

PhD and MA Fellowships Public Opinion and Reconciliation

The [Department of Political Science](#) at The University of Western Ontario is pleased to invite prospective students to apply for one PhD or one MA fellowship as part of their application to pursue graduate studies in our department. Selected fellows will work on research projects that support or are closely aligned with Drs. [Christopher Alcantara](#) and [Laura Stephenson](#)'s SSHRC-funded project on "The Determinants of Public Support for Indigenous Reconciliation Policies".

Each fellowship will provide the student with \$10,000 per year on top of the funding package offered by the department. The PhD fellowship is renewable for up to four years, subject to ongoing satisfactory performance. The MA fellowship is non-renewable. The fellowship will be paid through some combination of scholarship money and research assistance salary as determined by the supervisors.

How to Apply:

Students must apply and be selected for entry into the department of political science's PhD or MA program. To apply for a fellowship, please send the following materials by separate cover to Dr. Alcantara (calcanta@uwo.ca) with the subject line, "Reconciliation Fellowship", before February 1, 2026.

- Cover letter (1-2 pages, single spaced) that indicates:
 - how you define reconciliation, and your interest in public opinion or public policy,
 - your educational and career goals,
 - and any substantive, theoretical, and methodological expertise that would benefit this project.
- CV listing any relevant experience, training, publications, or attributes that would benefit the project, and which speak to your ability to successfully complete a graduate degree at Western.

About the Project:

Settler countries are rapidly approaching moments of reckoning. As Indigenous communities are increasingly successful at raising public awareness about the shaky constitutional foundations of their "host" countries, state elites have begun to respond with initiatives that promote reconciliation. Yet Indigenous reconciliation remains slow in many countries, including Canada, because many citizens seem supportive only of symbolic measures and not substantive ones. Surprisingly, there are few studies that have systematically investigated public attitudes towards

reconciliation policies in Canada. To that end, this project asks: 1) What do Canadians believe reconciliation with Indigenous peoples means? 2) What factors shape individual-level support for different reconciliation initiatives? 3) What are the implications for encouraging increased public support for Indigenous reconciliation in Canada?

To answer these questions, we draw upon our previous research and theories of group conflict, rational choice, political psychology, racism, and Canadian nationalism to build an analytical framework for investigating the nature and determinants of Canadian public opinion towards Indigenous reconciliation. We aim to empirically deploy this framework in three stages. First, we will conduct a series of focus groups to generate a rich dataset on the various ways that Canadians understand reconciliation and why they might support reconciliation policies. Next, we will draw upon those data to develop a theoretical framework and to identify and test causal mechanisms by administering a large-scale, national survey to Canadians. Finally, we will take our findings from that survey and test them comparatively by administering large-scale, national surveys to citizens in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, three countries that have similar settler pasts, but which vary in terms of their reconciliation journey with Indigenous communities.