



## **CPSA Reconciliation Committee's Statement and Briefing Note on Genocide on the Anniversary of the December 15, 2015 Release of the TRC's Final Report**

The Reconciliation Committee of the Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) issues the following statement and briefing note on the anniversary of the December 15, 2015 release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report. In what follows, we recognize the expansiveness of genocide against Indigenous Peoples in what is now Canada, and call on the discipline of Canadian political science to incorporate the study of genocide against Indigenous Peoples into the full range of activities conducted by the CPSA membership.

Since 1912, the CPSA has promoted, developed, and facilitated the study of government and politics in Canada and internationally. The Association represents political scientists from across the country, as well as many graduate student and associate members. As part of our commitment to reconciliation, we recognize that genocide has been committed against Indigenous Peoples by the Canadian settler state and has been perpetrated by provincial and federal levels of government. The discipline of Canadian Political Science has also been complicit in legitimating and ignoring colonialism and ignoring its genocidal impacts, and we commit to turning away from that legacy and toward a scholarship of justice and injustice in relation to the state and Indigenous peoples.

We recognize that Canada remains a settler colonial state, in which Indigenous Peoples and their rights to self-determine their own futures continue to be subject to government and settler resistance, definition, and approval. We further recognize institutional continuity in the current incarnations of state institutions, churches, political parties, and other state partners which instigated and maintained policies of genocide. These entities continue to operate, often according to procedures and goals which differ little from the past.

In part, genocide is about the attempted destruction of, and continued assault on, legal, political, and social institutions. As political scientists, we possess unique training, skills, insights, and tools with which to expose, nuance, challenge, and destabilize the ways Canadian orders of government and their institutions have set out to destroy Indigenous societies and institutions in service of building a settler state.

In addition to this, the discipline of political science has long made important interventions into both *what is*, but also *what ought to be*. The members of the CPSA are uniquely positioned to take up research, teaching, and service with the aim of building or thinking through decolonial futures that are not rooted to ongoing violence and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples. We are also able to consider the illegitimacy of the state in its colonial context and in relation to Indigenous land and political claims against the state, something the political elites have been unable to do.

This committee calls on Canadian political science faculty, students, and others in our field to recognize the genocide of Indigenous Peoples in and beyond the Indian Residential School, Day School and Industrial School systems as a key focus of research, teaching, service and reflection. We reiterate our earlier statement acknowledging the struggles of First Nation, Inuit and Métis survivors of residential schools and survivors of other coercive Canadian institutions that have been deployed to eliminate Indigeneity (released on [September 30, 2021](#)). Those institutions pursued genocide.

## **CPSA Reconciliation Committee's Briefing Note on Genocide**

In international law, genocide is defined in Article II of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (hereafter the Genocide Convention).

Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group is considered genocide:

- (a) Killing members of the group
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

The Reconciliation Committee recognizes genocide and genocidal processes that stretch beyond the Indian Residential School, Day School, and Industrial School systems. Below we lay out a non-exhaustive list of examples that demand sustained research and teaching attention.

Our recognition of genocide is consistent with the *Final Report* of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), which details “the application of genocide in both legal and in social terms, and as it persists today.”<sup>i</sup> We recognize that the state continues to interfere with Indigenous governments, legal systems, and ways of living, and that Indigenous societies are not in control of their lands, which the state now claims.

The committee identifies a double standard in government behaviour concerning official genocide recognition. The federal and various provincial governments have officially recognized eight genocides: the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust (Shoah) (including Jewish, Roma and Sinti victims), the Ukrainian famine genocide (Holodomor), the Rwandan genocide, the Srebrenica massacres, the mass killing of the Yazidi people, the mass murder of the Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar, and the current genocide of China's Muslim Uyghur populations. Consistent with these precedents, we call on both orders of government in Canada to recognize the genocidal Indian Residential Schools as violations of the Genocide Convention.

We recognize that the Genocide Convention is not a perfect legal instrument. It was the result of political compromises, in which almost the whole section on cultural genocide as a key type of genocide was nearly removed in its entirety. Some colonial governments and settler states were themselves complicit in genocide during the drafting and passage of the Genocide Convention.

Within political science, there have been calls to expand the definition of genocide to better encompass the ongoing effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples. The call to expand our understanding and to combine legal and sociological understandings of genocide is supported

by the work of Canada's 2019 Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place*.

There are numerous genocidal actions and processes that CPSA members cannot avoid. These stretch across themes of territorial destruction and dispossession; continuing forcible separation of children from their families and homelands; gender-based violence, and the continuation of systemic racism across Canada. Taking up the expansive nature of genocide in Canada is necessary to hear the truth that must precede reconciliation. Examples of genocide and genocidal processes requiring sustained research and teaching attention include, but are not limited to:

- Deliberate killing of Mi'kmaq peoples during the eighteenth century;
- The use of starvation tactics to force Indigenous Peoples onto small "reserves", and to incentivize compliance from reserve residents; confinement under police and military control on reserves, from which they could not travel, and on which they could not make a living;
- The enforcement of control by Indian Agents and ministers of the federal government over the selection and terms of on-reserve leaders, eventually codified in the *Indian Act*;
- The wars and terror tactics used to eliminate and disperse the Métis from their homeland starting in 1869/70; the refusal by each order of government to hold responsibility for Métis people, creating an accountability and jurisdictional vacuum;
- Use of expansionist and exploitative logics to destroy animals, plants, waters, and lands within an imposed capitalist economic framework;
- The deliberate and targeted destruction of animals (like the buffalo) which provided not only food, shelter, clothing, and tools, but were also essential members of Indigenous nations as persons and protectors;
- The forced relocation of Inuit families and communities to fates of isolation and starvation. This included the mass slaughter of their dogs to ensure they could not travel and could not hunt. The ethnic cleansing of portions of the Arctic of their Indigenous inhabitants;
- Forced removal of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children from their families and placement in non-Indigenous adoptive and foster homes, in what is called the Sixties Scoop; we also note that the numbers of Indigenous children presently in provincial non-Indigenous foster care exceed the numbers of those formerly incarcerated in residential schools;
- The gender-based genocidal targeting of Indigenous women and girls, as well as gender diverse and sexually diverse peoples. Women have been systematically stripped of their traditional power, authority, roles and support mechanisms;
- The sexualized, racialized violence against Indigenous women and girls that has erased and marred the lives of many, and enumerated in the MMIWG Inquiry which concludes that genocide has and continues to occur, directed at Indigenous women and girls;
- Forced sterilization of Indigenous women and girls through racist medical practices in some provinces, communities and hospitals;

- The past and present state theft of Indigenous territories;
- Evasion of responsibility for land theft by the state, which continues to offer inadequate redress through governance, treaty and land claims processes, while the lands and resources are exploited by corporate and state actors;
- The refusal of successive provincial and federal governments to halt pipeline development in certain territories, despite the lack of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) by Indigenous people responsible for those territories, a right asserted in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Taking up any one of these, or the multitude of other examples, within one's research, teaching, and/or service allows the discipline of Canadian political science to respond to the generations of professors who used their talents to either build/maintain or train those who built/maintained policies, programs, or institutions that committed genocide against Indigenous Peoples.

The above realizes the promise this committee made in its [September 30, 2021](#) statement on the inaugural National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. Here we explicitly recognize the expansiveness of Canada's genocidal treatment of Indigenous Peoples.

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<sup>i</sup> Reclaiming Power and Place: the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Vol 1a. Canada, 2019. Web Archive. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <[www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028038/](http://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028038/)>. p 52-53.

### **Media Contact**

The following colleagues are available for interviews on this or other matters relating to reconciliation. Contact the [CPSA Secretariat](#) for professor Joyce Green's phone number.

#### [Joyce Green](#)

Professor Emerita, Politics and International Studies – Regina

#### [Gordon Christie](#)

Professor – UBC

#### [Veldon Coburn](#)

Assistant Professor – Ottawa

#### [Matthew James](#)

Associate Professor – Victoria

#### [David B. MacDonald](#)

Professor – Guelph