

From Pedagogy to Practice Inspiring Change

[MUSIC]

TEXT ON SCREEN: Inspiring Change

STUDENT: "On the First Day," by Rosanna Deerchild, topic -- residential schools.

NARRATOR: This class is studying poetry through inquiry-based learning. But there is something different about this lesson.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: For me, the point, really, of the lesson was to reiterate some of the topics and themes they've been studying with First Nation Metis and Inuit content.

NARRATOR: And the students in this grade eight core class know it. This knowledge has been embedded into the foundations of their daily learning. The perspectives have changed. As a result, they can now move towards a deeper understanding.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: To paraphrase Murray Sinclair a little bit, education leads to understanding, and understanding leads to reconciliation. So I think that's a very important piece. They need to learn about not just residential schools, other issues. This is the perfect age, I believe, to hook them into some of these things. So the response from the students has been overwhelming.

NARRATOR: And it shows. But not just with these students. All around the province, people of all ages are beginning to take greater interest in the truths of the past.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: How does that relate to residential schools?

JACK NIGRO: Indigenous history is our history. In past experiences that we have had as adults in the education system, it frankly has been missing. And I think the commitment that we want to make is that it won't be missing for this generation of students.

TEACHER: We're going to conduct a social experiment today, to help you better appreciate and understand the struggles that the students who attended this school had to face.

DAVID STEELE: We're aware of much more now, and I think there is a strong appetite and desire for us to address some of these issues. That won't happen without a well-educated community. So the starting point is for our educators to be aware and have a good understanding of the issues, and then for them to be able to provide students with opportunities to learn and gain an understanding of what needs to happen.

KEANNA: Getting educated on these topics can really help, because then we're learning about what's happening and everything, so then we have a better understanding of what we're trying to heal, and everything.

KEVIN REED: Something has happened in the last year or two. The issues have become clearer. They've become more widely known, and people are more open to learning about them.

JENNIFER OUSSOREN: Just with more and more talk about reconciliation, people feel like the change can happen in education, right? Like that's such a big, powerful motivator for teaching. Like, we can make changes here. We can change perspectives and we can change beliefs.

TAMMY HARDWICK: Creating that change is really going to move us forward in truth and reconciliation. So it's very important that we ensure that we highlight that, and students know what that means.

CHRISTY RADBOURNE: We really believe in our children. We're educating to be agents of change.

DAVID STEELE: I don't think that you can listen to the stories of indigenous people and not be affected as a person, and then feel the need to do something.

EMMIE: Kids can carry the traditions when they're older, and they can teach their families for generations, because you don't want to forget something like this. It's very important.

NARRATOR: There is momentum around First Nation Metis and Inuit education. And in its implementation, schools are embracing their role.

SHERYL MATTSON: When you hear the anthem being played, whether it's a trilingual or unilingual version of one of our indigenous languages, or whether you hear an acknowledgment of the territory you're on. When I'm seeing different authors and books being used, not just because they're part of the First Nations unit, or Social Studies unit, but because it's part of the regular integration to a Language Arts class. That, to me, is what we need to be doing, because it's not negating, omitting or limiting the knowledge that's here; it's actually holding it up as also being worthy of having a place within the educational system, which it does.

HEATHER GARDNER: It's amazing that we're able to bring culture into our schools now, whereas before it was frowned upon. And it's my generation and my children's generation that are now more acceptable to it. We have more open perspectives, and it's welcome here. It's a dream that our parents and grandparents never had.

MARY JANE FARRISH: It's our young people growing up, learning about the diversity of perspectives and identities that will be the change makers, and will be the agents for improvement.

CARMAN TOZER: Walking that good path, the treating students with respect, embracing and being inclusive to all groups, not just indigenous people, I think those things work for everyone, including us. I do think that a little of that emphasis on Aboriginal people, indigenous people, is important, and will help those students that are indigenous within their classroom become more self-aware, but also to help the other students around them to have a greater understanding of what being indigenous in Canada is like.

VICTOR CHAPAIS: Nobody knows the value of an education than a person that doesn't have the education. There's so much potential the kids have today, so much opportunities that they have. There's so much out there, that I want them to feel comfortable in pursuing those opportunities, pursuing a better life.

ANIKA KUTHRIE: It's all going to, I think, end in a better education system. It's going to end in more well-rounded students, First Nation Metis and Inuit and non-First Nation Metis and Inuit. It's going to end in a more aware and cohesive relationship in society in Canada.

TEACHER: Just like that -- yep, perfect.

DAVID STEELE: I talked to some indigenous people. I've been impressed with their level of hope and belief that things can change, when at times things looked so complicated and so difficult, you wonder how we do move ahead. But their hopefulness, I think, has given me hope. And as I listen to some of our students today, they talked about being hopeful. And I think that if we have that hope, then we can accomplish a lot of things.

STUDENT: You need something that really hits you to actually understand what's going on and want to make a change.

NARRATOR: The impacts of curriculum reform around First Nation Metis and Inuit education are being felt around the province.

CHRISTINE JAMIESON: I think that the passion that the students have brought into the classroom has just been electric, when they come back and tell me that they're talking to their peers and their family and friends. And then also on occasion parents have come back to say that they're learning a lot through their students. It makes me feel very hopeful that reconciliation will move with our youth.

RAY LAKE: This generation, it's so funny, we're always trying to solve the problems that we made, thinking that the kids that we're teaching have the same problems. They have none of the hang-ups that we had. And I think that gives me great hope.

DEVON: These posts could benefit you in the long term. So for food, I think it would be a good trade.

DEVON: It's one of the most impactful things I think we can do, is the education. And that's what gives me hope, is the fact that we can do something to change what is going to happen.

JESSA: I want to be a nurse.

TEACHER: You're going to be a nurse?

Perfect. There we go!

JESSA: I think one of the only things we can do is make awareness. We can't change it, what happened. So we kind of have to change the future.

MOHAMMED: We can use them on these more, and make them have better lives.

MOHAMMED: By learning we can do something about it, because now we know what's happening. And if not me, other people. And if we just keep passing it on, everyone will know, and just by sharing it, it will spread the message.

ALEXANDER: It's a part of me. It's my culture. It's -- I don't know, it's just something inside of me that won't go away. I'm proud to be Aboriginal.

JONATHAN: It's good that we're studying to talk about it.

JONATHAN: I moved to Canada three years ago, and I'm not a citizen yet. I moved, actually, from Africa. And I can sort of relate to what the Aboriginals have been going through in Canada. We have to help them. If we can do that, we can start changing everything, you know. So it's little steps at a time. We can't change the world in a day, you know. We have to start now.

MEGHAN: We, the Metis, were important middle men in the fur trade.

MEGHAN: As students, we can actually make a bigger impact than a lot of people, because if we notice something, there's a lot more of us. We can bring awareness to it.

ESME: We are responsible for creating a better relationship as we move forward.

ESME: I'm very hopeful for the future. With knowledge comes people who are willing to make a change, and with education, our generation can move forward with the reconciliation, and move forward as a country in trying to better ourselves as individuals and as a society.

JACK NIGRO: This is going to happen one person, one school, one project at a time.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: I really feel for me, this is a passion. And I believe for the students it's the best possible thing I could be offering them. So I put blinders on and just move forward.

LUISA BOTELHO: I believe every day. I walk in my building believing every day that we can make a change.

ELDER: Okay, I'm going to tell you a story. A long time ago, there was a grandfather, and who had a son who was same age as you guys.

STUDENT: I think by far, this is my favourite one so far.

KEVIN REED: Your openness to the experience and your honesty about how you feel about it are really important. Thank you all for that. [INAUDIBLE]

STUDENT: Guys, we're right in the heart of it.

BOB BAXTER: [FOREIGN LANGUAGE]

STUDENTS: Yaay!

STUDENT: I don't know, it just helps me concentrate a little better when I'm outside.

[MUSIC]

TEXT ON SCREEN: From Pedagogy To Practice
www.edugains.ca/newsite/curriculum/elementaryresources/socialstudies.html