

Lesson Plan: Speaking Our Truth by Monique Gray Smith

Grade 7-12

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 involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

Connections to Secondary Curriculum:

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

Vocabulary:

- truth
- misappropriation of culture
- elders
- traditional knowledge keepers
- oral traditions
- First Peoples
- colonization
- genocide
- intergenerational trauma
- intergenerational survivor

Big Ideas: Honouring and respecting those that speak their own truth. Sharing knowledge through traditions and stories. Indigenous life before and after colonization. The effects of systematic racism on the indigenous community and the strategies they used to cope with the trauma. **This is a wonderful resource and may take much longer than a week to thoroughly complete discussions and projects on these topics. It can very easily be extended into an entire unit.**

Introduction:

- Start with asking about speaking your own truth. What does that mean? Who's allowed to do it?
- Discuss how indigenous stories have been told by other, frequently non-indigenous, people. What is authentic and what is the misappropriation of culture/truth/literature?
- Lots of books out there tell indigenous legends, stealing away the agency of these First Peoples. How do we figure out what is authentic and what is not indigenous?
- Is there a shared truth? Explore the idea that people with different perspectives and cultures, often share similar experiences. Look at understanding the other person's view.
- Read the section Knowing the Truth, p. 28-29.

Activities:

- Read the section The Seven Sacred Teachings p. 22.
 - Discuss the idea that everyone is a knowledge keeper. Elders teach with spoken word (oral traditions) and shared lessons (they weren't necessarily there or did it themselves). Knowledge is shared as stories and that's what we refer to.
- Read the sections Pre-Contact, The Historical Journey, The Residential Schools, The Children Who Never Came Home, Effects on Families p.30-68.
 - Compare and contrast what indigenous life was like before colonization and after.
 - What do you think were the consequences of the loss of culture and language?
 - Review some of the Reflection questions in this section and have students choose one to write a journal response.
 - How would you feel if you were told you could no longer speak your own language?
 - How do you think it would feel to be referred to by a number instead of your name?
- Read the section Ripple Effect, p. 70-76.
 - Discuss intergenerational trauma and survivors. Explore how residential schools and other atrocities committed against indigenous peoples led to the fracturing of self-identity, families, and communities. In particular, how it affected parenting and addictions.

Extension Activities:

- Tie in 8th Fire. Look at Canadian history from a First Nations perspective.
- Videos:
 - 8th Fire Wab Kinew 500 Years in 2 Minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7LY-fXzhZI>
 - 8th Fire - Episode 1 - Indigenous In The City https://youtu.be/H19_cXhjMY
 - 8th Fire - Episode 2 - It's Time <https://youtu.be/xMmEcZa0ZQM>
 - 8th Fire - Episode 3 - Whose Land Is It Anyway? <https://youtu.be/ROOyjGCxhys>
 - 8th Fire - Episode 4 - At The Crossroads <https://youtu.be/O1PIGOsaer0>

Links:

[Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation Teacher's Resource Guide](#) by Tasha Henry
[Speaking Our Truth: A journey towards reconciliation in the classroom](#) by Lauren-Rose Stunell
[Speaking Our Truth](#) -lessons by Teaching Books

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