



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.”¹ 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 Metis 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.

ⁱ 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/>. p 52-53.