

From Pedagogy to Practice

Introduction: From Pedagogy to Practice

[MUSIC]

TEXT ON SCREEN: From Pedagogy to Practice

TEACHER: Brought some fabric for a dress or a skirt.

TEACHER: It helped us a lot.

NARRATOR: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission released 94 calls to action in June of 2015. Soon after, the Ontario Ministry of Education implemented new strategies, outlining the role that education plays in moving the relationship between Canada's First Nation Metis and Inuit communities, and the rest of Canada forward together.

It would be a call to action. To come to terms with a part of Canadian history that is often overlooked.

KEVIN REED: It's an area that most Canadians don't know very much about, and it's an area that affects every Canadian every day, even though they may not know it.

NARRATOR: The Canadian government's role in colonization has long been a controversial one, steeped in intergenerational trauma for Canada's First Nations Metis and Inuit people.

JENNIFER OUSSOREN: We see the impact of residential schools. From where I'm sitting as a principal, I see some of the problems that students come to school with, and it's a direct result of the history.

NARRATOR: And the role that education played in this history was often times the most damaging one.

RAY LAKE: The history of our education system is that we've tried to kill the Indian in the child, that we have targeted those children and tried to take away their culture.

JENNIFER OUSSOREN: There's still work to be done, for sure, in repairing a relationship between community and school.

RAY LAKE: I know that I'm a representative of a school system that has done some pretty terrible things. I know I'm a representative of a school system in which Aboriginal kids fail more than non-Aboriginal kids.

DAVID STEELE: They can become overwhelming, when you think of the difficulties that people faced, and the challenges that we have ahead. But I think the first step is understanding why we are where we're at right now, and then with that

understanding, and with being compassionate people, we can try to find a way forward.

NARRATOR: Now presented with a new opportunity to reconcile the past, Canada is moving to build new foundations and relationships with its First Nations Metis and Inuit communities. Some believe this movement can start from inside the education system.

ALVIN FIDDLER: I think that's the key piece. I think education is the only way we can achieve reconciliation in this -- not just in this province, but across the country.

TESA FIDDLER: Educators have a huge responsibility to repair those relationships with parents and children and grandparents and community. Education is what was the biggest tool of colonization.

ALVIN FIDDLER: A lot of the students, everyone at school, even at the university level, know very little about the First Nation history, with the relations between the First Nations people and government.

RAY LAKE: Just on an ethical, moral level, we need to right that wrong.

TAMMY HARDWICK: The big goal is that everyone has an understanding of the histories, the perspectives and the contemporary issues that impact indigenous peoples in the past and today.

KATHY MCCONNACHIE: Then we can learn to be more empathetic, more understanding. And we can also, I think, relate it to what the kids are going through now.

KEVIN REED: Public education has the potential to set a dialog going in Canada. And to participate in that dialog, you need to know something about Aboriginal issues.

TEACHER: Nice job!

NARRATOR: With the new policies being developed within school boards and at the Ministry of Education, greater access has been given to educators. Yet the question remains, how to start? And how to do it directly?

DARREN LENTZ: So if the water, if you can picture it going forward and the water running over the bottom --

ANIKA GUTHRIE: I hear a ton of teachers talk about they don't know enough, and that's not their area of expertise, and so they don't feel like they can do it in a good way. And so that fear stops them from even trying often.

MEGAN MAJOR: One of the challenges that I face is, I don't feel that I know enough information. I feel that sometimes I might be stepping on some of their toes, and I want to make sure that I am giving the right information.

MEGAN MAJOR: And the Wolf Clan, teaching is be kind to your family. Always --

EILIDH CHILDS: So my advice to new teachers would be not to worry about where you're starting, just to start.

RYAN ROY: Just try. Use the colleagues that you have. Use any contacts that you have, that you feel comfortable talking with.

MICHELLE TYMKIN: My advice would be to just sort of step outside of your box and find that courage to make those connections.

RAY LAKE: What the elders have told me over and over again is, as long as you do it with a good heart, don't worry so much about the protocol. Worry about the intent.

CHRISTY RADBOURNE: It's much worse to have not done anything at all than to have started on that journey.

RAY LAKE: Can you make a safe place in your classroom and talk about difficult things, and invite people who do have that voice?

TESA FIDDLER: We're very lucky today to have both Grant E. Fiddler and Chief Collins with us --

NARRATOR: And classrooms across the province now have a support system for finding those deep and diverse voices.

CHIEF COLLINS: Building that relationship and understanding each other is the only way to grow.

KEVIN REED: So most school boards now, I think, have First Nations Metis and Inuit consultants.

ALEXA MCKINNON: They will work hand-in-hand with teachers, with the student and with the community and help support with the teaching role.

TESA FIDDLER: I support teachers. I think that's one of my main roles.

ANIKA GUTHRIE: I support teachers.

TAMMY HARDWICK: I work to support teachers in schools.

HEATHER GARDNER: To help liaise and build a relationship between the school and the families.

NICOLE RICHMOND: The second level is, of course, supporting educators.

TAMMY HARDWICK: Some of the work that I might do is go in and do professional development.

TESA FIDDLER: I do a lot of professional development.

NICOLE RICHMOND: The work is about bringing our educators on board, because a lot of times our educators talk to me, or they talk to their peers, and they say, I really want to be able to do this. Help me. Show me how to do it.

ANIKA GUTHRIE: I think it's important to have a role like this, to support the teachers and the impact that that can have on all of those students.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: It was really valuable for our team of teachers to have those supports, because it helped to give us confidence to go into our classrooms and approach the material.

RYAN ROY: The material is sensitive material. You want to make sure you're doing it right. So it's nice to be able to have a person you can go to and talk to just about anything.

KEVIN REED: Yes, you may feel some apprehension. But there are lots of supports in your community and in your school boards to help you with this.

BOB BAXTER: Bonjour.

STUDENTS: Bonjour!

BOB BAXTER: Okay, my name is Bob Baxter, and --

NARRATOR: Along with school boards and widely available resources, First Nation Metis and Inuit education provides students and educators with something distinct to the learning experience.

BOB BAXTER: [FOREIGN LANGUAGE]

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: The most important learning that I've ever had is just listening to elders.

RAY LAKE: There is a deep and abiding kind of wisdom in Aboriginal culture that teaches you how to live with [INAUDIBLE]. That's valuable.

BOB BAXTER: Yep, we get wiser.

BOB BAXTER: If you teach a child to hate, he's going to hate. If you teach him to love, he's going to love. If you teach him the surroundings, he's going to cherish that.

DARREN LENTZ: It's an opportunity for the kids to hear the real story and build relationships. It's all about relationship-building.

KEVIN REED: If you feel challenged putting Aboriginal perspectives in your own mouth, don't do it. Get somebody else to do it for you. Bring in an elder or a community member to talk about it.

CHRISTY RADBOURNE: The community will really respond to just you reaching out, making those first steps.

DARREN LENTZ: Thanks, Don.

NARRATOR: Mind sets are changing in Canada. The issues surrounding First Nations Metis and Inuit people are more clear, and Canadians now more open than ever to learning about them. By integrating new perspectives, the potential for education to have large societal impacts is great.

JONATHAN: Education's the best way to actually do this. I'm really interested to see where this is going to go.

GREG ROGERS: If we can give students life experiences that are real, then the learning is going to be that much more powerful.

COLLEEN SHERIFF: And they're actually really seeing the benefits of it with the students. They're realizing that they've been missing something.

MOHAMMED: By learning, we can do something about it, because now we know what's happening, just by sharing it. It will spread.

VICTOR CHAPAIS: There's so much potential the kids have today, so much opportunities that they have. I want them to feel comfortable in pursuing those.

ARDEN: I think one thing is, we're talking about it. I know that I take the discussion home, and then I talk about it with my parents.

TIM: You're going to be that person in the future that knows that they haven't been treated well. So you're going to be the generation that fixes it.

NARRATOR: And so with the new generation of students, the steps towards reconciliation may be closer than originally thought.

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.

KEVIN REED: Reconciliation happens one conversation at a time. So the longer we do this, the more conversations are heard.

RAY LAKE: The thing we get to capitalize on as teachers is, every generation gets smarter than we were. So I think as a teacher, it's about giving your students the voice to forgive themselves and others. And they are ready to reconcile. And they've already done it in really profound ways.

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