



Witness Blanket



Teacher Guide

Pathways of Reconciliation

Pathways of Reconciliation

All Canadians play a role in reconciliation, whether they know it or not. This final set of lessons is designed to help students and teachers identify where they are on the path of reconciliation.

Acts of reconciliation will look different for everyone. We must recognize that reconciliation is not a destination but a journey. Teachers are simultaneously learners and facilitators, and can use their own growth as a model for their students. Teachers should be asking themselves and their students:

How can I contribute to reconciliation through my thoughts and actions?

Reconciliation lessons

These lessons provide an opportunity for students to respond to the *Witness Blanket* using art and could include connecting with local Indigenous artists. It also provides an opportunity to strengthen the relationship that was initiated by connecting with members of local Indigenous communities in the previous lesson.

The “Personal action: Reconciliation and me” lesson below uses art to honour the work that Carey Newman did in creating the *Witness Blanket*. It is one of many ways teachers can empower students to express their plans for action.

Collective action: Land acknowledgement

A land acknowledgement should not be a frozen text. It should reflect individual or group knowledge of Indigenous peoples in the area. It is an act of reconciliation and as such it should grow and change to reflect a person’s journey on the path of reconciliation.

Objectives

- Students will examine and rewrite the land acknowledgement for their class.

Activate

1. Present students with the challenge of writing a land acknowledgement for your community.
2. Review the land acknowledgement used by an organization in your area.
3. Share and discuss the template that students will use to write their own land acknowledgement:
 - a. Our school is located on the ancestral lands of **(insert Indigenous peoples)**. I have benefitted from being on this land because **(insert something you like about where you live)**. Indigenous peoples have had to survive **(insert something learned in the classroom about the impacts of colonization)**. Because of this, I will **(insert commitment to action)**.

Learn and discuss

Depending on the age and maturity of the students, teachers can choose to create their land acknowledgement as a class or independently.

1. Identify where you are located, the Indigenous name for your community, the Indigenous peoples whose traditional territory you are on and whether treaties apply to the territory.
 - a. [Native Land Digital](#) identifies traditional territories and languages of Indigenous peoples globally.
 - b. The Government of Canada's [Geo-viewer](#) site identifies Indigenous peoples and lands in Canada.
2. Ask students to reflect on ways that Indigenous peoples continue to have their rights and necessities denied in your region. Consider things like fishing and hunting rights, access to safe drinking water, or healthcare, the presence of schools close to home, or the impact on their lands by mines, pipelines, railways or other projects.
 - a. Encourage students to consider what they learned from the *Witness Blanket* and from their connections with Indigenous communities.
3. Ask students to reflect on their commitment to healing and action.
 - a. Encourage students to consider how they can take action in ways that connect with their interests.

Reflect and share

1. Using the reflection wall shapes, ask students to write out their land acknowledgement.
2. Before adding it to the reflection wall gather in a talking circle to share land acknowledgements.
 - a. Depending on your learners, you may want to share ideas and build consensus on the creation of a single classroom land acknowledgement.
3. Add land acknowledgements to the reflection wall.
4. Find a way to share the class and/or personal land acknowledgements, either as part of school announcements, as a morning ritual in class, as an opening to a school event, or in some other public forum.

Personal action: Reconciliation and me

Goal

Students will create a plan to take action for reconciliation and share their work.

Objectives

- To review acts of reconciliation,
- To develop and implement a way to take action for reconciliation in the school or elsewhere.
- To use art to demonstrate learning, including music, visual arts, drama, dance or creative writing.

Early years (Kindergarten-Grade 4)

Through their experiences with the *Witness Blanket*, connecting with Indigenous communities and cultures, and writing a land acknowledgement, students should recognize they are already taking action on the journey of reconciliation.

As a final element to their exploration of the *Witness Blanket*, students may want to respond to their learning with art. This could include creating something about what they learned to present as a gift for their guest speaker.

Depending on the age and maturity of students, teachers may want to follow elements of the inquiry-based reconciliation plan for middle and senior year students.

Middle and senior years (Grades 5-12)

Inquiry question

How will I contribute to reconciliation through my thoughts and actions?

Activate

1. Ask students to identify several potential acts of reconciliation.
 - a. Searching “reconciliation 150” or “reconciliation acts” is a good starting point to generate ideas.

Learn and discuss

1. Discuss with students how Carey Newman's work to create the *Witness Blanket* was a way to share residential school Survivors' experiences and an act of reconciliation.
2. Ask students to consider these questions:
 - a. What are some small steps that I can do in my life?
 - b. What are some steps we can take in our school or community?
 - c. How can we share what we've learned about residential schools and make a commitment to reconciliation?
3. Reflection

Using the reflection wall, journaling or a talking circle, ask students to share their ideas for acts of reconciliation and their thoughts about making them a part of daily school life.

Reconciliation project ideas

Posters for reconciliation

Students will create posters for reconciliation, where they share their learning and reflections with others.

Student-led event

Students will plan and organize an event for the school and/or community where they will share their learning and inform others about residential schools.

Encourage students to share their personal land acknowledgements or share your class land acknowledgement at the start of the event.

Student showcase

Students will create plans for individual or small group acts of reconciliation. Students will share what they did with others as a part of a showcase to encourage and inspire others to act for reconciliation.

Encourage students to share their personal land acknowledgements or share your class land acknowledgement at the start of the gathering.

Arts-based action and showcase

An arts-based response to the *Witness Blanket* is a powerful way for students to connect with and respond to their learning.

1. Start by asking students to think about the following questions:
 - a. What kinds of art do I/we like to create?
 - b. What is the reconciliation action that I/we will focus on?
 - c. How will we share that idea?
2. Let the students know that they have until the end of class to draft an idea and a few classes to complete the project.
3. Set a time for students to showcase their work.

Sample student plan:

Name(s):

I/We like to: Dance/visual arts/drama/music/writing/other

Reconciliation action: I/we commit to _____ (action) because _____

Draft artistic idea: We will create a skit/song/poster/display/poem/dance to express our commitments to reconciliation.

Evaluation

[Appendix A](#) provides a rubric for evaluating students. Self-assessment is also an important part of this process and focus should be placed on a student's progress on the path of reconciliation, and not only on their results.

Closing reflection

At the completion of the project, gather students for a talking circle to reflect on their experience of the *Witness Blanket*.