



“Let’s Talk About Reconciliation” A Resource Guide for Libraries

Why Reconciliation?

Reconciliation means “establishment and maintenance of mutually respectful relationships.” In Canada, it often refers to the process of bringing Indigenous peoples and Canadians together to resolve conflicts from the past — especially the dark history of residential schools.

“Reconciliation is not an Indigenous problem, it is a Canadian problem. It involves all of us,” said Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which was tasked with investigating and commemorating the residential school system.

In 2015, the Commission released its final report and 94 “Calls to Action” for advancing Reconciliation.

The Role of Libraries

Justice Sinclair and many others have said that education is key to reconciliation. As institutions that are both repositories for knowledge and natural gathering places, libraries can play an important role.

One way in which they can participate is by organizing meetings, discussions and film screenings where people from all communities can come together and talk about how to move forward.

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) has a selection of more than 280 films, dating as far back as 1968, made by First Nations, Métis and Inuit directors. This unparalleled collection of work looks at Canada and the world through Indigenous eyes, and can be used to spark discussion.

We’ve listed various ways to organize that discussion below, as well as things libraries should keep in mind when planning such an event.



Reaching Out to Indigenous Communities

Canada is home to hundreds of Indigenous nations and peoples, such as First Nations, Inuit and Métis, who live in thousands of individual Indigenous communities, cities and towns.

It's crucial to include the Indigenous people who call your area home in the discussion. Find out which Indigenous groups are there by seeking out local First Nations, Métis, or Inuit organizations. In urban areas, Friendship Centres and local Métis Nation offices are a great resource and might even have contact information for local dignitaries or Elders, who should always be invited to take part.

Those Indigenous Elders, community leaders or dignitaries must be included in your planning process early — this is a partnership, remember? So connect with them before the planning begins. You should also lean on them for guidance in crafting the structure of the discussion itself.

In collaboration with the Indigenous community and with the guidance of an Elder or Elders, a film from the list provided by the NFB should be selected. The NFB is not responsible of the selection. Films are available as digital files or in DVD format. (Please verify your audiovisual equipment with your technical staff to ensure that the films can be presented optimally.)

Many universities and colleges have contacts in Indigenous communities and Elders-in-residence now, so consider reaching out to them. The following national organizations are also a great resource and can likely point you in the right direction:

Assembly of First Nations
Tel: 613-241-6789
Website: <http://www.afn.ca/>

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
Tel: 613-238-8181
Website: <https://www.itk.ca/>

Métis National Council
Tel: 613-232-3216
Website: <http://www.metisnation.ca>

National Association of Friendship Centres
Tel: 613-563-4844
Website: <http://nafc.ca/en/>

Indigenous groups hold Elders in high regard and often call upon them to open meetings or gatherings with greetings or prayers. There is a protocol for requesting an Elder's presence. Find out what it is and stick to it. This might include an offering of tobacco or cloth, or some other gesture, as well as an honorarium.



Getting Down to Business

Reconciliation is about moving forward from the hurts of the past — but there's a catch: many of those hurts are still happening today, and talking about them can sometimes be difficult.

In collaboration with the Elder(s), we encourage you to plan the structure of the discussion in advance so that it remains respectful and allows time for all who wish to express themselves to do so.

We suggest you consult with your Indigenous partner to find out what the protocol is in your area, and respectfully include it.

Share Your Experiences

Communication is an important part of people coming together.

After you've held your first event, think about what went right. What were the challenges? While there is likely no single, "right" way to hold such a gathering, other libraries and institutions can still learn from your experiences and adapt them to their regions.

We invite you to share your experiences with CCUNESCO (ccunesco@ccunesco.ca) and other libraries so that they can embark on their own path to reconciliation.

Communications and Media

The media can be an important ally when getting the word out about events at your library or institution. Consider a news release for your event, targeting local media well in advance. Remember to be clear about why people should be interested in attending and participating.

In collaboration with the community and with the guidance of an Elder, a screening date should be decided and communicated to the NFB.

You can also approach the NFB and CCUNESCO to send a release together. We'll be sharing a national news release in November for you to use.

When you're preparing for your event and want to promote it even further, social media is a great tool. We encourage you to create a Facebook event on the library's Facebook page and to publish several posts in the days and hours before the event on your social media platforms. An official [Facebook](#) page for the whole initiative has been created — please don't forget to like it and tag it in your posts. You can also post videos and photos during the



event, so that people who can't attend in person can still participate.

For more information, please contact:

- To participate to the initiative: Alexandra Salmon-Bobek, CCUNESCO, alexandra.salmon-bobek@ccunesco.ca

- To order a film: Marianne Di Domenico, NFB, m.didomenico@nfb.ca

What's Next?

Reconciliation is a process with no clear finish line; rather it should be viewed as a continuing and evolving dialogue and relationship. The same can be said for the NFB and CCUNESCO's reconciliation initiatives.

Questions

Getting the discussion moving can sometimes be a challenge. Here are some questions you can raise to get people talking.

1. Why should Canada embark on a process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples?
2. What would be an example of reconciliation in Canada?
3. What would be a concrete example of an action an individual can take toward reconciliation?
4. Have you encountered stories about residential schools on film, in media or in books before? What did you know about the schools?
5. What impacts did residential schools have on Indigenous peoples and communities?
6. Are things that happened in the past the responsibility of future generations? Why or why not?
7. What have you learned today that you would share with your friends and family?
8. What does reconciliation mean to you?
9. What can you as an individual do to bring Indigenous peoples and Canadians together?
10. How will people know when reconciliation is actually happening? Do you see it happening now?
11. When it comes to Indigenous peoples and Canada, what will the relationship look like in 10 years from now?