



Let the

truth

be told

Indigenous Oral Testimonies Activity Guide

First Edition

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The Guide is available for purchase from the LHF.

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Canada

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The Legacy of Hope Foundation is a national Indigenous charitable organization whose purposes are to educate, to raise awareness and understanding of the impacts of the Residential School System, including the intergenerational effects on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, and to support the ongoing healing process of Residential School Survivors. Fulfilling this mandate contributes towards Reconciliation among generations in Canada.

Design by: Tania Budgell

All images are stock photos except the photo on pages 18-19 (*Igloodik Inuksuk* by Tania Budgell).

Contents

How to Use This Guide.....	1
The Legacy of Hope Foundation's Guiding Framework and Principles	2
Engaging with Indigenous Oral Testimony.....	3
Hearing Those Who Were Once Silenced.....	3
Importance of Oral Testimony in Education and Schools	4
Humanizing the Learning Experience	4
Using Oral Testimony.....	5
Deepening Understanding	5
Agency, Allies, and Reconciliation.....	6
Pedagogical Approaches	7
Lesson Plan 1: Residential Schools and Sixties Scoop, In My Words.....	9
Activities.....	12
Student Handout – Events as Experience.....	14
Student Handout – Graphic Organizer – Medicine Wheel.....	15
Teacher Resource – Indigenous Oral Testimony Experience Discussion Guide	16
Lesson Plan 2: Agency and Resistance.....	19
Teacher Preparation – Agency	21
Activities.....	22
Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis	24
Teacher Resource – Lesson 2 Discussion Guide.....	25
Lesson Plan 3: Allies and Reconciliation as Learning to Action.....	29
Activities.....	31
Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis	34
Student Handout – Agency and Allies	35
Conclusion	37



How to Use This Guide

Thank you for choosing to use the Indigenous Oral Testimonies Activity Guide, *Let the Truth Be Told*, in your classroom. It is our hope that the information and activities contained herein will give teachers and students the resources they need to examine the history of the Residential School System and to recognize the impact it has had and continues to have, on generations of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Another goal of this Guide is the exploration of Reconciliation and its foundations for understanding and meaningful action. Through these lessons, teachers and students will work towards their own improved understanding of what it means for Indigenous and non-Indigenous People in Canada to work towards Reconciliation.

Note

We use the term Indigenous Peoples to represent the 1.67 million people in Canada who identify as Indigenous. Canada is home to 977,230 First Nations individuals, 587,545 Métis, and 65,025 Inuit, with the rest reporting as Non-Status.¹ From 2006 to 2011, the First Nations population in Canada increased by 23%, the Métis population rose by 16%, and the Inuit population grew by 18%.

¹ <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/rt-td/ap-pa-eng.cfm>

The Legacy of Hope Foundation's Guiding Framework and Principles

In collecting and sharing the Indigenous Oral Testimonies found on the site wherearethechildren.ca, the Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) was guided in its work by a healing and decolonizing framework and principles.

The LHF's vision is for a country that is informed and capable, and people live as equals in a mutually beneficial, caring, dignified, and just relationship and where Reconciliation exists and is growing for the better future of all. In fulfilling this mandate, the LHF works in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, communities and organizations across Canada and undertakes research, communication tools, public education and awareness and policy activities that support the development and implementation of our exhibitions and commemoration projects, as well as ongoing educational tools and resources to foster public awareness of actual Indigenous histories.

The work of the LHF is informed by the experiences and Oral Testimonies of Residential School Survivors, Sixties Scoop Survivors, their families, and communities. A deep caring, respect, and compassion for, and honouring of Survivors, their families, and communities guides the LHF's work. All the LHF's deliverables are informed by the guiding principles that our work must contribute to the health, safety, well-being, and healing of Survivors, their families and communities, and towards improving relationships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous in Canada.

The principles of partnership, collaboration, and Reconciliation are represented in the lessons and activities of this Guide as the knowledge and orientation of experience come from the Survivors themselves, in their own words, as they freely shared. These principles were also used in building this resource.

The responsibility of those who use the testimony of Survivors and this guide is to continue that collaboration and goal towards Reconciliation. And to use it to promote good relations and encourage people to take meaningful action to foster respect and understanding for future generations.

Engaging with Indigenous Oral Testimony

Recognition of the value of Indigenous Oral Testimony is on the rise, among non-Indigenous. Where once it was largely ignored, it is expanding in many academic and legal circles and it is having considerable influence in courts. While the recognition of Indigenous Oral Testimony continues to grow, it is important to remember that this has not always been the case.

Not too long ago, the Federal Government and several Christian churches acted to silence and devalue Indigenous voices and Oral Practices (as well as any Indigenous cultural practices) in their quest to separate families, and civilize and “kill the Indian in the child.”

Indigenous Peoples have always placed, and continue to place, great significance on Oral Testimony and Oral Practices in all aspects of culture, legal practice, teachings, community gatherings, and more. Undoing the silencing of Indigenous voices in the Canadian educational system is a key goal that this curriculum addresses. In recognition of the importance and long tradition of Oral Testimony and Practices within Indigenous communities, we must take a moment to look at how to respectfully use and engage with this valuable resource.

Hearing Those Who Were Once Silenced

In the Oral Testimonies on the *Where Are the Children?* website (wherearethechildren.ca), you can hear many cases where Indigenous Survivors gave testimony that as children they were deliberately silenced. They were forbidden to use their own languages, to say what they meant in their own words, and to express their own frame of mind and worldview. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action² are put into practice, one consistent theme is the recognition of Indigenous voices and the need to have them woven throughout every aspect of education, history, etc. to educate people.

Oral Testimony carries special significance within efforts at truth and Reconciliation. Using Oral Testimonies is a way of bringing Indigenous voices directly into classrooms and of having them be heard by students, as the participants who shared them wanted to be heard so they can build empathy, and foster compassion and understanding. This is putting Indigenous voices on Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop at the center of the learning experience and the process of using their Testimony helps to demonstrate the value of Indigenous voices and Oral Practices.

The practice of listening to Oral Testimony – hearing what is being said by using first person – helps to connect the speaker and listener in a meaningful way. The connection and knowledge can inspire meaningful action toward Reconciliation and is a healing aspect of this Guide. By engaging in this traditional practice, Survivors' experiences are honoured and we demonstrate respect, and space for Indigenous practices is made.

² http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Importance of Oral Testimony in Education and Schools

The Legacy of Hope Foundation defines Reconciliation as a process where individuals or communities work towards arriving at a place of mutual understanding, acknowledging and honouring. This is a necessary step in promoting healthy and productive relations between people and between groups. Understanding, acknowledging and honouring are rooted in learning about each other.

In Canada's education systems there has been too little inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' histories, contributions, descriptions of Nations, practices, knowledge and worldviews and this can be said of Canada as a whole, not just in formal education. In part, it was the lack of understanding, acknowledging and honouring of Indigenous Peoples that helped create the conditions for Residential Schools and later the Sixties Scoop. This is a large part of why building that understanding and respect in youth will help to inform and change relationships that will foster Reconciliation for future generations.

If we understand Reconciliation as a process for understanding, acknowledging, honouring, and respecting, we must begin this journey with the voices of Indigenous Peoples. For non-Indigenous Peoples, choosing to take up the role of listener and learner is essential for understanding and is meaningful to Indigenous Peoples as a sign of willingness and commitment to building new relationships. Learning through empathetic listening also builds up the critical understanding that is necessary for non-Indigenous Peoples to become allies and feel called to action alongside Indigenous Peoples.

Action without understanding is a hollow tree, not fit to lean or rely on. Action based in understanding forms a strong tree with deep roots where Reconciliation can grow.

Humanizing the Learning Experience

Reconciliation is based on a critical understanding of Indian Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, criminalization and institutionalization, and the struggles, experiences, and healing journeys of all those involved. This cannot happen without a humanized view of both the contextualizing of the experiences and the feelings expressed by the Survivors. Listening to Survivors convey their experience and their understanding sensitizes student understanding, fosters empathy, and builds healthy caring that a textbook article or chapter could not possibly achieve on its own.

Switching the focus to listening to the voices of those who were previously marginalized and silenced and examining how that changes individuals' understandings of experiences works well to encourage a critical pedagogy practice. Having students experience the transformational and humanizing effects of listening to Survivors and building understanding on the roots of Survivor experiences, students can begin to cultivate a greater appreciation for humanized approaches to understanding the world and seek out voices that are not usually present in standardized curriculum.

Using Oral Testimony

Oral Testimony can be accessed on the website wherearethekids.ca for any of the lessons contained in this Guide. The details in each Oral Testimony can vary greatly. Some Survivors address more challenging or traumatizing circumstances than others. As the teacher, it is important for you to preview the Testimony you intend to use with students. Review the full Testimony first to make sure it is age-appropriate and right for your classroom.

To access the Testimony, go to the above website and proceed to the link, "Stories." There, you will find many Survivor accounts. Clicking on each one leads to a play menu and includes an option to "View Transcript." From there, the teacher can scan for content and determine if that Oral Testimony is a good fit for their class. For the purposes of these lessons and respectful engagement with Survivor Oral Testimony, teachers can then retrieve the selected Testimony for the purposes of the classroom lesson.

Deepening Understanding

Reconciliation, and the process of education itself should be a humanizing process. Humanizing means to make deeper, emotional connections with the content, and, in this case, with Indigenous Residential School Survivors. Humanizing content is both critical for Reconciliation and promoting good relationships and it is also good pedagogical practice.

By reframing the stories of Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop and expanding understandings to include the Oral Testimony of Survivors, these experiences become lived and living experiences. Students are better able to make connections between the events the Survivors describe and their on-going efforts at healing and the challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples. Textbooks and printed words are limited and can only provide so much detail when engaging students on such complex topics.

Listening to the stories builds within students the value for the act of listening to understand and

seeking out the voices of those once excluded from these spaces. By increasing the connections students can make to the experiences, they deepen their understanding, which helps them begin to empathize. In turn, this empathy helps students more critically examine the world and be able to detect and address stereotypes, ignorance and racism. This practice also promotes a greater understanding of how students learn, the value of seeking out other perspectives, and it highlights the methodology of listening to the voices of lived experience as an effective way to build better understandings and relations with people they may otherwise never meet or hear directly from.

Things to Consider

The histories, memories, and impacts of the Residential School System are complex. There are many details, policies, different perspectives, and unique features that are challenging to grasp fully even after years of study. These activities represent a first step for many of us in exploring these stories and impacts. Here are some important things to think about as you prepare to deliver these activities.

1. No one can know everything that happened at the Residential Schools. Try not to position yourself as an "expert." Even if you have a connection to the content, try to remain open to the possibility that participants may have more or different knowledge or experiences than you do.
2. There are few generalizations that can automatically apply to all Residential Schools. Each school, in its particular location, under its particular administration, and at a particular time, had unique features. It is important to listen for, recognize, and discuss differences. This should be made clear to participants.
3. Some of the content in these activities deals with difficult subjects and emotional responses may be triggered in participants as a result. It is vital to create a supportive environment when presenting these materials – one in which participants can express their feelings and thoughts openly.

Agency, Allies, and Reconciliation

By listening to Oral Testimony, students will learn about acts of agency and moments of resistance in individuals' experiences that are also not represented in most written texts. Listening to these struggles and acts of courage and hearing the Survivors share their Oral Testimony gives students the opportunity to comprehend that the Survivor had to overcome a lot of painful things to get to this point in their life. Students will see that they, too, can take actions to challenge and address racism when they hear or see it happening in their world.

By listening to Survivors, students will usually be able to build empathy and compassion for their journey and often be inspired to want to take action against injustices impacting Indigenous Peoples and want to be partners in Reconciliation. Reconciliation requires establishing relationships built on mutual respect and appreciation. When critical reflection happens then it can invoke a commitment to change in order to improve and build just relationships in Canada. Without listening to Survivors, this critical reflection and Reconciliation would not be possible.

Reconciliation is about two or more different individuals or groups building a new, healthier relationship. Reconciliation is the opposite of passivity; however, Reconciliation action cannot be without understanding. It is through understanding that critical reflection can occur, and students can identify what meaningful action involves in the context of the relationship in Canada between Indigenous and non-Indigenous People. This understanding builds a recognition of agency in students as well as providing some of the methods for being good allies.

The Oral Testimonies and this Guide are excellent resources to promote greater understanding of agency and allyship. The use of Oral Testimony is itself a way to humanize experiences and promote a deeper understanding. The act of being listeners and striving to understand the experiences from

the perspectives of the Survivors helps students to identify, reflect on, and understand their own experiences in juxtaposition.

By listening to Oral Testimonies, students can begin to see acts of resistance and agency, some obvious, some subtle, that run through the different Testimonies, and gain a sense of the larger resistance happening during these experiences. They begin to see the Survivors not as faceless statistics that were acted upon, but people with emotion in their voices, animated, who have families and lives that were altered forever, who detail in their own words their experiences and what they did to push back to maintain some semblance of their identity in their oppressive environment. It becomes much easier to see Indigenous Peoples as resilient and strong, possessing agency – as people who struggled, resisted, survived – making invaluable contributions to this world and who are working in their own ways to cope, heal, and thrive, despite all attempts to destroy them.

The details in the Oral Testimonies also emphasize the damage of top-down action and the importance of understanding Indigenous Peoples' perspectives when looking at these issues. By the nature of understanding the problem with top-down approaches and solutions, and by listening to Indigenous Survivors sharing their Oral Testimonies, students may begin to perceive the agency they themselves possess, and that action in partnership and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples is how Reconciliation is built.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples need to heal from the history and experience of the Residential School System, the Sixties Scoop, and the racist and traumatizing beliefs that justified those actions. As a part of this, non-Indigenous People need to identify pre-conceived, harmful beliefs where they exist and unlearn racist teachings, as well as simply learn about Indigenous Peoples, their history, contributions, and existence in Canada today.

Many Indigenous Peoples are working to unlearn the harmful messages and traumatizing experiences that were forced on them in Residential Schools and both Survivors and their families have suffered so much hardship and grief as a result. It is a sad truth that one of the biggest outcomes of the Residential School experience and the Sixties Scoop has been the traumas, shame, and pain caused to the hearts and souls of Indigenous Peoples across the country. More than 7 generations attended these schools and experienced physical, emotional, mental, sexual and spiritual abuse, and this dysfunctional experience altered Nations, communities, families and hundreds of thousands of lives. It is a sad truth that one of the biggest outcomes of the Residential School experience and the Sixties Scoop has been the traumas, shame, and the extreme pain caused to the hearts and souls of Indigenous Peoples across the country. Indigenous Peoples experienced and continue to experience racism and discrimination, they battle post-traumatic stress disorder and they are regularly triggered by reoccurring traumas which can manifest itself through self-harm, suicide, addictions, and a variety of mental health issues.

Indigenous Peoples continue to experience systemic and overt racism and discrimination, and they have little economic security nor do they benefit from the vast resources in this country. Although there is a lot of healing that we must do, there is still a lot of unlearning that must happen for everyone to undo and reset relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.

Together, Indigenous Peoples and allies can build new relationships and ways of interacting with one another. This is particularly important given that Indigenous youth are the fastest growing population in Canada, and they are increasing as a significant part of Canadian society. Through positive interactions, learning to treat one another respectfully, and with all people working together for a more just society, we can create a brighter future for all people.

Pedagogical Approaches

In this Guide, you will see the terms 'Surface Level,' 'Deepening Level,' and 'Transfer Level.'³ These are pedagogical terms indicating the different levels and focuses on the activities of the curriculum.

Surface – focus on facts and introductory understandings

Deepening – greater depth, greater analysis of material, more emotional connections

Transfer – learning how to take the understanding and apply it to new and related areas, understanding that their knowledge should expand beyond its original context

The '**Student Inquiry Question**' is intended to be shared with students and help them activate their thinking and guide their focus for the lesson. It is structured in such a way as to get them to move away from didactic thinking to the subversive, to questioning the texts they are given as well as thinking about how their learning can be applied beyond the initial contexts. When more than one question is provided, teachers can select from the options for their class.

³ Fisher, D., Frey, N., Hattie, J. (2016). Visible learning for literacy: Implementing the practices that work best to accelerate student learning. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin / A SAGE Company.



Lesson Plan 1

Residential Schools and Sixties Scoop, In My Words

CONTAINS

- Activities
 - Student Handout – Events as Experience
 - Student Handout – Graphic Organizer – Medicine Wheel
 - Teacher Resource – Indigenous Oral Testimony Experience Discussion Guide



Lesson Plan 1

Residential Schools and Sixties Scoop, In My Words

Focus

Students explore the differences in engaging with events and experiences when approached from different perspectives. By comparing methods of engagement and by using processes that deliberately ask them to consider a complex analysis of experience (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual), students will practice a more humanized analysis of materials and how it affects their engagement and understanding.

Duration

Two 45-minute sessions (minimum)

Grade Level

Junior, Intermediate, Senior

Differentiating for Level and Learning

- Consider using more child-accessible Oral Testimonies for younger grades that still highlight relevant experiences while being understandable and appropriate for younger audiences.
- There are some Testimonies that are geared for younger ages or you can pre-identify a section(s) of a Testimony as appropriate.
- Invite students to draw images when completing their graphic organizers to capture information and their analysis (it should be noted that this is not necessarily a simpler way of note-taking; instead, it calls on different strengths than writing for conducting and conveying analysis).

Building Competencies

The activities in this lesson plan are designed to build upon the competencies below. It is hoped that they can be met by completing all the lesson plans in this Guide.

- **Knowledge and Understanding:** experiences and events, the complexities of experiences, relationships between experience and outcomes on individuals
- **Thinking:** gathering information, analyzing, inferring, transferring of understanding to different contexts and expressions of information
- **Communication:** expression and organization of ideas and information in written and oral forms
- **Application:** making connections to historical events and figures, contextualizing knowledge, building multiple connections to content, humanizing understanding

Key Learning

1. Students analyze and evaluate the difference between text and Testimony in engaging with social studies.
2. Students interpret Testimony for relating the depth and nature of historical experience.
3. Students create an analysis of experience that requires critical exploration of human experience and impact.

Curriculum Areas

- History
- English
- Native Studies
- Civics
- Geography

Teacher Preparation

Read the introduction to this guide to have an over-arching understanding of the goals and values of using Indigenous Oral Testimony from Residential School Survivors. Familiarity with the Residential School System is needed before beginning the lesson. For more information, visit wherearethechildren.ca.

1. Have a flip chart available to complete a KWHLAQ chart (or use a chalkboard or whiteboard).
2. Have photocopies ready of *Student Handout – Events as Experience*.
3. Have photocopies ready of *Student Handout – Graphic organizer – Medicine Wheel*.
4. Have one or two Oral Testimonies selected from wherearethechildren.ca for this lesson. A text version for the first experience, and then provide audio-video for the second (or the same one but now with video)

Optional: have sticky notes for the students

Review

Students prepare for engaging with Oral Testimony of Indigenous Residential Schools or Sixties Scoop Survivors with the activities in this lesson. Students then deepen understanding with Oral Testimony analysis (first as a written text and then watching and listening to an Oral Testimony) and reflect on how it is different from text-based learning, as well as practicing analyses that help them view content and experience through a more humanized lens. Finally, students' practice "learning transfer" by exploring in-class discussion on how Oral Testimony impacts their understanding and could be used in different areas of learning.

Activities

Key Learning: Students will be introduced to Indian Residential Schools and Sixties Scoop through the lens of Survivors.

Activate

Student Inquiry Question

How does the method of our engagement with experiences and information change our recognition of the facts, emotions, and impacts of the described experiences? How does it influence what we take away from those interactions?

Surface Level

Students begin their exploration of Residential Schools and Sixties Scoop through Oral Testimony from Indigenous Survivors. Students are encouraged to begin to see how Oral Testimony and hearing from marginalized voices can greatly change understandings.

1. Introduce students to the idea of social studies and experience as emotional and profound
 - Use the introduction to this Guide for older students or *Student Handout – Events as Experience* on page 14 for younger students

2. Draw a KWHLAQ⁴ chart (see below) on the chalkboard and, with the students, fill out the KWH sections only
 - What do they **know** about the Residential School System?
 - **What** are their sources for knowing about Residential Schools? (books, newspapers, interviews with academic experts, speeches by politicians, etc.)
 - **How** can they learn more?

The Learned, Actions, and Questions sections of the chart will be completed later.

3. Give the students the *Student Handout – Graphic Organizer – Medicine Wheel* handout and ask them to fill it in with quotes, keywords, and thoughts on Residential Schools from an Oral Testimony text source that describes an experience.
 - Oral Testimony: Choose from wherearethechildren.ca or 100 Years of Loss manual (pgs. 109-125)
 - *Student Handout – Graphic Organizer – Medicine Wheel*

⁴ Know, What, How, Learn, Actions, Questions

KWHLAQ Chart

Know	What	How	Learned	Actions	Questions

Deepening Level

Students explore how using different constructs (in this case an Indigenous one considering a 'whole person') can enhance their observation skills and improve the connections they can make to what they are learning. Students gain a more humanized or greater depth of understanding of the experience of Survivors beyond what facts, statistics, or textbook overviews can provide.

1. Draw a graphic organizer like the Medicine Wheel on a chalkboard or flipchart and, as a class, collect student answers and analyses.

Use the *Teacher Resource – Indigenous Oral Testimony Experience Discussion Guide* (page 16) to examine the facts, interpretations, and possible inferences that can be made from this information about the depth and impact of experiences.

2. Ask students to view another Oral Testimony from wherearethechildren.ca, or a Sixties Scoop Testimony, and complete a separate Medicine Wheel graphic organizer.
 - *Student Handout – Graphic Organizer – Medicine Wheel*
 - Alteration: The class views the same Testimonial (it can then be reviewed with students as a class), or students can choose individually.

Transfer Level

Students contextualize their learning within a broader understanding of education and curriculum resources. Students explore the differences in understanding based on the resources they used to become informed.

1. Discuss the differences between Oral Testimony and reading an experience.

Return to the KWHLAQ chart on the chalkboard and complete the LAQ sections

- What have they **learned** about what Oral Testimony brings to their understanding?
- What **actions** can students take to learn more?
- What **questions** do students have about learning from Oral Testimony?

2. Class discussion

- How might Oral Testimonies play a future role in student learning?
- What are the challenges of collecting Oral Testimonies?

Student Handout – Events as Experience

In schools, events and moments you are expected to study are often covered in textbooks. Textbooks tell a broad view of things, which means they look at large events and key figures. If you think about it, you can probably quickly come up with examples where you read about a government taking an action, and maybe what countries, provinces, or communities experienced as a result. Maybe you have seen lines like, “The people struggled,” or “This made people angry.” In fact, much textbook content is written in what is known as the third person.

The third person means distance from the speaker or narrator. It means using phrases like, ‘they,’ and ‘them.’ An example of the third person is, “*They* were sent to Residential School.” It can seem very distant to the reader. The second person is closer, and uses ‘you,’ as in, “*You* will read about Indigenous Peoples and Residential School experiences.” It can feel closer to the reader, more immediate. The first person means using “I,” and “We” such as “*We* are listening to an oral testimony.” This is a very different position and can have a very different feeling to it, especially when you read about important events and experiences. Reading lots of third person writing can make some events seem dry and unrelatable. Hearing, “I” and “We” within events and experiences can greatly change how you feel about and understand them.

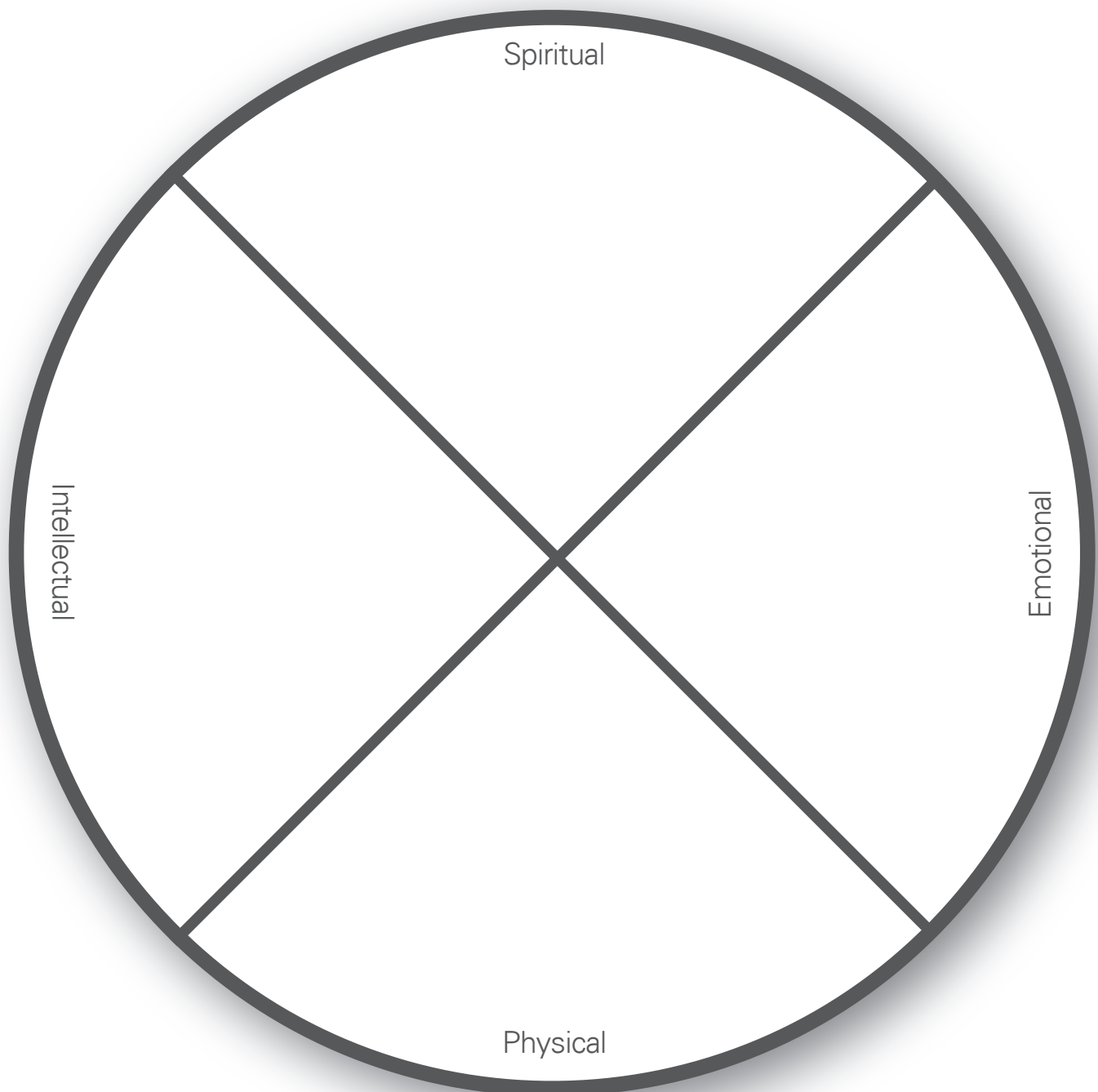
The experiences you will hear and read about here are all Oral Testimony, and they are expressed in the first person. The people who are telling these stories are Survivors who have come a long way in life and are sharing what they experienced with you. In part, it is their intent that you understand their experiences in a way that would not have been possible if you read a textbook chapter covering the experiences of “they” and “them.”

Oral Testimony and practices also have great significance for Indigenous Peoples. Oral traditions were the principal way events would be recorded and re-experienced. It is how a lot of knowledge was and is passed on. It was, and remains, a key part of Indigenous cultures. So, when you listen to Oral Testimony by Indigenous Peoples about their experiences, you are also engaging in these experiences in a way that respects Indigenous practices and values.

Human experience is exactly that, a human experience. To gain a greater understanding of things, it is often better if we can find a way to move away from one general perspective, such as the third person. As you listen to the Oral Testimony, think about what human experience is, how it can be described in different ways using different methods, and what sorts of understandings you can gather from Oral Testimony, something that is not part of most textbooks.

Student Handout – Graphic Organizer – Medicine Wheel

This is a medicine wheel. It is used by some Indigenous Peoples as a representation of the elements of a whole person. These elements are the **physical** (bottom), **intellectual** (left), **spiritual** (top), and **emotional** (right). We will use this as a critical thinking tool to help us better understand Oral Testimony and the experiences of Indigenous Survivors at Residential Schools. Try taking notes from an Oral Testimony and see if you can categorize what is being said into different areas of human experience. Do not worry if you are having trouble categorizing an experience. Just go with what you feel is right.



Teacher Resource – Indigenous Oral Testimony Experience Discussion Guide

This is not a right-or-wrong exercise. The goal is to help students begin to perceive Oral Testimony in a more humanistic way. This is important for creating the depth of understanding for Reconciliation, as well to increase critical thought and analysis of experiences and events, and the value of seeking out first-hand accounts when learning.

Physical

Possible items can include the physical descriptions of the home setting before Residential School, the settings at school, or any descriptions of locations after school that stand out to students. This can include all healthy forms of affection and/or inappropriate and harmful physical contact. Sports and games played, and events could be included here. Acts of violence and abuse would also go here.

Explore how students make their choices, and what their rationale was for putting something into this category. Are students noting experiences that were mostly subjected to the Survivor, or are they making note of physical activities, events, and other experiences that were instigated or started by the Survivor or other students that the Survivor talks about?

Intellectual

Possible items to be placed here include thoughts the students had, reflections and understandings about life before school, the school itself, or after their time in school that they share. Students may also note what Survivors learned in school,

what they thought about that learning and other mental activities required by the school. Students may also note its absence.

Spiritual

Religion was a powerful tool that was used to scare, shame and force students within the Residential School System to comply. Separating children from their family, customs, languages and traditional ways of being was thought to be the only way to force them into the dominant religions of Canada. Experiences students could place here would be spiritual teachings from before Residential School, during, and after. Students may find that they put a lot into this category when Survivors talk about their return to culture, family and language as part of their healing journey.

Emotional

There are likely to be many emotional moments in the Indigenous Survivors' Oral Testimony. Students may struggle with determining whether to put something in this category or another category. Consider physical abuse – because of the nature of the experience, it may seem like it should go in physical; however, because of a strong response of a Survivor, it may seem to belong in the emotional category. Selecting either or both categories are accurate and demonstrates the multi-faceted impacts on Indigenous children. What is important is sharing how students made their category decisions and understanding these experiences as far more than facts, dates, and summaries of experiences.

Questions

Ask students to share what they put into the different categories. Compare the same moments placed into different categories by different students, and their reasons for those choices. Ask students if they struggled with their placements. Did they find themselves noting things they might not otherwise have if they had not been asked specifically for these categories (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual)? How challenging did they find it?

Remind the students that though things could go into different categories, or across them, this graphic organizer is meant to reflect a single person's experience. All their notes still work to build up an understanding of an individual's whole experience. Encourage reflection and sharing on how looking at a person's experience through their Oral Testimony and how they chose to frame their experience, and this graphic organizer may have led to a more humanized understanding of the Survivor's experience.





Lesson Plan 2

Agency and Resistance

CONTAINS

- Teacher Preparation – Agency
 - Activities
 - Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis
 - Teacher Resource – Lesson 2 Discussion Guide



Lesson Plan 2

Agency and Resistance

Focus

Students explore the differences in understanding events and experiences when they express their learning through an alternate means (in this case, art). Students begin to understand the role of agency and the difference in exploring Oral Testimony and Survivor accounts as opposed to third person textbook coverage.

Duration

Two 45-minute sessions (minimum)

Grade Level

Junior, Intermediate, Senior

Building Competencies

The activities in this lesson plan are designed to build upon these competencies. It is hoped that they can be met by completing all the lesson plans in this Guide.

- **Knowledge and Understanding:** demonstrate an understanding of Survivor experiences and agency
- **Thinking:** evaluating and inferring from different sources of data; detecting point of view; formulating conclusions
- **Communication:** expressing interpretations of data in alternate forms; convey knowledge and understanding in discussion and written form
- **Application:** applying conceptual analysis to categorize and evaluating knowledge; applying multiple literacies to take in and express knowledge and understanding

Key Learning

1. Students identify how agency can be represented in individual stories and compare how that may be absent from broader text-based coverage of experiences and events.
2. Students recognize the continued agency of Residential School Survivors throughout the Residential School experience.
3. Students construct a visual understanding of experience and resistance.
4. Students assess how visual/audio approaches may change and increase their connection with their studies and the experiences of others.

Curriculum Areas

- History
- English
- Native Studies
- Civics
- Geography

Teacher Preparation

The goals for this lesson are to increase awareness of agency and how different sources (Oral Testimony vs. textbooks, etc.) express this concept differently. Teachers should review the *Teacher Preparation – Agency* (page 21) section prior to the lesson to help support discussion and dialogue as students engage with the Oral Testimony and activity. Have several Oral Testimonies from wherearethechildren.ca to suggest for students to use.

Teacher Preparation – Agency

Understanding agency is very important when examining Oral Testimony and when pursuing true Reconciliation. Agency is the concept that people possess the ability to change their life and the things around them. It is the idea that people are not simply objects to be acted upon but are themselves able to create, make, and shape the world around them.

Standard approaches to covering events and history focus on large forces and organizations, and key figures in places of power. When it comes to the people facing the brunt of decisions and actions by those forces, they are typically faceless, lacking identity, and can be made to look powerless or passive.

Systems of oppression, and powerful authority such as what a government holds, are real and difficult to resist. The power of these forces and figures should not be reduced to being something that would crumble once the people choose to resist. Instead, the goal here is to appreciate a sort of middle ground. Yes, large forces can deny people many options and freedoms, and keep them from living a full life (to be able to freely choose and shape their lives). However, the people also have power. They can resist and this can be in loud and obvious ways or more subversive and subtle ways. There is also great value in the act of resistance and practicing agency itself, beyond the idea of, “did they succeed?” Without effort, there can be no change. And sometimes continuing to exist can in and of itself be a powerful act of agency and resistance.

Agency is a powerful concept for students to have when trying to understand Oral Testimony, when understanding new ways of looking at events, and in understanding something about themselves, including in the face of large bureaucracies.

Understanding agency is a critical part of also understanding allyship, which will be explored further in the next lesson.

For this lesson, students will be encouraged to identify acts of agency and gain an appreciation for examining events through the perspectives of the oppressed to gain a deeper, more humanized understanding.

Activities

Key Learning: Students will explore how agency and the ability to act can be present in smaller, common day ways. It is not always tied to immediate success and can exist in ways that are not always represented in school resources.

Activate

Student Inquiry Question

How do individual accounts of shared experiences, such as war or protests, show different agency from textbook coverage? How might Indigenous Oral Testimony reflect a different agency from textbook coverage of Residential Schools?

Surface Level

Students begin this lesson by putting their selves and experience at the center. The nature of resistance and the agency and its subtleties as demonstrated by Indigenous Peoples in the Residential School System and the Sixties Scoop will be more accessible for students in this way, setting them up to make deeper connections and understandings of the Oral Testimony.

- Use the *Teacher Resource – Lesson 2 Discussion Guide* (page 25) to aid in the activities.

1. Start: Students take time to reflect and 'pair share' acts of resistance.
 - Ask students to think about a time when they felt something was wrong or unfair, and how they acted to resist or fight back on their own or with only a few other people. Guide them to choose an example they are comfortable sharing with the class. Students then make partners or trios and share their story. Optional: Ask a few duos/trios to share with the class.
2. Discussion: Invite students to talk about how sometimes an individual does not have the power to stop something unfair from happening but that they can resist in many ways. Ask students to share their feelings – did those acts of resistance help them deal with the unfair situation? How do they think they would feel if they did not resist?
3. Share a handout of a testimony and asks students to try to identify acts of defiance or resistance. Go over the testimony with the class and identify where you, the teacher, saw acts of resistance. Resistance can include continuing to speak one's Indigenous language amongst themselves or singing softly to themselves in their language; sneaking to hug their sibling; and/or thinking or talking about running away.

Deepening Level

Students will use an analysis framework (looking for information in specific categories) to deepen their understanding of agency and resistance. Students will use visuals and share activities to explore how greater awareness of agency affects their understanding of Survivors.

1. Provide *Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis*.
2. Do not ask for acts of agency or resistance. Instead, inform students that they will watch different Oral Testimonies and instead of writing things down, they are going to draw these experiences. They can use keywords, objects, or entire scenes for each one.
3. After watching the Oral Testimony and completing their drawings, ask students to form small groups. Then ask them to each retell the story they heard to the group using their drawings to help explain the Survivor's experience.
4. Class discussion:
 - Ask students about the effects of making the drawings to better understand the experiences. How did thinking about what to draw effect how they understood the experience?
 - Ask students about the effects of the drawings when they heard the other persons' story.
 - Ask the students if looking for and sharing the acts of agency changed any of their feelings about the stories. If so, why and in what way?
 - Ask students to cover up the act of agency with another sheet of paper or a book. Does its absence change the overall effect of the drawings? How do the students feel about the accuracy of their drawings to tell this person's story now? Is it a fair representation or is too much missing?

Transfer Level

Class discussion encourages students to transfer learning to other areas of their school experiences. Students analyze how the person telling the story, and how they are telling it, can greatly influence and increase understanding. Students begin to see how they can act to inform others as a method of Reconciliation.

- How might these acts of agency be missed in standard curriculum? Are these types of acts in the coverage they usually see about Residential School? How might missing these acts of agency change how they see Residential School Survivors? How might these Survivors be changed if they had not done these acts of agency?

Learning to Action: Consider having the students set up a classroom exhibition of their drawings and invite other classes to view them as a means to understand and build their knowledge of the experiences of Residential School and Sixties Scoop Survivors.

Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis

You can write or draw in these boxes.

Survivor: _____

Worst Thing	Best Thing
Act of Healing	Life Before Residential School/Sixties Scoop
Life After	Acts of Agency

Teacher Resource – Lesson 2

Discussion Guide

Surface Level

1. Have students explore the idea of resistance. This can be done in several ways. Consider first building a definition of resistance with the whole class.
2. Consider sharing a personal tale of resistance, preferably from a context where you were not in a position of power (i.e., something from your childhood as opposed to resisting students' request for an extension on an assignment, for example). Below are optional examples of resistance, one well known, one less well known.
 - Example 1: Many people have heard of the Holocaust, where the Nazis arrested, confined, and executed Jews over several years. While this was happening, Jewish people's ability to resist was greatly reduced. However, resistance did happen and it was quite meaningful. Jewish people resisted in many ways including resistance to Nazi power while in the concentration camps. One story of this resistance is told in the film, *Schindler's List*.
 - Example 2: In 1923, the Six Nations representative Deskaheh went to the League of Nations (the precursor to the United Nations) to seek help in resisting Canadian imperialism on the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. The Six Nations People did not have the strength to completely push back the imposition of Canadian laws such as the *Indian Act* on their own, so they sought outside help.
3. Now that students have some idea of what resistance means, have students do a think-pair-share on examples from their own lives.
 - Ask students to think about a time when they felt something was wrong or unfair and how they acted to resist or fight back. They should come up with examples they are comfortable sharing with the class.
 - They can share in pairs or form small groups to share with each other. Invite a few students to share their experiences. Consider creating a scale on the chalkboard to note their examples. It is up to the teacher how this scale might work, but here are some suggestions: 'obvious' and 'subtle;' 'overt' and 'covert;' 'direct' and 'indirect;' or even, 'physical,' 'mental,' 'emotional,' and 'spiritual.'

Discussion

Talk about the nature of power and resisting it. Sometimes, something unfair happens and we cannot stop it, but we can still resist it. This resistance is important. Encourage students to think about the examples they shared of their own resistance and ask them to share their feelings about them. Did those acts of resistance help them deal with the unfair situation? How would they feel about those experiences if they had not resisted? Encourage them to use these thoughts in understanding the Oral Testimony of Survivors. One example that can be discussed is how we can all resist negative things people tell us by replacing it with what we tell ourselves. Even if we are told something like, "You are stupid." We can learn to challenge those statements with our own thoughts by saying internally, "I am smart... etc."

Deepening Level

This activity is about deepening the student's understanding of what resistance looks like and its frequency in the Oral Testimony of Survivors. The teacher's goal is to highlight the types of insights that can be gathered from listening to Survivors and those who have experienced events as opposed to taking a top-down perspective of events. Explain to the students that for most of the Oral Testimony, there are some recurring categories:

- What was the worst thing that happened?
- What was the best thing they remember?
- What can they share about their healing journey? (life before Residential School; life after Residential School; and acts of agency or resistance and resilience, etc.)
- Use *Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis* or have students make their own charts with larger pieces of paper. Ask students to draw their interpretations and conceptualizations of this information – they can write key words, draw objects, people, or whole scenes.

The drawing exercise is easier done if the page is divided into categories as opposed to something from each category going anywhere on the page.

By focusing certain ideas together, the activity will be more striking – students could try covering up the acts of agency or resistance and trying to view the Survivor's Oral Testimony without that context to see how it may change their impressions, understandings, and connections.

Have students make groups and use their drawings as tools to share the Oral Testimony of the Survivor they heard. Use the following questions to guide students towards a deeper understanding of the Oral Testimony and their connections to it.

1. Ask students about the effects of making the drawings as a way to better understand the experiences. How did thinking about what to draw affect how they thought about the experience?
2. Ask students about the effects of the drawings they saw when they heard the other persons' stories.
3. Did looking for and sharing the acts of agency change their feelings for the stories? If so, why and in what way?
4. Ask students to cover up the act of agency with another sheet of paper or a book. Does its absence change the overall effect of the drawings? How do the students feel about the accuracy of their drawings to tell this person's story now? Is it a fair representation or is too much missing?
5. Point out to the students that they have engaged in providing their own 'Oral Testimony' by documenting and expressing what they heard and how they interpreted it. How do they feel about this type of connection to what they study as opposed to taking notes on events and timelines?
6. What is their impression of their final drawings? Do they think there is value in sharing their 'Oral Testimonies' of this experience?

Transfer Level

The goal is to encourage students to practice transferring their analysis from the direct lesson to larger purposes – other content learned in class, their schooling in general, their life, society, and the world around them. Use the following questions to encourage students to practice transferring their understanding and analysis to other areas.

1. How might these acts of agency be missed in standard curriculum?
2. How might these acts of agency be missed in the coverage students usually see about the Residential Schools?
3. How might these Survivors be different if they had not carried out these acts of agency?

Learning to Action: Have the classroom set up an exhibition of their drawings and invite other classes to view and learn about Survivors and the Residential Schools, Sixties Scoop, lessons learned about this part of history, honouring Survivors, and how to act to build better relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Canada.







Lesson Plan 3

Allies and Reconciliation as Learning to Action

CONTAINS

- Activities
 - Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis
 - Student Handout – Agency and Allies

Lesson Plan 3

Allies and Reconciliation as Learning to Action

Focus

Students analyze Oral Testimony as an ally and begin to understand Reconciliation as an active process requiring that understanding is paired with meaningful action. Students develop a sense of curriculum as alive, or humanized, and that becoming informed is a prerequisite to meaningful action.

Duration

Two 45-minute sessions (minimum)

Grade Level

Junior, Intermediate, Senior

Building Competencies

The activities in this lesson plan are designed to build upon these competencies. It is hoped that they can be met by completing all the lesson plans in this Guide.

- **Knowledge and Understanding:** demonstrates knowledge of facts, events, and experiences; understands interrelationships between people, experiences, and communities
- **Thinking:** analyses and synthesizes Oral Testimony data; use problem-solving and inquiry
- **Communication:** organizes and expresses ideas in Oral, written, and visual forms; communicates to inform and persuade

- **Application:** applies analytical processes to increase understanding; applies contextual and visual analysis to make connections within and between contexts and modern societal issues; makes connections between past, present, and future contexts; applies knowledge and understanding to problem-solving and inquiry processes

Key Learning

1. Students analyze Oral Testimony to evaluate effects of Residential Schools and create solutions.
2. Students collect and analyze data from Oral Testimonies for analysis.
3. Students synthesize data to identify themes and evaluate priorities.
4. Students generate possible solutions.

Curriculum Areas

- History
- English
- Native Studies
- Civics
- Geography

Teacher Preparation

Teachers are encouraged to read the *Student Handout – Agency and Allies* prior to beginning this lesson, as well as the introduction to this Guide, to help them understand the emphases for this lesson.

Activities

Key Learning: Students will explore how achieving a more humanized understanding of the topic from the Oral Testimony of Survivors themselves translates to more effective Reconciliation and learning to action.

Activate

Student Inquiry Question

Can looking at individual experiences help us develop broader, community- or organization-wide responses?



Surface Level

Students begin to explore the nature of acting and engaging in Reconciliation by placing themselves at the center.

1. Talk to students about allyship and action. Students can review the *Student Handout – Agency and Allies* handout on defining allyship and action to inform the discussion.
 2. Ask students about the difference between when the teacher should intervene to assist one student and when the teacher should intervene to assist the whole class. (One example could be a student not understanding a test question versus the teacher making a mistake in writing the test). How might the nature of that intervention change when it is provided to larger numbers? What would make that assistance more effective?
 3. Now ask the students to look from a different lens. What could the students do to address any of these challenges instead of waiting for the teacher? What could the students do if it was the teacher who represented the obstacle? Perhaps the teacher does not understand that there is a problem, or they think they understand what the problem is but are not correct – how might students address this? What if the students and teacher worked together? Students are encouraged to keep those distinctions in mind for this lesson.
- Possible answers or ideas to raise could be: asking students where they are having problems instead of the teacher assuming they already know where students are struggling; asking students what they might need for help; asking students if problems outside of school could keep them from being successful in school; asking what could the teacher do if the challenge was home-based or if the challenge was community-based; and asking if the challenge was from more than one source or area of a student's life.
 - A possible question to ask to encourage critical thinking is 'What sorts of challenges might occur if the teacher assumes she/he knows what's wrong and goes ahead with an intervention without confirming their assumption?'

Deepening Level

Students discover how examining multiple instances of an experience can deepen their understanding of not just individual experiences but also wider impacts when the experience is a shared one. Students explore how transferring understandings into different mediums (visual) can affect their understanding.

1. Have students listen to several Oral Testimonies (at least 2 different ones). Students can listen as a whole class, individually, or in groups. Students will collect keywords and experiences from the multiple Oral Testimonies onto a graphic organizer.
 - *Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis*: Classes can use the graphic organizer provided or design their own. Using a larger sheet of paper to allow for more visual representations within the categories is recommended.
 - The provided graphic organizer invites students to collect data on the following:
 - Positive Experiences;
 - Acts of Agency;
 - Negative Experiences;
 - Healing Journey;
 - Life Before Residential School/Sixties Scoop; and
 - Life After.
2. Invite students to take visual notes or depictions of the information they collect if they prefer.
3. After students have analyzed multiple Oral Testimonies and filled out their organizers, ask students to work in groups of 3-4 to come up with keywords that can define similarities or themes in these areas (life before, negative experiences, positive experiences, etc.) across their different organizers.

4. As a classroom, share some examples of keywords that describe these experiences or key images that help represent them. Have students complete these on sticky notes – these will be shared with the class in the next activity.

Transfer Level

Students transfer understanding of multiple experiences to family and community-wide impacts. Students explore how a more humanized understanding based on listening can lead to more meaningful actions for Reconciliation.

1. Whole-class exercise: Have the students brainstorm key community roles, (examples are mayor, doctor, police officer, farmer, etc.). Draw large person-shaped outlines for these roles on the chalkboard. Now ask for a few volunteers from each group and have them place their group's sticky notes of keywords or drawings from the *Negative Experiences* and *Life after Residential School* categories into these outlines on the board.
2. Discussion: Explore how individual experiences in Oral Testimony add depth to the understanding of effect, and how, after hearing multiple Testimonies, students may begin to see how these struggles build community-wide issues. For example, in some cases, these experiences may prevent people from taking up needed community roles.
3. Have students remove the sticky notes from the person-shaped chalk outlines then have students place their sticky notes for *Acts of Agency* and *Healing Journey* onto the chalk drawings. Ask students to reflect on how these visuals and knowing these things affect their impressions of Survivors.

4. Return to the idea of allyship and action.
Have students work in groups and brainstorm how they could act as allies. Remind them of their discussion about interventions and acting from assumptions at the beginning of the lesson. Have them pick from categories to focus their brainstorming such as:
 - schools;
 - communities;
 - government; and
 - categories they generate on their own.
5. Have students draw posters that show what an ally school, community, and government could do to help bring about the healing paths that the Survivors discussed in their Testimonies.
6. Close with a discussion about the following themes:
 - What is good allyship?
 - Why is it important to listen to Survivors to better understand;
 - How does engaging with Oral Testimony inform their understandings and inform their actions;
 - Discuss final thoughts on what was learned about Residential School and Sixties Scoop Survivors; and
 - Discuss what they can do to build healthy and just relationships, end racism and to foster Reconciliation.



Student Handout – Oral Testimony Analysis

You can write or draw in these boxes.

Survivor: _____

Positive Experiences	Acts of Agency
Negative Experiences	Healing Journey
Life Before Residential School/Sixties Scoop	Life After

Student Handout – Agency and Allies

Around the world and throughout history, there have been many acts of aggression from one group on another. On a more overt scale, there are wars and on a smaller scale there are corporations hiring union busters to break up strikes and make employees go back to work to quash their fight for rights. Another example which is entirely unlike those above is systemic and systematic discrimination against minority groups like Indigenous Peoples. In this last case, the Canadian government has created laws that targeted Indigenous Peoples to eliminate their rights, lands and resources through legislations such as the Indian Act, (which still exists today), destroyed communities and families when they took away their children, and today there continue to be more Indigenous children apprehended by Child Welfare than there were children in Residential Schools and we all now know the devastating impacts that caused.

There are also many experiences of pushing back against aggressors and stopping their aggression. No matter how big the effort, it is made up of individuals. For those individuals to act, they often need to feel like their actions can make a difference. We may wish for freedom and equality but making it a reality is a journey that requires many small steps and actions by many. Those steps are powered by all individuals, sometimes by themselves and sometimes with others, and together they make progress towards equality. That is practicing agency through allyship.

Many people, when they see an injustice or something not fair, wish to right that wrong. However, we must be careful not to repeat the mistakes of the past. In terms of the Residential Schools, we can see that one major operating principle was that leadership in Canadian society thought it knew better than Indigenous Peoples, that it was superior, and that they would profit financially from the land and resources while discriminating against Indigenous Peoples in every way. And so, large-scale action was taken to put Indigenous children in Residential Schools, away from their families, with a model to remove their education, traditions, cultures, languages, spirituality, and make them “more civilized.” Yet, at the same time Indigenous Peoples were not given the same education, food, immunizations, clothing, and family comforts as all other Canadian children and were treated with immeasurable abuse.

If we define Reconciliation as understanding and meaningful action to build a better relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous People, how then can we move Reconciliation forward? In this case, what you learn about Residential Schools, their methods, purposes, and the experiences had within them, provide good information on what not to do. And what to do differently to figure out how to be good allies and take responsibility to improve relationships today.

In listening to Oral Testimonies, we know that Indigenous Peoples were subjected to many experiences by people who felt they knew better, who felt that Indigenous Peoples needed to be told how to change to improve their lives. Yet, we also know from the Oral Testimonies that these experiences were mostly painful, (as they would have been for any child and their family) and the response many chose was to resist the message of Residential Schools. Some of the most lasting impacts of Residential School thinking were the messages that being Indigenous was shameful and meant that they were uneducated and that they were somehow inferior. Much of this behaviour was in part guided by thinking that Indigenous Peoples needed to be saved from themselves. Many may still think Indigenous Peoples need rescuing and this notion must be challenged so as to be able to identify how one can be an ally. Indigenous Peoples’ resistance to these messages and practice of agency is tightly connected to the identity of having survived and resisted Residential Schools and their prior connections to the land, language, family and the environment. While some Indigenous children were completely broken down in spirit and found themselves unable or unwilling to

resist, for many, resistance was a must. Even if they could not escape the Residential School System itself, they could still in some way resist the message, even if only in small ways. For some, it may have appeared that they complied with the process, and they had to do so to survive, but inside they vowed to hold on to their language or to their family memories, which was and is a testament to their strength and resilience.

When Survivors talk about their healing journey and how they pursue it, they talk about reclaiming what was taken from them by going to these schools, and they talk about the frame of mind they had before Residential School. They may still be actively pursuing their recovery, based on what they have decided is best for themselves. It is also important to remember that while Residential Schools have ended only 21 years ago, there are still many assimilative and hostile systems and practices against Indigenous Peoples ongoing in Canada today, and many Survivors have haunting memories that may remain or be triggered by current events or happenings.

A quick review of the news will highlight some major issues where discrimination is still ongoing in Canada, such as the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) that was created to look into the systemic causes of the high rates of violence targeting Indigenous women. This includes predators who believe they can kill an Indigenous woman with no regard for the consequence because there would be little public outcry. There is also the over-incarceration of Indigenous Peoples, often due to racism at the point of contact with police and throughout the process involving the justice system. These ongoing issues remind us that the process of eliminating racism is so necessary, with continuous systemic harms still being inflicted on Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This is one reason why Reconciliation is such an important goal for Canada.

Reconciliation does not occur if Canadians only learn about the many traumatizing effects of Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop on generations. Nor does it come from learning about the truth of the systemic racism within the Indian Act, throughout the years of caselaw where Indigenous Peoples have tried to assert their rights but lost in court, or the many other injustices Indigenous Peoples have faced and continue to encounter.

Meaningful action will come from learning about the truth of our collective past and present, from the acknowledgement, and honouring of what has been experienced, and by developing the respect and commitment to make concrete change so that we can work toward Reconciliation together. If we are to learn from these experiences, how then do we put our understanding into meaningful action, to be good listeners so as to understand what is needed to be good allies? What ideas can we obtain from listening to the Testimonies, identifying with how they must have felt and experienced, and listening for what could help create more positive relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples?

We (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) must have truth, understanding, acknowledgement, respect, justice, healing, and rebuilding so there can be genuine Reconciliation. Reconciliation is creating new ways of being with one another based on dignity, kindness, and appreciation of what we all have lived and what we can all contribute to this journey we call life. When we tell the truth about the lived experiences, as told to us by Survivors, these solemn and heartfelt Testimonies constitute a new Oral history based on Indigenous customs and Traditions and the practice of witnessing, actively hearing and sharing the experiences of truth-telling we become part of actions that can lead to Reconciliation. In short, learning is not enough, there must be action. However, just acting is not enough, either. We need to listen, learn, and reflect. And when we do these things, we are better able to act in a way that is respectful and collaborative. And it is those types of actions that will help us all build a more just society.

Conclusion

The lessons in this Guide focus on Oral Testimony of Indigenous Survivors of the Residential School System. The goals of this resource include humanizing and decolonizing education. Humanizing is achieved as the emotions and reactions of students are part of the learning. They will see Indigenous Peoples not as passive footnotes in historical contexts but as the real figures they were and are, struggling against oppressive forces and exercising their agency to shape their lives in meaningful ways – including resisting the traumatizing message of Residential Schools. It is decolonizing because by tackling this subject matter teachers and students have created space in classrooms for Indigenous Peoples, their experiences, and their views.

In many ways, including legislatively and economically, Canada's history with Indigenous Peoples has been one of silencing. When we take up these issues, when we listen to Indigenous voices, we are in a way pushing back at these silences. When we set aside the standard curriculum for a moment, or we add to it with Indigenous voices – conveying the messages they choose, how they choose to tell it – we create a little more balance in schools and educational spaces.

Reconciliation is a process that requires understanding and action. The lessons herein are intended to help teachers and students gain a better appreciation for the need for action that is based on deep, informed reflection. This is how we avoid the mistakes of the past as we move forward to co-create Reconciliation.

It is by listening to each other that we can best understand each other and determine how best to take the next steps. But simply listening to a Survivor's Oral Testimony is not enough. We need not only develop empathy and understanding of the many challenges Indigenous Peoples faced and continue to experience we must also take positive and respectful action.

The Legacy of Hope Foundation thanks you for using this curriculum resource and for taking part in this sacred journey of being witness to truth-telling and hopes that you too will be inspired to take action toward Reconciliation.

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