



## FACTUM

### Canadians Agree (77%) There Should Be a National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Residential Schools, but Split on Removing Statues (52%)

Six in Ten (62%) Say They Know More about Residential Schools Now than Before the Discovery of the Unmarked Burial Site

**Toronto, ON, June 9th, 2021** – The discovery of 215 unmarked graves at a former residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia, has shone a spotlight on the legacy of residential schools and has thrust conversations about reconciliation to the forefront. A new Ipsos poll conducted for Global News has found that most (77%) Canadians believe there should be a national day of remembrance for the victims.

The legacy of residential schools and the path of truth and reconciliation in Canada has been a subject of political discourse for many years, but recent events have caused nearly two thirds (62%) of Canadians to agree that they know more now about the residential school system than they did before the discovery of the unmarked burial site. However, whether awareness will translate into action remains to be seen. One potential action that some have been advocating for is removing statues of architects of the residential school system, but Canadians are split on the idea with half (52%) in favour, and half (48%) against.

#### *Kamloops Discovery a Shock for 80% of Canadians*

The discovery of 215 bodies in unmarked graves in Kamloops has been a revelation for many Canadians. Nearly all (89%) say they have seen, read, or heard anything (43% a lot, 34% something, 12% not too much) about the Kamloops finding, and 80% agree that they were shocked by the uncovering of the burial sites at the former residential school. Quebecers are more likely than any other region to say they were shocked by the Kamloops discovery (92% vs. 80% ATL, 79% ON, 74% SK/MB, 70% BC, 70% AB).

Despite conversations about Truth and Reconciliation swirling in the political realm for years, it seems this discovery might have made the legacy of Indian residential schools feel more tangible for many: six in ten (63%) agree that the Kamloops discovery changed their view of Indian Residential Schools. Not only do Canadians indicate that they know more, but there appears to be more political will- 77% agree there should be a national day of remembrance for residential school victims, including missing indigenous children.

#### *Canadians Agree Government and Church Have Responsibilities in Reconciliation*

Beyond the tragic nature of finding 215 deceased children, much discussion has surrounded how to move forward, who should bear responsibility for searching for more unmarked burial sites, and how to atone for the legacy of residential schools. A majority of respondents feel that *both* government and religion play a part in this: 87% of Canadians agree that the Federal government should assist in searching the grounds of other former residential schools to determine whether there are more unmarked burial sites. The exact same proportion (87%) agree the Catholic Church and religious organizations that ran residential schools need to play a bigger role in reconciliation. Furthermore,



## FACTUM

eight in ten (81%) agree that the Federal government must act now to help raise the quality of life of Canada's aboriginal people, a 6-point increase from 2020, and up 18 points from 2013.

The role of the private sector might also be a factor in reconciliation as 65% agree Canadian businesses need to play a bigger role in reconciliation. Notably, indigenous respondents indicate that the private sector has a part to play: 54% of indigenous respondents say that they 'strongly agree' that businesses need to play a bigger role in reconciliation (vs. 20% non-indigenous). Additionally, Quebecers (81% vs. 64% ATL, 64% BC, 59% ON, 57% AB, 57% SK/MB) and Gen Z (78% vs. 71% Millennial, 63% Gen X, 58% Boomer) are more likely to agree that the private sector has a role to play in reconciliation. Whether a role in reconciliation lay with businesses, government, or the church, Canadians appear pessimistic that progress will be made quickly: 68% agree that real reconciliation with indigenous peoples will *not* be achieved in their lifetime.

### *Canadians Divided on Whether Indigenous Peoples Are Treated Well by Canadian Government*

Despite the strong agreement that the federal government should be involved moving forward, Canadians are divided on whether the treatment of indigenous peoples until now has been adequate and whether the Prime Minister has kept his promises.

While half of respondents (54%) agree that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has kept his promise to build better relationships with Canada's indigenous peoples, there is even less consensus on whether indigenous peoples are treated well by the Canadian government.

When asked in 2013 during the Idle No More movement which saw Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence on hunger strike, 62% of Canadians agreed that indigenous Canadians were treated well. This metric has only declined since. When asked in February 2020 during the rail blockades in support of the Wet'suwet'en Nation's opposition to the Coastal GasLink pipeline, 55% agreed that indigenous peoples are treated well by the government. Presently, less than half (46%) of Canadians agree that Canada's indigenous peoples are treated well by the Canadian government, marking a 16-point decline in 8 years. Importantly, indigenous respondents are significantly more likely to *strongly disagree* that indigenous peoples are treated well by the Canadian government: (34% indigenous vs. 17% non-indigenous).

### *Many Never Learned About Residential Schools in Their Education*

But how much of this sentiment is driven by what is learned about the Indian residential school system in Canadians' education? Two thirds of respondents (68%) say they never learned about residential schools between kindergarten and the end of secondary school, significantly higher among boomers (85% vs. 73% Gen X, 54% Millennial, 34% Gen Z). However, indigenous respondents are significantly more likely to say they *learned a lot* about residential schools in their K-12 education (23% vs. 9% non-indigenous).

Whether Canada's youth will be more educated on the subject of the Indian residential school system remains unclear for many. Only 34% of Canadians believe children today are taught a lot or a little about residential schools in their primary/secondary education (kindergarten through to the end



## FACTUM

of secondary school). A quarter believe that residential schools are not part of the current curriculum (23%), while four in ten (43%) aren't sure what is taught in today's schools.

### *Canadians Divided on How to Handle Legacy of Founders Who Created Residential School System*

Despite nearly unanimous shock and sadness being evoked in the aftermath of the Kamloops finding, when it comes to the legacy of Canada's founding fathers- many of whom were architects of the residential school system- Canadians show less uniformity in their opinions.

Taking a broad lens: 54% of Canadians agree that we should remove all statues of historical figures who are deemed to have perpetuated racism, a 15-point increase from September 2020 when the same question was asked in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Considering the legacy of historic leaders who were architects of the residential school system, Canadians are divided on how to handle statues of these persons, or buildings named for them: 52% agree that statues of leaders who planned the residential school system should be removed, while 56% agree buildings for these persons should be renamed. However, that leaves nearly half of Canadians who *disagree* with each statement, suggesting that while Canadians agree that an unmarked burial site of children is a tragedy, reckoning with the legacy of our leaders who contributed to residential schools may be a more complex discussion.

A prime example of this conflict arises in the case of Sir John A Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister and a key architect in the creation of the residential school system. Six in ten (59%) agree that Macdonald's legacy as Canada's founding PM outweighs his role in the creation of residential schools. However, nearly half (46%) agree that statues and buildings bearing Sir John's likeness or name should be removed, due to his involvement in residential schools.

While Canadians appear unsure how to handle the legacy of our founding fathers, more consensus arises when considering protestors who are defacing statues. Only a third (33%) support protestors who are removing or defacing statues of historical figures who they deem to have perpetuated racism. However, the data show support for protestors is strengthening over time as this metric has increased 7 points since being asked in September 2020 pertaining to the Black Lives Matter movement.

It is important to note that indigenous Canadians show less ambivalence on this subject- respondents who self identify as indigenous are significantly more likely to *strongly agree* with removing statues and supporting protestors:

- 37% *strongly agree* statues of historic leaders who were architects of the residential school system should be removed (vs. 17% non-indigenous)
- 32% *strongly agree* places and buildings named after historic leaders who were architects of the residential school system should be renamed (vs. 18% non-indigenous)
- 29% *strongly agree* statues of and buildings named for Sir John A Macdonald should be removed due to his legacy in creating residential schools (vs. 15% non-indigenous)
- 27% *strongly agree* they support protestors who are removing or defacing statues of historical figures who they deem to have perpetuated racism (vs. 11% non-indigenous)



## FACTUM

### About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between June 4-6, 2021, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,001 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online. The sample comprised of n=47 respondents who identify as Indigenous Canadians. Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

### For more information on this news release, please contact:

Darrell Bricker  
CEO, Ipsos Global Public Affairs  
+1 416 324 2001  
[Darrell.Bricker@ipsos.com](mailto:Darrell.Bricker@ipsos.com)

### About Ipsos

Ipsos is the world's third largest market research company, present in 90 markets and employing more than 18,000 people.

Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP

[www.ipsos.com](http://www.ipsos.com)