



Finding Our Place in Reconciliation

Learning Activity

"...reconciliation is not a one-time event; it is a multi-generational journey that involves all Canadians."

- *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, p. 209*

Introduction

It's been five years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada released its reports explaining what it learned about residential schools. Following in the footsteps of earlier reports, the TRC told Canadians about the significant harms of residential schools, and how their legacy lives on in the ongoing discrimination of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, families, and communities in Canada.

The TRC told us we all have a role to play in the process of making things right. To start this journey, the TRC announced 94 Calls to Action. These are actions governments, courts, businesses, schools, and people living in Canada can do to support First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in their fight for justice.

Progress has been slow. When this was written, only 10 of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action had been fully accomplished. We can help raise this number by continuing the conversation, taking action, and putting pressure on people in power to make these changes. We all need to find our place in the work of reconciliation. This activity hopes to help you get started.

This learning activity can be done individually, or in a group. It can accompany your celebration of Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams, or be done as a stand-alone activity throughout the year. Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams invites people and organizations to honour residential school survivors and express their commitment to reconciliation by planting heart gardens. To learn more about [**Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams**](#), read the section below "Participating in Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams."

Learning Intentions

After learning about the impact of residential schools on First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, you will choose a Call to Action you want to see come true and create a personal goal to help make it happen.

Steps

1. Learn about the impact of residential schools

Spend some time learning about residential schools by yourself or with family, friends, or community members. The below resources offer great starting points.

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.

Free online learning resources

- The Legacy of Hope's [**Where are the Children Exhibition**](#)
- The Legacy of Hope's [**100 Years of Loss Exhibition**](#)
- The Caring Society's [**Reconciling History**](#) page & [**A History of Inequity**](#) timeline
- The Project of Heart's [**Learning Resources**](#)
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [**Reports and Calls to Action**](#)
- The National Inquiry into Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, & 2SLGBTQQIA People's [**Final Reports & Calls for Justice**](#)
- The Caring Society's [**7 Free Ways to Make a Difference**](#)
- CBC's [**Residential School Map**](#)
- Historica Canada's [**podcast and video series**](#) about residential schools

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, Métis and Inuit 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?

- o *Take it further:* What can you do to make sure the Canadian government does better for First Nations, Metis and Inuit students when it knows better?

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](#)**
- The TRC's **[Calls to Action](#)**
- CBC's **[Beyond 94: Truth & Reconciliation in Canada](#)**

After getting to know the TRC's 94 Call to Actions, choose one or two you want to help come true. Find out what progress has been made on your Call to Action with CBC's Beyond 94.

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.

This can be tricky because 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. Don't let this discourage you! You can help influence what happens in these places by speaking out and taking action. The trick is to think creatively and be specific.

Take a look at the below examples for ideas.

Call to Action:

63. We call on the leaders in charge of education in Canada to always work on improving education about Aboriginal people and cultures including Treaties and the legacy of residential schools (from Spirit Bear's Guide to the TRC's Calls to Actions).

Examples of Goals:

- I will email my principal and teachers asking what we will be learning from Aboriginal peoples this school year, and emphasizing that this learning is important to me. I will ask if it is possible for our school or class to invite a local Elder to share their knowledge with us.
- I will learn about local treaties, 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.

Call to Action:

30. We call on governments in Canada to make sure there are less Aboriginal people in jail (from Spirit Bear's Guide to the TRC's Calls to Actions).

Examples of Goals:

- I will graph the percentage of Aboriginal people in prison compared to the percentage of Aboriginal people in each province or territory. I will share this work on social media to raise awareness about the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in jail.
- I will research and learn about the work that many Aboriginal peoples are doing to end mass incarceration. I will share this information with my friends and family.
- I will write a letter to my Member of Parliament and my provincial Member of the Legislative Assembly asking what the government intends to do to reduce the number of Aboriginal people in prison.

4. Follow up and reflect

After some time, follow up on your goal with the questions below. Again, answer in a way that works for you.

- How did it go? What went well and what didn't? Looking back, are there changes you could have made to your goal to have a bigger impact or help yourself accomplish it?
- What did you learn from the process?
- What's your next goal?

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.

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 made an effort 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](#).

Area of Action	Kinds of Flowers
Child Welfare	White flowers like yarrow, blueberries, blackberries, & raspberries
Education	Blue flowers like forget-me-nots, blue cornflower, & borage
Language and Culture	Purple or violet flowers like asters, crocus, heliotrope, heather, chive, lupines, catmint, & lavender
Health	Yellow flowers like sunflowers, goldenrods, black-eyed Susans, squash, & pumpkin
Justice	Pink flowers like foxglove, coneflower, pink cornflower, cosmos, & sedum