

# What Is Reconciliation? — pp. 34 – 35 continued

**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:**

- 1 On page 34, the late Murray Sinclair, former 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?
- 2 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.

- 3 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?

- 4 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?

- 5 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?

**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.

**What Is Reconciliation?**

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

**A Path to Healing**

“It took 125 years to create the problem — seven generations — so it may take generations to fix.” —the late Murray Sinclair, former Chair of the TRC

“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.

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.

“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, Egalé 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, Indigenous ally, former Pathways to Education Canada Indigenous Education Advisory Circle Member

“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 Mullen, 2014

“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

**Think About It!**  
How do you reconcile with your friends and family when you break a promise?

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**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?