Stolen Lives
Two-Week Unit Outline

Introduction

Preparing for This Unit

This unit outline, based on the resource *Stolen Lives: The Indigenous Peoples of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools*, introduces indigenous identity and traces the ways in which it was eroded by government policies and institutions. These lessons will give students an understanding of the choices individuals, groups, and the Canadian government made that contributed to genocide.

Students will come to this history from a variety of perspectives. Some students may be members of churches that participated in the residential school program, while others may be related to individuals who were targeted. Therefore, for many, this will be a difficult history to learn about. Because students will have a range of emotional responses, it is crucial to take steps to create a safe and reflective classroom community. Review the eight components of a reflective classroom and consider creating a classroom contract to help students approach this history with courage and lay the groundwork for open and honest conversations that are sometimes uncomfortable but allow us to grow.

As you prepare to teach the unit, read the Historical Background section of *Stolen Lives*, which provides an excellent foundation for understanding this history and will help you guide students through these lessons and answer their questions. We also recommend that you read the introduction to each chapter, which provides specific context for the readings that follow. You will also find essential questions for each chapter there. These overarching questions are helpful as journal prompts and discussion topics for the classroom.

Throughout this unit outline, you will find links to resources that demonstrate how to foster a reflective classroom community and how to support students as they encounter the emotionally challenging history of the Indian Residential School System.

Each row in the charts below corresponds roughly to one day of instruction time. Since schedules, class period length, and the needs of individual classes and students vary, teachers will likely need to make adjustments to this plan to best suit their needs and circumstances.

www.facinghistory.org/stolen-lives-two-week
**Essential Questions**

- What choices did individuals, groups, and the Canadian government make throughout the history of the Indian Residential School System?
- How did these choices contribute to the creation of the Indian Residential School System?
- How can we use this history and its legacy to mobilize Canadians to participate in meaningful reconciliation?

**Ontario Curriculum Expectations**

**B2.5:** Describe attitudes towards and significant actions affecting ethnocultural minority groups in Canada during this period (e.g., residential schools, restrictions imposed by the Indian Act), and explain their impact.

**E2.3:** Identify some key developments and issues that have affected the relationship between the federal/provincial governments and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples since 1982 (e.g., the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada), and analyse them from various perspectives.

**E3.3:** Assess the significance of public acknowledgements and/or commemoration in Canada of past human tragedies and human rights violations, both domestic and international (e.g., residential schools).
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| 1. A Glimpse into Indigenous Identity | Reading: “I Lost My Talk”  
Reading: Culture, Stereotypes, and Identity  
Reading: Language, Names, and Individual Identity  
Reading: Words, Places, and Belonging  
Reading: Words Matter  
Reading: Language and Worldview  
Reading: Métis | Students analyze “I Lost My Talk” using the Big Paper strategy. The silent discussion focuses on the following question:  
*What questions do you have about this poem? What connections can you make to this poem?*  
The class reads aloud Culture, Stereotypes, and Identity, examining the factors that shape indigenous youth identity. Then students create mind maps in their journals to capture their responses to the following questions:  
- What similarities and differences do you notice about the forces that shape indigenous identities and what shapes your identity?  
- What does this reading reveal about the importance of accessing one’s culture and identity?  
Students then explore the perspectives on identity of a variety of Indigenous Peoples. Place students in five groups and give each group one of the remaining five readings in the materials list. (Words, Places, and Belonging can be split between two groups). Each group will record three to four headlines or hashtags on sticky notes to capture the main ideas about identity from their reading.  
Then, as a whole class, students will use the sticky notes their groups created to make an identity chart for Indigenous Peoples.  
End the session with a class discussion or journal writing based on the following prompt:  
*What does this identity chart reveal to you about language and identity? How does this identity chart add to your understanding of Rita Joe’s poem “I Lost My Talk”?*  
| Before having a silent conversation using Rita Joe’s poem “I Lost My Talk”, be sure to first read it aloud as a whole class. This poem is about silencing voices, so it is particularly important to first give voice to the poem.  
The identity chart you create for Indigenous Peoples could be posted on the wall and kept on the wall for the duration of the unit. This will give students a visual reminder of what was lost at the residential schools.  
Chapter 1 Language and Identity Introduction |
| 2. Stereotypes and Membership | Reading: “I’m Not the Indian You Had in Mind”  
Reading: The Danger of a Single Story  
Reading: The Idea of the “Indian” | Students read “I’m Not the Indian You Had in Mind” and The Danger of a Single Story. Then they discuss the readings using the Save the Last Word for Me strategy. Students then read together The Idea of the “Indian” and respond to connection questions 1 and 2 in their journals.  
Finish the lesson with a class discussion about the following question:  
*How can we combat stereotypes?*  
<p>| Caution students that there are offensive and racist words in The Idea of the “Indian”. Before teaching this lesson, review the Note on Language in the opening pages of Stolen Lives. Also consider telling students in advance that they will encounter offensive language in the reading, and review the class contract to help guide their responses to it. |</p>
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| **3. Membership** | Reading: *They Have Stolen Our Lands*  
Video: Genetics, Eugenics, and Ethics  
Reading: *Race Theory* | Students read *They Have Stolen our Lands* and use the text to create a found poem.  
The class then watches the video *Genetics, Eugenics, and Ethics* and/or reads *Race Theory*. While watching, they should note one thing they find surprising, one thing they find interesting, and one thing they find troubling about what they learned. Give students some time to reflect in journals on the following questions:  
- How might this way of thinking have helped make the establishment of the Indian Residential School System possible?  
- Imagine the chiefs in a conversation with Morton, or hearing the ideas in the video. How would the chiefs respond to the video and/or reading? Use the Think, Pair, Share strategy to have students discuss their responses. | Consider introducing the concept of universe of obligation during this lesson. Students can diagram their own universes of obligation (using this handout) and then, over the next two lessons, think about who was in Canada’s universe of obligation. |
| **4. Membership: Social & Legal Consequences of Institutions** | Reading: Chapter 3 Historical Background (The Indian Act)  
Reading: *Killing the Indian in the Child*  
Reading: *The Role of the Churches* | Students read “The Indian Act” section of the Chapter 3 Historical Background and take notes using the 3-2-1 teaching strategy.  
Students then use the Reader’s Theater strategy to perform excerpts from the readings *Killing the Indian in the Child* and *The Role of the Churches*.  
Debrief the activity by leading a class discussion in response to this question:  
*What are the implications of institutionalized racism? How did the passages we used for the Reader’s Theater help highlight these implications?* | For additional historical context, teachers and students can review the Stolen Lives timeline. |
### 5. Residential School Survivor Testimony

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| 5. Residential School Survivor Testimony | Reading: Parental Dilemmas Reading: “The Welcome” Reading: First Days Reading: Curriculum Reading: Language Loss Reading: Schedule and Discipline Reading: Punishment and Abuse Reading: Resistance Handout: Pedagogical Triangle | The class reads aloud *Parental Dilemmas* and then discusses the following question: *What forces influenced the willingness of Fontaine’s mother to have him attend one of the residential schools?* Students read and discuss the following readings using the Jigsaw strategy: *The Welcome, First Days, Curriculum, Language Loss, Schedule and Discipline, Punishment and Abuse.* In their initial groups, students use the Pedagogical Triangle model as a graphic organizer to capture their responses to the following questions:  
- What is new, significant, and/or troubling?  
- What ethical/moral questions do these viewpoints raise?  
- What emotions do these sources provoke?  
- What tools do people need in order to heal as well as to advocate for reconciliation for themselves and others? They share their triangles in their second group. Students then read *Resistance.* Lead a brief class discussion centered on the connection questions. | These readings can be emotionally challenging. Consider ending this lesson by having students complete exit cards to give you a sense of how they are responding to this content. On their exit cards, students can complete the following sentences:  
One important thing I learned today was . . .  
One thing that gave me some difficulty was . . .  
One thing I would like to know more about is . . . |

### 6. Apologies

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| 6. Apologies | Reading: The Churches Apologize Reading: The Government Apologizes Reading: Are Apologies Enough? | Begin by having students respond to the following question in their journals:  
*Think of a time when you were wronged or you wronged someone and an apology was made. Was it a good apology? If so, why? If not, why not? Use the Think, Pair, Share strategy to start a class discussion, and then, as a class, create criteria for a good apology.* Students will then use those criteria to evaluate the apologies described in the readings *The Churches Apologize* and *The Government Apologizes.* You might divide the class in half, assigning one reading to each half. Or you might have all students work in small groups to read and analyze *The Churches Apologize* and then have the whole class analyze *The Government Apologizes* together. Finally, students will read *Are Apologies Enough?* and, in their journals, respond to this question: *What can an apology accomplish as a means of moving toward justice and reconciliation? What else needs to happen?* | Teachers may consider watching the government apology online while also using the text. As an extension, consider leading a class discussion or debate about connection question 4 following the reading *The Government Apologizes.* |
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| 7. Genocide, Part One | **Video:** Watcher of the Sky (Introduction)  
**Reading:** Genocide Introduction  
**Reading:** A Canadian Genocide in Search of a Name  
**Reading:** Cultural Genocide | Students watch the video on Raphael Lemkin’s establishment of the term genocide and then read *Genocide*. Using the Think, Pair, Share strategy, students respond to connection questions 1 and 3 following the reading.  
Students will take on the role of international lawyers and investigate whether the Indian Residential School System could be considered in compliance with the Genocide Convention. They will take a position in response to the following question:  
*Did the Indian Residential School System constitute genocide?*  
For the rest of this lesson, they will gather evidence and make their determination. In the next lesson, they will share their arguments in a debate.  
To begin the investigation, the whole class reads aloud the Introduction to Chapter 7, which includes an excerpt from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report.  
Students should then use the following readings to gather evidence and determine their position:  
- Article 2 of the Genocide Convention (in the reading *Genocide*)  
- *A Canadian Genocide in Search of a Name*  
- *Cultural Genocide* | Consider using the connection questions after each reading in this section. They provide excellent prompts for student research. |
## 8. Genocide, Part Two

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<td>Students will engage in a debate in the style of the Four Corners strategy to express and defend their conclusions about whether or not the Indian Residential School System should be classified as genocide. Use the following four statements to conduct the debate:</td>
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<td>- Only when the Indian Residential School System is labelled as genocide can true healing and reconciliation take place.</td>
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<td>- Labelling the Indian Residential School System as genocide is not necessary.</td>
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<td>- The destruction of a group’s way of life constitutes genocide.</td>
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<td>- The addition of the word cultural to genocide more accurately describes the Indian Residential School System than the word genocide alone.</td>
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<td>After the debate, students will write a paragraph, letter to the editor, or letter to their member of Parliament in which they answer the following question:</td>
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<td><em>To what extent was the Indian Residential School System an act of genocide?</em></td>
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Teachers may need to provide examples of letters to an editor and/or to a member of Parliament and other people that can effect change. It will be helpful for students to have specific names and addresses. You might also discuss in advance the responsibilities, power, and influence of the addressees in order to help guide what students ask them to do in response to their letter.

Teachers can use the Historical Background section, as well as the Introduction to Chapter 6: Truth and Reconciliation, to prepare the mini-lecture for this lesson.

## 9. Reconciliation and Choosing to Participate

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<td>The class watches Senator Murray Sinclair in the video <em>What Is Reconciliation?</em></td>
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<td>Then students write definitions (in their own words) for reconciliation in their journals. They should also write about what reconciliation looks like, feels like, and sounds like. Students share and discuss their definitions using the Think, Pair, Share strategy.</td>
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<td>The teacher now gives a mini-lecture on transitional justice and the creation and mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.</td>
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<td>The class will then investigate the following question: <em>How can reconciliation help a nation, individuals, and groups heal from past trauma?</em></td>
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<td>Using the Jigsaw strategy, students will work in small groups to analyze readings that explore different aspects of this question, and then they will meet in new groups to share their learning from their first group.</td>
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<td>Finally, pose this question:</td>
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<td><em>How can we participate in reconciliation?</em></td>
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<td>Students respond on exit cards. They will return to their responses at the beginning of the next lesson.</td>
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Teachers may want to discuss the concept of transitional justice as a way of introducing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Teachers can use the Historical Background section, as well as the Introduction to Chapter 6: Truth and Reconciliation, to prepare the mini-lecture for this lesson.

You also might ask students to become familiar with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. This document can help students select their Choosing to Participate projects.
10. Choosing to Participate

Students begin by discussing as a class the ideas from the previous lesson’s exit cards in response to this question:

*How can we participate in reconciliation?*

Then students break into smaller groups and brainstorm as many ideas as possible, eventually identifying one they would like to develop further. Once they have chosen a single idea to focus on, they should begin to flesh out the details of the project. Tell them to pay special attention to *audience, purpose, and format* when developing their project ideas.

Student groups then use class time to develop their plans as fully as possible. Depending on the idea, some groups may be able to actually create part of their response, some may be able to sketch or model their idea, and others may develop a written plan. Their plans should build on their learning from these lessons as well as the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action* document.

Finally, during this class period or at another time, students may share their projects through a *gallery walk.* The class might also host a Reconciliation Pavilion, a special display in the school showcasing their learning for staff and other students, perhaps introduced with a special event.

### Assessment

Senator Murray Sinclair, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission chairman, in his final remarks on the report in 2015, stated:

> This is not an Aboriginal [Indigenous] problem, this is a Canadian problem. Because at the same time that Aboriginal people were being demeaned in the schools and their culture and language were being taken away from them and they were being told that they were inferior, they were pagans, that they were heathens and savages and that they were unworthy of being respected — that very same message was being given to the non-Aboriginal children in the public schools as well.

- Why, according to Senator Sinclair, is this history both an Indigenous and a Canadian problem?
- How does the history you learned about in this unit support Senator Sinclair’s statement?
- What will you remember about this history and the specific voices you heard?
- How can you use what you learned to inform others and commemorate this difficult history?