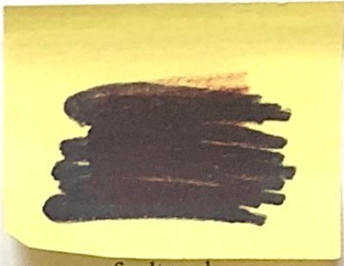


If I Ran This Country



The way Indigenous people were treated in the past is not our concern or our fault and there's not anything we can do about it. The best thing for Canada is for everyone to forget and move forward to the future. Unfortunately, some Canadians have this mentality, and this is not true, or the mindset needed to reconcile this important relationship. Canada's relationship with our Indigenous people has been some of the darkest chapters in Canadian History. From Residential Schools to the many broken treaties, it is time to give all the rights back to the Indigenous peoples. This may seem like an immense issue to tackle but, as Prime Minister, it is crucial that this relationship is mended. I am going to focus primarily on education to reconcile this relationship, and I think it is very important to make Canada cannot continue progressing before we reconcile this relationship to ensure a just future for all Canadians. ✓

Astrophysicist Carl Sagan once said, "For an understanding of the future, look to the past". This is very relevant on the topic of Indigenous people's rights. We need to understand what we did wrong and how it affected our Indigenous people in order to think of what we need to do next. Canada's First Nations have been here for thousands of years, preceding European knowledge. The first Europeans to arrive in Canada were the French, next came the English with the Hudson's Bay fur trading company. This was a mutually beneficial exchange for the English and the Indigenous peoples, until the Hudson's Bay company claimed all the land surrounding Hudson's Bay as their own. At this time, Europeans had been steadily migrating over to Canada and were encroaching on Indigenous people's land. The Europeans who came over were mainly Catholic and wanted to convert the Indigenous people to their religion.

When Canada became a country in 1867, the government bought all the land from the Hudson's Bay company. Shortly after the government took over, the Indigenous peoples went from allies to subordinates. The Canadian government didn't accept the Indigenous culture and wanted to assimilate them into western society. Approximately 150 000 children were taken from their homes, away from their families and any Indigenous culture they knew. I can't imagine being taken from my parents, no longer being addressed by my name and being punished for speaking the language. An article published by Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. Stated, "The goal of the schools was to "Kill the Indian in the child" but sometimes the child themselves died - 6,000 of the 150,000 who attended the schools between the 1870s and 1996 died or disappeared. The residential school system harmed the children significantly and there was much physical, mental and sexual abuse that occurred. When the children left Residential Schools, they felt worthless and knew nothing of their own culture. The impacts of Residential Schools have caused so much suffering and pain, that has been passed on for many generations.

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The same year Residential Schools opened the Indian Act was passed. This Act outlined what Indigenous peoples could and couldn't do. The goal of the government with this Act was to assimilate Indigenous peoples into western society. It stated if they gave up their "Indian status", they would gain the right to vote, own land and buy alcohol. Many treaties were also signed with the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples. Some of the most significant treaties signed were the eleven Numbered Treaties. It stated the government would provide proper schools and supply seeds, farm animals and agriculture techniques for farming on reserves. This treaty also stated the government would supply hunting and fishing rights, annuities, flags and chief uniforms and initial lump-sum payments. The treaties were not signed in good faith and in many cases, have not been fully honored.

In Canada, Indigenous peoples are still facing much unjust treatment to this day. It has drastically improved since the 19th century but much work still needs to be done. Many people think all Canadians live like we do here in Ottawa but the conditions on many reserves are horrendous. It is unacceptable that there are people in Canada living without running water. On many reserves there is inadequate housing, often without electricity and indoor plumbing. Crowded living conditions lead to poorer health. There are lower levels of education leading to lower income levels. There are also higher levels of incarceration, and higher rates of suicide both stemming from intergenerational trauma from Residential Schools. An article posted by Indigenous Corporate Training Inc stated, "The Indian Act greatly contributes to these eight issues and more.". On top of the atrocious living conditions on reserves, Indigenous peoples also face much discrimination.

As society changes and evolves so does our language use. In the past there was a variety of terms used regarding Indigenous peoples and it is important to use the most respectful terms when addressing them. There has been much moves towards reconciliation like the Constitution Act of 1982 which recognized the rights of Aboriginal peoples. Other movements towards reconciliation are the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in 2006, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Canadas position in 2007, the Indian Residential School apology in 2008 and lastly the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2009.

I understand this is a very large and complex issue and I know it will be a work in progress. It is not a quick easy fix, but I am going to continue to work towards reconciliation and equality. To start, I plan on improving conditions on reserves. It is not acceptable to have people living in Canada in such poor conditions and I will not let these atrocities happen any longer. I

specifically want to focus on housing, accessible healthy food options and education. An article published by CBC stated, "According to a report by former TD Bank economist Don Drummond, the funding gap between First Nations school's vs other schools across Canada averages around 30 percent." I will make sure there is equal funding as education is so important for children. If they do not receive a proper education, it is very difficult to pursue a post-secondary career. I not only plan on working on the education of Indigenous peoples but all Canadians. I will be implementing mandatory curriculum for K-12 incorporating our history with Indigenous peoples and teachings. Lastly, I want to honor all the treaties that were signed in the past. I want to share the land and make sure we can all benefit, not only one signatory.

The way Canada has treated Indigenous people in the past has been unacceptable. Reconciling this relationship is very important and all Canadians have an important role to play. It is important for everyone to acknowledge Canada's wrongdoings and take a step towards reconciliation. Something every Canadian can do is get more educated and show empathy to their neighbors.