



ADDENDUM

to

EDUCATOR'S EQUITY COMPANION GUIDE

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HARMONY MOVEMENT



CHAPTER 8

I Am Not Your Mascot

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A Note on Language

For consistency and out of necessity for brevity, we chose to use the term “Indigenous” throughout this section as an inclusive and internationally-recognized term. It describes individuals and collectives who consider themselves related to the First Peoples of Turtle Island. First Nations, Métis and Inuit also are used, depending on the context.

Vladik comes to class wearing a shirt of his favourite football team. Adam, a Métis classmate, tells him the logo is offensive. He says it’s not right for sports teams to use names and symbols that represent Indigenous peoples in offensive ways.

Vladik says Adam is being too sensitive. The team has always had this name, and it is part of history. Besides, Adam should feel proud that a big league team chose to adopt an Indigenous name. A teacher and some other students overhear the conversation. A moment later, the bell rings.

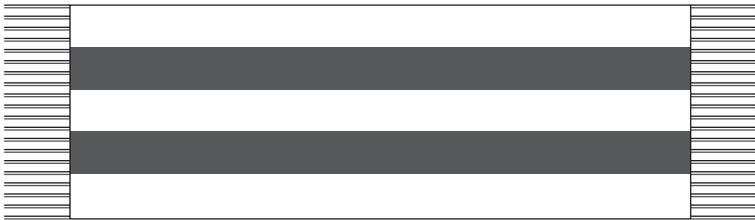
- Is Adam being too sensitive? How do you think he feels?
- What issues are at play here? What is Vladik not seeing or unaware of?
- Would it have made a difference if a classmate who does not identify as Indigenous had objected? Why or why not?
- If you were the teacher, what would you do?
- When the language or images we use offend others, do you think intention matters? What can we do to prevent the offence?
- Have you noticed other images or words relating to Indigenous peoples and cultures that have been used in problematic ways? What action was taken?

The History We Weren't Taught

Christopher Columbus didn't discover America. When European settlers began arriving on Turtle Island, the land we now call North America, in the 1500s, it had been a site of human activity for millennia and was home to many diverse Indigenous nations. These were complex societies with distinct languages, cultures, spiritual practices and forms of governance.

Once various European forces became aware of the wealth of natural resources in the Americas, rather than continuing to trade with First Nations peoples, they went to war with them and with each other for control over the land. Sources estimate that up to 90 per cent of the Indigenous inhabitants died due to wars, diseases and extermination in the initial decades of European contact.

It may be uncomfortable to think about, but colonization is not just a shameful chapter of Canadian history; it continues to this day. Colonization refers to the process of appropriating traditional Indigenous lands, exercising power and control over the original inhabitants and seizing their resources. In Canada, this happened in many cases by force or deceit, gradually incorporating these assets into the British Empire. After Britain won the Seven Years' War in 1763, King George III issued a document called The Royal Proclamation to officially claim British territory in what is now North America.



Belts made of wampum (sea shells) were used by some Indigenous peoples to mark agreements with Crown officials. Each design is unique and symbolizes mutual respect and peace.

This Land is Whose Land?

Land ownership and development are Western colonial concepts. The view of many Indigenous communities is that they come from or belong to the land, and therefore are its stewards. In his book *The Inconvenient Indian*, Thomas King explains, “Land has always been a defining element of Aboriginal culture. Land contains the languages, the stories, and the histories of a people. It provides water, air, shelter, and food. Land participates in the ceremonies and the songs. And land is home.”

Between the 1700s and early 1900s, the Crown – representing the state that is now Canada – negotiated many different treaties with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. For Indigenous nations, these agreements represented the beginnings of new relationships. They were sacred and binding, created in a spirit of cooperation, reciprocity and sharing of the land, its resources and all its bounty. However, the colonialist interpretation of these treaties was based on self-interested greed and power. They expropriated traditional territories to make way for resource exploitation, settlement expansion and the destruction of ecological systems that have supported Indigenous peoples for thousands of years.

Indigenous peoples are still fighting for justice. This is a legal struggle for human rights, sovereignty, access to traditional lands and environmental protection. It is also a grassroots, social struggle that is mobilizing Indigenous peoples and allies in movements like *Idle No More* and *Not Your Mascot*.

★ THE CENSUS SAYS

- In 2011, more than 1.8 million people reported they were Aboriginal or had Indigenous ancestry.
- The Aboriginal population in Canada includes 615 First Nation communities and more than 50 nations, eight Métis settlements and 53 Inuit communities.
- More than 60 Aboriginal languages are spoken in Canada.

The Inherent Racism in Colonization

Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body of politics.

~ Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, 1920

To subjugate a whole group of people, those in power must create a story that portrays them as less than human. This is done by adopting language, policies and institutional practices that normalize the oppression of the targeted group. This is how Black people were subjugated during apartheid in South Africa and how Jews were targeted in Nazi Germany.

When European settlers arrived on Turtle Island, they described the Indigenous peoples they encountered as “uncivilized,” even though they had an array of cultures, traditions, trade systems and forms of governance. This was based on ideas of Christian, white superiority.

In the 1950s, J. E. Andrews, the principal of the Presbyterian school in Kenora, Ontario, said, “We must face realistically the fact that the only hope for the Canadian Indian is eventually assimilation into the white race.” At the time, such ideas freely were expressed by leaders, politicians and educators.

Today, the Indian Act of 1876 continues to regulate the lives of many First Nations people by imposing a band-elected leadership system, a reserve system and many other oppressive policies. This has resulted in a set of narrow criteria that determines who is a First Nations person in Canada and who is not.

The federal government introduced a legal term, Status Indian. It grants rights to First Nations people while imposing major restrictions on their daily lives. Not all Indigenous people were given this designation, and the government instituted discriminatory reasons to revoke Indian Status.

“They Came for the Children”

Imagine: one morning people in uniform arrive on your doorstep and whisk away your children. They say it’s for their own good, that it’s the law of the land, that there is nothing you can do to stop this from happening. When you do try, they threaten to put you in jail. Your children cry as they are ripped from your arms and loaded into the back of a cattle truck filled with other children, some as young as four.

This was the experience of thousands of Indigenous families under the Indian residential school system that began around 1830s and operated for 150 years. More than 150,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend, and it was not until 1996 in Saskatchewan that the last school closed.

Residential schools were religious institutions funded by the federal government with the goal of separating Indigenous children from their families and traditions, and assimilating them into European-Canadian culture. The stated goal was to “kill the Indian in the child”.

Residential schools played a key role in the colonization process. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Report has called these institutions “an act of cultural genocide” because their purpose was to erase Indigenous cultures, languages and ways of life in a manner that was deliberate, systematic and widespread.

Residential schools were over-crowded and poorly maintained. The children were subjected to neglect, disease, malnutrition, and physical and sexual abuse. According to the TRC report, at least 6,000 children died in residential schools, but the actual number is believed to be much higher because government officials stopped recording these deaths around 1920.

Indigenous communities lost their next generation, as students were stripped of their languages, traditions, culture and family ties. This resulted in intergenerational trauma: psychological wounds passed from one generation to the next. The trauma and effects of the Indian residential school system continue to permeate Indigenous communities and families today.

Although its consequences were devastating, the residential school system did not succeed in eliminating Indigenous cultures. Survivors exerted public pressure to expose what happened and drive the TRC process. By telling their stories, they were determined that this history would not be repeated.

Indigenous Origin of Canada's Place Names

Many names of places in Canada have Indigenous origins.

For example:

- Canada is derived from **Kanata**, meaning “settlement” or “village” in the languages of the Wendat and Haudenosaunee.
- **Onitariio** is a Wendat word that relates to the Lake Ontario.
- Saskatchewan is derived from **Kisiskatchewan Sipi** or “swift-flowing river” in Cree.
- The Mohawk word **Karón:to** means “where the trees are in water” and gave Canada’s most populous city its name, Toronto.

The Effects of Colonization Today

When I fought to protect my land and my home, I was called a savage. When I neither understood nor welcomed his way of life, I was called lazy. When I tried to rule my people, I was stripped of my authority.

~ Chief Dan George, July 1, 1967

Many people think colonization is something that happened in the past. In fact, it is an ongoing system of oppression supported by legal, political and societal practices. Here are just a few examples:

- History and historical facts are presented from the point of view of white European settlers in school curricula and in the mainstream media.

- First Nations and Inuit communities experience high rates of suicide, especially among children and youth because of intergenerational trauma and a lack of services, stemming from inequitable funding.
- Dozens of Indigenous communities across the country have inadequate housing and continue to live with “boil water advisories”.
- It is estimated that more than 1,100 Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit individuals have gone missing or have been murdered since the 1960s. It has taken decades for the federal government to finally announce a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2015. Meanwhile, Indigenous women continue to face instances of violence 3.5 times higher than non-Indigenous women.

Truth, Reconciliation and Hope

Without truth, justice, and healing, there could be no genuine reconciliation.

~ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 2015

By establishing a new and respectful relationship, we restore what must be restored, repair what must be repaired, and return what must be returned.

~ Phil Fontaine,
former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations
and residential school survivor

Truth and reconciliation refers to the process of restoring the relationships between Indigenous peoples and the government of Canada. The process includes confronting the history of colonization and residential schools, and a commitment to restoring the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples.

Justice Murray Sinclair led the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which brought these issues to light. For seven years, the Commission collected and shared the stories of residential school survivors, reviewed and preserved historical facts to uncover the truth, and framed 94 Calls to Action.

This has led to ongoing conversations about what each of us can do to support reconciliation and to help educate others.

WATCH: *Trick or Treaty?*, a 2014 National Film Board documentary by Alanis Obomsawin. It tells the story of the First Nations' fight for justice to enforce Treaty 9, also known as the James Bay Treaty.

Rethinking Adam and Vladik's Story

Adam is making an important point about cultural appropriation, a form of exploitation of one cultural group by members of another cultural group with greater power in society. Vladik may not have intended to offend anyone, but he didn't think about the meaning and impact of his team's name and logo. He may not have considered the history behind them, and how stereotypes lead to prejudice against Indigenous peoples.

For example, the derogatory term "Redskin" refers to scalping the heads of Indigenous people in the 1800s in exchange for a bounty. The government and army awarded money for the scalps of children, women and men. At the time of writing, Nova Scotia still has a law from 1756 that authorizes settlers "to annoy, distress, take and destroy the Indians" and offers payment for Mi'kmaq scalps. We cannot appreciate the impact of derogatory terms unless we become familiar with their origin and history. It is our responsibility to share this knowledge and to eradicate hurtful language from our vocabulary.

In many spheres of society, including the sports world and entertainment industry, Indigenous people are reduced to caricature-like depictions and narrow stereotypes. These portrayals are rooted in colonialism and racism. It is only when we see individual incidents as part of a pattern that we can begin to understand how they affect people from marginalized groups.

Taking Action: Reconciliation Through Education

Education is the key to reconciliation.

~ Justice Murray Sinclair, Truth and Reconciliation
Commission of Canada, 2015

What can non-Indigenous people do to work towards reconciliation and ensure that history is not repeated?

Call 62 of the TRC's Calls to Action relates directly to education, with references to curriculum, classroom teaching methods, post-secondary education and more. Here are just a few examples of actions schools and educators can take that would have a significant positive impact:

1. Learn about the precolonial and colonial history of your area, and acknowledge the traditional territory in meetings, events and classroom activities.
2. Question and reject the idea that the history of the nation referred to as Canada began with European settlement (the "Doctrine of Discovery"). Showcase diverse Indigenous perspectives of this history.
3. Take the time to explore the experiences and understand the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in your school. Consider how your teaching style and the school climate can better meet those needs. Learn about the effects of intergenerational trauma.
4. Develop relationships based on reciprocity and respect with local First Nations rights holders, Indigenous communities, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit families in your region.
5. Use the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's plain language reports on the residential schools as an introduction to classroom discussions. Use the 94 Calls to Action to engage students in civic action.
6. Create opportunities for experiential learning by inviting guest speakers and organizing field trips to places of significance. Be mindful of the emotional impact of the content on First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.

7. Seek and share stories of resistance and resilience when teaching about the history of Indigenous people.
8. Question and challenge stereotypes, and promote accurate and inclusive representations of Indigenous peoples in the media, mainstream culture and the curriculum.
9. Celebrate National Aboriginal Day (June 21) and make a commitment to support Indigenous cultures and issues throughout the year.
10. Request and participate in professional development workshops about Indigenous history and culture. Seek local Indigenous resources and connect with Friendship Centres to build knowledge and relationships.

Using the Right Language: It's Complicated

Aboriginal – The legal term recognized by the Canadian Constitution of 1982 that includes three peoples: First Nations (previously referred to as Indians), Métis and Inuit. A government-imposed term, “Aboriginal” is still used for census purposes by Statistics Canada and other agencies.

Indigenous – The term is rooted in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and is used by Indigenous communities around the world to build solidarity and resistance to modern-day colonialism. It is often used as an inclusive term to describe First Peoples in Canada. It has created the space for some individuals and communities to self-identify because the government term Aboriginal Peoples has not reflected how Indigenous peoples define themselves, and has not recognized their diversity. The federal government has taken steps to adopt the term (e.g. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada), although Aboriginal and Indian are still used in some policy contexts. Not all Indigenous people agree on the use of this term.

Indian – Now considered offensive and outdated, this term is still used in government of Canada legal documents such as the Indian Act of 1876. When Columbus arrived in the Caribbean islands in 1492, he thought he had reached India and referred to the residents of the land as Indios (Spanish for “Indians.”) Although he realized his mistake, European colonists continued to use the term for centuries to refer to all Indigenous peoples on the South, Central and North American continents.

Native – Historically adapted from “Native American”, this term was used commonly in the 80s and 90s and is generally considered outdated. It is still used by some organizations (e.g. Native Child and Family Services) and the government.

Additional Entries to Appendix A

USEFUL TERMS

Aboriginal Peoples – Aboriginal is the legal term recognized by the Canadian Constitution of 1982 to refer to three main groups of descendants of the original inhabitants of North America (Turtle Island): the First Nations (previously referred to as Indians), Métis and Inuit. There are more than 600 First Nations communities in Canada, with more than 50 distinct languages and cultures.

Aboriginal self-governance – Self-government is the structure through which communities may control the administration of their people, land, resources and related programs and policies. It is based on the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to govern themselves.

Cultural Genocide - Whereas physical genocide refers to the mass killing of the members of a targeted group, cultural genocide is the destruction of their structures, language and practices.

Indian Residential School System – Government-sponsored religious schools, established to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture.

Indigenous - An inclusive term that creates the space for individuals and communities to self-identify, with the understanding that the way the Government of Canada has defined Aboriginal people has not reflected how Indigenous peoples have defined themselves. The term is rooted in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and is used by Indigenous communities around the world to build solidarity and resistance to modern-day colonialism.

Inuit - The Indigenous peoples of the North American Arctic. Inuit means “the people” in Inuktitut and an Inuit person is known as an Inuk. The word “Eskimo”, which has been used historically to refer to the Inuit, is outdated and offensive.

Métis - People of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry, and one of the three recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The Métis culture draws on diverse ancestral origins, such as Cree, Ojibwe, French, Scottish and Irish.

Two Spirit - Prior to colonization, Two Spirit was considered a spiritual term and role embodying the existence of more than one gender. Today the term is used by many Indigenous gay, lesbian, bisexual and gender-diverse people to describe themselves. Some teachings speak to a sense of non-gender, neither male nor female.

Additional Entries to Appendix B

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