



Reconciliation in Action: An Analysis of Canadian National Healing Forests

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Introduction

Background:

The residential school system in Canada was a government policy, run by the church, focused on the assimilation of Indigenous children into dominant culture. A strained relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities is a result of this legacy.

Terms:

Indigenous refers to a community of people whose cultures and languages are shaped by a connection to a specific land-base, and who inhabited these homelands since time immemorial.

Reconciliation, as defined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, focuses on the necessity for renewed or respected ties between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples .

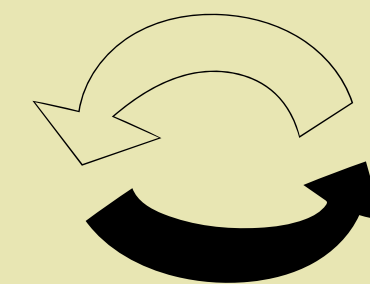
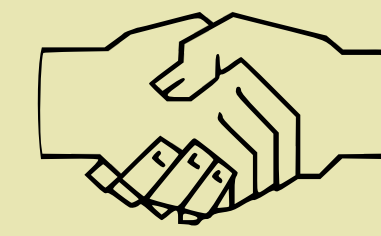
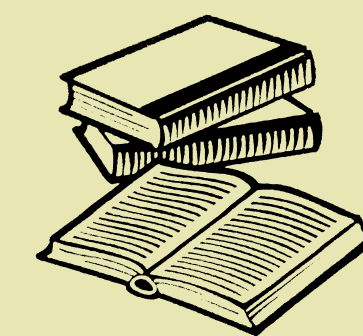
Research Objectives:

This thesis explores the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada through an analysis of the National Healing Forest initiative, which aims to facilitate reconciliation through partnership, community and nature. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on definitions and methods for reconciliation.

Literature Review

Reconciliation Framework :

Indigenous scholars (Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby 2019; Calrke, 2015) have outlined three key elements that are crucial to the reconciliation process **awareness, relationship, & restitution.**



Collaboration Theory :

It is believed that collaboration can be an **action to change behaviour** that will **contribute to reconciliation.**



Empowerment Theory:

Empowerment refers to collaborative action to **improve the quality of life** in a community and the linkages between communities at the community level.



Nature as Healing :

The physical and mental **health benefits** of **forests** are significant. Many Asian cultures have practiced “forest bathing” for centuries due to these benefits The health benefits of forests is a key feature of the National Healing Forests initiative to bring healing to the nation.

What is the NHF initiative?

The aim for the initiative, which started in 2015, is to establish a **network** of Healing Forests across Canada where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, can **come together** to **reflect, heal** and **participate** in ceremony to better understand the legacy of the **Residential School system**, moving forward in a positive way.

Methods

To establish the impacts of the NHF initiative, a content analysis of online media coverage on the initiative was compared to the frameworks, theories and models of reconciliation and relevant theories.

Thematic analysis

Finding themes from the literature that contribute to reconciliation

Media content analysis

Inductive & deductive coding from social media, websites and 28 online news articles

Framework analysis

Looking for similarities and differences in both sets of qualitative data

Results

Relationship	Awareness	Resurgence
Building better relationships (14 articles)	Learning/Listening (22 articles)	Indigenous Tradition (16 articles)
Respect (10 articles)	Students (13 articles)	Healing from nature (14 articles)
Community action (10 articles)	Raising awareness (7 articles)	Ceremony/ smudging (14 articles)
Collaboration (8 articles)	Reflection (6 articles)	Community connection (10 articles)
Memorial (8 articles)	Discussion/ Conversation (6 articles)	Indigenous medicine/plants (9 articles)
Long term commitment (6 articles)	Legacy (4 articles)	Indigenous art (7 articles)
Equality (4 articles)		

Discussion

The significant themes that arose from the relevant media content on the National Healing Forest initiative align with the framework of reconciliation based on three prominent themes and supported by relevant theories. The initiative reaches many levels of involvement from different sectors of Canadian government and institutions, with citizens and community action being the focal point. The decentralization of power, community action and healing in nature are the most important contributions from the initiative to reconciliation in action.

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