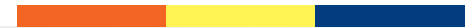




Finding Our Place in Reconciliation

A Learning Activity



INTRODUCTION

This learning activity is designed to accompany the actions you take as part of Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams. If this is your first time participating, we recommend that you first take a look at the Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams [website](#)¹ to familiarize yourself with this event and its significance. There, you will also be able to access important information like frequently asked questions, the registration page, and the map of this year's heart gardens.

Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams invites people of all ages to plant heart gardens in memory of children lost to the residential school system, to honour residential school survivors and their families, and to act on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action. The TRC told Canadians about the significant harms of residential schools, and how its legacy lives on in the ongoing discrimination of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, families, and communities in Canada. The act of planting represents our commitment to reconciliation. The first uncovering of the children in unmarked graves in 2021 at Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation reminded peoples living in Canada of how dismal conditions were in the schools. Therefore, we hold a responsibility to actively participate in reconciliation and encourage our elected officials, business leaders, and community groups to do the same.

Implementing the TRC's Calls to Action (2015) is one of the best ways to honour the children who died in the residential schools, the survivors, and their families but sadly at the time of writing in 2022, only 11 of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action have been fully implemented

(Jewell & Mosby, 2021).² We can do better by educating ourselves, our families and neighbours, and holding elected officials, educational institutions and business leaders accountable to take action.

Inspired by the heart garden planted by children and survivors during the TRC Closing Ceremonies in June of 2015, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams is a free and meaningful way to participate in reconciliation. Alongside planting flowers, you can make a paper heart with your call to action on it, and plant it. After you have finished planting your heart garden, you can blow bubbles. Bubbles represent all the dreams that residential school survivors have for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children today, and the generations of children to follow. Planting your own heart garden honours survivors of the residential schools and the children that did not come home. To commemorate your process of reconciliation, this activity invites you to learn about residential schools, and commit to implementing the TRC Calls to Action. Heart gardens can be planted by one person, a family, or in a group. The process will get you started on your path of reconciliation.

And don't forget, reconciliation is all of us! Planting your heart garden and engaging with the questions and materials in this activity guide are just two ways we can meaningfully incorporate reconciliation into our lives! To learn more about what you can do to help advance reconciliation throughout the rest of the year, be sure to check out the "[What You Can Do](#)"³ section on the Caring Society website where you'll find information on events, resources, and learning materials you can use to expand your knowledge and inspire action.

1 <https://fncaringsociety.com/honouring-memories-planting-dreams>

2 Calls to Action Accountability: A 2021 Status Update on Reconciliation, a report created by the Yellowhead Institute is where this information is from. Their report was authored by Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby. The document is free online and reachable here: <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/trc-2021-accountability-update-yellowhead-institute-special-report.pdf>

3 <https://fncaringsociety.com/what-you-can-do>

LEARNING INTENTIONS

After learning about residential schools, the impact they continue to have on generations of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and families, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by exploring the resources below, you will choose a TRC Call to Action and help make it happen.

STEPS

1. Learn about the ongoing impacts of the residential school system and its legacy

Educating ourselves is an important first step to take toward reconciliation. If you haven't learned about residential schools before, take some time to do so by yourself or with family, friends, or community members. Even if you are already familiar with the residential schools and the TRC's Calls to Action, it's still a good idea to continue expanding your knowledge. The resources below offer great starting points, whether you prefer to learn through reading, listening, or watching.

Keep in mind that learning about residential schools can be emotionally difficult and potentially triggering. Take care to check in with yourself, take breaks, and reach out for support as needed.

If you are a survivor of the residential school system or a family member of a survivor and need support call Health Canada's 24-Hour National Survivors Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419.

The Caring Society's Resources:

- ♥ [Spirit Bear's Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action](#)⁴
- ♥ Reconciling History [webpage](#)⁵
- ♥ A History of Inequity [timeline](#)⁶
- ♥ *Spirit Bear: Fishing for Knowledge, Catching Dreams* [book](#)⁷
 - *Spirit Bear: Fishing for Knowledge, Catching Dreams* [learning guide](#)⁸
- ♥ *Spirit Bear: Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams* [book](#)⁹
 - *Spirit Bear: Honouring Memories Planting Dreams* [learning guide](#)¹⁰

4 <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/spirit-bears-guide-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-canada-calls-action>

5 <https://fncaringsociety.com/reconciling-history>

6 <https://fncaringsociety.com/history-inequity>

7 <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/spirit-bear-fishing-knowledge-catching-dreams-ebook>

8 <https://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-fishing-knowledge-catching-dreams-0>

9 <https://fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBear/honouring-memories>

10 <https://fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBear/honouring-memories>

Other Free Online Resources:

- ♥ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's **Reports and Calls to Action**
- ♥ Historica Canada's **podcast and video series**¹¹ about residential schools
 - **Content warning:** *Some may find these podcasts upsetting, as they include first-hand survivor testimonies of the residential school experience.*
- ♥ Canadian Geographic's **Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Resource**¹²
- ♥ The Legacy of Hope's **Where are the Children Exhibition**¹³
- ♥ The Project of Heart's **Learning Resources**¹⁴
- ♥ Duncan McCue's **Kuper Island podcast**,¹⁵ available through CBC
- ♥ **A National Crime**,¹⁶ a documentary created by Carleton University students exploring the efforts of Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce
- ♥ CBC's **Residential School Map**¹⁷
- ♥ The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA People's **Final Reports and Calls for Justice**¹⁸

Once you've spent some time learning, answer these questions in a way that is best for you (e.g., in conversation, writing, drawing, or another means of expression).

- ♥ Why did the federal government create residential schools and force First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children to attend them?
 - Take it further: How did the federal government enforce its residential school policy?
- ♥ What were the consequences of the residential school system on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, families, and societies?
 - Take it further: In what ways do these impacts live on today? Name as many specific examples as you can.
- ♥ Do you think the Canadian government knew students were being harmed, and in too many cases dying, while residential schools were operating? Do you think the Canadian government did enough to protect residential school students?
 - Take it further: Do you think the Canadian government does better for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students when it knows better today?
 - What can you do to ensure your elected representatives implement the TRC Calls to Action?
 - Who can you talk to ensure people in your family and community know about residential schools and the TRC Calls to Action?

11 <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools-podcast-series>

12 <https://indigenoupeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/section/truth-and-reconciliation>

13 <https://legacyofhope.ca/wherearethekids/>

14 <https://projectofheart.ca/what-is-project-of-heart/resources>

15 <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/cbc-podcasts/1062-kuper-island>

16 <https://carleton.ca/history/cu-videos/a-national-crime>

17 <https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/beyond-94-residential-school-map>

18 <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report>

2. Choose a TRC Call to Action

Get acquainted with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Below you can find a link to Spirit Bear's youth-friendly guide to the Calls to Action as well as the TRC's original Calls to Action.

If you're learning as a group, it might be more enjoyable to assign each person a section that they will be responsible for sharing with everyone else.

- ♥ [Spirit Bear's Youth Guide to the TRC's Calls to Action](#)¹⁹
- ♥ The TRC's [Calls to Action](#)²⁰
- ♥ Yellowhead Institute's [Calls to Action Accountability status updates](#)²¹

3. Create your goal

Now that you've chosen the Call to Action you want to focus on, you're ready to write your goal.

Many of the Calls to Action address big problems and speak to people in government or people working in businesses, courts, schools, media, and other settings. However, people of all ages can encourage change so that governments, organizations, businesses, educational institutions, (etc.), can take action. By sending them letters or messages that you support the TRC Calls to Action, you can ask what these places are doing to implement them. There are Calls to Action for community groups (even sports!) so we can all do something to take action and show the survivors and their families that we care. To start, pick a Call to Action that speaks to you. It can be related to school, health, culture, the media – the choice is yours. Then, think about something that you can do in your own life to help implement

the Call to Action. Remember, there's no goal that is too big or too small to help advance reconciliation – the key is to do *something*. Just be sure to think creatively and be specific. You can brainstorm with your friends, family, or community as well!

Take a look at the examples below for ideas.

Primary Grades (Ages 4 to 12) Are Called to Action!

Spirit Bear's Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action:

8. We call on Canada to give schools that teach First Nations students enough money for those schools to give a fair education that makes them proud of who they are.

Examples of Goals:

- ♥ I will learn about Shannen Koostachin and **Shannen's Dream**,²² and I will think about what a safe, comfy school means to me and draw a picture about how it makes me feel. I will share my ideas with my classmates and teacher.
- ♥ I will learn about some of the challenges First Nations students face in getting the education they need for the jobs they want to do when they grow up. I will fill out the "When I grow up, I want to be..." worksheet and share it with my teacher and classmates. I will share this on social media after I receive permission from my parent and/or guardian using the hashtag **#ShannensDream/#RevedeShannen** – or I will ask a trusted adult to share it for me!

¹⁹ <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/spirit-bears-guide-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-canada-calls-action>

²⁰ https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

²¹ <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/trc>

²² <https://fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream>

Junior Grades (Ages 12 to 14) Are Called to Action!

Spirit Bear's Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Call to Action:

63. We call on the leaders in charge of education in Canada to always work on improving education about Aboriginal²³ peoples and cultures including treaties and the legacy of residential schools.

Examples of Goals:

- ♥ I will email my principal and teachers asking what we will be learning from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities this school year and the home territory where our school is located, and I will emphasize that this learning is important to me.
- ♥ I will ask if it is possible for our school or class to invite, with appropriate protocols, a local community-authorized Elder and/or Knowledge Keeper to share their knowledge with us.
- ♥ I will learn about local treaties and agreements between the government and First Nations, and find out if the government has kept its treaty promises. I will make a timeline or poster showing what I learned and put it up in a community space so that everyone can learn, too.

Senior Grades (Ages 14 to 18) Are Called to Action!

Spirit Bear's Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Call to Action:

20. We call on Canada to respect the health needs of all Aboriginal people, no matter where they live in Canada.

Examples of Goals:

- ♥ I will watch the documentary *Jordan River Anderson, The Messenger* by Alanis Obomsawin, to learn about the life of Jordan River Anderson and the discriminatory standard of healthcare and other public services that Canada provided to Jordan and other First Nations kids like him. I will teach my friends and family what I have learned and encourage them to do the same with their own networks so we can help hold governments to account.
- ♥ I will read about **Jordan's Principle**²⁴ and the ongoing Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case, which found that Canada is discriminating against First Nations children and failing to fully implement Jordan's Principle. I will write a letter to the Prime Minister and to my Member of Parliament urging them to stop discriminating against First Nations kids, and to fully implement Jordan's Principle. I will post my letter on social media to encourage my friends to do the same.

²³ The term "Aboriginal" is a Canadian legal term that originates from the Canadian *Constitution Act* of 1982 and is best used in a legal context. The *Constitution Act* stipulates that there are three distinct Aboriginal groups in Canada: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis – we recommend referring to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis specifically, as the term Aboriginal also collapses important differences between diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

²⁴ <https://fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle>

Community Members Are Called to Action!

Spirit Bear's Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Call to Action:

57. We call on all governments in Canada to teach the people that work for them about Aboriginal people and cultures, including residential schools, treaties, and Aboriginal rights and laws.

Example of Goal:

- ♥ I will participate in a physical or virtual Reconciling History Walking Tour located on the Caring Society's **YouTube Channel**²⁵ and/or **website**²⁶ to learn more about the history of certain Canadian public figures who are buried at Beechwood Cemetery, and gain a greater understanding of their choices, actions, and impacts surrounding the residential school system.
- ♥ I will discuss with friends and family who work for various levels of government what the current level of education is regarding residential schools, treaties, and Aboriginal rights and laws for public servants. I will mobilize their support through the **Spirit Bear Plan**²⁷ to help push for greater education and training from within.
- ♥ I will email and write letters to the elected board of trustees within my region and ask for meetings with them to discuss such goals and ensure they are implemented.
- ♥ I will email and write letters to my municipal, provincial, and federally elected government representatives in my region, and ask for meetings with them to discuss such goals and ensure they are implemented.

25 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrWE8sMcTkE&list=PL0QM6zTBLIPvijyXP_LOxQZQpvBVCr0pT

26 <https://fncaringsociety.com/reconciliation-walking-tours>

27 <https://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-plan>

4. Follow up, reflect, and share

After a few weeks, follow up on your goal with the questions below. Again, answer in a way that works for you. Think about what you've learned and the steps you've taken toward achieving one of the TRC Calls to Action, and ask yourself and someone in your circle the following questions:






- ♥ Did you accomplish your goal? If yes, what went well and what didn't? Are there changes you could have made to your goal to have a bigger impact, especially in response to the *Spirit Bear Plan*? If you didn't yet accomplish your goal, what were the barriers and what steps can you take to ensure that next time, you do?
- ♥ What did you learn from the process?
- ♥ What's your next goal?

This time, after you've had some time to reflect on your experience, make a point to discuss what you've learned and the goal you created with someone else so that they can get involved in their own way. The key to effecting change is sustained, collective effort and making sure that the conversation keeps going.

PARTICIPATING IN HONOURING MEMORIES, PLANTING DREAMS

Bring your commitment into your heart garden by writing your goal on the back of your paper heart or by saying it aloud while planting your flowers and heart messages. If you have questions about where to start, what to plant, and how to participate safely in Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams while keeping healthy and safe, visit our [Frequently Asked Questions page](#).²⁸

If you're planting flowers, you can also plant flowers that represent the area of action your goal speaks to. The chart below may inspire you. We decided to choose non-invasive heirloom varieties and colours that support pollinators like bees! For more guidance on planting a pollinator-friendly garden, check out this [website](#).²⁹

Area of Action	Kinds of Flowers
 Child welfare	We associate orange flowers with the child welfare system, as a legacy of residential schools. Orange flowers you can choose from include butterfly milkweed and Michigan lilies.
 Education	Blue flowers were Shannen Koostachin's favourite – especially forget-me-nots! The colour blue is also a significant colour to Jordan's Principle. Blue flowers you can choose from are forget-me-nots, blue cornflower, and borage.
 Language and culture	Purple or violet symbolize wisdom; we associate these flowers with the importance of honouring the cultures and languages of First Nations children, youth, families, and communities. Purple or violet flowers you can choose from are asters, crocus, heliotrope, heather, chive, lupines, catmint, and lavender.
 Health	Yellow is symbolic of optimism and hope; we associate this meaning with health. The colour yellow is also connective to Jordan's Principle. Yellow flowers you can choose from are sunflowers, goldenrods, black-eyed Susans, squash, and pumpkin.
 Justice	Pink represents love and compassion; we associate these flowers with justice. Pink flowers you can choose from are foxglove, coneflower, pink coneflower, cosmos, and sedum.

²⁸ <https://fncaringsociety.com/heart-garden-faq>

²⁹ <https://davidssuzuki.org/living-green/create-pollinator-friendly-garden-birds-bees-butterflies>