

# Speaking Our Truth: A journey towards reconciliation in the classroom.

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Resources	Speaking our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation, written by Monique Gray Smith
Supporting Resources	A website with connections and resources was created to accompany the print text. <a href="http://orcabook.com/speakingourtruth/">http://orcabook.com/speakingourtruth/</a>
Author/Creator and/or literature background	<p><b>Monique Gray Smith:</b> Monque Gray Smith is of Cree, Lakota and Scottish descent. She is an award winning and best selling author, who creates educational resources as well as children's books. Her book <i>Speaking our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation</i> was created with the intent of educating children on the harsh effects Residential schools had on Canada's relationship with Indigenous people (Smith, 2019).</p> <p><b>More information about the author can be found on her website:</b> <a href="https://www.moniquegraysmith.com/">https://www.moniquegraysmith.com/</a></p>
UPE Course Connections	<p><b>EDUC 435-</b> Literacy, Language and Culture: This book provides a great avenue for literacy circles in both the 'Facilitations' in EDUC 435 and the 7-12 classroom. <i>Speaking our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation</i> provides pre service teachers with foundational knowledge to create deep connections and discussions on the topic of reconciliation. Pre-Service teachers can use informational books such as these to begin understanding the importance of highlighting powerful Indigenous people in history and how their stories can spark powerful discussions and work on Indigenous culture in the classroom.</p> <p><b>EDUC 450-</b> Diversity in Learning: Monique Gray Smiths unique use of the Seven Sacred Teachings to explain and inform on Indigenous culture creates an opportunity for Pre-Service teachers to include these teachings in their classroom and classroom management. They could begin to create strategies they can use to become cultural sensitive teachers when educating Indigenous</p>

	<p>students. The seven sacred teachings offer a unique avenue to understanding the social constructs of Indigenous ways of knowing and how their Knowledge Keepers share ways in how to use the seven sacred teachings as a guide in your life journey.</p>
<p>K-12 Connection</p>	<p><b>Appropriate Grades- (7-12)</b> Monique Gray Smith’s <i>Speaking our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation</i> can be beautifully incorporated into the Alberta Program of Studies. The <b>Social Studies</b> curriculum provides students with the learning opportunity that contributes to the development of understanding of identity of Indigenous peoples and students. As well, it provides an insight into Canadian history for all grades and European explorers and settlers (gr 7). It also dives into the history of Residential Schools and their impact on Canada's relationship with the Indigenous people (gr 7-9). <b>English Language Arts-</b> (also appropriate for grade 6) Students are able to honor and value the traditions, concepts and symbols that are the expression of their identity. It also develops the student’s understanding of reconciliation and allows them to become active and responsible treaty peoples in the community. It gives students topics to include in projects involving speech and debate and offers many subjects and issues for those engaging in opinion and essay writing.</p> <p><b>Health and Wellness:</b> The seven sacred teachings can be used as a way for students to develop courage, bravery, honesty and begin to self regulate their emotions. The teachings allow students with connections to the land and animals with a deep history of Elders using the teachings to better themselves as human beings. They can also be used to develop a community of respect and love in the learning environment.</p> <p>Finally, this book provides, with great detail, a chance for students to study the geographical location of each territory and treaty land in Canada. They can begin to visualize and conceptualize the number of residential schools present in Canada throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and where they were located. It allows students to question and understand the Indigenous peoples perspectives and understand the challenges</p>

	they faced and continue to face as a result of residential schooling
Materials	Speaking our Truth: A journey of Reconciliation Seven poster or chart papers posted around the classroom Markers for each group Space to divide the class into seven working groups
Rationale	<p>The purpose of this lesson is to bring awareness and education to students' understanding of residential schools and their impact on the relationship between Canada and the Indigenous people. It will allow students to create a meaningful connection with the land and how animals and their character traits in our country can guide them on their life journey.</p> <p>Through the analysis of Speaking our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation, students will begin to create connections with the Seven Sacred Teachings and understanding Indigenous ways of knowing. They will begin to celebrate Indigenous culture and become more aware citizens when studying difficult topics in Canada's history such as the residential school system.</p> <p>This lesson allows students to create their own meaningful connections with Indigenous culture through the study of the Seven Sacred Teachings. They will begin to understand the oral traditions of the Indigenous communities, how their teachings shape a person's identity and guide them to live their life as a respectful and loving human being.</p> <p>When teaching Indigenous history and culture, books like Speaking our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation are a great tool to have in the classroom that provide first hand and authentic perspectives to students. They are honorable ways for non-Indigenous people to share Indigenous history in an authentic, valued and respectful manner.</p>
Lesson Ideas/Activities	<p><i>*This Lesson plan is intended with teachers having already read the novel to their class*</i></p> <p><i>Pre Lesson Tasks:</i> After a pre reading of the book, the teacher should divide the class into seven working groups. The seven</p>

poster papers should be posted around the classroom in order for the students to perform a gallery walk. Papers should be spread out enough for the students to gather around and share their ideas without being too close to the next working group. Each poster should be clearly headlined with each teaching. One for courage, one for love, one for honesty etc.

1.) The teacher should begin the lesson with a post reading reflection on the seven sacred teachings. Students should be encouraged to share the seven animals and what they represent. A video can also be shown to the students to refresh their memory on their learning and understanding.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOm0RG2oZIO>

2.) The teacher will explain how each group will spend three minutes at each poster and rotate clockwise around the gallery walk. The students are required to choose a scribe who will write on the poster their ideas. Students should write on the poster.

- The animal that represents the teaching.
- When they have felt like this particular animal.
- Who in their life represents and exhibits similar characteristics to this animal. Ex. "My father is like the turtle because.."
- Have they already had life experiences that contribute to this teaching?
- How they are going to share this teaching with their friends or family. Ex. "I was loving like the eagle when I...."
- What are their next steps in adopting the characteristics of this teaching. Ex. "how am I going to be more courageous like the bear?"

Students should be made aware that they may add to each paper when they rotate but if an idea has already been written by another group, what can you add instead of saying it again?

3.) Gallery Walk should begin. Students should

begin at any teaching and end at the same teaching. This activity should take around 30 minutes with transitions.

- 4.) If time permits, students should choose a spokesperson who can share with the class the ideas that each group came up with and their understanding of the sacred teaching. This discussion should encourage students to begin thinking critically about how the Indigenous people use the land and the animals to create guides for their own teaching, learning and way of life.

#### Next Lesson and Assessment:

As a final assessment and project, students should work in their working group with their chosen sacred teaching and use their “notes” from the gallery walk to create a poster. Creating a poster for the school allows students to showcase their learning with their peers and their teachers. It also allows their school to incorporate and showcase their learning and commitment to understanding Indigenous culture and is a step towards reconciliation. Having student work based on Indigenous teachings alive and active in the hallways allows Indigenous students to see their culture highlighted and incorporated into their school; giving them a sense of pride and identity.

Students can be assessed on the quality of the poster they create as well as the foundational to deep knowledge they have attained. They can include pictures of the animal representative of the teaching, ideas about what it means to live this teaching, how they are choosing to live this teaching and ways in which others can begin to better themselves through the use of the seven sacred teachings.

This type of assessment provides the school with positive Indigenous ways of knowing and culture that creates an inclusive and diverse sense of school community.

	<p>Extension Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Students can be encouraged to create a Reconciliation bulletin board in the school and encourage their peers to create ideas about how they can become inclusive treaty members and their next steps in reconciliation. Students can come up with ideas on what they can do in their community to actively work towards reconciliation.</li><li>- Students may write their ideas on post-it notes that can be shared on the bulletin board. They can share their new ideas through a school newsletter or on the school announcements each morning.</li><li>- Elders may be invited to the classroom to help them with this task.</li><li>- They can also post the seven sacred teachings on the bulletin boards with ways in which they can be more loving like the eagle or courageous like the bear. Outlining for students active steps they can take to follow these teachings will open their learning into their authentic lives.</li></ul>
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Sources:

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