

Demonstrating Respect through Understanding and Taking Action (ReconciliAction)

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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 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
1831		
1844		
1876		
1883		
1920		
1922		
1950s		
1966 (Oct. 26)		
1969		
1990 (Oct. 30)		
1996		
1996 (Nov. 1)		
2008		
2015 (June 2)		

Date	Event	Significance
1831	Mohawk Institute becomes boarding school	first government funded residential school in Canada
1844	Bagot Report	recommends Indigenous children be separated from their parents in order to assimilate into non-Indigenous culture
1876	Indian Act	gives Canadian governments control over Indigenous (Indian) rights and culture
1883	Prime Minister authorizes residential schools	Macdonald authorizes process of taking Indigenous children away from families to cut all ties to their cultures
1920	Residential schools become mandatory	Indigenous students aged 7-16 have to attend residential schools by law under the <i>Indian Act</i>
1922	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
1950s	The residential school system expands north	Inuit children are included in the residential school system
1966 (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
1969	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
1990 (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
1996	Gordon's Indian Residential School closes	this is the last residential school to close in Canada
1996 (Nov. 1)	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Final Report	Recommends inquiry into effects of residential school, including language loss and trauma.
2008	Prime Minister of Canada apologizes for residential schools	formal apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper; followed by provincial apologies
2015 (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

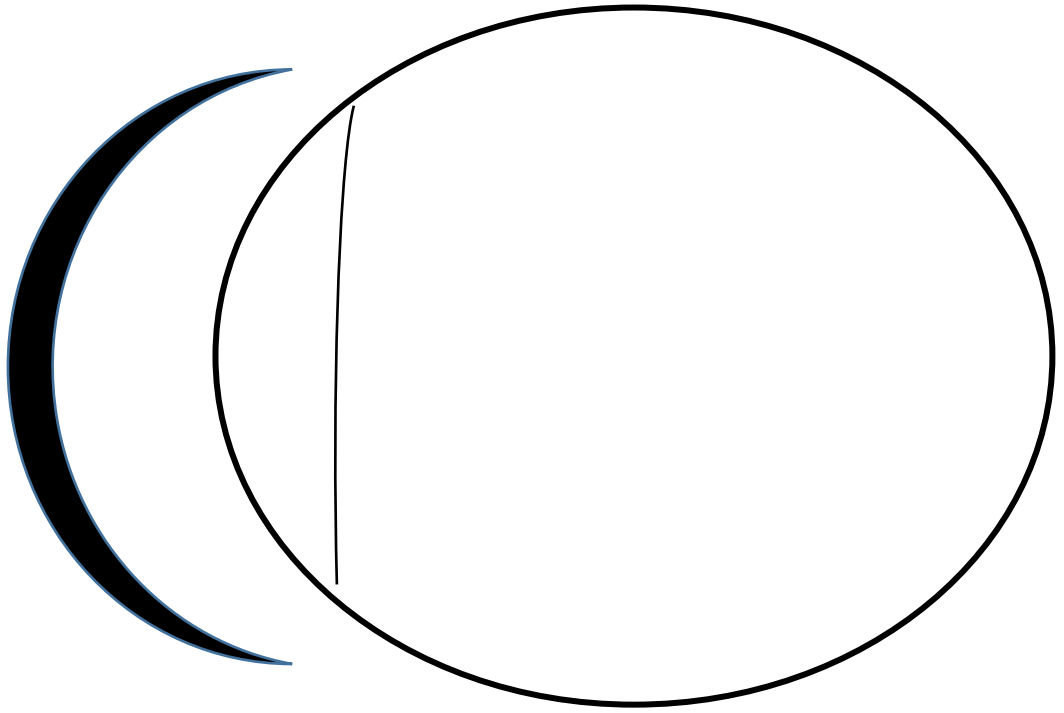
Handout 2

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

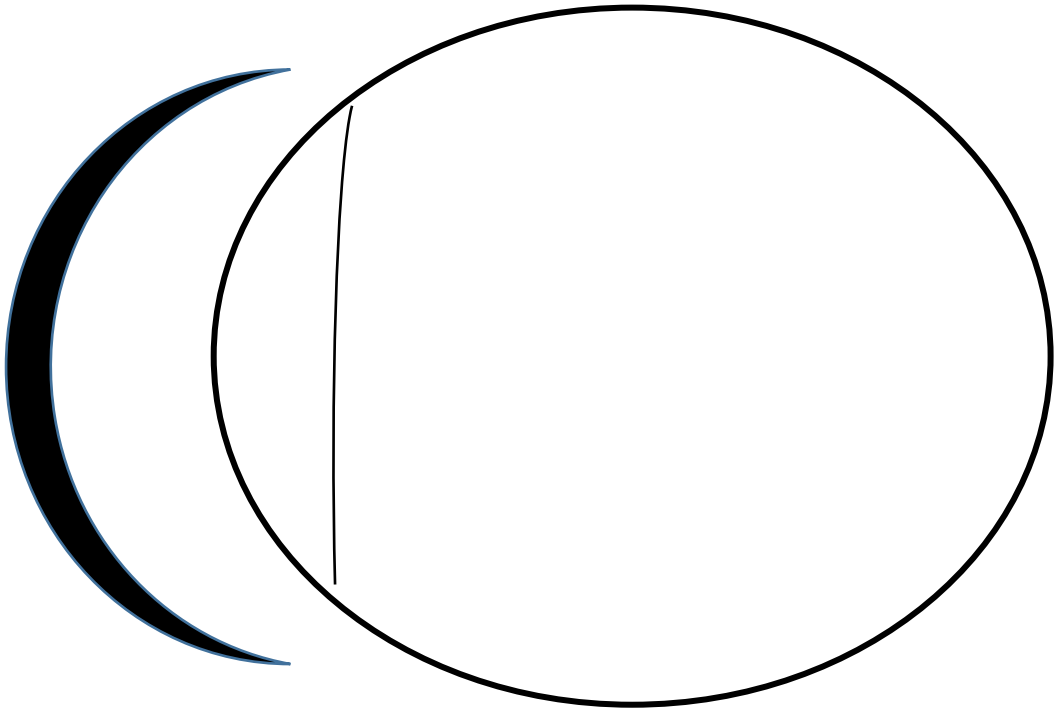
Handout 3

Two Eyed Seeing

Non-Indigenous Perspective

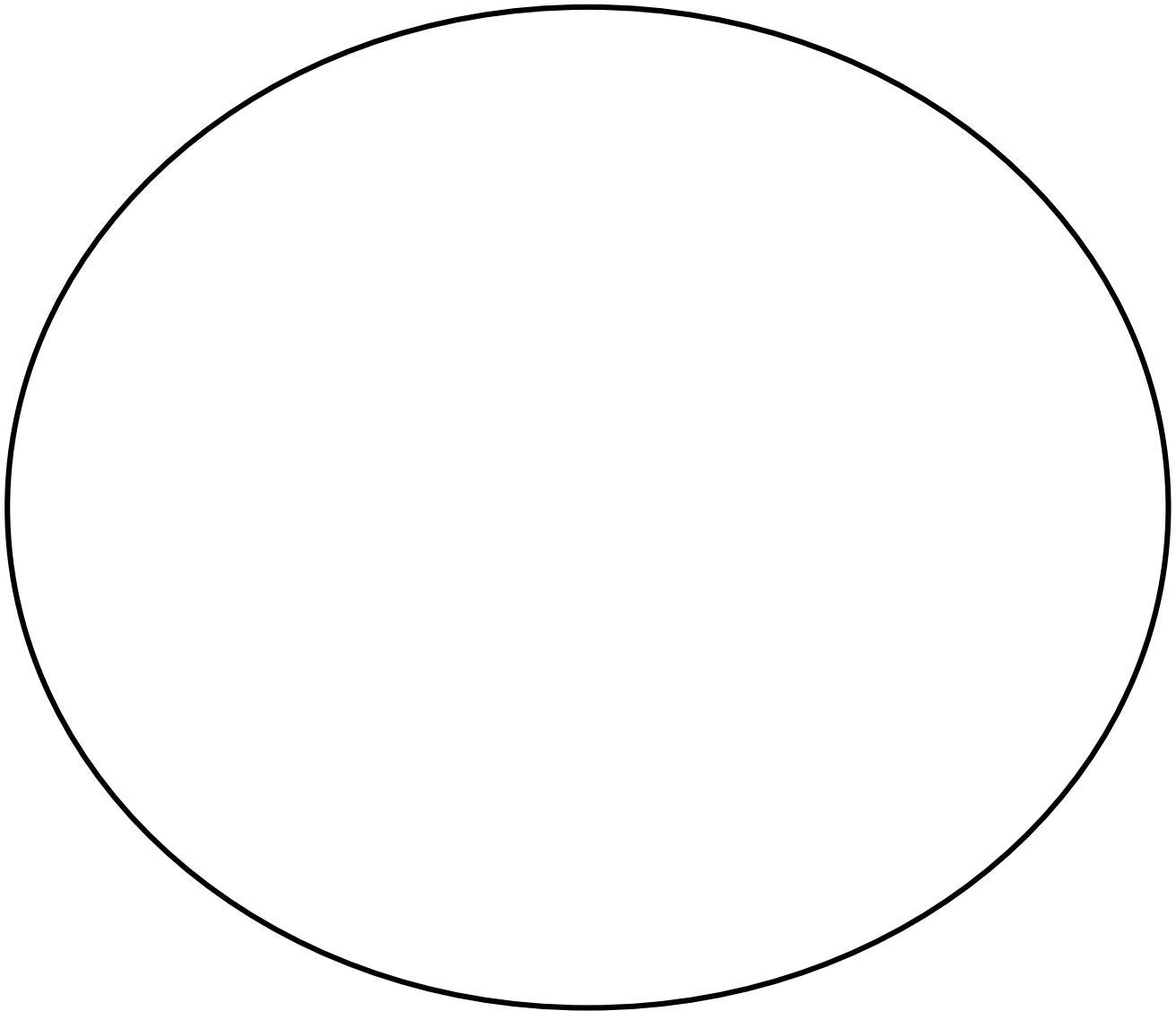


Indigenous Perspective



Historical Event: _____

ReconciliACTION



Action Plan: