



JUNE

2020

—  
MAY

2021

GENERATING CRITICAL  
INDIGENOUS  
POLICY PERSPECTIVES



YELLOWHEAD INSTITUTE

A Year  
in Review.

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Executive Director

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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

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**163,256**  
**SITE VISITS**  
80% increase

**638,317**  
**PAGEVIEWS**  
80% 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*

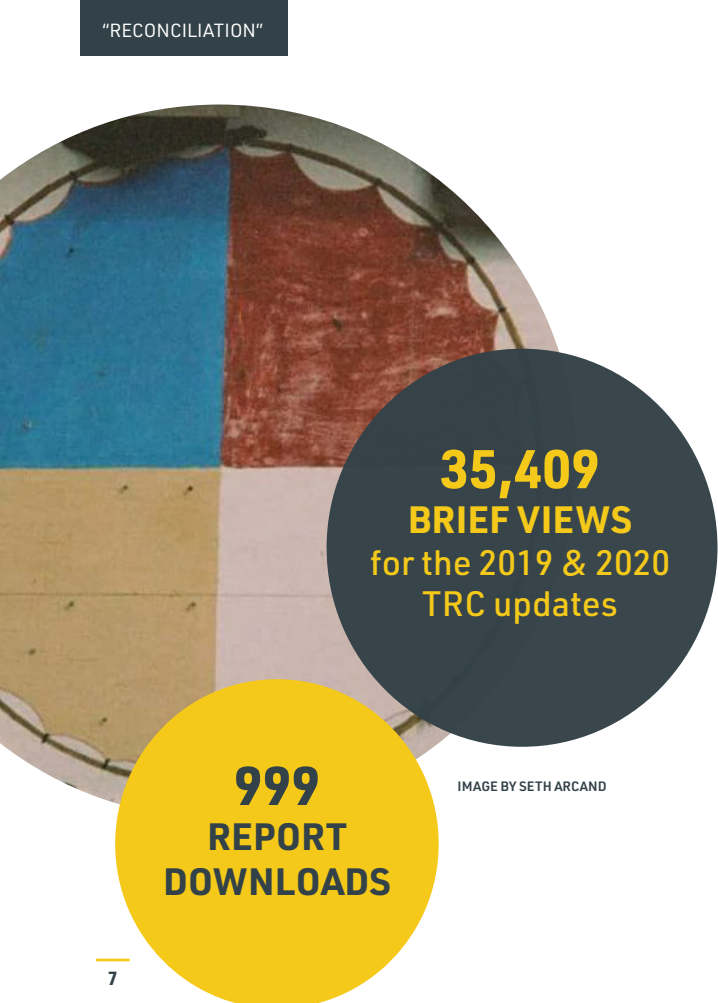


# “Reconciliation”



**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.



**35,409**  
**BRIEF VIEWS**  
for the 2019 & 2020  
TRC updates

**999**  
**REPORT**  
**DOWNLOADS**

IMAGE BY SETH ARCAND

## SPECIAL REPORT

### **Calls to Action Accountability:**

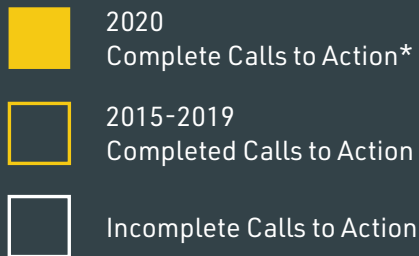
### **A 2020 Status Update on Reconciliation**

by Eva Jewell (Anishinaabekwe, Deshkan Zibiing) and Ian Mosby

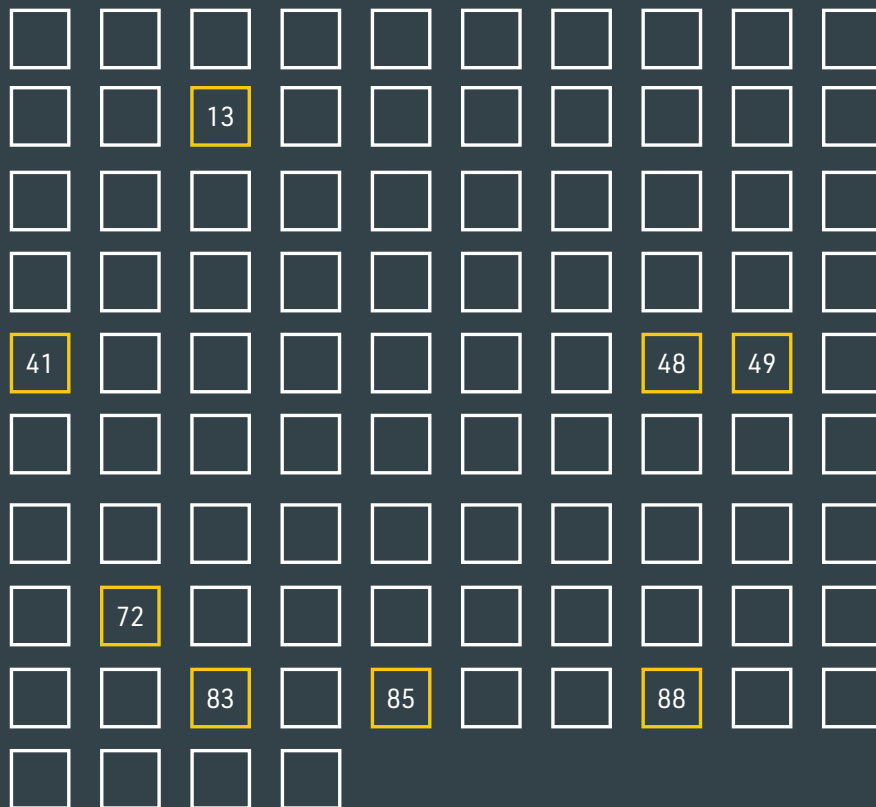
**This year marked the 5th anniversary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).**

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.**





## SPECIAL REPORT

### 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.

**894**  
REPORT  
DOWNLOADS

"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."

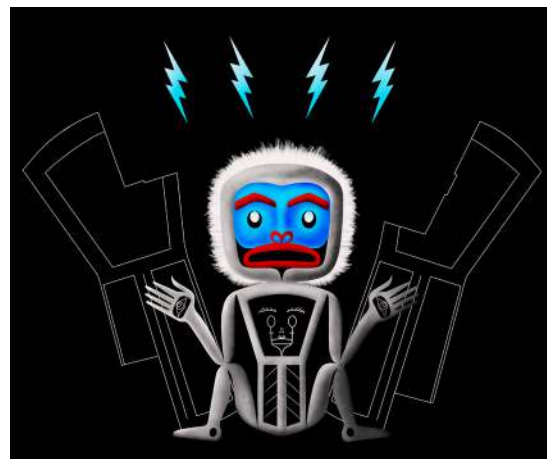


**Creative collaborations play an important role in Yellowhead's design and knowledge mobilization strategy. Engaging with Indigenous artists and featuring their work enhances our ability to amplify the key themes and topics we are sharing, and offers another accessible entry point into the research.**

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.



Broken by Bracken Hanuse Corlett

**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.

# Restitution



## Yellowhead Institute Red Paper



**On May 12, 2021, Yellowhead Institute launched our second Red Paper, *Cash Back*.**

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.

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*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 Naomi Metallic (Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation), Yellowhead Board Member.

### LEARN MORE

[cashback.yellowheadinstitute.org](https://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!"



Illustration from 'A Brief History of Centralization' by Brandon Mitchell, (Mi'gmaq - Listuguj)

## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

**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 Naomi Metallic and Karihwakeron Tim Thompson



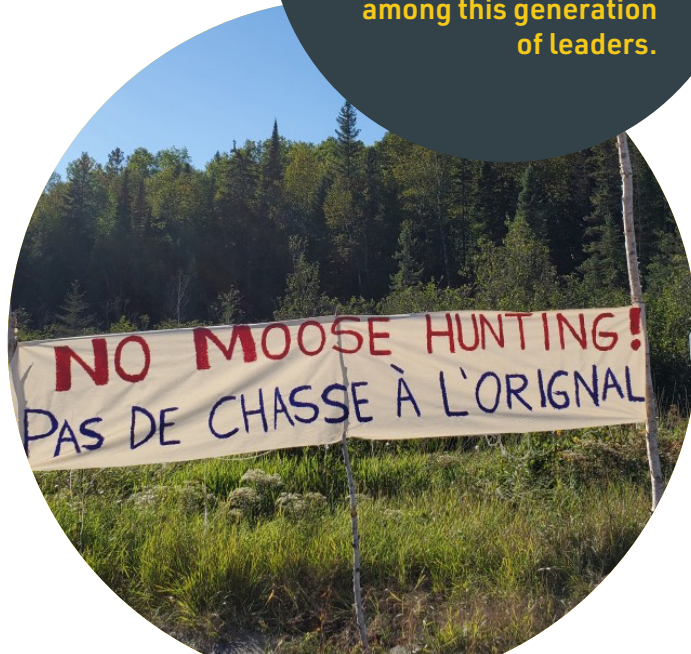
## Kitigan Zibi Freedom School

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'kmaq 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'kma'ki 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





IMAGE BY JOI T. ARCAND (NEHIYAW, MUSKEG LAKE CREE NATION) - TOWN HALL, MARCELIN, SASKATCHEWAN (2009)

  
**400**  
 downloads

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.

"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, Wapsewsiipi - 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.

# Abolition & Solidarity



**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.



## ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL RACISM

**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 iskweu, 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**  
**Writing Myself into Existence: An Essay on the Erasure of Black-Indigenous Identity in Canadian Education**

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





Design and data visualization play integral roles in Yellowhead's knowledge mobilization strategy. In line with our commitment to creating accessible content, Yellowhead released a series of infographics along with Rai Reece's brief, *Carceral Redlining: White Supremacy is a Weapon of Mass Incarceration for Indigenous and Black Peoples in Canada*, which have been downloaded and shared extensively. Visit Yellowhead's online **Community Resource Library** to see more of our tools and resources!

**"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

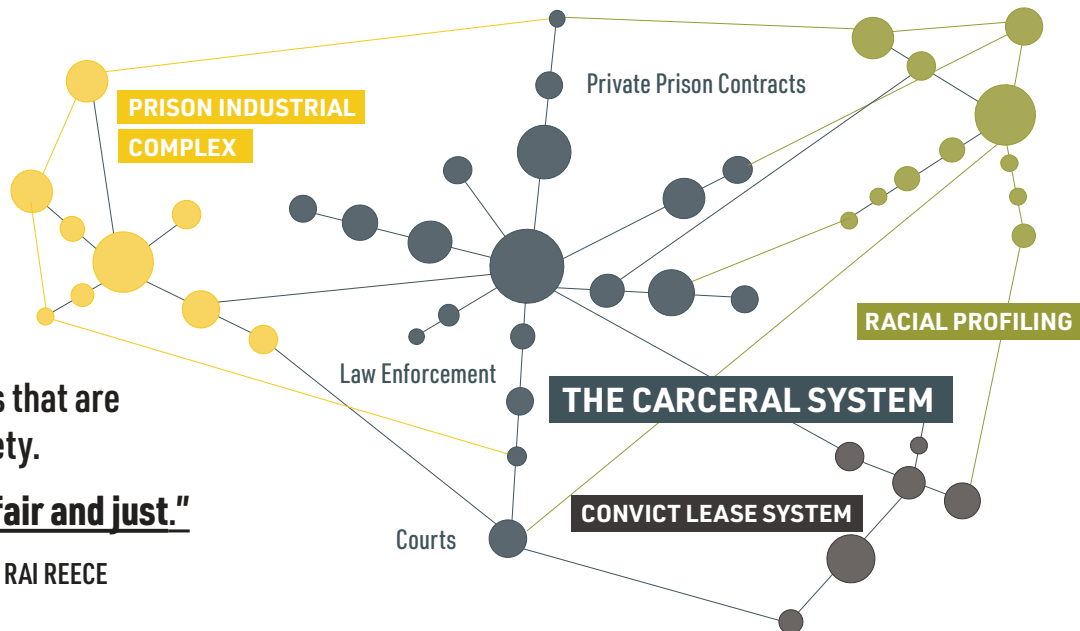




Image by Tsista Kennedy (Oneida and Anishinaabe). This artwork accompanied Karina Vernon's Yellowhead brief, *Black-Indigenous Futures In Art, Literature And #BlackLivesMatter*.



# Who We Are



## BOARD OF ADVISORS

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

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

Judith Sayers  
Hupačasath First Nation

Kris Statnyk  
Gwich'in, Vuntut Gwitchin  
First Nation

Naiomi W. Metallic  
Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation,  
Gespe'gewa'gi

Peter Di Gangi

## ASSOCIATES

Damien Lee  
Fort William First Nation

Eva Jewell  
Anishinaabekwe,  
Deshkan Ziiibiing  
(Chippewas of  
the Thames First Nation)

Jas Morgan  
Cree-Métis-Saulteaux

Megan Scribe  
Ininiw iskwew,  
Norway House Cree Nation

Anne Spice  
Tlingit, Kwanlin Dun  
First Nation

## RESEARCHERS & COLLABORATORS

Kelsi-Leigh Balaban  
Métis

Jasmyn Galley  
Wiikwemkoong Unceded  
Territory & London, UK

Ethan Guthro  
Métis

Mihskakwan James Harper  
Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation,  
Treaty 8

John Hill  
Oneida Nation, Turtle Clan

Robert Houle  
Wapsewsipi (Swan River)  
First Nation, Treaty 8 Territory

Stephanie Matchiwita  
Anishinaabe,  
Garden River First Nation

Samuel Wong  
Métis

## OPERATIONS

Hayden King  
Anishinaabe,  
Beausoleil First Nation  
Executive Director

Shiri Pasternak  
Research Director

Yumi Numata  
Operations &  
Communications Manager



## RESEARCH FELLOWS

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  
Wapsewsipi (Swan River)  
First Nation, Treaty 8

Minnawaanigogizhigok  
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  
Inninuwig (KI) First Nation

Ellen Gabriel  
Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk),  
Kanehsatà: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

Dëneze 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

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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.





**TWITTER**

@yellowhead\_

**INSTAGRAM**

@yellowheadinstitute

**FACEBOOK**

fb.me/yellowheadinstitute

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yellowheadinstitute.org