

# Lesson Plan: Beyond the Orange Shirt Story by Phyllis Webstad

Grade 8-12

## **Calls to Action:** Number 63

We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:

- I. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- II. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- III. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
- IV. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

**First Peoples Principles of Learning:** Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place). Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge. Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

## **Connections to Secondary Curriculum:**

- Social Studies
- History
- English Language Arts
- English First Peoples
- Science
- Foods

## **Vocabulary:**

- truth
- residential schools
- traditional knowledge keepers
- oral traditions
- intergenerational trauma
- intergenerational survivor

## **Possible lesson structures:**

- Different students in reading circles or lit circles for each story.
- Compare and contrast different stories.
- Tableaux to incorporate storytelling.

## **Big Ideas:**

- This book is about residential school Intergenerational Survivors in Phyllis Webstad's family going back to her great-grandmother and forward to her grandchildren. This book includes introductions to each family member, quotes and stories from family members,

and personal photos. While a few members remember some positive experiences, most family members' experiences were traumatic.

### Introduction:

- Explain that feeling some type of discomfort is expected and natural for this unit and its subject matter. Students should be encouraged to express discomfort and any need to reflect on or take a break from content.
- Ask students if they can think of examples of family stories that have been shared with them. How would they feel if they didn't have any connection with their family's history? Would they know who they were without those family connections? Would they be the same person without them? **Reminder to tread carefully in this discussion and check in with your students, especially new immigrants, refugees, and adopted or foster kids who may not have connections with their families.**

### Activities:

- Explore the history of residential schools with nonfiction resources. Ask if this information reflects the experiences of the indigenous communities in an authentic way.
  - Research residential schools in your community or your chosen community. What years did they operate? Find a story from a former student. Research the demographics of the school population in terms of which nations students came from surrounding the residential school (understanding that much of this information is incomplete or lost).
- Read chapters from this book to have students learn about the personal experiences indigenous individuals had surviving residential schools.
  - Compare and contrast several stories to see if their experiences were similar.
- Discuss the effects of losing indigenous language and knowledge on indigenous culture and traditions.
  - Resource: [firstvoices.com](http://firstvoices.com) -to learn indigenous languages.
  - Look at why languages are so important. Speak to language then look at language being ripped away. Indigenous peoples lost their agency and didn't have their traditional stories to return to.
- Discuss the role of knowledge keepers and how important information is lost between generations when they are not allowed to share their stories and culture.
  - Use the example of fishing and the pictures on pages 91-92. Research the dip netting method of fishing. What are they fishing for? Describe the net being used thinking of how it would have been made prior to modern equipment. Describe the fishing process, as if you had to read an explanation and then try to catch a fish without a guide to help you.
- Look at how indigenous people view everyone as part of the immediate family. There is some trauma with family issues, so be cautious. When talking about family it can be a rough experience for some. There is blood family, but also the family that you make with the community. Then link it back to how all of that was taken away. They were not allowed to speak their language and were punished if they did.

- Read pages 39-57. Compare methods of punishment in your family's history. How do methods or punishments your parents received for misdeeds differ from punishments that are currently used today?
- Tie in Truth & Reconciliation with healing.
  - Look at the [Kuei: My Friend](#), a book of letters by Deni Ellis Béchard & Natasha Kanapé Fontaine. Explore different literary formats: oral narrative, written narratives, letter writing, etc.
  - Do an inquiry on what Truth & Reconciliation is. Your federal government decided on the current process. Do you think it sufficiently addresses indigenous issues?
- Self-reflection: Do I think any differently now about residential schools or indigenous people? Have a conversation about why indigenous people don't just "get over it". What could you say or do?

**Extensions:**

- Bring in residential school or indigenous speakers, or go on a field trip. The closest residential school to Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows is [St. Mary's Indian Residential School](#) in Mission. Another residential school was located in North Vancouver called [St. Paul's Indian Residential School](#). Consider the perspective of the speaker. Give them a consumable gift when they come, or share some food. AbEd teachers can be a good connection for speakers.
- Jessica Knott (a Foods teacher) has knowledge about Wapito, a root vegetable that grows in swampy areas. Katzie First Nation lost knowledge of how to grow it. Allison Garneau may be another good resource.

Created during several Professional Development sessions led by Devika Chudy from the MRTA Social Justice Committee, 2022-2023.