

NATIONAL HEALING FORESTS INITIATIVE

BC Parks Conference
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Our Motivation (Yours?)





Marieval Cowessess Indian Residential School in Elcapo Creek Valley, Saskatchewan, n.d./ St. Boniface Historical Society Archives, 0001/SHSB 1461

A Brief History of Residential School

- ▶ Purpose: learn English, read the bible and convert to Christianity
- *Constitution Act, 1867 (aka BNA)* - government responsibility over 'Indians'
- *Indian Act, 1876* - education
- Remove children from cultural and family influence

Residential School Objectives

- ▶ Assimilation into white society
- ▶ End the “Indian Problem”

The Goal of Residential School

“We instil in them a pronounced distaste for the native life so that they will be humiliated when reminded of their origin. When they graduate from our institutions, the children have lost everything Native except their blood.”

- Bishop ^(St.) Vital Grandin, 1875



Walk for Reconciliation May 31, 2015

Prior to release of TRC
Report

94 Calls to Action

Murray Sinclair

- ▶ “Reconciliation is not an Indigenous problem: it is a *Canadian* one.”
- ▶ “We are all treaty people”

National Healing Forests

Create outdoor, green spaces for reconciliation, partnerships, building community and connecting people to nature.



Planning and Partnership in Developing a Healing Forest - Community Level

- ▶ Communities
 - ▶ People
 - ▶ Grassroots
 - ▶ You
- ▶ Indigenous partners are a core requirement
 - ▶ First Nation, Metis, Inuit

Core Steps to Creating a Healing Forest

- ▶ Assemble a small group of like-minded, caring people
- ▶ Partner with an Indigenous community within the traditional territory where your Healing Forest will be located
- ▶ Meet as necessary to create a vision for your Healing Forest
- ▶ Find a suitable location and engage the owners or managers of that land
 - ▶ E.g., if a city park, obtain permission from city council
- ▶ Gather community interest in the healing forest and express why the project is important for reconciliation
- ▶ Hold a ceremony to dedicate the Healing Forest space
- ▶ Consider using established graphic signifying a Healing Forest

Healing Forest Possibilities

- Outdoor gathering place - Elder teaching, sharing
- Walking trails and native species
- Tree planting or use of sacred medicines
- Garden memorials with names
- Children's honoring park
- Limitless possibilities - imagination!

Healing Forest Projects and Progress



Scotchfort Reserve, PEI



Perth, Ontario



Winnipeg, Manitoba



Winnipeg Healing Forest



Photo Winnipeg Free Press



Photo Winnipeg Healing Forest Facebook

Fitch Bay, Quebec



Riverside Public School, Cape Breton Knowledge Path and Healing Forest



St. Matts United Church, Toronto



Progress to date

- ▶ Now 18 Healing Forests in Canada - 30+ more being planned - All unique and community-developed
- ▶ Thesis done on Healing Forest
- ▶ **Royal Canadian Geographic Society** is using the Healing Forest to teach about reconciliation (teaching module available)
- ▶ **David Suzuki Foundation** is partnering with the National Healing Forests initiative - funds for community Healing Forest
- ▶ **Network of Nature** now a partner to help share news and identify funding options

Cost of a Healing Forest?

- ▶ Extremely variable - all depends on the vision of the community
- ▶ All Saints Anglican Church, Ottawa - \$5,000
- ▶ Riverside Public School, Cape Breton - \$100,000
- ▶ Fitch Bay, Quebec (private land) - \$1000
- ▶ Each Healing Forest is unique - there is no one model, size or design.

Some Key Challenges?

- ▶ **Gaining trust and cooperation** of appropriate Indigenous people (s) or organizations - takes patience and respect, but this, too, is part of reconciliation
- ▶ **Funding** - always a challenge; sources do exist at many governance levels and through foundations.
- ▶ **Momentum** - relationship-building takes time and patience. Successful Healing Forest champions keep going because the purpose, vision and motivation drivers are strong
- ▶ **Relationship-building with Indigenous communities** may take a year or more - take the time to develop organically

Logo (created by Marcoon Design)



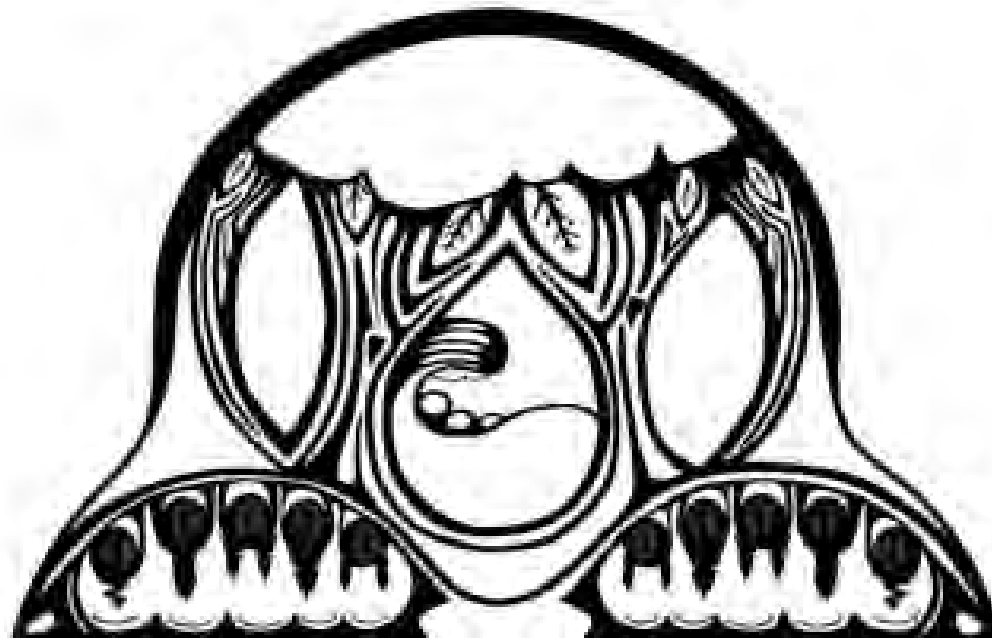
Partnership & Reconciliation

- Develop a Healing Forest as you wish as long as its in the spirit of Reconciliation and Respect
- The creation of a Healing Forest in partnership builds long-term friendships, respect, community understanding
- When you create a project, please share the news on our website! NationalHealingForests.ca

Our invitation to you: create your own Healing Forest to aid in reconciliation and healing across Canada, and expand the Healing Forest community.

At the same time:

- connect people to nature
- address climate change
- respect two ways of knowing
- build community



NationalHealingForests.com

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