



September 30th, 2025

Re: Embark's Board of Directors Recognizes and Affirms Truth & Reconciliation Day

Content Warning/Trigger Warning: *systemic racism, intergenerational trauma, colonialism, residential schools.*

Embark Sustainability Society wholeheartedly acknowledges that our organization is situated and operates on the stolen and unceded lands of the qí'cəy' (Katzie), Kwantlen, kwikwəłwəm (Kwkwetlem), Qayqayt, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Semiahmoo, Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Tsawwassen and səliłilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As an independent student society operating on Simon Fraser University, we are cognizant that universities are products of settler colonial states and thus exist at the expense of First Nations who have the rights to this land and to self-governance. Educational institutions in so-called Canada were established to uphold and privilege eurocentric perspectives and values while erasing Indigenous knowledge systems. Embark not only affirms the Indigenous right to self-determination and sovereignty over their lands on Turtle Island and globally, but also believes that we have a collective responsibility to join this struggle beyond solidarity statements in order to materialize Truth and Reconciliation.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, on September 30th, recognizes the intergenerational trauma and ongoing impacts of The Residential School System on Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island. This day coincides with Orange Shirt Day, founded by Phyllis Webstad, a member of the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation and part of the Northern Secwépemc (Shuswap) Peoples. On her first day at St. Joseph Mission Residential School, Phyllis' orange shirt, gifted by her grandmother, was taken away from her on the first day of school, an act that symbolizes the eradication of Indigenous culture, identity, and belonging. Her story, and the message "*Every Child Matters*" reminds us that what occurred cannot be minimized or misrepresented as "assimilation". It was and continues to be genocide: children were separated from their families, neglected, starved, experimented on, subjected to abuse and sexual violence, punished for speaking their native language and practicing their traditions. Many never returned home and remained buried in unmarked graves. Read more about Phyllis Webstad's story [here](#).

Truth and Reconciliation is not only about acknowledging this painful history; we must also confront the ongoing realities of colonialism today (land dispossession, birth alerts, millennial scoop, etc.). Reconciliation cannot be reduced to a word revisited once a year as a "reminder". To reconcile is to address, hold accountable, and dismantle the violence and



systemic harms Indigenous Peoples continue to endure, which are rooted in settler colonialism and white supremacy. Indigenous Peoples disproportionately experience racial profiling and police brutality, while government inaction continues to fuel the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirited People+ (MMIWG2S+). These inequities also manifest as limited access to culturally safe healthcare, underfunded education systems, inadequate childcare and housing, and precarious/discriminatory employment—factors that sustain the cycle of intergenerational harm.

As an organization committed to food justice and climate equity, we recognize that food insecurity and environmental racism are part of the harm experienced by Indigenous Peoples. In so-called Canada, “between 24-60% of First Nations experience food insecurity, which is three to five times higher than the general Canadian population”, which also leads to severe and long-lasting health consequences at much higher rates (Assembly of First Nations, 2019). These inequities are rooted in the effects of colonization: land dispossession, the erasure of knowledge regarding traditional food systems and agricultural practices through residential schools and policies like the Indian Act passed in 1876, and unaddressed systemic socio-economic barriers as prior mentioned.

Indigenous land theft persists in so-called Canada through corporate exploitation and complicit legal systems. Rather than seeking consent and building relationships of cooperation, corporations and governments displace Indigenous land protectors with force – extracting resources and destroying ecosystems that are vital to Indigenous ways of life, stewardship, and food sovereignty.

Reconciliation requires that we uphold Indigenous rights to self-governance and decision-making. We must actively examine the systems and structures around us that perpetuate inequities, and work to dismantle them. We must also amplify accountability and practice transparency. As settlers and as an independent student society, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves and make efforts to learn the truth about the violence that occurred at these schools and the violence that continues to occur on Turtle Island and beyond. We affirm our commitment to:

- Support Indigenous-led solutions that foster healing, justice, self-determination, and anti-oppression;
- Assert Indigenous People(s) inherent right(s) and title(s) to the land, as well as the right to self-determination in all forms;
- Support [Indigenous-Led Control of Indigenous Education](#)
- Ensuring Indigenous students’ voices are amplified by providing holistic and ongoing support throughout their academic journeys; and



- Acknowledging the disproportionate impacts of the ongoing climate crisis and environmental genocide on Indigenous Peoples' ability to uphold their rights and responsibilities to the land.
- Support the implementation of the [94 Calls to Action](#) resulting from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

In Solidarity,

Embark Sustainability Society Board & Staff

Learn more about Truth & Reconciliation, Indigenous communities, and other reflective pieces:

- Find out what Indigenous lands you occupy: native-land.ca
- [Orange Shirt Day – Phyllis Webstad's story](#)
- [Impact of government policies on Indigenous communities | Sixties Scoop](#)
- [Educational pieces: The Scream by Kent Monkman](#)
- [Addressing Indigenous racism and discrimination in B.C. Health care](#)
- [Timeline of the canadian residential school system and their lasting effects](#)
- [The dark history of Canada's Food Guide: How experiments on Indigenous children shaped nutrition policy](#)
- [Lunch and Learn webinars](#) throughout the National Week of Truth and Reconciliation
- Namwayut—We Are All One: A Pathway to Reconciliation by Chief Dr. Robert Joseph: published book traces Robert Joseph's journey as a residential school survivor to becoming a leading voice in peace building and reconciliation
- Presented by Phyllis Webstad: [A brief history of Canada and the Residential School System imposed on Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#). Timeline from early European contact through to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2010.

Support Indigenous communities at SFU:

- **SFU First Nations, Métis & Inuit Student Association (FNMISA)**
 - Website: <https://fnmisa.ca/>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/sfu.fnmisa/>
- **SFU Indigenous Student Centre**



- Website: <https://www.sfu.ca/students/indigenous.html>
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/sfu_isc/
- **Office for Aboriginal Peoples**
 - Website: <https://www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples.html>

References

Assembly of First Nations. (2019, November 7). *Decade-long, mega-study finds barriers to access to healthy traditional foods are eroding food security for First Nations*. Assembly of First Nations.
<https://afn.ca/all-news/news/decade-long-mega-study-finds-barriers-to-access-to-healthy-traditional-foods-are-eroding-food-security-for-first-nations/>