

Steps to Understanding Truth and Reconciliation Activity Instructions

Age: Junior High (grades 5-8)

Objectives:

- Understanding of intergenerational impacts of residential schools achieved
- Understanding of residential schools in context of colonialism achieved
- Introduction to TRC of Canada provided
- Exploration of reconciliation and importance of learning from the past

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Puzzle Activity

Time: 10-15 minutes

Materials:

Clear tape

One puzzle printed for every 3-4 students

Instructions:

To prepare puzzles, print the following three images (may need to print multiple copies of images depending on group size), write one question on the back of each image, then cut up images on lines to create puzzle pieces. These are the questions to consider:

1. Do you think it is important for children to be able to grow up in a loving community? Why?
2. Do you think it is important for children to be able to learn about their own family's history and culture? Why?
3. Do you think it is important for countries to fix past mistakes, even if they happened many years ago?

Divide students into groups of three or four students. Hand out one puzzle to each group, as well as clear tape. Once they have pieced it together, tell them to flip over their image and discuss the question on the back of it. Allow the groups a few minutes to discuss the question within their own group.

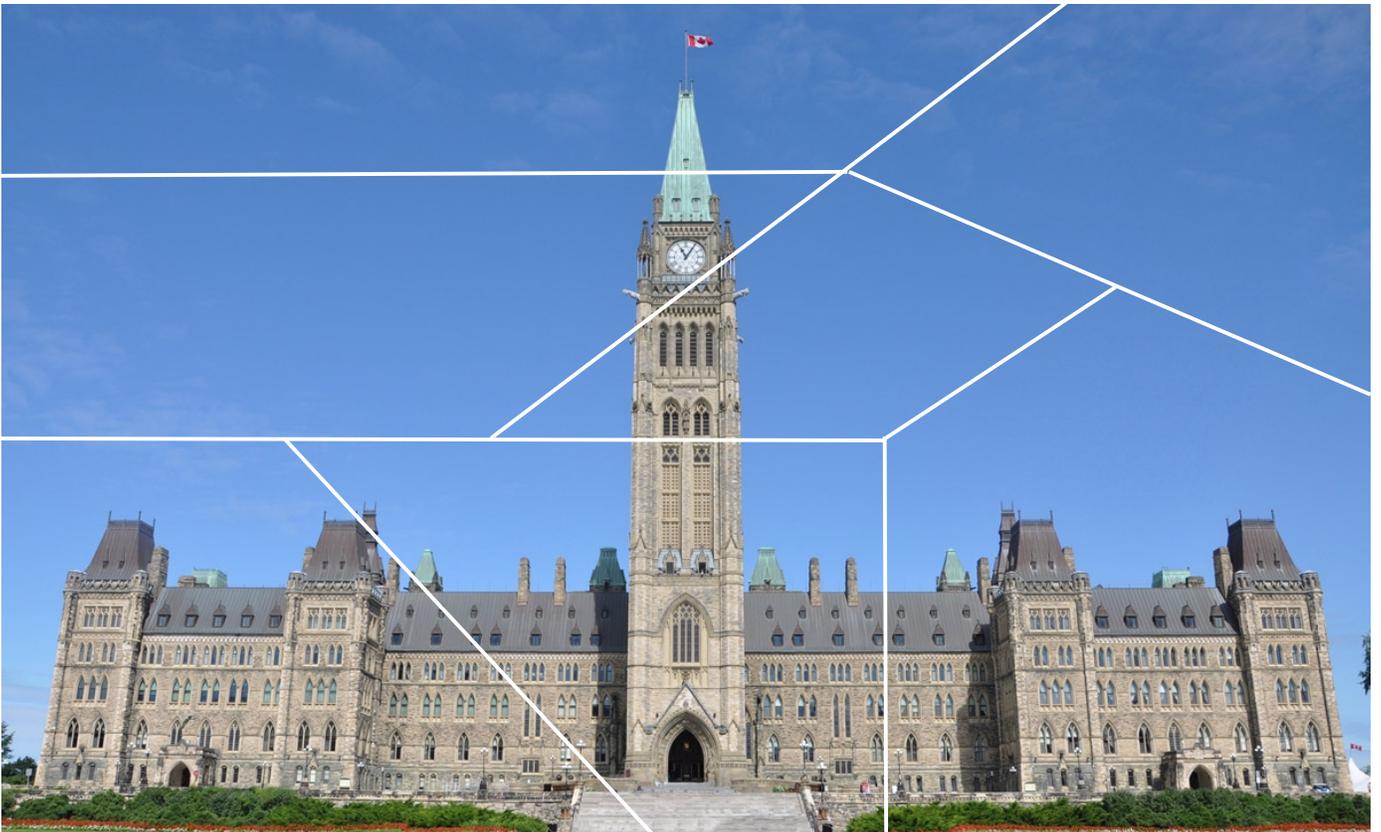
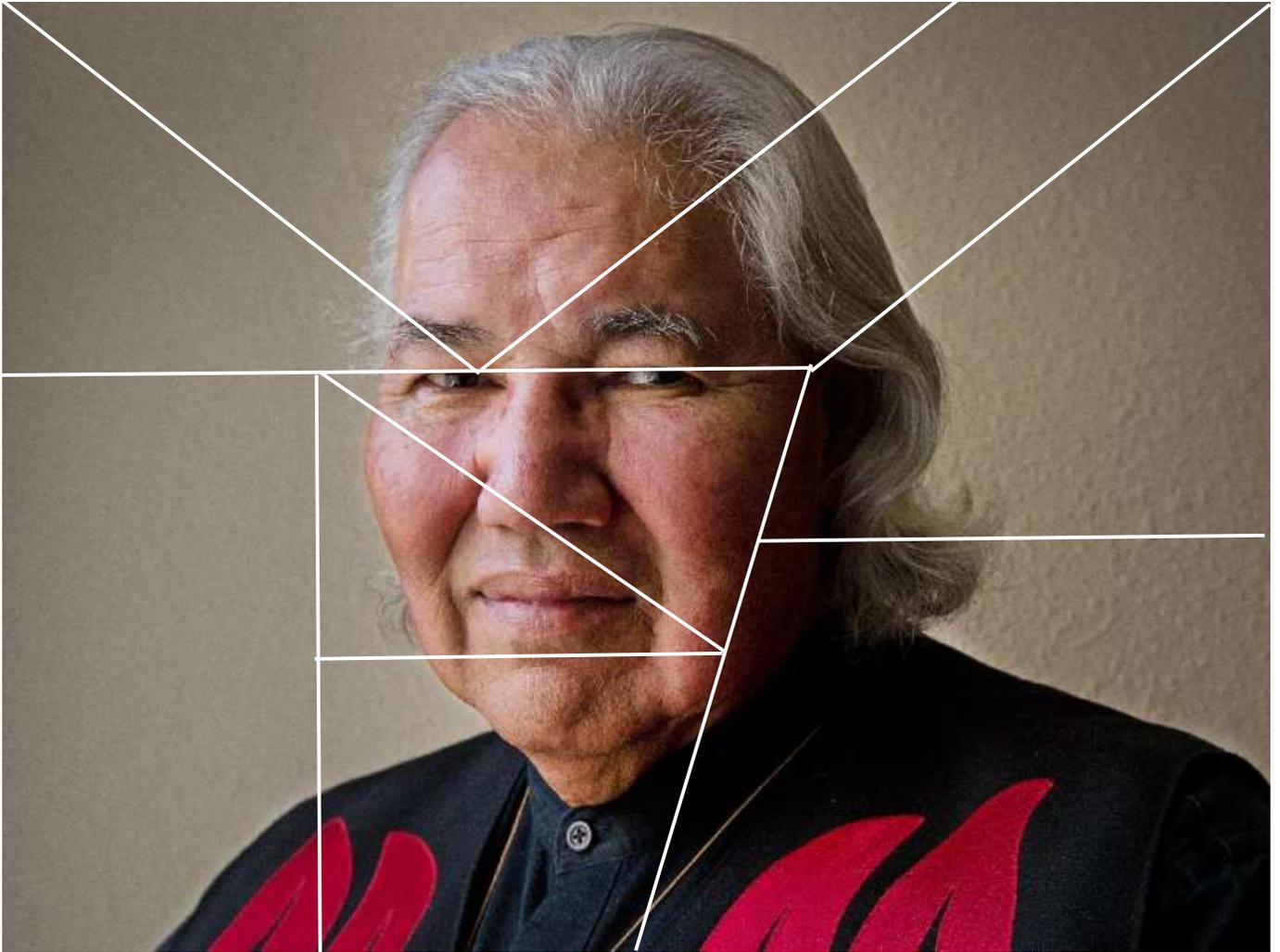
Ask each group to show the larger group their image, explain what it is (facilitator may need to assist with this), and tell the group the question and answer

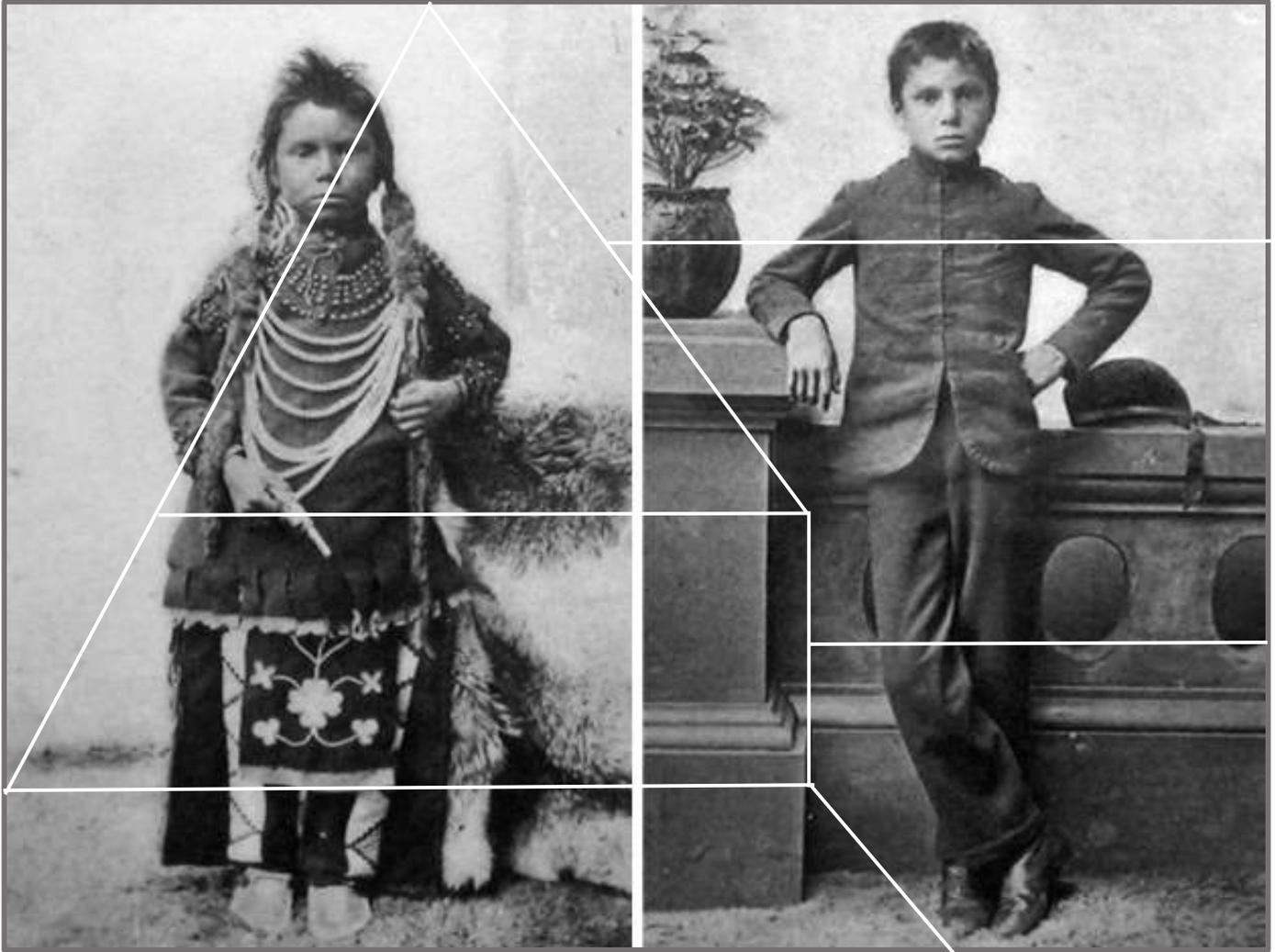
Debrief:

Explain that today we will be discussing residential schools and the impact that they had on individuals, families, and communities.

Explain each of the three pictures as the groups present.

1. Justice Murray Sinclair: he was the leader of something called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – we are going to discuss this later today
2. Parliament Hill in Ottawa: represents government in Canada. Today we are going to talk about actions by the government of Canada that have caused a lot of harm for Indigenous peoples
3. Before and after photo of Thomas Moore who was a student at Regina Indian Industrial School: we are going to talk about residential schools today





Impact of Residential Schools Activity

Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

Sheet with stories on it for each student (provided in student package)

Instructions:

Allow the students to read through the handouts that tell the stories of people who experienced residential schools

In same small groups as previous activity, ask them to discuss the questions on the slide

How did the experiences at residential schools affect how people felt about themselves and their personal identity?

In what ways did residential schools have a lasting effect on families and communities who might not have gone to residential school?

Back in the larger group, ask the groups to share what they discussed

Robert (Kamloops Residential School)

I look back on my own life and I can see how my experiences in the residential school affected me. The way I related to my children, I was distant. I couldn't express myself, I couldn't say "I love you" very well, couldn't hug them. Whenever they cried too much, I couldn't deal with that. Because I couldn't cry, I didn't know what crying was. I was brought up in the school, we were taught never to cry. When I was there, there was no affection between the supervisors and the children. There's only rules. So it's not like a home situation, you don't have the adult in your life saying to you "I care about you, I love you.

Barbara (St. Mary's Mission)

Although my dad didn't talk about his years at residential school, I think the things that he did or learned that affected my life was the feeling part, like saying I love you, or giving me that hug. I think if he hadn't gone there he would have those things but he didn't. So like myself he wasn't able to reach out and say I love you and I appreciate you. That is what really bothers me is we weren't able to do that or know how

to. Now that my grandchildren are around I am able to do that and it is a different story. I give them the love that I wasn't able to give to my children.

Debrief:

When we talk about Residential Schools, it is important to not just think about those who attended schools, but other people who were then impacted by them going to school. In Barbara's story, she wasn't the one who went to residential school, but she felt the impact in a really big way. Residential schools took so much away from those who attended schools, but also from the family who was left behind, and the future family of those who attended schools.

Creating our own inclusive stories

Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

Inclusive stories sheet for each student (provided in student package)

Instructions:

Explain that now we are each going to write our own inclusive story about Indigenous peoples in Canada, starting with the phrase "Canada is a place where..."

Leave the questions up on the slide and tell the students to consider these questions as they write their story on the sheet in their package.

If students need examples or help to get going, give a basic framework of what the start of your story might look like: *Canada is a place where the history of all people is understood. All people who have settled here want to learn about each other's history and treat each other with love and respect. In school, everybody's history is accurately included when we talk about the past, and everybody is considered when we look towards the future. Indigenous people do not experience racism from other people or from the government, and are able to practice and embrace their culture in the ways that they wish.*

Allow the students about 10 minutes to write their stories (more or less depending on how much time is available/what the students need)

When they are completed, ask them to get in groups of about 3 to tell their stories to each other and share the important parts of their story with a small group

Debrief:

Explain to the students that these are the kinds of stories that we should be working to create in Canada. The TRC allows us to hear a lot of stories that carry a lot of pain about Canada's past and present. We want to make sure there is never the need for a TRC again.

If there is time left at the end of the workshop or there are students who are done who don't have something to keep them occupied, start a game of telephone, encouraging them to think about how the stories we hear sometimes get twisted.