

THE GOAL

of the Connecting – Resilience – Indigenous Truth & Reconciliation Workbook

“We need to pursue reconciliation consistently and passionately. Education has gotten us into this mess, and education will get us out. We see this as our challenge and our hope.”

The Honourable Senator Murray Sinclair

Reconciliation requires action, and together we are taking action. Indigenous Peoples benefit from the support of allies, but we should strive to meet expressed needs, and not assumed needs.

Our goal is to provide a resource that includes high-quality articles and activities, consisting of units that can be used by someone with little or no prior knowledge or understanding of Indigenous Peoples or subjects.

CRITR began in response to the current Canadian societal context. This includes the discovery of mass graves at various residential schools, ongoing public unrest, the pandemic, and calls for anti-racism programs and education.

When putting together this resource

1. We emphasized the following values and ideas:
 - ▶ An Indigenous worldview expresses people’s need to develop themselves and their children, in a way that addresses their spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental gifts.
 - ▶ The teaching and healing process is interconnected and cyclical in nature.
 - ▶ Indigenous knowledge is a representation of knowledge from different Indigenous Nations.
2. We worked to introduce readers to the concept of a “sacred circle,” also known as a medicine wheel, as well as Indigenous Peoples’ principles of learning in general terms. We recognize that these teachings vary, so we have included regional ideas where necessary.
3. We included words of encouragement.
4. We worked to find the balance between too much and too little content.
5. We worked to inform and inspire without overwhelming the teacher or the student, in the classroom or at home.
6. We included fresh insights and learning activities for key Indigenous events that are celebrated annually in schools and communities across the nation.

We trust that you will agree that we have provided a resource that has high learning value and use for both the teacher and the student, in the classroom and at home.

Dear Teachers,

We crafted this resource with teachers in mind. We thoughtfully considered and directed our creative efforts to meet the expressed needs of all teachers.

Our goal was to create a resource that addresses social emotional needs of students and incorporates Indigenous perspective, culture, arts, and knowledge.

We believe teachers want something that is to the point and user-friendly, and also has a nice balance between teacher-led information sharing and individual and group student activities.

The diversity of Indigenous Peoples makes it challenging to create a resource that is relevant to everyone everywhere. We worked to have a geographical balance as well as to include recommendations of variations to modify the materials based on location. This allows teachers in any location to work with the material and make it more applicable to where they live and teach.

We understand that:

- ▶ Teachers may be stretched during their day and don't have the time or energy to devote to this topic or the time it takes to prepare an interesting lesson.
- ▶ Teachers may be afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing and, therefore, hesitate to teach or do anything. Added to this, many teachers are afraid of doing Indigenous education wrong, not having the personal experience or training to teach this kind of information. The result is that teachers do nothing or look for the one-page worksheet and miss the mark.
- ▶ Teachers know the curriculum but may not be as familiar with Indigenous cultures.
- ▶ Most people, teachers, students, parents, and guardians want to be active participants in reconciliation, but don't know how, what to do, or where to begin.
- ▶ Many schools do not have an Indigenous education coordinator, so classroom teachers are left to pursue their own professional development and gather their own reconciliation materials to present to their students.

Our resource serves to support a teacher who may be overwhelmed yet wants to make meaningful progress and do something.

We trust you will find this book useful, valuable, and engaging for you and your students.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

What is reconciliation? What does reconciliation mean to you and your family? We need to know what reconciliation means. We will not truly understand what it is and what actions we must take without education.

While researching and interviewing people, the Orange Shirt Society determined that there are many views of reconciliation and that they are all valid.

The view of reconciliation is very personal. It will depend on experiences, cultural heritage, upbringing, education, and where people live.

As you and your children walk your personal journey of reconciliation, we challenge you to participate in discussions and think about how reconciliation may affect your family, your child's school, and your community.

There is no right and wrong way to explore reconciliation. The only wrong view is to ignore it. When people know better, they can do better.

Our hope is that children will learn about what happened to Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and that as they understand they will empathize, and they will make sure it never happens again.

In this book, you will find stories told by Indigenous authors, including some details about the removal of children from their families, as well as overcrowding, disease, and poor food at residential schools. On top of that, sickness, heartache, loneliness, and disconnection from all that the children knew was experienced by most. It is important to know these stories of assimilation.

But now it is time for reconciliation. Instead of attempting to make everyone the same, it is time to celebrate the differences and to restore respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples. It is reconciliation and NOT assimilation that we must embrace to make a positive difference.

It is important to be educated about the truth of the past so we can build a future together that embraces differences and responds to the TRC Calls to Action in a meaningful way.

We can do two things to be more educated as we move forward to reconciliation. First, every person must make the effort to listen to painful truths of what took place in residential schools as well as the intergenerational impacts. Second, the painful history of Indian Residential Schools belongs to all Canadians. It is every Canadian's responsibility to learn about the past and make informed choices in the present moment that create an inclusive future.

Reconciliation is about change, justice, respect, and re-building the relationships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

We invite you to start your own journey now.



Encouraging “Better” Practices

Éy swáye! (Hello). I raise my hands to you for pursuing Indigenous truth and reconciliation. I want you to know that you matter. You are unique and gifted. You are impacting others now and generations into the future with your help, hope, and commitment.

To be clear, I am on my own journey towards truth and reconciliation. The only things I know for sure is that I have A LOT to learn and that I need grace, grace that empowers me to face the challenges ahead and make a positive difference.

The best advice I have to share with you is to try and make teaching and learning personal. How can you do that?

- ▶ Share the “Author Profiles” and provide opportunities for others to feel empathy and connected with Indigenous Peoples, seeing them as individuals and groups deserving of respect.
- ▶ Seek additional knowledge from Indigenous truth and reconciliation experts. (Links to supplemental resources have been provided in the book.)
- ▶ Present Indigenous stories and ideas that will lead others to be more open-minded.
- ▶ Allow space and time for personal contemplation and reflection.
- ▶ During discussions, acknowledge common ground and reinforce freedom of choice.
- ▶ Promote active learning and classroom experiences that allow learners to construct meaning and teach others.
- ▶ Prompt others to explore how they can use their interests, gifts, and talents to support Indigenous truth and reconciliation.
- ▶ Commit to ongoing learning and growth by posing open-ended questions and affirming people’s desire and ability to change.

Rather than promoting “best teaching and learning practices,” I hope you feel encouraged to pursue “better practices.” Best practices imply we have reached an endpoint. Pursuing better practices is rooted in a process of extending grace and empowering people to form and express independent opinions. Remember, there are many paths that lead to the same learning goal and the same learning goal can be a path to many different outcomes.

Xyólmethet (Take care).

Douglas Williams

Library Learning Commons Teacher and Indigenous Education Coordinator

I would love to hear about your journey towards Indigenous truth and reconciliation. I can be contacted at blessedtobeateacher@gmail.com