

Truth and Reconciliation

Lesson Plan

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First Peoples Principles of Learning:

Learning is embedded in memory, history and story

Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions

Social Studies Curricular Competencies, Grade 4–5: Make ethical judgments about events, decisions or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond

Social Studies Curricular Content, Grade 4–5: The impact of colonization on First Peoples societies in British Columbia and Canada; human rights and responses to discrimination in Canadian Society

Social Studies Curricular Competencies, Grade 9–10: Make reasoned ethical judgements about actions in the past and present, and determine appropriate ways to remember and respond

Social Studies Curricular Content, Grade 9–10: The continuing effects of imperialism and colonialism on Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world; discriminatory policies and injustices in Canada and the world; truth and reconciliation in Canada

Estimated Time Required: 60 minutes

Overview:

This lesson can be given towards the end of a unit on truth and reconciliation and/or residential schools. This lesson will give students a greater understanding of what the government is doing and how students can contribute to reconciliation.

Cautionary Note: Residential schools are a deeply disturbing part of our history. Some material in these interviews may trigger unpleasant feelings, both inside and outside of the classroom, especially for survivors of residential schools and their families. We suggest teachers acknowledge this with their students. For those who need support, the [Indian Residential School Survivors Society](#) offers assistance.

1. Start the class with the following activity to help your students begin thinking about what an apology means. Tell students that one side of the room is the 'agree' side and the other is 'disagree'. As you read the following statements, students are to go to the side that better represents what they personally believe. After each statement, ask for volunteers to share their reasons for picking their side.

- You should apologize to someone if you have done something hurtful
- An unjust act can affect generations of people.
- If the government did something wrong, should they apologize, even if they believed they were doing the right thing at the time.
- Saying that you are sorry should always be enough to have others forgive you.

- You should always accept an apology.

(These statements are inspired by chapter 6, “The Ethical Dimension,” in *The Big Six* by Dr. Peter Seixas and Tom Morton.)

2. Play the Island of Voices interview on *listen* page of the Residential Schools and Reconciliation pathway <<http://learning.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/pathways/residential-schools-reconciliation/listen/>> This interview was conducted by students in the Reynolds Secondary School Flexible Studies Program on Vancouver Island. They made connections with members of the Songhees community and spent time at the Royal BC Museum.

Instruct students to identify some different ways residential schools are still affecting Indigenous communities and people as they listen to Elder Secllemah (Joan Morris) share her experiences of residential school (5:40–13:47).

Discuss with students the different impacts on Indigenous communities that Elder Secllemah mentioned.

Play Shayli Robinson’s interview on the *watch* page of the Residential Schools and Reconciliation pathway <<http://learning.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/pathways/residential-schools-reconciliation/watch/>>. Shayli talks about the impact of residential schools on her family. This video was created for the Royal BC Museum’s 2017 exhibition *Family: Bonds and Belonging*. As students watch, have them again listen for the different ways residential schools are still affecting Indigenous communities and people.

After watching, ask the following discussion questions. You may wish to do this in a ‘think, pair, share’ model (students think about the questions, discuss with a partner, and then share with the group):

- Elder Secllemah and Shayli are years and generations apart, but how are their stories similar?
- How has residential school impacted Shayli’s life, even though she did not go to one?
- Think about the statements you agreed or disagreed with earlier in the lesson. Have any of your responses changed? (For example, can an unjust act affect generations of people?)

3. Introduce Stephen Harper’s 2008 statement of apology for Indian Residential Schools (you can [read](#) or [play a clip](#) of the apology to the class). Stephen Harper was the first Prime Minister to apologize for the residential school system.

Explain to students that there were mixed feelings about this apology. Many Indigenous people did not think that this apology was sufficient given the amount of pain colonization and residential schools have caused in their communities, while others found relief in hearing the Canadian government recognize their experiences and apologize.

Ask your students the following discussion questions:

- Do you think that this apology was adequate?
- Prime Minister Stephen Harper was apologizing on behalf of the Canadian government. At present, what role does the government play in reconciliation (improving relationships between the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples)?
- We all react to apologies differently. Is any reaction less or more valid?
 - Why do you think some Indigenous people felt relief while others found the apology insufficient?
- Is an apology always enough? Do we sometimes need to do more?

- What else could the government do to show their support for Indigenous peoples?

4. On December 15, 2015, after conducting seven years of research, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report examining past wrongs against Indigenous peoples in Canada. This report gives a detailed account of residential schools and the lasting effects they have had on Indigenous communities. Survivors of residential schools share their experiences, particularly in the Survivors Speak section. The report includes 94 Calls to Action, which outline the steps that both the government and citizens of Canada must take in hopes of reaching reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Introduce [the 94 Calls to Action](#) to your students (you may wish to have some of the Calls to Action printed and hand them out to the class). Tell students that these are the next steps Indigenous peoples believe need to be taken in order to reach reconciliation.

Have students form groups of four and brainstorm on how they can help create change and reach reconciliation. Students can look at the 94 Calls to Action for inspiration. Ask them to focus on the different categories that the report uses and to think about how they can help reach reconciliation in school, on sports teams or in other youth programs. Remind students that these do not need to be elaborate solutions—just simple ways they can show they care about Indigenous people.

Have a volunteer from each group report their ideas to the class. As a class, demonstrate how you will help reach reconciliation by coming up with your own calls to action or by creating signs and posters to place around your school based on their ideas and the 94 Calls to Action.

For additional resources on this topic visit the [read](#) section of the Residential Schools and Reconciliation pathway.

If you choose to use this lesson plan with your students, share their creations or reflections on the Royal BC Museum's Learning Portal by making a playlist! (<http://learning.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/our-playlists/>).