

# EVERY CHILD MATTERS

RECONCILIATION THROUGH EDUCATION

# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



CANADA'S  
**HISTORY**



National Centre for  
Truth and Reconciliation  
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

# Foreword

In an address to teachers, parents and community members at Rideau High School in Ottawa on the Critical Role of Education in Reconciliation, Senator Murray Sinclair famously said “Education got us here. Education is what will get us out.”

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report that outlined its 94 recommendations to advance the process of reconciliation in Canada. Since then, teachers throughout the country have answered the call. Teachers have shown an authentic desire to share the full history of residential schools - and their enduring legacy - with their students. They are leaders in this journey, inspiring us to build meaningful relationships, confront difficult histories, and envision a better way forward for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.

Students - leaders in their own right - have demonstrated exceptional capacity to bridge communities and generations. Through their own learning and actions, students have shown exceptional courage in standing up for a future that is more just and equitable.

The publication *Every Child Matters: Reconciliation Through Education* and this complementary educator’s guide are designed to support teachers and students in their learning journey. The activities are intended to encourage student inquiry and investigation, while also supporting action-based learning.

We would like to thank all of the contributors and advisors who have shared their work and contributed to this important project.

We also offer sincere appreciation to TD Bank Group for their assistance in extending the reach of the publication *Every Child Matters: Reconciliation Through Education* into classrooms across Canada.

Canada’s National History Society with the  
National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

# Introduction

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) issued an urgent call to Ministries of Education, Faculties of Education, school districts, administrators, and teachers across the country to develop curricula so that students learn about residential schools, the contributions of Indigenous peoples, and the legacy of colonialism in Canada. Senator Murray Sinclair famously stated, "Education got us here. Education is what will get us out."

It must be acknowledged that many Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators across Canada had been teaching and learning about "truth" and "reconciliation" in the many years before the TRC's important work. However, in the five years since the Calls to Action were released, an unprecedented number of teachers and students are learning about residential schools, the strength and resilience of Survivors, and the many contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and communities. Moreover, students are learning that colonialism is not a chapter in a history book, but an ongoing, intentional, and racist system that continues to discriminate against Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Across the country, teachers and students are learning about our collective history and both past and current inequities. They are sending letters to the Prime Minister demanding equitable education funding for students on reserves. They are bringing their bears to school on Bear Witness Day in honour of Jordan River Anderson, the five-year-old boy who died in a Winnipeg hospital, never spending a day in his family home in Norway House Cree Nation. They are learning about land defenders and water keepers. They are writing letters of support to communities such as Grassy Narrows, Rapid Lake, and the Wet'suwet'en Nation. They are seeing themselves as partners in historic and modern Treaty relationships. Children and youth across Canada are learning about historical truths, connecting them to current injustices, and taking meaningful reconciliACTIONS.

As teachers, we are honoured to share these lessons with you. Each lesson is based on one of the seven teachings, reminding all of us that love, truth, wisdom, humility, courage, respect, and honesty truly matter. It is our hope that these lessons help you and your students live out these teachings, in your classrooms, in your actions, and in your everyday lives.

Connie Wyatt Anderson  
Lisa Howell  
Meredith Rusk  
Sylvia Smith  
Anne Tenning

## Contributors

**Connie Wyatt Anderson** is a long-time educator from The Pas, Manitoba. She has been involved in the creation of student learning materials and curricula at the provincial, national, and international level, and has contributed to a number of textbooks, teacher support guides and school publications. She was one of the instructional designers for the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba's education initiative and remains part of their pedagogical and facilitation team. Connie was awarded the 2014 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching, and in 2017 was recognized as the Manitoba Métis Federation's Distinguished Leader in Education.

**Lisa Howell** lives on the unceded lands of the Anishinaabe people in Ottawa. She is a passionate elementary school teacher, as well as a part-time professor and PhD Candidate at the University of Ottawa in the Faculty of Education. Lisa is honoured to be the recipient of a "Partner in Indigenous Education" Award from Indspire, as well as a Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. She is committed to learning, living, working, and teaching towards good relations with students, colleagues, communities, and schools.

**Meredith Rusk** is Echo Dene from the Fort Nelson First Nations. She presently works in the Secwèpemc territory for the North Okanagan-Shuswap School District as the Indigenous Resource Helping Teacher. Much of her thirty-two years of teaching has been within Indigenous communities and programs. She has a Master of Education from Simon Fraser University and is presently working on her doctoral program in the Philosophy of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of British Columbia in Kelowna. She is a workshop facilitator for the British Columbia Teachers Federation.

**Sylvia Smith** is an educator with more than thirty years experience in the classroom, and resides with her two daughters, partner, and grandson on unceded and unsurrendered Algonquin Territory in Ottawa. In 2011 she won a Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching for "Project of Heart," an Indian Residential School commemoration project. In 2015 she was inducted as an Honorary Witness to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She is the director of Justice for Indigenous Women, and in her spare time, volunteers with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa.

**Anne Tenning** is a member of the Stz'uminus First Nation and has been a K-12 educator for 20 years with specializations in Science, English Language Arts, and Indigenous Education. She is the District Principal of Indigenous Education and Curriculum in SD83, North Okanagan-Shuswap. Anne received the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2008 and the UVic Distinguished Alumni Award for the Faculty of Education in 2015. Anne is passionate about increasing Indigenous perspectives and understandings in education, particularly the lasting legacy of residential schools. Anne's mother, Elizabeth Tenning, is a survivor of the Kuper Island Indian Residential School.

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# Demonstrating Respect through Understanding and Taking Action (ReconciliAction)

**Author:** Meredith Rusk

**Grade Level:** 7-9

**Themes:**

- Indigenous Culture and Perspectives
- Decolonization
- First Nation, Inuit & Métis
- Indigenous Spirituality
- Social Justice

**Subject Areas:**

- Social Studies

**Overview:** This set of lessons encourages students to consider multiple perspectives of historical events and to explore what it means to be an ally. Through seeking an understanding of the history of the residential school system and Indigenous perspectives and points of view, students will begin to move towards engaging in activities that can guide them towards reconciliACTION.

**Time Required:** Three, 1-hour lessons. Lessons 1 and 2 may be completed in advance of the Every Child Matters virtual event. Lesson 3 may be completed following the event.

**Historical Thinking Concepts:**

- Establish historical significance
- Analyze cause and consequence
- Take historical perspective

**Learning Outcomes: Students will...**

- Describe the history of residential schools by organizing a timeline
- Explain the significance of colonial actions on Indigenous peoples
- Investigate events in Canadian history and analyze different points of view
- Explore what it means to be an ally
- Construct a plan of action towards reconciliation

## **Background Information:**

Residential schools were more than places to educate Indigenous children. They played a huge role in the colonization of Indigenous lands and peoples and have left a legacy of abuse and trauma. These schools were not the only attempts at assimilating or colonizing Indigenous people. Many events in history, and even today, demonstrate the ongoing issues of systemic racism and colonialism.

In order to move forward together, it is important for students to understand that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people may have different perspectives on historical or contemporary events.

For example, since contact, concepts of land have been viewed differently between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. For thousands of years the First Peoples of what is now Canada have maintained interconnected webs of relationships with the lands and all things of the land. Sandra Styres (2017, 2019) placed importance on land by using a capital "L." She refers to Land as more than a place, but as a living being that encompasses philosophies, principles, and ways of being. Indigenous people, being in relationship with the Land, have a responsibility to be the caretakers so the gifts of the land can be available for future generations. Elmer Ghostkeeper (1995) has referred to the way Indigenous Peoples live "with" the land rather than "off" the land. The European newcomers to this place viewed land as a way to build financial gain through its rich resources - from fish to furs to forest.

Care needs to be taken when defining allyship. Allies for reconciliation should understand that to be respectful they need to position Indigenous voices as first and foremost. It is important that allies work with Indigenous peoples and take time to understand their culture and knowledge systems as much as possible. There are times when Indigenous people need to take action in their own way and on their own, with allies observing and supporting. Educators and learners must be prepared to make mistakes, but we will all learn to move forward and become more respectful with each step. It is important to take action if we want to move towards reconciliation.

## Lesson Activities

### Part 1: Timeline of Indian Residential Schools

1. Have students create a timeline of residential schools by choosing one of the following activities:
  - a. Have students examine this [condensed timeline \(1620-2008\) from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation](#). As the last date is 2008, have them add to, or update, the timeline so that it becomes current.  
  
**Suggested resources:** [Indian Residential Schools: A Chronology](#) from LawNow.org; [Timeline: Residential Schools](#) from Historica Canada; [A timeline of residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) from CBC
  - b. As students watch the video, [Residential Schools in Canada: A Timeline from Historica Canada](#), have them fill in the timeline table in Handout 1.
2. Have students discuss their experiences of engaging in the timeline of residential schools. Examples of discussion questions:
  - a. What event, and date, stood out for you? Why was this surprising?
  - b. How does looking at a timeline of the residential school system help to build understanding and break down racial attitudes?
  - c. In what ways might this timeline stretch into the future? How long do you think it might take to reach a point when these events are resolved? What will it take to resolve them?

### Part 2: Two Eyed Seeing: Taking Two Perspectives on Historical Events

1. Discuss with the students what perspective or different points of view mean. You should also introduce the concept of historical perspective, which involves trying to view the past through the social, intellectual, and emotional lenses of the time. You may choose to use the following video clips: [Perspective Taking](#), [Historical Perspective](#), [Too Quick to Judge](#), [The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs](#).
2. Assign a historical event from Handout 2 to individual students or small groups. Give them time to investigate the event and have them determine possible perspectives that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people would have taken at the time. They can record their notes on the handout. After the students have had time to investigate the event and determine points of view, discuss as a class. Remind students to pay particular attention to different perspectives towards land.

#### Questions to consider:

- How was this event significant to each group?
- Did the event benefit one group more than the other?
- How did this affect Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the future?



**Extension:**

Have students research a historical or contemporary topic and present multiple perspectives on the topic. Students should list the resources they used to better understand and highlight the different points-of-view on these topics. They should also develop strong inquiry questions that help guide them to think about different perspectives.

Examples could include:

- The Discovery of Oil (Ontario, 1857; Alberta 1914)
- The Gold Rush
- Women of British descent gaining the right to vote in 1918
- Canada's sesquicentennial celebrations in 2017
- Coastal GasLink and Wet'suwet'en pipeline conflict (2018-present)

**General Notes:**

When using source material (websites, articles, etc), remind students to consider the perspective of the person who prepared the materials.

Each section contains a time in Canadian history where students are to determine a point of view for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Although people from different cultures can also see things from the same point of view, for this activity, students are to contrast Indigenous and European perspectives of land. It is not intended for them to make judgements or to take sides, but rather to identify different perspectives. (They can make ethical judgements during the discussion after this activity.)

**Questions of inquiry:**

- In what ways did/do Indigenous and non-Indigenous people view land differently?
- How did local historical events benefit European settlers while negatively affecting Indigenous lands, communities, and people?
- Have students read the [United Nations definition of genocide](#). Assess to what extent residential schools were a form of genocide?
- In what ways does/can ReconciliAction move us as a community or nation towards social justice and change in Canadian society?

**Part 3: What is an ally and how do we move towards ReconciliAction?**

1. After participating in the Every Child Matters virtual event, have students read over and discuss the [TRC Calls to Action for Education](#)
2. Have students brainstorm what reconciliation could mean for them individually, for their class, for their school, or for their community. You may choose to use Handout 4 and have them write words, phrases or draw small symbols or pictures. You could also record their sharing in a large circle on a whiteboard or chart paper.
3. Introduce the word ReconciliAction as the "doing" of reconciliation and have students

brainstorm ideas of how to turn their circle (or ideas) into action. This does not have to be a major project. It can be anything from creating hearts with messages of hope to display in the classroom or school or creating a video to share with others. Their ideas, or plans, can be recorded on the bottom of Handout 4.

You can refer to [projectofheart.ca](http://projectofheart.ca) for ideas of what students across Canada have done for ReconcilAction.

**Extension Activities:**

- Art Activity - students create posters on historical perspective or their reconciliAction ideas.
- English Language Arts - students create poetry on residential schools or reconciliation

**Additional Resources:**

[An Overview of the Indian Residential School System \(Ontario\)](#)

[Downie/Wenjack Foundation](#)

[Where Are the Children](#)

## HANDOUT 1

Date	Event	Significance
<b>1831</b>		
<b>1844</b>		
<b>1876</b>		
<b>1883</b>		
<b>1920</b>		
<b>1922</b>		
<b>1950s</b>		
<b>1966</b> (Oct. 26)		
<b>1969</b>		
<b>1990</b> (Oct. 30)		
<b>1996</b>		
<b>1996</b> (Nov. 1)		
<b>2008</b>		
<b>2015</b> (June 2)		

Date	Event	Significance
<b>1831</b>	Mohawk Institute becomes boarding school	first government funded residential school in Canada
<b>1844</b>	Bagot Report	recommends Indigenous children be separated from their parents in order to assimilate into non-Indigenous culture
<b>1876</b>	Indian Act	gives Canadian governments control over Indigenous (Indian) rights and culture
<b>1883</b>	Prime Minister authorizes residential schools	Macdonald authorizes process of taking Indigenous children away from families to cut all ties to their cultures
<b>1920</b>	Residential schools become mandatory	Indigenous students aged 7-16 have to attend residential schools by law under the <i>Indian Act</i>
<b>1922</b>	Dr. Bryce publishes <i>The Story of a National Crime</i>	Dr. Bryce exposes the governments of Indigenous children's health and welfare, including the high death rate at residential schools
<b>1950s</b>	The residential school system expands north	Inuit children are included in the residential school system
<b>1966</b> (Oct. 26)	Chanie Wenjack dies	a formal investigation is launched into Chanie's death and the jury finds that residential schools cause tremendous emotional and psychological problems
<b>1969</b>	Government takes over remaining residential schools from churches	remaining residential schools continues to run, but are now totally under the control of the Canadian government
<b>1990</b> (Oct. 30)	Phil Fontaine calls for public inquiry	Fontaine speaks publicly about his abuse and calls for a public inquiry into residential schools, which the Canadian government initiates a year later
<b>1996</b>	Gordon's Indian Residential School closes	this is the last residential school to close in Canada
<b>1996</b> (Nov. 1)	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Final Report	Recommends inquiry into effects of residential school, including language loss and trauma.
<b>2008</b>	Prime Minister of Canada apologizes for residential schools	formal apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper; followed by provincial apologies
<b>2015</b> (June 2)	The Truth and Reconciliation Commission formal summary	The Truth and Reconciliation Commission release 94 Call to Action aimed at addressing the legacy of the residential school system

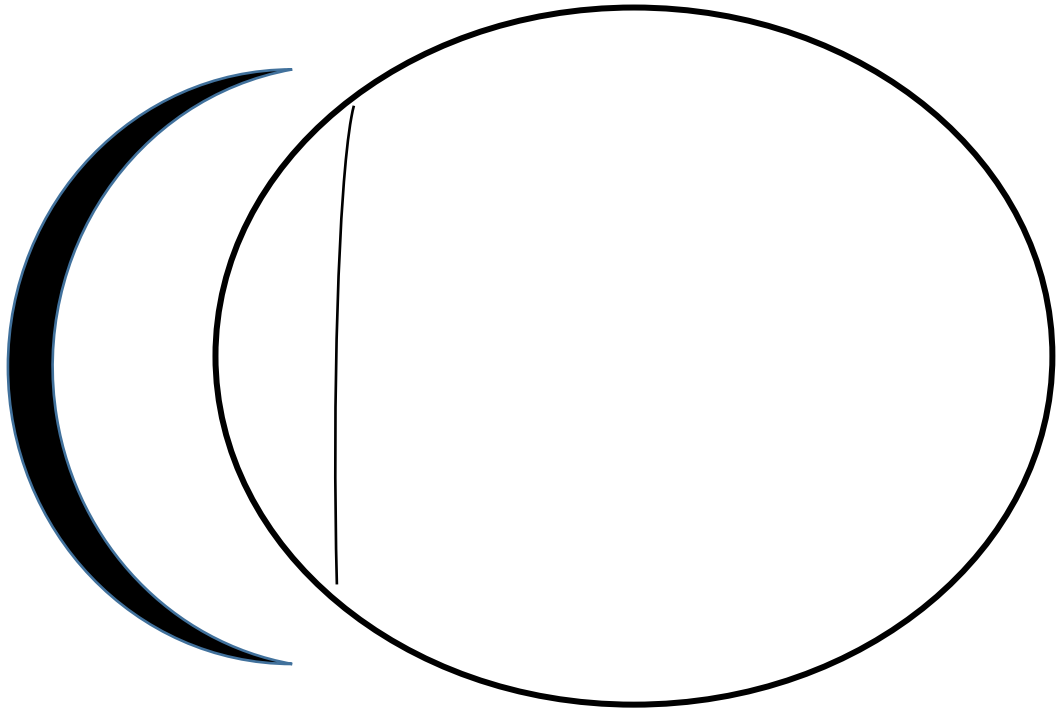
## Handout 2

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Indian Residential Schools</b> (1870s -1996)</p> <p><b>Think about:</b> What was the Canadian government's intent when creating the residential school system and removing Indigenous children from their families? How did this affect the communities and families?</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> "History of Residential Schools in Canada," CBC <a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-history-of-residential-schools-in-canada-1.702280">https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-history-of-residential-schools-in-canada-1.702280</a></p> <p>"History of Residential Schools," Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada <a href="https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/history-of-residential-schools/">https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/history-of-residential-schools/</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Last Spike - Canadian Pacific Railway</b> (Craigellachie, BC; Nov. 7, 1885)</p> <p><b>Think about:</b> What were benefits of completing a railway connecting the western and eastern Canada? How were the Indigenous people affected by this railway system?</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> "The Last Spike", The Canadian Encyclopedia <a href="https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-last-spike">https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-last-spike</a></p> <p>"The Rail, from Sea to Sea", The Canadian Museum of History <a href="https://www.historymuseum.ca/history-hall/the-rail-from-sea-to-sea/">https://www.historymuseum.ca/history-hall/the-rail-from-sea-to-sea/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Red River Resistance</b> (1869-1870)</p> <p><b>Think about:</b> What did the Canadian government gain from selling a large portion of Rupert's land? How did this affect the Métis who occupied a small piece of this land?</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> "North West Rebellion," The Canadian Encyclopedia <a href="https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/north-west-rebellion">https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/north-west-rebellion</a></p> <p>"The North West Resistance," First Peoples of Canada <a href="http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_metis/fp_metis_bac_kground.html">http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_metis/fp_metis_bac_kground.html</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Numbered Treaties</b> (1871-1921)</p> <p><b>Think about:</b> What were the short and long-term benefits of treaties for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> "Numbered Treaties," The Canadian Encyclopedia <a href="https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/numbered-treaties">https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/numbered-treaties</a></p> <p>"The Numbered Treaties," Government of Canada <a href="https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360948213124/1544620003549">https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360948213124/1544620003549</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>High Arctic Relocation</b> (1953, 1955)</p> <p><b>Think about:</b> Why did the Canadian government want to relocate Inuit families to the High Arctic islands? How did this affect Inuit families and their communities?</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> "Inuit High Arctic Relocations in Canada," The Canadian Encyclopedia <a href="https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit-high-arctic-relocations">https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit-high-arctic-relocations</a></p> <p>"Broken Promises - The High Arctic Relocation," National Film Board of Canada <a href="https://www.nfb.ca/film/broken_promises_-_the_high_arctic_relocation/">https://www.nfb.ca/film/broken_promises_-_the_high_arctic_relocation/</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Kanesatake Resistance</b> (July - September 1990)</p> <p><b>Think about:</b> How does this event, also referred to as the Oka Crisis, demonstrate contrasting points of view around land use and ownership?</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> "Oka Crisis," The Canadian Encyclopedia <a href="https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/oka-crisis">https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/oka-crisis</a></p> <p>"Oka Crisis: How it Started," CBC News: The National <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fShsLqN01A0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fShsLqN01A0</a></p>

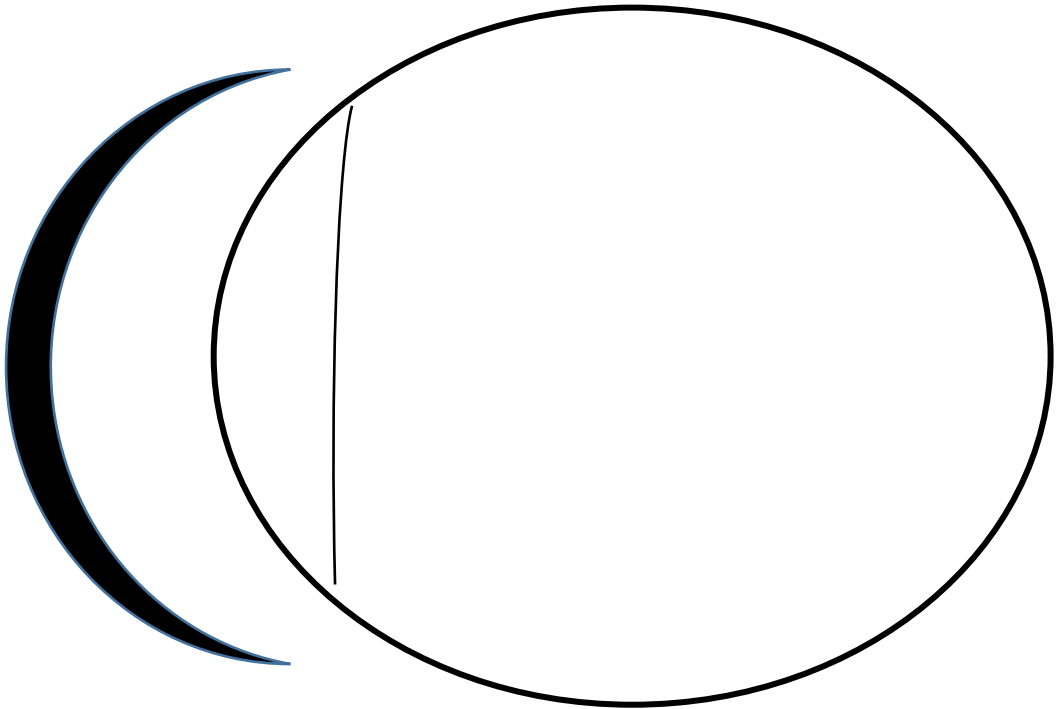
**Handout 3**

**Two Eyed Seeing**

Non-Indigenous Perspective

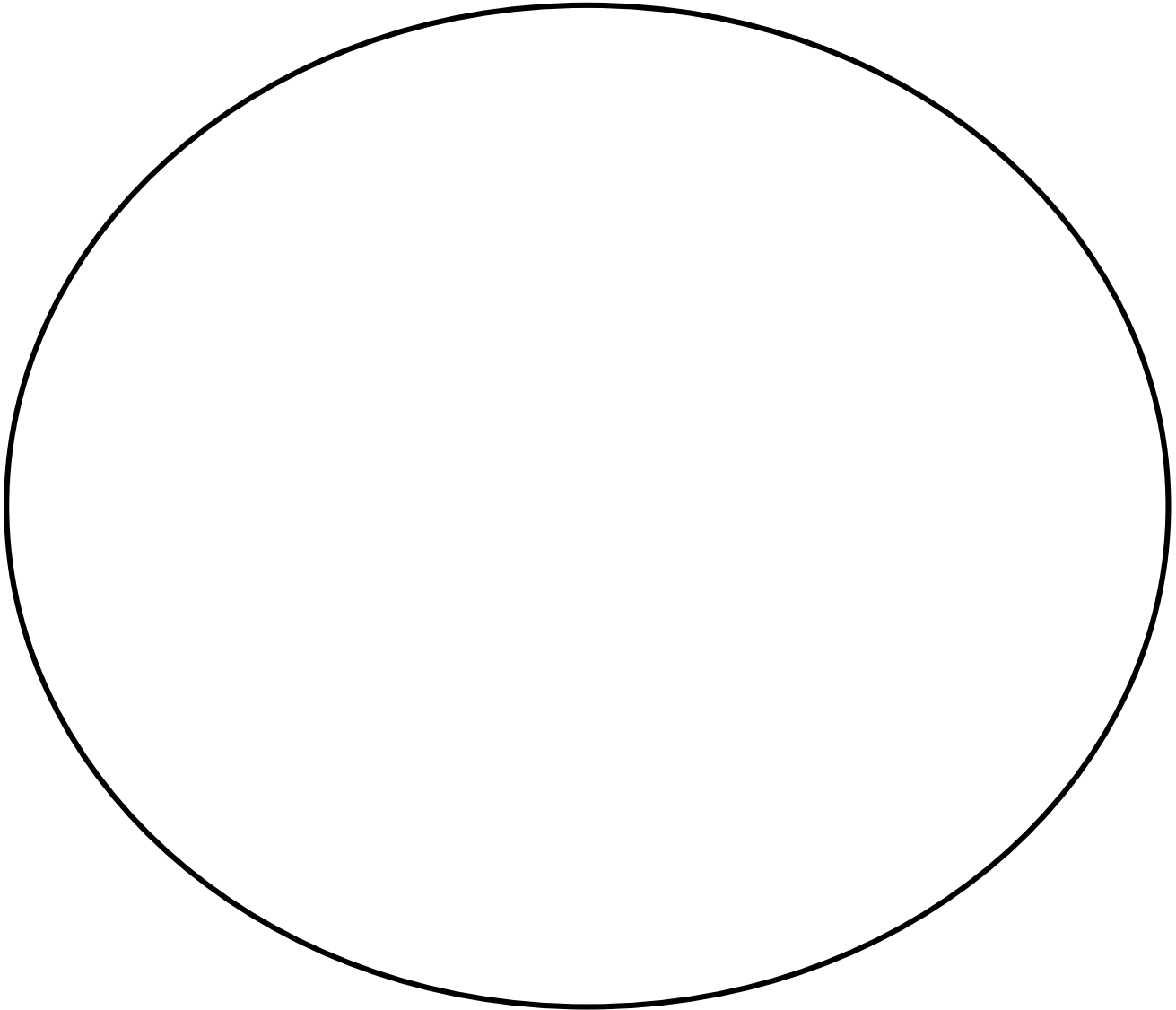


Indigenous Perspective



Historical Event: \_\_\_\_\_

# ReconciliACTION



Action Plan:

# Gibaajimominaan: Our Stories\*

**Author:** Connie Wyatt Anderson

**Grade Level:** 7-9

**Themes:**

- Decolonization
- First Nations, Inuit & Métis
- Social Justice
- Residential Schools

**Subject Areas:**

- Social Studies
- History
- Indigenous Studies

**Overview:** In this lesson students listen to a residential school Survivor\*\* tell their story, respond with a personal comment or question, link the Survivor's experiences with the Seven Sacred Teachings, and consider what they can do to support the Survivors and their families.

**Time Required:** One to three periods.

**Historical Thinking Concepts:**

- Identify continuity and change
- Analyze cause and consequence
- Take historical perspectives
- Understand the ethical dimension of historical interpretations.

**Learning Outcomes: Students will...**

- Explore the history of residential schools in Canada.
- Identify historical sources used to study residential schools.
- Engage with a residential school Survivor testimony.
- Value the importance of Survivor testimony/lived experience.
- Appreciate Indigenous knowledge systems, using the Seven Sacred Teachings as a lens.

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\* Gibaajimominaan means 'our stories' in Anishinaabe

\*\* Students may opt to personally interview a Survivor.



## Lesson Activities

### Activating: How will students be prepared for learning?

- Familiarize yourself with *Guidelines for Learning from Residential School Survivors: Strategies for Teachers* at the end of this lesson before beginning the learning activity.
- Provide an overview of residential schools in Canada. Incorporate maps, images, etc.
- Encourage questions, invite dialogue.

### Acquiring: What strategies facilitate learning for groups and individuals?

- Divide the class into table groups. Distribute *Kitayánán: We are Still Here*.
- Facilitate a small group reading activity.
- Check for understanding. Ask: what types of sources can we use to learn about student experiences in residential schools? Capture responses on whiteboard/flipchart.
- Encourage questions; invite dialogue.
- Pay special attention to Survivor lived experiences and personal testimonials.
- Distribute *Learning and Listening with Respect*. Read over with the class.
- Engage students with a Survivor's personal story. You may access stories at <http://legacyofhope.ca/wherearethechildren/stories/>, invite a Survivor to class, have students interview a Survivor; or listen to a Survivor speak during the Every Child Matters virtual event.
- Encourage questions; invite dialogue.
- Make time for student introspection.

### Applying: How will students demonstrate their understanding?

- Introduce the concept of Indigenous knowledge by sharing the definition provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):  
"Local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality. These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world's cultural diversity, and provide a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development."
- Explain that different Indigenous nations throughout Canada and the world will have different knowledge systems. Provide an overview of the Seven Sacred Teachings, which is a set of teachings that are common to many Indigenous groups in Canada. (There are many versions of these seven teachings which are sometimes referred to as the Seven Grandmother Teachings or the Seven Sacred Teachings. Nations and communities may

use differing stories to impart these teachings, but the same guiding principles and morals can be found in all.)

- Distribute *Gibaajimominaan: Our Stories*. Instruct the students to complete.
- Guide and assist as necessary.

#### **Materials/Resources:**

- Access to Internet, including video and audio capabilities (optional)
- *Guidelines for Learning from Residential School Survivors: Strategies for Teachers*
- *Learning and Listening with Respect Student Resource* - copies as needed
- *Kitayánán: We are Still Here Student Resource* - copies as needed
- *Gibaajimominaan: Our Stories Student Resource* - one copy per student

#### **References/Further Resources:**

- [Residential School Survivor Stories](#)
- [Residential Schools in Canada](#)
- [Seven Grandfather Teachings](#)
- [National Student Memorial Register Book](#)

#### **Extension Activity: Using Objects to Tell the Story of Residential Schools (grades 4-9)**

- Introduce 'The Witness Blanket' to students by exploring the [website](#)
- Click on the objects
- Facilitate a class discussion
- Explain how a curator pieces carefully selected objects together to represent a story.
- Introduce the steps of curator:
  1. The curator selects objects that represent the topic they are sharing.
  2. The objects together must represent a story.
  3. All of those stories together must represent an overall coherent narrative.
  4. The objects must fit within a defined space
- Have students design an exhibit dedicated to the history and legacy of residential schools in your class. Encourage students to bring items from home, items from school, etc.

# Guidelines for Learning from Residential School Survivors

## *Strategies for Teachers*

Exploring the history of residential schools in Canada by engaging students with the lived experiences of Survivors requires a high level of sensitivity, a keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter, and well-planned learning activities.

**Define the term “Survivor”.** Residential School Survivors attended residential schools in Canada. The consequences of the abuse suffered in these schools continues to affect First Nations through an intergenerational effect –the harm caused to students affects families and communities over generations.

**Translate statistics into people.** Show that individual people—grandparents, parents, communities, and children—are behind the statistics and emphasize the diversity of personal experiences within the larger historical narrative.

**Residential Schools were not an inevitability.** They were created by the Canadian federal government and were operated by churches for more than 100 years. Multiple laws and numerous organizations and players kept them operational.

**Avoid simple answers to complex questions.** The history of Residential Schools raises difficult questions about human behaviour, citizen action and inaction, and the context within which governmental and individual decisions are made. Be wary of simplification

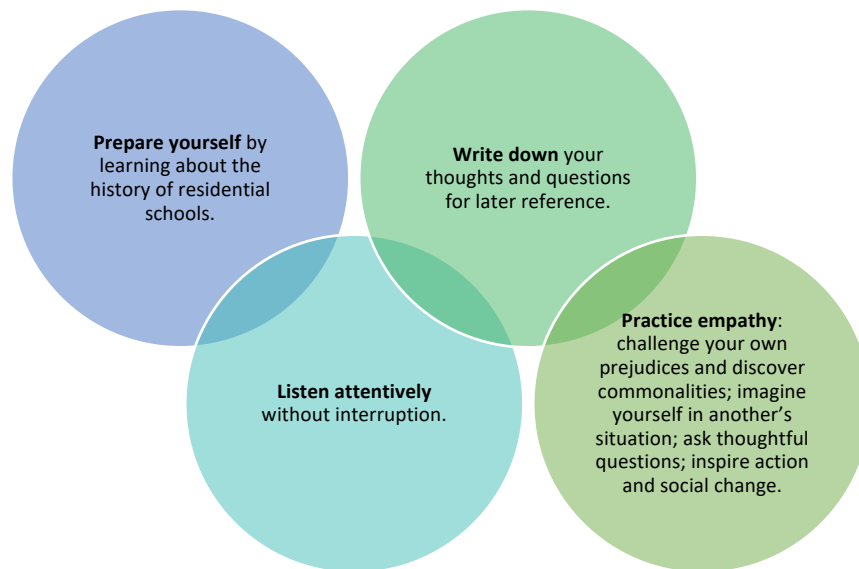
**Contextualize the history.** The Residential School era and particularly how individuals and organizations behaved at that time, should be placed in historical context. Residential Schools should be studied in the context of Canadian history as a whole to give students a perspective on the precedents and circumstances that contributed to them.

**Make sound pedagogical choices.** Construct well thought out learning activities. Avoid word scrambles, crossword puzzles, ‘tipi Tuesday’, and gimmicky exercises; rather encourage critical analysis and student praxis. Use authentic sources and firsthand narratives.

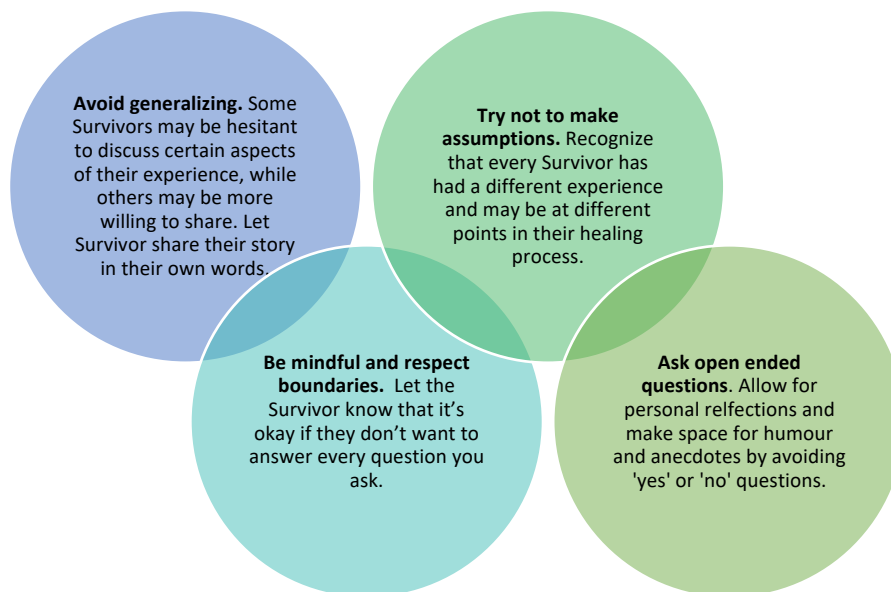
# Learning and Listening with Respect

As a student you have been given a gift - you have listened to (or interviewed) the personal story of a residential school Survivor. This gift comes with responsibilities on your part: to be respectful, appreciative, and to practice self-care. Below are some guidelines for you.

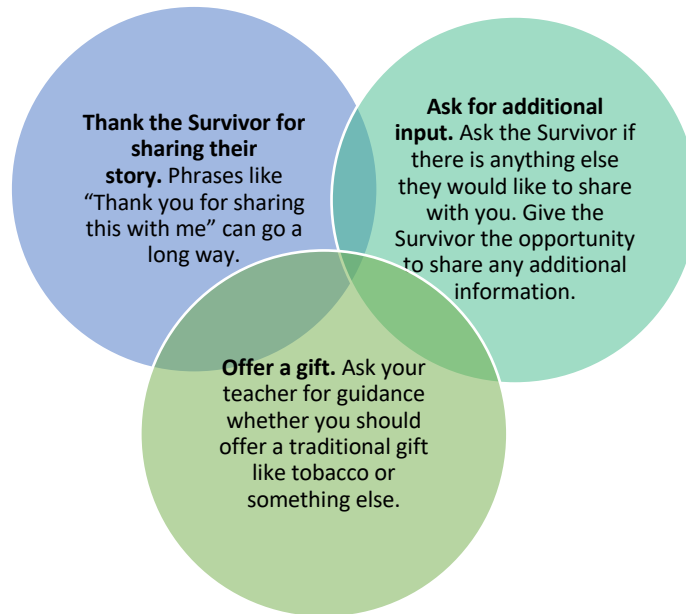
Residential schools are a complicated topic. Each Survivor has their own story and own lived experience. When **listening to an interview** and/or discussing it with your classmates:



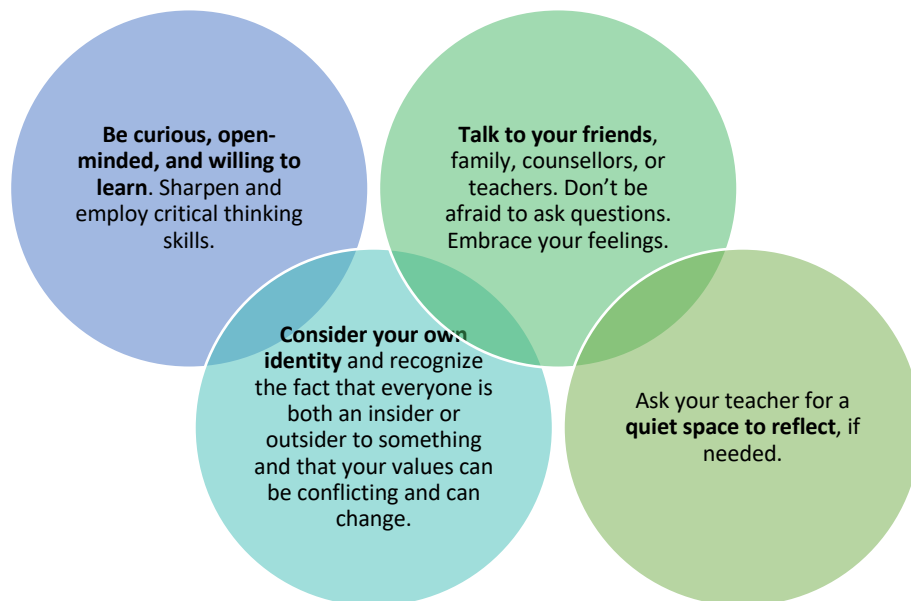
When **interviewing a Residential School Survivor:**



**At the end of interviewing a Survivor**, show appreciation:



Finally, don't push your feelings aside. Hearing the firsthand experiences of residential school Survivors may trigger your own emotions (teachers call this *emotive history*) and **taking care of yourself is paramount.** What can you do?

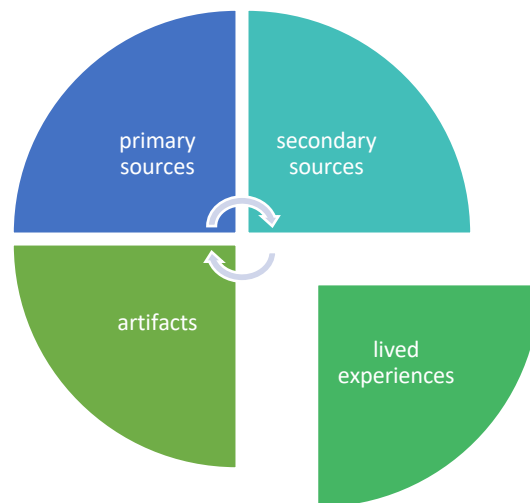


# Kitayánán: We are Still Here

Between 1831 and 1996, residential schools operated in Canada through arrangements between the Government of Canada and various Christian church organizations. Over 140 residential schools existed nationwide and an estimated 150,000 children were forced to attend.

One common objective defined this era– the assimilation of Indigenous children and the resultant eradication of Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions.

Today, we can learn about the experiences of the students in these institutions using a variety of sources. Primary sources include the school documents such as attendance registries, photographs, and Survivor diaries; secondary sources like books and films about residential schools; and artifacts like farming tools and children’s uniforms. These sources speak on behalf of both living and dead students.



While residential schools are very much part of Canada’s past, they are not relegated solely to the annals of history. Residential schools form a very real part of our present. By several estimates, there are currently 80,000 Survivors alive in Canada today. The chances are high that you know a Survivor, have sat next to one in a public space, shared a work or school environment, or know someone whose family has been affected by intergenerational trauma as a result of residential schools. Their lived experiences and personal testimonials provide us with the fourth type of source for learning about residential schools. They speak for those Survivors who are no longer with us and provide us with a direct account of their experiences. Their stories are a breathing connection between the past and the present and a tangible gift to the future.

# Gibaajimominaan: Our Stories

## Part 1: Record

Survivor's Name:

Home community:

Summary:

- Residential school:
- Years attended:
- Age:

## Part 2: Tell

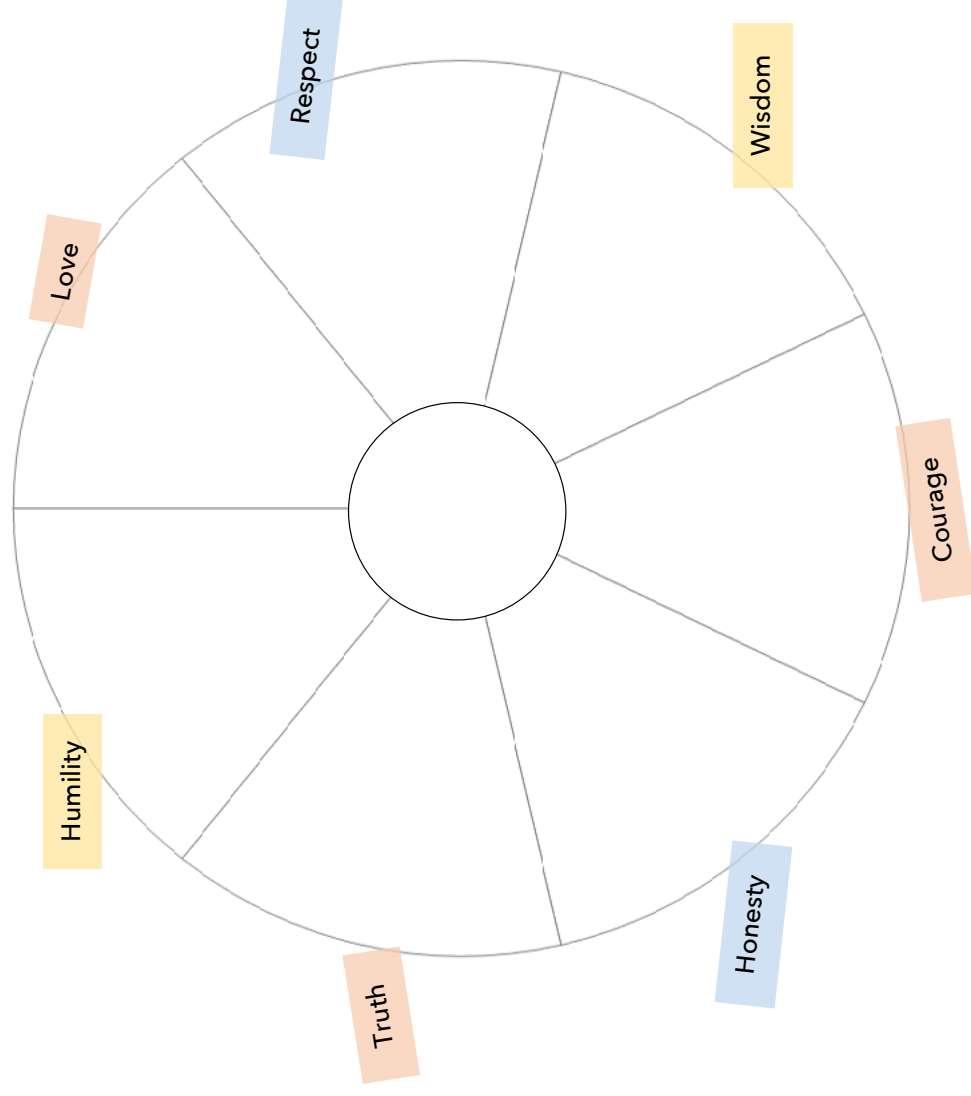
What Survivor statement or recollection resonated with you? Why?

## Part 3: Wonder

Imagine you were the interviewer. Write a comment or question for the Survivor. (If you were the interviewer, write a comment or post an additional question)

## Part 4: Connect

Write the Survivor's name in the middle of the circle. Use the circle segments and connect his/her residential school experiences with the Seven Sacred Teachings. Are there blank segments? How can we support Survivors and their families to fill in those gaps? Write your ideas on the perimeter of the circle.



# Learning Humility Through Being a Witness

**Author:** Meredith Rusk

**Grade Level:** 7-9

**Themes:**

- Arts and Culture
- Indigenous Culture and Perspectives
- Decolonization
- First Nation, Inuit & Métis
- Indigenous Spirituality
- Social Justice

**Subject Areas:**

- Social Studies
- Art

**Overview:** This set of lessons will help students understand the Indigenous principles of humility and witnessing. Through engaging in two acts of reconciliation, students will begin to understand the way humility puts us in a place of feeling small within the larger picture of issues and events. Then, through learning to be witnesses to stories and experiences, students will become empowered to take action to make change.

**Time Required:** Three, 1-hour lessons. Lessons 1 and 2 can be completed in advance of the Every Child Matters virtual events. Lesson 3 can be completed afterwards.

**Historical Thinking Concepts:**

- Establish historical significance
- Analyze cause and consequence
- Take historical perspective

**Learning Outcomes: Students will...**

- Value acts of reconciliation
- Discuss ways of sharing stories of residential schools
- Understand their own responsibility in reconciliation as a witness to the stories of residential schools
- Investigate ways they can share the stories of residential schools to others



## Background Information:

Ways of witnessing to Indigenous peoples can vary between each nation. It is generally based on the idea of being responsible to pass on the stories and histories they have witnessed to others so that they are recorded in memory. As students listen to the stories of residential schools, they are witnessing a part of Canada's history and an event that, when fully understood and shared with all Canadians, can bring our country towards reconciliation.

Humility can be a difficult concept to understand. It can be defined as being insignificant or lesser than others. It is often considered the opposite of being proud. Generally, humility is about balance in terms of how we see ourselves in relation to others. We are no better or worse, and in an Indigenous sense this is reflected in relation to all things, including people, animals, plants, or rocks and other minerals. To humble oneself is demonstrating that, although you are an important being, you are no more important than others, or other things of the earth including the water, the lands, and the sky.

When people listen to the stories of residential schools they often "hear" these stories with their ears, their minds, and their hearts. We can be humbled by witnessing these events and when we are in this place of humility, it can bring us to want to do something to make change. Students are important individuals. The value of humility can help them to see themselves in terms of the larger picture, and, through unselfish actions, they can feel better about themselves and come to understand they have the power to make changes for themselves, their families, their schools, their communities, and the country.

These lessons are meant to create this in students so they see themselves as witnesses and look to create action – even in small ways – that will lead their classrooms, schools, and communities towards reconciliation.

## Lesson Activities

### Part 1: The Witness Blanket

The Witness Blanket, created by artist Carey Newman, is a national monument that reflects the stories of residential schools and reconciliation in Canada. Newman, with the help of others, collected more than 800 pieces from residential school sites, government buildings, churches, and cultural centers across the country, and placed them on large pieces of wood that form a blanket. He chose the idea of the blanket as it represents protection in his Kwakwak'awakw culture. Website: [witnessblanket.ca](http://witnessblanket.ca)

1. Have students view the video [If Someone Came and Took Your Child?](#)
2. Have students [explore the blanket](#)
3. Have students think about the following questions:
  - How do you feel as you look at the collective piece?
  - Does it make you feel small in this huge presence of Canadian history?
  - Does this make you want to do something, be helpful in some way, or demonstrate gratitude?
4. Have students record their observations in the box at the top of Handout 1.

5. After they have had adequate time (about 15 to 20 minutes) to reflect on this, have them share with others which piece they found most touched on their emotions.
6. Explain the terms humility and the way Indigenous people view witnessing. (This will be reviewed at the beginning of the next lesson).

## Resources

*Picking Up the Pieces: The Making of the Witness Blanket* (Orca Books, 2019) by Carey Newman and Kirstie Hudson. [E-book and pdf copies are available for sale online](#)

## Part 2: The Stained Glass Window

In 2008, then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper made an official apology to former students and their families for the Canadian government's part in Indian Residential Schools. Four years later the government installed a stained glass window, designed by Métis artist Christi Belcourt, to commemorate the apologies and the legacy of Residential Schools.

1. Review the terms humility and witnessing.
2. Have students view the video [Remembering the Past: A Window to the Future](#) (can be downloaded on MP4 format) Note: video mentions sexual abuse at Residential Schools
3. Have students fill in the bottom section of Handout 1 as they [read the brochure](#) on the stained glass window
4. Students can discuss their feelings about this piece, then brainstorm some actions they could take that would represent reconciliation (or they can write their answers on Handout 1 and then collect their ideas after).
5. They can keep these thoughts and ideas in mind until after the Every Child Matters virtual event on September 30, or determine a plan of action at this time.

Note: There is a [printable colouring book](#) of the stained glass window that students/classes can reproduce to display in their classes or schools. (To make them appear more transparent, after colouring rub cooking oil on the back of each piece.)

## Part 3: Becoming a Witness

After students have participated in the Every Child Matters live event, have them determine how they can witness the stories of residential schools, the Survivors, and their descendants. This may be done as a large group, in small groups, or individually. This can be anything from murals within the schools, painting classroom or school windows, or creating smaller pieces such as tiles. For examples of students' reconciliation work, visit [projectofheart.ca](#). You can find more examples of student initiatives under each province in the main navigation menu.

### Further questions of Inquiry:

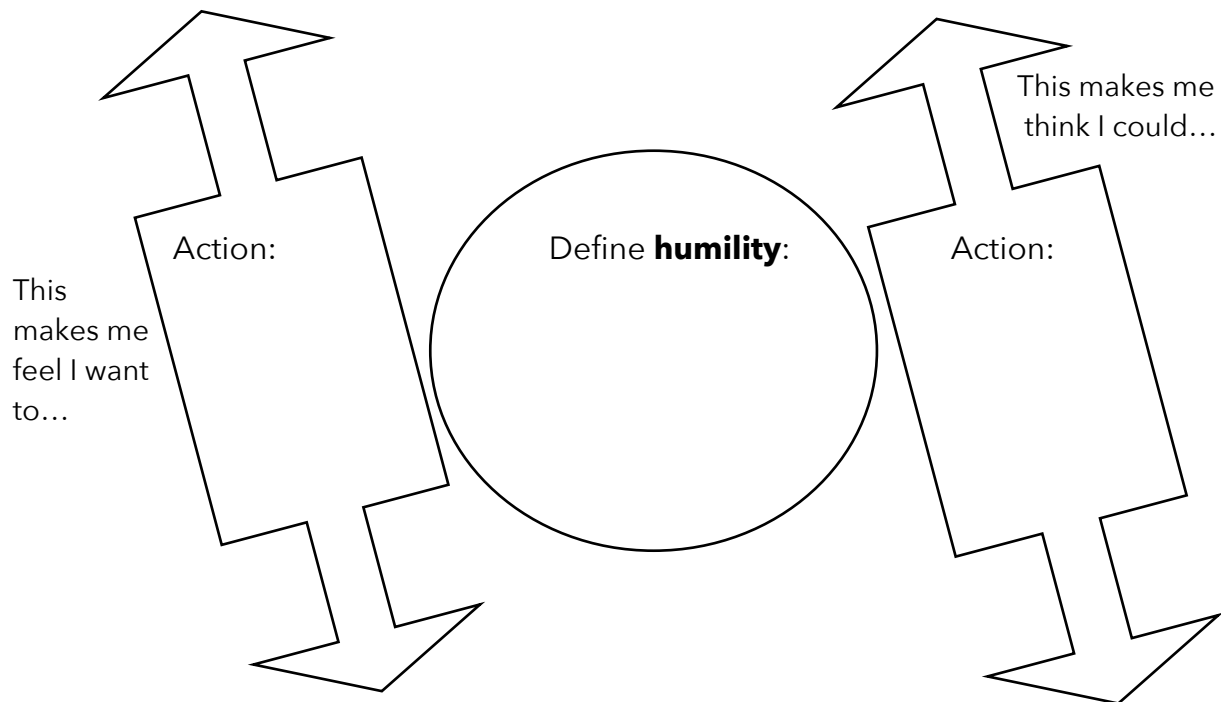
- What other art pieces that represent reconciliation have been created in Canada and what has been their significance?
- What reconciliation actions have been taken through music or dance and how have these projects been promoted?

# Handout 1 - Graphic Organizer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Witness Blanket:**

How do you feel as you view the many items on the blanket?



## **Stained glass window:**

How do you feel as you listen to the stories of the art piece and view each section?

# Honesty: Taking Action

**Author:** Lisa Howell

**Grade Level:** 7-9

## Themes:

- Decolonization
- First Nations, Inuit & Métis
- National Politics
- Social Justice
- Treaty Knowledge
- Youth

## Subject Areas:

- Social Studies
- History
- ELA
- Civics

**Overview:** In this lesson, students will take up the concepts of honesty and action. Specifically, students will learn about Indigenous youth who have taken action against the harms of colonialism. Students will assess the outcomes of individual and collective action, and design a personal plan for reconciliation in their own lives and communities. They will also learn how to navigate difficult conversations that sometimes occur when you stand up for what you believe in.

**Time Required:** 4 lessons (60 minutes each)

## Historical Thinking Concepts:

- Use primary source evidence
- Identify continuity and change
- Analyze cause and consequence
- Take historical perspectives
- Understand the ethical dimension of historical interpretations

## Learning Outcomes: Students will...

- Understand their roles/responsibilities in reconciliation;
- Identify some of the inequities that Indigenous children and youth experience;
- Discuss the incredible resiliency of Indigenous youth in the face of adversity;
- Assess and examine the impacts of individual and collective actions;
- Generate guidelines for navigating difficult conversations; and
- Design a reconciliation action plan.

## Background Information:

According to Statistics Canada (2016), one third of First Nations and Inuit peoples, and 22 % of Métis people are under 14 years old, and the youth population is increasing. This means that children and youth are both the present and future of their communities, and like all young people, they deserve to grow up safely in their homes and communities with opportunities, access to services, education, and culture (Blackstock, Bennet & Ng-A-Fook, 2018). Indigenous children and youth are often denied the basic services that most of us take for granted. Despite these incredible challenges, First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Youth are advocating for their rights, raising awareness, and rising up with strength and resilience. Their perseverance and strength have inspired non-Indigenous youth across Canada to take action in peaceful and sustained ways. Indeed, Shannen’s Dream has been called the “largest youth-driven movement in Canadian history” (Angus, 2015, p. 2).

## Lesson Activities

### Activating: Lesson 1 (60 minutes)

#### Part 1:

- Show students the pictures of youth activists. Give them some time to look at the photographs and then ask the following questions: What do you see in the photos? What are the people in the photos doing and why? Have you seen any of them in the news or on YouTube?
- Invite students to take a moment to “turn and talk” to a classmate about the youths in the photo.
- Explain that each of these youth are leaders in their communities, taking on issues such as underfunding in education and other services on reserves, the high rate of suicide among Inuit youth, and leadership in Métis culture and rights. Each of these youth have had to engage in difficult conversations about their experiences due to the harms of colonialism in Canada. Let students know that they will have a chance to “meet” each of these youth leaders later in the lesson.

#### Part 2:

- Ask students if they have ever spoken out against injustice or walked in support of something. Ask students to “think/pair/share” for a moment.
- Discuss their responses, asking the questions: What does it take to stand up to something? How do you navigate difficult conversations with people who might not understand your position? What might be the causes and consequences of standing up for your beliefs (or of not standing up?)
- Read the section on “Honesty” in the *Every Child Matters* magazine, either in small groups or aloud to your class. Discuss the statement, “Having the courage to talk about what you’re learning, how it’s impacting you, and what you want to change is powerful and courageous.”

- Explain to students that learning the truths about Canadian history means being honest about our collective story, learning about residential schools, the Indian Act, and the ongoing inequities and oppressions that many Indigenous communities face. Being honest also means understanding our own privilege and using it in a respectful way to work against anti-Indigenous racisms. Brainstorm a list of ways that students can navigate difficult conversations with others. Post this list in the classroom.
- End this lesson with a short clip from the National Film Board of Canada called *Hi Ho Mistahey*. Explain that legendary Indigenous filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, who lives in Montreal, made this film. (Display her photo on the screen.) She has made over 50 films about Indigenous peoples in Canada and inequitable services.
- Tell students that this clip is just over a minute long, and it features 12-year-old Summer Mudd, from Attawapiskat First Nation. In it, she is speaking at a news conference at a school in Ottawa, demanding that the government address underfunding to education on reserves.
- Ask students to think about the honesty and courage that Summer had to stand up and speak.
- [Play clip](#) (19:43-21:00 min)
- Ensure you have time to address any feelings, questions, and/or comments students might have after the lesson.

## **Lessons 2 and 3 (two 60 minute classes):**

### **Part 1:**

- Display these inquiry questions:
  - What are some of the inequities Indigenous children and youth face and how are they overcoming these inequities with action?
  - What are the lessons we can learn from them?
  - How might we get involved in reconciliation in our own lives and communities?
- Ask students to pick at least one and do a “quickwrite” (5 mins) about it. (Students who find it difficult to write quickly might draw or write joy notes.) Afterwards, invite a few students to share.
- Ask students to organize themselves into groups of 4-5 (or organize groups yourself ahead of time, according to your preference/class needs). Explain that each group will do a mini-research project about one of the youths in the photographs (display the photographs on the screen) and then present their knowledge to the class, so that each youth is represented.
- Display (and provide hardcopy handout, if needed) of the questions/guidelines to support student research.

\*Adapt as necessary to your class and learners. You might give certain groups certain questions, or less questions. Or, you may give some groups more in-depth questions.

## Part 2:

- Prior to this lesson, print out the pictures of each youth and display them on poster board/chart paper around the classroom, with their name written above their photo.
- Each student group will present their mini-research project (5 mins). You may invite students to take jot notes as they listen to the presentations, depending on your class needs.
- After the presentation, pass out a sticky note to each student and ask them to write down one thing they learned about the youth that they find inspiring. Collect sticky notes and put them on the appropriate poster board (or ask a student to do this).
- At the end of the presentations, you will have a collection of student thinking around the room about each of the youth leaders.
- Ask students to join you in a circle on the floor (if your students know how to participate in a circle discussion, this won't need any explaining. If you don't regularly use circles, you may want to try it out with your class before this lesson. [This is a wonderful guide](#) to establishing circles with your class.)
- Pass around an object (a stone, a seashell etc.) and ask students these questions: What was the most inspiring part of learning about the youth leaders? What might you do in your own life to foster positive relationships and action toward reconciliation?

## Applying: Lesson 4 (60 minute period)

### Part 1:

- Recap the learning students have done so far by saying something such as: "In these lessons, we have witnessed the incredible strength and resilience of Indigenous youth in spite of so much adversity. Colonialism, Indian residential schools, the child welfare system, and chronic inequitable funding for education and health services have created a system of oppression in Canada for Indigenous youth. What do you think were the historical perspectives of the time when the policies for funding services for children on reserve were created? What are the perspectives now?" Discuss these important questions.
- Go on to remind students that despite these injustices, youth leaders such as Shannen Koostachin, David Kawapit, Hannah Tooktoo, Mitch Case, Gabrielle Fayant, and Maatalii Okalik are rising up, demanding justice, and showing strong leadership. How might we use the lessons of their courage and honesty to take action ourselves?
- Explain that students will have the opportunity to take what they have learned and design a reconciliation plan for themselves. They can work individually, with a partner, or in a small group. The idea is that they have a plan to take part in action by the end of the class.
- Display the following links to these non-profit Indigenous-led organizations that are working towards reconciliation:
  - [First Nations Child and family Caring Society](#) (Campaigns and resources for action around Shannen's Dream, I am a Witness, Jordan's Principle)

- [Moosehide Campaign](#) (violence against Indigenous women and children)
- [Downie-Wenjack Fund](#) (reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples)
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's [Imagine-a-Canada](#) (education for reconciliation).

Ask students to research one of the organizations and decide on a campaign they wish to engage in. Provide them with (and/or display) the Reconciliation Plan Guiding Questions to guide the creation of their plan.

- Give students time to create a written plan. Make sure you leave enough time for students to share their plans if they want to.
- Before the end of the lesson, discuss a reconciliACTION that your class or school community could take up. How might you go about teaching others in your school what you have learned in these lessons?
- Make sure to follow-up in subsequent classes and invite students to share how their reconciliation work is going with the class.

#### **Materials/Resources:**

- Access to internet and devices
- Photos of youth leaders
- Questions/Guidelines to Support Student Research
- Every Child Matters magazine
- Picture of Alanis Obomsawin
- [Hi Ho Mistakey clip](#)
- Sticky notes
- Poster board
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Printer
- Item for circle
- [Circle guide](#)
- Reconciliation Plan Guiding Questions

#### **Assessment:**

You might use the student's reconciliation action plan as an assessment to understand how they are thinking about the concepts they learned throughout the lessons. You could also create a rubric for the mini-research project and assess students on research skills, group work etc. Finally, you can have students complete a self-assessment at the end of the lesson sequence.



**Extension Activities:**

- **Blackout Poetry:** Write a Blackout Poetry using the [TRC Calls to Action](#) to illustrate inequities that many Indigenous children and youth face.
- **Write a letter/email:** Learn more about one of the Indigenous Youth that students “met” through their mini-research projects. Write the youth a letter, expressing what you understand about the inequities they face and the leadership that they have showed. Then, **ACTUALLY** mail or email your letter to them! The youth we met in this lesson were: Shannen Koostachin (send a letter to her family), David Kawapit, Hannah Tooktoo, and Mitch Case, Gabrielle Fayant, and Maatalii Okalik.
- **Podcast/Blog:** Contact one of the youth leaders and interview them for a podcast or blog that you create!

**References:**

Angus, C. (2015). *Children of the Broken Treaty: Canada’s lost promise and one girl’s dream*. Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.

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Statistics Canada. (2016). *Aboriginal peoples in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census*.

Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm>

## Indigenous Youth Leaders



Mitch Case

Shannen Koostachin

Hannah Tooktoo



David Kawapit Jr.

Maatalii Okalik.

Gabrielle Fayant

## Questions/Guidelines to Support Student Research

- Find primary sources when possible (newspaper articles, interviews, speeches, videos, oral histories, letters, etc.).
- Remember that this is a mini-research project! Stick to the guiding questions:
  1. What Nation/community is this youth from and what treaty area or land is that Nation/community located on?
  2. What is the main issue that this youth is advocating for and why?
  3. What actions has this youth taken to inspire change? What has been the impact of their actions? What (if anything) has changed for children and youth living on reserves, and what has not changed over the time they have been advocating?
  4. What adversities and challenges did the youth overcome to have the courage to become a leader/activist?
  5. How might you use the example of this youth's honesty and courage to take action yourself?
- You have the rest of this class (approximately 50 mins) to work on your mini-research project. Think about how you can share your work as a group. Also think about how you wish to share the knowledge you have gained with your peers (google slide show, spoken word piece, graphic art poster, etc.) You will each have 5 mins to present.

## Reconciliation Plan Guiding Questions

1. What organization will you take action with? Why?
2. What are the major issues that this organization (or individual) takes up?
3. What will you DO to take action? List the actions you will take (i.e. letter writing, teaching others, attending an event, learning more).
4. What impacts do you hope your actions might have?
5. How will you navigate difficult conversations with others who don't share your views?
6. Do you believe that it is our ethical responsibility as Canadians to take action against historical and current harms? Why or why not?