

# TRANSFORMATIVE RECONCILIATION AND THE QUESTION OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

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The recent discovery of unmarked graves of children in several former Indian residential schools across Canada serves as a case study and a prompt for this reflective article. The author considers what it means for Canadians to take collective responsibility for things they have not done. First distinguishing moral responsibility from collective responsibility, and restorative reconciliation from transformative reconciliation, the author then identifies social actions that distract us from conscientiously talking about and taking collective responsibility for past wrongs, and addresses actions that enable transformative reconciliation. The article concludes by suggesting a unique role for all who seek to cultivate a culture of peace and the possibility of a new “we.”

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## INTRODUCTION

We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion.... This is the reality in which we live.<sup>1</sup>

As a person of colour, I came to Canada in 1974, and I chose to receive my Canadian citizenship in 1983. This reflective piece is my way of trying to understand my responsibility as a Canadian citizen within the particular context of the recent discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves of Indigenous