



NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY



"The lives of all Canadians, including Indigenous People, will get better when we increase their inclusion in wealth, health, and opportunity of Canada."

Keith Martell
President & CEO, First Nations Bank of Canada

June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day, a day recognizing and celebrating the cultures and contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

June 21st is the day of the year with the most sunlight in our part of the world and, like the sun that shines 24 hours on this day in much of our North, I believe the challenges and tragedies of 2020 can enlighten us on the opportunity to become a stronger and better country. I believe celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day can be one step toward a stronger Canada. So where do you start?

So far, 2020 has given us little to celebrate. COVID-19's impact on our social, economic and health care systems, the terrible toll it has had on all Canadian Elders and most recently the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Rodney Levi and Chantel Moore highlighting the devastating outcome of systematic racism for many People of Colour. These events are triggering all Canadians to take a hard look at everyday life. What good can come from these events?

The negative events so far in 2020 have helped many Canadians become more empathetic to the plight of the unemployed, the socially distant or racially marginalized. Nothing makes you more empathetic for marginalized people than experiencing a little of your own financial uncertainty or seeing the video of a man die from policing gone horribly wrong. While these events might create more empathy for the circumstances of too many Indigenous People, let's make National Indigenous Peoples Day a time to begin turning that empathy into action.

We need to recognize Canada's Indigenous People in the core of our national fabric. Let's put away biases and explore the truth about Canada's First Peoples and take actions toward reconciliation to

move our country forward. Indigenous inclusion and success is in the best interest of all Canadians and it is everyone's responsibility to make that happen. At First Nations Bank, Indigenous people are a majority of our staff and management. They are bright, hardworking, successful and self-sufficient Canadians. Inclusion works.

I encourage everyone to join me in making Canada even better by promoting the success and inclusion of Indigenous People. The lives of all Canadians, including Indigenous People, will get better when we increase their inclusion in the wealth, health and opportunity of Canada.

Each year I make a few reading recommendations to help you take actions toward Indigenous Inclusion. This year I am referring you to a book to help turn well-meaning empathy to rational compassionate action. Complementing this book is a report that includes specific actions you can take or support when turning empathy into action. I think in these times when empathy is high, we need to remember only actions make a difference.

- ***Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion***; by Paul Bloom- The author takes the view that “empathy is surprisingly bad at making us good. It's a spotlight focusing on certain people in the here and now. This makes us care more about them, but it leaves us insensitive to the long-term consequences of our acts and blind as well to the suffering of those we do not or cannot empathize with”. While this might sound harsh, the author notes that the “subtitle of the book is 'The Case for Rational Compassion.' The 'rational' part refers to how we should make moral decisions, and it's pretty obvious what this means. But 'compassion' might be less clear.” The author says he is “referring here to concern for others, wanting their pain to go away, wanting their lives to improve”.
- ***Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls To Action*** – “Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts.” -Justice Murray Sinclair. <http://nctr.ca/reports.php>. For the third time, I am recommending reading this report, with specific attention to the Calls To Action. The report, which I recommended in 2016 and 2017, is so important to moving forward as a country for both Indigenous Peoples and all Canadians. It not only provides an excellent context to the truth that brought us to where we are at, but in the line of this year's challenge to act, the report includes Calls To Actions.

All the best to you and your families on June 21st, National Indigenous Peoples Day, an important day for all Canadians.

Keith Martell

President & Chief Executive Officer
First Nations Bank of Canada and FNB Trust