

# Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation

## LESSON PLAN



**Created by:** Lord Appiah & Nadine Ballantyne, members of Reconciliation Saskatoon's Youth Advocates

**Discipline:** Subject of choice for teachers involved

**Grade Levels:** K-3

**Time for lesson:** 1 hour

### Lesson focus:

What is the Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation and how was it created in response to the Canadian Residential School system? How can students contribute to the process of "Truth and Reconciliation"?

### Outcomes:

Grades K-3 will listen to a Residential School Survivor share his story and the history of the Walk for Reconciliation. They will become more familiar with the Residential School System, and consider how they can honour Survivors who are still alive in our community.

### Objectives:

Students will participate in art projects that recognize Residential School Survivors and invite more students to get involved in reconciliation

- Option #1: Create birthday cards for Residential School Survivors. The birthday cards that are created by students will be delivered to members of the Saskatoon Survivor's Circle
- Option #2: Create posters inviting students to Walk for Reconciliation on June 21

### Materials for Birthday Cards:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Stationary
- Coloring materials such as markers, crayons, and colored pencils
- Glue
- Stickers
- Rubber stamps or other pictures (ex: photographs or magazine images)

### Procedures:

#### 1) **Introductory Conversation about Residential Schools**

"Teaching about Residential Schools to children! - YouTube"

Watch "Eugene Arcand: The History of Saskatoon's Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation"

2) After the videos have been completed, the teacher will discuss **"Who are Indigenous peoples of Canada?"** This term refers to the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people that were in this country long before immigrants from Europe and elsewhere decided to settle.

3) Teacher will lead a discussion about **what residential schools were and the age groups of the Indigenous children placed into schools**. Indian Residential Schools were far from Indigenous homes and communities, and enrollment was compulsory for Indigenous children. From 1867 to 1996, Indigenous children between the ages of 7 (and even younger) and 15 were taken from their families by the government to attend these schools.

4) Teacher will lead a discussion **“Why were residential schools bad for children?”** Children did not get the chance to grow up with their parents and some children did not return home after their stay in the school. Also, children in Residential Schools were punished for speaking their languages, and their connection to their families and culture was severed. The schools did not meet the basic needs of the children: for love, healthy food, etc., and they were severely mistreated. They were not held or told they were loved. They never celebrated birthdays and many didn’t even know when their birthdays were.

5) **The Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation** began in 2016 to honour Residential School Survivors. For three years, thousands of people gathered on the riverbank and “rocked their roots” by wearing their own cultural regalia or holding symbols of their culture. It is an important part of reconciliation to know your own ancestry.

This year, we are inviting people to walk on June 21 National Indigenous Peoples Day on their own or in groups (following safety protocols) to show their support for Survivors and commit to working towards equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

## **ACTIVITY** (20 minutes)

### **Option # 1: Birthday Cards**

As you heard in the video from Survivor Eugene Arcand, Residential School Survivors never celebrated birthdays. At the end of every Walk for Reconciliation, we gave the Survivors cupcakes and sang happy birthday—which we can’t do this year due to covid. Invite the kids to make birthday cards for the survivors.

- This activity will help students get involved in thinking and talking about the survivors who are still alive today as well as promote awareness in a respectful way in the schools. Contact Carrie at [beaconnectr@gmail.com](mailto:beaconnectr@gmail.com) who will deliver the birthday cards to members of the Saskatoon Survivors Circle—a community of survivors who support each other in their healing from the ongoing trauma of Residential School.

### **Option #2: School Posters**

Invite students to create posters for the Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation on June 21. Hang the posters around the school to raise awareness about the walk and get all classrooms involved!



## **Conclusion:**

The teacher will end the class discussion on a positive note.

- Today, residential schools do not exist anymore. The last residential school in Saskatchewan was closed in 1996. However, the children who attended those schools are now grown-up, and many are still dealing with the problems they faced as a child. We call them survivors.
- For these residential school survivors, we show them our support by walking on June 21, which is called National Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Check out this video from the Walk for Reconciliation in 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YbzuEi-XqM>
- Many people in our community work hard to heal the damage done by Residential schools and ensure that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are equal. Check out ConnectR, an online project to help people find and respond to Calls to Action and move forward on a path of truth and reconciliation: [www.BeAConnectR.com](http://www.BeAConnectR.com)

## **Closure:**

Students will hand in their completed birthday cards to the teacher. Students can hang their posters around the school.



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*For these "Residential School Survivors", we show them our support by walking on June 21, which is National Indigenous Peoples' Day. Check out this video from the Walk for Reconciliation in 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YbzuEi-XqM>*

*Many people in our community work hard to heal the damage done by Residential schools and ensure that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are equal. Check out ConnectR, an online project to help people find and respond to Calls to Action and move forward on a path of truth and reconciliation: [www.BeAConnectR.com](http://www.BeAConnectR.com)*

*The Rock your Roots "Walk for Reconciliation" informational page: [Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation | Saskatoon.ca](http://Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation | Saskatoon.ca)*



**Visit [BeAConnectR.com](http://BeAConnectR.com)**  
**for more resources, videos and information about**  
**how you can respond to the**  
**Truth and Reconciliation Commission**  
**with your own Calls to Action.**

## Additional reading materials for teachers to utilize for students and for themselves at home regarding what residential schools are:

### K-G5

#### Title

A Stranger at Home: A True Story

#### Sources

<https://www.annickpress.com/Books/A/A-Stranger-At-Home>

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/11482930-a-stranger-at-home>

#### Title

As Long as the River Flows

#### Sources

<https://houseofanansi.com/products/as-long-as-the-rivers-flow>

#### Title

Dear Canada: These are my Words: The Residential School Diary of Violet Pesheens

#### Sources

<http://www.scholastic.ca/books/view/dear-canada-these-are-my-words>

#### Title

Environmentalists from our First Nations

#### Sources

<https://secondstorypress.ca/kids/environmentalists-from-our-first-nations>

### External Materials for Teachers

Grant, A. (1996). No End of Grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada. Pemmican Publications, Inc., 1635 Burrows Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2X 0T1.

Milloy, J. S. (2017). A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system (Vol. 11). Univ. of Manitoba Press.

Hanson, E. (2009). The residential school system. Indigenous Foundations.

Mosby, I., & Galloway, T. (2017). "Hunger was never absent": How residential school diets shaped current patterns of diabetes among Indigenous peoples in Canada. *Cmaj*, 189(32), E1043-E1045.

Young, B. (2015). "Killing the Indian in the Child": Death, Cruelty, and Subject-formation in the Canadian Indian Residential School System. *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*, 63-76.