VIRTUAL NORTH AMERICAN STUDENT CONGRESS 2027

Who Carries Culture Forward?

Indigenous Cultural Values in Canada



Youth language immersion camp · Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey

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RESEARCH LENS

- Geopolitics & International Order
- Defence & Arctic Security
- Democratic Institutions & Foreign Influence
- Government Relations & Public Policy

Political analysis grounded in international relations and public policy, applied here to Indigenous cultural sovereignty

Question: To what extent do the Canadian government and society cherish and promote the cultural values of its Indigenous peoples?



Government

Recognition backed by resources and Indigenous decision-making



Society

Cultural expression and respect within everyday institutions

Assessment framework for this presentation. First Nations, Inuit and Métis priorities and experiences differ.

A History of State Control

Residential schooling disrupted the relationship between generations

1831

An early residential school

Mohawk Institute opens in Brantford, Ontario

1920

Compulsory attendance

Federal policy compels attendance for ages 7–15

1996

The last school closes

The last residential school closes in Saskatchewan

Selected milestones: NCTR, Residential School Timeline; Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, History of Residential Schools

Canada’s Commitments

Legal commitments create a basis for accountability

Implementation must be assessed in community experience

2015

TRC Calls to Action

Language rights and community-led revitalization

2019

Indigenous Languages Act

Recognition of rights related to Indigenous languages

2021

UN Declaration Act

A federal framework for implementing the Declaration

TRC (2015), Calls 13–15; Indigenous Languages Act (2019), s. 6; UN Declaration Act (2021), ss. 4–6

Public Support Has Results & Limits

Reported learners of B.C. First Nations languages



Regional reported learner counts, not a fluency measure or a national estimate

TANGIBLE PROGRESS

Community work and public investment expanded learning opportunities

A CONTINUING LIMIT

Demand exceeds the federal First Nations language funding model's resources

Sources: FPCC, 2022 fact sheet (published 2023); Canadian Heritage, First Nations language funding guidelines (October 2026)

Engagement Has Limits

Confederation of Tomorrow · 2025 survey of Canadian adults

68%

say individuals have a role in reconciliation

21%

feel very familiar with residential school history

Reconciliation attitudes offer context; they do not directly measure cultural respect.

Source: Environics Institute and partners (2025), printed pp. 8–11; n = 5,391; fieldwork May 1–June 16, 2025

Indigenous Voices in Public Culture



Source: APTN, March 30, 2026. Promotional artwork: Acting Good in Anishinaabemowin, APTN

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Indigenous languages

APTN’s free online content includes Inuktitut and Michif.

Space for contemporary stories and language learning.

Respect Must Reach Daily Life

Reported unfair treatment, racism or discrimination from a health professional in the previous 12 months



Culture also belongs in care

Traditional medicines and healing are priorities identified by many First Nations, Métis and Inuit respondents.

2024 survey, ages 15+. Low cumulative response increases risk of bias; use estimates cautiously.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Health Care Access and Experiences (2024), Chart 2; Indigenous health and reconciliation (2025)

Meaningful Support, Uneven Fulfilment

GOVERNMENT

Legal recognition and funded programs create genuine opportunities.

Resources do not meet all demand.

SOCIETY

Cultural platforms and engagement coexist with uneven knowledge and reported discrimination.

The continuing test: sustained support that Indigenous communities can direct

Synthesis of the evidence presented. Examples illustrate particular settings, not every community's experience.

Sources

NCTR and Indigenous Peoples Atlas

Residential school history and timeline

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Calls to Action (2015), especially 13–17 and 22

Indigenous Languages Act (2019)

Sections 6–8: language rights and support

UN Declaration and Canada’s 2021 Act

Cultural rights; implementing Act, ss. 4–6

First Peoples’ Cultural Council

2022 language status report fact sheet

Canadian Heritage

First Nations language funding guidelines, 2026

Environics Institute and partners

Reconciliation survey, 2025; printed pp. 8–11

APTN

Free Indigenous-language online content, 2026

Statistics Canada

2024 healthcare experiences, Chart 2

Statistics Canada

Traditional healing and reconciliation, 2025

Visuals: Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey; APTN; Lucide icons (ISC). Full source and asset links are in the notes.

Further reading

01 Taiaiake Alfred
Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto

02 Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald M. Derrickson
Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call

03 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
Calls to Action, especially 13–17

04 First Peoples' Cultural Council
Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages (2022)

05 John Inazu
Learning to Disagree (2024)

Selected readings from the congress agenda, with additional evidence on language transmission

Thank you

For the Next Generation

“right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage”
UN Declaration · Article 31(1)



Photograph: Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey