



Lesson Plan

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION WITH THE HONOURABLE MURRAY SINCLAIR

SUGGESTED AGES:

GRADE 9-12

DURATION:

4 CLASS PERIODS (60 MINUTES EACH)

SUGGESTED SUBJECT AREAS:

SOCIAL STUDIES - TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Disclaimer: Educators and group leaders are responsible for ensuring lessons and materials presented in their classrooms or groups are appropriate for their unique students.

OVERVIEW OF UNIT PLAN:

- Day 1: Understanding Truth and Reconciliation
- Day 2: DWF Live with the Honourable Murray Sinclair
- Day 3: Investigating the TRC's 94 Calls to Action
- Day 4: Critical Reflections

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the historical context and significance of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada.
- Explore the impacts of colonization, residential schools, and cultural genocide on Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- Examine the Calls to Action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and their relevance to your location.
- Foster empathy, understanding, and respect for Indigenous perspectives and experiences.
- Engage in reflective activities and discussions to promote healing and reconciliation.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- [Copies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#)
- [Letter of Stephen Harpers Apology](#)
- Chart paper and markers
- Post-it notes
- Whiteboard and markers
- Access to the internet for research purposes
- Video clips or documentaries related to the residential school system in Canada

DAY 1: UNDERSTANDING TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

WARM-UP ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

1. Introduce the class to the word “apology”. Create a mind map and ask the students to voice their ideas about what an apology means.
2. Ask the students to stand up. Highlight one side of the room as the “agree” side and the other as “disagree”. As you read the statements below, students are to move on a spectrum that represents what they believe. After each statement, ask for volunteers to share their reasons.
 - a. You should apologize to someone if you have done something hurtful.
 - b. An unjust act can affect generations of people.
 - c. If the government did something wrong, they should apologize, even if they believed they were doing the right thing at the time.
 - d. Saying that you are sorry should always be enough to have others forgive you.
 - e. 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.

DAY 1: UNDERSTANDING TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

INTRODUCTION TO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AND CANADA'S APOLOGY (30 MINUTES)

1. Provide background information regarding the residential school system. Create a KWL chart to gauge your students' awareness of residential school history in Canada.
 - a. Visit the Royal BC Museum website and [watch](#) Shayli Robinson's video regarding the impact of residential schools on her family. This video was created for the Royal BC Museum 2017 exhibition Family: Bonds and Belonging.
 - b. Play the Island of Voices [interview](#) on the Residential Schools and Reconciliation pathway page.
 - i. Focus the students' attention on Elder Seclemah and her experiences of residential schools (5:40-13:47)
 - ii. Ask the students to identify some different ways residential schools are still affecting her
 - iii. Discuss with students the different impacts on Indigenous communities that Elder Seclemah mentioned

DAY 1: UNDERSTANDING TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

STATEMENT OF APOLOGY (10 MINUTES)

1. Introduce Prime Minister Stephen Harper's 2008 statement of apology for Indian Residential Schools. Stephen Harper was the first Prime Minister to make an official apology on behalf of Canada for the residential school system.
 - a. Video Clip
 - b. Printed Statement
 - i. Explain that this apology elicited mixed feelings from Indigenous community members. Many Indigenous people did not think that this was sufficient given the pain caused by the residential school system.
 - Extension: You could also show the Pope's apology in lieu of or in addition to the Prime Minister's.
 - Extension: Show DWF's panel discussion Indigenous Perspectives on the Pope's Apology.
 - c. Ask the students the following
 - i. Do you think this apology was adequate?
 - ii. At present, what role does the government play in reconciliation today?
 - iii. We all react to apologies differently. Is any reaction less or more valid?
 - iv. Is an apology always enough? Do we need to do more?
 - v. What else could this government do to show their support for Indigenous Peoples?
2. Facilitate a class discussion to elicit reactions, questions, and reflections on the video and the recording about residential schools in British Columbia.
 - a. Ask the students to complete a small journaling activity to personally respond to both Shayli and Elder Secllemah's experiences.
 - b. Ask the students to write about the initial apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Ask them to reflect on the beginning activity and if they think this apology is sufficient.

DAY 2: DWF LIVE WITH THE HONOURABLE MURRAY SINCLAIR



ABOUT THE HONOURABLE MURRAY SINCLAIR:

The Honourable Murray Sinclair is a former Senator of Canada and was Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). He has been a champion for Indigenous rights, having served as Manitoba's first and Canada's second Indigenous judge. He oversaw the TRC from June 2009 to December 2015, where he heard the testimonies of more than 7,000 residential school Survivors. The 94 Calls to Action that accompanied that report are widely understood to be the roadmap to reconciliation in Canada.



[WATCH ON
YOUTUBE](#)

In this DWF LIVE, Jared Visitor, Chanie Wenjack's great-nephew, hosts a candid conversation with Senator Sinclair on education, business, and reconciliation.

EXPLORING THE TRC THROUGH THE HONOURABLE MURRAY SINCLAIR (60 MINUTES)

1. On December 15, 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report examining the history and pain inflicted against Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The report shares Survivors' experiences in the Survivors Speak section. The report includes 94 Calls to Action, which outline the steps that both the Canadian Government and the citizens of Canada can take to work toward reconciliation.

DAY 2: DWF LIVE WITH THE HONOURABLE MURRAY SINCLAIR

2. Show Senator Murray Sinclair's discussion with Jared Visitor [on YouTube](#)

a. Help students respond as a group to the following questions:

- i. What does Senator Murray Sinclair say needs to happen before true reconciliation can happen? What are the roadblocks of reconciliation?
- ii. What are the four questions Senator Sinclair asked students at the Treaty Six event? Why are they important for Indigenous people and all children? Instruct students to answer these questions themselves. (Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? Who am I?)
- iii. What was the message you got from the story about the vole? What was the vole trying to help the man understand in Senator Sinclairs' story?
- iv. How many generations of Indigenous Peoples did Senator Sinclair say have been caused harm? Is there an immediate path to reconciliation? Why or why not?
- v. What is the reason many people in Indigenous communities feel lost according to Senator Sinclair? How long do you think this will take?
- vi. According to Sinclair, why was the Government of Canada failing concerning reconciliation?
- vii. If we want to achieve reconciliation, what do we need to change at an individual level?
- viii. Why should we be concerned about those who deny the history of residential schools in Canada? What can we do about it?
- ix. How does Senator Sinclair define reconciliation?
- x. How should corporate Canada move forward with regard to reconciliation? What industry has been the most damaging according to Senator Sinclair?
- xi. No Call to Action is more important than another, but what actions carry the most impact according to Senator Sinclair? Why?
- xii. What question does Senator Sinclair hear a lot regarding his success? Why is this question a critical point of evaluation for reconciliation within Canada's context?
- xiii. Why is education so important for all? Why does Senator Sinclair think it is so important? How does this impact our individual truth and reconciliation journey?
- xiv. Why is self-awareness key to positive movement toward reconciliation?
- xv. Why are so many reconciliation commissions problematic according to Senator Sinclair?

DAY 3: INVESTIGATING THE TRC'S 94 CALLS TO ACTION

INVESTIGATION (30 MINUTES)

1. Divide students into small groups and provide each group with a section of the TRC Calls to Action. Tailor the calls based on skill level and understanding for the class.
2. Instruct groups to read and discuss a specific set of Calls to Action related to education, language, or cultural revitalization.
3. Encourage students to consider how each Call to Action applies to them and brainstorm potential strategies for implementation. Using chart paper and markers, students can present their actions and thoughts to the class.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS (30 MINUTES)

1. Have each group present a summary of the Calls to Action they analyzed, highlighting key points and proposed strategies.
2. Facilitate a brief discussion after each presentation, allowing for questions and reflections from the class.
3. Take pictures of the actions and submit them via the [ReconciliACTION DWF Legacy Schools Page](#)

DAY 4: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

REFLECTION AND JOURNALING (20 MINUTES)

1. Provide time for individual reflection and journaling on the following prompts:
 - a. How has your understanding of Truth and Reconciliation evolved?
 - b. What role do you believe non-Indigenous people have in the process of reconciliation in Canada?

CREATING A PATH FORWARD (20 MINUTES)

1. Provide students with post-it notes and ask them to write down one action or commitment they can make to contribute to reconciliation in their personal lives or communities. Remind them of the video with Senator Sinclair and Jared Visitor, what is one small thing we can all do?
2. Have students stick their post-it notes on a designated area of the whiteboard or poster board.
3. Lead a discussion on the actions and commitments shared, highlighting the importance of individual agency and collective responsibility in the reconciliation process.
4. Take pictures of the actions and submit them as [ReconciliACTIONS through the DWF Legacy Schools Page](#)

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT (15 MINUTES)

1. Ask students to research and reflect on a specific Call to Action from the TRC that resonates with them. They should write a brief response discussing why they chose that Call to Action and how they envision contributing to its implementation in their community or society. Take the time to record each action for each student.

ASSESSMENT:

1. Assess students' engagement and participation in class discussions, group activities, and reflection exercises.
2. Evaluate students' understanding of Truth and Reconciliation through their responses to reflection prompts, group presentations, and written assignments.
3. Provide feedback on students' ability to empathize with Indigenous perspectives and critically analyze the impacts of colonization and residential schools in Canada.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Invite local Indigenous community members or Elders to share their perspectives and experiences related to Truth and Reconciliation with the class.
2. Organize a field trip to a nearby Indigenous cultural centre or museum to further explore Indigenous history and contemporary issues.
3. Collaborate with other subject areas, like English or Art, to create interdisciplinary projects focused on Truth and Reconciliation, such as poetry writing, or artwork inspired by Indigenous themes.

Some parts of the Lesson were supported by the Learning Portal of the Royal BC Museum – Truth and Reconciliation Lesson created in part by Hannah Morales.