



National Council
for Reconciliation

Inaugural Annual Report

2026

Reporting Year: 2025–2026 | Tabled in Parliament: 2026

DEDICATION

“To Survivors, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, to future generations, and to all those who carried this work through to legislation — **your truths guide this work.**”

OUR VISION

A Canada where reconciliation is lived every day through truth, accountability, and mutually respectful relationships — where responsibility is shared, Indigenous Knowledges are honoured, and learning, reflection, and courage guide lasting change.

OUR MISSION

To champion, monitor, and advance meaningful reconciliation through independent reporting, research, public education, and dialogue. We prioritize Indigenous Voices and support all Canadians in understanding, embracing, and fulfilling their role in reconciliation.

Submitted to the Minister of
Crown-Indigenous Relations
Pursuant to Section 17(1) of
the *National Council for
Reconciliation Act* (2024)

Reporting Year: 2025–2026
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“The measure of this report is not only in what it surfaces, but what it produces. The National Council for Reconciliation is committed to monitoring the federal response to these recommendations with the same rigour and independence that guided this inaugural assessment. Accountability does not end with the tabling of a report; it begins with the actions taken in response.”

National Council for Reconciliation, Board of Directors



Executive Summary



The Inaugural Annual Report of the National Council for Reconciliation (Council) comes at a decisive moment, 11 years after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) issued its Final Report and one year into the Council's mandate. It finds a reconciliation landscape where federal activity has increased, but First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples are still living with the harms of systems that have not fundamentally changed. The Council calls for urgent, sustained action to close outcome gaps and rebuild public trust in reconciliation efforts.

Context, Mandate, and Scope

Reconciliation in Canada stands at a critical juncture. It is a shared, intergenerational responsibility that extends across governments, institutions, civil society, and all peoples in Canada. The work requires truth, accountability, and sustained structural change. Within this broader national landscape, the federal government plays a central role in shaping the conditions under which reconciliation can advance or falter.

This Inaugural Annual Report of the National Council for Reconciliation (Council) is submitted to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations for tabling before each House of Parliament, as required under section 17(2) of the *National Council for Reconciliation Act*. The Council is mandated to independently monitor, evaluate, and report each year on the state of reconciliation in Canada and on the implementation of the Calls to Action requiring federal leadership.

Reconciliation leadership is also emerging across universities, municipalities, Crown institutions, and other public bodies, underscoring that reconciliation is advancing across sectors beyond the federal government.

The Council's analysis and assessment draw on evidence from the Federal Convening Circle, an independent Scholars' Report based on expert interviews, and foundational research aligned with the Council's four Strategic Pillars.

What This Report Means for Everyone in Canada

Reconciliation is not solely the work of governments. It calls for the commitment and participation of all people in Canada. This report provides a picture of where progress is being made, where it is stalling, and what must change to ensure that reconciliation leads to real, sustained improvements in the lives of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. In submitting this Inaugural Annual Report, the Council calls on every person in Canada to recognize, understand, embrace, and fulfill their role in advancing reconciliation.

Key Messages

Federal departments report the most intensive period of reconciliation-related activity since 2015, including new rights-based legislation, major settlement agreements, expanded distinctions-based partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, and increased investments in areas such as education, child welfare, and health. Departments also highlighted progress in Indigenous-led research funding, distinctions-based health system transformation, and the development of emerging federal tools to support Indigenous data sovereignty. The Scholars' Report similarly noted positive shifts, including a tenuous but increased public awareness of Indigenous Rights and histories, strengthened Indigenous-led education and cultural resurgence, and growing leadership in Indigenous research.

Departments and experts also identified persistent structural barriers: short-term funding cycles, jurisdictional fragmentation, engagement fatigue among Indigenous partners, and significant gaps in federal and Indigenous-defined data and indicators. They also noted rising denialism and the risk that reconciliation becomes procedural rather than transformational if structural issues remain unaddressed. One illustration is the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, whose core funding ends in March 2027. As a permanent national institution for truth-telling, education, and commemoration, it must repeatedly seek time-limited renewals, which limits its ability to plan and forces it to divert capacity away from its core responsibilities toward securing short-term funding for a long-term mandate.

Overall Assessment

Taken together, the evidence reveals a reconciliation landscape marked by meaningful progress and serious structural vulnerability. Federal activity has intensified, but the foundations required for long-term, rights-based, Indigenous-led progress remain unstable. Without decisive federal action to stabilize funding, strengthen data governance, embed rights-based frameworks, and protect the durability of reconciliation commitments across political cycles, reconciliation risks stalling or being reversed.

Structural Actions Required to Advance Reconciliation

Building on this overall assessment, the Council identifies several urgent structural actions for federal leadership. These actions, along with the Council's broader priority findings and recommendations, are organized around four Strategic Pillars:

- Leadership, Public Trust, and Accountability
- Strong Governance and Organizational Maturity
- Engagement and Relationship Building
- Research, Monitoring, and Learning

These actions correspond to the recommendations set out in Chapter 4. Across all four pillars, **the Council's analysis identifies a central structural gap: more than a decade after the TRC's Final Report, there is still no federal body responsible for prioritizing Calls to Action, sequencing implementation, or ensuring accountability across departments.**

The evidence also shows that sustained leadership from the centre of government is required to coordinate and drive these actions across departments. To close this gap, the Council identifies the following urgent actions to strengthen federal leadership and support coherent, long-term progress:

1. Federal Reconciliation Plan

Develop a Federal Reconciliation Plan that clearly articulates the Government of Canada's position on reconciliation and sets out priorities, multi-year timelines, and interim milestones for implementing the TRC Calls to Action, ensuring consistent federal direction and coherence across departments.

2. Long-term Funding Baselines for Core Reconciliation Programs and Institutions

Establish long-term, stable funding baselines to replace short-term, proposal-based cycles that undermine continuity in community-led work, enabling departments to plan and deliver sustained, multi-year progress.

3. Federal-Indigenous Data and Indicators Strategy

Create a federal-Indigenous data and indicators strategy to close gaps in federal administrative data, support Indigenous-defined indicators, and enable consistent measurement of reconciliation progress across institutions, including pilots co-developed with Indigenous partners whose insights inform broader changes to federal reporting on the Calls to Action.

4. UNDRIP Alignment of Federal Legislation and Policy

Accelerate alignment of federal legislation, regulations, and policy instruments with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to ensure federal laws and policies uphold and advance Indigenous Rights.

5. Strengthen Support for Indigenous Languages

Reaffirm the central importance of Indigenous languages to reconciliation, consistent with the *Indigenous Languages Act*, which, in its preamble, recognizes that rights related to Indigenous languages are at the core of reconciliation and fundamental to shaping the country. Ensure that federal funding and policies provide stable support for Indigenous-led documentation, revitalization, and intergenerational transmission of endangered languages. Barriers within the federal public service that penalize Indigenous language speakers, including bilingualism requirements that disadvantage them, should be removed as incompatible with these commitments.

6. Safeguard Reconciliation Progress

Strengthen the durability and transparency of reconciliation commitments across political cycles by embedding, to the extent possible, reconciliation objectives and reporting requirements in legislation and central policies, and by securing long-term independent funding models for national reconciliation institutions. Major changes should be accompanied by a transparent, public impact assessment that sets out potential effects on Indigenous Rights, outcomes, funding stability, and implementation capacity.

7. Protect Capacity to Implement Reconciliation Commitments

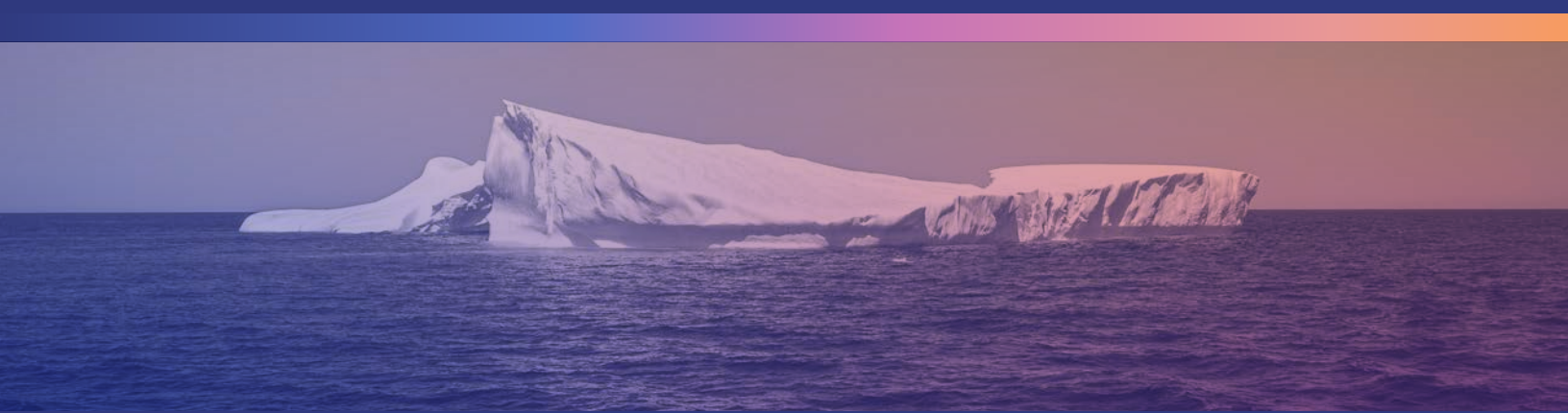
Publicly report on how fiscal and organizational changes affect the federal government's capacity to implement the TRC Calls to Action and other reconciliation commitments, and protect that capacity by maintaining critical positions, institutional knowledge, and Indigenous-facing program functions. Cuts in these areas show up as longer wait times, fewer services, and weaker support for Indigenous Rights.

The Council anticipates the Prime Minister's response to this Inaugural Annual Report to be issued publicly and jointly with the Council, accompanied by a meeting to discuss the Government's commitments and next steps. A public, joint response is essential to ensure that the response is not minimized, delayed, or overshadowed by other announcements. It will also signal that reconciliation remains a national priority requiring visible leadership from the centre of government.

Looking ahead, the Council recognizes that reconciliation requires closing the gap between symbolic commitments and the material conditions that shape the lives of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. As outlined in the final chapter, the Council will focus on the social and economic foundations of long-term well-being, including child and family well-being, health equity, language revitalization, justice, and Indigenous-led economic development. This forward-looking work is intended to help ensure that reconciliation is reflected not only in commitments and processes, but also in better outcomes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. The Council will also explore Indigenous-led approaches to education, data governance, and the protection of Indigenous intellectual property.



Message from the Board of Directors



The inaugural Board of Directors of the National Council for Reconciliation offers this Inaugural Annual Report as an act of accountability, relationship, and shared responsibility grounded in truth, guided by Indigenous Knowledges, and offered with the courage this moment demands.

Reconciliation in Canada is at a crossroads. It is complex, intergenerational, and ongoing, requiring long-term commitment, truth-telling, and accountability that can withstand political change. This Council exists because for generations, Indigenous Peoples have carried the harms of colonial systems and government policies. This Inaugural Annual Report is our commitment to speak honestly, to listen attentively, and to uphold the vision that Survivors and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) entrusted to the Council, to advance reconciliation between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, and non-Indigenous peoples.

We are conscious that the Council was brought into being through the relentless advocacy of Survivors, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, communities, and their allies over many decades. The TRC's Calls to Action, including Calls 53, 54, 55, and 56, did not arise in isolation: they emerged from more than 6,500 testimonies, each an act of courage and trust. This Council exists because of that trust. We honour that responsibility by fulfilling our mandate with the independence, rigour, and humility it demands.

Our Values guide every aspect of this report and every decision of this Board: Truth and Accountability; Honouring Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Knowing; Respect, Reciprocity, and Shared Responsibility; Integrity and Independence; and Courage and Constructive Challenge. Together, they form the foundation for how we carry out our mandate.

Truth and Accountability require that we speak clearly about both progress and harm. This report identifies meaningful federal action and progress, and also names long-standing serious structural risks, short-term funding cycles, jurisdictional fragmentation, significant data gaps, engagement fatigue, and rising denialism. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples experience these as programs starting and stopping, and commitments that do not hold over time. When Indigenous partners are asked to show up repeatedly without seeing change, they begin to withdraw their time, knowledge, and trust. We name these issues not to assign blame, but to compel action.

Honouring Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Knowing shapes our approach. Knowledge is relational and carries responsibility. The voices and perspectives of Indigenous Survivors and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples form the foundation of this report. The Federal Convening Circle and expert interview process were designed with this principle at the centre, prioritizing candid dialogue and relationship-building rather than a compliance exercise.

Respect, Reciprocity, and Shared Responsibility remind us that reconciliation is not the responsibility of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples alone. It is a collective journey that asks governments, institutions, communities and individuals to examine their roles, accept accountability, and take sustained action. Each of us has the power to inspire change through everyday actions that deepen understanding, strengthen relationships, and honour the truths that guide this work.

Integrity and Independence govern how this Council operates. We act without fear or favour. We are accountable to Parliament and to all Canadians, including, most importantly, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples whose rights and dignity are at the centre of this work. We will present our findings accurately and transparently, without political influence and without overstating progress.

Courage and Constructive Challenge are required of us and of all who read this report. Reconciliation asks difficult questions of deeply embedded systems in law, policies, governance, education, finance, health, and culture. The Council is prepared to surface those truths and challenge structures that impede progress, with the constructive purpose of building something better. This report is not the final word. It is the beginning, the first chapter of an ongoing national accounting of reconciliation that the Council will pursue with rigour, humility, and purpose in the years and decades to come. We express our gratitude to every individual, government department, organization, and community that contributed to this inaugural process. Their openness, candour, and commitment encourage us that progress is possible. We recognize that this Inaugural Annual Report does not reflect every voice and every region. We commit to broadening our engagement and deepening our evidence base.

We anticipate the Prime Minister's response to this Inaugural Annual Report to be made public and issued jointly with the Council, as a visible sign that reconciliation remains a national priority and a shared accountability. We present this report with a commitment to truth, accountability, and shared responsibility, and as an invitation for all peoples in Canada to act and uphold their part in this national journey.

The Inaugural Board of Directors for the National Council for Reconciliation



Charlene Bearhead



Harold Cochrane



Jonathan Dewar



Peter Dinsdale



Joseph Murdoch-Flowers



Julie Ann Wriston



Mahalia Yakeleya Newmark



Inaugural Board and Organizational Foundations



The National Council for Reconciliation is the result of nearly two decades of sustained advocacy, truth-telling, and organization-building. This section traces the Council's creation, introduces the inaugural Board, and summarizes its first year of work.

3.1 History of the National Council for Reconciliation

The Council is the result of nearly 20 years of truth-telling, advocacy, legal struggle, and institution-building. That journey began with the courage of residential school Survivors whose testimonies formed the foundation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) and led to the passage of the *National Council for Reconciliation Act* in 2024.

Between 2008 and 2015, the TRC documented the history and legacy of residential schools and gathered testimony from more than 6,500 Survivors, their descendants, and communities across the country, each testimony an act of courage and trust. Its Final Report, released in December 2015, affirmed that the residential school system constituted cultural genocide and presented 94 Calls to Action as a roadmap for governments, institutions, and society. Calls to Action 53-56 specifically called for the creation of a permanent, independent, Indigenous-led body to monitor, evaluate, and report on reconciliation progress across Canada. The federal government's first formal step toward establishing the Council came in December 2017, with the appointment of an Interim Board of Directors to advise on its design.

The Interim Board undertook research and consultation, reviewed international models, and developed core design principles for the future institution. Its Final Report, delivered in June 2018, emphasized that the Council must be independent from the Crown; funded through a stable endowment rather than discretionary annual appropriations; national in scope, multi-generational in its mandate; and focused on monitoring, evaluating, and reporting rather than program delivery. Above all, it concluded that the Council must be governed by and accountable to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. These design principles anticipated many of the structural risks identified in this report, including the need for independent, long-term monitoring across political cycles and for public reporting that distinguishes between activities and actual changes in outcomes.

The establishment of an Indigenous-led Transitional Committee in 2021 renewed momentum and was tasked with translating the Interim Board's design work into concrete legislation. The Committee's recommendations, delivered in early 2022, directly shaped the drafting of Bill C-29 (*An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation*), which was introduced in Parliament in June 2022.

The Bill underwent extensive parliamentary review, including testimony from National Indigenous Organizations, advocacy groups, scholars, and Committee members, and was strengthened through amendments that reinforced Indigenous representation on the Board, clarified the Council's independence, and established robust data-sharing obligations under what became section 16.1 of the Act. Committees in both Houses heard support from witnesses for the creation of a national reconciliation body, alongside concerns about its governance, mandate, and relationship to existing Indigenous Rights Holders and institutions. Witnesses emphasized that the Council should be independent of government influence,

reflect diverse Indigenous Voices beyond national organizations, have timely access to federal information, and be resourced on a long-term basis, while not replacing Indigenous Rights Holders, Indigenous governments, treaty relationships, or existing Crown-Indigenous bilateral mechanisms.

On April 30, 2024, the *National Council for Reconciliation Act* received Royal Assent. It came into force on July 2, 2024, fulfilling Call to Action 53 and establishing the permanent statutory mechanism to implement Calls to Action 54, 55, and 56. In March 2025, the Council was incorporated as an independent, non-Crown entity under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, and its inaugural Board of Directors was appointed through a joint process involving the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the Transitional Committee.

Today, the Council stands as Canada's national mechanism for reconciliation accountability, linking community experience and federal action, centring First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Voices and Knowledge systems, and helping ensure that reconciliation remains a shared responsibility across all sectors of Canadian society and across generations.

3.2 Mandate and Core Design Principles

The Council is mandated to monitor the state of reconciliation in Canada, report to Parliament on progress, support public education and dialogue, and advance reconciliation between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and non-Indigenous peoples across all sectors of Canadian society. Its work is intended to help ensure that reconciliation commitments lead to better health, education, justice, and economic outcomes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, not only changes in laws and policies. The Council's primary tools are monitoring, evaluation, and public reporting. It does not have regulatory or funding authorities.

The Council's structure reflects the design principles articulated by the Interim Board and carried forward by the Transitional Committee. These principles are grounded in what is required for independence and respond directly to Calls to Action 53-56, which envisioned a permanent, Indigenous-led body capable of holding governments to account. The core principles are:

- **Independence:** The Council is not a government department, agency, or Crown corporation. It is a not-for-profit organization governed by its own Board under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. Board members do not serve at the pleasure of the Crown, and the Council sets its own workplan, priorities, and reporting, subject only to the Act and its by-laws.
- **Stable, arm's-length funding:** Budget 2019 announced a one-time \$125-million endowment, along with \$1.5 million in first-year operational funding. The endowment is a financial mechanism intended to support the Council's independence, protecting it from annual budget cycles and political influence. The endowment is managed at arm's length from

government, with investment policies set by the Board in accordance with its fiduciary duties. It is neither a trust nor a program-funding vehicle. Instead, it serves as a financial foundation that enables the Council to carry out its mandate in perpetuity.

- **National, multi-generational mandate:** The Council is designed to operate across generations, building cumulative knowledge and holding successive governments accountable. A multi-generational mandate requires stable, long-term institutional foundations. Consistent with section 7 of the Act, the Council understands its monitoring and reporting role broadly and is guided by the priorities and concerns of Survivors, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, communities, and organizations as its work evolves.
- **Focus on monitoring, evaluating, and reporting:** The Council is not a program-delivery body nor is it a funding agency. Its role is to track, assess, and report, providing an independent and authoritative account of Canada's progress in reconciliation. This includes monitoring the indicators in section 16.1 of the Act and identifying gaps and risks in federal data and reporting. The Council will describe federal progress, highlight difficult truths, identify best practices, and help shape the benchmarks and narratives that will guide reconciliation in the years ahead. This Inaugural Annual Report begins that work by identifying gaps.
- **Scope of reporting:** This Inaugural Annual Report focuses on federal leadership in response to 76 of the 94 Calls to Action requiring federal responsibility, and the indicators in section 16.1 of the Act. Over time, consistent with the Act and the TRC's Calls to Action on measurement and reporting, the Council expects to broaden its public reporting to reflect progress and challenges across all levels of government and sectors of Canadian society, while maintaining a primary focus on federal laws, policies, and programs.
- **Indigenous-led governance and accountability:** The Board is composed primarily of Indigenous members representing First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, and reflects diverse regions, Knowledge systems, and professional backgrounds. Indigenous governance is not a feature of the Council; it is its foundational structure.

These principles align with the Council's Mission and Values and ensure that it can act with integrity, independence, and courage in fulfilling its statutory obligations and honouring the trust placed in it by Survivors and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

3.3 Inaugural Board and Governance Structures

The inaugural Board of Directors, appointed in March 2025, brings together lived experience, academic scholarship, community leadership, organizational governance, and policy expertise, representing the breadth of reconciliation work taking place across the country. The inaugural Board included: Charlene Bearhead, Edith Cloutier, Mike DeGagné, Jonathan Dewar, Peter Dinsdale, Joseph Murdoch-Flowers, Mahalia Yakeleya Newmark, Belinda Webb, and Julie Ann Wriston. The Board was jointly selected by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the Indigenous-led Transitional Committee, consistent with the Act.

Included in the Act is the provision for National Indigenous Organizations, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, and Native Women's Association of Canada, to each nominate a candidate for the Council's Board of Directors. The Assembly of First Nations nominated Harold Cochrane, who currently serves on the inaugural Board. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, and the Native Women's Association of Canada have not yet submitted a nominee. The Council will continue to endeavour to build and strengthen relationships with the National Indigenous Organizations and looks forward to continued engagement as the nomination process advances and the full complement of the Council's Board is actualized.

In its first year, the Board has been engaged in the essential, foundational work of organization-building and establishing the governance architecture required for the Council to fulfill its mandate credibly and sustainably. This has included:

- **Board governance:** Establishing governance structures and policies consistent with best practices in not-for-profit governance and Indigenous organizational accountability, directly advancing Strategic Pillar 2: Strong Governance and Organizational Maturity.
- **Endowment oversight:** Overseeing endowment management and financial stewardship required to protect the Council's long-term independence.
- **Information Disclosure Protocol:** Implementing the protocol required under the Act to govern information obtained from federal departments under section 16.1.
- **Advisory and engagement groundwork:** Laying the groundwork for future engagement with Survivors, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, communities, and organizations so the Council's work remains grounded in lived experience and evolving priorities.

3.4 Early Activities (2025-2026)

Organization-building occupied much of the first year. The Council also began fulfilling its core reporting mandate as a trusted, independent, Indigenous-led organization committed to building the relationships required for genuine accountability over time.

The central activities of the Council's first year include:

- **Strategic Plan:** The Council initiated the development of its first Strategic Plan, articulating four Strategic Pillars and establishing a monitoring and reporting framework to guide future annual reports.
- **Research and Monitoring Foundations:** A research framework is under development that aligns with section 16.1 of the Act and implementing the Information Disclosure Protocol and federal data-sharing arrangements, laying the early groundwork for the federal-Indigenous data and indicators strategy recommended in this report.
- **Engagement Pathways:** A convening and engagement framework is under development to engage First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, organizations, governments and all sectors of Canadian society to inform the Council's work.
- **Federal Convening Circle (April 21, 2026):** The Council convened Deputy Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers, Directors General, and senior officials from 16 federal departments and agencies, and co-hosted with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. The session focused on open, candid dialogue, and on generating significant qualitative insight for this Inaugural Annual Report, including insight into where federal commitments are translating into on-the-ground changes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.
- **National Expert Interviews (March-April 2026):** Twenty Indigenous and settler academics were interviewed to provide insight into the state of reconciliation in Canada and to help interpret federal data and commitments, including the risks that reconciliation remains procedural rather than transformational if structural issues are not addressed.

These activities advance all four of the organizations' Strategic Pillars: **Leadership, Public Trust and Accountability** (Pillar 1); **Strong Governance and Organizational Maturity** (Pillar 2); **Engagement and Relationship-Building** (Pillar 3); and **Research, Monitoring and Learning** (Pillar 4).

3.5 Engagement and Partnership Approach

Reconciliation is lived in communities and across jurisdictions, and the Council's work depends on relationships of trust with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, governments, and other partners. Building on its initial activities in 2025-2026, the Council will develop a convening and engagement plan that supports distinctions-based and regional perspectives, and creates regular opportunities for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, governments, organizations, communities, and Knowledge Keepers to inform its priorities and interpret federal reporting, while remaining attentive to engagement fatigue and the need to streamline federal processes. As the Council's capacity grows, this approach will guide its work with federal departments, Indigenous partners, and other institutions to monitor, evaluate, and report on the state of reconciliation in Canada.

3.6 Reconciliation Across the Wider Federal Landscape

As the inaugural Board began its work, it was clear that reconciliation is being taken up in many parts of the federal landscape, not only in the departments and agencies assessed in this Inaugural Annual Report. This inaugural assessment focuses on 76 of the 94 Calls to Action requiring federal leadership and does not attempt to catalogue the full range of reconciliation efforts underway across Canadian society. Beyond the institutions examined here, several federally created bodies and Crown institutions are developing their own reconciliation plans, advisory structures, and reporting frameworks. For example, the Bank of Canada has adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan that commits to deepening its understanding of Indigenous economies, fostering a more equitable and inclusive organizational culture, and reporting publicly on progress. Other Crown corporations and public institutions, such as those with Indigenous advisory councils, are also embedding reconciliation commitments into their governance and operations. These initiatives fall outside the scope of this inaugural assessment, but they illustrate a broader shift toward embedding reconciliation commitments, indicators, and relationship-centred practice across the wider federal landscape. They do not lessen the structural gaps identified in this report, but they offer examples of practice that federal departments can learn from.

3.7 Reconciliation Leadership Beyond the Federal Sphere

Reconciliation leadership extends beyond the federal government. Across Canada, Indigenous Governments, universities, municipalities, and public institutions are advancing rights-affirming initiatives. These initiatives demonstrate what sustained, relationship-centred reconciliation can look like in practice. While these efforts fall outside the scope of this inaugural federal assessment, they illustrate a broader national shift toward embedding reconciliation commitments across institutions.

Four leading examples, among others, include:

- **Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey–Nova Scotia education partnership (Nova Scotia):** Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey and 12 Mi'kmaw communities exercise recognized jurisdiction over on-reserve K–12 education under a sectoral self-government agreement, working in long-term partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia. This Mi'kmaw-led system centres language, culture, and community-based supports and has achieved among the highest Indigenous high school graduation rates in Canada. It is widely cited as a leading model of rights-based Indigenous education and intergovernmental collaboration, even as recent provincial funding decisions have raised new concerns about the stability of Mi'kmaw-specific grants and the province's long-term commitment to reconciliation.
- **Swxwú7mesh Úxwumixw–UBC Partnership (British Columbia):** In 2022, the Squamish Nation and the University of British Columbia entered a Memorandum of Understanding committing to shared governance, expanded Indigenous student supports, co-developed research agendas, and the advancement of Swxwú7mesh language and knowledge systems. The agreement is widely recognized as a significant model of long-term, rights-based collaboration between an Indigenous Government and a major public institution.
- **Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (Northwest Territories):** Thaidene Nënë is a large, protected area co-governed by Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, Parks Canada, and the Government of the Northwest Territories. Grounded in Dene law and knowledge systems, it recognizes Indigenous leadership in land stewardship and is widely cited as a leading example of rights-based, Indigenous-led conservation and shared governance.
- **City of Vancouver UNDRIP Strategy (British Columbia):** Vancouver became the first municipality in Canada to adopt a comprehensive UNDRIP-aligned strategy, developed jointly with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. The strategy sets out commitments on cooperative decision-making processes, land-use reforms, Indigenous-led cultural and language revitalization, and new mechanisms for public accountability.

Across the country, universities are expanding Indigenous governance roles, creating Indigenous-led research institutes, and embedding Indigenous languages and knowledge systems into academic life. Municipalities are establishing Indigenous advisory councils, co-developing land-use plans, and adopting reconciliation action plans with public reporting and shared-governance commitments.

These developments underscore that reconciliation is a shared national responsibility and offer important opportunities for cross-jurisdictional learning as the Council's work evolves.

The following chapter presents the Council's initial assessment of the state of reconciliation in Canada, based on federal reporting, departmental submissions, expert perspectives, and insights from the Federal Convening Circle.



FEDERAL PROGRESS ON RECONCILIATION: Gaps and Risks



Federal action on reconciliation since 2015 reflects meaningful legislative, programmatic, and cultural progress, alongside structural barriers that continue to limit long-term outcomes for Indigenous Peoples. This chapter surveys that progress, identifies systemic challenges, and assesses the sector-specific and societal risks shaping reconciliation.

The period between 2015 and 2026 has been, by any historical measure, the most active period of federal action on reconciliation in Canadian history. Departments and agencies described legislative, programmatic, and cultural advances that reflect commitment and, in some cases, fundamental shifts in the relationship between the federal government and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. These achievements are recognized not as evidence that the work is complete, but as an indication that sustained commitment can produce improved outcomes in the lives of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, and serve as a foundation for the next phase of reconciliation. As the Council's findings emphasize, the next phase requires clearer reporting on whether federal initiatives are closing outcome gaps, not only cataloguing activities and announcements.

4.1 Federal Legislative and Policy Development

Federal departments and agencies have identified several significant legislative and policy developments since 2015. These include:

- **UNDRIP Act and Action Plan:** The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2021) and its 2023-2028 Action Plan establish a federal, rights-based framework for reviewing and amending laws and policies in cooperation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada. Implementation remains at an early stage, and most measures are still in progress. Departments and experts noted that the principal challenge is not the absence of frameworks, but the gap between rights-based commitments on paper and day-to-day federal practice.
- **Indigenous Justice Strategy:** Released in 2025, the Strategy seeks to address the severe overrepresentation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in the criminal justice system through distinctions-based, community-led approaches and reforms across the justice continuum.
- **Indigenous Languages Act:** The 2019 Act and the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages create a statutory framework for language revitalization and protection. Federal submissions describe ongoing efforts to develop long-term funding and program models with Indigenous partners, though gaps between needs and available resources remain substantial.
- **National Council for Reconciliation Act:** Enacted in 2024, the Act fulfills Call to Action 53 by establishing a permanent, independent mechanism to monitor and report on progress towards reconciliation.
- **Child Welfare Settlements and Reform:** Major settlement agreements, including compensation and long-term reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and measures under Jordan's Principle. These agreements and measures have directed significant resources toward Indigenous children and families and seek to remedy past discrimination.

- **Cultural and Workplace Shifts:** Cultural ceremonies and Indigenous practices have become more visible across federal workplaces, with some organizations embedding Indigenous cultural competency into leadership expectations, performance management, and learning policies.
- **Public Service Learning:** The Canada School of Public Service reports approximately 384,000 completions of Indigenous awareness learning modules since 2019, indicating a significant expansion of reconciliation-related learning across the federal public service.
- **Indigenous-led Health Governance:** Indigenous-led health governance continues to evolve, including the First Nations Health Authority entering its second 10-year mandate in British Columbia and ongoing work on distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation and the Indigenous Health Equity Fund.

Taken together, these developments point to a federal system that has begun to reorient itself toward Nation-to-Nation, Inuit-Crown, and Métis-Crown relationships grounded in rights, partnership, and respect. Distinctions-based partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations have expanded, with more policy and program frameworks moving away from pan-Indigenous approaches toward First Nation, Inuit, and Métis-specific arrangements.

Even with these shifts, federal submissions and data also make clear that many Calls to Action remain only partially implemented, that structural inequities persist across child welfare, education, health, income, and justice, and that progress is uneven across jurisdictions and distinctions. Federal status reports also show that some Calls to Action are considered “completed” based on narrow legal or procedural changes, while concerns raised by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples about broader systemic issues remain unresolved.

In other cases, such as Call to Action 46, federal progress has stalled. Call to Action 46 calls on all parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to develop and sign a Covenant of Reconciliation that sets out shared principles for advancing reconciliation. According to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), a draft Covenant was developed by the parties following the conclusion of the TRC, but it was never finalized or adopted. CIRNAC confirmed that the last substantive discussion of the draft Covenant took place on August 19, 2021. On April 30, 2024, the parties struck a text-editing committee. CIRNAC has also confirmed that the text-editing committee has not met again and that no further substantive work on the draft Covenant has occurred. Federal status reports have remained unchanged for eight years, with no reported timelines, no intergovernmental process, and no Indigenous-Crown engagement specific to this Call to Action. The stagnation reflected in several Calls to Action, including Call to Action 46, highlights deeper structural barriers that continue to constrain reconciliation efforts across the federal system.

4.2 Persistent Structural Barriers

Against this backdrop of progress, federal departments and external experts consistently identified structural barriers that continue to undermine the sustainability, reach, and transformational potential of reconciliation work. These are systemic features of federal governance that must be directly addressed if reconciliation is to move from promise to practice. These barriers are often compounded by federal structures and processes that may not always align with Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

Short-term funding cycles were the most consistently cited barrier. CIRNAC reported that 82% of its funding is temporary, with 60% scheduled to sunset by 2028. This funding profile creates systemic instability: programs are launched, communities engage and invest, and then funding disappears, leaving partners to absorb the cost of disrupted relationships and unfulfilled commitments.

Jurisdictional fragmentation between federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous Governments continues to create gaps, duplications, and accountability vacuums, particularly in health, child welfare, and justice. The division of responsibilities often misaligns with the lived realities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, whose rights are not fully recognized by any single level of government. Federal departments and experts repeatedly noted a gap between the proliferation of strategies, frameworks, and action plans and the slower pace of implementation on the ground, particularly where new laws and policies are not matched by resourcing, governance changes, or enforcement mechanisms.

Engagement fatigue was raised by multiple federal departments and independent experts. Indigenous partners are repeatedly consulted, in some cases by several departments, on overlapping topics, without experiencing meaningful policy change as a result. Experts described this as a shift toward “soft” or symbolic reconciliation rather than structural change. Over time, this results in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and communities withdrawing their time, expertise, and goodwill from federal processes, which degrades the quality of federal decision-making impacting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples' lives and makes accountability work, including the Council's, more difficult.

Data gaps and limited use of Indigenous-defined or Indigenous-developed indicators make it impossible to measure progress on reconciliation with confidence or credibility. Federal reporting systems were designed to track program outputs, not the quality of relationships, the revitalization of cultures, or the healing of intergenerational trauma. These federal efforts are insufficient for measuring reconciliation outcomes.

Threats to the durability and transparency of rights-based legislation and policies represent an emerging and serious risk to reconciliation. The April 2026 announcement by the British Columbia government that it was considering pausing or amending the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act following the Gitxaala v. British Columbia (Chief Gold Commissioner)*, 2024 BCSC 1272 decision, was

cited by multiple experts as a troubling signal that legislative gains achieved in implementing UNDRIP can be reversed when political or economic pressures mount. Progress on curriculum reform also remains uneven across provinces and territories.

These structural barriers shape outcomes across every major sector examined by the Council. The following snapshots illustrate how they continue to affect progress in child and family services, education and income, health, and justice.

4.3 Sector Snapshots

4.3.1 Child and Family Services

The removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities is a core harm of colonial policy. The overrepresentation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in care remains a central test of reconciliation. Federal reporting since 2015 points to significant legislative and policy shifts. This includes the coming into force of the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* in 2020, which affirms Indigenous jurisdiction over child and family services and creates a pathway for Indigenous laws and systems grounded in self-determination. Long-term reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program includes major compensation and program restructuring. The federal government presents this as a response to findings of systemic discrimination and as a shift toward prevention-focused, substantively equal services for First Nations children on-reserve.

By late 2024, the federal government reported that 10 trilateral and one bilateral coordination agreement were in place, 19 Indigenous child and family services laws were in force, and 26 additional coordination tables were underway. These developments suggest a shift toward Indigenous-governed systems. However, national data still show Indigenous children vastly overrepresented in care, and inconsistencies across federal, provincial, and territorial data systems limit the ability to track outcomes across jurisdictions or over time. Federal inputs also acknowledge that intergovernmental complexity, slow implementation of coordination agreements, and uneven, time-limited funding continue to delay the full realization of the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* and Calls to Action 1-5.

The emerging Canadian Child Welfare Information System, co-developed with Indigenous partners, offers a potential foundation for better, distinctions-based data. Still, coverage is not yet comprehensive and will need to reflect Indigenous data governance and priorities to support real accountability. As with other sectors, current federal reporting emphasizes agreements and laws, while data on whether fewer Indigenous children are entering care or experiencing shorter and safer placements remain limited and fragmented.

In future reports, the Council will look not only at the number of agreements and laws, but at whether Indigenous children are experiencing safer, more stable, culturally grounded care that keeps them connected to their families, communities, languages and cultures.

4.3.2 Education and Income

Education and economic opportunity are fundamental to Indigenous self-determination and to closing the socio-economic gaps identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Federal inputs describe a substantial scaling-up of investments in Indigenous education since 2015, particularly for First Nations elementary and secondary education on-reserve. A co-developed funding and policy approach launched in 2019, accelerated investment growth in First Nations K-12 education on-reserve. Federal data show that overall funding nearly doubled between 2015-16 and 2023-24, and Canada reports 10 regional First Nations education agreements in place, with many more under negotiation. Distinctions-based post-secondary education strategies, co-developed with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners in 2020, include dedicated federal funding for Métis Nation and Inuit students across Inuit Nunangat for the first time.

Despite these investments, federal data compiled for the Council show that large gaps in educational attainment and income persist between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and non-Indigenous peoples. These gaps translate into fewer choices, higher rates of poverty, and more limited opportunities for many Indigenous children and youth. Tables drawn from Indigenous Services Canada and Statistics Canada highlight enduring differences in median and employment income, as well as in post-secondary completion, especially for people living on-reserve, in remote communities, and across Inuit Nunangat. Federal submissions acknowledge that current performance frameworks still emphasize spending, program counts, and enrolment more than Indigenous-defined outcomes such as language revitalization, land-based learning, or community-driven measures of success. They also note that the pace and design of reforms are often constrained by existing authorities, fiscal frameworks, and negotiations with provinces and territories, which can delay or weaken changes called for in the education-related Calls to Action.

In subsequent years, the Council will examine whether new funding models, regional agreements, and distinctions-based strategies are translating into measurable, community-defined improvements in learning conditions, achievement, and economic security.

4.3.3 Health and Justice

Health and justice outcomes reflect the impacts of residential schools, systemic racism, and ongoing jurisdictional disputes, showing up in shorter life expectancy, higher rates of chronic illness, and disproportionate contact with police and courts for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

In health, federal reporting to the Council describes a gradual move toward Indigenous-led and distinctions-based approaches: co-development of Indigenous health legislation beginning in 2021, the creation of the Addressing Anti-Indigenous Racism in Health Systems Program, and the launch of the Indigenous Health Equity Fund in 2023. Federal submissions also describe

expanded support for mental wellness, maternal and child health, primary care in remote and isolated communities, and initiatives that integrate Elders, traditional healing, trauma-informed practice, and land-based programs.

However, the indicators assembled for this report show profound and persistent health inequities across nearly every domain, with significant gaps for Inuit and for First Nations in remote and northern regions. Across many of these measures, Indigenous health status has improved only modestly since 2015, while the gaps with non-Indigenous populations remain large and, in some cases, have narrowed only slightly or not at all. These patterns suggest that recent initiatives have not yet produced the level of structural change required to close health gaps, nor are they consistently measured against Indigenous-defined indicators of wellness. For many communities, this means that policy changes have not yet translated into reliable access to safe, culturally grounded care.

In the justice system, federal submissions emphasize new laws, policies, and strategies intended to respond to the Calls to Action on overrepresentation and systemic discrimination. These submissions include the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and its 2023-2028 Action Plan, sentencing and bail reforms, and the Indigenous Justice Strategy, which sets out distinctions-based measures co-developed with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners. Investments in Indigenous-led justice programs, community-based alternatives, court work services, and supports for Indigenous victims and families have increased, and some funding has become more stable.

Nonetheless, the data provided to the Council show that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples remain significantly overrepresented in custody and as victims of violence, and that many justice-related Calls to Action and recommendations from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) remain only partially implemented. Most federal measures are at the “planning” or “well-underway” stage rather than embedded as permanent, rights-consistent changes to institutions and practices. In its ongoing work, the Council will assess whether these initiatives align with Indigenous-defined indicators of safety, fairness, and self-determination, and whether they result in sustained, measurable reductions in overrepresentation and harm, rather than only expanding programs within existing systems.

Alongside these sector-specific developments, the Council also heard that reconciliation is shaped by broader cultural and societal shifts that influence how institutions, governments, and communities understand and act on their responsibilities.

In future reports, the Council will examine whether federal health and justice reforms are producing the structural changes needed to close the long-standing gaps and support Indigenous-defined measures of wellness, safety, and justice.

4.4 Normative and Societal Shifts

Beyond federal policy and program delivery, experts and departments alike identified a significant normative shift in Canadian public life over the decade since the TRC released its Final Report. This shift, though still tenuous and inconsistent across the country, represents a change in the cultural and social landscape. This provides an important foundation for sustained progress in reconciliation, including the decision to establish an independent, Indigenous-led National Council for Reconciliation. Federal leaders who met with the Council described a public service and a broader federal system that now speaks about reconciliation, Indigenous Rights, and Indigenous data in ways that would have been rare 10 years ago, even if practice has not yet caught up with language.

Positive shifts include greater public understanding of residential schools, cultural genocide, and the intergenerational colonial harm. There is growing interest among non-Indigenous peoples in Canada to understand their own roles and responsibilities in reconciliation. Indigenous-led education and cultural resurgence are vibrant, growing movements in many communities. Experts emphasized that these shifts are uneven across the country; education, public discourse, and civic initiatives have advanced further in some regions and municipalities than in others, and in some areas are facing more visible backlash. These gains in awareness do not offset the fact that Indigenous children remain vastly overrepresented in care, health gaps remain wide, and justice outcomes remain unequal. Both realities must be held together.

A growing number of students entering post-secondary institutions now do so with a baseline knowledge of Indigenous histories that their parents' generation overwhelmingly lacked. Municipal-level reconciliation initiatives, including the renaming of streets and public spaces, land acknowledgement protocols, and engagement with heritage sites, are widespread. Civil society organizations, professional associations, and environmental groups have openly acknowledged harmful policies and are actively seeking change. Participants at the Council's Federal Convening Circle also spoke about the importance of ensuring Elders, Survivors, leaders, and youth have a "voice" in institutional processes. They stressed that this voice must carry real weight in decisions and not be limited to symbolic participation.

These societal shifts do not substitute for structural change, but they create the conditions in which structural change can become possible and sustainable. At the same time, they remain uneven and contested; backlash, misinformation, and economic anxiety can quickly erode support if progress is not matched by visible improvements in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples' lives. There is also a risk that reconciliation is treated primarily as a matter of learning about history rather than of changing laws, institutions, and resource allocations today. These normative shifts create important momentum but also reveal vulnerabilities that could undermine or reverse recent gains. The Council, therefore, examined several emerging risks that threaten the sustainability of reconciliation efforts.

4.5 Emerging Risks

Federal departments and experts consistently identified several emerging risks and vulnerabilities that could threaten the sustainability of reconciliation gains:

- **Rising denialism:** Efforts to cast doubt on the documented mortality of residential school children and the established historical record of residential schools are growing in some quarters of Canadian public life. Denialism undermines public education, erodes social cohesion, and creates political cover for inaction. It also retraumatizes Survivors and their descendants by calling into question truths that have already been documented and acknowledged.
- **Political shifts threatening rights-based legislative architecture:** The British Columbia government's April 2026 signal that it was considering pausing or amending implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, following the *Gitxaala v. British Columbia* (Chief Gold Commissioner), 2024 BCSC 1272 decision, was cited by experts as an early indication that rights-based legislative gains remain vulnerable to reversal. The Council notes with concern any move to weaken, suspend, or reinterpret rights-based commitments in response to economic or political pressures. Rights-based frameworks such as UNDRIP-aligned legislation, modern treaties, and self-government agreements are foundational to reconciliation. Their erosion, coupled with a retreat to predominantly "soft" or symbolic measures, would signal a serious step backward.
- **Endangerment of Indigenous languages:** Scholars described a narrowing window for language documentation and transmission, noting that the loss of fluent speakers makes revitalization exponentially more difficult. This vulnerability sits uneasily alongside the *Indigenous Languages Act*, whose preamble affirms that rights related to Indigenous languages are at the core of reconciliation and fundamental to shaping the country. Short-term funding models, combined with delays in the flow of resources, continue to place Indigenous-led revitalization efforts at risk at a critical moment when sustained action is most needed. Intergenerational responsibility cannot be met with temporary, stop-start funding.
- **Education reforms vulnerable to rollback:** Curriculum achievements in several provinces remain dependent on political will rather than statutory protection. The absence of national standards leaves reconciliation education vulnerable to reversal. Departments and experts alike noted that what one generation of students learns can be quickly undone if curricula are weakened or contested at the political level.

- **Precarious and time-limited funding:** Departments highlighted the misalignment between long-term reconciliation commitments and short-term, often temporary funding authorities. A substantial share of current reconciliation-related spending is scheduled to sunset in the coming years. In a context of fiscal restraint, there is a risk that Indigenous-led services, language and culture initiatives, and emerging governance arrangements remain precarious rather than becoming part of the permanent architecture of how Canada is governed. **No institution, no community, and no intergenerational relationship can be built on a foundation of temporary funding**, a theme that recurs throughout departmental submissions, expert interviews, and the Council's assessment.
- **Jurisdictional stalemates and misalignment:** Federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous Governments all hold responsibilities in areas such as child and family services, health, education, justice, and emergency management. Departments and partners described how unclear roles, legislative gaps, and misaligned mandates can delay or derail implementation of the Calls to Action and Indigenous jurisdiction. Without explicit attention to these dynamics, there is a risk that individuals continue to fall through the cracks when they move between systems and that reconciliation efforts remain fragmented rather than systemic.

These emerging risks underline that reconciliation gains remain reversible. The Council will monitor not only whether new initiatives are launched, but also whether the legal, fiscal, and institutional foundations of reconciliation are being strengthened or weakened over time, and whether tangible, Indigenous-defined improvements align with changes in public narratives on safety, well-being and self-determination.

The next chapter turns to what federal leaders themselves told the Council about progress, gaps, and the resilience of reconciliation commitments within their own institutions.



FEDERAL CONVENING CIRCLE: Insights and Outcomes



Federal leaders spoke candidly about progress, gaps, and the resilience of reconciliation commitments. The conversation reflected a shared recognition that reconciliation requires honesty, sustained effort, and a willingness to confront systemic barriers.

On April 21, 2026, the Council and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada co-hosted the first Federal Convening Circle on reconciliation, bringing together Deputy Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers, Directors General, and senior officials from 16 federal departments and agencies. The session created space for candid dialogue on federal progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Calls to Action, for which they are responsible, broader reconciliation efforts, and the overall state of reconciliation within the federal system. The departments represented included CIRNAC; Indigenous Services Canada; Justice; Health Canada; Correctional Service Canada; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; Parks Canada; Library and Archives Canada; Statistics Canada; the Canada School of Public Service; Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; Public Safety; Canadian Heritage; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; Public Health Agency of Canada; and the Privy Council Office.

The Federal Convening Circle reflected on the Council's founding purpose: to monitor, evaluate, and hold the federal government accountable for its reconciliation commitments, while also modelling a relational, dialogue-centred approach. Framed as an open conversation rather than an audit, the session invited senior officials to speak candidly about progress and gaps so the Council could better understand, and publicly report on, the breadth and limits of federal reconciliation work.

5.1 Relationship-Centred Approach

The Council reiterated its role as an independent organization committed to building relationships and deepening its understanding of federal reconciliation work. Participants spoke openly about progress and challenges, identified systemic and persistent barriers, risks and gaps, and reflected on what reconciliation demands of federal institutions at this moment. Several participants stressed that reconciliation work must not become a "checkbox" exercise, but should be intrinsically motivated, grounded in a clear purpose, and sustained commitment.

5.2 Federal Progress

Departments pointed to program design explicitly shaped by the Calls to Action; long-term institutional relationships with Indigenous Governments and organizations; advances in Indigenous data governance; expanded Indigenous cultural ceremonies within federal systems; and foundational legislative and policy frameworks.

They also highlighted tangible outcomes: negotiated settlement agreements and resolution processes; transfers of authority in areas such as child and family services; and new programs co-developed with Indigenous partners that move beyond pilot projects toward long-term commitments.

Participants noted that some reconciliation work within departments is not directly tied to specific Calls to Action but is reshaping how federal institutions approach their responsibilities and relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, including through new governance arrangements, advisory structures, and internal culture shifts.

5.3 Persistent Gaps and Systemic Barriers

Participants were candid about ongoing challenges. A central theme was the misalignment between long-term reconciliation commitments and short-term, project-based funding cycles. This instability undermines trust and makes it difficult to sustain multi-generational work and embed reconciliation into core federal budgets.

Departments also described the difficulty of measuring community and Survivor-led change using conventional performance frameworks, noting that key aspects of reconciliation, such as relationship quality, healing, and shifts in power, are not easily captured by standard indicators.

Other systemic barriers surfaced repeatedly: the gap between strategies and frameworks on paper and implementation on the ground; persistent confusion about distinctions between consultation, engagement, and information-sharing, leading to uneven practice and uncertainty about the influence Indigenous partners can expect; and engagement fatigue among Indigenous experts, leaders, and communities who are asked frequently to advise without seeing corresponding results. Participants often returned to the challenge of giving concrete, operational meaning to co-development, Nation-to-Nation, Inuit-Crown, Métis-Crown relationships, and respectful partnership within federal processes and constraints.

5.4 Forward-Looking Priorities

Looking ahead, departments stressed that the central task is no longer to announce new commitments, but to implement existing ones in ways that are durable, transparent, and grounded in Indigenous Rights and priorities. Participants identified several priorities: sustained relationships with Indigenous partners; co-development of indicators that better reflect the pace and nature of Nation-to-Nation, Inuit-Crown, Métis-Crown work; and embedding Indigenous Voices in federal governance and decision-making processes.

They also emphasized the importance of reorienting federal work towards supporting Indigenous wealth, prosperity, and self-determination, including through Indigenous-led economic development. Several departments identified a role for the Council in sustaining political momentum, providing context that audits cannot, and publicly tracking whether reconciliation commitments remain resilient in the face of leadership changes, fiscal pressures, and shifting priorities.

Insights from the Federal Convening Circle reveal how short-term funding, engagement fatigue, implementation gaps, and measurement challenges limit what departments and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples can accomplish. These constraints directly inform the Council's priority findings and recommendations because they significantly restrict First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples' ability to advance their own priorities.

In addition to federal perspectives, the Council sought independent expert analysis. The next chapter presents the perspectives of 20 Indigenous and settler scholars on the state of reconciliation in 2026, and the structural changes required to move from awareness to sustained rights-based change.



SCHOLARS' PERSPECTIVES:

Where Reconciliation Stands and Recommendations for the Council



The Council commissioned interviews with Indigenous and settler academic and community leaders. Their perspectives offer a critical assessment of the progress and risks of reconciliation, grounded in research and lived experience.

Reconciliation in Canada is at a pivotal moment. This was the clear message from 20 Indigenous and settler scholars who participated in interviews commissioned by the Council. Their perspectives offer a candid assessment of reconciliation in 2026, shaped by meaningful progress, serious structural stagnation, and growing political volatility. The interviews reflect a wide range of disciplines, regions, and lived experiences, and offer a grounded, often uncomfortable view of where reconciliation stands and what the Council must do to help move it forward.

Mixed Progress and Deep Concern

Scholars acknowledged real gains since 2015: increased public awareness of residential schools, curriculum reforms in some jurisdictions, Indigenous-led research, and major legislative developments, including the implementation of *UNDRIP and the Indigenous Languages Act*. They also pointed to significant national initiatives, including the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the mandate of the Special Interlocutor on Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, as evidence of a shifting landscape.

Yet these advances sit alongside persistent vulnerabilities. Scholars emphasized that symbolic or “soft” measures have often been prioritized over structural change, and that program instability continues to undermine long-term work. Many areas rely heavily on temporary or time-limited authorities, creating uncertainty even when funding is renewed. They also described a widening gap between reconciliation rhetoric and material change, particularly in areas involving land, jurisdiction, and the implementation of rights.

A central theme was the ongoing reluctance across governments to fully embrace what scholars described as “hard rights,” including land restitution, self-government, jurisdiction over resources, and genuine free, prior, and informed consent. Several warned that economic reconciliation, as currently framed, risks substituting revenue sharing for restitution and rights implementation. For many, the story of the last decade is one of significant normative and legislative shifts coupled with increasing material inequalities and a growing sense of vulnerability in governments' commitment to reconciliation.

Key Challenges Identified

Across interviews, several common challenges emerged. Together, they illustrate the scale and complexity of the work ahead.

Education and Denialism

Scholars described uneven reconciliation education and a rise in organized denialism that distorts evidence, retraumatizes Survivors, and fuels anti-Indigenous sentiment. They stressed that this is not simply a matter of individual ignorance, but a coordinated effort that requires a national response, including clear public communication from institutions such as the Council.

Program Instability

Scholars highlighted the chronic reliance on temporary or sunseting authorities. Even where funding has been renewed, the short planning horizon forces communities and organizations to plan in one- or two-year increments, undermining long-term planning, workforce stability, and trust in government.

Data Gaps and Transparency

Scholars pointed to persistent gaps in transparency and data across all orders of government. Outcome gaps are inconsistently measured or publicly reported, making it difficult to track whether conditions are improving. They also highlighted barriers to accessing historical and contemporary records, including church archives, police files, and federal collections, which impede accountability and truth-telling.

Institutional Strain

Scholars noted that while many institutions have adopted reconciliation language and created new structures, Indigenous faculty, students, and staff continue to face burnout, tokenism, identity fraud, and hostile learning environments. Experts spoke of the "emotional and institutional labour" being demanded of a relatively small number of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, without corresponding shifts in power, workloads, or tenure and promotion systems.

Fragmented Reconciliation Frameworks

Experts stressed the TRC Calls to Action must be understood alongside the MMIWG Calls for Justice, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the reports of the Special Interlocutor, and other Indigenous-led processes.

Expectations of the National Council for Reconciliation

As one expert observed, the core challenge is not a lack of public understanding but the persistent gap between knowledge and action: "Awareness is not consistently translating into structural change." Scholars saw the Council's role in closing this gap as both urgent and demanding. They emphasized several core functions that would distinguish the Council from existing bodies and help ensure that reconciliation work does not stall.

Five core functions that were emphasized include:

1. National Accountability

Scholars urged the Council to monitor reconciliation not only at the federal level but also across provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, as well as key institutions and sectors. In their view, reconciliation is a shared responsibility, and current accountability mechanisms are fragmented, with no single body providing a clear national picture of where reconciliation is advancing and where it is stalling.

2. Data Leadership and Measurement

Many identified Indigenous-defined indicators and Indigenous-led evaluation as among the most important contributions the Council could make. They recommended working with Statistics Canada, Indigenous Governments, and others to track and publicly report on outcome gaps, benchmarks, and long-term progress, focusing on results in people's lives rather than activity counts or spending totals.

3. Public Education and Dialogue

The Council was urged to take an active role in countering denialism, supporting reconciliation education (including for newcomers and professionals), and fostering public conversations that connect symbolic actions to structural change. Scholars highlighted the need for honest communication about both progress and regression.

4. Community Connection and Best Practices

Several scholars encouraged the Council to map and share community-based reconciliation initiatives, especially in smaller and rural communities that often fall below the national radar. Making visible this "multi-actor, multi-site" work could help counter narratives that reconciliation is only a governmental or urban project.

5. Safeguarding Progress Across Political Cycles

Finally, the Council's permanence and Indigenous-governed structure were seen as essential for providing continuity, guarding against rollback, and insisting on long-term commitments that reflect the multigenerational nature of reconciliation. Scholars stressed that this authority will depend on the Council's willingness to use its independence, even when doing so is politically uncomfortable.

A Call for Bold, Independent Leadership

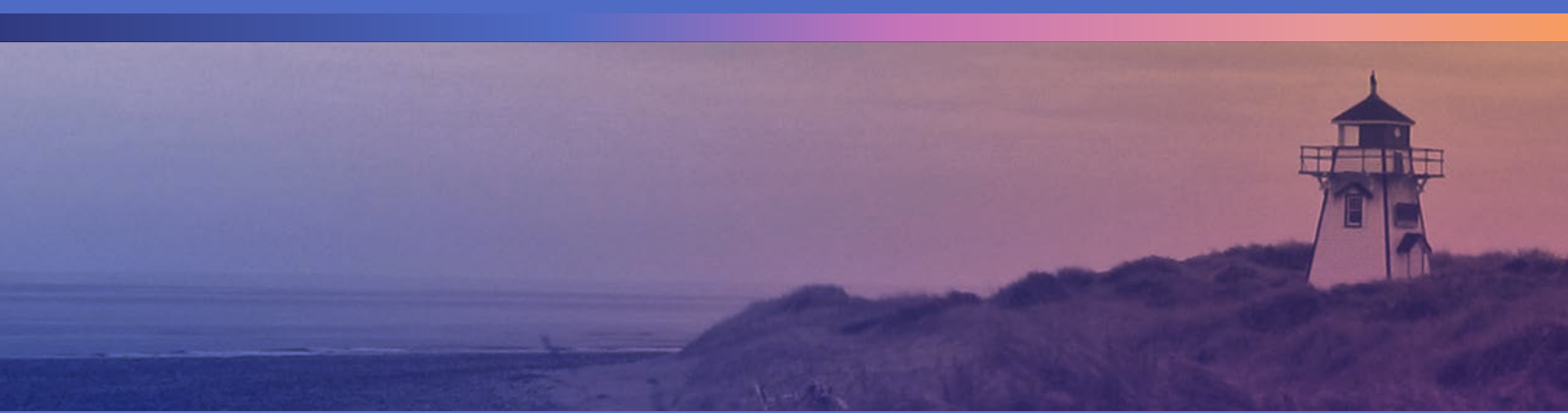
A recurring message was that reconciliation currently lacks clear national leadership, and that the Council is expected to help fill that void. Scholars urged the Council to use its independence to speak plainly about both progress and failures, including when governments redefine reconciliation in ways that dilute Indigenous Rights. They encouraged the Council to elevate Survivor Voices, connect reconciliation to broader Indigenous-led processes, and lead national dialogue on issues such as the scheduled 2027 destruction of Independent Assessment Process records. These records are subject to a Supreme Court of Canada order, requiring their destruction after 15 years unless individual Survivors choose to preserve their own files. Scholars emphasized that the Council should promote broad awareness of this deadline and support a nationwide effort to ensure Survivors understand their options, given the implications for truth, memory, and intergenerational accountability.

As one scholar noted, "Reconciliation requires multigenerational commitment and cannot depend on the political will of any single government. The Council is the organization Canada created to hold that commitment across generations."

The scholars' perspectives make clear that reconciliation requires sustained leadership, structural change, and long-term commitment. Building on these findings, the following chapter outlines the Council's priorities, recommendations, and intended actions for advancing this work.



Priority Findings and Recommendations



The Council calls on the Government of Canada to move from broad commitments to concrete, time-bound actions across four pillars: leadership and accountability, strong governance, relationship-centred engagement, and Indigenous-defined monitoring and learning.

The National Council for Reconciliation issues the following findings and recommendations pursuant to its mandate under section 16.1 of the *National Council for Reconciliation Act*. These findings reflect the Council's assessment of the most urgent structural issues that cut across departments and that pose the greatest risk to long-term reconciliation if left unaddressed or met only with incremental responses. They are organized around the Council's four Strategic Pillars: Leadership, Public Trust and Accountability; Strong Governance and Organizational Maturity; Engagement and Relationship Building; and Research, Monitoring, and Learning. Together, the pillars provide a framework for identifying where federal systems must change to support sustained, Indigenous-led reconciliation.

Across all four pillars, the Council's analysis points to a central structural gap: **more than a decade after the TRC's Final Report, there is still no federal body responsible for prioritizing Calls to Action, sequencing implementation, or ensuring accountability across departments.** This absence of coordinated leadership from the centre of government, through the Privy Council Office (PCO), has contributed to uneven progress and persistent gaps. It has also underscored the need for ongoing monitoring of Calls to Action that the federal government has marked as complete, to ensure that commitments remain in place, are implemented as intended, and continue to produce the outcomes envisioned by the TRC. Several of the recommendations that follow call for strengthened whole-of-government coordination led by PCO, working closely with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and other central agencies.

The analysis also emphasizes the importance of the Council's mandate under section 16.1 to monitor progress on reconciliation, including continued oversight of Calls to Action marked as complete. This oversight helps ensure that commitments remain in place and continue to achieve their intended outcomes.

The findings and recommendations are grounded in evidence gathered through the Federal Convening Circle, the independent Scholars' Report, and foundational research conducted during the 2025-2026 reporting year. **The Council anticipates the Prime Minister's response to this report will commit to implementing the following recommendations and set out timelines and federal leads for those commitments.**

	Strategic Pillar 1
	Leadership, Public Trust, and Accountability
Priority Finding:	Federal reporting does not yet provide a clear or accurate picture of whether reconciliation commitments are improving outcomes

Federal reporting on 76 of the 94 Calls to Action requiring federal leadership continues to emphasize activities, legal changes, and funding announcements rather than evidence of improved outcomes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. Many Calls to Action remain in “planning” or “well underway” stages for extended periods, and some are marked “completed” based on narrow procedural or legislative changes, even where substantive issues persist. For example, federal reporting identifies several child-welfare-related Calls to Action as “completed”, yet departments acknowledged ongoing gaps in service quality, jurisdictional coordination, and long-term outcomes for children and families. Similar patterns appear in justice-related Calls to Action, where legislative amendments are reported as progress despite continued over-representation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in correctional systems.

When reporting fails to clearly distinguish between activity and impact, Parliament, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and the broader public cannot reliably determine whether federal actions are producing tangible results. Reporting must also incorporate Indigenous assessments of progress and explain discrepancies between the federal government's ratings and lived experience. Public trust depends on reporting that is transparent about progress, persistent gaps, and concrete plans to address them.

	Strategic Pillar 2
	Strong Governance and Organizational Maturity
Priority Finding:	Federal governance roles and co-development expectations remain unclear and inconsistent

Federal governance arrangements for reconciliation remain uneven and insufficiently defined, particularly across federal departments and in relationships with other orders of government. Departments described jurisdictional stalemates, misaligned mandates, and inconsistent co-development practices that delay or dilute implementation of the Calls to Action and Indigenous jurisdiction. The Council's legislated mandate is clear, but federal direction on how departments are expected to work with Indigenous Governments, Rights Holders, existing treaty and bilateral mechanisms, and the Council as an independent accountability body remains underdeveloped.

The Council also observed that while CIRNAC is responsible for reporting on federal implementation of the Calls to Action, there is no clear mechanism to ensure that the designated departmental lead advances the work. This gap is evident in the PCO's handling of Call to Action 46. Although PCO is listed as the federal lead, its submission to the Council did not identify a timeline, engagement plan, or next steps; instead, it pointed to work led by other departments as evidence of progress. The Council offers this example not to single out one department, but to illustrate a recurrent governance pattern: when the designated lead does not act, there is no federal mechanism to resolve the gap, clarify responsibility, or ensure coordinated progress across departments. Without clearer roles, accountabilities, and co-development expectations (and without a central authority empowered to enforce them), progress will remain fragmented and vulnerable to delay.

	Strategic Pillar 3
	Engagement and Relationship-Building
Priority Finding:	Engagement fatigue is increasing, and federal practice remains uneven

The Federal Convening Circle demonstrated the value of relationship-centred dialogue and non-adversarial accountability, but departments acknowledged that Indigenous Governments and organizations are experiencing significant engagement fatigue. Both departmental input and the Scholars' Report point to federal engagement that is often duplicative and uncoordinated, with multiple entities engaging on related issues without shared timelines, clear intersections, or consistent distinctions between information-sharing, consultation, and co-development. When engagement is not clearly coordinated, lacks strong feedback loops, and is not tied to shared decision-making or tangible change, reconciliation risks becoming transactional or symbolic rather than transformative. Over time, this erodes trust and reduces the willingness of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples to participate in federal processes. When First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and communities withdraw their expertise and goodwill, federal decision-making on Indigenous lives deteriorates, and the Council's own ability to monitor and report accurately on reconciliation work is weakened.

	Strategic Pillar 4
	Research, Monitoring, and Learning
Priority Finding:	Federal performance frameworks are not yet grounded in Indigenous-defined indicators of reconciliation

Departments and scholars highlighted the difficulty of measuring multi-generational, community-led reconciliation work within existing federal performance and results frameworks. Current indicators focus heavily on activities and outputs (such as the number of training completions, programs launched, or policies amended) rather than on Indigenous-defined outcomes such as shifts in power and jurisdiction, language revitalization, justice and safety outcomes, or community well-being. In many areas, measures of success continue to be set by federal institutions rather than by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples themselves, and do not reflect Indigenous Knowledge systems, priorities, or definitions of reconciliation.

The Council recognizes that developing indicators for reconciliation, particularly those not easily captured by numerical measures, is complex and often contested work. Without Indigenous-defined indicators and long-term monitoring approaches that reflect Indigenous Knowledge systems and priorities, federal reporting will continue to overlook key aspects of reconciliation progress and risk reinforcing a narrow, compliance-oriented view of progress. These gaps limit the Government of Canada's ability to engage, learn, adjust, and be accountable for whether reconciliation commitments are improving the lives of Indigenous children, families, and communities.

These priority findings identify structural issues that require coordinated federal action. The recommendations that follow translate these findings into the immediate steps the Government of Canada must take to strengthen leadership, clarify governance roles, improve engagement practices, and ensure that reconciliation progress is measured in ways that reflect real and measurable outcomes. Together, they set out the minimum federal actions needed to support sustained, Indigenous-led reconciliation. The Council will assess the Government's response to these recommendations in its Second Annual Report and will report publicly on areas where commitments are not met or are implemented only in form, not in substance.

As noted earlier, more than a decade after the TRC released its Final Report, the absence of a central federal body to prioritize Calls to Action, sequence and monitor implementation, and enforce accountability has contributed to uneven progress and persistent gaps. The Council therefore recommends that several measures requiring whole-of-government coordination be led by PCO, working in close collaboration with CIRNAC and other central agencies as appropriate.

In the Council's view, implementing the Calls to Action with the seriousness they require demands the same level of central leadership that the Government has brought to other national priorities. In practical terms, this could include establishing a dedicated reconciliation secretariat within PCO, with the mandate and authority to coordinate implementation of the Calls to Action and related commitments across departments. Where recommendations call for central coordination by PCO, the Council anticipates the Prime Minister's response to this report to indicate whether the Government accepts this role for PCO and, if not, to explain how it will otherwise ensure coherent prioritization, sequencing, enforcement, and implementation of the Calls to Action across departments.

In keeping with the Council's commitment to transparency and to ensure that the Prime Minister's response is not minimized or treated as a routine administrative matter, the Council anticipates the Prime Minister's reply to be issued publicly and jointly with the Council, accompanied by a meeting to discuss the Government's commitments and next steps. Public release is essential to prevent the response from being minimized, delayed or overshadowed by other announcements, and to reinforce that reconciliation remains a national priority requiring visible leadership from the centre of government. A co-published response also strengthens accountability by clarifying the Government's position on the Council's recommendations and the actions it will take to advance them to departments, Indigenous partners, and Canadians.

Recommendations

We remain mindful that the TRC framed its directives as Calls to Action, and we carry that spirit forward in our work through the recommendations below, which correspond to the pressing structural actions identified in the executive summary and are organized around the Council's four strategic pillars.



Strategic Pillar 1

Leadership, Public Trust, and Accountability

1.1 Improve Federal Reporting on the Calls to Action

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada commit to developing a clear plan and timeline to improve public reporting on 76 of the 94 Calls to Action requiring federal leadership. The PCO should lead this plan to ensure a whole-of-government approach. It should outline how future reports will distinguish between activities (including legal or policy changes) and evidence of improved outcomes; incorporate Indigenous partners' assessments of progress; and transparently explain any differences between the federal government's ratings and Indigenous assessments.

The Council recommends that the Government assign central responsibility for this work to the PCO, with CIRNAC providing support where required.

1.2 Establish a Federal Reconciliation Plan

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada create and make public a Federal Reconciliation Plan that articulates the Government of Canada's position on reconciliation and sets out clear priorities, multi-year timelines, interim milestones and accountabilities across departments for implementing the Calls to Action requiring federal leadership. The Government commit to co-developing this plan with Indigenous partners and to publishing it within a defined timeframe, with updates at least every two years.

The development of this plan requires leadership from the centre of government, in collaboration with CIRNAC and other central agencies as appropriate. The Council will evaluate the adequacy and implementation of the Federal Reconciliation Plan in its Second Annual Report, including whether it identifies central leadership within PCO, clear departmental leads, and time-bound milestones.

1.3 Conduct a Reconciliation Capacity Assessment

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada conduct and publish a reconciliation capacity assessment across key departments and agencies to determine how recent and planned fiscal and organizational changes affect the federal government's ability to implement the Calls to Action and other reconciliation commitments. This assessment should identify reconciliation-related functions funded through temporary or sunseting authorities. It should also analyze impacts on staffing, expertise, institutional knowledge, and Indigenous-facing program functions, and assess departments' ability to maintain effective relationships with Indigenous partners.

It should require departments to publicly report any internal reallocations of funding originally secured for specific reconciliation-related programs or services, and to explain how such reallocations affect their capacity to meet reconciliation commitments. The assessment should identify where critical capacity is at risk of being lost and set out measures to safeguard essential positions, knowledge, and functions required to sustain reconciliation commitments over time. Where risks are identified, departments should develop and implement mitigation plans and report on these measures in subsequent updates to Parliament.

The Council recommends that the Government assign central responsibility to the PCO, in collaboration with CIRNAC and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

1.4 Safeguard Reconciliation Progress

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada strengthen the durability and transparency of reconciliation commitments across political cycles by, to the extent possible, embedding reconciliation objectives and reporting requirements in legislation and central policies, and by securing long-term, independent funding models for national reconciliation institutions. Central to this is a reconciliation impact requirement within Cabinet and Treasury Board processes. Such a requirement would ensure that proposed changes to major reconciliation commitments are accompanied by a transparent, public impact statement outlining potential impacts on Indigenous Rights, outcomes, funding stability, implementation capacity, and accompanied by mitigation measures where risks are identified.

1.5 Strengthen Federal Support for Indigenous Languages

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada affirm the central importance of Indigenous languages to reconciliation, consistent with the *Indigenous Languages Act*, which, in its preamble, recognizes that rights related to Indigenous languages are at the core of reconciliation and fundamental to shaping the country. Recent public debate involving the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages has highlighted broader questions about how federal institutions support Indigenous languages. While no formal investigation or audit has yet been completed, the Council will remain attentive to the facts as they emerge.

In this context, the government should take concrete steps within the federal public service to recognize the importance of Indigenous languages as essential, including identifying and removing barriers created by bilingualism requirements for Indigenous public servants who speak an Indigenous language and English or French, and establishing appropriate exemptions or pathways that reflect the value of Indigenous languages within the federal workforce. This action clearly demonstrates federal commitments under the *Indigenous Languages Act* and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

The Council recommends the Department of Canadian Heritage lead this work, in collaboration with the Offices of the Commissioners of Indigenous Languages and Official Languages, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the Public Service Commission of Canada, and Indigenous partners.



Strategic Pillar 2

Strong Governance and Organizational Maturity

2.1 Clarify Federal Roles and Co-Development Expectations

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada commit to co-developing, with Indigenous partners, clear, consolidated guidance on roles, responsibilities, and co-development expectations for federal departments across key reconciliation domains, such as child and family services, justice, health, education, emergency management, and data. This guidance should identify departmental leads, set out minimum expectations for co-development and shared decision-making, and clarify how existing principles, including those in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and related federal commitments, apply across different domains and processes.

This Council recommends that this guidance be led by CIRNAC, in partnership with the PCO and key line departments in the relevant domains.

2.2 Strengthen Federal Implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada strengthen federal implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* by establishing clear expectations, timelines, and accountability mechanisms for departments to align legislation, policies, and operational practices with the Declaration. These mechanisms should include consolidated federal guidance on how UNDRIP obligations apply across different policy domains; minimum standards for co-development and shared decision-making; and measures to ensure that departments have the capacity, expertise, and governance structures required to implement the Act. The Government should also commit to publishing this guidance within a defined timeframe and reporting regularly to Parliament and Indigenous partners on progress.

The Council recommends that this work be led jointly by CIRNAC and the Department of Justice, with the PCO ensuring consistent application and accountability across federal departments.

2.3 Stabilize Long-Term Funding for Core Reconciliation Programs and Institutions

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada immediately commit to stabilizing long-term core funding for essential reconciliation programs, services, and institutions. This process includes working with Indigenous partners and affected organizations to move core reconciliation functions off short-term, sunseting authorities and onto stable arrangements such as endowments, A-base core funding, or other permanent mechanisms that match the permanence of their responsibilities.

Time-limited funding arrangements are misaligned for institutions with permanent national responsibilities in key reconciliation functions, including truth-telling and archival stewardship, commemoration, and public education. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), whose current core federal funding ends in March 2027 following a five-year agreement, is a clear example. An organization mandated to steward Survivor testimonies, support families, and educate the public about the residential school system cannot plan on a five-year horizon. Requiring the NCTR to repeatedly seek short-term renewals for a permanent responsibility creates serious risks for intergenerational accountability and goes beyond a routine funding management issue.

Similar dynamics affect other Indigenous-led institutions with permanent responsibilities, which must regularly divert capacity from their core work to secure short-term renewals for long-term mandates. For these programs and institutions, stable long-term core funding would reduce administrative burden, enable sustained planning and staffing, and free both Indigenous organizations and federal officials from recurring renewal negotiations, allowing them to focus on implementing the broader structural changes identified in this report.

The Council recommends that the Government assign central responsibility for this work to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and the Department of Finance Canada, with direction from the PCO, in collaboration with CIRNAC, relevant portfolio departments, and Indigenous partners.



Strategic Pillar 3

Engagement and Relationship-Building

3.1 Reduce Engagement Fatigue and Strengthen Relationship-Centred Practice

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada set out immediate steps to reduce engagement fatigue and strengthen relationship-centred practice with Indigenous partners, led by the PCO as the central agency responsible for coordinated action across departments. This work would streamline major federal engagement processes, clarify distinctions between information-sharing, consultation, and co-development, and require departments to build in and report on feedback loops that show how Indigenous input was considered and what changed as a result.

The Council recommends that this effort be centrally coordinated by the PCO, in close collaboration with CIRNAC and major program departments to align engagement practices and reduce duplication.



Strategic Pillar 4

Research, Monitoring, and Learning

4.1 Co-develop Indigenous-Defined Indicators and Monitoring Approaches

The Council recommends that the Government of Canada commit to working with the Council, Indigenous partners, Survivors, and Knowledge Keepers to co-develop Indigenous-defined indicators and methods for monitoring reconciliation progress, and to pilot these in selected departments or initiatives within a defined timeframe. This work must be grounded in Indigenous data sovereignty, including respect for Indigenous governance over how data about their communities is collected, interpreted, and used. The Government's response should identify participating departments, outline governance and design roles for Indigenous partners, and explain how lessons from these pilots will inform broader changes to federal reporting on the Calls to Action.

The Council recommends that this work be co-led through a distinctions-based partnership model, with Indigenous-mandated data organizations leading the Indigenous side of the co-development, and Statistics Canada designated as the federal lead responsible for coordinating federal participation, in collaboration with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and other relevant federal partners. This co-leadership model respects Indigenous data sovereignty and supports the meaningful co-development of indicators and monitoring approaches, while ensuring a clear federal counterpart for whole-of-government alignment.

These recommendations address the fundamental structural changes required now to support coherent and accountable federal action. The next chapter turns to the longer-term considerations about where reconciliation must go in the years ahead, questions the Council will continue to explore as it develops its forward-looking work.



Looking Ahead



Reconciliation is a multi-generational, national responsibility that demands action and sustained commitment.

The Inaugural Annual Report of the National Council for Reconciliation surveys the state of reconciliation in Canada. It identifies federal progress alongside serious structural vulnerability and calls for urgent, sustained action to close outcome gaps and strengthen the foundations of reconciliation.

As the Council looks to the future, we do so with humility and determination. Efforts at reconciliation must be renewed and strengthened across generations and across all sectors of society in Canada. Our work will continue to be guided by Indigenous Knowledge systems and the Voices of Survivors and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

Strengthening Monitoring and Public Accountability

Monitoring progress is central to our mandate. Each year, the Government of Canada must provide the Council with data on children in care, education funding, educational and income attainment, health outcomes, youth custody, criminal victimization, and overrepresentation in the justice and corrections systems.

The Council will explore establishing a network of experts to help interpret and contextualize these indicators. We will publish our findings and develop a public-facing website to strengthen transparency and public understanding. We will continue to assess whether federal leadership from the centre of government is strengthening or weakening over time, consistent with the structural actions identified in this report.

Focusing on Social Realities

Child and family well-being, health equity, language revitalization, justice, and the safety of Indigenous women, girls, and vulnerable people are central to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's vision and vital to advancing reconciliation. The Council will monitor how policies, funding decisions, and implementation practices across all orders of government affect these outcomes, ensuring that reconciliation efforts address the lived realities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and the hard rights issues identified by experts, including land, jurisdiction and self-determination.

Sharing Community-Led Best Practices

Across the country, communities are advancing reconciliation in diverse ways. The Council will explore creating a database of local reconciliation initiatives to help identify and share promising practices and highlight models that are scalable or adaptable in other regions.

Exploring Indigenous-Led Approaches to Reconciliation Education

Institutions across Canada are seeking guidance on reconciliation education. The Council will explore whether Indigenous-led approaches such as reconciliation competencies, curriculum frameworks, or micro-credentials could support high-quality, sustained learning. We will study these issues and may recommend practical, Indigenous-led approaches, while recognizing that education systems are shared across federal, provincial, territorial, and local authorities.

Exploring a Way Forward on Indigenous Languages

Indigenous languages are foundational to identity, culture, and self-determination, and their revitalization is central to the vision set out in the *Indigenous Languages Act*. Throughout our engagements, both the Federal Convening Circle and the scholars emphasized that existing federal efforts are not sufficient to meet the scale of need or the urgency expressed by communities. They called for a more coherent, better-resourced, and longer-term approach that reflects the commitments articulated in the Act's preamble.

The Council will explore ways to advance these issues, including how federal institutions effectively support Indigenous-led language revitalization and uphold the place of Indigenous languages within Canada's linguistic landscape. We will study these questions over the coming year and may bring forward recommendations in our next Annual Report, informed by Indigenous Knowledge systems, community experience, and evidence gathered through our monitoring mandate.

Advancing Economic Reconciliation

Reconciliation requires moving from symbolic gestures to concrete outcomes. Indigenous-led economic development is essential to self-determination and long-term well-being. The Council will explore ways to strengthen economic reconciliation, including convening Indigenous economic organizations, researchers, and governments to share evidence and promising models, while remaining attentive to critiques of approaches that substitute revenue-sharing for restitution and rights implementation.

Exploring Protection of Indigenous Intellectual Property

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples have inherent rights to their Traditional Knowledge and cultural expressions. The Council will explore mechanisms to support the protection and promotion of Indigenous intellectual property by convening legal scholars, cultural heritage experts, and Indigenous practitioners, and by examining potential models for Indigenous-led support services that respect Indigenous data sovereignty and community protocols.

Our Path Forward

Throughout our engagements, we were encouraged to “push the boundaries of what is thinkable.” The Council accepts this challenge. Our work will remain firmly grounded in our legislated mandate and Indigenous governance principles, while embracing the bold vision that Survivors, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, communities, and experts have called for.

We also recognize who is not yet fully reflected in this first report: Survivors whose Voices we have not heard directly, Indigenous youth, and individuals and communities in rural and remote regions. Over the coming year, the Council will explore how best to deepen these relationships, including with Indigenous organizations, provincial, territorial, and federal governments, and sectors of society in Canada. The Council will then bring these perspectives more fully into its monitoring, engagement, and reporting work.

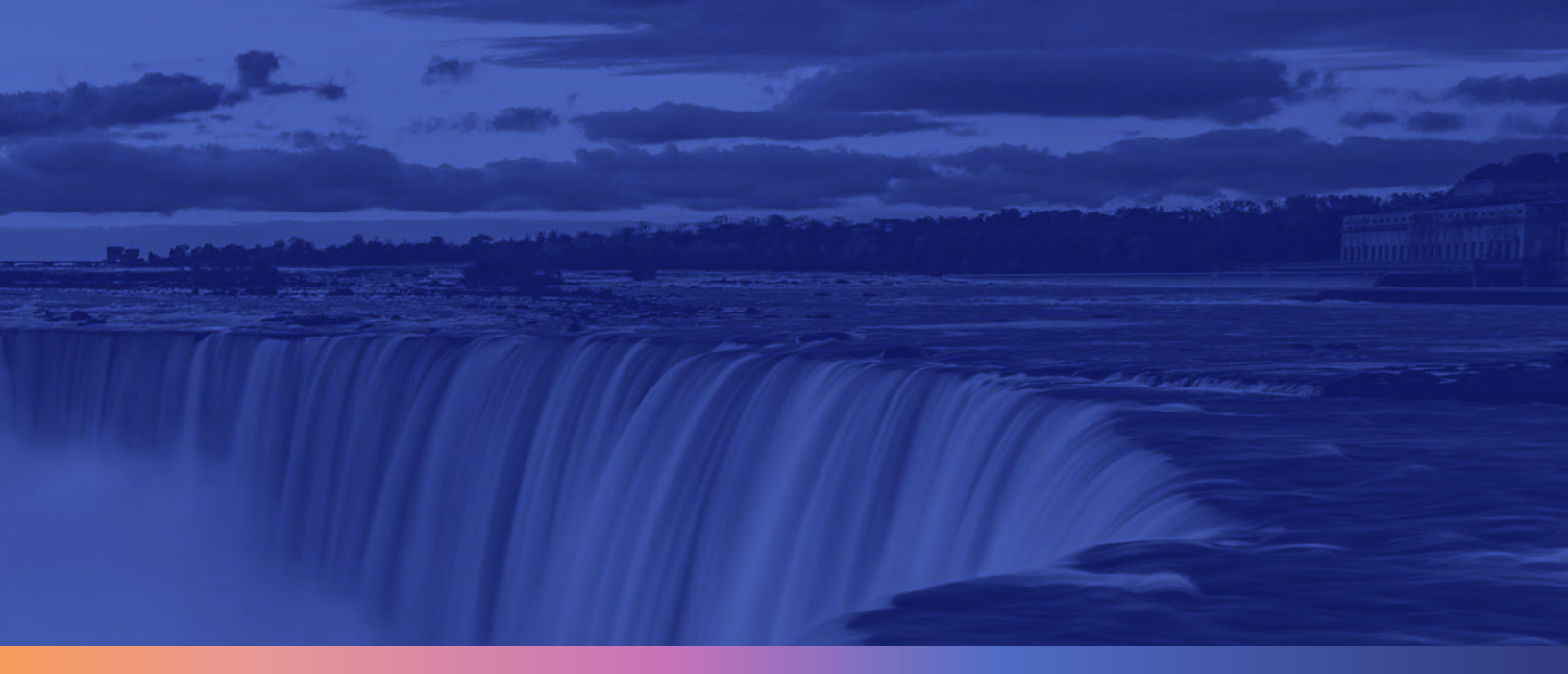
As an independent, permanent, Indigenous-governed organization, the Council will continue to monitor, evaluate, convene, report, and advocate, guided by its mandate and accountability to Survivors and to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. We look forward to the Prime Minister’s response to this report and will closely monitor progress on its commitments.



Appendix

Timeline for the Establishment of the National Council for Reconciliation

2008–2015	The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada holds national events and gathers more than 6,500 testimonies from Survivors and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. Its Final Report, released in December 2015, presents 94 Calls to Action, including Calls 53–56, calling for a permanent, Indigenous-led national reconciliation monitoring body.
December 2017	The Prime Minister announces the Interim Board to advise on the design and establishment of the National Council for Reconciliation.
June 2018	The Interim Board delivers its Final Report, articulating core design principles: independence, endowment-based funding, national scope, a focus on monitoring and reporting, and Indigenous-led governance.
December 2021	An Indigenous-led Transitional Committee for the Council is established to bridge the Interim Board's design work into legislation and ensure Indigenous leadership in the Council's establishment.
June 2022	Bill C-29, <i>An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation</i> is introduced in Parliament and undergoes extensive review and amendment.



April 30, 2024	<i>The National Council for Reconciliation Act</i> receives Royal Assent, fulfilling the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action 53.
July 2, 2024	<i>The National Council for Reconciliation Act</i> comes into force. The Council gains its full legal mandate.
March 3, 2025	The Council is incorporated under the <i>Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act</i> . The Inaugural Board of Directors is appointed jointly by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the Transitional Committee.
March–April 2026	Interviews are conducted with 20 expert Indigenous and settler scholars from across the country.
April 21, 2026	The first Federal Convening Circle is held with Deputy Ministers and senior officials from 16 federal departments and agencies, co-hosted by the Council and CIRNAC.
June 30, 2026	The Inaugural Annual Report of the Council is submitted to Parliament pursuant to Section 16.1 of the <i>National Council for Reconciliation Act</i> .



National Council
for Reconciliation

