

Orange Shirt Day

Curriculum Resource Guide

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to gather resources for educators wanting to incorporate learning about residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and Indigenous education more generally into their curriculum, in relation to Orange Shirt Day and beyond.

There are many existing learning resources. An important source at McGill is the Indigenous Initiatives Website:  mcgill.ca/x/J3p

Note: Residential school survivor testimonies are an invaluable gift for learning. However, considering the traumatic, ongoing discoveries of 2021, this might not be the best time to request classroom visits. Instead, there are many existing video testimonies, including those shared on the Legacy of Hope Foundation's website, that can be drawn upon:

 tinyurl.com/wherearethekids

If you do invite Elders and traditional knowledge holders to your school, there are certain cultural protocols to be followed, which are specific to communities and which you need to inform yourself about.

In the following list, we have organized some of these resources by category and given brief suggestions about how they might be used. There are also some important first principles to engage: The importance of taking a trauma informed approach, and educating oneself about the concept of decolonization, including decolonizing the self.

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

Approaching topics related to residential schools with care and sensitivity is crucial – not just when it comes to content, but in considering the impact the content may have on students. Hearing and talking about residential schools can be a retraumatizing experience for Indigenous students – it can also elicit strong emotional responses in non-Indigenous students. Becoming familiar with trauma-informed practices could help create safer learning spaces for students learning about residential schools.

Trauma informed practice gets us to ask, “what happened to the person” (Education Centre, 2021). This view helps us to consider how trauma affects people in their daily life and encourages us to approach others with compassion for what they might have been through. Trauma informed care seeks to avoid harming people more than they have already been (e.g., re-traumatization), through identifying triggers, for instance (Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre, 2021). Triggers, for example, can include questions that are experienced as intrusive, or asked before trust is established (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014). Trauma informed practice is based on principles of trust, safety, collaboration, and empowerment, to name a few (Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre, 2021).

To help navigate emotionally loaded topics, consider incorporating grounding techniques/exercises – this could be useful both for yourself and for your students (grounding helps to take focus/attention outward instead of inward like in meditation, which can be triggering for some people) (Clark, 2017). Setting ground rules around how discussions will be done in class and having emotional supports prepared for ahead of time and available to students if they need (e.g., school counsellor, hotlines, Indigenous liaisons, etc.) (First Nations Education Steering Committee and First Nations School Association, 2015).

While it is important to acknowledge trauma and its effects, we also need to give space to inner strengths, resources/supports, and healing strategies. People can heal from trauma – this is an important message to remember

and to also convey to students. The First Nations, Métis, Inuit Education Association of Ontario and the University of Windsor have a document outlining pedagogical considerations for teaching about residential schools that is worth reviewing:

 tinyurl.com/teachingresidentialschools

Other references:

American Academy of Pediatrics/Films Media Group (2014). *Essential elements of a healing environment: Part 3: Trauma informed practice: American Academy of Pediatrics - Reaching teens. Films On Demand.*

 mcgill.ca/x/J3G

Clark, N. (May 25, 2017). Trauma-informed practice with Indigenous Peoples across the Life Span. Retrieved from  <https://youtu.be/Ul71hyrAW-A>

Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre (2021). *Becoming trauma informed.*

Retrieved from  tinyurl.com/becomingtraumainformed

DECOLONIZATION

Decolonization is a central term connected to reconciliation. Decolonization means, in part, understanding the impacts that colonization has had on Indigenous Peoples (e.g., trauma related to residential schools, land theft and appropriation, loss of language) and critically thinking/talking about the *ongoing* effects of colonization. It also means recognizing the impacts of colonization on all Canadians. Decolonization values the strengths and resilience of Indigenous Peoples and supports their efforts to reconnect with/reclaim Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Decolonization recognizes the many ways diverse Indigenous Peoples have and continue to resist colonization. To engage in decolonizing practice is an uncomfortable, unsettling process. It is also a lifelong practice, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike.

Efforts linked to reconciliation and decolonization represent a long-term commitment to Indigenous Peoples. So, it will not be possible to cover every aspect related to residential schools in your first attempt. What is worth emphasizing once more is being mindful of *how* these topics are covered – in other words, the approach used. A sensitive, collaborative, and balanced discussion that emphasizes the strengths, resilience, and diversity of Indigenous Peoples, while drawing on resources that centre Indigenous voices, is a good start. Local resources, educators, and facilitators may be available that provide perspectives and experiences particular to the First Peoples in your community or area.

DECOLONIZING: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

A crucial step in the process of decolonization is grappling with one's own lived experiences and positionality. In *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Paulette Regan (2010) recounts her personal journey engaging in Indigenous-settler relations as the director of research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. In this context she calls on non-Native Canadians to take a critical look at how the history of the country is presented, and to simultaneously open themselves up to the idea that violence lies at the core of relations between Euro-Canadians and Indigenous people. Regan continues by saying that non-Indigenous people must situate and self-critique their own decolonization struggles or “unsettle the settler within”. This personal work needs to take place so that pedagogical and curricular work can challenge nationalistic truth-myths (Donald, 2012) that deny the interconnectedness of people to each other and the living/non-living world. Decolonizing the self is in line with Jan Hare's description of how in- and pre-service teachers can use a reconciliation framework. This framework begins with pre-service teachers making personal sense of what reconciliation means and then exploring the significance of residential school history as a necessary part of the curriculum, and the role of teacher educators in addressing Indigenous perspectives (Hare, 2020, p. 29).


Donald, D. (2012). Forts, colonial frontier logics, and Aboriginal-Canadian relations: Imagining decolonizing educational philosophies in Canadian

contexts. In A.A. Abdi (Ed). *Decolonizing philosophies of education*. Sense publishers.

Hare, J. (2020). Reconciliation in teacher education: Hope or hype? In Phelan, A., Pinar, W., Ng-a-Fook, N. & Kane, R. *Reconceptualizing teacher education: A Canadian contribution to a global challenge*. (pp. 39-66). University of Ottawa Press.

Regan, P. (2010). *Unsettling the settler within: Indian residential schools, truth telling and reconciliation in Canada*. UBC Press.

Resources

- “*Whose Land is it Anyway?*” is a collection of essays, articles and narratives authored by Indigenous scholars, activists and allies who present the impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples as well as highlight the possible pathways toward decolonization through their writing. Supported by the B.C. Federation of Post-Secondary Education, this handbook provides knowledge of the past with clear aspirations of bringing together understandings for the future.  tinyurl.com/decolonizationhandbook






CURRICULAR RESOURCES

ORANGE SHIRT DAY


Orange Shirt Day, September 30th, is a day set aside in Canada to honour and remember the more than 150,000 Indigenous children who were sent away to residential schools. The trauma of that school system has had haunting effects. September 30th is a day to wear an orange t-shirt to honour, declare, and be of mind toward healing of the losses and lasting haunting impacts on families and communities. Importantly, wearing an orange shirt and participating in events affirms a unified commitment toward reconciliation. Orange Shirt Day supports all people moving forward, together, to establish a future of respect and awareness of the colonial legacy of systemic racism and its harmful effects.

About Phyliss Webstad: During an awareness campaign in 2013, Phyliss Webstad, a residential school survivor from the Canoe Creek Indian Band in British Columbia, shared her emotional story of attending a residential school from the age of 6 years old. On the first day of school Phyliss's new orange shirt her grandmother had bought her was abruptly removed and replaced permanently with a school uniform. This published children's story of her time and poignant consequences of residential schooling underscores the tremendous loss and forced assimilation caused by such a system. Yet, her story offers the symbolism of resiliency and reaffirmation where "every child matters."



- An overview of her story is at  youtu.be/E3vUqro1kAk
- *The Orange Shirt Day Story* by Phyliss Webstad.
 tinyurl.com/orangeshirtstory
- Phyliss's Orange Shirt: CBC report on Orange Shirt Day events as well as links to numerous book resources on the topic of residential schools.
 tinyurl.com/phylliswebstad


School Program Resources: The two links below offer numerous learning activities for students in kindergarten until Grade 12 related to Orange Shirt Day. In the links below you can find the following:

- Video links
- Discussion questions for students aged K-7.
- Suggestions for numerous learning activities (for K-7), many associated with age-appropriate literature. Several activities can be adapted for Secondary School classrooms.
- Samples of projects carried out by various grades
- Learning plans for teachers (accompanied by suggestions for various books.)
- Classroom teachers list of resources (K-12) (English & French resources)
- Links to lists of children’s and Young Adult books.
- List of children’s books: Indigenous stories and tales.


-  mcgill.ca/x/J3x
-  mcgill.ca/x/J3f

More Classroom Teacher Resources: The links below (from across Canada) house numerous lesson plans, videos, and book resources for classrooms K-12. Resources include suggestions for classroom work regarding Orange Shirt Day as well as cross curricular programs for learning about Indigenous people, culture, and pathways for responding to the TRC.

-  tinyurl.com/orangeshirtresources
-  tinyurl.com/orangeshirtsupplies
- The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation has published an educational guide for Truth and Reconciliation Week 2021. It includes a graphic novel for teaching about Orange Shirt Day, posters, and educator’s guide for teaching about residential schools for grades 5-12.

-  tinyurl.com/educationalpackage

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION REPORT

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008, mandated as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement agreement, to document the history and impacts of residential schools. Thousands of school survivors shared their stories in a series of public and private meetings across the country. The final report includes 94 Calls to Action to "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation." Many of these relate to education. The report can be found on the TRC website:  tinyurl.com/historyofthetr

- The First Nations Child and Caring Society's website includes a child-friendly version of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action:

 tinyurl.com/fncaringsociety

- The TRC website also includes over 300 educational resources for all ages related to residential schooling and other associated topics:

 tinyurl.com/nctreducation

- This TRC guide, produced in collaboration with the University of Ottawa and Project of Heart, includes an introduction to Indigenous pedagogies such as the talking circles, and offer three case studies of residential schools designed for the Ontario Social Studies curriculum, grades 6, 8, and 10, fostering historical thinking competencies:

 tinyurl.com/curriculumguidepdf

GENERAL RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

- The Legacy of Hope Foundation's website includes many resources for teaching about the intergenerational impacts and history of residential schooling and the Sixties Scoop, including the archived "Where are the Children?" Exhibit, and curriculum for K-12. While many are free to download, available for purchase is a Teaching Bundle, including a DVD and timeline. <https://legacyofhope.ca/wherearethechildren/resources/>

- Project of Heart is a resource particularly for non-Indigenous educators, written for Ontario educators, but with wider applications. It has a particular focus on how to address trauma in the classroom. Project of Heart is “an inquiry based, hands-on, collaborative, inter-generational, artistic journey of seeking truth about the history of Aboriginal people in Canada” which provides many different resources for teaching and learning about the history and legacy of residential schools in Canada, as well as commemorating the lives of the children who died.



tinyurl.com/whatisprojectofheart

- This residential school curriculum resource was created by Dawson College staff in relation to Working it Out Together magazine:



tinyurl.com/ResidentialSchoolspdf

- The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) has developed lists of resources and pedagogical tools, particularly for teachers in B.C., from K-9, 9-12, and adult education, including a curriculum for teaching about residential schooling and reconciliation for grade 5, Social Studies and ELA (BC curriculum standards, but these overlap with the QEP, in particular in ELA).



tinyurl.com/fnescdoc

THE CARING SOCIETY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES RELATED TO THE WELFARE OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

The First Nations Child & Family Caring Society has many resources, a large number shared through the character of Spirit Bear: “A member of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, Spirit Bear represents the 165,000 First Nations children impacted by the First Nations child welfare case at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, as well as the thousands of other children who have committed to learning about the case and have taken part in peaceful and respectful actions in support of reconciliation and equity.”



tinyurl.com/aboutspiritbear

- There are several books for children featuring Spirit Bear written by Cindy Blackstock (Gitxan Nation) all based on true stories:



tinyurl.com/fncaringsocietybooks

- Also see Spirit Bear’s first film: *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* (26 min, 2020). This is a stop-motion animation of the book by Michif animator Amanda Strong and Cindy Blackstock: “It tells the story of Spirit Bear hopping a train to Ottawa and banding together with children and animals to end injustice against First Nations children at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Based on a real case that resulted in Canada being ordered to end its discriminatory underfunding of services for First Nations kids, this film was made especially for children, but is essential viewing for all Canadians.”



tinyurl.com/fncaringsocietyfilms

- The film is accompanied by a series of three lesson plans designed for children and teens.



tinyurl.com/fncaringsocietylessonplans





- Information for teachers and others who work with children about how to access services for First Nations children and youth in relation to Jordan’s Principle: “Funding can help with a wide range of health, social and educational needs, including the unique needs that First Nations Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA children and youth and those with disabilities may have.”



tinyurl.com/sac-isc

GENERAL INDIGENOUS EDUCATION RESOURCES

- Art institute of Canada: Indigenous Resources for teaching through Visual Arts. Offered by the Art Institute of Canada, this educator’s resource site provides teacher guides and independent student learning activities to facilitate the study of Canadian art through an expansive range of topics. First Nations, Metis and Inuit artists, and cultural knowledge sharing are very much part of this collection. The learning resources are accessible and interdisciplinary whereby all educators (not solely art educators) will find them relevant and useful. Each guide presents suggestions for in-class activities, individual and group assignments, links to image files and slides that can be downloaded, and pertinent topics for discussions. Every resource guide is assigned to grade ranges for elementary and secondary students.

- There are many books available for children, teens, and adults written by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis authors that could be explored with students in classrooms or used for the important work of self-education. This website contains lists and brief descriptions of some of these books, and an online store for purchasing them:  goodminds.com
- This is a teacher's guide for exploring the literature about Métis life for children published by the Gabriel Dumont Institute:  tinyurl.com/metismuseum
- As part of their development of resources for K-12 teachers in BC, The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) has created a guide to help teachers "make decisions about which resources might be appropriate for use with students", including defining what makes an "authentic" resource. Many of these are relevant to teachers in other contexts.  tinyurl.com/fnescauthenticresources
- The KAIROS Blanket Exercise is a workshop that explores the nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. It can be adapted for different age levels. This is an experiential introduction to colonization in Canada, led by expert facilitators:  tinyurl.com/kairosblanketexercise

Consider how to learn/enact reconciliation with your students throughout the year, beyond Orange Shirt Day.

Eg.

- Ask on what/whose territory is your school located?
- Meet and invite people from the community/ies with relationships to your area and school
- Learn to acknowledge the land and original custodians of the territory
- Learn basic phrases in the language of the territory
- Support children to recognize and challenge stereotypes
- Learn about the diversity of indigenous peoples
- Learn about the experiences of First Nations children in Day Schools, who share some experiences with those in residential schools