This annual report is divided into three main themes, “Reconciliation”, Restitution, and Abolition & Solidarity. These themes represent how Yellowhead has approached our work over the past year, guided by critically important social movements. Here, we share select highlights of our work from June 2020 - May 2021.
A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I did not expect to be writing another one of these Annual Report messages at home, still in the midst of a pandemic. Nor did I expect so much of our path as an organization to be shaped by it over the past year.

Though, I suppose it is less the pandemic that has shaped our work and more the injustices that the pandemic has laid bare, plus the responses to those injustices by emerging social movements.

The Land Back and “Shutdown Canada” movements challenged Canada’s land dispossession in new ways, while Black communities continued organizing effectively around police violence and abolition, drawing links to Indigenous experiences with structural racism. Towards the end of the year, renewed campaigns for reconciliation also emerged, and yet more questions were asked of Canada’s commitment to justice for residential school survivors.

We contributed to all these discussions and even led some of them.

As we did, our team grew. We welcomed new and brilliant Indigenous Associates and Research Fellows. We kept publishing our Briefs, too, including our milestone 100th! We launched the Cashback Red Paper. And, we helped change the name of our university! Or at the least, contributed to the process.

I suppose what I’ve learned over the past year is that our expectations can mean very little. Social change doesn’t wait for convenience, political will, or for pandemics to end. Communities can even keep growing and thriving despite it all. And that understanding offers some hard-earned hope.

Hayden King
Anishinaabe, Beausoleil First Nation
Executive Director, Yellowhead Institute
Our Growing Influence

- **638,317** PAGEVIEWS
  - 80% increase

- **163,256** SITE VISITS
  - 79% increase

- **25,715** DOWNLOADS of Resources & Tools
  - 60% increase

- **12,162** TWITTER FOLLOWERS
  - 80% increase

- **2,193** FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS
  - 61% increase

- **154+** MEDIA FEATURES & MENTIONS
  - 75% increase
From May 2020 to June 2021, we collaborated with 75 Indigenous writers and researchers, and 17 Indigenous artists and creatives to create over 70 briefs, reports, and community resources.

shaping change urgently (2020) by Kaya Joan. Artwork commissioned for the Yellowhead Special Report, A Culture of Exploitation: “Reconciliation” and the Institutions of Canadian Art
“Reconciliation”

The past six years have brought renewed focus on the concept of reconciliation.

Led by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s emphasis on transforming Canadian institutions, Indigenous people have demanded more from the so-called nation-to-nation relationship. While there is much to be cynical about, there has also been some movement, however modest. Yellowhead has intervened in these incremental shifts, holding governments accountable to their commitments and/or their lack of meaningful action.
This year marked the 5th anniversary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Following up from their 2019 TRC check-in, Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby once again provided an update on Canada’s progress on the Calls to Action. According to their analysis, not one Call to Action was completed in 2020, despite the fact that progress could have alleviated issues that Indigenous communities were facing (and continue to face) due to COVID-19. The impact of this regression in progress and lack of substantive change revealed in this report only becomes more stark when we look ahead to the ongoing discovery of thousands of children’s bodies on Indian Residential School grounds starting in June 2021.

As “reconciliation,” for better or worse, continues to be the key framework that many Canadians use to understand their relationship with Indigenous peoples, Yellowhead’s TRC check-in resources provide essential critical analysis not found elsewhere. They are consistently some of our most read, downloaded, and referenced reports.
In 2020, no additional Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action were completed.

<table>
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A Culture of Exploitation: "Reconciliation" and the Institutions of Canadian Art

by Jas Morgan

Over the last five years, Canadian museums and galleries have expressed increasing commitments to "reconciliation".

Through a series of interviews with cultural workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, this special report reviews the relationship between these institutions and Indigenous artists, finding a culture of exploitation. What will it take to right the relationship between galleries, museums, granting bodies and the Indigenous cultural workers they’ve historically exploited?

Yellowhead released a 15-Point Guide for change alongside the report, Standards of Achievement for the Relationship between Indigenous peoples and Cultural Institutions in Canada in order to provide practical guide for institutions and governments to begin reversing this exploitation and renewing the relationship. This report and guide elicited a high-level of engagement – requests for consultations, speaking opportunities, and anecdotal feedback about the report being shared within various cultural institutes speaks to its reach and impact.

“This is vital reading for all non-Indigenous cultural workers to understand the system we work in: let’s not replicate the nonsense we claim to want to ‘decolonize.’ Let’s listen.”
Creative collaborations play an important role in Yellowhead’s design and knowledge mobilization strategy. Engaging with Indigenous artists and featuring their work enhances our ability to amplify the key themes and topics we are sharing, and offers another accessible entry point into the research.

For our special report, *The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada: Lessons from B.C.*, we commissioned a piece from interdisciplinary artist, Bracken Hanuse Corlett (Wuikinuxv and Klahoose Nations). This special report – featuring contributions from six primarily Indigenous authors – considers the promise of B.C.’s UNDRIP legislation but also some of the challenges that have emerged, specifically around implementation.

**ARTIST STATEMENT**
Titled “Broken,” this piece is about systems and ways of knowing. The implementation of UNDRIP is a minimum standard that should have been in place long ago. Whether it is legally binding or not, I take a cynical approach to it, as it would be filtered through the same system that banned our Potlatches on the West Coast from 1885 to 1951. My family is in the process of throwing our first Potlatch within memory, and this directly ties to the ban that was put in place. The Tlakwa, or Copper is a significant symbol of the Potlatch. Breaking copper can be seen as an act of transgression, defiance or as a challenge. We are taking our coppers back into ceremony regardless of what is happening with systems in the outside world.
The lens through which Yellowhead supports communities is restitution.

We believe that Canadian governments and communities are obligated to return land, resources, and, yes, cash. This is the foundation of any renewed and fair relationship, so we shape much of our research around this concept. But in many ways, restitution means the revitalization of vibrant Indigenous life, too, which we also aim to foster through initiatives such as our Freedom School.

Picking up from *Land Back*, the first Red Paper by Yellowhead about the project of land reclamation, *Cash Back* looks at how the dispossession of Indigenous lands nearly destroyed Indigenous economic livelihoods. *Cash Back* is about restitution from the perspective of stolen wealth.

*Cash Back* began in November 2019 when Yellowhead convened 27 Indigenous leaders and allies for a two-day community workshop; it evolved to include 40+ people (over 50% Indigenous youth), six partnerships with Indigenous creatives, and the development of numerous accessible tools and resources in addition to the report, many of which were co-created with our collaborators.

This Red Paper was co-directed by Shiri Pasternak, Yellowhead Research Director and Naiomi Metallic (Listuguj Mi’gmaq First Nation), Yellowhead Board Member.

LEARN MORE
cashback.yellowheadinstitute.org
While Yellowhead has always prioritized creating accessible content, for *Cash Back*, we drew from our learnings from the *Land Back* Red Paper, and really focused on creating an engaging, dynamic, and informative online experience for this Red Paper — despite the limitations and challenges presented by the pandemic. The *Cash Back* website is an interactive experience that walks visitors through a summary of each report section, with related tools and resources; it also includes special features highlighting groundbreaking research on the Indian Trust Fund and the Hudson’s Bay Company.

We collaborated with six Indigenous artists, including four youth, on illustrations, educational comics, and animated videos. Their work was vital to bringing to life the complex policies and concepts in *Cash Back*.

**By the Numbers:**
(Two weeks post launch)

- 2,418 Report Downloads
- 507,176 Twitter Impressions, 976 likes, 588 retweets
- 11,103 Site Pageviews
“This new report from the always insightful @Yellowhead_ is an absolute must-read for anyone interested in addressing settler-colonialism in Canada and securing economic justice for Indigenous peoples. Powerful scholarship and an urgent call to action.”

“Read the incredible & profound report from @Yellowhead_. "Colonialism as fiscal policy" resonates so deeply. So many parallels to draw with occupied territories & colonized peoples the world over. This is the type of research that will guide us through climate crisis. #cdnpoli”

“Excellent use of media by @Yellowhead_ in the report to educate and explain the relationship between land and wealth theft of indigenous peoples. Recommended for all #educators to learn and teach in their classrooms!”

TORONTO STAR | MAY 12, 2021
‘Follow the money’: New report explores pathways to reparations for Indigenous people

CTV NEWS | MAY 16, 2021
‘Cash Back’: Report investigates what restitution for Indigenous land theft could look like

APTN TV | MAY 13, 2021
How dispossession of Indigenous lands nearly destroyed Indigenous Economies

MEDIA INDIGENA | MAY 15 & 24, 2021
CA$H BACK podcast, Parts 1 & 2 featuring Naiomi Metallic and Karihawkeron Tim Thompson

Illustration from ‘A Brief History of Centralization’ by Brandon Mitchell, (Mi’gmaq - Listuguj)
Reflecting the social context of summer 2020, this year’s Freedom School focused on themes of Land Back, solidarity, and direct action.

Due to COVID-19, Yellowhead hosted a scaled-down, local Freedom School that was held in September 2020 for eight Algonquin youth. It took place in Kitigan Zibi First Nation and at the Algonquin moose moratorium blockade that was happening at the time, just outside of Kitigan Zibi. Led by Shady Hafez, who co-led our first Freedom School in 2019 and is currently a Research Fellow with Yellowhead, this Freedom school included a mix of on the land and culture-based activities with presentations and discussions. Examples of activities included a session on Black and Indigenous Solidarity, a Moose Moratorium Art Build, hide tanning, and a discussion on critical legal perspectives on land claims.

Participants expressed the value of connection and learning, as well as fun and respite they felt throughout the Freedom School. We are committed to fostering these relationships and learning from their feedback as we plan forward for future Freedom Schools.

The Freedom School is an experience that fosters peer-to-peer learning and connection, with a vision of strengthening solidarity among this generation of leaders.
“The weekend was exceptional. I was given the opportunity to practice traditional teachings, learn about land title claims and an Anishinaabe economic framework from Indigenous experts, and support the Algonquin nation to assert jurisdiction over their territory.”

- FREEDOM SCHOOL YOUTH PARTICIPANT
The past year saw some of the most intense confrontations over land and resources in recent memory.

Yellowhead strived to amplify the voices of young Indigenous writers, thinkers, artists and activists involved in these campaigns. This past year, for much of the year, they took over our weekly Briefs page with urgency and action. 1492 Land Back Lane and the resistance of Mi’kmaw fishers to violence in their waters were two issues we followed closely. Both are at the heart of questions around land back, jurisdiction and the future of our collective relationship.

“I am humbled to have been able to share on current events in Mi’kmaw’i surrounding the first regulated #moderatelivelihood fishery. Wela’lin @Yellowhead_ for this wonderful opportunity. M’s~t No’kmaq.”
- HANNAH MARTIN

AUGUST 24, 2020
Statement from Concerned Haudenosaunee Women Regarding Injunctions at 1492 Land Back Lane

OCTOBER 7, 2020
Peace, Friendship and Fishing in Mi’kma’ki by Hannah Martin

OCTOBER 28, 2020
Open Letter from the Williams Family Regarding their Rights and Safety

SEPTEMBER 8, 2020
Yellowhead Statement Regarding Arrests at 1492 Land Back Lane

MARCH 30, 2021
Colonizers being Colonizers: Lobster Fishing & the Continued Oppression of L’nu’k in Mi’kma’ki by Melkita’n
“At such an important time in our shared history, treaty can help us re-imagine new and healthy forms of relationships, new possibilities.”

What role should the Numbered Treaties play in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic?

In June 2020, Yellowhead Institute released the special report *COVID-19, the Numbered Treaties & the Politics of Life* by Gina Starblanket (Cree/Saulteaux, Star Blanket Cree Nation) and Dallas Hunt (Cree, Wapsewsipi - Swan River First Nation). This report provides an analysis of the medicine chest and healthcare clauses in the Numbered Treaties, arguing that they represent a politic of life that, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to be needed more than ever. This report highlights how the competing interpretations of treaties continues to be a point of tension between First Nation and settler expectations when it comes to imagining the full scope of what restitution could, and should, entail. Moreover, it encourages us to shift the treaty paradigm towards one of mutual aid, support and care.

This Special Report was released with the resource, “An Annotated Guide to the (Mal)Interpretation of Confederation Era Treaties in Canada.” This factsheet uses a generic version of a treaty to explain the difference in expectations between settlers and First Nations by breaking down specific language and clauses.

400 downloads
As hopeful about the Land Back movement as we were last year, the campaign for justice among Black and racialized communities inspired us to learn more and find ways to build solidarity across communities.

Shared experiences with police violence fostered a mutual desire for a future without incarceration and making links between communities. To that end, Yellowhead devoted significant space to new friends and collaborators to help us think and breathe together.
We have learned that police violence doesn't exist in a vacuum but, rather, that violence is a symptom of structural conditions of white supremacy, capitalism and, of course, settler colonialism.

Many of our most-read Yellowhead briefs released in the summer of 2020 explore how these forces work together and how they might be pried apart. The production of these briefs is representative of our commitment to addressing important issues of the time, amplifying the voices of researchers, educators, artists and writers who have deep ties to, and critical perspectives on these issues, and sharing content in a way that supports to the movement of learning into action.

Select Related Briefs

- **JUNE 2, 2020**
  - To Breathe Together: Co-Conspirators for Decolonial Futures
    - by Sefanit Habtom & Megan Scribe (Ininiw iskwew, Norway House Cree Nation)

- **JUNE 27, 2020**
  - Abolish the Police: The Financial Cost of Law Enforcement in Prairie Cities
    - by Emily Riddle (nehiyaw, Alexander First Nation)

- **JULY 15, 2020**
  - Police Brutality in Canada: A Symptom of Structural Racism and Colonial Violence
    - by Krista Stelkia (Syilx/Tlingit)

- **AUGUST 10, 2020**
  - An Indigenous Abolitionist Study Guide
    - by the Toronto Abolition Convergence

- **JANUARY 28, 2021**
    - by Etanda Arden (Afro-Indigenous)
The timeliness and relevance of the content we publish is reflected, in part, in the feedback we receive and the number of times the briefs are accessed.

Krista Stelkia’s brief on police brutality is our top read brief of the year with over 51,000 page views.

The Indigenous Abolitionist Study Guide has been accessed over 33,000 times.

“I am currently reading through [the Abolition Study Guide] with a study group I formed...and it has been an enlightening experience that’s given me some new tools with which to make change.”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER FEEDBACK

“Unmaking is a desire for worlds in which Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous peoples can breathe and live full lives.”

- Sefanit Habtom & Megan Scribe
“THE ANSWER TO THESE CHALLENGES IS PRISON ABOLITION. Visioning a world where inequalities are resolved by investing in housing, healthcare, and education – all investments that are required for community safety. It is not utopian, but simply **fair and just**.”

- RAI REECE
Image by Tsista Kennedy (Oneida and Anishinaabe). This artwork accompanied Karina Vernon's Yellowhead brief, *Black-Indigenous Futures In Art, Literature And #BlackLivesMatter.*
Who We Are

**BOARD OF ADVISORS**

Emily Riddle
nehiyaw iskwew, Treaty Six, Alexander First Nation (Kipohtakaw)

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nehiyaw iskwew, Treaty Six, Saddle Lake Cree Nation (Onihcikiskwapiwin)

Judith Sayers
Hupačasath First Nation

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Gwich’in, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

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Tlingit, Kwanlin Dun First Nation

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John Hill
Oneida Nation, Turtle Clan

Robert Houle
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Anishinaabe, Garden River First Nation

Samuel Wong
Métis

Hayden King
Anishinaabe, Beausoleil First Nation Executive Director

Shiri Pasternak
Research Director

Yumi Numata
Operations & Communications Manager
In October 2020, Yellowhead grew our community by welcoming eight new Research Fellows. They join 13 fellows from our first 2018 cohort.

2020 - 2022 Cohort:

Shady Hafez
Algonquin Anishinaabe & Syrian, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg

Robert Houle
Wapeseewpi (Swan River) First Nation, Treaty 8

Minnawaanigoiizhigok a.k.a Dawnis Kennedy
Waabizheshi Marten Clan, Anishinaabe Nation & descendant of Canadian settlers

Andrea Landry
Anishinaabe
Pays Plat First Nation

Elisa Levi
Chippewas of Nawash First Nation

Fallon Simard
Anishinaabe-Métis

Dr. Gina Starblanket
Cree/Saulteaux, Star Blanket Cree Nation, Treaty 4 Territory

Riley Yesno
Anishinaabe
Eabametoong First Nation

2018 - 2022 Cohort

John Cutfeet
Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (K)First Nation

Ellen Gabriel
Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), Kanehsatá:ke

Christina Gray
Ts’msyen member of Lax Kw’alaams, Dene, and Métis from Lutsel K’e

Shalene Jobin
Cree and Métis, Red Pheasant Cree Nation, Treaty Six

Tanya Kappo
Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation

Dëneeze Nakehk’o
Dene, Liidlii Kue First Nation

Sherry Pictou
Mi’kmaw, L’sitkuk, Bear River First Nation

Brock Pitawanakwat
Anishinaabe, Whitefish River First Nation

Raven Sinclair
Nehiyaw (Cree), George Gordon First Nation, Treaty 4 Territory

Courtney Skye
Mohawk, Turtle Clan
Six Nations of the Grand River Territory

Karihwakeron Tim Thompson
Mohawk Nation, Bear Clan Family, Wahta, Mohawk Territory

Vanessa Watts
Anishinaabe and Mohawk

Tara Williamson
Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Gaabishkigamaag

Research Fellows play an essential role in the development of Yellowhead, as advisors, representatives, and collaborators.
Acknowledgments

As Yellowhead grows, some of our team members move on. We want to recognize Shiri Pasternak, our founding Research Director, who stepped down from this role at the end of June 2021. Shiri’s contributions to Yellowhead are immense and will continue to play an important part in our work. We also recognize Peter Di Gangi, a founding board member who served for three years.

We continue to benefit from the unwavering support of Dean Pamela Sugiman in the Faculty of Arts, as well as all of our Arts colleagues. Partnerships with the Laidlaw and Inspirit Foundations have continued to allow us to work on policy, social, and cultural issues in creative and unique ways. We are also grateful for those individuals who choose to donate to Yellowhead in support of our work.

We look up to all our collaborators who were arrested and jailed this past year, students at XU who risked their degrees to demand change, and residential school survivors who finally made Canadians listen.

Thank you to these friends, cousins, and colleagues for motivating us to keep pushing.