

From Pedagogy to Practice The Learning Journey

[MUSIC]

TEXT ON SCREEN: The Learning Journey

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: I'm just going to bring this into the centre okay? So the reason it's okay for us to have this is because it was a European belt that was commissioned right? It's not a wampum belt exchanged between Indigenous nations so then it's okay for us to have it and to hold it. What is the substance of this chain? Do you remember?

STUDENT: It's like the lives, friendship, and how we're tied. And you said how the chain started to rust then eventually it broke.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: Good, so what is this? Silver right?

STUDENTS: Yeah.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: And what do you have to do to silver in order to keep it looking? Sued?

STUDENT: Polish it.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: You need to polish it right? So the idea was that they agreed that they would need to polish the chain of friendship. In your own relationships how do you take care of a relationship? How do you polish the chain? What do you do? Tim?

TIM: You got to see the person or see whenever you have a relationship you've got to interact with them very so often, like it can't be for years and years or else you lose that relationship or in this case the chain.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: Yes, you have to interact, you have to communicate. Good, Duncan?

NARRATOR: As part of an Ontario Education Policy Framework curriculum documents have been revised to embed First Nations, Metis, and Inuit perspectives and provide training in the implementation of the new curriculum. Many classrooms are already working collaboratively with their board and with their communities at large to adopt the new policies in hopes of changing the dialogue around First Nations, Metis, and Inuit history, culture, and ways of knowing.

ARDEN: You have to communicate with them and you have to listen to their side of the story, too.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: Listen, good, Chris?

CHRIS: You kind of have to--

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: I started to see a problem in what was happening in schools with Indigenous education so I started to get really interested in maybe making some change there and how we're approaching Indigenous education perspectives in our school. We sort of went on a learning journey for looking at the whole journey in Indigenous people on this land from pre-contact all the way to now. and so when they start to understand the past and when they start to understand what happened, and they start to understand the impact of the residential school system in the 60s, how does that impact a group of people? And then they start to understand why some of these problems exist.

STUDENT: They've been put in a situation that they didn't even ask to be put into the situation, they didn't do anything. They were just forced to live like this and they can't do anything.

NARRATOR: Perspectives are changing. Educators now have better access to the truths about the historical and contemporary issues brought forth by a clearer acknowledgement of what has happened in the past.

RYAN ROY: It started more for me when they did the Truth and Reconciliation and they had the commission. That's when we got to delve a little bit deeper into what was going on. The kids really generally speaking don't have any understanding about what happened with the residential school situation.

HEATHER GARDNER: It's important to reconcile what has happened in the past, especially to learn about the residential school system. It's an atrocity and act of genocide that happened so recently and I think people need to acknowledge that it happened.

JENNIFER OUSSOREN: We see the impact of residential schools. from where I'm sitting as the principal I see some of the problems that students come to school with and it's a direct result of the history whether that's high absenteeism, lack of parental support for education.

HEATHER GARDNER: There are some families that still feel that the education system is working against them, and there's still that awful R word that is being used, and that's racism.

DEBORAH ROSS: If people are educated and understand what happened, the true history then we might alleviate some of that racism.

LUISA BOTHELO: We need to do this, and we have been doing this for many years but I feel that we haven't been doing enough. And so we need to be able to go deeper in our learning and what we have to do again as settlers to be able to bring that truth foremost to the forefront of our communities.

BARBARA-ANN FELSCHOW: Knowing that truth today and learning the truth of today that they personally may not have learned in classrooms themselves as they came through the system, it's certainly not something that textbooks and resources have embraced in terms of the true version of the history of Canada.

KEVIN REED: It's an area that most Canadians don't know much about and it's an area that affects every Canadian every day even though they might not know it, and if you don't understand First Nations, Metis, and Inuit perspectives, and histories, and cultures you don't really understand how Canada operates and what it means to be Canadian. And you don't really understand what you're seeing. If you don't have some grasp of the history of Aboriginal Canadian relations you don't really know why that's happening.

NICOLE RICHMOND: We're really guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action but a lot of our teachers are aware that the TRC recommendations and calls to action are out there and they're really excited about how they can use that as a resource to bolster what they're already doing. So mandatory learning about residential schools and mandatory learning about Indigenous contributions to Canadian society is absolutely essential. So there's two real reasons. The first one is to insure that our First Nation learned and our Indigenous see themselves reflected in the curriculum and validated by what they're learning and then the second thing is it's a good public education function to teach our students about what our society is and the historical background and what it means to be living in Canada at this time in terms of this whole reconciliation process that's happening. How do we contribute to that?

TESA FIDDLER: Residential schools is pretty--it's something we need to talk about but I think that people are just really uncomfortable. They don't want to be too graphic. I'm like well, it happened to 4 and 5 year old children. I'm not sure how we can--kids have to know at some point that this happened, but that's always the fear. We don't want to give them the graphic details. Is it safe to talk about it? We have to talk about it 'cause it happened.

DAVID STEELE: They can become overwhelming when you think of the difficulties that people face and the challenges that we have ahead but I think the first step is understanding why we are where we're at right now. Then with that understanding and with being compassionate people we can try to find a way forward.

JENNIFER OUSSOREN: There is still work to be done for sure in repairing relationship between community and school. You can't get much worse than how it was and so school for a lot of people through the generations was something really negative and to be feared.

RAY LAKE: Just on an ethical, moral level we need to right that wrong and it's an easy wrong to right in the sense that we just need to listen and acknowledge that, that happened.

HEATHER GARDNER: Our people that went to those schools survived, or didn't survive and the resilience is the reason that we're here today.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: I think it's fundamentally important to do this in Ontario and in Canadian classrooms. I think education was used as a tool of oppression against First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people and now we need to use that as a tool for reconciliation.

ALVIN FIDDLER: I think that's the key piece. I think education is the only way we can achieve reconciliation not just in this province but across the country. That all of us need to know the history of this country and that means revising our curriculums in all our schools to include all these pieces including residential schools and including treaties.

STUDENT: He is demanding an urgent meeting with Justin Trudeau and--

NARRATOR: Within the grasp of classrooms across the province is a new and greater understanding of Canadian history. For those educators already embedded in the material overcoming the challenge of how to approach this learning was often the first step.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: I planned a little bit with someone on the equity team at the board and also our First Nations, Metis, Inuit consultant Tammy at the board. So we had a chance to talk and plan a little bit. 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 from a non-Indigenous perspective because that's not my perspective and so I was feeling really un-confident with that at first and worried that I would do something wrong, or say something wrong.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: You can put your name on it and you can use just one side or both sides--

NARRATOR: Because there is some sensitivity surrounding the material some educators have apprehension with taking on something they know little about.

MARY WALKER HOPE: If you had asked me to do any of this five years ago I just wouldn't do it because it just--I didn't feel comfortable and I didn't feel confident, and I didn't want to step on anyone's toes, and I didn't want to offend anybody.

MEGAN MAJOR: I think 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 them the right information.

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. I heard an elder speak once and she said she was so happy to hear these teachers talking about being afraid which isn't as mean as it sounds. For herself as a parent of her children in school as

a residential school survivor. She said when she heard the educators speaking about how they're afraid she said I just think that's so good because that means that we have something in common and we can work together now.

EILIDH CHILDS: Certainly I stress to my students a lot that I'm learning alongside them and if there's something we don't know that we'll explore that together.

DARREN LENTZ: I think the willingness to learn, to show the willingness to learn and we have new things to learn every day from a variety of people is one important thing, and not being afraid to make mistakes.

MARY WALKER HOPE: I know that I totally can make mistakes and say the wrong thing, and ask the wrong question, and pronounce something incorrectly and I know that nobody's gonna get offended at it. They'll correct me which is wonderful. You know what? Everybody's gonna make mistakes right?

BARBARA-ANN FELSCHOW: So my messaging to teachers and to others is don't take yourself too seriously, enjoy the moment. You're going on a journey of learning, embrace it and don't be too worried about the mistakes because they'll form you along the way and they'll make you a better person.

EILIDH CHILDS: As you're walking around if you see something that someone has that you're not sure about ask them a question. What we're bringing to--

NARRATOR: The challenge for some lays in how to begin and really there are two schools of thought when it comes to initial steps.

EILIDH CHILDS: So my advice to new teachers would be to start--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.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: What you need to do is pick out the topic and then support your topic with evidence.

NARRATOR: But there is an alternative approach.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: I know that there is a sentiment that we want teachers to just jump in and do it, but I feel that it is so important that you do need to prepare yourself a little bit and educate yourself before you teach someone something. I do say jump in, but educate yourself. I think it's important.

JANETTE CORSTON: Sometimes you want to go and take these big steps but if you don't build the foundation first, a strong foundation then it's not gonna support what you want to do in the future.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: There are seasons [INAUDIBLE]

NARRATOR: Regardless of how educators choose to start there's something everyone can take comfort in.

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

TODD SAUNDERS: Don't be afraid to start somewhere, and if we can start the ball rolling I think things, they kind of take on a life of their own sometimes.

EILIDH CHILDS: So if it means that you're just going to bring in a topic, or an article, or something that you want to address in the classroom to do that and then I would say to invite others to come to your classroom so that they can share their knowledge. I think most of my students' learning has come from the experiences, and the elders, and the community members they have met and then we can make connections and I can help them further their learning after those experiences or after those conversations. So just to start and then you'll be able to see how far it can take you.

NARRATOR: And educators will go places they didn't expect. Bringing First Nations, Metis, and Inuit perspectives into the classroom brings complex questions from students and educators. In answering those questions doors will open to new and different ways of learning, and seeking out guidance from others to help find the answers is important. There's no shortage of helpful suggestions for how to proceed.

JENNIFER KNIGHT-BLACKNED: First of all to be mindful of the connections and to strive to make more connections within the cultural, and traditional, and historical perspectives within the curriculum.

LUISA BOTELHO: Don't be afraid of the emotions that are going to come with bringing this to the forefront with all your teachers and educators. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

DARREN LENTZ: You have to sometimes learn and go out, and do things and I've gotten corrected on many things I've done, and it's okay because that's part of the learning process.

LUISA BOTELHO: Not knowing something doesn't mean that you're not doing something. And so it's okay to also be part of that learning journey.

PETER JOLIFFE: I think the beauty is that you get to make mistakes and learn from them. I mean we ask our students to do that. Teachers shouldn't be afraid of doing that as well.

DON: Maybe some advice would be to be hands on instead of just putting it on the board and answering questions. Maybe bring people in from the community. If you want to teach them about nature maybe bring them out to a park. Even doesn't have

to be far. Bring them even out on the playground and just show them the trees, grass, different kind of plants and get them out there.

ANNA: Learn more about it, look in books. If they know somebody with an Indigenous background and they were educated about it they could probably go to them to ask questions so they can teach the children.

SOPHIE: I would say bring it in slowly. Don't bang it down on the one day. We've looked at newspapers before in school, we just do Aboriginal ones. We look at poems; we just look at Aboriginal poems. We read stories, but we read Aboriginal stories. So you can just put it in that way.

ELLA: If you don't know where exactly to start you can always start with the art or just little bits of history here and there and then grow from there.

JANETTE CORSTON: Taking the baby steps as I believe that we do every year here is what has made our school successful for both our students, our staff, and our community.

TEACHER: Can you speak your language?

STUDENT: Yeah.

TEACHER: And you speak it? Do you? Good for you.

NARRATOR: Just starting the work is significant.

PETER JOLIFFE: As part of the Truth and Reconciliation commissions calls to action and recommendations we recognize that we stand today on treaty land, and that's the James Bay Treaty, Treaty IX which is what you've been--it should be celebrated. Students at our school, they're showered with examples of cultural knowing and cultural practices, traditional ways of knowing. It's a good thing. It should be adopted not only by our school but by lots of other schools.

REBECCA CLARKE: How important it is to give those students the different perspectives of what is happening in the country. There is a lot of resources out there and you don't have to change completely the way you're teaching. You can just bring it into your language lessons and your math lessons very easily.

TODD SAUNDERS: I encourage people just take a chance. Make a phone call to some local organization, ask them what they might be able to do, invite in a guest speaker, have classes watch a movie or a documentary to start the conversation. There is no wrong point to start but we all have to start somewhere.

CHRISTINE JAMIESON: This activity is called the Blanket Activity. It will briefly explain the historical relationship between the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and Europeans and Canadians. It is not always a pretty picture. These blankets--

NARRATOR: Those who are motivated to begin but are having difficulties proceeding are not alone. It helps to reach out to the school community.

KEVIN REED: So what we're going to do now is pass this talking feather around and I would just like you to share your feeling, or some observation that you made about the relationship between Aboriginal peoples in Canada and--

NICOLE RICHMOND: The work is about bringing our educators onboard 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.

TESA FIDDLER: How do I teach about residential schools? How do I teach about treaties? What do I need to use? And so they're asking those questions. So a lot of people are saying you know what, let's do this? But how do I do it?

TODD SAUNDERS: Educators are great at figuring out how things work best for their class. So if we can introduce some ideas, concepts, resources into the schools I think that will allow people to take it and go with it in ways that we never really thought possible.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: Think about perspective, any questions you have and even connections right? We know that we history is living. We've talked about that, history is living. It's around us all of the time. I initiated an inquiry project with my grade team. I was just interested in okay, how can we approach the social studies piece of our curriculum that's so rich? And I was really, really motivated by what was there in that document and how it could really be a living curriculum for the kids.

STUDENT: The Indigenous obviously didn't make these statues and I'm sure if they did it would be a lot different.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: So what I did was I set up a provocation for them. So I was taking a look at the big idea of allowing students to understand experience of the past and when we understand experiences of people in the past it helps to put our own experiences and challenges into context. So when I set up the provocation I wanted to have a mix of present day issues that are facing Indigenous communities and peoples, and also looking at some of my more specific expectations with the curriculum and the time period that the kids are exploring now. I was very careful in making sure that every student would have a way in today, and so that's why I really like to use images a lot to provoke that thinking. If it's too text heavy then that right away sort of separates kids and some of them can feel a little bit overwhelmed by that, but I felt like everyone was able to access the material at their level.

STUDENT: What's this statue up there?

NARRATOR: There are many different approaches educators and schools can use to infuse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit cultures, perspectives, and ways of knowing into the learning.

SYRENA LALONDE: We have the grandfather teachings represented in our school. They're etched into the floor, they're symbols. We also celebrate our grandfather teachings through the instruction of character traits and character education and we celebrate our learnings at assemblies in the school where students can identify with and be recognised for demonstrating those positive traits.

JANETTE CORSTON: We have our seven teachings. That is the basis of our character education program that we have here at this school. It helps too with the decor of the school and it helps to create that culture.

DARREN LENTZ: And that's so important because it's another perspective and it's a good teaching. So the kids have learned so much from doing those little activities and we give the teachers the autonomy to do what they like around the teaching but they bring that teaching into all aspects of their classroom.

CHRISTY RADBOURNE: And so all of us I know are working on character development in our schools. It's part of the school effectiveness framework. So it really aligns very well with that and it's a very simple way to bring in some cultural teachings that are well explained across popular culture and you can find the resources to support that. That's a great place to start.

NARRATOR: Culturally and regionally specific in Ontario the seven grandfather teachings is one small example among many of a first step. Once taken there are many places for educators to expand their practice.

DEBORAH ROSS: I do it mostly through our language classes. Through English it just seems to fit in the best that way. A lot of it is doing like through different book reports or almost anything that we're expected to teach in the Ministry documents you can make it work. Rather than reaching for those traditional books that we always use I reach for my books that have Aboriginal content.

TODD SAUNDERS: Just the use of picture books, and that's something that a long time ago we thought was only for our primary kids but it's really effective through all the grades.

DEBORAH ROSS: Some people think well grade 8s and picture books don't always mesh but they love to be read to. I don't think that ever goes away.

TODD SAUNDERS: So there's a lot of important learning I think that comes from those picture books and they're something that's accessible to all of our students.

CHRISTINE JAMIESON: In my English classroom it started with bringing in the literature that were written by Aboriginal voices.

KRISTA YOUNG: I just finished a novel study in my grade 9 applied English course and we read the Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian and I had great engagement with that novel. A lot of the students could relate a lot to it.

DEBORAH ROSS: We've done Fatty Legs as a novel study.

RAY LAKE: We've been talking about residential schools for about two weeks now. We read the novel Indian Horse.

RYAN ROY: Over the years we've actually got a lot more Aboriginal, First Nations, Metis material that you can use, a resource kit because sometimes you don't know where to start with it all so it's nice to have books and resources to be able to do that with because often times you really don't know where to start and you want to make sure you're doing it right.

CHRISTINE JAMIESON: Small bites, and it takes a while to get an education, and to become knowledgeable, and you need to be lifting your awareness and then move where you're confident, and starting small and then it'll grow from there.

NARRATOR: The pool of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit books and literature continues to grow to include the newest culturally relevant resources.

PETER JOLIFFE: We're starting off with a five minute introduction using Gord Downey and Jeff Lemire's Secret Path. So we'll be streaming just a introductory song, I think it's called Stranger.

DEBORAH ROSS: When Gord Downey's video The Secret Path came out and I watched that at home and I thought this would be such a cool thing for the kids to watch so I brought that into the classroom.

[MUSIC]: I am a stranger. I am a stranger [INAUDIBLE]

DEBORAH ROSS: That was so, so powerful and I think that a lot of our intermediate students have seen that and can relate to some of that, or have been able to talk to their parents and their grandparents about it to have a better understanding of why that child walked so far, why was he going home? What was the importance of that?

PETER JOLIFFE: Comes to your mind? What question? From that we're opening up to collaborative inquiry. All the students have seen the film already so that's been the prior knowledge that we've generated. They have come up with inquiry questions based on the film, so we're using the film to look at how can we connect this with our elders?

PETER JOLIFFE: The class is going to take a break, the bell's gonna ring in a second so we're gonna take a little bit of a break to--

CARMAN TOZER: Having to identify with that, have students realize that is a part of their past and to move forward and move on to a type of forgiveness I guess that yeah this happened to us. We need to go on to the next phase.

ANNA: My granny and grandpa went to residential school and yeah I'm just very curious of what happened.

STUDENT: I personally think that we will never truly understand the history of residential schools because we haven't lived it. However bringing in some people who did and hearing about what they had to say does help a lot.

NARRATOR: After some comfort with the material and a foundation of knowledge about the issues has been established finding the right supports can bring limitless possibilities to the learning.

JENNIFER KNIGHT-BLACKNED: The Ontario curriculum has lots of places where there is natural opportunity to expand using Indigenous perspectives.

EILIDH CHILDS: We just completed a birch bark basket project and that easily tied in maths, art, science, and so there's some natural ways that some of these projects and experiences can reach a lot of curriculum expectations.

CLARE CAZA: When I'm teaching Law I try and--we're looking at human rights, we look at the past history, we look at residential schools, we even look at Law, legislation, the Indian Act. In Civics kind of looking at how the history of Canada, how it's developed to the way it is today. We're looking at European influence but we're also looking here at what was happening here at the time. Even just looking at simple things as people getting the right to vote and for women, for minorities, for our First Nations people it's been a journey, and a process and it's important to recognize and look at all of those things.

REBECCA CLARKE: So if you see up here I have a graph, and can somebody please tell me why do we use graphs? Why do we use graphs? I wanted to show the students how expensive food was in Nunavut so I first thought that I would have them graph it, but then I realized that would probably take them a long time so I wanted to incorporate pulling information from a graph and drawing conclusions, and then from that making inferences of how people in Nunavut were able to survive. Connected it to the math curriculum because with the math curriculum they were analysing data from a graph and I guess with the social studies curriculum as well in that they were looking at different communities within Canada.

RAY LAKE: We take our kids up to [INAUDIBLE] Provincial Park and we climb this enormous hill and we look out on this beautiful vista and we have three people speak. We have a geologist who tells us the scientific story of that land. How did Lake Superior form? We have an artist speak who is a historian for the group of seven, and then we have an elder speak to talk about what the land means to Aboriginal people and how there's a spirit in everything.

You're trying to create this idea that the land belongs to all of us and that we're responsible for it. So I think that's one of the places where certainly Aboriginal education really does fit the curriculum and really does fit what our kids need to learn for the coming generations.

COLLEEN SHERIFF: We have Aboriginal games, we also try to have more literature in the schools, more accurate history.

ANGELA TOZER: All of our students in grade 9 take the Expressing Aboriginal Cultures Course in grade 9 and then in grade 10 we have the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada option course. We've got the Political Views course, grade 11.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: Today was an extension of our study of poetry through inquiry. They had five different poems and each poem had a topic that was related to First Nations, Metis, or Inuit topics and themes. Exchange your noticing, decide on a topic together and I would like you to partner-read your poem. And they individually read their poem and tried to find any noticing they had, poetic devices, figurative language. Then they worked with a partner and exchanged ideas and found their golden line, and then they went with a larger group and did the same thing and organized their golden lines into a poetic summary which they then in the five different groups presented five different poetic summaries with their golden lines and included the topic of their poem.

STUDENT: I lost my talk [INAUDIBLE] topic residential schools.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: The point really of the lessons was to reiterate some of the topics and themes they've been studying with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit content.

CHRISTINE JAMIESON: Our math department, I was recently at a conference where they were doing a beading exercise using algebra and I just thought that's not my subject discipline, but now I've got my in. So I get to collect the resources and share them.

REBECCA CLARKE: Now, how it's gotten better today is that we have more resources. The picture books that we wanted it to be authentic and bring it in so there are way more resources now that I'm able to use.

RAY LAKE: We've institutionalized learning in so many ways, and we've bound it by bells, and walls, and classrooms, and I think it's great to bring things into the school but you also need to bring students back out. There's a wisdom and a healing that's on the land and I think you need to get kids out there.

ANGELA TOZER: Part of the course curriculum part is to go out to Camp Ona Pona for a Tuesday to Friday stint and we try to embed that into our literacy course goes out and made a winter survival guide. So they would go out snaring rabbit and then come back and do the jot notes, write their paragraph or the series of paragraphs and then they would go out and learn how to make fires, come back, write their jot notes, write their paragraphs and we always have elders come along on our trips to add that perspective into as well.

RYAN ROY: We've had the Truth and Reconciliation Garden, we have elders that are around the school quite often. Like I said Pow wows, feasts. We have a pretty

good diversity kit here that is readily available with lots of resources for the kids and for teachers.

DEBORAH ROSS: We ran what we call our Aboriginal focus groups and it's through the Aboriginal focus groups that--and we try to include the whole school--where students are involved in things like the beading, tamarack bird making, cooking traditional foods, dogsledding when we had the dogsledders here. They do some ice fishing, we have a gentleman that takes the kids out on a nature walk in the bush and they look at the medicinal plants and the value of some of the plants out there.

DARREN LENTZ: It's been phenomenal. We have elders that come in and one of the things they say is they love to see these kind of things being taught in the schools that it's experiential learning, it's 21st Century learning. It's the ability to learn about community and culture, language, land all within a school context.

DEBORAH ROSS: If you watch the expression on the students' faces as they're taking part in these activities it's just like you see them smiling, they're engaged. It's a good experience for them.

DON: Well first of all we built birch bark baskets and been starting on this canoe back here, and we learned about the seven grandfather teachings and what they mean, and how to spruce root pick. That was pretty fun, go out in the bush and just pick stuff. Well I liked it because it was like outdoor and it was like natural and stuff and you weren't in a classroom, you were actually out there where stuff is.

ELLA: We're learning teachings like outside of school this weekend there is a program for girls that's going on Saturday and Sunday where you get to learn about the traditional tobacco teachings.

SOPHIE: When she brought in our guest speakers, when Geronimo came and earlier in the year I think it was the second week of school Nicole Robinson came from the board too so that was really interesting to connect with them.

EDEN: When I first came here like the second day we started learning Ojibwe and learning about different things like ceremony and stuff like that, and I found that really cool 'cause at my old school they didn't do a lot of that.

JENNIFER KNIGHT-BLACKNED: The children are learning language, they're learning hands-on. They're learning the cultural and traditional experiences but they're also the classroom teachers learning them with their students, and while they're learning them they're looking at it through the lens of an educator and where are their connections with the curriculum they're teaching in say science, social studies, math what have you and how can we extend those learning opportunities?

DARREN LENTZ: And a lot of people used to say oh, it sounds like you're watering down the curriculum with other things. It always say gaining this kind of knowledge and understanding you're actually watering up the curriculum. You're making it that much richer because students gain that real life, hands on experience that they can

apply their knowledge to form their classroom into real life experiences where they're out there doing things and experiencing it. And the elders and community members love to see that happening.

JENNIFER KNIGHT-BLACKNED: More and more teachers are seeing what their role could be and they're looking at the activities and the experiences and thinking like well how can I extend that into my classroom? Or what's even better is students are figuring out ways that they can extend it in the classrooms. We really are co-learning. Our students, our teachers, our language teachers, we're learning together which is kind of exciting because it's exciting for I think students to see that, the adults are taking the risk. With that sort of risk-taking mindset it's okay. It's okay to take the risk. It's okay to say, you know what? That's not working and we're learning quite a bit from that.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: I think how my teaching has shifted and changed is from the focus of content. I think it's more about bringing it to life for the kids and thinking critically, and it's really teaching through the big ideas. So I want the kids to be emotionally invested in the material because if they're not emotionally invested and if they're not intellectually engaged in what we're doing then they're not going to be able to think critically and I think that that's one thing my kids, they really do care about it and they're passionate about it because of all the work that we've done, and the discussions, and allowing them to be open in the circle.

STUDENT: A diamond is forever [INAUDIBLE] the wampum belt, like it was metal and [INAUDIBLE] silver [INAUDIBLE]

NARRATOR: Interest is growing, perspectives are changing, supports are more easily accessible and in new ways educators are evolving their practices and taking the steps to open the conversation, and they're learning right alongside their students.

CHRISTINE VANDERWAL: The more I learn the better I do. So I also feel a sense of responsibility to continue to take my own learning forward. I feel like I'm learning not only as an educator but just as a Canadian.

CHRISTINA ELMSLIE: To paraphrase Marie Sinclair a little bit education leads to understanding, and understanding leads to reconciliation.

KEVIN REED: Reconciliation happens one conversation at a time and so the longer we do this the more conversations have occurred and I think that 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.

PAMELA HARDY: It's not a frightening experience. It's actually a peaceful experience and it's a lot about every day living. Living that good life every single day no matter who you are, what culture you come from.

RYAN ROY: I think it's so important that the kids really learn that because it's our job here as educators to make sure that they are prepared for the future and that's a big piece.

ELLA: I think it's definitely cool because I personally feel like not a lot of schools really teach you about this.

DEBORAH ROSS: I can't tell you how many times I've seen students that haven't done well academically in previous years and when they've been given an opportunity to write about, or to draw about, or to talk about issues related to Aboriginal people it's just like a whole different student.

KIARA: I love learning about our culture and letting other people learn about our culture. I like seeing the reaction on their face to when they hear about some stories. I don't know, I just think our culture's really--everybody should learn about it.

DON: Teachers, geography or something they teach you about animals and stuff in the classroom but it's kind of neat going out and actually looking at them, seeing how they live, what they eat, what they do, what you can do with the stuff outside.

RAY LAKE: The thing we get to capitalize on as teachers is every generation gets smarter than we were and so I think as a teacher in some ways it's about getting out of their way.

GERONIMO HENRY: My job as a figure, as a survivor is I want to get the word out to all the non-natives, or even natives 'cause some natives didn't know about it either I guess. We want it to go viral. We want it to go right across the world. So that's why I go out and tell my story about 11 years in the residential school. And when I'm talking to those kids that are grade 4 or grade 5 and they listen it seems like they really listen to what you say and they have feelings. I tell them, I says you're the ones that are gonna make--you are the next generation. You can make things happen, you know? They just want the truth, right? At that age that's what they want. They just want the truth and if it's wrong they want to make it right too and they'll do stuff to make it right.

DEVON: To make a change and a difference you got to look to the future.

EDEN: The kids are eventually gonna grow up to be adults and can vote, can become Prime Ministers so they need to learn the culture 'cause it will help them in the future.

MEGHAN: They're our history. They were here first. We need to learn about whose land we're on and whose land that we've taken.

DEVON: I think education's one of the most important things we could do right now for issues like this.

JONATHAN: Education is the best way to actually do this 'cause now I know a lot more about their culture, I know a lot more about their history, and I'm really interested to see where this is gonna go.

RYAN ROY: They're going to be our future leaders, our future parents, our future teachers so we need to make sure that they at least have a base level of understanding so that they can make an educated choices to how they want to teach that to their own child or to their classroom so that it's not just looked at as something negative. We have to turn that around and make it into something that we understand which will make it positive.

PETER JOLIFFE: We get the chance to impact a generation and we should be doing that with just methods that are relevant and content that is inclusive.

CARMAN TOZER: Aboriginal people are the fastest growing population in Canada. We're the youngest population in Canada. And I think we really need to equip the rest of society that hey, we're here and we're here to stay and we're gonna be taking a more important role in what's happening in Canada. And so I think yeah, I think the rest of Canada needs to be prepared for us.

ALVIN FIDDLER: What I see happening is that the more we engage in these types of conversations that we begin to be a bit more comfortable, and relaxed and I think establishing those relationships is so key.

NICOLE RICHMOND: There's been a history of mistrust between education bodies and First Nation communities and that's a history that we're beginning to explore and we're beginning to understand the implications of it and so building bridges and building trust is absolutely foundational if in a school board that's as populated with First Nations, Metis, Inuit learners as ours we absolutely must be doing this if we want to be responsive as a community and as a public education board.

LUISA BOTELHO: I don't think it's only in the classroom. I think it's in everything that we do as human beings. I think that it's the classroom, it's students, it's families, it's our community, it's our country. I think that we are very grateful to have a system and country that we can start with the classroom but then we need to be able to move it out into the different levels of society.

CARMAN TOZER: That whole forgiveness thing is gonna be our next challenge and I think we're going through that right now and we're making strides, but I think it's gonna be a difficult journey.

OFF-SCREEN: But you have hope?

CARMAN TOZER: Oh yeah, there's always hope.

[MUSIC]

TEXT ON SCREEN: From Pedagogy To Practice

www.edugains.ca/newsite/curriculum/elementaryresources/socialstudies.html