

# What does it mean to be a settler on Indigenous land?

JUNE IS NATIONAL INDIGENOUS HISTORY MONTH IN CANADA

While we should continuously be having conversations about what solidarity with Indigenous peoples looks like, we are highlighting that *especially* this month at CCNCTO

Indigenous people  
原住民

yuán zhù mǐn    jūn4 zyu6 man4  
Mandarin            Cantonese

To examine our relationship to these lands and Indigenous peoples, we (as non-Indigenous folks) need to understand our identity as settlers



SETTLER:



A settler is someone who lives in Canada and does not identify as Indigenous

Settler  
定居者

dìng jū zhě    ding6 geoi1 ze2  
Mandarin            Cantonese

For those in our community who identify as people of colour/racialized folks, it's important to recognize that our racial background does **not** mean we are exempt from also being settlers (i.e. we are still settlers)



By immigrating and settling here, we continue to “benefit daily from settler-colonialism”<sup>1</sup>



**Content warning:** The following sections will include discussion of violence, abuse, and death impacting Indigenous folks. This history is important for us as settlers to learn, but we urge folks to practice self-care as they read through the materials

1. Tan, 2021



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# Canada's History with Settler Colonialism

## Colonization

殖民化  
殖民化

zhí mǐn huà  
Mandarin

zik6 man4 faa3  
Cantonese

Canada as a nation exists because of

- 1) colonization
- 2) ongoing settler colonialism

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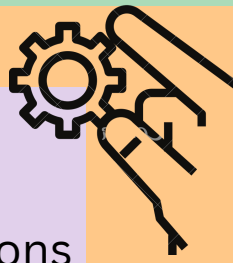
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## Colonization:

The process of establishing dominance and control through dispossession, violence, and other means

- Oftentimes the goal of colonization is to better control a population and/or land
- Dominance can also be embedded into systems and institutions (ex. government, laws, policies) to establish racial, economic, political, etc control



## Settler colonialism:

An ongoing process of dispossession, violence, dominance, and control that enables non-Indigenous folks, known as settlers, to live on (and occupy) Indigenous lands<sup>2</sup>

- A central part of settler colonialism is that it is **ongoing**
- The purpose of settler colonialism is to replace an existing Indigenous population and permanently occupy Indigenous lands<sup>3</sup>

2. Eidinger and York-Bertram, n.d.

3. Ibid.



# How has colonization and settler colonialism impacted Indigenous peoples in Canada?

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\*\*Just a note that Indigenous peoples are NOT 'Canada's Indigenous people's' – they lived on this land long before Canada (as a country) was formed\*\*

As part of the settler colonial project, the Canadian government relied on residential schools to “destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples [into the nation,] so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples”<sup>4</sup>

### Residential school

寄宿学校

寄宿學校

jì sù xué xiào    gei3 suk1 hok6 haau6  
Mandarin                      Cantonese

- Over 150,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families from 1863–1996 to attend these schools (run by the Catholic church). Many youth in these schools experienced physical and sexual abuse, and/or death
- These schools forced Indigenous children apart from their families, communities, and traditional lands, with the purpose of destroying Indigenous cultures and languages



Destruction extended beyond culture and language and included inflicting physical harm onto children at schools (for more look into unmarked graves at residential schools)

- **Destruction was also felt in communities, where the impact of removing children from their homes was felt**



While the last residential school in Canada closed in 1996, the Canadian government has continued and attempted to use dispossession of land, violence, dominance, and control to harm Indigenous communities

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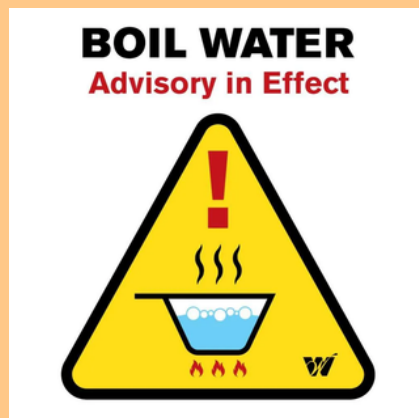


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There are too many ways in which this has occurred, so we encourage folks to continue their education by looking into:

- The Sixties Scoop
- Bans on Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices
- The impact of the Child Welfare System on Indigenous youth
- Every Child Matters/Orange Shirt Day
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Indigenous access to and treatment in healthcare
- Boil water advisories in Indigenous communities



## Child Welfare System

兒童福利制度  
儿童福利制度

ér tóng fú lì  
zhì dù  
Mandarin

yi4 tung4 fuk1 lei6  
zai3 dou6  
Cantonese



It is important to remember that throughout the history of (and in present-day) Canada, Indigenous peoples have continued to resist colonial violence and fight for self-determination



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- Self-determination: the rights of Indigenous peoples to “autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs”<sup>5</sup>

**But why is it important for non-Indigenous settlers to understand these histories and continued injustices?**



As racialized settlers in Canada, “[m]any of us have familial or ancestral histories of being harmed by colonialism and/or imperialism in our home countries”<sup>6</sup>

- For example, many countries in Asia and the Global South have been impacted by war, worsened economic conditions, political instability, etc that countries in the Global North (including Canada, the US, England, etc) have economically/politically benefited from
  - These push factors (a result of colonialism and/or imperialism) may have impacted our (or our family’s) immigration, bringing us to Canada



**Many of us have not been educated about Canada’s colonial past (and present) because this isn’t taught in mainstream schooling**

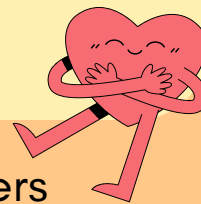


5. Siyám, 2021

6. Tan, 2021

# But, we *also* came to Canada for a better life

While colonialism and/or imperialism could have impacted why we came to Canada, many of our community members continue to assert that Canada is *better* than [insert country], so we should be happy and are lucky to be here



- For example, many of our community members continue to be concerned and fearful about ongoing issues in their homelands
- But “[w]ithout invalidating the genuine concerns and fears that diasporas in Canada may have for their homelands, these comparisons are unhelpful in facing the reality of violence against Indigenous and Black people on this land. Racialized immigrants **can and should be** concerned about injustices in Canada as much as injustices in their countries of origin”<sup>7</sup>



**We continue to benefit from and contribute to settler colonialism just by the fact that we continue to live in Canada. But we further harm Indigenous folks when we remain ignorant of the past and present**



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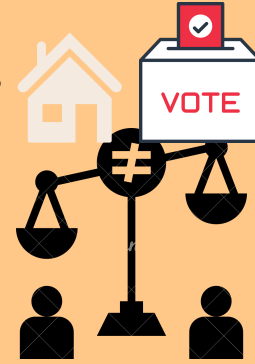


7. Ibid. (emphasis added)

# But I *also* experience discrimination and oppression

Another comment we hear often from racialized settlers is that we *also* experience discrimination and oppression

- We know that early Chinese immigrants in particular were subject to extremely discriminatory immigration, housing, voting, etc laws
- We also know that today many of our community members are unfairly impacted by immigration laws, disproportionately represented in low-income and precarious frontline work, experience significant language and cultural barriers to accessing public services and programs, and face systemic racism in many other aspects of their lives



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While we aim to support and advocate alongside Chinese community members to promote equity for those most marginalized (and we encourage allies to do the same), we also have a duty (and should **want**) to support and advocate alongside Indigenous folks to stand up against injustice and empower **ALL**



# But I am *proud* to be Canadian

Again, many of our community members are also *proud* to be Canadian, feeling a “[s]ense of loyalty, duty, and gratitude to Canada”<sup>8</sup>

## But to that we ask:<sup>9</sup>

- Should gratitude “shield us from understanding why the atrocities towards Indigenous communities in Canada end up ignored[?]”
- Should we witness injustice and continue to act “as if it is not our business[?]”
- At what point is it our responsibility to act? (it definitely is our responsibility, as we live on Indigenous lands)

**Again, our argument is that we should stand up against injustice and empower ALL! Our solidarity is not finite (limited) - we can stand in solidarity and support all who are marginalized and require allies in this work!**

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8. Ibid.

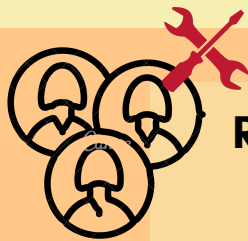
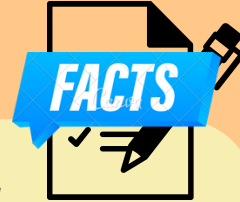
9. Ibid.



# What does this mean for me as a settler?

Beginning in 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed to work in partnership with Indigenous communities to document facts about the residential school system

- A final report titled *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* was released in 2015, with [94 Calls to Action](#) to improve conditions for Indigenous folks and create a stronger foundation for reconciliation



**Reconciliation involves repairing relationships between institutions, settlers, and Indigenous communities (which requires a lot of work being done by institutions and settlers to repair harm)**

**While all of the Calls to Action should be implemented, Call to Action #93 specifically applies to our work at CCNCTO**

Call to Action #93 is for newcomers to Canada, calling for education for newcomers about the history, experiences, and rights of Indigenous peoples, as well as the impacts of colonization and residential schools



# Demanding Justice and Accountability

The point of learning is not to feel guilty (our feelings should **and do not** outweigh injustices occurring)

- Instead, we must act in solidarity with Indigenous peoples by educating ourselves, using our voices to call in other non-Indigenous settlers, amplifying Indigenous voices (in social media, community groups, politics, etc), and **showing up** (whether that be to rallies, meetings, consultations, community events, etc)
- This includes using our voices to **demand** Calls to Action be implemented (as our government has not enacted many of the 94 calls)



## What does this mean for CCNCTO?

At CCNCTO we are committed to continuing to call our community members in. We will be building on some of our work from previous years to urge our Chinese Canadian community members to join us as we unpack, unlearn, educate, and transform our attitudes and thought processes

- We urge community members to question how we benefit from settler colonialism, how we can organize alongside Indigenous communities, and what it means and how it looks for us to stand in solidarity
- Learning (and unlearning) Indigenous histories and experiences is our responsibility. By taking on this work, we ensure that when we **do** show up for Indigenous folks, we can show up in ways that are uplifting and empowering

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# What Else Can I Do?



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Stay in touch with CCNCTO through **WeChat** or follow us on Instagram @**CCNCTO**

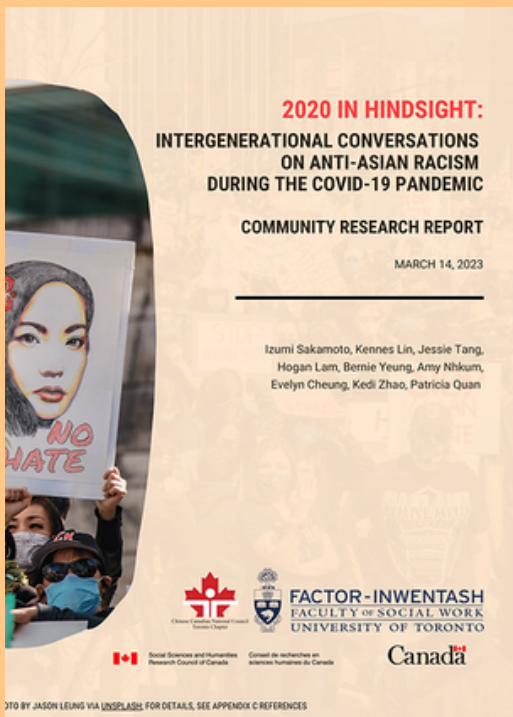
Check out our most recent '**2020 in Hindsight: Intergenerational Conversations on Anti-Asian Racism during the COVID-19 Pandemic**' report!

To get involved in any of our work, subscribe to our newsletter

[www.ccnctoronto.ca/  
monthlynewsletter](http://www.ccnctoronto.ca/monthlynewsletter)



- **Talk** to others in your social circles about Indigenous histories and issues
- **Share** this **information** with others
- **Engage** with local community members and organizations to advocate for change



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