

themselves, as though there were no external causes. Aboriginal peoples have therefore been characterized as a social and economic problem that must be solved.

By the 1990s, textbooks emphasized the role of Aboriginal peoples as protestors, advocating for rights. Most Canadians failed to understand or appreciate the significance of these rights, given the overriding perspective of Aboriginal assimilation in Canada's education system.

Although textbooks have become more inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives over the past three decades, the role of Aboriginal people in Canadian history during much of the twentieth century remains invisible. Students learn something about Aboriginal peoples prior to contact, and during the exploration, fur-trade, and settlement periods. They learn about Métis resistance in the 1880s, and the signing of Treaties. Then, Aboriginal peoples virtually disappear until the 1960s and 1970s, when they resurface as political and social justice activists. The defining period in between remains largely unmentioned.¹⁰⁷ So much of the story of Aboriginal peoples, as seen through their own eyes, is still missing from Canadian history.

In the Commission's view, all students—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—need to learn that the history of this country did not begin with the arrival of Jacques Cartier on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. They need to learn about the Indigenous nations the Europeans met, about their rich linguistic and cultural heritage, about what they felt and thought as they dealt with such historic figures as Champlain, La Vérendrye, and the representatives of the Hudson's Bay Company. Canadians need to learn why Indigenous nations negotiated the Treaties and to understand that they negotiated with integrity and in good faith. They need to learn about why Aboriginal leaders and Elders still fight so hard to defend those Treaties, what these agreements represent to them, and why they have been ignored by European settlers or governments. They need to learn about what it means to have inherent rights, what those are for Aboriginal peoples, and what the settler government's political and legal obligations are in those areas where Treaties were never negotiated. They need to learn why so many of these issues are ongoing. They need to learn about the Doctrine of Discovery—the politically and socially accepted basis for presumptive European claims to the land and riches of this country—and to understand that this same doctrine is now being repudiated around the world, most recently by the United Nations and the World Council of Churches.

Survivors have also said that knowing about these things is not enough. Our public education system also needs to influence behaviour by undertaking to teach our children—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—how to speak respectfully to, and about, each other in the future. Reconciliation is all about respect.

The Commission's 2012 *Interim Report* made three recommendations directed at provincial and territorial governments: