businesses and Communities

Despite growing revenues and overall success, Indigenous businesses and communities experience ongoing barriers due in large part to the legacy of exclusionary colonial policies from both public and private institutions, including broken treaties and promises, leading to the forced displacement and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from their lands, resources, and cultures.

Among the key challenges facing Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs living on reserve are the prohibitive restrictions in the *Indian Act*, which both severely reduced the land base of First Nations (and thus its economic potential), while also preventing reserve lands from being used as collateral^{xxxix}. As such, Indigenous businesses (both on- and off-reserve) face significant challenges around equitable access to financing, in addition to procurement, capacity building, and digital connectivity, severely undermining opportunities for shared growth and prosperity.

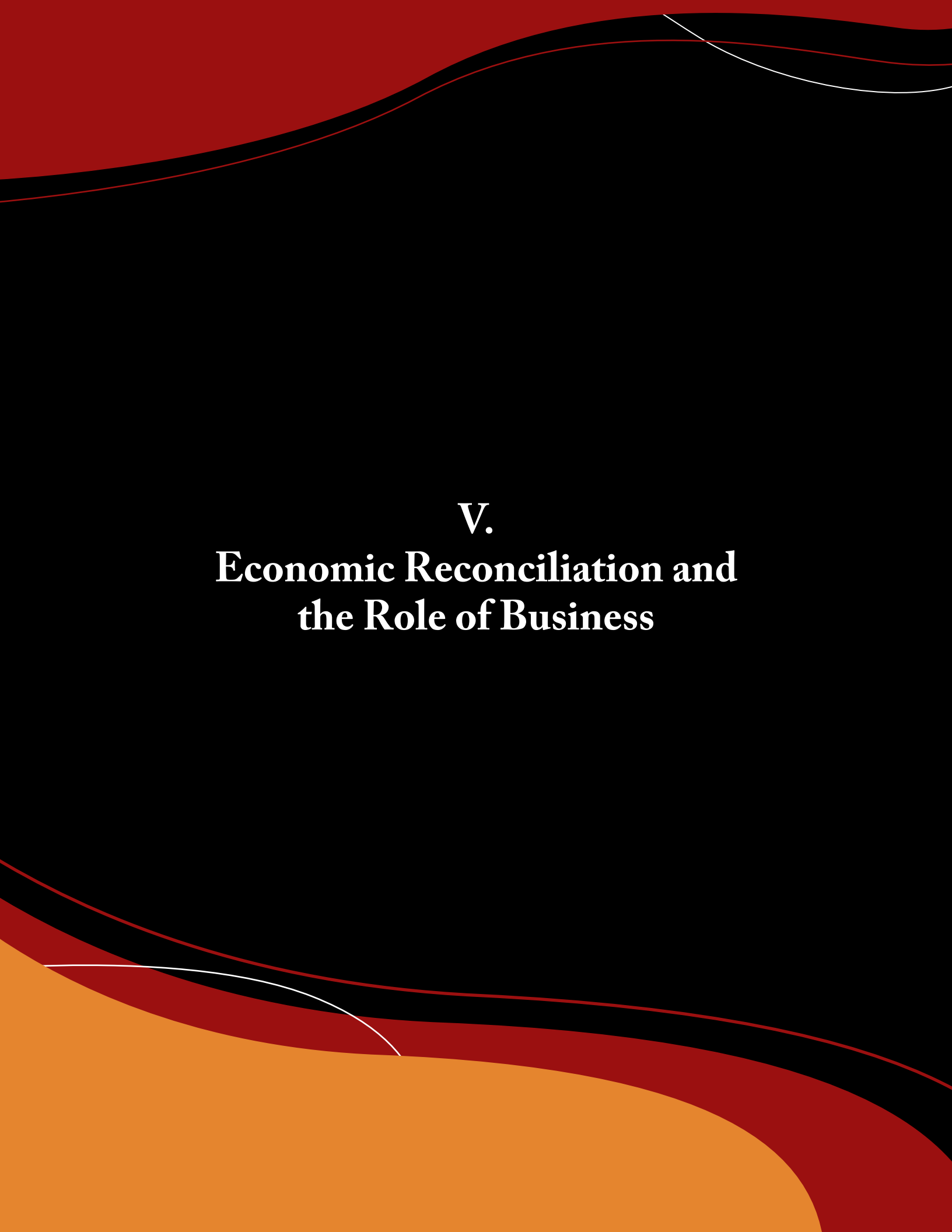
The Indian Act has and continues to exclude First Nations from meaningful economic participation, including historical provisions that restricted access to legal representation, required permission to leave reserve lands, limited the ability to sell agricultural products, enforced enfranchisement¹¹ for university admittance, and denied the right to vote.

At the same time, ongoing structural racism and discrimination have led to intergenerational trauma, deeply disproportionate rates of Indigenous poverty and incarceration, severe infrastructure deficits (e.g., water, housing, public services, etc.), and deeply inequitable outcomes related to Indigenous education, employment, and other [social determinants of health](#), all of which pose significant challenges for Indigenous Peoples' social and economic mobility and equity.

The following section and subsequent resource will dive deeper into opportunities for non-Indigenous organizations to help remove some of these barriers and enable Indigenous businesses and communities to achieve fulsome economic participation and prosperity.

Due to the ongoing legacy and impacts of colonialism, Indigenous Peoples face a plethora of disproportionate social and economic barriers in Ontario, affecting their access to financing, critical infrastructure, education, employment, and health outcomes.

¹¹ Loss of Indian Status rights.



V.
**Economic Reconciliation and
the Role of Business**

Understanding Reconciliation

Reconciliation may have different meanings to different people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous^{xl}. The term “reconciliation” was brought into mainstream Canadian parlance with the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) landmark [reports](#) in 2015, which include [94 Calls to Action](#) for Canadian industries, institutions, and individuals to meaningfully address the historic and ongoing injustices experienced by Indigenous Peoples, from education, child welfare, justice, and health to language, culture, media, art, sport, and business.

The TRC follows in the tradition of other groundbreaking reports illuminating the true history of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada (e.g., [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#) (RCAP), [Hawthorn Report](#), [Penner Report](#)). Other notable reports, such as the [Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#) (MMIWG) and the [Urban Indigenous Action Plan](#), call on public, private, and individual actors to take accountability and action on the unique, systemic injustices facing Indigenous women, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and urban communities.

According to a leading Indigenous think tank, [Yellowhead Institute](#), only 13 of the 94 TRC Calls to Action have been implemented as of 2022, raising significant concerns about the commitment of public and private actors to reconciliation^{xli}. In light of this slow progress, many Indigenous people may be weary and skeptical of the term “reconciliation,” while others may feel that the term does not reflect the true history of Indigenous-settler relations, as “reconciliation” suggests the restoration of a former relationship based on trust and mutual respect. Without tangible actions, commitments to reconciliation can ring hollow and sow seeds of deep distrust among Indigenous Peoples, reinforcing colonial patterns and ultimately moving further away from meaningful reconciliation. As such, it is critical for settlers to move beyond words to concrete actions grounded in self-reflection, accountability, understanding, and engagement.

It is incumbent upon settlers to take time to review and reflect on the TRC and other landmark reports on reconciliation to better understand the true history and ongoing impacts of colonialism, including their roles and responsibilities to advance reconciliation.

Learn more about key reports related to reconciliation in [Appendix C](#) ➤

Economic Reconciliation

Among the incomplete TRC Calls to Action is number 92, which focuses on the concept of economic reconciliation, i.e., pursuing meaningful, equitable economic opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous Peoples. To action economic reconciliation, Call to Action 92 calls on Corporate Canada to adopt the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP) as a reconciliation framework for corporate policies and activities involving Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources under three key themes:

- **Engagement:** Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- **Equity:** Ensure that Indigenous Peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Indigenous communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects¹².
- **Education:** Provide education for management and staff on the history of Indigenous Peoples, including the history and legacy of residential “schools,” UNDRIP, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous laws, and Indigenous–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism^{xlii}.

Building on the TRC Calls to Action, UNDRIP, RCAP, and other landmark reports on reconciliation, the [National Indigenous Economic Strategy](#) (NIES) outlines a path to socioeconomic parity for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, with 107 Calls to Economic Prosperity for Corporate Canada, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), institutions, and governments to advance economic reconciliation, with clear vision statements under four strategic pathways:

- **People:** The capacity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit is strengthened to provide world-class skills, knowledge, and leadership in Canadian and global economies. Indigenous Peoples are empowered to choose the distinct way they define, generate, and redistribute wealth¹³.
- **Lands:** Indigenous jurisdiction related to land is enshrined in the knowledge that the land was never ceded but rather intended to be shared and protected for future generations. Landmark court decisions, international law, and United Nations declarations are recognized and enacted into legislation. The land encompasses all elements, including water, air, and resources that lie on, above, and beneath the land. Economic reconciliation is attained when all land-related claims and issues are resolved¹⁴.
- **Infrastructure:** Leading-edge physical and institutional infrastructure and services are in place to ensure a prosperous Indigenous economy today and for future generations¹⁵.
- **Finance:** Indigenous Peoples and communities have the financial capacity to achieve economic and social prosperity on their own terms^{16, xliv}.

¹² This includes Indigenous communities living on- and off-reserve.

¹³ This includes Indigenous entrepreneurship, leadership and governance, labour force and markets, social capital, and workplace.

¹⁴ This includes land sovereignty, land management, and environmental stewardship.

¹⁵ This includes physical and institutional infrastructure, and financial resources for infrastructure.

¹⁶ This includes revenue sources, stimulus funds, procurement, and trade.

Taking Action on Economic Reconciliation

There are many avenues that businesses of all sizes and industries can pursue to advance economic reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples under the key themes outlined in TRC Call to Action 92 and the NIES. While each approach may not apply to every organization, it is incumbent upon businesses to critically examine and implement the relevant actions that they can take on both an organizational and sector-wide level.

As with any key strategic initiative, economic reconciliation must be both a top-down and bottom-up approach, with visible, inclusive leadership actions demonstrating ongoing commitment and accountability.

Tangible steps toward economic reconciliation for businesses to take include, but are not limited to:

- ✔ **Sharing territorial acknowledgments.** Like commitments to reconciliation, territorial or land acknowledgments have come to be seen by some Indigenous people as [superficial](#) and lacking meaning. Beyond acknowledging territories and nations, settlers should reflect on the true history and present-day realities of the territories, connect the acknowledgment to the work that they do, and commit to taking action toward reconciliation beyond the acknowledgment. Learn more about territorial acknowledgments at [native-land.ca](#).
- ✔ **Sharing educational reconciliation resources with staff.** This could include dedicating staff time to review and reflect on key reconciliation reports, books, films, etc. (e.g., lunch and learn, book/film club). See [Appendices B](#) and [C](#) for some examples of key resources.
- ✔ **Providing Indigenous cultural competency training for staff.** Ongoing staff training is a foundational economic reconciliation action for non-Indigenous organizations to better understand Indigenous cultures and histories. See [Appendix B](#) for Indigenous cultural awareness trainers.
- ✔ **Attending and/or participating in Indigenous community or business events.** This could include becoming a sponsor or tradeshow exhibitor at Indigenous economic conferences, such as the [Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association](#) (OFNEDA) annual conference.
- ✔ **Making Indigenous community investments.** This could be a component of corporate DEI, ESG, and/or CSR initiatives to help build Indigenous community capacity.
- ✔ **Providing reduced rates/complimentary access to events, membership, training, etc. for Indigenous businesses/individuals.** This is an easy step for businesses to take to reduce the barriers to entry for Indigenous engagement with their organizations and networks.
- ✔ **Implementing HR strategies and/or targets to recruit and retain Indigenous job candidates.** This should be a formal process to both attract a range of Indigenous candidates and create an inclusive, supportive environment to ensure Indigenous employees feel safe and welcome in the workplace.
- ✔ **Auditing workplace policies and procedures that promote reconciliation.** Reconciliation must be an organization-wide approach, not siloed in a specific department. See [Appendix B](#) for Indigenous-owned consultancy firms that provide organizational audit services related to reconciliation.
- ✔ **Convening an Indigenous Advisory Committee or other governance structure.** This could help ground organizational and strategic approaches in Indigenous knowledge and experience and ensure more effective, meaningful, and lasting reconciliation initiatives.

- ✓ **Developing Indigenous partnership-building and engagement strategies.** This could include building relationships with local community Economic Development Officers and/or Economic Development Corporations. See [Appendix A](#) for Indigenous Economic Development Corporations and other Indigenous economic organizations in Ontario.
- ✓ **Implementing procurement policies with Indigenous suppliers.** The Government of Canada recently adopted a [five percent Indigenous procurement target](#), reflective of Indigenous Peoples representing five percent of the Canadian population, and the Government of Ontario is currently updating its own Indigenous procurement strategy.
- ✓ **Linking executive compensation to economic reconciliation performance metrics.** Companies are increasingly exploring opportunities to tie executive pay and/or bonuses to ESG, DEI, and other inclusive business practices, which can help embed these important initiatives within an organization's overall approach.
- ✓ **Obtaining certification/accreditation in Indigenous relations.** See information about CCAB's Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program below.
- ✓ **Developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).** As a strategic organizational framework, a RAP may encompass many of the actions on this list, including leadership actions, employment, business development, and community relationships that promote Indigenous rights and self-determination. See [Appendix B](#) for Indigenous-owned consultancy firms that support RAP development.
- ✓ **Entering into revenue- or equity-sharing agreements with Indigenous businesses and/or communities.** This is of particular importance for major projects taking place in Indigenous territories to ensure Indigenous communities equitably benefit from development on their lands. However, other industries are increasingly exploring opportunities to redirect a portion of revenues to Indigenous communities and/or businesses to honour treaty relationships (e.g., retail providers donating revenues earned on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to Indigenous organizations).

CCAB offers several instructive programs to help build business capacity to advance economic reconciliation, including:

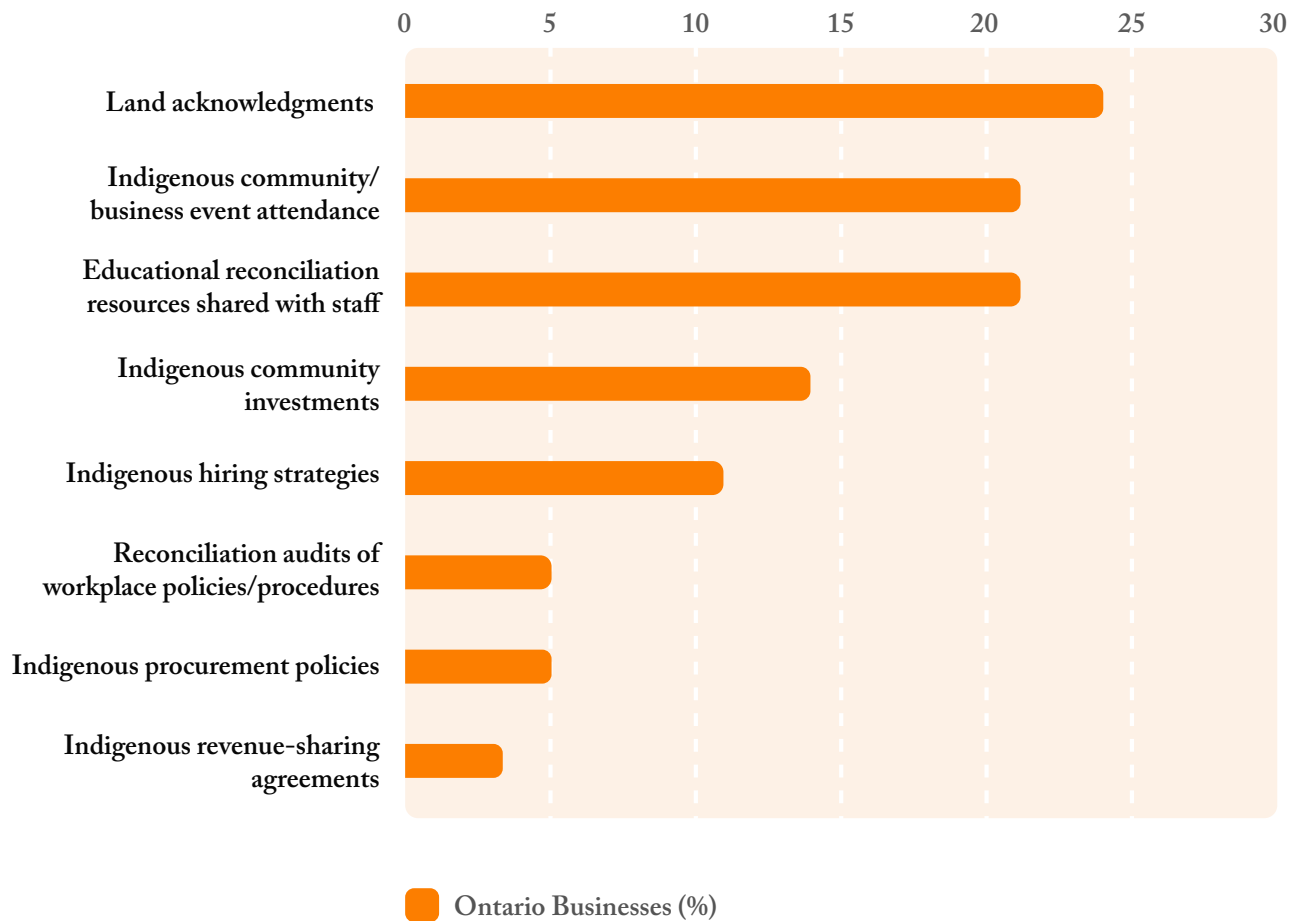
- ✓ The [Progressive Aboriginal Relations](#) (PAR) program certifies corporate performance in Indigenous relations related to employment, business development, community investment, and community engagement. A specialized version of the PAR program is also available for SMEs.
- ✓ The [Supply Change](#) procurement strategy includes the Aboriginal Procurement Champions group, comprised of companies committed to increasing Indigenous procurement opportunities. The Aboriginal Procurement Marketplace connects Aboriginal Procurement Champions and other companies with Certified Aboriginal Businesses.

Applying the principles and concepts from the TRC and other foundational reports, CCAB's [Business Reconciliation in Canada Guidebook](#) and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) [Reconciliation Toolkit for Business Leaders](#) provide practical steps for non-Indigenous organizations to take to advance economic reconciliation.

The subsequent resource in this Initiative will explore tangible ways in which businesses across the province have implemented different economic reconciliation actions. Find more economic reconciliation capacity-building resources in [Appendix B](#)

Action Gap

While non-Indigenous businesses increasingly recognize the value of partnering with Indigenous businesses and communities, according to the OCC's [2023 Ontario Economic Report](#), there is a significant gap when it comes to putting economic reconciliation commitments into action.



Non-profits, publicly traded companies, post-secondary institutions, and diverse-led businesses are significantly more likely to have taken steps, in contrast to businesses in the construction, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and wholesale trade sectors, signaling a strong need for further capacity building and accountability^{xliv}. Through this Initiative, the OCC is seeking to both build non-Indigenous business capacity to advance economic reconciliation and measure progress through ongoing engagement with our members.

Costs of Inaction

Meaningful action toward economic reconciliation can generate incredible value for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses, as well as the broader economy. In addition to supporting Indigenous people and communities, closing the Indigenous socioeconomic gap can help grow GDP, address critical labour gaps, strengthen supply chains, attract foreign investment, build project certainty and success, expand purchasing power, increase profitability, demonstrate strong, inclusive leadership, and ensure sustainable economic growth^{xlv}.

However, as noted above, many non-Indigenous organizations have yet to take tangible steps toward advancing economic reconciliation, leaving significant benefits on the table, from job creation and economic development to business and economic growth. Beyond failing to realize the collective gains through strengthened Indigenous Peoples and economies, there are also real costs to inaction and the ongoing exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from equitable socioeconomic opportunities.

The costs of inaction on economic reconciliation can be financial, operational, and relational and often stem from the failure to meaningfully engage with Indigenous Peoples early, often, and on an ongoing basis.

This can include undermining Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination by failing to recognize and uphold [Aboriginal and Treaty rights](#), implement the [duty to consult and accommodate](#), and/or obtain the [free, prior, and informed consent](#) of Indigenous Peoples¹⁷. These (in)actions can result in project delays and/or cancellations, increased costs and resources (including compensation for historic grievances), legal challenges, regulatory intervention, investment uncertainties, reputational damage, and broken trust, all of which can ultimately impede future projects and shared prosperity with other Indigenous businesses and/or communities^{xlvi, xlvii}.

Rather than viewing Indigenous engagement as a corporate risk, working in true partnership with Indigenous Peoples will help mitigate costs, realize collective benefits, and bring unique Indigenous knowledge and skill sets to the table, which can help ensure the strength, success, and sustainability of the project, partnership, and Ontario's overall economic prosperity.

Working in true partnership with Indigenous Peoples can help ensure project and overall economic strength, success, and sustainability.

¹⁷ While the recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty rights, the duty to consult and accommodate, and obtaining free, prior, and informed consent have primarily been seen as government obligations, in many cases, [businesses](#) are also legally required to recognize Indigenous rights, title, and the duty to consult. Regardless of the legal implications, these are also best practices for meaningful Indigenous partnership building.

Overcoming Challenges

Like any business relationship, building meaningful partnerships with Indigenous businesses and communities grounded in trust and mutual respect takes time and resources and may not always be a linear process. Reconciliation action is complex and will inevitably include mistakes and setbacks, regardless of intention. Moreover, due to the legacy and ongoing impacts of colonialism, including the tangible ways in which the business community has and continues to undermine Indigenous Peoples and rights, many Indigenous businesses and communities may be reluctant to engage with settler organizations and justifiably question the true intentions and goals for the engagement and/or partnership.

As such, it is incumbent on non-Indigenous businesses to both build and communicate the path by which Indigenous partner knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and priorities will be valued and implemented by the non-Indigenous partner, which may require reassessing and/or changing course on the project, policy, or partnership. This is why early, often, and ongoing engagement with Indigenous businesses and communities is fundamental to advancing economic reconciliation and can help build trust, mitigate risks, and provide opportunities to sincerely address unavoidable setbacks.

As outlined in CCAB's [Business Reconciliation in Canada Guidebook](#), this process should include:

- ✓ Learning about the unique and varied customs, values, and business practices of Indigenous communities, including respecting local protocols.
- ✓ Engaging with Indigenous communities early to build meaningful relationships, develop appropriate partnership and financing agreements, and ensure communities can fully assess the project/partnership impacts and share their interests, concerns, and priorities.
- ✓ Engaging with Indigenous communities often to hear concerns, priorities, and updates.
- ✓ Ensuring senior leadership is committed to authentic engagement with appropriate community leader(s) at similar levels of authority (e.g., a First Nations Chief should have direct contact with a CEO, President, or Board Director)^{xlviii}.

This approach aligns with the [Seven Grandfather Teachings](#), a widely shared set of Anishinaabe guiding principles to ensure good relations, peace, and harmony¹⁸.

The subsequent resource in this Initiative will dive deeper into some of the challenges around advancing economic reconciliation and showcase creative partnership solutions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses.

¹⁸ Truth (Debwewin), Humility (Dabasendiziwin), Respect (Manaaji'idiwin), Love (Zaagi'idiwin), Honesty (Gwayakwaadiziwin), Bravery (Zoongide'ewin), and Wisdom (Nibwaakaawin).

Standing with Indigenous Businesses and Communities

By taking action on economic reconciliation, non-Indigenous organizations can partner with Indigenous businesses and communities to bridge gaps for growth and success. This can include direct support for Indigenous people through inclusive education, training, employment, networking opportunities, entrepreneurship and capacity-building supports, access to finance and procurement opportunities, digital and other infrastructure developments, and revenue- and equity-sharing agreements.

Not only can these actions support individual Indigenous people, but they can ensure the growth and prosperity of Indigenous communities and businesses. It is important to ensure actions toward economic reconciliation are not framed as charitable or paternalistic approaches (which can perpetuate colonial patterns), but rather as critical to redressing historic and ongoing injustices experienced by Indigenous Peoples, which have and continue to directly benefit non-Indigenous, settler individuals, communities, organizations, and institutions. However, as outlined above, this support is not one-directional: the Indigenous economy is strong and growing, providing enormous value to non-Indigenous businesses, as well.

Economic reconciliation is not about charity, but redressing historical and ongoing injustices from which settlers continue to benefit: providing a hand-up, not a handout.

As outlined above, economic reconciliation is fundamental to building inclusive, equitable, sustainable prosperity for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Ontario and across Turtle Island.

Measuring Impacts

Economic reconciliation requires a fundamental shift from the status quo to ensure the interests, priorities, values, and rights of Indigenous Peoples are meaningfully and equitably included in business practices. This must include moving beyond tokenism and time-limited activities toward building enduring, mutually beneficial partnerships with Indigenous Peoples grounded in understanding, trust, and respect.

As such, a critical component of any organizational commitments and actions toward economic reconciliation must be accompanied by clear impact evaluation and reporting metrics, with opportunities to reassess and (as necessary) change approaches based on lessons learned. This is a key pillar of corporate DEI, ESG, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and critical to ensuring effective, meaningful, and lasting impacts toward economic reconciliation. In addition to supporting Indigenous business and economic interests, this could also include direct investment and/or support for local Indigenous community initiatives.

Businesses must be open to meaningfully incorporating Indigenous perspectives and priorities, which may include reassessing and potentially changing course on a project or initiative.

Find Indigenous-owned consultancy firms who can support this work in [Appendix B](#) ➤

Beyond Call to Action 92

While the primary focus of this Initiative is building capacity among non-Indigenous businesses to advance economic reconciliation, it is important to recognize that businesses have roles and responsibilities beyond TRC Call to Action 92. The other TRC Calls to Action, in addition to the Calls for Justice from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG and the UNDRIP Articles, cover a range of relevant, interrelated action areas for non-Indigenous businesses and industries, including but not limited to:

- ✓ Eliminating **education and employment** gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (e.g., TRC Call to Action 7, MMIWG Call for Justice 4.4, UNDRIP Article 17).
- ✓ Closing gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous **health** outcomes, including through the provision of culturally appropriate health services and integration of Indigenous healing practices (e.g., TRC Call to Action 19, MMIWG Call for Justice 7.1, UNDRIP Article 24).
- ✓ Providing **post-secondary** and other professional education on the history and legacy of colonialism and Indigenous rights, including through the integration of Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods (e.g., TRC Call to Action 62, MMIWG Call for Justice 11.1).
- ✓ Identifying approaches to increase safety, security, and equitable benefits of **resource extraction and development** projects for Indigenous Peoples, rights, and lands, including avenues for the increased participation of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people (e.g., MMIWG Call for Justice 13.3, UNDRIP Article 32).
- ✓ Developing and maintaining safe, affordable, culturally appropriate Indigenous **housing** (e.g., MMIWG Call for Justice 4.6, UNDRIP Article 21).
- ✓ Building safe, affordable **transit, transportation, and other critical infrastructure** (e.g., MMIWG Call for Justice 4.8).
- ✓ Educating workers in the **hospitality** industry on Indigenous Peoples and rights, including violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people (e.g., MMIWG Call for Justice 8.1).
- ✓ Increasing Indigenous **media** programming and initiatives, including through equitable Indigenous employment, leadership, and professional development opportunities (e.g., TRC Call to Action 84, MMIWG Call for Justice 6.1, UNDRIP Article 16).
- ✓ Supporting Indigenous **artists**, including through Indigenous representation on heritage and commemoration boards (e.g., TRC Call to Action 83, MMIWG Call for Justice 16.11, UNDRIP Article 11).

The subsequent resource in this Initiative will explore examples of economic reconciliation actions across industries, recognizing that all organizations, regardless of size, sector, or location, have critical roles to play in supporting the Indigenous economy and actively contributing to its growth.

Next Steps

The next phase of this Initiative will involve in-depth engagement with Indigenous businesses and communities, as well as non-Indigenous businesses, to better understand the gaps and opportunities to build meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships and advance reconciliation. The findings from the engagement phase will help inform the second, more comprehensive resource in the Initiative, which will showcase some best practices in Indigenous partnership building across the province, culminating in an event to share the resource and build connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses.

Businesses at all stages of their reconciliation journeys are welcome to join this work. Visit the OCC's [Economic Reconciliation Initiative webpage](#) to learn more about opportunities to get involved in the next phases of the Initiative.

Indigenous Communities, Languages, Territories, and Organizations

Indigenous Communities and Nations in Ontario

First Nations in Ontario are made up of Anishinaabek, Mushkegowuk, Onkwehonwe, and Lenape Peoples. These Peoples make up 14 Nations^{xlix}:

- Mushkegowuk (Cree)
- Mohawk
- Tuscarora
- Seneca
- Cayuga
- Oneida
- Onondaga (Haudenosaunee – Onkwehonwe Peoples)
- Delaware
- Mississauga
- Chippewa
- Pottawotami
- Algonquin
- Odawa
- Anishinaabe (Anishinaabek Peoples)

These 14 Nations make up [133 First Nations communities](#) across Ontario. Ontario is also home to diverse Métis and Inuit Peoples.

Indigenous Languages in Ontario

The most common Indigenous languages spoken in Ontario are Algonquin and Iroquoian languages^l:

- Ojibway (Algonquin)
- Oji-Cree (Algonquin)
- Cree (Algonquin)
- Anishinaabemowin (Chippewa) (Algonquin)
- Nehinawewin (Swampy Cree) (Algonquin)
- Mohawk (Iroquoian)

Other Indigenous languages spoken in Ontario include^{li}:

- Inuktitut and other Inuktit (Inuit) languages
- Other Algonquin languages, including:
 - Other Cree languages, including Ililimowin (Moose Cree), Iyiyiw-Ayimiwin (Northern East Cree), Nehiyawewin (Plains Cree), and Nihithawiwin (Woods Cree)
 - Eastern Algonquin languages, including Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqewi (Malecite)
 - Anicinabemowin (Algonquin)
 - Daawaamwin (Odawa)
- Saulteau (Western Ojibway)
- Naskapi
- Other Iroquoian languages, including Cayuga and Oneida
- Dene and other Northern Athabaskan languages
- Assiniboine and other Siouan languages
- Michif (Métis language)

Learn more about [Indigenous languages](#) in Ontario and across Turtle Island, including revitalization efforts.

Treaty and Traditional Territories in Ontario

Find a [treaty map of Ontario](#) and learn more about the traditional territories, treaties, and languages in Ontario and across Turtle Island at [native-land.ca](#).

Tribal Councils and Political Organizations in Ontario

Find a full list of [First Nations Tribal Councils in Ontario](#), including community names, band numbers, political organizations, and treaties.

Political Territorial First Nations Organizations:

- [Chiefs of Ontario](#)
- [Anishinabek Nation](#) (formerly Union of Ontario Indians)
- [Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians](#)
- [Grand Council Treaty #3](#)
- [Mushkegowuk Tribal Council](#)
- [Nishnawbe Aski Nation](#)

Independent and Unaffiliated First Nations:

- [Independent First Nations](#)
- [Mohawks of Akwesasne](#)
- [Six Nations of the Grand River](#)

Métis and Inuit Organizations:

- [Métis Nation of Ontario](#)
- [Red Sky Métis Independent Nation](#)
- [Tungasuvvingat Inuit](#)

Urban and Intersectional Indigenous Organizations:

- [Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#)
- [Ontario Native Women's Association](#)

Regional and National Indigenous Organizations

First Nations Organizations:

- [Assembly of First Nations](#)

Métis Organizations:

- [Métis National Council](#)
- [Women of the Métis Nation](#)

Inuit Organizations:

- [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#)
- [Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada](#)

Urban and Intersectional Indigenous Organizations:

- [National Association of Friendship Centres](#)
- [Native Women's Association of Canada](#)

Indigenous Economic Organizations

- [Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business](#)
- [Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers](#)
- [First Nations Financial Management Board](#)
- [Indigenomics Institute](#)
- [Indigenous Resource Network](#)
- [Indigenous Skills Employment and Training Program Agreement Holders](#)
- [Indigenous Tourism Ontario](#)
- [Indigenous Works](#)
- [Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association](#)
- [National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association](#)
- [National Indigenous Economic Development Board](#)

Indigenous Economic Development Corporations

Indigenous Economic Development Corporations (IEDC) are the economic and business development arm of First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and major economic drivers for Indigenous communities, though not all Indigenous communities have an IEDC (there are at least 68 IEDCs in Ontario)ⁱⁱⁱ. Learn about some of the [IEDCs in Ontario](#), including challenges and opportunities.

Economic Reconciliation Capacity-Building Resources

CCAB Resources

- [Business Reconciliation in Canada Guidebook](#)
- [Certified Aboriginal Business Program](#)
- [Progressive Aboriginal Relations Program](#)
- [Supply Change:](#)
 - [Aboriginal Procurement Champions](#)
 - [Aboriginal Procurement Marketplace](#)

Indigenous Cultural Competency Training and Consultancy Firms

- [Anokiigamig e-Learning](#)
- [Assiginack Consulting](#)
- [Bear Standing Tall & Associates](#)
- [Bridging Concepts](#)
- [Danielle Hartley Indigenous Relations](#)
- [Indigenous & Community Engagement](#)
- [Inspired Connections Consulting](#)
- [Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.](#)
- [Indigenous Insight](#)
- [Indigenous Treaty Partners](#)
- [Kairos Blanket Exercise](#)
- [Kisapemtoltipon](#)
- [LDC Solutions](#)
- [Makhos Staffing Solutions Inc.](#)
- [Nikaanaganaa Counselling & Learning Centre](#)
- [Nisto Consulting Inc.](#)
- [NVision Insight Group Inc.](#)
- [Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres Indigenous Cultural Competency Training](#)
- [Organization Culture Initiatives](#)
- [Reconciliation Education](#)
- [San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program](#)
- [Superior Strategies](#)
- [Trace Associates Inc.](#)

Other Economic Reconciliation Capacity-Building Resources

- Biskane: [Cultural Champion and Cultural Ally Referral Program](#)
- Congress of Aboriginal Peoples: [Reconciliation Toolkit for Business Leaders](#)
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada: [The Reconciliation Journey](#)
- First Nations Health Authority: [Territory Acknowledgements](#)
- First Nations Financial Management Board: [RoadMap Project](#)
- Government of Canada: [Indigenous Business Directory](#)
- Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (ICT): [23 Tips on What Not to Say or Do when Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples](#)
- ICT: [27 Tips on What to Say and Do when Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples](#)
- ICT: [Dispelling Common Myths about Indigenous Peoples](#)
- ICT: [Indigenous Peoples: A Guide to Terminology](#)
- Indigenous Tourism Ontario: [Cultural Authenticity Program](#)
- Journalists for Human Rights: [Style Guide for Reporting on Indigenous Peoples](#)
- London Chamber of Commerce: [Indigenous Engagement Report](#)
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC): [Ganohonyohk \(Giving Thanks\): Indigenous Prosperity Research](#)
- OFIFC: [Labour Force and Training Strategic Framework](#)
- OFIFC: [Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound Program](#)
- Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce: [Truth and Reconciliation Roadmap](#)

Relevant Reports and Additional Resources on Economic Reconciliation

Indigenous Cultural Competency Training and Consultancy Firms

- [Indian Self-Government in Canada: Report of the Special Committee \(Penner Report\)](#)
- [Jay's Treaty](#)
- [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan](#)
- [National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada](#)
- [Numbered Treaties](#)
- [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Calls for Justice](#)
- [Reconciliation: Growing Canada's Economy by \\$27.7 Billion](#)
- [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#)
- Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: [Part One](#) and [Part Two](#) (Hawthorn Report)
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ISBN: 978-1-928052-95-1

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