



Sharing the Message of Truth and Reconciliation

A Guide for Parents, Kids, and Educators

Introduction

Reconciliation and the lasting impacts of residential schools have sparked conversations between parents and children, educators and students, around Indigenous issues, histories, and perspectives in homes and classrooms across Canada. This guide provides background information, two articles, and sample notes to help parents and educators have conversations with children about the need for reconciliation.

In response to the **Calls to Action** from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's report in 2015, Scholastic Canada partnered with Indigenous educators including 10 key advisors to create Take Action for Reconciliation for grades 3–8.

“**‘Truth Before Reconciliation’** The importance of understanding the true history of Canada regarding Indigenous Peoples must occur before reconciliation. Each Canadian needs to know that the impacts of government policy, including residential schools, were designed to be hurtful to Indigenous Peoples.”
—**Brad Baker, educator from the Squamish Nation**



Take Action for Reconciliation
Advisory Team

(Left to right): **Cornelia Laliberte**, Métis (Saskatchewan); **Brad Baker**, Squamish Nation (British Columbia); **Lowa Beebe**, Piikani Nation of Treaty 7 Nations (Alberta); **Jaime Battiste**, former treaty education lead at Mi'kmaw Ki'natnewey (Nova Scotia); **Marilyn Maychak**, Inuk (Ontario); **Diane Jubinville**, Pasqua Nation (Saskatchewan); **April Waters**, Métis (Manitoba); **Fibbie Tatti**, Sahtúot'jné tribe (Northwest Territories); **Pamala Agawa**, Anishinaabe-kwe from Batchewana First Nation (Ontario); **Colinda Clyne**, Anishinaabe-kwe from Kitigan Zibi First Nation (Ontario)

Background for Parents & Educators

Reconciliation is described as working together to repair a relationship. The relationship between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people has not been equal for a long time. In 2008, the federal government began the Truth and Reconciliation process with a formal apology to the Survivors of residential schools. As part of the process, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was set up to go across Canada to interview and gather statements from Indigenous people relating to residential schools. Residential schools began in the 1800s, and the last one was closed in 1996.

About 150 000 Indigenous children were taken from their parents to live in these schools. The purpose of the schools was to “eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural and spiritual development of Aboriginal children” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada). Indigenous children were placed in the schools and were forbidden to speak their languages, and forbidden to believe in their own culture and identity. As a result, the intergenerational impact of residential schools is still being felt today in Indigenous communities throughout Canada.

The Commission's focus on finding out the truth about residential schools was meant to lay the foundation for the reconciliation process. Repairing damaged trust, making reparations, following through with concrete actions, and establishing respectful relationships were some of the recommendations the TRC also described as part of this reconciliation process.

The TRC made 94 *Calls to Action* on how Canadians can make amends for the oppression of Indigenous Peoples and move forward with reconciliation. The Commission singled out education as a key tool in reconciliation, and that children and youth should play a strong part in developing reconciliation policy, programs, and practices.

It is important for students to take note that reconciliation is an ongoing participatory process that ideally includes everyone in Canada. This process includes the learning journey of understanding the historical context that has set the stage for contemporary Indigenous lives in Canada.

Restoring the Relationship

Two key understandings about the reconciliation process are that it is reciprocal, and that it looks different to each individual. The experience of colonization has been ongoing since the moment settlers arrived on Turtle Island (North America). As such, the process of reconciliation is expected to be lengthy but certainly achievable. Education plays a special role in reconciliation, given that over the course of at least a century Indigenous children were forcibly pushed into residential schools, and most Canadians did not learn about this truth in their own experiences of education. As the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair stated in his role as Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, **“Education is what got us here, and education is what will get us out.”** A key consideration in any action taken is that decisions that are made are guided by Indigenous communities and made with these communities.

Source: *Community Ties TG* page 30, 70.

Learning About Reconciliation and Residential Schools

Many of us are just coming to know the history of treaties and residential schools in Canada because of the way the education system functioned for so long. As such, it is important to come to terms with the fact that learning will take time, and there may be some bumps along the way. This is okay. It is important to act, learn, teach, reflect, and make things better as you come to know better. As writer Thomas King stated, “Don’t say you would have lived your life differently had you heard this story. You’ve heard it now.” The same applies here. Reconciliation is about action, and there is a moral imperative to teaching this content in a good way. There are many excellent resources, and many more are being developed on a regular basis. If there is something you don’t know, don’t be afraid to learn about it and find out!

Terminology

First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples are often assumed to be culturally homogenous. This could not be further from the truth. One of the challenges is the terminology used to describe Indigenous Peoples. For example, one of the historical terms used is *Indian*. This term is outdated and often felt to be offensive. In the 1970s, the term *Indian* was replaced with *First Nations*, and it is meant to honour the nationhood that the government sought to erase through the treaty-making process and residential schools. The term *Indian*, however, still has legal relevance because of the *Indian Act*. The *Indian Act* impacts many aspects of people’s lives, but one of the biggest ways is through Indian Status. Indian Status is legal recognition of an individual’s First Nations ancestry and all associated rights, including any treaty rights and the rights to live on a First Nations reserve, apply for funding for post-secondary education, and limited health benefits provided through NIHB (non-insured health benefits). There is a growing movement to change the *Indian Act* so that it is less restrictive and oppressive.

The word *Aboriginal* is also considered to be offensive to some people, but it is accepted by many. It is an umbrella term that can refer to First Nations, Inuit, or Métis. It is not a term that captures distinctions, which is one of the reasons some dislike

it. The term *First Nations*, as well, functions in the same way. It implies many nations, but unless one seeks out more knowledge, the distinction is not clear. There are over 600 distinct nations across Canada that could fall under the category of First Nations. Across central Canada there are diverse Métis communities that have many similarities, but also many distinctions. Across the Arctic there are at least four distinct Inuit land claim regions with peoples speaking different dialects and expressing culture in distinct ways relating to the land that they are connected to. When delving into the learning of historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous Peoples, it is important to be as specific as possible about the group or groups you are exploring.

The term *Indigenous* has gained popularity over the last several years, but it is important to define what is meant by the term *Indigenous*. It is often used in a global context to refer to the original peoples of a particular land or territory. For the purposes of this guide, the term Indigenous is synonymous with the term *Aboriginal* and refers to the three distinct groups within Canada that are recognized under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

In an attempt to push back against terms that were imposed upon Indigenous Peoples, there is a significant push in communities to reclaim traditional names for nations. Some examples would include using the word *Anishinaabe* to refer to people historically known as Ojibwe, or the use of the word *Kanien’kehá:ka* for the peoples historically known as Mohawk. The term *Inuit* is a word in Inuktitut that means “the people,” *Dene* means “the people” in the Dene language, and many Métis people from western regions refer to themselves as *Otipemisiwak*, which means “the people who rule themselves” in the Nēhiyaw (Cree) language. The reclamation of language is significant as communities seek to reconnect and re-establish traditional languages that were diminished through the Indian Residential School System over the course of a century.

One of the unique stereotypes that Indigenous Peoples face is that it is assumed that they live in rural areas, on reserves, or in northern communities. It is true that

many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples do live in these places. However, urban Indigenous populations are growing very fast, and in fast-growing diverse Canadian cities urban Indigenous people often feel hidden in plain view. This urban reality is quite distinct from the rural or reserve reality, and it is important that the content that is learned in schools reflects a diversity of perspectives and experiences to avoid singular narratives being taught to children that are then replicated in their day-to-day lives.

Residential Schools

Indian Residential Schools operated for more than a hundred years in Canada. With children being taken as young as four years old, every aspect of Indigenous families was impacted. Conditions at many of the schools were deplorable, and many children were physically, sexually, emotionally, and spiritually abused. The impacts of all of this, weighing on one generation

after the next, continue to be felt intensely by communities across Canada. Communities are working hard to heal themselves from the deep harm that came from these intergenerational experiences. Residential schools are still new to the learning of many Canadians, which is why it continues to be important to expand the learning of children from their entry into the school system until they leave it.

In 2008, the federal government of Canada formally apologized for its role in the Indian Residential School system. One of the outcomes of this apology was the launching of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The intent of this commission was to gather truth through the testimony of Survivors of Indian Residential Schools, and research into the impact of these schools. The process of reconciliation relied on the gathering and educational outcomes of the truth gathering and was seen to be ongoing and involving both individuals in Canada as well as the collective.

Teaching and Learning with Indigenous Peoples

- Connect with your school board’s Indigenous education liaison or department.
- Build relationships with local communities. Expect it to take time to build trust and for the relationships to grow.
- Prioritize the voices of Indigenous Peoples and listen.
- Centre Indigenous content, knowledge, ways of knowing and being in your practice (Traditional Knowledge, books, film, music, philosophy, art).
- Follow traditional protocols in your local area (e.g., gifting, blankets, and tobacco), and don’t be afraid to ask if you are unsure of the protocols.
- Work with Elders and Knowledge Keepers trusted in your local communities. Often Indigenous education departments and local agencies that serve Indigenous groups are great resources for advice.
- Reciprocate—Value the time and knowledge of any guests in your learning space, or community members you work with. Think about how you can reciprocate the relationship. Remember that a gift or an honorarium is also given.
- Go beyond arts, crafts, and displays of music and dance. Talk about the issues, even the most difficult ones, and make sure to include Indigenous voices, values, stories, and perspectives.

These sample articles and lessons may help teachers, parents, and children start their journey of learning about Canada's history with Indigenous Peoples and take their first steps towards reconciliation.

What Is Reconciliation?

Excerpt from *Community Ties* Student Book



A Path to Healing

"Reconciliation." It's a big word, but what does it mean? It is when people work to repair a relationship. It is an ongoing process. In this case, it is repairing the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and other Canadians. It has been unequal for a long, long time.

"It took 125 years to create the problem—seven generations—so it may take generations to fix."

—Senator Murray Sinclair,
former Chair of the TRC

In 2008, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper made a formal apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools on behalf of the Canadian government. That same year, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was set up. Their job was to go across the country to interview people who had attended residential school to get their stories and statements. This was stressful for many students because they didn't want to remember those hard times, but it was also healing for some Survivors.

The TRC completed its report in 2015. It came up with 94 Calls to Action—ways that Canadians can move forward. There is a lot of healing and work still to be done, but the TRC report is a good start for finding a way to honour the past, while looking towards a bright future for all Canadians.



▲ Cree Elder Lorna Standingready (left) shared the story of what happened to her as a little girl in residential school. Here, she attends the closing ceremony of the TRC on June 3, 2015.

People have lots of ideas from **learning** to **caring** to **acting**.



"I expect folks to understand that reconciliation is a two-way street. And that we can't get to reconciliation until we have the truth part."

—Rebecca Benson,
Egale Canada Human Rights Trust



"We all go to school and we each have the power to decide how we will use our learning for good. As a young person, your voice is powerful. How will you use your voice to make your community more fair and respectful?"

—Charlene Bearhead,
Pathways to Education Canada Indigenous
Education Advisory Circle Member



"We know we made mistakes in the past, but now it is time to right our wrongs. Time to learn from them and teach the next generation this important history. No matter our race or background, we stand together, all of us as one, and we are united as a country because we are all different, but we are all Canadian."

—Nevaeh Murray,
Grade 6, Charlottetown, PEI



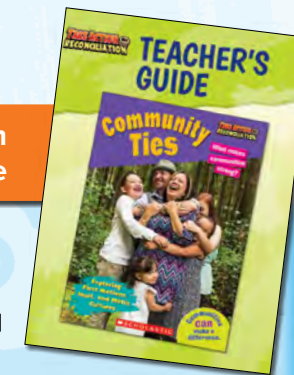
"Reconciliation means... you have to recognize and listen to the survivors of events and hear their stories. You need to spread awareness and make sure that everyone knows about it. Then you need to fix the problem and make sure it doesn't happen again."

—11-year-old Zachary Mullin,
2014

Think About It!

How do you
reconcile with
your friends and
family when you
break a promise?

What Is Reconciliation? Discussion Prompts



Sample Lesson from
Community Ties Teacher's Guide

Summary: This selection explains the meaning of reconciliation and looks at the different ideas people have about it.

Reading Level:

Vocabulary: generations, reconciliation, relationship, process, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), residential schools, Survivors, truth, awareness

Minds on Reflection (Before Reading): When you have a disagreement with your friends, what do you do to fix the problem? Do you apologize? What else would you do?

Understanding the Page:

- On page 34, Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the TRC, states that "It took 125 years to create the problem—seven generations—so it may take generations to fix." What does "generations" mean? What problem is Justice Sinclair talking about? What does he mean when he says it took 125 years to create the problem?
- In 2008, the Canadian government apologized to former

students of residential schools. Why did they apologize? What do you think of this apology? When a relationship needs fixing, do you think an apology is all that is needed to mend the relationship? Explain your thinking.

- Also in 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established to hear the stories of Survivors of residential schools. How do you

think telling their stories helped the Survivors?

- On page 35, Rebecca Benson suggests that reconciliation is a two-way street. What is meant by "a two-way street"? Benson also says that "... we can't get to reconciliation until we have the truth part." What does she mean by the truth part? What truth is Benson referring to? Why is

telling/knowing the truth an important part of reconciliation?

- On page 35, Charlene Bearhead says that "... we each have the power to decide how we will use our learning for good. As a young person, your voice is powerful." In what ways can you make your voice heard? At home? At school? In your community? How can you make your community more fair and respectful?

[Download Sample](#)



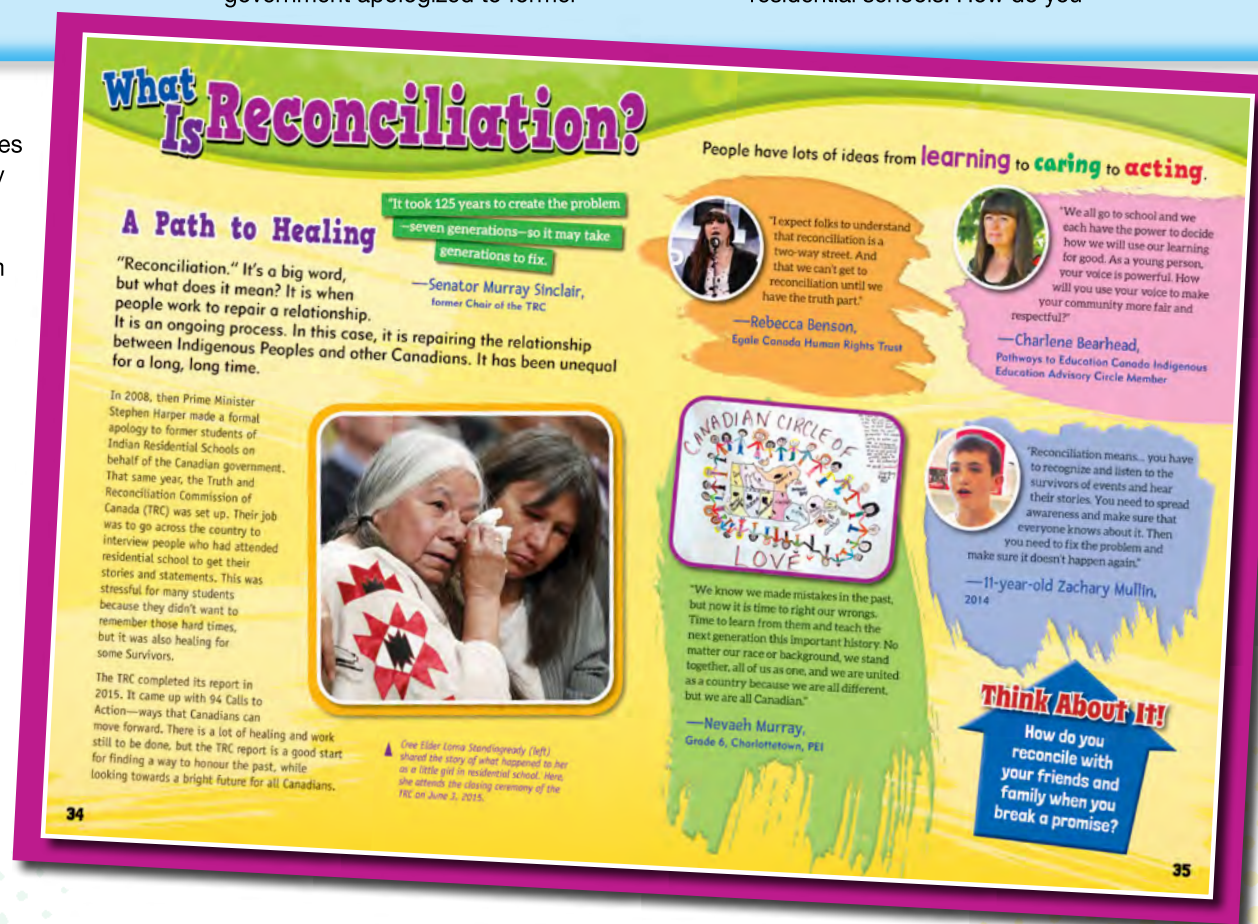
History — In the selection, Nevaeh Murray expresses that it is time to right our wrongs. What does Murray mean when she goes further to say, "Time to learn from them and teach the next generation this important history"? Why is it important to learn from history? What lessons do you think all Canadians can learn from knowing about the history of residential schools in Canada?



Social Studies — Zachary Mullen says that "Reconciliation means... you have to recognize and listen to the survivors of events and hear their stories. You need to spread awareness and make sure that everyone knows about it. Then you need to fix the problem and make sure it doesn't happen again." Discuss Mullen's statement with a partner. What does he mean by "spread awareness"? When you recognize and listen to the survivors of events and hear their stories, what does that help to do? Why is making sure that everyone knows about what has happened an important step in reconciliation?



Health — Revisit the picture of Cree Elder Lorna Standingready on page 34. At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission meetings, Elder Standingready shared her story of her time at residential school. Why do you think she was crying at the closing ceremony of the TRC? Do you think that sharing their stories may have been both traumatic and healing for Elder Standingready and other Survivors? Discuss your thinking with a partner.



Social Studies — Historically, Canada's oppression of Indigenous Peoples led to the loss of their traditional territories, ways of life, and languages, the banning of cultural practices, and the Residential School System. We learn on page 34 that reconciliation means repairing a relationship. What do you think repairing the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people involves? Discuss your ideas as a class. In your discussion, consider the idea that reconciliation is an ongoing process.



Global Citizenship — Write a letter to your local government to ask if they are working towards reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. How is the government working towards reconciliation? Write why you think it is important for the government to achieve reconciliation. Share your letter with your school to show that you want changes.



Further Inquiry

Conduct further research on the Residential School System. What were the attitudes of the Canadian government towards Indigenous Peoples at that time period in Canadian history? What were the roles of churches and the Canadian government? What was the Canadian government's goal? How did residential schools impact the lives of Indigenous children and their families and communities? How are the effects of residential schools still having an impact on Indigenous communities today?



Think About It!

How do you reconcile with your friends and family when you have done something to damage your relationship, such as break a promise or hurt them in some way? What are the keys to a good relationship? Brainstorm what is considered a good relationship, for example, having respect, having trust, and sharing. What happens when a relationship is broken? How can you repair that relationship?

How Colonialism Affects Indigenous Wellness

Excerpt from *Path to Wellness* Student Book



Before Europeans Arrived

Before colonization, Indigenous Peoples set up their communities in ways that helped them maintain good health. Communities had access to land, water, and ice. People were able to move to different locations whenever they wanted.

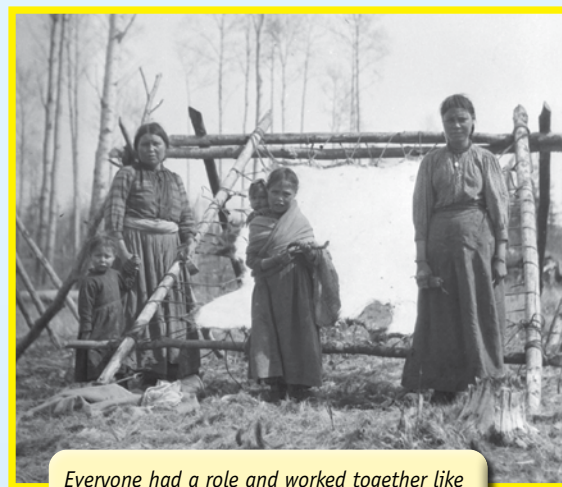
Each person had a close connection to local plants, animals, and features of the land. This gave them a sense of place and belonging. Children were cared for by everyone in the community, and people worked together to get things done. Each person had a role in the community, and a feeling that they were valued.

Indigenous Peoples also enjoyed good health. They had active lifestyles based on hunting, fishing, and gathering, which kept people physically fit. They also had healthy diets made up of plants, berries, fish, and wild meat—and they didn't have processed sugar! That means they had no cavities in their teeth and almost no diabetes.



Many First Nations moved to follow their food and had homes they could carry or set up and take down quickly and easily.

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Everyone had a role and worked together like these women stretching a hide.

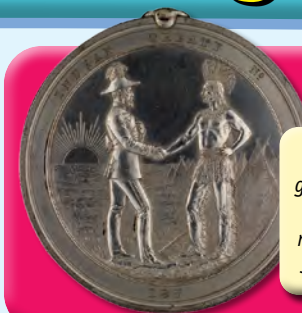
Some people had health problems as a result of their work—for example, a person who made baskets or tanned hides all day might develop arthritis—but Indigenous oral history says that Indigenous Peoples lived long lives. This allowed elderly people to pass their wisdom to young people.

In the last 200 years, all this has changed. Today, Indigenous Peoples experience some of the worst health in Canada. Diabetes, tuberculosis, cancer, heart disease, accidents, and mental health conditions are all more common in Indigenous Peoples than in non-Indigenous Canadians.

So how did this happen?

It's complicated. There are many reasons. Some of these were intentional to break Indigenous Peoples' connections to their cultures, families, and communities. These are considered by many to be acts of genocide.

Genocide: deliberately working to destroy a group or what makes them an ethnic group



This medal was given to the Chiefs who signed the numbered treaties 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Treaties

Treaties Indigenous Peoples made with European or Canadian governments were used to secure peace and friendship, create mutual obligations, and share resources. Over the years, many promises were not kept, such as health care and education.

The Indian Act

The *Indian Act* which came into law in 1876 changed the way First Nations people live.

Ceremonies and ways of life became illegal. This separated First Nations people from their cultures and identities. First Nations also had to accept European forms of government and education. That meant they could no longer make their own political decisions or raise their children. This led to feelings of powerlessness, which had a very negative effect on health and wellness.

First Nations were forced to move to reserves. They could no longer move freely on the land. Hunting, fishing, and gathering became more difficult. When they farmed, laws were passed that prevented



Students participate in the Kyuquot Cheklesah annual school potlatch. Potlatches were banned from 1884 to 1951.

them from selling their crops to support their families. It meant living in crowded conditions, which also had negative effects on health and wellness. Some First Nations people began to use alcohol and drugs to forget their pain.



A memorial in Woodland Cemetery for Inuit patients who died at the Hamilton Sanatorium in the 1950s. Many Inuit were sent to the South for treatment when crowded conditions in new Inuit communities lead to high rates of tuberculosis. It is still a problem in many parts of Canada today.

New Diseases

Many Indigenous people died from diseases the Europeans brought with them. In some cases, diseases were spread intentionally. For example, blankets infected with smallpox were given to Indigenous communities. Healers didn't know which plants could be used to treat the diseases or which ceremonies would help. When Elders or Knowledge Keepers died, much of their scientific and medical knowledge died with them.

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Residential Schools

When Indigenous children were sent to residential schools, they were told that their cultures were wrong, and they were forbidden to speak their languages. Being forced to speak English or French for most of the year meant that many children forgot how to speak the languages of their ancestors. When they returned home, they could no longer communicate with their parents and grandparents, and it was difficult to pass down cultural knowledge. Survivors of the schools often felt like outsiders in their own communities. They felt isolated from their families, communities, cultures, and languages. That made it hard for people to stick together. The family unit broke down, so children had no model of what a healthy family looked like. At school, some children were abused. Children were also not shown any love, so they became angry, afraid, and sad. When they became parents, some passed this anger, fear, and sadness on to their own children.



Students at a residential school in Shingle Point, Yukon, 1932–1933.

Forced Relocation



This is the original location where Inuit were dropped in Resolute Bay. For the first year, they lived in tents and snow houses.

Many First Nations communities were forced from their traditional territories, and Métis were forced from their homelands. This broke up families and communities. Later, Inuit were forced into permanent settlements, which also made it difficult to move freely on the land to hunt, fish, and gather their traditional foods. All of these things created poverty, starvation, hopelessness, and a lack of food security.

Change of Diet

Losing access to traditional sources of food forced Indigenous Peoples to eat a Western diet with more starch and sugar. Many people began to have problems with their health, such as heart disease and diabetes.



The traditional diets of Indigenous people were much healthier than a modern, processed diet.

The Sixties Scoop

The Sixties Scoop began in the mid-1950s and continued well into the 1980s. Thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their families and placed in foster homes or put up for adoption to White families. This disconnected kids from their families, communities, cultures, and languages.



Indigenous children were adopted by families around the world.

Ways of Resilience

It's still happening!

The negative effects of colonization didn't just happen in the past. Colonialism still affects Indigenous Peoples today. Discrimination, lack of clean water, food insecurity, poverty, and poor housing all have negative effects.

Indigenous Peoples are resilient. They are overcoming the challenges and reclaiming control of their lives. They are reviving cultural practices and traditional healing practices. Indigenous organizations are also using cultural knowledge to help Indigenous Peoples re-create healthy families and healthy communities.



Playing hand games in the community of Déline, Northwest Territories.

Friendship Centres

Indigenous Peoples living in urban communities can use healing and wellness services at friendship centres, which are staffed by Indigenous people in each province across the country. Friendship centres offer family support services, language and culture programs, appointments with Elders, counselling, and help locating health care services in the city.

Cultural Practices

Many organizations are using traditional healing practices such as sweat lodges, and cultural programs such as traditional food preparation, traditional toolmaking, and medicine gathering to improve the health of Indigenous Peoples.

Working With Elders

Many Indigenous health centres work closely with Elders and traditional healers. Indigenous communities are also setting up land-based healing programs, and Elders pass on the knowledge they have learned. Inuit Elders are teaching youth traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering. They are also preparing ways to help lessen the dependency on Western food and lower the cost of eating.

Land-Based Practices

There is a focus in many communities on land-based practices such as hunting, gathering, and fishing. Young people in Indigenous communities are learning skills that were lost as a result of colonization. When Elders share knowledge of the land, water, and ice with young people, it creates pride in Indigenous identity. The positive feelings participants have when they take part in land-based practices show just how important culture is to wellness and healthy living.

How Colonialism Affects Indigenous Wellness — pp. 10 – 13

Summary: This selection describes the different ways that Indigenous Peoples' health and wellness have been impacted by colonialism.

Reading Level: 

Vocabulary: colonization, access, belonging, wisdom, intentional, genocide, treaties, ceremonies, forced, Elders

Minds on Reflection (Before Reading): Reflect on the word *colonialism*. What does it mean? Is it a positive or a negative word? Who in your community has been impacted by colonialism?

Understanding the Page:

1 On page 11, a photo shows students participating in the Kyuquot Cheklesah annual school potlatch. Potlatches were one of the ceremonies banned in Canada from 1884 until 1951 by the federal government. What do you think were some of the impacts of this ceremony being banned for over 60 years? With this in mind, why is it so important

and meaningful to see images of young people participating in this ceremony?

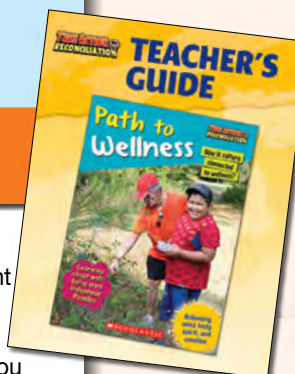
2 While it can be hard to imagine how Indigenous Peoples lived before the time of contact, there are many stories and evidence that show how Indigenous nations and peoples experienced good health and balance. Today, Indigenous people experience some of

the highest rates of illness, including cancer, diabetes, and mental health conditions. What are some reasons Indigenous people are experiencing higher rates of illness? How can this be addressed so that Indigenous people live healthier lives?

3 On page 11, we learn about a memorial in the Woodland Cemetery in Hamilton, Ontario, for

Inuit patients who passed away in the Hamilton Sanatorium. What is a sanatorium? Why were Inuit sent there? How does tuberculosis continue to impact people in Canada today? Are there communities that are more likely to experience tuberculosis than others? Who are they? Why do you think this is?

Sample Lesson from
Path to Wellness Teacher's Guide



Health — Disease had one of the largest impacts on Indigenous populations in the past. Illnesses such as influenza (the flu), common colds, and smallpox killed millions of people over a short period of time. Sometimes the transmission of smallpox was intentional. Investigate smallpox. How has this disease been addressed? Is this disease still a threat in the world?

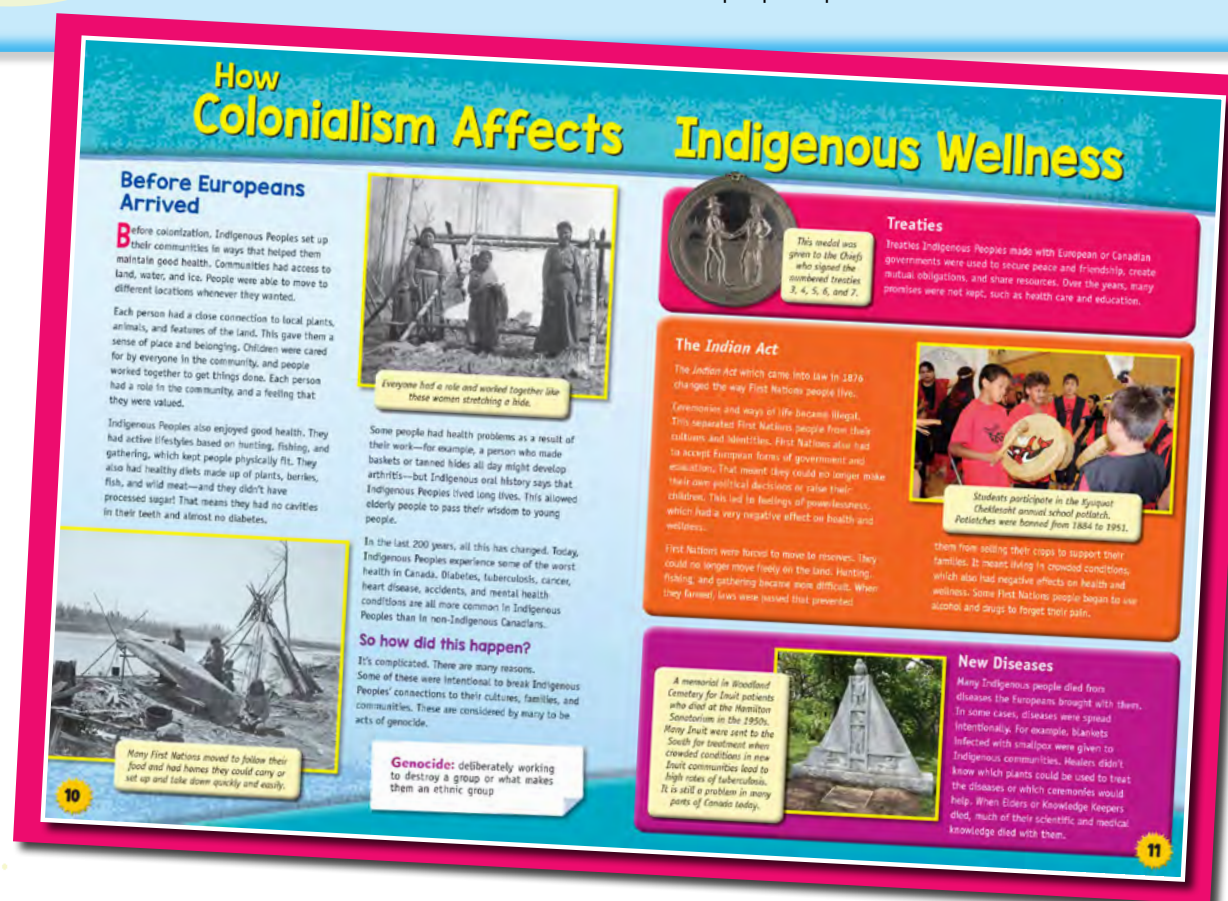
History — Treaties apply to much of the land across Canada, likely including the territory on which you live and attend school. Investigate the treaty that applies to your area. Which First Nations, Inuit, or Métis groups are signatories to this treaty? Has the treaty (or treaties) in your area been honoured? How can you be involved in honouring the treaties?



Language Arts — On page 11, we learn about some of the effects of the *Indian Act* in Canada. How do you feel about what you learned in this section? What questions do you have? Write an opinion paragraph stating your beliefs about the *Indian Act* and its impacts on First Nations peoples.



Health — In Canada (and around the world), Indigenous people who eat a traditional diet generally experience good health and wellness. Investigate some foods that are indigenous to Canada. Were there any indigenous foods that were surprising to you? How many of these foods do you include in your diet on a regular basis? Share your findings with the class.



Science — One commonly known plant that is indigenous to North America is the sunflower. Plant sunflower seeds in moist soil and place in a sunny area. Track the growth of the sunflower. What do you notice about its growth? What questions do you have about the growth of the plant and flower? What uses can you see for the plant and its parts for foods or medicines? If possible, plant the sunflower in the earth and watch it flourish.



History/Social Studies — Some argue that genocide is one of the intended outcomes of the *Indian Act*, the Indian Residential School System, and the treaty-making and reserve-making processes beginning in the 1800s. What can we learn from the Canadian government's decisions that resulted in the physical, cultural, and spiritual genocide of Indigenous Peoples over the last 150+ years? Has the government been accountable for these actions? If not, how can they be held accountable? How can the effects of these policies be made right? Develop a list of ideas for how the government can be held accountable for justice in relation to these acts of genocide. How can Indigenous Peoples feel that some justice has been served? Discuss with a partner.

How Colonialism Affects Indigenous Wellness — pp. 10 – 13 continued

Vocabulary:
sweat lodges

Understanding the Page:

- 1 There are four sections on page 12. What are some of the similarities between each of the sections? What are the differences? Even though many of the items discussed in each section happened in the past, they still impact individuals and communities today. What are some ways that communities continue to feel the impacts of the government policies described?
- 2 In residential schools, children were only allowed to speak English or French and were punished for speaking their ancestral languages. Do you have the opportunity to learn your family's original language(s) in your school? If so, could you imagine having to learn a different language and being punished for speaking your mother tongue? Do you have the opportunity to learn an Indigenous language in your school? Why is it important to have access to learn an Indigenous language?
- 3 Forced relocation in different forms impacted First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Consider some of the impacts of being forced to leave your home. How were these policies harmful to communities? What are some ways that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples resisted these policies?
- 4 Traditional diets are typically healthier than modern, Western diets which are highly processed. Do you think it is hard to eat a traditional diet today? Does your family eat traditional foods? Do you find it hard to find/eat those foods where you live? For Indigenous people in the city, what are some ways that they can follow a traditional diet?



Social Studies — The Sixties Scoop refers to the time period when thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their families and put into foster homes or were adopted by non-Indigenous families. This was done to intentionally disconnect children from their families and cultures. Investigate some of the consequences of adoption. Is adoption always a positive or negative experience? Explain your thinking.



Health — The traditional foods of Indigenous groups vary from coast to coast; however, they typically fall into the categories of fish, wild meat, grains, vegetables, fruits, and dairy/alternatives. Looking at *Canada's food guide* (Web link: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>), what kind of foods are you eating? What are some ways that all Canadians can benefit from consuming a diet of foods indigenous to Canada?



Social Studies — Resilience is sometimes defined as the ability to bounce back from challenges. What are some of the key challenges that Indigenous Peoples continue to bounce back from? Is it right that communities have to continue to respond to these challenges? What are some changes that can be made in Canadian society to respond to the challenges Indigenous Peoples continue to face?



Further Inquiry

Friendship centres provide a gathering place for Indigenous people to come together. Is there a friendship centre in your community? If not, where is the nearest friendship centre? Are there other resources for Indigenous people available in your community? What resources might be needed, and how can they be brought into your community?

Residential Schools
When Indigenous children were sent to residential schools, they were told that their cultures were wrong, and they were forbidden to speak their languages. Being forced to speak English or French for most of the year meant that many children forgot how to speak the languages of their ancestors. When they returned home, they could no longer communicate with their parents and grandparents, and it was difficult to pass down cultural knowledge. Survivors of the schools often felt like outsiders in their own communities. They felt isolated from their families, communities, cultures, and languages. That made it hard for people to stick together. The family unit broke down. At school, some children were abused. Children were also not shown any love, so they became angry, afraid, and sad. When they became parents, some passed this anger, fear, and sadness on to their own children.

Forced Relocation
This is the original location where Inuit were dropped in Resolute Bay. For the first year, they lived in tents and snow houses.
Many First Nations communities were forced from their traditional territories, and Métis were forced from their homelands. This broke up families and communities. Later, Inuit were forced into permanent settlements, which was made difficult to move freely on the land to hunt, fish, and gather their traditional foods. All of these things caused poverty, starvation, homelessness, and a lack of food security.

Change of Diet
Losing access to traditional sources of food forced Indigenous Peoples to eat a Western diet with more starch and sugar. Many people began to have problems with their health, such as heart disease and diabetes.
The traditional diet of Indigenous people were much healthier than a modern, processed diet.

The Sixties Scoop
The Sixties Scoop began in the mid-1950s and continued until the 1980s. Thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their families and placed in foster homes or sent up for adoption to white families. This disconnected kids from their families, communities, cultures, and languages.

Ways of Resilience
It's still happening!
The negative effects of colonization didn't just happen in the past. Colonialism still affects Indigenous Peoples today. Discrimination, lack of clean water, food insecurity, poverty, and poor housing all have negative effects.
Indigenous Peoples are resilient. They are overcoming the challenges and reclaiming control of their lives. They are reviving cultural practices and traditional healing practices. Indigenous organizations are also using cultural knowledge to help Indigenous Peoples recreate healthy families and healthy communities.

Friendship Centres
Indigenous Peoples living in urban communities can use healing and wellness services at friendship centres, which are staffed by Indigenous people in each province across the country. Friendship centres offer family support services, language and culture programs, appointments with Elders, counselling, and help locating health care services in the city.

Working With Elders
Many Indigenous health centres work closely with Elders and traditional healers. Indigenous communities are also setting up land-based healing programs, and Elders pass on the knowledge they have learned. Inuit Elders are teaching youth traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering. They are also preparing ways to help lessen the dependency on Western food and lower the cost of eating.

Land-Based Practices
There is a focus in many communities on land-based practices such as hunting, gathering, and fishing. Young people in Indigenous communities are learning skills that were lost as a result of colonization. When Elders share knowledge of the land, water, and ice with young people, it creates pride in Indigenous identity. The positive feelings participants have when they take part in land-based practices show just how important culture is to wellness and healthy living.

Cultural Practices
Many organizations are using traditional healing practices such as sweat lodges, and cultural programs such as traditional food preparation, traditional toolmaking, and medicine gathering to improve the health of Indigenous Peoples.



Social Studies — Elders play a very important role in Indigenous communities. Is there a difference between an Elder and an older person? Do you have Elders in your life that are important to you? What are some of the things you have learned from them? How are Elders important in preserving culture?



Health — Traditional sources of food (e.g., fish, berries, wild meat, etc.) helped Indigenous people keep their bodies healthy. Through colonization, relocation, and removal from their territories, many people lost access to traditional foods, while colonizers at the same time introduced foods composed of a lot of milk, flour, and fat that are also high in salt and sugar. The introduction of these foods had health impacts on Indigenous communities. Investigate some of the health impacts. Choose one health impact and do further research. Write a paragraph on the ways that healthy eating can positively support recovering from ill health.

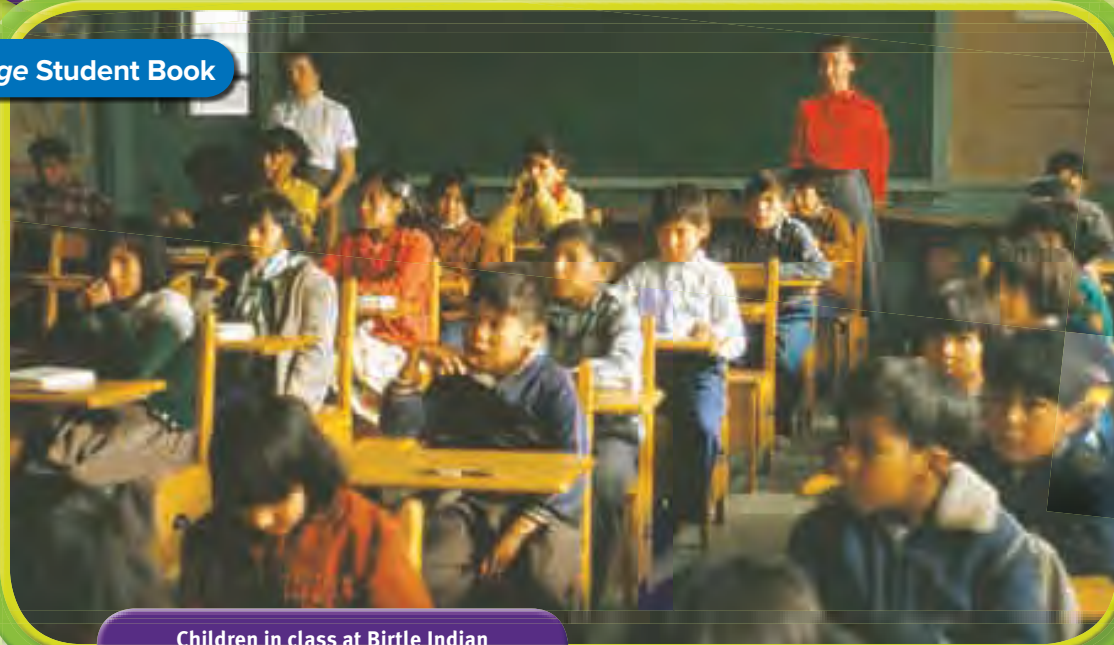


Geography/History — What are some of the ways that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people relied on the land in the past? Do you think it would have been an easy adjustment for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people who were forcibly relocated, sometimes to drastically different climates and geographical areas? What can you think of as some of the impacts of relocation on these communities (consider both the community that was forcibly relocated, and the community they were removed from)?

This third sample lesson delves into the legacy of residential schools and how communities are healing from that legacy.

Changing the Legacy of Residential Schools

Excerpt from *Time for a Change* Student Book

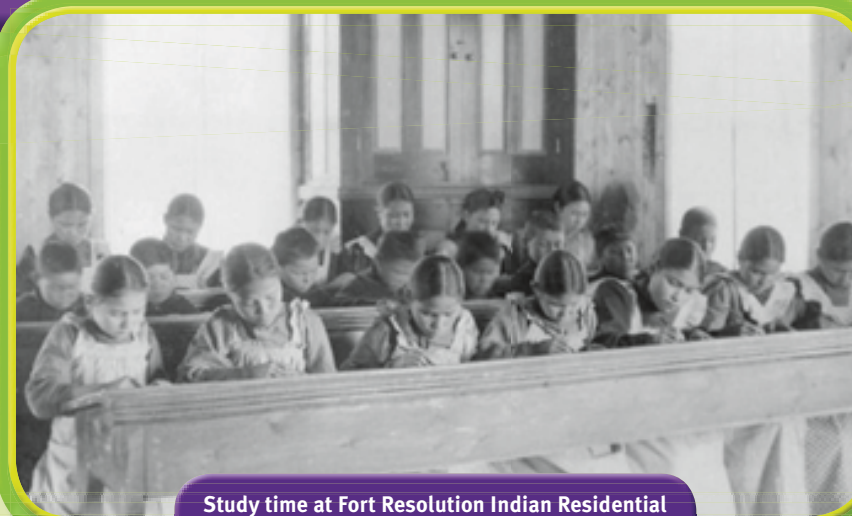


Children in class at Birtle Indian Residential School in Manitoba, c. 1957.

Download Sample ➔

For over 100 years, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were removed from their homes and communities by the Canadian government and forced to attend residential schools. They were forbidden to speak their languages, or practise traditional customs and spirituality. They lived in substandard conditions and experienced abuse. They did not see examples of normal family life.

When Indigenous children left the schools, they often felt that they did not belong in their own communities. They didn't have the traditional skills to help their parents, and they had been taught to feel ashamed of their Indigenous identity. Racism and stereotypes meant they also did not feel welcome in Canadian society. Many residential schools did not provide good quality education, so those who attended the schools were often unable to succeed in higher education or the workplace.



Study time at Fort Resolution Indian Residential School in the Northwest Territories.

When the federal government apologized to residential school Survivors in 2008, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper admitted that the government wanted to assimilate

Indigenous children into colonial society in an attempt to “civilize” them. Today, Survivors of residential schools are trying to heal from the experience.



“We need to speak about it; we need to learn about it.”

—Phyllis Webstad, founder of the Orange Shirt Day movement

Taking Action

Orange Shirt Day

When Phyllis arrived at her residential school at the age of six, all of her clothes were taken, including the orange shirt her grandmother had bought her for the first day of school. Phyllis has spoken publicly about how the colour orange reminded her throughout her life of how the school taught her that she and the other kids didn't matter. She started a national movement, Orange Shirt Day, to acknowledge residential school Survivors and to show that every child matters. Orange Shirt Day is recognized all across Canada every year, on September 30th. What will you, your class, or your school do to honour Survivors next September 30th?



Norman Yakeleya's Story



Norman Yakeleya is from Tulít'a, Northwest Territories, and now lives in Yellowknife. He was a councillor, chief, and former Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Sahtu in the Northwest Territories Legislature. In 2018, he was elected national chief of the Dene Nation. At the age of six, Norman entered Grollier Hall residential school, run by the Roman Catholic Church in Inuvik, Northwest Territories.

Q: What do you want people in Canada to know about your time in residential school?

NY: They taught me to listen to a teacher, do geometry and chemistry, how to write proper English. I learned a little bit of piano, hockey. I studied, but I didn't learn about drumming or where our songs come from, how our language is structured, the importance of the Elders' teachings, the importance of being one mind. So when I went back home at age 15, I was locked out by my own people because I didn't know how to set a fishnet, how to set a snare. There was a price to pay.

When I came out of residential school, I was in a pattern of blaming, manipulating, and living my life as a victim. I wasn't a very nice guy. But all those behaviours, it just covered up my denial about who I was and what residential school did in my life. I was so

angry. When I went into the sweat lodge, the Elder said I had to pray for the courage to forgive. Part of the healing process is letting go. If you don't allow yourself to forgive, you stay stuck in the past, instead of living your life with the path in front of you. When you walk through life with the path in front of you, you can see where you walk, because the path is there.

Q: What are some things that your community is doing to address the legacy of residential schools?

NY: The education system right now does not reflect the Traditional Knowledge of the Elders. There are one- or two-week programs on the land, but that's different from sustaining yourself on the land.

An Elder called me from one of the small communities. He wanted to get the young people together with the Elders and start mapping out our trails—where to go, where not to go, and which areas are forbidden because of our traditional stories. These young people have academic knowledge and a strong desire to know who they are and what they are—but they don't have the Traditional Knowledge. We want to ensure that this knowledge continues on. We are planning a week-long conference that brings together Elders, students, anthropologists, and archaeologists. We want to record the stories and presentations so that we can preserve our history, knowledge, heritage, culture, and spirituality for future generations.

Q: Do you think that Canada is working differently with Indigenous Peoples now?

NY: [Prime Minister] Trudeau said he wanted to create a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples. Part of that is recognizing Indigenous rights. We need to look at our nation-to-nation relationship. This is an opportunity to sit down and have a discussion about residential schools

in Canada, and the impact it had on communities, people, our cultures. We have to talk about what's continuing the intergenerational impacts. We have the inherent right to our language, our culture, our own systems. We can work nation to nation.

Taking Action

A Path Forward to a New Relationship

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has said that Canada must change the way it works with Indigenous Peoples and communities. Part of that is understanding the rights that Indigenous Peoples have. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was created by the United Nations. It's a document that explains the rights of Indigenous Peoples around the world. UNDRIP contains 46 articles that describe specific rights and the actions governments must take to protect them. All Canadians can take action to respect these rights. We can learn about what these rights are and ask our government to fully implement them.



▲ On August 9, 2017, Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild from the Ermineskin Cree community in Maskwacis, Alberta, opened an event about UNDRIP for the 10th anniversary of the Declaration.

UNDRIP has four important themes:

- The right to **self-determination**. That's the right of Indigenous Peoples to decide what is best for them and their communities.
- The right to be **recognized as distinct peoples**.
- The right to **free, prior, and informed consent**. This means the right to be consulted and to make decisions about anything that may affect their rights—freely, without pressure, with all the facts, and before any decisions are made.
- The right to be **free of discrimination**.

Think About It!

Why is it important for the education system to include Indigenous histories, experiences, and perspectives?

Summary: This selection teaches us about the legacy of residential schools and how communities are healing from that legacy.

Reading Level: 3 +

Vocabulary: legacy, forbidden, spirituality, substandard, stereotypes, assimilate, heal

Minds on Reflection (Before Reading): How are residential schools different from the school you attend?

Understanding the Page:

1 The title of this selection is “Changing the Legacy of Residential Schools.” What do you know about the term *legacy*? Is legacy a positive word or a negative word, or is it neutral? Discuss with a partner.

2 In this selection, we learn about how students were forbidden to speak their languages, or practise traditional customs and spirituality. Consider how this would feel if it were you and your family who were forbidden to practise your traditions. How do you think you would respond to this?

3 Why do you think it is so important for students and all of Canada to be aware of residential schools, their legacy, and to talk about what happened?

4 In 2008, the federal government apologized to Survivors of residential schools. Is a simple verbal apology enough?

What has the government been doing to make things right with Survivors and their ancestors? What more should the government do?



Social Studies - On page 22, we learn that in residential schools children were forbidden to practise traditional customs and spirituality. What do you think were some of the impacts of forcing children to give up their traditional customs and spirituality? Revisit Norman Yakeleya’s interview on page 24 in considering your answer. How was Yakeleya affected by not learning the traditional customs and spiritual practices of his people? Research some of the traditional customs of Indigenous communities where you live. What are Indigenous communities doing to ensure that these practices are passed on to the next generations?



Language Arts - On pages 22 and 23, there are two images showing children in residential school. Using these images to help you think, write down the keywords of any questions you have about these images. How do the images make you feel? Using your notes, write a poem about the images. Share your poem with a partner.



Health - Indian Residential Schools impacted the health of individuals and communities in a large way. With a partner, make a list of the ways that residential schools impacted the physical health of Indigenous Peoples, and the mental health of individuals. Brainstorm some ways that the health of Indigenous Peoples is being supported today.



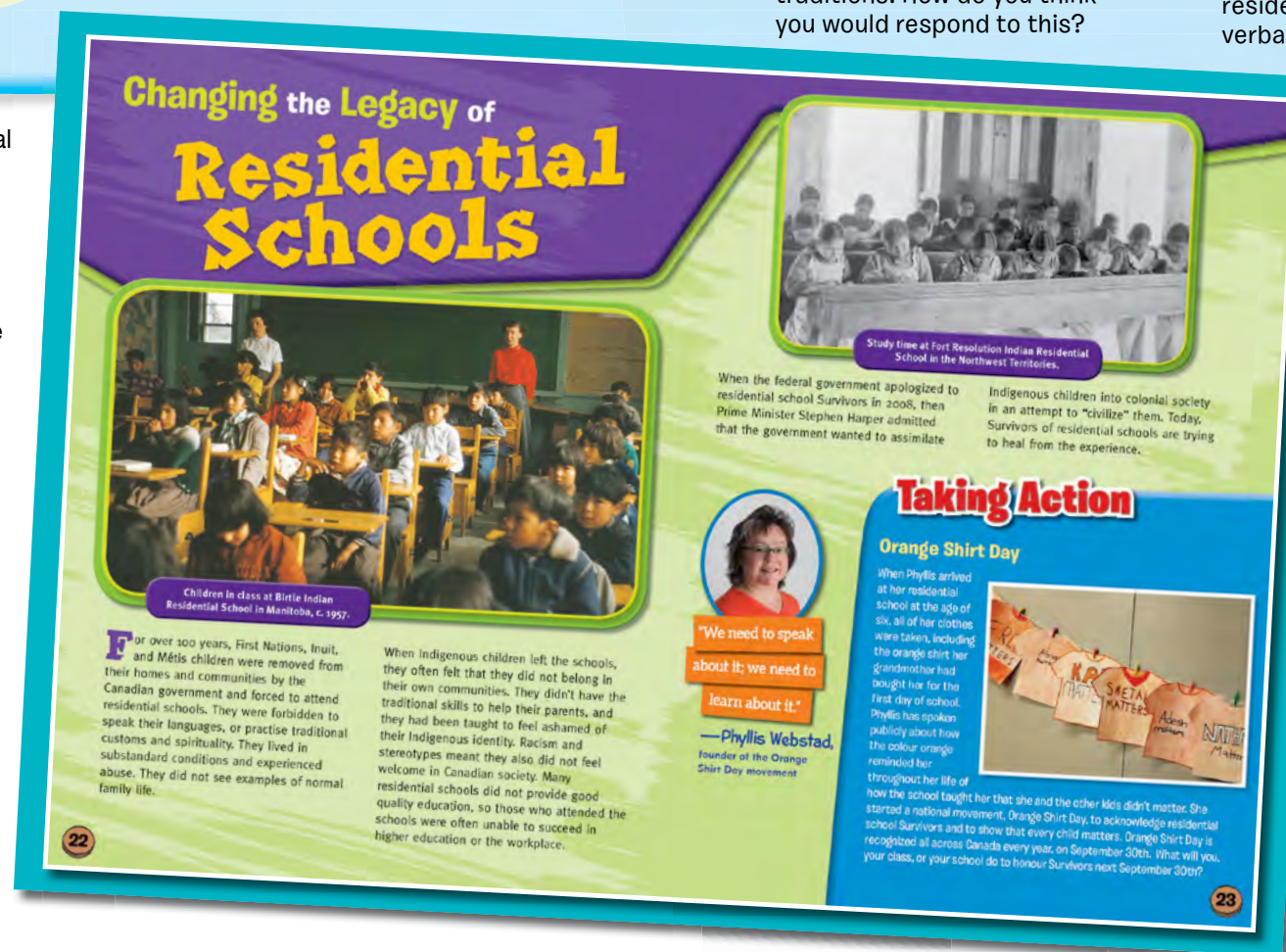
Health - On page 22, we learn that when some Indigenous children returned home after residential school, they felt like they didn’t belong in their own communities. Norman Yakeleya expresses the same idea on page 24 when he says, “... I was locked out by my own people” and “There was a price to pay.” What price did Yakeleya pay? Imagine feeling that you do not belong in your own family and community through no fault of your own. What effect do you think these feelings had on the spiritual, mental, emotional, and even physical health of former residential school students? Discuss your thoughts in a small group.



Language Arts - Using what you have learned in this selection, any questions you might have, and current events relating to truth and reconciliation, write an opinion article giving your perspective on the current state of truth and reconciliation in Canada today.



Social Studies - Assimilation is when one group begins thinking and acting like another group. For First Nations peoples, this happened through being forbidden to speak ancestral languages and to practise cultural and spiritual traditions. What is the situation like in Canada today? Research the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s *Calls to Action* and see if you can find anything that addresses assimilation.



Sample Lesson from
Time for a Change Teacher's Guide



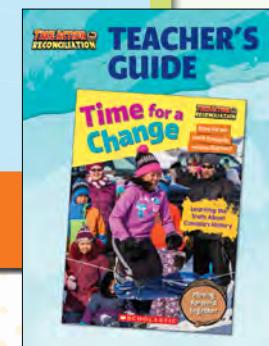
Taking Action

On page 23, we learn that Phyllis Webstad began the Orange Shirt Day movement to honour the Survivors of residential schools. Find out more about Orange Shirt Day. What are schools across the country doing on September 30th to honour residential school Survivors and to show that every child matters? What does your school community do, or could be doing? What ideas do you have for getting your school community involved?

[Download Sample](#)



Media/Art - Make a poster sharing important information about Orange Shirt Day, and encouraging people to participate. Start a poster campaign in your school to make sure everyone participates on September 30th!



Summary: In this part of the selection, Dene Norman Yakeleya from Tulit'a, Northwest Territories, shares some of his experiences in residential school and how some people are addressing its legacy.

Vocabulary: Elders, behaviours, sweat lodge, Traditional Knowledge, rights, inherent, distinct, consent, discrimination

Minds on Reflection (Before Reading): Why is it so important to hear the stories and experiences of Survivors?

Understanding the Page:

1 Norman Yakeleya talks about how he learned about piano, hockey, and writing English, but that he didn't learn about drumming, where Indigenous songs came from, or the structures of his own language. What impact did this education have on his ability to be a member of his Indigenous community?

2 On page 24, Yakeleya talks about how angry he was after coming out of residential schools. Make a list of the reasons why you think he would have been angry. What were some of the ways Yakeleya worked to heal? What can you learn from his experience with anger?

3 Yakeleya mentions two types of knowledge, which are academic knowledge and Traditional Knowledge. What are the differences between the two types of knowledge? Why are both important?

4 On page 25, Yakeleya talks about the importance of recognizing

Indigenous rights, and looking at the nation-to-nation relationship. What does nation to nation mean? What do you think he means by a nation-to-nation relationship? What questions would you ask him if you had the chance?



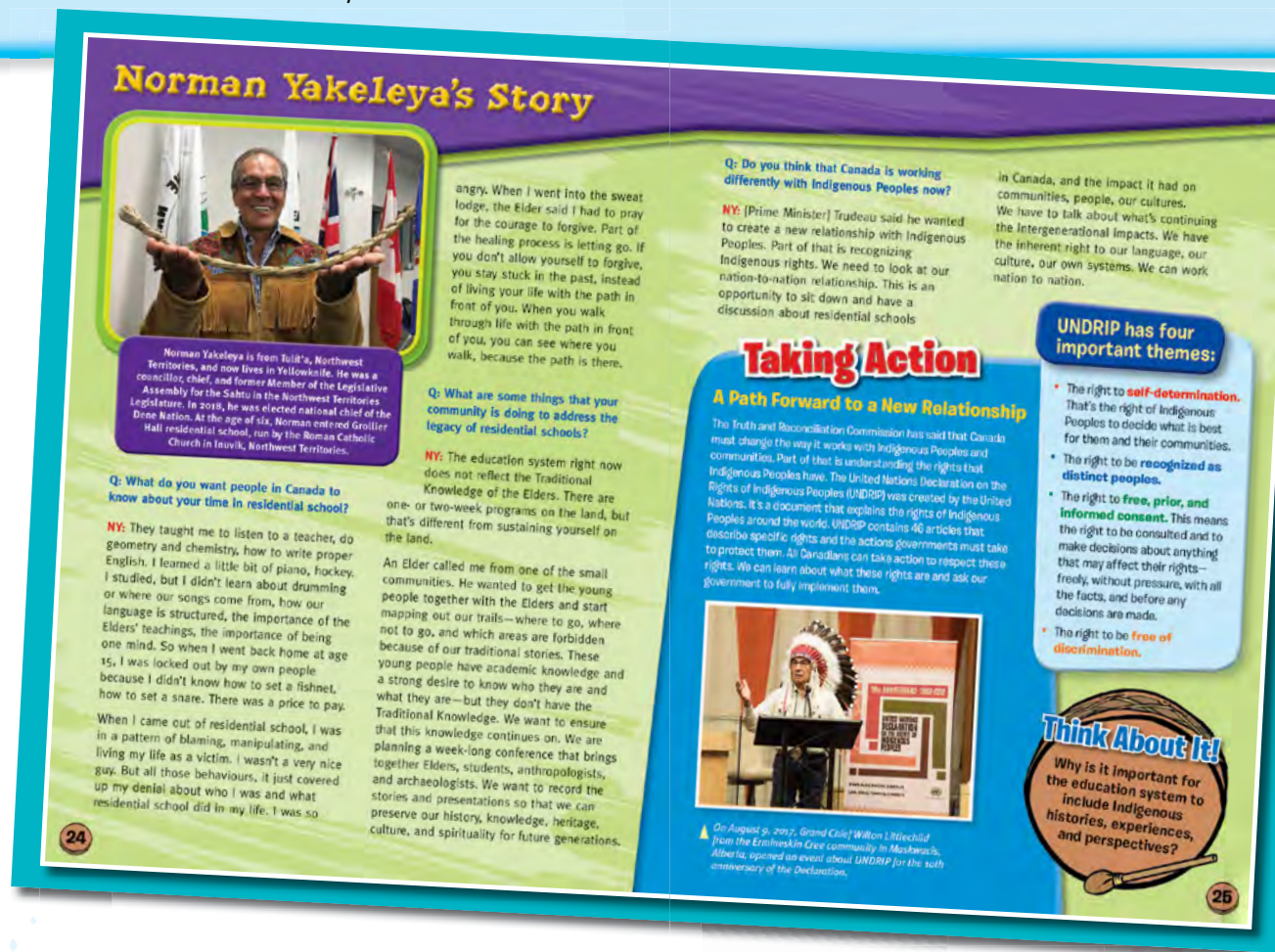
Social Studies - On page 24, we learn from Norman Yakeleya that he felt locked out of his community by his own people when he returned from school because he did not know how to do specific things. What things would have helped him feel more a part of his community? What are some of the ways today that individuals are learning these kinds of things to reconnect with their communities?



Language/Technology - Using your research skills, find a web resource that helps people learn a language Indigenous to your territory. Why do you think these web resources are so important to boost language skill development? How can your learning of Indigenous languages, even a few words, assist in reconciliation?



Health - On page 21 of "Piita Irniq's Story," Elder Irniq shares that part of healing is talking about your pain and "helping Inuit to understand where they have been as a people, where they are now, and where they are going in the future. Working with Inuit to understand this about themselves is very important." Compare and contrast Elder Irniq's ideas on healing to what Norman Yakeleya believes about healing: "Part of the healing process is letting go. If you don't allow yourself to forgive, you stay stuck in the past, instead of living your life with the path in front of you." How are their ideas on healing similar? How are their ideas different? What are your thoughts about healing? Discuss with a partner.



Social Studies - On page 25, four themes in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) are identified. Do you think one is more important than the others? If so, why? Chose one theme and discuss with a partner.



Media/Art - Using a computer media program, sketching, or your choice of visual art, design a poster highlighting the four key themes of UNDRIP. Working with your teacher, arrange a poster/media campaign in your school to draw attention to the importance of UNDRIP.



Social Studies - On page 25, Yakeleya talks about how Prime Minister Trudeau said he wanted to create a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples. An important part of this, Yakeleya believes, is that Indigenous rights need to be recognized, and he also believes that we need to look at the nation-to-nation relationship. What are some of the Indigenous rights that continue to go unrecognized? Discuss your ideas with a partner and then the class.

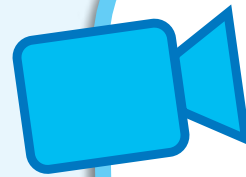


Language Arts - Prime Minister Trudeau's desire to create a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples is noted on page 25. Write a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau identifying the key points that you feel need to be addressed in order to continue healing the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Learn More

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Commissioner Dr. Marie Wilson gives a backgrounder on the history of residential schools, their impact on Indigenous communities, and information about the TRC, and Survivors share their stories. Click to watch each video. ➡

Please note: These external web links provide additional information that is consistent with the intended purpose of this discussion guide; however, the external links are subject to change and not maintained by *Scholastic Canada Ltd.*



Videos

[What Happened?](#) ➡

[What Has Been the Purpose and the Role of the TRC?](#) ➡

[How Should People Feel?](#) ➡

[Namwayut: we are all one. Truth and reconciliation in Canada](#) ➡

Chief Robert Joseph, hereditary chief of the Gwawaenuk First Nation, shares his experience in residential schools.

[In their own words](#) ➡

Nine Survivors talk about their experiences in residential school and its impact on their lives.

[#Next150 Challenge: Survivor Stories](#) ➡

As part of the Next 150 Challenge initiative, Survivors of residential schools tell their stories.

[Residential school survivor says her last name was stolen](#) ➡

Residential school Survivor Vivian talks about her time in residential school.

[Residential school survivor on waiting for reconciliation](#) ➡

Residential school Survivor Wanbdi Wakita talks about the need to right the wrongs caused by residential schools with meaningful actions.

[Residential School Survivor Stories](#) ➡

From the Legacy of Hope Foundation, Survivors of residential schools tell their stories.

Learn more about *Take Action for Reconciliation*:
www.scholastic.ca/education/take-action-for-reconciliation