



Recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day- June 21, 2021

Valerie Jefferd, NNPBC Indigenous Director & NP Councillor

On June 21st we celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada because it is the summer solstice, the day with the longest light, and it holds special significance for many Indigenous people. This day gives us an opportunity to acknowledge and show our respect for the diversity, vibrant culture, traditions, history and unique contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Canada's Indigenous people have and continue to shape life across our country, from coast to coast to coast. Settlers occupy traditional territories, Indigenous words, games and inventions are used as part of everyday life and traditional Indigenous ways of being are slowly being incorporated into healing practices.

While today we celebrate, we also acknowledge that there is more work we must do in order to progress towards true reconciliation. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond in her [In Plain Sight](#) report explicitly articulated acts of engrained and systemic racism against Indigenous peoples in the BC health care system. This racism negatively impacts the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and our communities. The recent discovery of the unmarked graves in Kamloops, BC, Brandon, MB and Lestock, SK underscores the extent to which systemic racism and colonization have profoundly and negatively impacted Indigenous peoples. While this has been a sad discovery, it is not shocking. We know the impact of Canada's residential school system has caused trauma, pain, and death for an unthinkable number of people, and has impacted subsequent generations as well. Canada's history of colonization, residential schools and racism must be acknowledged in order for us to heal.

It is also imperative that Canada continue to implement the calls to action laid out by the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry](#), and to act upon the recommendations found in the In Plain Sight report. We must also always remember that reconciliation is not a single end point, but rather an ongoing and sustained practice.

Today I recognize all of Canada's Indigenous peoples for your strength, resolve, compassion, and enduring leadership. May we celebrate your contributions not just on this day, but every day.

Valerie Jefferd, NNPBC Board Indigenous Director & NP Indigenous Councillor