

What Reconciliation Means to Me

Healing, Understanding, and Building Bridges

Reconciliation is more than just a word; it is a profound act of coming together to address past wrongs towards Indigenous peoples and move forward in a spirit of mutual respect, understanding, and healing. It involves seeing the truth of history, acknowledging the pain and suffering endured by others, and committing to actions that foster trust and unity. To me, reconciliation is both personal and communal—a journey that calls for introspection, empathy, and collective effort.

Understanding the Past

Reconciliation begins with understanding—the willingness to delve into the history of colonization and the treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada. It includes uncovering truths that have often been hidden or ignored. It requires recognizing the inequities, injustices, and traumas that have shaped the lives of individuals and communities. For me, this process is deeply humbling. Learning about the experiences and history of Canada's Indigenous peoples, reveals the resilience and courage they have demonstrated in the face of adversity. It also forces me to confront my own biases and privileges, propelling me to become an ally for change.

Acknowledging Pain and Seeking Forgiveness

Acknowledgment is a critical step in reconciliation. It means affirming the validity of others' pain and suffering and demonstrating genuine remorse for the harm caused. Forgiveness, however, is not a given; it must be earned through sincere efforts to make amends. To me, reconciliation is not about erasing the memory of wrongs but about creating a space where healing can begin. It's about saying, "I see you, I hear you, and I honor your truth."

Building Bridges Through Dialogue

One of the most powerful tools for reconciliation is dialogue. Constructive conversations allow individuals and groups to express their perspectives, share their stories, and find common ground. For me, listening is as important as speaking. It's showing up – walks, marches, powwows are wonderful opportunities. It's about creating a safe space where people can open their hearts without fear of judgment or dismissal. I love being part of Conversation Circles - learned from my Indigenous sisters. Dialogue fosters understanding and trust and paves the way for meaningful connections, turning differences into opportunities for growth.

Commitment to Justice and Equity

Reconciliation is incomplete without action. It requires a steadfast commitment to justice, equity, and systemic transformation. This means advocating for policies and practices that address historical wrongs and reduce disparities. For me, reconciliation is about standing up against discrimination, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring everyone has access to opportunities for success. It's about dismantling structures that

perpetuate inequality and replacing them with systems rooted in fairness and compassion. It is wonderful to see Manitoba, where I live, now has an Indigenous Premier, and many Indigenous people are part of his Cabinet. Structures are beginning to change - health care, services for children, educational and employment opportunities etc. are accommodating to meet the needs of the Indigenous community, but much more is needed.

Personal Reflection and Growth

On a personal level, reconciliation challenges me to grow—to examine my own role in perpetuating or combating injustices. It asks me to be accountable for my actions and to continuously strive to be better. This process of reflection is not always comfortable, but it is necessary for meaningful change. Reconciliation pushes me to be more empathetic, patient, and open-minded, fostering relationships built on trust and respect.

Healing as a Community

Reconciliation is not a solitary endeavor; it is a collective journey. Healing as a community involves coming together to celebrate shared humanity and to mourn shared losses. Being part of the MMIWG2S support community has filled me with respect and appreciation for the tragedy that continues to this day. It's about standing in solidarity with those who are hurting and working together to create a more inclusive and harmonious society. For me, reconciliation is about fostering a sense of belonging—a reminder that every individual has inherent value and deserves dignity.

A Vision for the Future

Ultimately, reconciliation for me is about envisioning and striving for a future with our Indigenous brothers and sisters where harmony, respect, and understanding prevail. It's about cultivating a world where the scars of the past do not dictate the possibilities of the future. To me, reconciliation means planting seeds of hope and nurturing them through acts of kindness, courage, and perseverance. It's about leaving a legacy of unity for generations to come. Focusing on youth and education is a good start - as Murray Sinclair said, "Education got us into this mess; education will get us out."

Conclusion

Reconciliation is a process on many levels- one that demands truth, acknowledgment, dialogue, action, and healing. It inspires both personal transformation and communal progress, shining a light on the path toward equity and justice. To me, reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters is not just a goal but a continuous journey, a way of life that calls us to live with empathy and purpose. It is an invitation to bridge divides, honor shared humanity, and create a world where all can thrive - together.

- Mary Scott

