

Reconciliation is a process

BY TIFFANY MILLER

I AM A person of Metis and mixed European ancestry. At Confederation College, I am an Indigenous library liaison at the Paterson Library and an instructor in the Aboriginal Community Advocacy Program.

The first federal Truth and Reconciliation Day has just passed, on Sept. 30, and some people will not think about truth and reconciliation or the 94 calls to action again until next year. But every day, Indigenous people are aware that in the last seven years only 13 of the 94 calls to action have been completed. Additionally, of the 71 that remain: 29 are in progress, 32 are in the proposal phase and 20 have not been started.

Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, many political and educational organizations have started the process of “decolonizing.” To understand “decolonization” you must first understand that the land we know as Canada was formed by colonialism.

The Oxford dictionary defines colonialism as “a policy or practice of acquiring full or partial control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it.” By that definition, decolonizing would mean returning the land to First Nations to govern, giving them self-determination over their culture, economy and government and I do not see that mentioned in anyone’s decolonization strategies.

Regardless of what the colonial structures are doing or not doing, each one of us has the power to create change and reconciliation, starting with the relationships and conversations we have in our homes, workplace and community.

One person alone may not be able to make large sociological shifts in ideology or mobilize the

*We should all do our part
in the journey of decolonization*



ONE CITY,
MANY VOICES

The Thunder Bay’s Anti-Racism and Respect Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

government to end the 45 long-term drinking water advisories that are still in effect in 35 communities, but you can start healing our community one day and one person at a time.

It starts with relationship building, creating a community of support, listening with an open mind and heart, and having a respectful curiosity.

Own your ignorance and be open to learn. We can educate ourselves and lead efforts to educate others by investigating with positive intentions. Have the humility and courage to stumble along the way.

Make safe spaces for people to heal and grow. Make efforts to ensure that everyone is included and there is equitable representation.

Understand that your Indigenous coworkers are grieving every time there is another news story. Give them the space and resources to take care of themselves.

Don’t be afraid to ask Indigenous people questions. (Learn how offering tobacco respects cus-

toms when seeking insight.)

Allow Indigenous voices to lead the conversation, and stand beside First Nations people in urging government to take action. By participating in meaningful allyship, we can and speak truth to power.

We can support our friends and coworkers in exercising their agency, fighting for their rights, position and place.

We can take leadership in planning truth and reconciliation activities, honouring residential school survivors and speaking out against injustices in our spaces and communities.

I feel like the biggest barrier that keeps people from starting this process is fear of making a mistake or “doing it wrong,” but I would argue that there is no “right way.”

Reconciliation is a process not a destination.

The only thing that we can do wrong is to do nothing.

As my favourite sociology researcher Brene Brown says: “Nobody is safe until we are all safe.”

While I work through the uncomfortable of stepping out of my own comfort zone, breaking trail and creating a spaces where everyone has the same consideration and opportunities, I will continue to “be awkward, brave and kind.”

I hope you will join me.

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