

Closing Words

On September 22, 2013, the day after the British Columbia National Event, the Commissioners joined 70,000 people gathered in the pouring rain to participate in a Walk for Reconciliation, organized by Reconciliation Canada, a non-profit organization. If one was looking down Georgia Street in downtown Vancouver, a sea of multicoloured umbrellas was visible as far as the eye could see. Traditional ceremonies and protocols began the walk. Chiefs in regalia, women wrapped in button blankets and cedar capes, and drumming, dancing, and singing accompanied Survivors, their families, and people from multiple faith traditions and all walks of life, who marched together in solidarity. We walked for Survivors and all that they have done to bring the long-hidden story of residential schools to the country's attention. We walked to remember the thousands of children who died in residential schools. We walked to honour all Indigenous peoples as they reclaim and restore their identity, equality, and dignity. We walked to stand up for the transformative social change that is so urgently needed in Canada. And, we walked for the uplifting solidarity of being united with tens of thousands of others, all joined together in a new community of common purpose. Residential school Survivor and Gwawaenuk Elder Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, speaking as Reconciliation Canada's ambassador, has said, "Reconciliation includes anyone with an open heart and an open mind, who is willing to look to the future in a new way. Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future, and the well-being of all our children, rests with the kind of relationships we build today."³⁰¹

In November 2012, Elders from Indigenous nations and many other cultures gathered for two days in Musqueam territory in Vancouver, British Columbia, to talk about how reconciliation can help Canada move forward. In a statement afterwards, they said,

As Canadians, we share a responsibility to look after each other and acknowledge the pain and suffering that our diverse societies have endured—a pain that has been handed down to the next generations. We need to right those wrongs, heal together, and create a new future that honours the unique gifts of our children and grandchildren.

How do we do this? Through sharing our personal stories, legends and traditional teachings, we found that we are interconnected through the same mind and spirit. Our traditional teachings speak to acts such as holding one another up, walking together, balance, healing and unity. Our stories show how these teachings can heal their pain and restore dignity. We discovered that in all of our cultural traditions, there are teachings about reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, healing and balance.

We invite you to search in your own traditions and beliefs, and those of your ancestors, to find these core values that create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth.³⁰²