

Postcard



From the ROCK

Welcome to the June edition of **Postcard from the Rock**. **Postcards** are 3-minute reads on topical DEI issues. This month: *"Indigenous Commemorations—What they Mean for your Organization."*

June in Canada is National Indigenous Peoples Month. Yours might be at a different time but this subject is important all yearlong!

LET'S GET REAL...on three things:

1. Whether you are in Canada, the U.S., Australia, the Caribbean, or places in between, Indigenous Peoples have for thousands of years been foundational to your society. And while some have been decimated by First Contact, they are and will always be here.
2. Indigenous Peoples are not historical curiosities: they are with the rest of us on the human journey—today. To think otherwise, says American Canadian Indigenous author Thomas King, is to *"trap Indigenous Peoples in a time warp...(to) insist that (the) past was all (they) had. No present, no future."*
3. Our human story is inextricably tied to that of Indigenous Peoples. Australian Indigenous visual artist and activist Lilla Watson says it best: *"If you have come here to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."*

So, what does this mean for your organization? Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #92 challenges the corporate sector (insert your organization here) to apply UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) principles, norms, and standards to your policies and core operational activities, in a way that encompasses Indigenous Peoples. It's a good place to start—even if you are outside of Canada. The Call specifies:

1. Educate management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, UNDRIP, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations.
2. Train your people in intercultural competence, human rights, and anti-racism.
3. If you do this seriously—not a check-off—and if you hold yourselves accountable to put what you learn into action, you will be part of shifting the needle that not only rights historical wrongs, but also opens the door to a fresh source of talent, perspectives, and markets/clients.

Finally, reject the rising tide of Residential Schools Denialism—in society and as needed in your organization. No good thing ever comes from denying historical realities. Instead, mark Indigenous celebrations with practical, measurable action.

READINGS: <https://thewalrus.ca/residential-school-denialism>; <https://rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524494530110/1557511412801>; <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/trc/> (Accessed June 2, 2023)