

# Truth and Reconciliation in your Classroom

## Authors

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## Description

This short and very accessible article addresses key principles and tools for addressing Indigenous content in the K-12 classroom.

## Salient Points/Insights

Teachers have a vital role to play in fostering Truth and Reconciliation in Canadian classrooms, but for the most part they have little first-hand cultural sharing experience with Indigenous people. Many are feeling neither prepared nor confident at the prospect of incorporating Indigenous content in their K-12 classes.

One key principle emphasized in the article is "to work *with* Indigenous people, families, and communities, rather than continuing to work in a system that speaks *for* Indigenous people, families and communities – that is, don't do *for*, do *with*." The author describes steps that teachers can take to avoid cultural appropriation (e.g., when giving examples in class, make sure that Indigenous people are presented appropriately; do not use or disrespect sacred objects; do not demonstrate their culture). They advocate an inquiry approach, where teachers become co-learners along with their students. They encourage teachers/learners to begin the inquiry with a focus on the significance of the land where their students study and play; that is, to use stories of the land where the school is located to explore with their learners the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and the necessity of reconciliation.

The authors list a few suggestions for fostering reconciliation in the classroom. First, ensure that Indigenous people are speaking for themselves, whether that be through inviting local Indigenous people into the classroom, or using vetted videos. Second, focus on the resilience and pride of the Indigenous peoples before focusing on the cultural genocide of residential schools. Third, learn about contemporary Indigenous people.

The authors suggest a variety of resources, as well as participation in courses, Indigenous events, and connecting with Elders and knowledge keepers. Teachers should not wait to become experts before they can teach about Indigenous subject areas. Most crucial is their willingness, humility and, integrity to teach.

## Questions for reflection

As you examine this webpage, consider the following questions:

- The authors mentioned the importance of the land when exploring the relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. How might you engage your learners in connecting with the land in the context of reconciliation?
- Scroll to the section titled "When you are vetting resources, look for these four things." The authors suggest examining potential resources to ensure they

portray Indigenous people in a whole-person manner, prioritizing Indigenous authors, checking authors' credentials, selecting resources that are connected with the learners' context, and incorporating Indigenous content in a variety of subjects. Vet the Indigenous content you've used in your classes in light of that list.

- One emphasis that the authors mentioned when teaching Indigenous subject areas in your classroom is teachers' preparedness. What steps have you taken to prepare yourself to address Indigenous content in your classes? What else could you do?

### **Keywords**

*learning disabilities, dyslexia, interventions, differentiated instruction, individualized instruction, mainstream schools*

### **Reference**

Freeman, K., McDonald, S., & Morcom, L. (2018). Truth and reconciliation in your classroom. *EdCan Network Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/truth-reconciliation-classroom/>