



LESSON PLAN 1: The Residential School System: Kill the Indian in the child

TRADITIONAL TERRITORY STATEMENT: We would like to acknowledge that Dawson College is located on the traditional territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk) people. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples.

This series of lesson plans aims to familiarize students with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities in Canada. Each lesson explores a different facet of contemporary Indigeneity, and includes resources by Indigenous voices. Students are invited to confront and unpack stereotypes and develop a clearer understanding of what it means to be Indigenous and an Indigenous ally in this country. The lessons in this series recognize and honour the histories, traumas and strengths of today's Indigenous communities, presenting them in accessible, engaging ways. They are meant to be an inspiring starting point that encourages educators and students to ask more questions and explore different hands-on learning activities that can put the lessons' information into practice. The possibilities are endless.

While exploring the topics in these lesson plans, some students may be triggered. Indigenous students along with other classmates who have experienced genocide and oppression may require support. Please ensure that there are proper measures in place to take care of their feelings.

★ The goals of these lessons are for students to:

- Grasp and develop their knowledge of the topics presented
- Understand the multi-generational impacts of colonialism
- Question and reframe cultural biases
- Discover how Indigenous people are reclaiming their power and identity
- Understand contemporary issues and policies that impact both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Canada

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“When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents who are savages... Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.”

Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, House of Commons, Debates, May 9, 1883

***Read more about this person at the end of this lesson plan**

Indian Residential Schools date back to the 1870's. The policy behind the government funded, church-run schools attempted to “kill the Indian in the child”. Over 130 Residential Schools were located across the country, with the last one closing in 1996.

More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were taken from their families and placed in these schools. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. Today, there are an estimated 80,000 former students still living.

Many students suffered emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and others died while attending these schools. There was a 1:25 chance of dying in Residential School. The unresolved trauma suffered by former students has been passed on from generation to generation.

“Seven generations of Aboriginal children were denied their identity. We heard how, separated from their language, their culture and their spiritual traditions and their collective history, children became unable to answer questions as simple as: Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? And who am I?”

Justice Murray Sinclair, TRC closing ceremonies. June 2015

***Read more about this person at the end of this lesson plan**



It is estimated that about 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children were removed from their communities and forced to attend residential schools. (Library and Archives Canada/PA-042133)

LESSON PLAN 1 GOALS:

To understand the history and structure of Residential Schools and the multi-generational impact they have had on Indigenous peoples.

- **What was Residential School and what purpose did it serve? Most importantly, what lasting impacts has it had on Indigenous people?**

READ: *A History of Residential Schools in Canada:*

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-history-of-residential-schools-in-canada-1.702280>

READ: *The Residential School System:*

http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_residential_school_system/

WATCH: *Healing Journey* (from WIOT3 TV series) episode 8:

<http://aptn.ca/workingitouttogether/full-episodes/season-3/> (22 minutes)

WATCH: *Healing Journey* *bonus video:

<http://workingitouttogether.com/content/healing-journey/> (3 minutes)

LISTEN: *NCTR Audio Podcast Series: Who We Were, Who We Are* (parts 1, 2, and 3: 15 minutes):

http://workingitouttogether.com/?post_type=content&cat=nctr-audio-series

- **What is The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and how is it achieving reconciliation in Canada?**

WATCH: *Educating Our Youth:*

<https://vimeo.com/75812900> (4 minutes)

READ: *The 94 Calls To Action:*

http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

- **Reconciliation in action: What activities are taking place to heal the relationship between Indigenous and Canadian people?**

LISTEN: *Circles for Reconciliation is reconciliation in action* (CBC):

<http://bit.ly/2FFqLEa> (5:36 minutes)

LISTEN & READ: *Wondering how to get involved in reconciliation? (Unreserved on CBC):*

<http://bit.ly/2y1p3wu>

Suggested class activities:

1. Identifying current perceptions and biases around Indigenous issues:

- Teacher poses a question/statement (ex. "Isn't it time for Indigenous people to get over what happened to them?").
- Pair up students or put them into small discussion groups.
- After discussing, invite each group to report back to class with key thoughts.
- Invite students to write their take-aways and further questions.

2. Review and respond to the TRC's 94 Calls to Action:

- Have students review the 94 Calls to Action and invite them to each choose one that touches them.
- Ask students to write a brief response on why the chosen Call to Action is so important to them. They can also examine what action (if any) is currently being taken to address it. ***This activity can also be used for homework**

Suggested follow up activity:

As a class, students discuss what they have learned and how it has impacted them. Students then write something new they have learned on a square of paper. All squares are displayed on a bulletin board for the entire college to see.

Suggested homework assignments:

1. Student writes a response to a Residential School Survivor's testimony from WIOT Magazine.
2. Student researches and reports on an example of Indigenous reclamation of education (ex. the Mohawk immersion school in Kahnawake).

Additional literature and videos:

We Were Children:

https://www.nfb.ca/distribution/film/we_were_children

Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation (non-fiction by Monique Gray-Smith):

<http://orcabook.com/speakingourtruth/index.html>

Indian Horse (fiction by Richard Wagamese):

<http://www.douglas-mcintyre.com/book/indian-horse>

Finding My Talk (non-fiction by Agnes Grant):

https://www.strongnations.com/store/item_display.php?i=3982&f=3109

Half Breed (biography by Maria Campbell):

https://www.strongnations.com/store/item_display.php?i=1252&f=3109

The Rez Sisters (play by Tomson Highway):

https://www.strongnations.com/store/item_display.php?i=1747&f=3109

Secret Path (graphic novel and album by Gord Downey and Jeff Lemire):

<http://secretpath.ca/>

Who was Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald (1815-1891)?

He was Canada's first Prime Minister (1867-1873 and 1878-1891) and the architect of our country's Residential School System. For this reason, many communities now attach him to the genocide of Indigenous people and want his name and statue to be removed from schools and public institutions.

**Who is Justice Murray Sinclair (1951-present)?**

He is a First Nations politician, former judge, lawyer, and was the chair of Canada's Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sinclair was the first Indigenous judge appointed in Manitoba and was appointed to the Canadian Senate on April 2, 2016. Sinclair is probably Canada's most recognized voice regarding the rights of Residential School students.

