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### **What does Reconciliation between Indigenous and settler peoples mean to you?**

What does reconciliation mean to me? I am a white settler whose family has, for generations, profited from colonial violence. Because of this I believe that it is important to start by acknowledging (without taking up space) my place in perpetuating and benefiting from colonialism, educating myself, and listening to Indigenous people. It is also important to note that while settlers might have ideas about how to proceed, only indigenous people have the authority to decide if the process is sufficient.

I think one of the important actions we as settlers need to take when it comes to reconciliation is considering whether or not the term itself conveys the true meaning of our responsibility. Is it appropriate, when talking about the harm that the Canadian state has inflicted on Indigenous communities, to couch colonial violence in a word that suggests wrong has been done by both sides? Is it even possible to attempt to reconcile centuries of colonialism when we continue to occupy stolen land and use the force of our government to invade Indigenous territory? Has reconciliation become a feel-good facade we engage with to tell ourselves that we are making an effort without changing the structures that support colonial violence? We need to listen to how Indigenous people feel about the word "reconciliation" before we blithely throw the term around.

I believe that many white settlers grow up with a disconnected narrative; this willingness to distance ourselves by viewing reconciliation through a governmental and historical lens is a way of ignoring colonial responsibility. While the Canadian government certainly causes a great deal of harm to Indigenous people, settlers cannot abdicate our role as those who built and profit alongside the state. It is of utmost importance that we connect ourselves to colonialism, past and present, and the resulting gains we have accrued at the expense of Indigenous people. The ways in which we benefit from and perpetuate racism and anti-Indigenous violence. We need to recognise that we are not separate from colonization but its beneficiaries, and by this association, we are complicit in its actions. We must acknowledge the ways in which harm has been done, past and present, and actively work to support Indigenous people and decolonization.

Above all, I believe that this process must follow the wishes and protocols of Indigenous people. Too often settlers decide we know what is best when it comes to our relationship - while we should most certainly be doing the hard work, I believe it is vital that the needs of Indigenous communities guide the process. Settlers do not get to decide how to make reparations, or tell Indigenous people what should heal our relationship with them. It has historically been settler violence and paternalism toward Indigenous people that causes harm. If we as settlers are truly invested in reconciliation, reparations, and ending the violence of colonialism, we need to take action in ways that are appropriate as opposed to repeatedly forcing our version of what is best.