

VICTORIA URBAN  
RECONCILIATION  
DIALOGUE

# Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue February 28-29 Gathering Report

*Final Report - August 2020*



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue (VURD) Steering Committee would like to acknowledge the traditional territory of the **WSÁNEĆ** peoples on whose land the 2020 Gathering was held.

We also acknowledge all of the Coast Salish Nations in the Greater Victoria area in which we do our work, and the urban Indigenous, Inuit and Métis people who make their homes on these territories.

**We are grateful for the participation of all the individuals who planned, hosted and attended the Gathering. Thank you for sharing your lived experiences and your desire to learn.**

*Your commitment to reconciliation is inspiring and gives up hope for the future!*

Members of the VURD Steering Committee:



Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada

***VURD logo and artwork by Jamin Zuroski.***

*Cover page art – “The mountains symbolize strength, the sun represents light and water represents life and our connection to mother earth.” - Elder Shirley Alphonse*



*Mosaic of the VURD logo using pictures from the Gathering. Digital artwork and event photography by Debbie Douez.*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the 2020 Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue (VURD) Gathering (the Gathering) held on February 28-29 on the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ peoples, in Victoria, British Columbia (B.C.).

VURD is a network of partners interested in advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the area of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The VURD Steering Committee is a collaboration of urban Indigenous organizations, including the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) and Métis Nation of Greater Victoria; three levels of non-Indigenous government (federal, provincial and municipal); and urban Indigenous community members. The 2020 Gathering was the third gathering hosted by VURD and brought forward the findings of the previous two events to seek community feedback and support for VURD's next steps.

The Gathering brought together over 150 people from the Métis Nation, all levels of non-Indigenous governments, the urban Indigenous community, local First Nations, and community-based social service agencies and non-profits including health, the justice and education sectors, financial institutions and arts organizations. The purpose of the event was to:

- Expand the VURD circle by building relationships and sharing experiences
- Learn about what is currently happening with reconciliation in the Victoria area
- Ground-truth the draft *Reconciliation Blueprint* for action in the Victoria area
- Inspire and garner support for the ongoing work of VURD

The event was made up of a variety of offerings, including cultural ceremonies and protocols, a shared feast, arts activities, community mapping, workshops, cultural performances, dialogue circles, and networking/relationship-building.

This report summarizes the key themes and findings that emerged from the event. Overall, participant satisfaction with the event was high, and many participants commented that they found it valuable, enjoyable and inspiring. Participants were very engaged, with some commenting that they would like to dive deeper into the topics in their workshop sessions for additional dialogue. Many participants recognized the event as a good opportunity for learning, relationship-building, ceremony and celebration.

The Gathering confirmed community support for ongoing work by VURD. Participants stressed that work to support reconciliation should be:

- Relationship-based
- Indigenous-led
- Place-based and land-based
- Both systemic and individual
- Long-term
- Collaborative across multiple sectors

## NEXT STEPS FOR VURD

The findings from the Gathering will be used to solidify the *Reconciliation Blueprint* and inform the activities of VURD. Given the limited number of participants at the Gathering and breadth of the Indigenous community, greater engagement of community members is considered a priority moving forward. The following suggestions that emerged from the Gathering highlight potential areas of action that will be considered for inclusion by the VURD Steering Committee:

### ***Enable greater representation for urban Indigenous people:***

Participants stressed that urban Indigenous people should be represented in all levels of the public and private sector. It was frequently stated that the “balance of power” needs to be adjusted so that urban Indigenous people have a meaningful voice and participation in decisions about the community. This will involve changing hiring practices and creating systems with urban Indigenous representation, exploring how to support urban Indigenous self-determination, and transferring funding and control of services to urban Indigenous people.



***Focus on ending racism:*** It was acknowledged that racism is alive and well and continues to be deeply harmful. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have important roles to play in ending racism. Ending racism will require training for non-Indigenous allies, resistance to colonization and oppression, de-centering settler perspectives and approaches, and systems change.

***Centre Indigenous ceremony, arts and culture:*** Participants highlighted the role of ceremony and culture in creating healing and empowerment for Indigenous people, building relationships and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and counteracting the impacts of colonial oppression. Participants suggested that urban spaces for Indigenous ceremonies be established, that occasions for non-Indigenous people to engage in ceremony with Indigenous people are powerful learning opportunities, and that Indigenous languages and arts should be funded, supported and visible.

***Support multiple forms of learning:*** Participants recognized that learning is at the heart of reconciliation. They stressed that learning is needed for all ages and all sectors of society, in schools, universities, workplaces, governments, businesses, and community settings. They did not see learning as being only formal training, such as a course or workshop. Learning can also happen through individual relationships, storytelling, experiences, art, connection with the land, and self-reflection. Learning opportunities should be tailored for non-Indigenous, Indigenous and blended groups and should “meet people where they are” in their learning journey.

***Support increased capacity for reconciliation:*** Participants noted that there are not enough Indigenous people able to participate in the process of truth and reconciliation, and that increasing Indigenous capacity to actively participate includes not just building hard skills but supporting healing work for those still struggling with multi-generational trauma. Non-Indigenous allies need to also

understand this capacity challenge and contribute to reconciliation, and that is why there was also a recommendation from participants for ally-ship training and ally engagement campaigns.

**Promote accountability through monitoring progress on reconciliation:** Participants expressed a desire for governments and organizations to be accountable for their actions and commitments towards reconciliation. The term ‘measurement’ was seen as restrictive, but they valued the idea of an Indigenous-led accountability framework that uses a variety of tools and indicators to assess progress towards reconciliation.

**Honour and recognize the contributions of Indigenous people:** Participants shared the importance of honouring the contributions of Indigenous people, showing gratitude for those who have kept culture and language alive, celebrating Indigenous knowledge, demonstrating respect for Elders and youth, and celebrating successes.

*“My definition of reconciliation ... is making the invisible visible. And I think at this time, everything that’s unfolding is making the invisible – that we as Indigenous people have all seen and known and felt – visible to the rest of this country.”*

–Author Monique Gray Smith



Attendees listen to panel speakers as the event is live-streamed; the recording is available on the VURD Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/victoriaurbanreconciliationdialogue/>

# PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

## *The Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue*

The Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue (VURD) is a network of partners interested in advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the region and surrounding areas of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

VURD was born in 2018 when the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, an Indigenous-run social service agency serving urban Indigenous people, along with partners interested in reconciliation, began a dialogue to discuss common interests and goals. Participants in these initial dialogues represented diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and came from community and three levels of non-Indigenous governments. This group now forms the VURD Steering Committee.

The VURD Steering Committee has hosted three gatherings, each increasing in size and scope. Each gathering invited people across multiple sectors of the community to connect with each other, build new relationships and share their own unique stories and perspectives in relation to reconciliation. These gatherings include:

- November 2018: First VURD Advisory Panel Gathering (40 people)
- February 2019: Second VURD Advisory Panel Gathering (80 people)
- February 2020: Third VURD Advisory Panel & Community Gathering (150+ people)

This report summarizes the 2020 VURD Gathering (the Gathering), including the background of VURD, the happenings at the Gathering, key findings of the dialogues, and suggestions for next steps. Appendix Two shares a summary of how the Gathering was planned and the lessons learned throughout the planning process, providing a roadmap for other communities that may want to host a similar event.

Reports from the 2018 and 2019 events can be found on the VURD website:  
[www.thedialoguevictoria.ca](http://www.thedialoguevictoria.ca)

## *The Opportunity for VURD*

VURD arose in response to the unique history and context of urban Indigenous people living in the Greater Victoria area.

Victoria is located on Vancouver Island, on the west coast of British Columbia. As the capital of B.C., Victoria is a vibrant community which is home to over 380,000 people. As a province, B.C. is home to a rich diversity of Indigenous peoples, including:

- 203 First Nations whose citizens originate from the area now known as B.C., making up 34 distinct Indigenous language groups, with at least 93 different dialects of those languages,
- Indigenous people of Métis and Inuit heritage and First Nations people from other parts of Canada who have made their homes in B.C., sometimes for many generations.

For many thousands of years, the lands now included in the Victoria region were governed and stewarded by the local First Nations, including the Lekwungen-speaking and SENĆOŦEN-speaking peoples. The Greater Victoria area is highly culturally diverse and is home to approximately 20 unique First Nations. Each Nation has their own cultural practices and ways of being tied to the land they live on. Colonization in B.C. began in the late 1700s with the arrival of European explorers from the coast, and later from the interior. These explorers brought diseases that devastated the Indigenous population. They also brought a racist ideology which viewed Indigenous people as inferior and saw the lands of B.C. as unsettled and free for the taking—despite Great Britain passing legislation known as the Royal Proclamation in 1763 that guaranteed Indigenous people rights to their traditional territories. It was common practice in B.C. for First Nations land to be settled by Europeans without treaties—this land is referred to today as “unceded.”

In the mid-to-late 1800s the jurisdictions of Canada and then British Columbia were formed, and colonization took an increasingly aggressive approach. The end goal was cultural genocide, with the intention to assimilate Indigenous people into Euro-Canadian society and wipe out Indigenous cultures. Indigenous people were relegated to small, mostly remote, reserves and were not allowed to leave without permission from “Indian Agents.” Indigenous children were separated from their families and sent to notorious residential schools, where they were taught not to speak their languages or practice their cultures. Economic, health, educational and other policies were put in place by all levels of government to oppress Indigenous people and destroy their cultures.



Indigenous people have always resisted colonization and fought to maintain their traditional lands and protect their languages and cultures. While the impacts of colonization have been extensive, attempts to assimilate Indigenous people were ultimately unsuccessful.

In the 1950s, changes to the Indian Act finally allowed First Nations people to leave their home reserves. This resulted in a large migration of First Nations people into urban areas, in search of economic and educational opportunities. Residential schools in B.C. remained open until 1984, and when they finally closed this brought more Indigenous people into urban areas. With the lifting of restrictions on movement, Indigenous people coming to live in urban areas found themselves further separated from their lands and cultures.

Although legal restrictions on movement and cultural practices have been loosened with the closing of the residential school system and updates to the Indian Act, colonization has continued into the modern era through racism, systemic inequities and discriminatory policies and practices. Modern day colonization manifests in under-funding for programs and services, exploitation of First Nations natural resources, and racism inherent in government systems such as the child welfare, health, justice and education systems. Racism is also widespread and evident in racial profiling, police brutality and frequent disregard for Indigenous life and lands.



In the 1950s Indigenous people who were migrating into urban areas began developing the Friendship Centre Movement, establishing Indigenous-run grassroots agencies across the country. These new organizations provided urban Indigenous people with a place to reconnect with their culture and to access programming across sectors, including housing, health, education, employment, and other domains. The Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) opened its doors in 1969. It has now been serving the Indigenous community of Victoria for over 50 years. **Victoria is now home to over 17,000 Indigenous people of diverse cultural backgrounds from across Canada. The majority of Indigenous people in Canada now live in urban areas.**

In 2015, after six years of travelling around Canada listening to Indigenous people share their experiences with residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada released its final report and 94 Calls to Action. These Calls to Action touch on virtually all aspects of Canadian society and all sectors of the workforce. The Calls to Action map a path forward to promote reconciliation for past wrongs and a future based on greater equity and mutual respect.

Around the same time, Canada also endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which outlines the inherent rights of Indigenous people that governments and other sectors of society must honour. The provincial government of B.C. has officially endorsed the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP, and in 2019 passed legislation to implement UNDRIP, with the *B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

It is in this dynamic context that VURD emerged in 2018. While avenues existed for local First Nations to engage in reconciliation with the City of Victoria, there were few opportunities for the urban Indigenous population of Greater Victoria to be included in the dialogue about reconciliation. To address this, VNFC, the B.C. Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and other VURD partners interested in promoting reconciliation in an urban context came together to develop a collaborative, relationship-based and mutually-supportive approach to enacting reconciliation in the Victoria region. This led to the formation of the VURD Steering Committee and the delivery of three annual gatherings.



**Collaboration, relationship-building and dialogue is at the heart of VURD.** Ultimately, VURD offers an avenue for a multi-sectoral approach to promoting reconciliation for urban Indigenous peoples. This is important because colonization has been a collaboration between multiple sectors of society to enact an attempted cultural genocide that involved all levels of government, non-governmental partners, and collaboration across systems of education, health care, justice, land and resources, and child and family services. **In order to promote reconciliation and move forward from the damage wreaked by colonialism, the same comprehensive coordination across sectors is now required.** VURD aims to bring together all levels of government, Indigenous agencies and community members to work in partnership to promote reconciliation.

### ***What VURD Does***

VURD creates an opportunity for key players in reconciliation in the Victoria area to build relationships, dialogue and explore solutions about key issues, and develop shared tools and resources. VURD works with the community to examine the meaning and impact of reconciliation for the Victoria region from an urban Indigenous context, with a focus on three key areas:

- Supporting urban Indigenous voices
- Enabling community engagement
- Generating ideas for tangible actions

The VURD Steering Committee is made up of representatives from the following agencies:

- Victoria Native Friendship Centre
- Métis Nation of Greater Victoria
- City of Victoria
- District of Saanich
- Capital Regional District (Victoria Region)
- Indigenous Services Canada (federal government)
- Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (provincial government)
- Indigenous Elder (community member)
- Indigenous artist (community member)
- Indigenous young adult (community member)

### ***About the 2020 VURD Gathering***

The 2020 VURD Community Gathering was held February 28-29 at the Saanich Fairgrounds. Over 150 people attended from the following sectors:

- Neighbourhood reconciliation circles
- Local First Nations
- Policing
- Elders
- Youth
- Community members
- Municipal, provincial and federal governments
- Financial institutions
  - Community-based social service and non-profit agencies, including: Libraries
  - Anti-poverty organizations
  - 2SLGBTQI+ organizations
  - Disability advocacy organizations
  - Immigrant and refugee organizations
  - Arts organizations
  - Environmental organizations
  - Child and family services
  - Faith-based organizations
  - Health
- Post-secondary institutions
- K-12 school districts

The 2020 Gathering was intended to build on what was learned at the previous two gatherings. A draft *Reconciliation Blueprint* was developed by the VURD Steering Committee in response to the findings of the 2018 and 2019 gatherings (see Appendix One).

The *Reconciliation Blueprint* outlines VURD’s shared mission, values, priorities, and potential indicators and approaches of measuring its success. It also identifies specific commitments for VURD to move reconciliation forward in the Victoria area. The Gathering was an opportunity to present the draft *Reconciliation Blueprint* to ensure the input and perspectives of VURD Gathering participants are honoured and accurately represented.

The purpose of the Gathering was to:

- 1. Grow the Circle:** Build and strengthen relationships through networking and shared cultural and educational experiences designed to connect people.
- 2. Learn About Reconciliation:** Grow a shared understanding of what reconciliation means, what people/organizations are doing to advance it, and what else VURD can do to promote moving forward together.
- 3. Co-Create a Blueprint:** Solidify the draft *Reconciliation Blueprint* for the Victoria area, shaped from the knowledge gathered from two previous Advisory Panel Gatherings, in order to bring it for further review at the community level and inform VURD actions.
- 4. Inspire/Garner Support:** Cultivate commitment to the draft *Reconciliation Blueprint* and VURD’s work, through strong communication tools and interactive facilitation.

The Gathering began on the afternoon of Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>. Participants were able to choose from interactive offerings upon arrival. The formal events commenced with opening ceremonies, followed by a feast and cultural presentation, and a discussion panel.

The following day included three workshop blocks, two of which were pre-defined and one in which the topics for discussion were determined by the participants the previous evening. The second day also included two community spotlights that highlighted reconciliation activities occurring in the region. The event concluded with a performance by an Indigenous storyteller and musician, and a closing ceremony. A summary agenda is below, and a full agenda for the event can be found in Appendix Three.

<b>Friday, February 28, 2020</b>	3pm-5pm	Networking & Interactive Happenings
	5pm-6:30pm	Opening Ceremonies and Feast
	6:30-8:30pm	Discussion Panel <i>Moderated by Shelagh Rogers</i>
<b>Saturday, February 29, 2020</b>	9am-2:30pm	Workshops & Engagement Sessions
	2:30pm-5pm	Plenary Presentations & Networking
	5pm-6pm	Closing Ceremonies

It is important to mention that the Gathering was held at a time of intense attention on settler-Indigenous relationships. Members of the Wet’suwet’en Nation, a First Nation in northern British

Columbia, were engaging in direct action to stop a government-approved natural gas pipeline through their territory. Across the country expressions of solidarity through direct action (such as blockades and protest) were occurring. Victoria was a central area of this action, with a diverse group of people, led by Indigenous youth, camping out at the provincial legislature to urge the Province to take action against the pipeline.

The VURD Steering Committee made efforts to include the Indigenous youth leaders, visiting them in person and inviting them to participate or present at the Gathering. The distance between the Gathering and the legislature, about 30 minutes drive from downtown Victoria, made participation a challenge and this offer was not taken up. These events influenced the dialogue of the Gathering and are reflected in some of the findings.

### Unexpected Impacts

The benefits of hosting reconciliation events often go beyond the stated purposes of the Gathering. By dedicating time and resources to host the event “in a good way,” that is tending to the relationships, protocols and relevance of the proceedings, there is a good chance that people and systems will be transformed in the process.

*“The VURD Gathering was an opportunity to listen to Indigenous perspectives and stories and experiences, and to be a witness.”*  
– VURD participant

Below are a few short examples captured by the hosts and facilitators that provide a glimpse into the unintended – but vitally important – impacts of the Gathering:

- A First Nation’s woman commenting that she learned more about the strength and richness of Métis cultural practices.
- An elected representative of a CRD municipality relating that they now realized Urban Indigenous peoples are a unique demographic they can support in reconciliation.
- Participants in VNFC employment training program who worked at the Gathering were exposed to event management, learned new skills, and realized they may want a job in the hospitality industry.
- Deepening partnerships, including: between all the Steering Committee member organizations and representatives; with UVic geography department (map shop and students); between Rainbow Health Cooperative and Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society – through a collaboration for the medicine tent.
- The non-Indigenous facilitators involved in the mapping were able to connect with Indigenous participants, and as a result had the opportunity to participate in Indigenous ceremonies during and outside of the VURD event.



## PART TWO: SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The following section of the report provides a summary record of each of the offerings that occurred at the Gathering. These summaries were compiled based on notes taken at the event and reflections of event facilitators. The key themes of each event were identified based on the dialogue that occurred. These summaries are not meant to be comprehensive records of all the conversations—rather they highlight the key learnings and feedback that emerged.

### *Interactive Happenings*

**Community Mapping Space:** The community mapping space was a drop in area hosted by the University of Victoria that allowed participants to inform the creation of two maps:

- A geographical map of the southern Vancouver Island area which marked spaces where reconciliation is occurring or could be occurring.
- A thematic map of the different activities, agencies, and events and how they contribute to reconciliation in the Victoria area.



**Pop-Up Bookstore by Bruce Parisian Library:** The Library staff and volunteers worked with Munro's Books to offer a selection of Indigenous-authored books, some written by facilitators and guests of the Gathering. Munro's offered the Library 20% of all sales, which amounted to \$500, meaning guests purchased \$2,500 in resources during the event.

**Interactive Indigenous Language Display:** The language display was an interactive display on Indigenous languages in B.C., hosted by the First Peoples' Cultural Council, a B.C. crown corporation that supports the revitalization of Indigenous arts, languages and cultures.

**Art Space:** The art space was a drop-in area that provided two opportunities:

- Cedar Rose Making: Participants were taught how to make cedar roses by Indigenous Elders and volunteers. This was an opportunity to learn a new art form, to interact with other participants and to interact with Elders to learn some of the teachings associated with cedar weaving. Some participants commented that this activity was “rejuvenating” and offered a space to re-charge.
- Mixed Media: In this space participants created spirit stones and made personalized messages on buttons. These activities encouraged relationship building and personal connection amongst participants and also provided participants with a gift to take-away in remembrance of the experience.



## Community Spotlights

### **Greater Victoria SD61, Shelly Niemi, Indigenous Administrator**

This presentation focused on Shelly's personal journey to become the Indigenous Administrator for School District 61. Shelly spoke about her commitment to Indigenous education, her experience working in SD57 in Prince George, and the value of Indigenous leadership in the education system.



### **Indigenous Sport as Catalyst for Reconciliation in B.C., Alex Nelson**

This presentation focused on Elder Alex Nelson's experiences as a leader in the field of Indigenous sports. Alex shared how Indigenous sporting events, such as the North American Indigenous Games, can empower Indigenous people by celebrating Indigenous culture and protocols and promoting healthy activities and Indigenous pride. Alex also highlighted the role that Indigenous sport can play in reconciliation by creating opportunities for cross-cultural relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through volunteerism, sponsorship and partnerships. The presentation demonstrated the increasing awareness and support for Indigenous sport over the last three decades.

## Cultural Activities



Cultural activities and protocols were integrated throughout the Gathering. These events provided an opportunity to create feelings of safety, show respect and inclusion of Indigenous culture, honour the contributions of Indigenous community members, and teach others about Indigenous cultures and hospitality. Over one third of participants commented that the range of cultural events and performances was a highlight of their experience at the Gathering. Cultural activities included:

**Cultural Protocols:** A number of cultural protocols were followed throughout the Gathering:

- Before the event, members of the Steering Committee reached out to the Tsartlip Nation and asked them to provide a traditional Welcome to the Territory. The Nation's youth drum group provided the Welcome also shared a Welcome song and returned to sing at the closing.
- The Gathering began with an opening prayer and ended with a closing prayer, provided by the Elder Advisor to the VURD Steering Committee.
- Tsow-Tun-Le-Lum Society was onsite throughout the Gathering offering Indigenous cultural wellness supports including trauma-informed counselling and cedar brushings, which were available to and accessed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.
- Traditional territory acknowledgements were offered in the workshops and in most cases participants began their sessions by sitting in circle and introducing themselves, including their cultural heritage.
- A variety of Indigenous languages were spoken and cultural practices were shared throughout the event.

**Grand Entry:** The Gathering opened with a Grand Entry in which representatives of the local First Nations communities, special guests, and VURD Steering Committee members entered into the plenary room with flags, regalia and drumming. This cultural practice is not local to this territory but is a borrowed practice from the interior of Canada. This entrance is meant to honour Elders, veterans, the local Nation and the people hosting the gathering.

*“I am grateful for the generosity and spirit of the host and a wonderful sense of community. The event was very thoughtfully produced; the music and performances were wonderful.” – VURD participant*

**Feast:** A cultural feast was shared on the opening night, honouring the strong value placed on sharing food in Indigenous cultures. The feast was catered by a First Nations business and included local and traditional foods. All meals and snacks were provided throughout the remainder of the event, also through local Indigenous caterers, and all food was accessible to everyone including serving staff, the conference team and facilitators.

**Cultural Presentations:** There were a number of cultural presentations, including:

- ANSWER (All Nations Strong Women for Education and Reconciliation): A female drum group
- West Coast Métis Jiggers: A local group of dancers from Métis Nation of Greater Victoria
- Youth drum group from Tsartlip First Nation
- Swil Kanim, a well-known Lummi Nation violinist and storyteller delivered a moving closing to the event, sharing his reflections on the themes of the Gathering and playing the violin. His music and teachings were acknowledged in participant evaluations as “a true gift” and many people were brought to tears during this stirring performance.



## Panel Discussion

The main panel discussion was moderated by acclaimed journalist **Shelagh Rogers**, and included:

- **Monique Gray Smith**, award-winning local Indigenous author and speaker
- **Sherri Bell**, President of Camosun College
- **Lisa Helps**, Mayor of the City of Victoria
- **Ry Moran**, Director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

A video of the full panel discussion is available on the [VURD Facebook page](#).



Some key themes that emerged from the panel discussion included:

***The power and importance of ceremony:*** Ceremony, Indigenous protocols, and cultural practices are essential to moving reconciliation forward in a good way. Even more so in gatherings that bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Ceremony helps ground us, and shows us the inherent beauty, value, sacredness, and specialness of ourselves, our places, and our communities. Ceremony is particularly important to ground and prepare people to have difficult conversations and speak from the heart. As Mayor Lisa Helps said, “Ceremony makes people behave better.”

*“Reconciliation is not dead. Reconciliation can’t die so long as there’s one last person in this country that is refusing to lose their language, refusing to accept Canadian history as it has been presented, who refuses to let colonization succeed.”*  
– Ry Moran, panel member

***Storytelling is vital to truth and reconciliation:*** The stories of Indigenous people, particularly survivors of residential schools, are the most powerful means to teach people the truth needed to enable reconciliation. These stories must be told to non-Indigenous Canadians again and again. These stories are vital to establish an emotional connection to the injustices and atrocities faced by Indigenous peoples, and this emotional connection is essential to learning and understanding. In-person dialogue



and videos are two of the best ways to tell these stories. It is important to tell these stories in a kind, gentle way, recognizing that an over-aggressive approach often causes people to shut down or be defensive instead of listening and engaging.

**Reconciliation is alive and well in Canada:** The Gathering came during a contentious time for Indigenous-settler relations in Canada due to the conflict over the Coastal GasLink pipeline through Wet'suwet'en territory, causing some people to argue that "reconciliation is dead." However, panelists stressed that despite the ongoing challenges reconciliation is alive and well in Canada. It was noted that the current confrontations felt somewhat different than previous Oka Crisis (1990) and Gustafsen Lake standoff (1995) due to the solidarity of non-Indigenous allies. The fact that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians are working together, walking side-by-side towards reconciliation, is a reason for hope.

**There is a long road ahead:** Practicing reconciliation often means having difficult, uncomfortable conversations, and there is a long road ahead for truth and reconciliation in Canada.

**Ending racism must be a main priority:** Recognizing, confronting, and eliminating racism is an urgent need and top priority. Racism is alive and thriving in Canada, and Indigenous people continue to be targeted by racist violence in many forms. Non-Indigenous people must recognize and call out racism.



**Honour those who preserve culture, stories, and traditions:** Those who preserved, and continue to preserve, Indigenous culture, stories, traditions, and place names in the face of genocide must be honored and thanked, and their Indigenous knowledge celebrated.

"The panel presentation on Friday night was incredible, inspiring and made me feel both hopeful and motivated to try hard to connect with people who are not currently engaged in reconciliation."  
– VURD participant

**We must uphold, support, and nurture Indigenous youth:** Many Indigenous youth don't feel safe, don't feel like they have a place in Canada, and don't feel like they have dignity. Being deprived of dignity is traumatic. It was noted that the Indigenous Youth and Land Defenders leading solidarity actions to support the Wet'suwet'en must be supported and nurtured.

**Hope for the future:** There are some young Indigenous people who are deeply proud of who they are and are standing up for themselves and their communities. Across Canada, there are millions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians working together towards truth and reconciliation. Many colonial institutions are beginning the difficult work of truth and reconciliation.

**The generosity of Indigenous people towards non-Indigenous people:** Non-Indigenous panelists shared their gratitude for the profound generosity of Indigenous people in teaching them about Indigenous ways and helping them practice reconciliation in a good way.

**The importance of place:** Reconciliation must be place-based. In an urban context, this requires addressing the challenging fact that cities are built on Indigenous lands. Place names are also vital for reconciliation. We must “de-name” colonial places and use Indigenous place names first.

**Colonial institutions must step up and do the work:** It is vital for colonial governments and institutions to take the initiative to support reconciliation. In response to the TRC’s Calls to Action, Camosun College developed its own 39 actions to support Indigenous students and truth and reconciliation. The City of Victoria initiated the City Family and its own series of dialogues on Reconciliation, and financial support for Orange Shirt Day is a normal budget item. These types of actions are examples of what institutions can do to support reconciliation.



# MORNING WORKSHOPS (BLOCK #1 & #2)

## *Defining the Road Ahead*

Workshop Format: Facilitated circle for introductions, followed by splitting up into three groups to participate in flipchart brainstorming about the VURD draft *Reconciliation Blueprint*, 'storytelling cards' and a proposed community engagement toolkit.

### **Community Engagement Toolkit Feedback** *"It is our life. We need to participate in this."*

The group was invited to reflect on the following questions:

- Is there a need for various community engagement toolkits based on whether the group engaging is all Indigenous people, non-Indigenous people, or a combination of the two?
- What recommendations do people have for these various toolkits?

**Offer tailored approach:** One suggestion was that different approaches for engagement tool kits are needed for groups of all Indigenous people, all non-Indigenous people, and mixed backgrounds. Among non-Indigenous people, approaches must be tailored to meet people where they are in their journey.

**Create accountability:** Participants suggested that there is a need to create accountability across sectors and jurisdictions. Decision-makers and elected officials needed to be held accountable, but there is also a need for less formal accountability such as through peer systems.

**Balance power:** There is a need for reciprocal relations in which power is balanced. The concept of "nothing about us without us" was suggested.

**Confront racism:** Participants felt that the community engagement toolkit could be useful to confront racism. They suggested that it could support people to develop thoughtful anti-racist responses and actions. Empowering allies and providing bystander training were also suggested.

**Reduce burden on Indigenous people:** Participants identified the importance of non-Indigenous people listening to Indigenous people's stories as part of the truth-telling component of reconciliation and acknowledged that not enough Indigenous people are ready to share their lived experience with non-Indigenous people. People suggested that Indigenous people could be supported to share their stories through the development of a toolkit, opportunities to learn about truth and reconciliation, and support for healing work for those struggling with multi-generational trauma. Indigenous participants acknowledged that it can be hard to share stories of colonial oppression, and one Indigenous person encouraged settlers to learn from Indigenous people and teach each other, so that Indigenous people don't always have to be the teachers.

**Support learning:** A toolkit could support people to understand reconciliation by increasing understanding of Indigenous rights, history and current context. One person commented that for

people resistant to reconciliation this would involve “unlearning.” New Canadians need to learn the true history of Canada.

**Support all people to be proud of who they are:** Participants commented that people should be supported to express their humanity, be proud of who they are and engage with their heritage. People should also be exposed to different cultures and ways of being.

**Use toolkit in systems:** Participants noted that government systems (ex: municipal councils) should actively engage with the toolkit in order to promote Indigenous engagement and organizational change.

**Promote experiential learning:** Participants noted that experiential learning and practice are important, and that an emotional connection is needed to create change. One suggestion was to have traditional territory tours led by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers.

### VURD Draft Reconciliation Blueprint Feedback

*“Indigenous people living off-reserve have no voice. We need full inclusion in decision-making institutions, not tokenism.”*

The VURD draft *Reconciliation Blueprint* (See Appendix One) was developed based on input from participants at prior VURD gatherings, and in this workshop the Steering Committee sought feedback and support for the draft. The group was invited to reflect on the following questions:

- Within the four areas in the *Reconciliation Blueprint*, which do they consider a priority?
- What actions could be taken to move work forward in each of the four areas?

#### Physical Spaces

- **Create space for cultural expression, healing and systems change:** Spaces are needed for Indigenous artists to do their work, for language revitalization and learning, and for ceremony (for example an all Nations Longhouse and Sweat Lodge in an urban area).
- **Use common areas:** Libraries, colleges, city squares can be used for reconciliation. It would be helpful to create a list of places that can host gatherings across the region.
- **Centered on land-based relationships:** People need to develop a relationship with the caretakers of the land and they will walk differently as a result.
- **Change street-names and landmarks:** Rename landmarks and street names with local First Nation names.

*“Our cities and towns are built on your lands, on your homelands. And our responsibility is to understand, what does that mean? What does it mean to have moved into somebody’s living room and never left? How do we reconcile that?”*

–Mayor Lisa Helps

## Education

- **Offer cultural-competency training:** Training should be mandatory for all public and private employees. Organizations should work to debunk myths and change work culture.
- **Provide education in the school system:** Education in schools continues to be critically important.
- **Understand history:** Canadians need to connect to their history, including understanding the damage of the Indian Act
- **Create jobs and skill-building opportunities for Indigenous people:** Indigenous youth need opportunities for jobs and training. Any organization that receives money from government should be mandated to provide at least one apprenticeship/mentorship.
- **Change the minds of settlers:** Education efforts must find ways to reach “settlers with opinions.” Settlers should be encouraged to understand their own culture and ceremonies so they understand Indigenous peoples’.
- **Support Indigenous language programs:** These programs should be available to Indigenous people regardless of whether they are in their own territory.
- **Work in collaboration:** Schools need to work with community centres, health workers, libraries – we should create a village.
- **Prioritize anti-racism:** Anti-racism education should be a priority, including in schools.
- **Use social media:** Stories and posts to social media can be a powerful education tool. If social media threads become toxic, one option is to tag the group and then intervene as settlers teaching settlers.

## Relationships

- **Listen:** People need to listen to those with lived experience and Indigenous youth.
- **Build trust:** Governments need to build trust by keeping their word. Challenging authority and power needs to be part of reconciliation.
- **Focus on people:** Relationships should be centered on urban Indigenous people, not service organizations.
- **Develop networks:** A membership network online could help people contact others directly to ask for resources or conversation. Some participants suggested a participant roster be created for those who attended the Gathering so that participants could follow up with each other and continue to collaborate.



## Systems Change/Decolonization

**Increase Indigenous representation and sharing of power and funds:** The majority of comments on this topic were related to need for greater representation of Indigenous people in decision-making processes (in government and the private sector). Participants felt that although the majority of Indigenous people live off-reserve, they are not given voice or recognition. Participants stressed that power and funding must be shared, with representation from First Nations, urban Indigenous people, and the Métis Nation at all levels of government in both elected positions and within the bureaucracy. This would involve changing hiring practices in government.



- **Increase self-determination:** Participants noted that Indigenous people have practiced self-governance since time immemorial, and there is a need for urban Indigenous self-governance models. This could involve Indigenous jurisdiction over governing institutions such as universities, libraries, law enforcement and the justice system.
- **Consider traditional governance systems:** A number of people commented that the governance models of the First Nations whose traditional territory a city is on should come first, and that there are different models of First Nations governance systems.
- **Change ideology:** One comment stated, “Implement Indigenous ideology.” Another stated that bureaucratic systems need to be more human-centered rather than efficiency-centered.

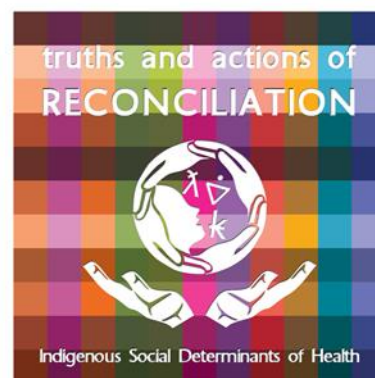
## “Storytelling Cards” Feedback

This activity sought participant feedback in three areas:

**“Storytelling Cards”:** These were a set of printed cards with prompts that invited users to “Tell me a story about...” various aspects of reconciliation (for example: “Tell me a story about a place you witnessed an act of reconciliation”). The cards were paired with a map of the local area so stories could be linked with specific places. Participants found these cards to be useful as ice-breakers and felt they could be valuable in facilitated workshops to support decolonization and reduction of lateral violence. Participants also suggested that they be mapped onto an online map, but that it is not appropriate to map stories and sites of ceremony as that information is personal and protected. One group of participants found language like 'tell me about' was extractive and should be revised. It was also suggested to use maps without colonial boundaries or place names.



**Indigenous Social Determinants of Health Cards:** These were a set of cards based on the First Nations Health Council Indigenous Social Determinants of Health. Participants saw value in using these cards to capture stories, strategize, make commitments to actions that support reconciliation, and spark dialogue. The Indigenous Social Determinants of Health are factors that influence the health and well-being of Indigenous individuals, families and communities, including education, housing, social inclusion, genetics and gender, access to health services, early childhood experience, personal health practice and coping skills, physical environment, employment and working conditions, income and social status, social support networks, and culture and language. Participants mentioned that the cards could be used in employment training programs to help participants attain holistic health. It was also suggested that they could be used to assess progress towards reconciliation through feedback from Indigenous community members. There was interest from a number of participants to include brief descriptions of what the Indigenous Social Determinants of Health mean.



**Cultural representation in the urban landscape question:** Participants were asked to provide feedback on the questions “What do you think is needed to identify and create Indigenous cultural representation/art in the urban landscape?” The ideas shared included alternate street signage (perhaps starting with stencils on pavement rather than street signs as a first step), murals, information plaques or QR codes to identify native plants, and spaces for Indigenous cultural practice in urban centres (for example an active space in the Royal BC Museum).

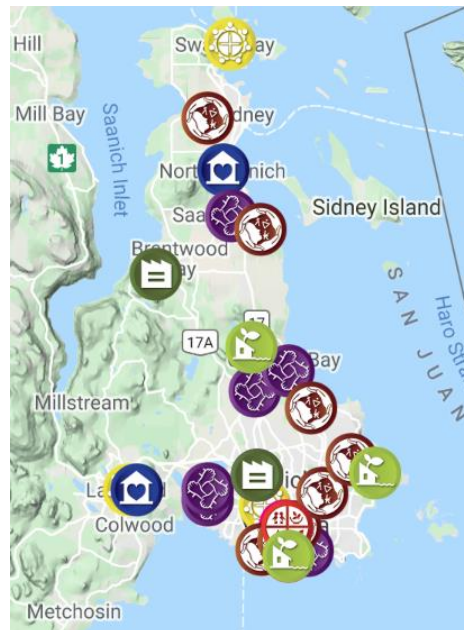
Although participants had limited time to offer feedback in the **Defining the Road Ahead** session, positive feedback indicated overall community support for the VURD draft *Reconciliation Blueprint*, the development of various community engagement toolkits, and the use of storytelling, dialogue, and mapping prompts to promote and assess progress towards reconciliation.



## Community Mapping Session

Workshop Format: Participants visited two facilitated stations and provided feedback to create maps. The workshop was co-created and hosted by the University of Victoria's Map Shop (Geography department) and members of the VURD Steering Committee.

**Spatial map:** The spatial map was created by inviting participants to indicate, on a physical map of the Greater Victoria area, locations where they felt reconciliation is taking place and new areas that, with the right resources and planning, have potential to be sites of reconciliation. Participants placed stickers that were designed to indicate one of 12 Indigenous Social Determinants of Health on the map. Participants were also invited to share stories or descriptions related to the locations they proposed for inclusion on the map. An interactive online map was created based on participant input, which can be found [here](#).



**Thematic Blueprint map:** This map was focused on the four components of reconciliation identified on the VURD draft *Reconciliation Blueprint*: physical spaces, relationships, education and systems/decolonization. Participants were invited to list encounters, programs or resources and relate them to one or more of these areas of reconciliation. Responses were mapped on a Venn diagram layout to indicate the individual and overlapping aspects of reconciliation. As such, the map intends to provide an idea of which focus areas are being supported and which could be strengthened. This map diagram can be seen in Appendix Six.



**Limitations:** The findings from these maps are limited due to the number of people who participated, and are therefore not representative of the wider geographic area or sectors of society. In addition, because VURD participants were invited due to their leadership roles in reconciliation, the maps may not represent the wider community where awareness of reconciliation may vary. The maps are intended to be the start of an ongoing process that can be used to

gather input about reconciliation and its impacts and identify geographic areas that are, or can be, sites of reconciliation.



**Key observations:** Based on the data collected at VURD, researchers observed that:

- Four categories of the social determinants of health were not selected (genetics and gender, early childhood experience, personal health practice and coping skills, and income and social status).
- The items mentioned by the most people for the geographic map include the renaming of Mt. Doug to PKOLS (3), and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (6). Future versions of the map could indicate frequency the item was suggested.
- There were less suggestions for the areas north of downtown Victoria (Saanich Peninsula).
- Some participants suggested city borders be removed from the reference map.
- The inclusion of sacred and ceremonial spaces on the maps was noted by some participants as being too sensitive to map, and the wording of some prompts was unsuitable for spatial mapping in an Indigenous context.

**Next steps:**

Community mapping offers the potential to add a strong spatial/geographical element to VURD initiatives by identifying spaces and relationships which support reconciliation.

The maps could be expanded by including more members of the community, focusing on specific regions, and including place-based mapping through walks.

Greater discussion is needed to determine how these tools can be used to advance reconciliation and the interests of Indigenous peoples in greater Victoria.

Initial ideas suggest that maps can be useful to help connect Indigenous people newly arrived in Victoria to services (language hubs, for example), or to help non-Indigenous people find places where they can learn about Indigenous peoples and culture. Mapping processes can also be used as a type of inventory to illustrate who is involved in VURD or as an assessment and accountability tool (e.g. areas where services exist, or number of providers over time).



## Ask an Elder

Workshop Format: Facilitated circle discussion. After introducing themselves, all participants were invited to develop questions on sticky notes. Then the moderator compiled/themed the questions and asked the four Elders in the group to respond. The questions were:

- How do you approach an Elder to work with you?
- How do you maintain hope for reconciliation?
- How do Elders connect with Youth?

*“When you sit with an Elder, you must take the time to listen.”*

**Elders are not just older people:** The Elders shared that the role of an Elder is not just about age. Elders have a special place in Indigenous communities that is earned through respectful action. As such, it is important when working with a community to learn about who is considered an Elder in that community, and not assume that people are Elders due to age alone.

**Elders have a special role to play with youth:** Elders have a unique role to play in providing guidance for youth. One Elder reflected on the importance of teaching youth in an age-appropriate way, so that they will understand. The Elders shared the joy they have in connecting with youth and passing knowledge on to younger generations.

**Reconciliation is viewed in various ways:** The Elders shared varied views on reconciliation and whether it is happening. While there were stories of progress that they have seen throughout their lifetimes, there were also stories of disappointment and mistrust. Feelings of both hope and disillusionment were shared.



**Take the time to speak to Elders:** One Elder explained that when you want to speak with an Elder, you must give your full attention and take the time to listen fully. Put your phones away and listen with your full self. The best way to consult with an Elder is to meet with them in person and sit down and share food with them. You may consider bringing a gift. You should not have a limited amount of time for this discussion—what you think might take 15 minutes could take two hours. If you do not have the time to listen, ask yourself why you are doing the outreach. Elders have cultural teachings to share that must be honoured with time, attention and respect.

**Be thoughtful about honoraria:** Make sure to honour Elders time with a respectful honorarium. When you ask an Elder for their time, consider that you may be taking them away from other work or needs within their communities. Be clear with Elders in advance about honoraria.

## Measuring Reconciliation

Workshop Format: The workshop began with an opening circle and group dialogue. Participants then split into small break out groups to share ideas about measuring reconciliation, including what tools/methods and indicators would be most useful.

*“Measuring reconciliation must be more than a box-ticking exercise.”*

The group was invited to reflect on the following questions:

- *How can we meaningfully measure progress towards reconciliation? How can we tell that it’s taking place?*
- *What kinds of tools or methods can organizations (workplaces, cities, non-profits, etc.) use to measure their progress towards reconciliation in a safe way that supports lasting changes?*

**The right language is important:** Some participants questioned whether the words “reconciliation” and “measurement” are the appropriate words to use in this context. Some other suggested words include: “conciliation,” “deconstruct,” “assessment,” and “reflection.”

**Truth must come first:** Participants shared that the ‘truth-telling’ aspect in the reconciliation process was not complete and needs to happen first before reconciliation can be achieved.

**Methodologies for measurement:** Participants suggested that measuring progress towards reconciliation is valuable but complex, and suggested that the following factors be considered:

- **Indigenous-led:** The process should be Indigenous-led and informed by Indigenous values and ways of being, such as a relationship-based approach. This would require systems change to existing government measuring systems, so that decision-making is decentralized and collaborative.
- **Best practices:** The approach should be informed by best practices and focused on tangible results; measurement is a tool and not an end in itself - it is designed to assess progress and hold governments (and others) accountable to their commitments.
- **Realistic and relevant:** Reconciliation is a lived experience; it is deeply personal - and systemic. There needs to be time for conversation and understanding impacts on people.
- **Structure:** Participants felt that creating a framework for measuring reconciliation that included key areas (e.g. behaviour, systems, environment, relationships) could be useful.
- **Various tools:** Surveys, public polling and interviews were suggested. A blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches where both the outcomes and the process are valued.
- **Collaborative:** Processes should be collaborative and use existing data where possible.
- **Distinctions based:** Should assess impacts on First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.



- **Informed by community:** Indigenous people need to be asked if they are noticing positive change; to understand their perspectives and needs, and whether they are seeing or feeling any changes. Measuring reconciliation must not perpetuate colonial policies and approaches.

**Indicators for measurement:** Participants suggested the following potential indicators:

- Coverage of Indigenous people and reconciliation in the mainstream media
- Upholding of Indigenous rights in the courts and government systems
- Indigenous people connecting to their culture, traditional language and healing
- Presence of Indigenous art in public spaces
- Statistics on Social Determinants of Health such as graduation rates, employment rates, homelessness rates, incarceration rates, poverty rates, and number of children in care
- Meaningful enactment of UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action
- Number of Indigenous people in leadership positions in all levels of government/society
- Number of public sector commitments and mandates that are inclusive of reconciliation
- Level of Indigenous content within K-12 curriculum
- Public awareness of Indigenous people, colonialism, and reconciliation
- Extent to which reconciliation is embedded into the work and policies of organizations including orienting new staff, cultural competency training, assessments of progress, feedback from Indigenous employees and Indigenous cultural advisors on cultural safety
- Reduction in incidences of racism and crimes against Indigenous people, Missing and murdered Indigenous women



# AFTERNOON OPEN SPACE DIALOGUES (BLOCK #3)

## *Reconciliation Through Arts, Culture and Land*

Workshop Format: Facilitated circle discussion

*“Art is not a thing; it is a way of being. In many Indigenous languages there is no word for art.”*

The group was invited to reflect on the following questions:

- How does art change one’s relationships to the land?
- How can art be used to teach people about reconciliation?

**Art is a powerful medium for reconciliation:** Participants discussed many ways that art can be a tool for promoting learning, dialogue and action about reconciliation, including the following:

- *Art can be transformative:* Participants discussed how art connects with people emotionally and spiritually, not just intellectually, and can therefore be a powerful tool.
- *Art can challenge people in a safe way:* While participants discussed the need to feel safe in order to learn and build relationships, they also explored the role of art in un-settling people, opening them up to new perspectives and learning. Too much concern over safety can lead to complacency—sometimes people need to be challenged.
- *Art can connect people to the land:* Art can be a way for people to relate to the land by telling stories about the land and celebrating the interconnection between humans and the land. Art can be a form of storytelling, and stories are important to connect to the land.
- *Art can promote dialogue:* Art can open up new conversations about different perspectives, encourage questions, and be a tool for dialogue and learning.
- *Art is inclusive:* Art can connect people and can be accessed by many people. Art transcends language and literary barriers, as well as age, gender and race. It can help people understand that truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples applies to everyone.

**Art is critical in urban settings:** In urban settings art is especially needed to connect people with Indigenous lands and cultures.

**Disconnection with the land is dangerous:** Participants expressed concern about the future of the land, air and water and the living beings that inhabit them and identified that a loss of connection with land (particularly in an urban setting) can endanger the land.

**Public spaces need art:** Because of the power of art to connect people to land, culture and learning, it is important that art be public. Housing art in museums can create barriers for access and will not reach as wide of an audience. Public art is a way of tearing down barriers.

**Adults need to reconnect with art:** Participants discussed how children and adults see art differently—for adults, art is often seen as an untouchable product rather than something interconnected with daily life and well-being.

**Art can promote both healing and harm:** Participants discussed the potential of art to bring about both healing and harm. Sometimes art can contain undercurrents of racism—this is especially evident in examples of hurtful posts shared on social media. In contrast, engagements based on love can create connections.

## How to Engage People Not Interested in Reconciliation

Workshop Format: The Elder shared initial reflections on the topic based on her life experience. Participants broke into small groups to discuss their ideas, and then shared in a large group circle.

*“Like a journey on the water, it is important to ride out the storms along the way.”*

The group was invited to reflect on the following questions:

- What needs to happen to change the minds of people who think reconciliation doesn't relate to them?
- What systems and platforms can engage people in reconciliation?
- In the Greater Victoria area, how can we engage people in thinking about reconciliation both with local Nations and Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous populations?
- What role can your organization play in engaging those who are “not interested” in reconciliation?

*“The VURD event was a safe place to share our views, stories and struggles. Being in a room of people doing the same work as you do is powerful.” – VURD participant*

**Reconciliation is a long-game:** The Elder reflected on her experience as a fisherwoman sharing stories of travelling on the water. Sometimes when you reach a rapid you have to go through it. Other times it's better to sit the experience out. Similarly, with reconciliation there will be smooth and challenging patches along the way.

**It's disappointing to see a lack of long-term engagement:** Some participants shared examples where they had invited people to engage around topics of reconciliation (for example through a community reconciliation circle) and attendance dropped after the first few sessions because people thought they already understood reconciliation. As a non-Indigenous person trying to engage other non-Indigenous people in dialogue about reconciliation, it can be frustrating, confusing and disappointing to witness low levels of engagement.

**Starting with an accessible activity is a good way to draw people in:** Participants shared that accessible activities, like Orange Shirt Day, can be a good way to expose larger numbers of people to the topic of reconciliation, and this can be a doorway to future learning. Engaging in group activities, like wearing an orange shirt, and hearing some of the stories and teachings around this activity, may make people curious to learn more and deepen their engagement. On the flip side, some participants expressed frustration in having to “make it easy” for people to engage in reconciliation or to simplify the process.

**Non-Indigenous people have the privilege of not engaging:** Some participants reflected that while engaging in reconciliation may feel like an optional activity for non-Indigenous people, for Indigenous people it is their everyday lived experience. Engaging in reconciliation is part of how they operate daily. For non-Indigenous people, it is important that they understand how reconciliation relates to them personally.

**People don't know what they don't know:** Due to the lack of education and experience most Canadian adults have about Indigenous people and the impacts of colonization, they often don't know what they don't know. The challenge of engaging new people is to help them understand that they are missing important information and that it is personally relevant to them to address the gaps in their learning.

*“After this event I am going to make an effort to talk to those I know who are not engaged in reconciliation and to share the teachings I have learned.”*

– VURD participant

## Reconciliation Through Decolonization and Systemic Change

Workshop Format: Facilitated circle discussion

*“The word reconciliation is meaningless to our people. The only way we can decolonize is to recognize power imbalances. You cannot reconcile when one entity has power over the other.”*

The group was invited to reflect on the following questions:

- *What can you do? What's in your heart? What are you doing in your personal lives?*
- *How do we dismantle institutional racism?*

**Power imbalances hinder reconciliation:** Participants shared that decolonization and systemic change involve undoing power imbalances. One participant stated that governments have not addressed the systemic oppression of urban Indigenous people. Bold actions must be taken to transfer resources and decision-making roles to Indigenous people.

**Relationship building is essential:** Several participants shared that systems change is about developing relationships, maintaining the bridges that connect us and breaking bread together.



**Awareness of land and place is needed:** Participants reflected that many people in decision-making roles aren't necessarily permanently settled in one place or tied to the land the way Indigenous people are. For this reason, it is important that those making decisions be mindful of where they are and how their decisions impact connections to the land. An example was shared of a ceremony at University of Victoria that grounds non-Indigenous staff to the place.

**Consideration of reconciliation with urban Indigenous people:** Participants discussed the difference in approaches to reconciliation with local Indigenous people and urban Indigenous people who originate from other territories. More conversation is needed to identify the challenges and opportunities with respect to reconciliation in an urban context.

**Funding models need to change:** Participants shared that lack of funding continues to be a barrier for many Indigenous people and organizations. Many Indigenous communities in urban cities give a lot of services but are unfunded. Additionally, participants commented that many granting bodies follow a

colonial process that doesn't allow time for relationship building and Indigenous definitions of success.

***Need for place-based approaches:*** Participants thought that federal, provincial and municipal funding should be provided based on a place-based reconciliation model that is unique to each territory.

***Children should come first:*** Participants also shared that they would like to see a system that Indigenous children can benefit from, and that the children should always come first.

***Recognize the contributions of Indigenous people:*** Participants also mentioned the importance of recognizing the contribution that Indigenous people bring to the economy and changing the language from deficit to asset based.

***We can move forward together:*** One participant shared that despite frustrations about the pace of change, 20 years ago an event like this wouldn't happen. It's important to celebrate success, to honor the history and commitments of the past and move forward together as allies, colleagues, peers and neighbors.

### *Indigenous Rights and Resistance*

Workshop Format: Facilitated circle discussion with Elder

***“Resistance is not one act—it is a way of being.”***

The group was invited to reflect on the following questions:

- Have you ever been involved in 'resistance'?
- How can people stand up for Indigenous rights in a respectful way?

***There are many forms of resistance:*** Participants discussed the different forms of resistance. Attending a protest or direct action is one form, but there are many others, including: collecting signatures/support for petitions, writing letters to decision-makers, educating people, finding funding for Indigenous programs, volunteering, and resistance from within a system.

***Culture is resistance:*** A recurring theme was that practicing Indigenous culture and speaking one's language are forms of resistance. For example, one person mentioned the potlatch as resistance.

***The role of allies in resistance:*** Participants discussed the roles of non-Indigenous allies in resistance. One person shared the advice “don't go into someone else's home and tell them how to run it” and emphasized the principle of non-interference. At the same time, it is important for allies to show up, but they need to have patience and let the Indigenous people lead. One participant shared, “If you hold privilege, use it.”



**Resistance requires courage and hope:** Participants shared that resistance can be challenging when people don't feel they can speak freely because of their job. They may have a fear of repercussion or of making a mistake. Older people may feel uncomfortable joining in youth-led movements; sometimes people feel that their individual presence won't make a difference. But participants stressed the importance of showing up and being together to support Indigenous rights.

**Anti-racism is resistance:** Participants discussed the importance of challenging racism, being active and not just a bystander. This doesn't have to be aggressive, but it's about being self-aware, showing up and speaking up.

**Success can happen within systems:** Some participants shared stories of resistance within systems, including the sport and post-secondary education system. For example, the growth of the Northwest Indigenous Games and the development of the Indigenous Language Revitalization Master's program at University of Victoria are examples of initiatives that required hard work to challenge existing systems and create change from within.

*"The event addressed hard questions in a supportive way. I appreciated the integration of political and cultural components, the Youth, story-telling, artistic activities, geographic (mapping) elements, sports, the role of Elders, the people invited, the amazing catering, gifts, literature, and ceremony."*

– VURD participant

**A toolkit is needed to inform roles in protests and direct action:** Being comfortable, respectful and effective at a protest as a non-Indigenous ally or as an urban Indigenous person from another territory on someone else's land can be difficult. Participants suggested it would be valuable to create a toolkit to clarify the difference between cultural support and cultural appropriation and to provide practical suggestions for being a good visitor and ally when supporting Indigenous rights.



# NEXT STEPS

One of the main purposes of the 2020 VURD Gathering was to gather information to solidify the draft *Reconciliation Blueprint* and guide the next steps for the VURD Steering Committee. The findings from this gathering will inform VURD activities and further engagement at the community level. Based on the key findings of this report, the following considerations for next steps have emerged:

## **VALUES THAT UNDERLIE NEXT STEPS**

**Relationship-based:** The need to build relationships based on trust surfaced in many of the workshops. Relationships need to happen between humans, on the individual level, and between organizations.

**Place-based and land-based:** Participants stressed that a place-based approach is needed, which is tied to the traditional lands and local Nations, the environment, and the specific context of Victoria. The healing power and connection developed through a relationship to the land was a recurring theme throughout the workshops.

**Systemic and individual:** Participants noted that it is not enough for individuals to learn about Indigenous peoples and promote reconciliation—change also needs to happen within organizations and systems, and the culture of these systems needs to change. There is a need for a new way of doing business that is based on values such as trust, reciprocity and respect for the land. At the same time, systems are made up of individuals, and individual change at the emotional, intellectual and social levels is the foundation of systemic change.



**Long-term:** Reconciliation is a long journey, and there needs to be sustained commitment, interest and funding to support the process. Time must be taken for reconciliation efforts, and non-Indigenous people must make the time to listen and learn. This work requires us to maintain courage and hope.

**Indigenous-led:** Reconciliation was recognized as being a collaborative effort between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Many conversations stressed the important role of non-Indigenous allies. However, it is imperative that Indigenous people steer the ship and are empowered to be key decision-makers in reconciliation initiatives.

**Collaborative:** Participants stressed the need for collaboration across multiple sectors.

## **POTENTIAL NEXT STEP ACTIVITIES**

**Enable greater representation for urban Indigenous people:** A common theme was that urban Indigenous people are not adequately represented or involved in decisions that impact them. While the majority of the Indigenous population in Canada lives off-reserve, they are often seen as an

afterthought to inclusion of local First Nations living on reserve. Participants stressed that while working with local Nations is essential, urban Indigenous populations should not be sidelined. They should be represented in all levels of the public and private sectors. It was often stated that the “balance of power” needs to be adjusted so that urban Indigenous people have a meaningful voice and participation in decisions about the community. Some specific suggestions included:

- Changing hiring practices in organizations to prioritize Indigenous knowledge and experience
- Creating systems for Indigenous representation in government and other sectors
- Support for urban Indigenous self-governance, including jurisdiction over key services
- Transferring control of urban funding to urban Indigenous people
- De-name colonial places and use Indigenous place names, so that Indigenous cultures are represented in the urban environment

**Focus on ending racism:** The theme of ending racism and engaging in anti-racist education and action was common across workshops. It was acknowledged that racism is alive and well and continues to be deeply harmful. Ending racism involves education, speaking up against injustice, and changing peoples’ minds and hearts. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have important roles to play in ending racism. Some specific suggestions included:

- Engage in multiple forms of resistance, such as letter writing, educating people, finding funding for Indigenous programs, volunteering and others
- Create change from within systems, for example by creating new programs, services and more holistic approaches to doing business
- De-centering settler perspectives and centering Indigenous approaches to reconciliation

*“If there is one thing we should commit to with all of our might, it is eliminating and challenging racism in all forms.” - Ry Moran, Director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation*

**Empower allies:** Many participants commented that there is a critical role for non-Indigenous allies in the work of reconciliation. While this work should be Indigenous-led, support from allies is both welcomed and necessary. Some specific suggestions include:

- Allies should be taught to identify their privilege and encouraged to use that privilege to show up in support of Indigenous people
- Provide training in how to be an ally, including anti-racism and bystander training

**Centre Indigenous ceremony, art and culture:** Participants highlighted the role of ceremony and culture in creating healing and empowerment for Indigenous people, building relationships and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and counteracting the impacts of colonial oppression. Some specific suggestions included:

- Establishing spaces for ceremony for urban Indigenous peoples
- Encouraging settlers to connect with their own cultures and ceremony so they can better understand Indigenous peoples’ cultures and ceremony
- Supporting Indigenous language revitalization
- Creating more opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to engage in culture and ceremony together
- Creating spaces for Indigenous artists to make and display or perform their art

- Practicing ceremony as a way to educate and connect non-Indigenous people to the local traditions
- Practicing culture as a form of resistance to colonization

**Support multiple forms of learning:** Participants recognized that learning is at the heart of reconciliation, and that non-Indigenous people need to learn about the past and current experiences of Indigenous people. Participants stressed that learning is needed for all ages and all sectors of society, in schools, universities, workplaces, governments, businesses, and community settings. They did not see learning as being only formal training, such as a course or workshop. Learning can also happen through individual relationships, experiences, art, connection with the land, and self-reflection. Some specific suggestions include:

- Offering cultural competency training, including training on Indigenous history, rights, and current context
- Creating and encouraging opportunities for experiential learning
- Storytelling to expose the “truth” of the Indigenous lived experience – non-Indigenous people must hear these stories again and again, through in-person dialogue and video
- Target training to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but with different approaches
- Enable traditional territory tours led by local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers
- Meet people where they are in their journey—some need to be engaged with “easy” activities before taking on the more challenging work of reconciliation, and people don’t know what they don’t know, so a gentle approach is more effective than an aggressive approach
- Identify places where gatherings about reconciliation can be hosted



In some cases, Indigenous people also need to learn about their history. Many Indigenous people did not learn the true history of this Country because they attended residential schools or Canadian public schools which failed to accurately tell these stories. Often Indigenous people only learn about colonization and the depth of their people’s experience as adults when they attend post-secondary education or when they are employed by Indigenous organizations such as Friendship Centres. These external opportunities to learn about colonization and Indigenous rights are not accorded to all Indigenous people and therefore culturally sensitive education supports would allow more Indigenous people to participate in dialogues about reconciliation.

**Support increased capacity for Indigenous people:** Participants noted that there are not enough Indigenous people to participate in or teach settlers about truth and reconciliation, and that Indigenous people need increased capacity to do this. They also noted that providing job skills training, mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities for Indigenous youth to engage in reconciliation are important. Some specific suggestions include:

- Taking the burden off of Indigenous people by having non-Indigenous allies engage in anti-racism and reconciliation
- Create mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities for Indigenous people

- Provide resources for Indigenous community members to participate in reconciliation processes where they could be both learners and teachers
- Supporting healing work for Indigenous people still struggling with multi-generational trauma

***Develop accountability and measurement tools:*** Participants expressed a desire for governments and organizations to be accountable for their actions and commitments towards reconciliation. They expressed that sometimes there is talk without action, or a lack of concern for reconciliation in the first place. Some specific suggestions include:

- Create an Indigenous-led accountability framework that is informed by Indigenous values
- Use a variety of tools and approaches to assess progress towards reconciliation including organizational self-assessment tools
- Develop meaningful indicators to assess progress towards reconciliation, with a particular focus on the experiences and outcomes for urban indigenous peoples

***Honour and recognize the contributions of Indigenous people:*** Multiple comments were shared about honouring the contributions of Indigenous people, showing gratitude for Indigenous people who have kept culture and language alive, demonstrating respect for Elders and youth, and celebrating successes. Some specific suggestions include:

- Take the time to publicly honour Indigenous people who have made contributions to supporting the resiliency of their culture and people
- Honour Indigenous knowledge
- Celebrate together as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people

## **CONCLUSION**

The Steering Committee is grateful to everyone who attended the third VURD Gathering.

As we continue our collective work, we will refine the *Reconciliation Blueprint* based on the input of participants at the Gathering and take actions in the areas outlined.

We will continue to update and work with members of the Advisory Panel and community members who want to move reconciliation forward in the Greater Victoria area.

To view pictures of the event, learn more about VURD and stay in touch, please visit:

The VURD website: <http://www.thedialoguevictoria.ca/home>

The VURD Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/victoriaurbanreconciliationdialogue/>

## APPENDIX ONE: Draft Reconciliation Blueprint

# VURD Reconciliation Blueprint (draft)

### OUR VISION

Looking for words or phrases in Indigenous languages (SENCOTEN, Lekwungen, Hul'q'umi'num, Nuu-Chah-nulth, Cree, Michif ...) and English that speak to concepts of reconciliation – of moving into wholeness - truth, healing, relationships, connections to land.

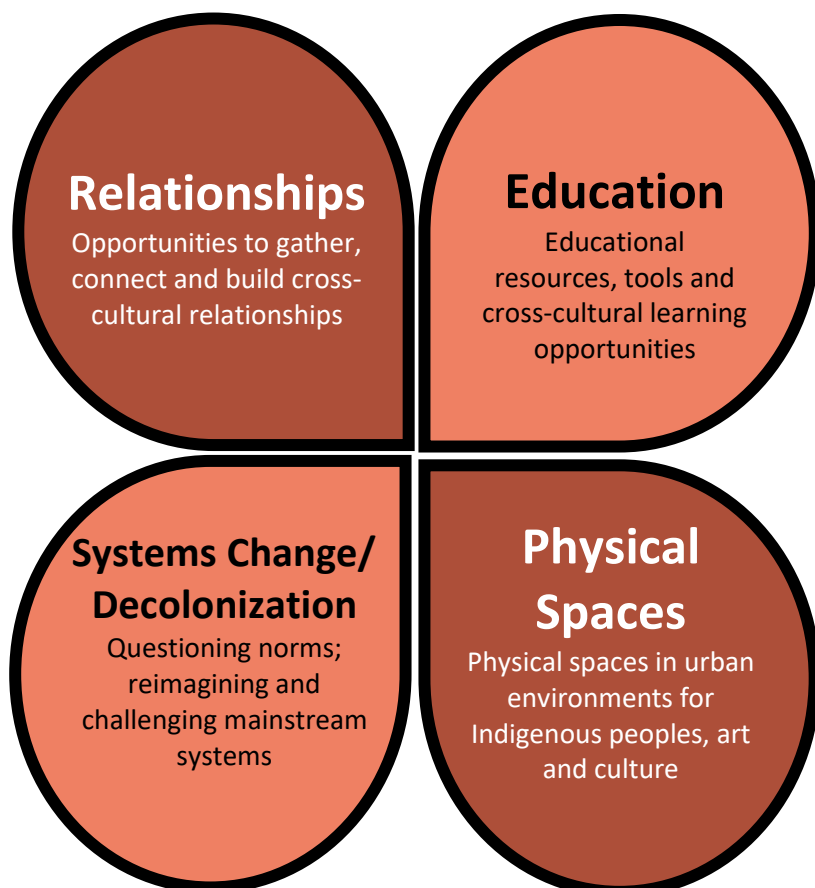
### OUR MISSION

Advance reconciliation in Greater Victoria through actions that promote social repair and systemic change.

### OUR VALUES

Kindness, Inclusivity, Truth, Uplifting Indigenous Voices, Culture, Artistic Expression, Sustainability, Justice

### AREAS OF FOCUS



### PROPOSED VURD ACTIONS

Guided by our values and areas of focus we will

1. **Relationships:** Continue to meet as a VURD Steering Committee and promote cross-sector collaboration and information sharing.
2. **Education:** Enrich and grow the reconciliation landscape by engaging more community members and organizations through a range of outreach and education activities including the development of enabling tools.
3. **Systems Change/Decolonization:** Identify priority areas for actions and advocate for resources for grassroots projects and monitor/report on progress; model decolonization through our own work practices.
4. **Physical Spaces:** identify spaces for Indigenous peoples and communities in urban environment to promote cultural events and artistic expression.

**OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT:** Tracking progress towards reconciliation through:

- Improvements in the Indigenous Social Determinants of Health (SDH).
- Implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action and Call for Justice of the National Inquiry into MMIWG.
- Utilizing principles of Indigenous evaluation; stories, celebrating achievements; aspects of 'Self-assessment'

## **APPENDIX TWO: Roadmap for Planning a Reconciliation Event**

This section provides a summary of how the 2020 VURD Community Gathering came together. While reconciliation is unique in each area, our hope is that other urban communities can learn from our experience and build on it to develop their own approach to promoting dialogue about reconciliation.

There were a few key approaches to planning that were central to the success of the Gathering:

- Weave culture throughout
- Draw on current relationships to enhance offerings
- Create a collaborative process with diverse representation
- Consider the four parts of self: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual
- Ensure the safety of all participants

### **BEFORE THE EVENT**

**Planned by the VURD Steering Committee:** The VURD Steering Committee is a unique collaboration of urban Indigenous organizations, including the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) and Métis Nation of Greater Victoria, three levels of non-Indigenous government (federal, provincial and municipal), and urban Indigenous community members. This group had been meeting regularly for over two years and had already hosted two prior gatherings (see introduction to this report for more information). This had allowed for trust and relationships to develop, and a shared sense of vision and commitment.

**Multiple funding sources:** The VURD 2020 Gathering was funded by Canadian Heritage, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and the Province of B.C. through the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR). In addition to funding, ISC and MIRR each provided staff time and expertise to the Steering Committee and its Working Group.

**Diverse representation:** When planning VURD events, efforts were made to support diverse representation and inclusion of Indigenous community members, local Nations, Elders, youth, non-Indigenous governments, social service agencies, and non-Indigenous community members. The invitation list for the event was developed by the Steering Committee, based on the principle of expanding on the 2018 and 2019 events to include more organizations, more representatives of each organization, and more community members. Attendance at the event was by invitation, although anyone who requested access was allowed to attend.

**Collaborative planning:** The VNFC was the lead implementation agency for the event, but all planning was done collaboratively. A team of facilitators who have worked with VURD since its inception were hired as contractors to plan the facilitation approach and facilitate the dialogue circles. This team of facilitators included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and role modeled how these communities can work in a collaborative environment in pursuit of reconciliation. The Steering Committee developed the vision for the event and met regularly with the facilitation team to create the agenda. Leading up to the Gathering, collaborative meetings were held once or twice a week to develop the agenda, invitee list, and plan the event logistics.

**Assembling a team:** An Indigenous event-planner was hired to coordinate the logistics of the Gathering and the team worked with several practicum students and volunteers. Senior VNFC staff were recruited to manage various aspects of the Gathering, like mental wellness, accessibility, Elder and cultural supports. Service staff were recruited from a VNFC employment training program and their program facilitators supervised their work. All catering was sourced through Indigenous vendors, and opportunities were provided to both small and large caterers, both on and off reserve, with special accommodations made where necessary.

## DURING THE EVENT

**Cultural grounding:** Culture and ceremony were used to honour the local Nations and the diversity of urban First Nations, Métis and Inuit people living in Victoria. Art and cultural activities were also used to create a safe and healing space for dialogue.

**Safety:** All aspects of safety were considered when hosting our guests, including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. The safety plan included accessibility, counselling supports, and cultural supports. A team of support people were onsite throughout the event managing everyone’s safety, including offering Indigenous cultural wellness supports such as trauma-informed counselling and cedar brushings, which were available to and accessed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

**Relationship-focus:** One of the primary goals of the Gathering was to support and enhance relationships between the attendees. As such, time was allowed for networking, sharing food together, and participating in collaborative activities such as creating art. Many conversations and connections occurred between participants outside of the formal offerings at the Gathering.

**Variety of engagement opportunities:** The event provided a variety of ways to engage, including: mapping, art activities, cultural activities, workshops, presentations, performances, and one-on-one conversations.

**Collaborative facilitation:** The facilitation team partnered with members of the Steering Committee, who participated during the event by taking notes, co-facilitating, and supporting event logistics (depending on their skills and interests). As such, the event was collaboratively-led and facilitated by all of the organizations who make up VURD.

### Facilitation Teams

Workshop	Facilitators and scribes
Ask an Elder	Alex Nelson, Nella Nelson, Rachel Mason
Community Mapping	Crystal Tremblay, Kikila Perrin, Emily Harris (Souie Gorup, VURD SC)
Measuring Reconciliation	Rosy Hartman & Sebastian Silva (Rob Parenteau and Patrick Harriott, VURD SC)
Defining the road ahead	Tanya Clarmont, Ken Josephson, Rachel Mason (Cristina Caravaca, VURD SC)



Open Space Dialogues	Facilitators and Scribes
How to Engage People Not Interested in Reconciliation	Nella Nelson, Rachel Mason, Erich Kelch
Reconciliation Through Decolonization and Systemic Change	Tanya Clarmont, Rosy Hartman, Crystal Tremblay
Indigenous Rights and Resistance	Alex Nelson, Sebastian Silva, Katrina Philpotts
Reconciliation Through Arts, Culture and Land	Barbara Hulme, Carey Newman

## AFTER THE EVENT

**Post-event de-brief:** The facilitators and steering committee gathered ten days after the event to debrief the event and evaluate both successes and opportunities for improvement. This allowed space for reflection, learning, and planning of next steps. Highlights from this de-brief are included in Appendix Five.

## APPENDIX THREE: Participant Agenda

### VURD Gathering Agenda Friday, February 28, 2020

Time	Activity	Description	Location
3:00 pm	Check-in & Interactive Happenings	Registration/Check-in	Foyer
		Visit our 3 interactive spaces:	
		1. Cedar Weaving	Oak
		2. Mixed Media Space	Poplar
		3. Community Mapping & Indigenous Language Display	Juniper
4:30 pm	Small Table Meet Ups	Network with tablemates, select topics for Block #3 sessions, and play Tell Me a Story	Cedar Ballroom
5:00 pm	Opening Ceremonies	Grand Entry, Protocols and Remarks by dignitaries: Shelly Cardinal and Adam Olsen	
5:40 pm	Feast & Cultural Presentation	Food by Songhees Catering and cultural presentation by ANSWER (All Nations Strong Women for Education and Reconciliation)	

6:30 pm	Discussion Panel	Moderated by Shelagh Rogers. Panelists: 1. Ry Moran, Director, National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation 2. Mayor Lisa Helps, City of Victoria 3. Monique Gray Smith, Writer 4. Sherri Bell, President, Camosun College	
8:00 pm	Wrap Up	Overview of Next Day	
8:15 pm	Adjourn		

### Saturday, February 29, 2020

Time	Activity	Description	Location
8:00 am	Breakfast	Full Continental	Dogwood
8:45 am	Plenary	<b>VURD Presentation:</b> how we got here and why we gather today <b>Community Spotlight:</b> Greater Victoria SD61, Shelly Neimi, Indigenous Administrator	Cedar Ballroom
9:30 am	Block #1	Choose from Four Sessions:	
		1. Defining the Road Ahead	Gallery
		2. Community Mapping	Juniper
		3. Ask an Elder	Ballroom
		4. Measuring Reconciliation	Gallery
10:45 am	Transition Break		
11:00 am	Block #2	Choose from Four Sessions	
		1. Defining the Road Ahead	Gallery
		2. Community Mapping	Juniper
		3. Mixed Media Space	Poplar
		4. Measuring Reconciliation	Gallery
12:00 pm	Lunch Service and Cultural Performance		Cedar
1:00 pm	Plenary	<b>Community Spotlight:</b> Indigenous Sport as Catalyst for Reconciliation in BC, Alex Nelson	Cedar Ballroom
1:15 pm	Transition to next session		

1:20 pm	Block #3	Open Space Discussion Groups	TBD
2:20 pm	Networking with Refreshments		Foyer
2:50 pm	Plenary	<b>Community Spotlight:</b> VURD, Future Steps Mosaic Art Reveal and Keynote by Swil Kanim	Cedar Ballroom
3:45 pm	Closing Ceremonies	Cultural Protocols, Presentation and Closing Prayer	
4:30 pm	Adjourn		

### **APPENDIX FOUR: Organizations Represented**

<p>Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan          Art Gallery of Greater Victoria          BC Aboriginal Network of Disability Society          Belfry Theatre          Bruce Parisian Library          Camosun College          City of Colwood          City of Langford          City of Victoria          Community Members at Large          District of Esquimalt          District of Highlands          District of Metchosin          District of North Saanich          District of Saanich          Dogwood          Elders          Fairfield Gonzales Community Association          Government House          Greater Victoria Acting Together          Greater Victoria Public Library          Hulitan Family and Community Services Society          Indigenous Services Canada          Indigenous Perspectives Society          Inter-Cultural Association          Island Métis Family &amp; Community Services          ISPARC (Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council)          Métis Nation of Greater Victoria          Moose Hide Campaign          National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation          Northwest Indigenous Council</p>	<p>Organizing Against Racism and Hate (OARH)          Our Place Society          Pacific Opera of Victoria          ProArt Alliance of Greater Victoria          Province of British Columbia          Rainbow Health Cooperative          Royal Roads University          Saanich Police Department          School District 61          School District 63          Social Environmental Alliance          Songhees First Nation          Sooke Reconciliation Project          Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area          Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services          Town of Sidney          Tsow-Tun-Le-Lum Society          University of Victoria          VanCity          Victoria Cool Aid Society          Victoria Native Friendship Centre          Victoria Police Department          Victoria Women in Need (WIN) Community Cooperative          Victoria Women’s Transition House          Tsartlip First Nation</p>
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## APPENDIX FIVE: Evaluation Results

### VURD Gathering Evaluation

This section summarizes the findings of:

- The participant evaluation, which was conducted through a printed survey that 57 people filled out at the close of the event.
- The Steering Committee debrief, which occurred ten days after the Gathering at an in-person meeting of the Steering Committee, event planners and facilitators.

#### **PARTICIPANT EVALUATION: QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS**

Participants were asked to rank their level of agreement with a number of statements about the Gathering on a scale of 1 – Strongly Disagree to 4 – Strongly Agree. The table below shows the average scores for each statement.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Average score</b>
1. The Panel discussion was informative and enjoyable	<b>3.67</b>
2. Break-out session topics were relevant to me	<b>3.58</b>
3. Facilitators in the break-out sessions were effective	<b>3.50</b>
4. I was able to network and connect with people	<b>3.59</b>
5. I was able to contribute to the future direction of VURD	<b>3.08</b>
6. I enjoyed the various interactive artistic offerings	<b>3.70</b>
7. I learned something that I value	<b>3.79</b>
8. I felt safe and respected	<b>3.82</b>
9. I would recommend attending VURD gatherings	<b>3.86</b>
10. I had a positive overall experience	<b>3.89</b>
11. The registration and RSVP process was easy	<b>3.84</b>
12. The invitation clearly explained the intent of this event	<b>3.63</b>
13. I had no problem getting to the venue	<b>3.71</b>
14. I felt welcomed to the space and felt a sense of community	<b>3.92</b>
15. The on-site check in was supportive and timely	<b>3.86</b>
16. The catering was enjoyable	<b>3.88</b>
17. The sound system was suitable for the event	<b>3.55</b>
18. The space and lay out for the event was easily accessible and suitable for my needs	<b>3.76</b>

## PARTICIPANT EVALUATION: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

### SUCSESSES & STRENGHTS

The main successes and strengths cited in participants' qualitative responses were:

- Ceremony, culture, and performances
- Breakout sessions and circle dialogues
- Panel discussion
- Event was well organized
- Elders sharing stories and cultures
- Great catering and food
- Participants felt safe and welcomed

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The main opportunities for improvement identified by participants were:

- Not enough time for breakout groups and circle dialogues (noted by 22 respondents)
- Several participants noted it was too far from town and not easy to find the event
- Feeling overwhelmed or not safe at times (a few participants)
- Not certain about the purpose and outcome of the event
- Issues with the sound system, including volume, lack of clarity, and feedback

### STEERING COMMITTEE EVALUATION:

#### SUCSESSES

The most commonly cited successes were:

- ***Ceremony, culture, and performances.*** The ceremony and cultural practices grounded the event in a good way, and the performances were outstanding.
- ***Well-organized and facilitated.*** The organization and facilitation of the event and the attention to detail, cultural supports, and the inclusion of the live stream for the panel.
- ***Sharing circles and breakout groups.*** The circles and small group discussions were cited as the most valuable and engaging parts of the event. Many wished there had been more time to dig deeper while in the circles.
- ***Great food.***
- ***Diversity of participants.*** The diversity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organizations from a wide variety of sectors.
- ***Relationship building and networking.*** The event was a great opportunity to build and nurture relationships and network with others from diverse backgrounds and sectors. One person noted that the unstructured, informal time was particularly valuable to meet people and build new relationships.
- ***Great learning opportunity.*** As one person noted, "Sharing personal stories and experiences increased understanding, including the challenges and issues facing urban Indigenous people."

Other successes noted included:

- *Cultural supports were appreciated*
- *Good opportunity for people from various organizations to practice reconciliation*
- *Great event in the context of the contentious state of reconciliation in Canada*
- *Powerful presentations*
- *Strong sense of solidarity and collaboration*

## **CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The most commonly cited challenges and opportunities for improvement were:

- ***More time for circle dialogues, breakout groups, and workshops.*** Several people noted that more time should be allocated for the circle dialogues and workshops in order to allow participants to engage with and learn from each other at a deeper level.
- ***More youth voices.*** Involving and centering youth voices and perspectives could be improved. One person noted, “Young adults are a big part of that space. Maybe we need to be bolder in the way we step into spaces and young people bring that passion. We should go to where young people are instead of asking them to come to us.”
- ***More local Indigenous voices and more diverse voices.*** Several people noted there could be more local Indigenous Nations and voices and a greater diversity of voices overall, including youth, urban Indigenous voices, people struggling with poverty and homelessness, and frontline service providers (including frontline staff, not just executives). Local Indigenous voices should be included on the main panel.
- ***Messaging about event purpose:*** The invitation, VURD website and communications could have more clearly identified the event purpose.
- ***The location was not accessible for all.*** The location, quite far out of town in a non-urban setting, was cited as a barrier to participation.

Other challenges and opportunities for improvement included:

- ***Funding.*** There is a need for stable, sustained funding to enable deeper engagement with communities and support urban Indigenous initiatives.
- ***Local, place-based focus.*** There could be a more local, place-based lens on reconciliation, rather than just “big picture”, “big R” reconciliation.
- ***Focus on concrete issues:*** There is a need to focus on issues facing urban Indigenous people including poverty, lack of housing, and over-representation of Indigenous children in care.

**APPENDIX SIX: Thematic Blueprint Map**



VICTORIA URBAN RECONCILIATION DIALOGUE

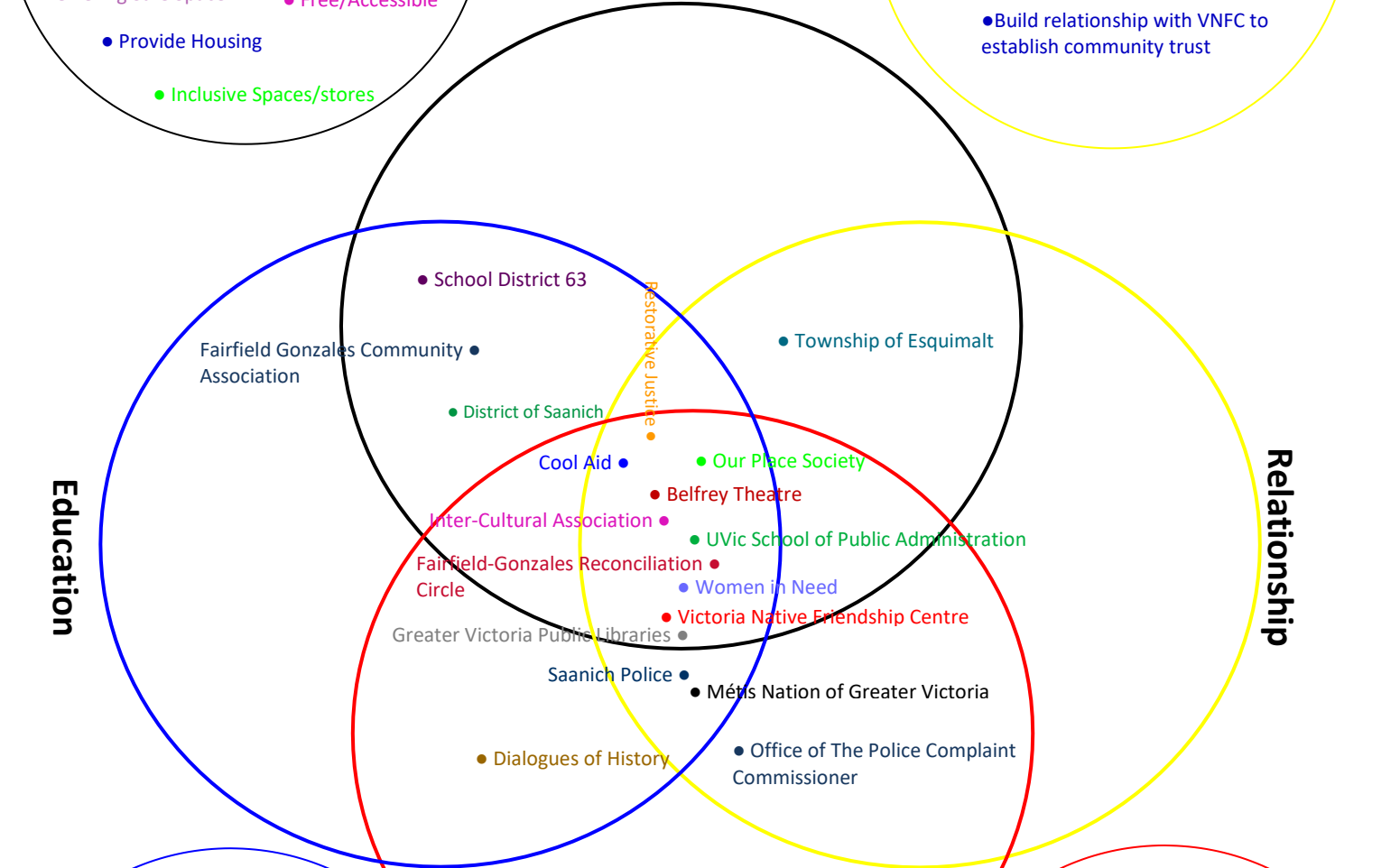
**Community Mapping Project**  
 (Third VURD Gathering, February 2020)  
**Community Blueprint Map**  
 More detailed maps available at [thedialoguevictoria.ca](http://thedialoguevictoria.ca)

### Physical Spaces

- Art Projects for Reconciliation
- Starting to create spaces
- Offering Space for Indigenous performances & discussions
- Making spaces accessible & visible within
- Mapping Interpretive Walks
- Sharing Space
- Offering Safe Space
- Free/Accessible
- Provide Housing
- Inclusive Spaces/stores

### Relationships

- Building Relationships between Community & Community members
- Bringing Community Together
- Building Relationships with Local Nations & the VNFC
- Building Relationships with Municipalities
- Build relationship with VNFC to establish community trust



### Education

- Creating conversations with people who don't know about Reconciliation
- Internal education for Counsellors & Community
- Educating people on the Need for this type of education
- Outreach & Materials to the wider community
- Early Childhood Education
- Indigenous Materials
- Eliminating Barriers
- Community Learning (space for and facilitation)
- Staff education (TRC, UNDRIP, MMIWG)

### Systems/Decolonization

- Shifting Culture within organizations contracting with government
- Slowly changing aspects of systems in-house
- Challenging the Status Quo through supporting community that is often not otherwise supported
- Implementing TRC
- Open Space for personal development
- Recommendations for Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls

**Systems/Decolonization**