

Indigenous People's Day and History Month – June 2021

Today is National Indigenous Peoples Day! To mark this important day, and all of this National Indigenous History Month, and to celebrate the many strengths, victories, and teachings of Indigenous communities in Toronto, today and from history, we have pulled together some ways to participate.

Below you will find events to celebrate, including sunrise ceremonies, wonderful stories, showcases of Indigenous cultures and exciting opportunities to learn more and get involved. There are also some difficult pieces, reminders, and teachings from centuries of devastating racism and colonialism perpetrated by non-Indigenous, settler communities in all eras up to today. The TAEH believes it is important to think more deeply about our own roles as organizations and individuals in both the past and the work to acknowledge and address this legacy today.

You'll find the resources below, but first a reminder of **two actions that TAEH partners can take with us now:**

1 – As noted at the June Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum, we will add a **new standing item to the beginning of each agenda to learn more about Indigenous experience in Toronto.**

We are hoping that many of you will suggest topics for us to explore, telling us what you would like to know more about – this can be about the Indigenous experience of housing and homelessness, or about history, policy and advocacy issues, culture, or digging more into the land we are all sharing. In this way too we are trying to go beyond land acknowledgement, important as it is of course, to create other ways to meaningfully learn and understand more and be part of working towards reconciliation.

Please email me directly at kira@taeh.ca through mid-August with your ideas. We will start with the September agenda, and I will remind you from time to time over the summer as well.

2 – Take the time to **learn more about cultural safety** in serving Indigenous peoples and communities with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC)'s **free online Indigenous Cultural Safety Training.** While this training was originally developed to support a culturally safe 2021 Street Needs Assessment, it is valuable training for all staff working in the homelessness sector and supports our collective commitment around reconciliation and addressing Indigenous homelessness.

The training can be found on the [SNA website](#) (under the Training & Resources tab) and will be **available free of charge until March 1, 2022.** It is approximately 70 minutes and is broken down into five chapters to allow staff to complete at a time that works best for them. The training has been designed to help better understand the lived experience of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Toronto and has a variety of components and features stories from Indigenous people with lived experience of homelessness.

Celebrate National Indigenous People's Day today!

Here are some ways to participate in this special day:

Sunrise ceremonies:

Summer Solstice – the longest day of the year (this year falling on June 20th) –coincides with National Indigenous People's Day. While traditions vary from nation-to-nation, Summer Solstice is a time when many cultures celebrate the beginning of summer. For many First Nations communities, giving thanks

for all of creation and [Mino Baamodziwin \(The Good life\) along with Mishoom Giizis, \(Granfather Sun\) is honoured, celebrated, and feasted.](#)

Join the Toronto virtual event to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, coinciding with a Sunrise Ceremony led by Elders Jimmy Dick and Marie Gaudet. Log on starting at 5:30 am on Monday, June 21 here. It will also be available afterwards for on-demand viewing any time. It will honour Indigenous traditions and culture, while providing an opportunity for community healing, including:

- A virtual tour of the Sunrise Ceremony space, guided by Elders Jimmy Dick and Marie Gaudet who explain the importance of the ceremony and its traditions.
- Song from hand drummer Folashade Kortee
- A message from Chief R. Stacey Laforme of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Greetings from Mayor John Tory

Watch the [Aboriginal Peoples Television Network's Indigenous Day Live](#), which will be livestreamed on June 20 from 8pm – 11:30 pm Eastern Time and streamed again on June 21.

Participate in the [Summer Solstice Indigenous Festival](#) (SSIF) - a multi-disciplinary arts festival that brings together Indigenous artists, performers, educators, students, and community members to share knowledge and celebrate Canada's diverse Indigenous cultures.

Arts and Culture



This wonderful new book was released recently. It is a collection of perspectives by and about Indigenous Toronto, past, present, and future. Get your copy ASAP – at the Toronto Public Library – or local bookstore.

From 12-1pm on June 24th, the Toronto Public Library is hosting a free [special panel discussion](#), gathering contributors to the book. Chef Johl Whiteduck, visual artist Philip Cote, author/playwright Drew Hayden Taylor and creative director/arts presenter Denise Bolduc discuss the cultural continuity and settler colonialism that have come to define Toronto as a significant cultural hub.

See [this list for more great books](#), including novels, poetry, graphic novels, and memoirs, written by Indigenous authors.

Other ways to explore the diversity of Indigenous arts and culture include:

- The [National Film Board of Canada](#) offers a rich online collection of Indigenous-made films through [Indigenous Cinema](#), a website that provides free streaming of more than 200 film titles.
- [Toronto History Museums](#) are offering digital programming on Indigenous histories, cuisine, arts, and perspectives in collaboration with community partners
- While the Tkaronto Music Festival happened on May 21 – 23 2021, you can [watch their recorded livestream](#) now and listen to some incredible music by Indigenous artists from around the world.

Interested in food? Watch Chef Joseph Shawana share his journey through food, some Indigenous stories around food and the importance of agricultural sustainability and the Three Sisters while making a meal over an open fire from his home in Manitoulin Island – [Have You Met the Three Sisters? Indigenous Food Stories with Chef Joseph Shawana](#).

Buy Indigenous. Support Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses. One great place is the [Summer Solstice Indigenous Marketplace](#). You can also explore the [Indigenous Business Directory](#).

Learn More

To Learn more about Indigenous organizations, events and research visit the [Tkaronto Indigenous Portal](#).

Explore Anishnawbe Health Toronto’s great collection of resources on a number of [traditional teachings](#) including The Four Sacred Medicines, Traditional Healing and Approaching a Traditional Healer, Elder or Medicine Person.

The [Toronto Aboriginal Services Support Council](#) (TASSC) has a wealth of resources in areas of policy, research and advocacy, including critical reports that teach us about the history, current realities and solutions to Indigenous homelessness and an excellent [fact sheet on Indigenous Homelessness in Toronto](#).

Other recent resources on homelessness and Indigenous experiences, from a variety of sources, are:

- [Fostering Indigenous Best Practices Towards a Wholistic Systems Approach to Homelessness](#)
- [A National Study of Indigenous Youth Homelessness in Canada](#)
- [Understanding Homelessness for Urban Indigenous Families](#)
- [Revisioning Coordinated Access: Fostering Indigenous Best Practices & Approaches to Homelessness](#)

A different way to learn about Toronto’s colonial history is watching the 30min film [By These Presents: “Purchasing” Toronto](#). It is an absurdist examination of the Toronto ‘Purchase’, a controversial treaty between the British and Mississaugas covering much of modern-day Toronto. Organized in three acts, **By These Presents** uses dance, large-scale puppetry, and humour to chronicle the opening chapter of the city’s colonial history. It’s great.

If you really want to dig deep, try the **University of Alberta’s 12-lesson, free, Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) [Indigenous Canada](#) from the Faculty of Native Studies** that explores Indigenous histories and contemporary issues in Canada. From an Indigenous perspective, this course explores key issues facing Indigenous peoples today from a historical and critical perspective highlighting national and local Indigenous-settler relations. Topics for the 12 lessons include the fur trade and other exchange relationships, land claims and environmental impacts, legal systems and rights, political conflicts and alliances, Indigenous political activism, and contemporary Indigenous life, art, and its expressions

And, you can attend a meeting of the City of Toronto’s [Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee](#). Established by City Council in 2019, this advisory committee provides advice to City Council through the Executive Committee or other appropriate Council Committee. [The Committee's Terms of Reference](#) set out its mandate to provide advice to City Council on the elimination of barriers faced by Indigenous

peoples, including barriers related to City By-laws, policies, programs, and service delivery; act as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to the participation of Indigenous peoples in public life; and advancing the achievement of social, cultural, economic, and spiritual well-being of Indigenous peoples. It is open to the public and a great way to learn more about current issues facing Toronto's Indigenous communities.

RECONCILIATION

Explore how to be active in your personal, and community's, path towards reconciliation, by checking out the [Settler's Take Action](#) website, hosted by the On Canada Project. They start from the awareness that non-Indigenous people who live in Canada benefit from the colonialism that happened here and that that means we are all responsible for our personal role in reconciliation. The site has many different kinds of resources, including [a free guide on getting started](#).

Reading for Reconciliation

The Toronto Public Library offers a [Reading for Reconciliation Booklist](#). The list has books on topics like colonialism and Indian Residential School legacy. As they say, "the titles are a testament to the power of the human spirit and the resiliency of Indigenous peoples, and our collective journey towards hope, healing, and reconciliation."

See too the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including its volume on the terrible legacy of [Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials](#). The Commission called for specific action in 2009, including forensic archaeology investigations on residential school sites.

One thing we can all do in this pointed moment of grief and anger is actively support these calls – see this [petition to the Government of Canada](#) that is easily signed on line for example.

To learn more about Canada's (lack of) progress on implementing all the TRC's Calls To Action, see the [Calls to Action Accountability: A 2020 Status Update on Reconciliation](#) by the [Yellowhead Institute](#). The Institute is a First Nation-led research centre based in the Faculty of Arts at Ryerson University. Privileging First Nation philosophy and rooted in community networks, Yellowhead is focused on policies related to land and governance. The Institute offers critical and accessible resources for communities in their pursuit of self-determination. It also aims to foster education and dialogue on First Nation governance across fields of study, between the University and the wider community, and among Indigenous peoples and Canadians.

Read [Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report of the National Inquiry in Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#). This report reveals that persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations, and abuses are the root cause behind Canada's staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. It calls for transformative legal and social changes to resolve the crisis that has devastated Indigenous communities across the country. The website includes many different [excellent ways to learn more and take action](#).

If you prefer webinar discussions, watch the recording of [Naagan ge bezhig emkwaan / A Dish with One Spoon Reconsidered](#), presented by the Toronto Public Library. Long before Europeans arrived, the Anishinaabe occupied territory which includes parts of present-day Ontario, Michigan, and Ohio. The resources found there are integral to their way of life and identity. The Anishinaabe defended this

territory, and its integrity was at the core of the peace they concluded in Montreal in 1701, a key element of which was the Naagan ge bezhig , or Dish with One spoon. Recently, however, the Dish with One Spoon has been popularized as an agreement to protect the environment. Researchers Victor Lytwyn and Dean Jacobs provide a history and overview of the Dish with One Spoon from an Anishinaabe perspective, while explaining how its incorporation into "land recognition statements" is damaging to First Nations who seek to protect their territories and resources.