Leading the way forward in reconciliation

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Touchstones for Youth:
Reconciliation in Indigenous Child Welfare

Module 2
Leading the Way Forward in Reconciliation

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MODULE 2: LEADING THE WAY FORWARD IN RECONCILIATION

MODULE OVERVIEW

This module has 3 units that help youth to learn about and discuss issues that affect Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities when it comes to child welfare. It helps both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth get a good understanding of policies and programs that have affected (and continue to affect) our Indigenous ways of knowing and living.

This module also explores the Touchstones of Hope:
1. Culture, language,
2. Holistic approach;
3. Self-determination;
4. Non-discrimination; and
5. Structural intervention.

This module gives youth the chance to:
• Learn about how people are working towards reconciliation in child welfare; and
• Use this knowledge to develop relationships that can help to improve the child welfare system for Indigenous people.

Our overall goal is to get youth to put their energies together to make improvements to the child welfare system. We designed the workshop in a way that recognizes the fact that Indigenous people learn in relation to each other. We hope that youth begin to work together in a collaborative and inspiring way that helps to build supportive and healthy communities.

To change the child welfare system, we need to work with one another to go through the four phases of reconciliation:
1. Truth telling
2. Acknowledging
3. Relating
4. Restoring

In module one, our goals were truth telling and acknowledging. Our goals with this module are mainly relating and restoring—building relationships that can help youth come up with action plans for changing child welfare in ways that positively impact both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, youth, and families.
**LEARNING GOALS**

This module has 3 units (each is 1.5 hours) that get youth to:
- Set intentions for their role(s) for reconciliation in the child welfare system
- Learn to use the Touchstones of Hope
- Develop actions plans for moving forward
- Identify the purpose and guiding values of the Touchstone movement
- Describe the touchstone process of reconciliation that involves truth telling, acknowledging, restoring, and relating
- Relate their own values and role(s) in reconciliation projects within Indigenous child welfare
- Develop a personal mission statement around the Touchstone movement for reconciliation

This workshop builds on *Touchstones for Leadership: Reconciliation in Indigenous Child Welfare*. This document is the result of a gathering in Niagara Falls in 2005. At this gathering, Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders within child welfare came together to create a vision of how to better serve Indigenous children, youth, and families. People agreed that **reconciliation is the place to begin**.

**Why is reconciliation the first step?**

Taking care of our Indigenous children is a practice that many of us develop because we’re learning about our rich and diverse traditional beliefs. Colonialism has interrupted these practices. Children, through residential school or child welfare, have and continue to be the target of the colonial enterprise. This has terrible impacts on Indigenous children, youth, and families.
Indigenous peoples keep fighting to protect children and youth from the harm that mainstream child welfare causes. We are seeing allies within this system who worry about the history of hurt and injustice. These people want to help Indigenous peoples in some way. The large gathering in Niagara Falls of Indigenous people and their allies shows this.

People at the gathering agreed that:
• Healing needs to happen;
• People need to seek reconciliation; and
• Trust needs to be built between both parties.

A first step is to offer youth the chance to gather knowledge, build relationships, and jointly develop action plans. As a means for creating space for this form of relating, this Touchstone workshop offers a chance to dialogue.

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS**

In this module we use:
• Ice breakers
• Sharing circles
• Direct instruction
• Working in pairs
• Brainstorming
• Case studies
• Independent writing exercises
• Large group discussion

**THE WORDS WE USE**

We use several terms to refer to Indigenous youth. We use these as follows:

**Aboriginal** - Used to describe 3 Indigenous peoples of Canada. Some people think this means “not original,” but the word is derived from “Aborigine,” a Latin word that means “from the beginning.”

**First Nations** - 1 of 3 Indigenous groups in Canada who are involved with treaties and the reservation system. Includes many different nations.

**Indian** - A word not used as often as others. This is not a “politically correct” term despite its use in government documents. Many First Nations people use this word as slang.

**Indigenous** - Used around the world to describe all Indigenous peoples.

**Inuit** - 1 of 3 Indigenous groups in Canada. Associated with the Territories and Circumpolar Nations.

**Métis** - 1 of 3 Indigenous groups in Canada. Métis are of mixed heritage and are most often associated with the “Métis homeland” (the prairie provinces). There are other Métis in Labrador who are of European and Inuit heritage.

**Native (American)** - A commonly used term. Socially accepted.

**Non-Status Indian** - A First Nations person who is not registered under the Indian Act (they don’t have enough “Indian” blood to register).

**Status Indian** – This is a First Nations person who is registered under the Indian Act.
**WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**

This workshop is for all youth between the ages of 15 to 24 who are:
- Concerned about how child welfare impacts Indigenous peoples in Canada;
- Involved in leadership activities within child welfare; and/or
- Wanting to develop leadership skills.

Youth should hope to have a positive impact on the lives of children and youth, especially in Indigenous child welfare.

*We define leadership to mean leaders from all levels—cultural, community, institutional, governmental, and political leaders in our Indigenous communities. We especially encourage youth who want to influence child welfare to take part in this training.*

**A NOTE ABOUT CASE STUDIES**

Some of the people in our case studies are real people. In some case, we support our case studies by including news clippings.

We try not to speculate on anything outside of the facts presented in news stories or interviews from the people who we are discussing.

**WHAT YOUTH WILL LEARN ABOUT**

This table shows where each competency appears within the workshop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Students will Learn About:</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Setting intentions for the role(s) of youth in reconciliation</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Using the Touchstones of Hope</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Developing action plans for moving forward</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Instructional equipment**

- Computer
- Projector
- PowerPoint file (on a CD or USB)
- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or flipchart with paper
- Markers or chalk (whatever is appropriate)
- Enough copies of the handouts for everyone
- Smudge bowl
- Smudge supplies such as sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco
- Matches
- Tobacco ties
- Sacred object such as a feather, talking stick, etc.

**How to prepare for this unit**

Review this guide. Review the unit resources that you’ll use for direct instruction so that you understand the issues that you’re covering.

Go over the list of ice breakers *(Appendix A)* to decide whether you want to use any. If this is the first time that your group is meeting, use an ice breaker so that everyone can get comfortable with each other. Get the supplies you need.

When you are getting ready for the day, go into the room you’ll be using. Decide how you want to set things up. You may wish to place all chairs in a circle with the tables pushed to the sides. Set up your projector and laptop in a way that most people are able to see what you are showing.

Make sure that you have any cultural items you need, such as a smudge bowl, medicines, and a sacred item to use in the talking circle.
Time

1 hour 25 minutes

Resources

- Resource 1-1: [Powerpoint] Youth Involvement in Reconciliation
- Resource 1-2: [Handout] The Touchstones of Hope
- Resource 1-3: [Handout] The Non-Discrimination Touchstone
- Resource 1-4: [Exercise] Making Plans for Getting Involved
- Resource 1-5: [Handout] Strategies for Building Relationships
- Enough copies of *A Youth’s Guide to Improving Child Welfare for Indigenous Peoples*

Suggested readings/websites

- Aboriginal Healing Foundation website: [www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sample Agenda for Unit 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>Sharing circle/ice breaker (depends on size of the group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Writing exercise and discussion working in pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Sharing ideas/brainstorm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Take a short break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 min</td>
<td>TOTAL TIME</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**WHAT TO DO**

1. Set up the room for the day in the way that you feel will work best.
2. If you’re using an ice breaker or a sharing circle, do it with the group according to the instructions.
   **Note:** Try to use only 10 to 15 minutes for this as you have a lot of other things to cover in this unit.
3. After the ice breaker or circle is complete, tell the youth that for the next hour and 15 minutes, you’ll be doing different activities to explore:
   - Why youth need to be involved in reconciliation
   - All of the Touchstones of hope, with emphasis on the non-discrimination touchstone
   - How to make plans for getting involved
   - Strategies for building relationships
4. Explain that you’ll first explore the topic of why youth need to get involved in reconciliation.
   **Note:** If youth took module one, this is a review so keep it short and sweet. If they have not taken module one then you can spend more time on it.
5. Hand out the following resources:
   - **Resource 1-1: The Touchstones of Hope (Page 16)**
   - **Resource 1-2: The Non-Discrimination Touchstone (Page 17).**
6. Ask different people to volunteer to read a few sentences out loud.
7. Next pass out **resource 1-3: Making Plans for Getting Involved (Page 18).**
8. Ask your peers to take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the exercise.
   Tell them that you want them to think about and discuss what types of ways they would like to get involved in improving child welfare.
9. Pay attention to the clock so that you can tell youth when their 5 to 10 minutes is complete.
10. Ask youth to share some of their preferred actions, especially their original ideas.
11. Write down the answers on a chalk board or whatever else so that youth can see what everyone is thinking about—this helps them identify who they want to build relationships with.
Resource 2-3: Using Touchstones to Return our Knowledge to Child Welfare Systems

Practice using the touchstones to help return Indigenous knowledge to the child welfare system. Think about each touchstone in the following Medicine Wheel. Write some ways in which you could use each one to return knowledge to the child welfare system. Be creative!