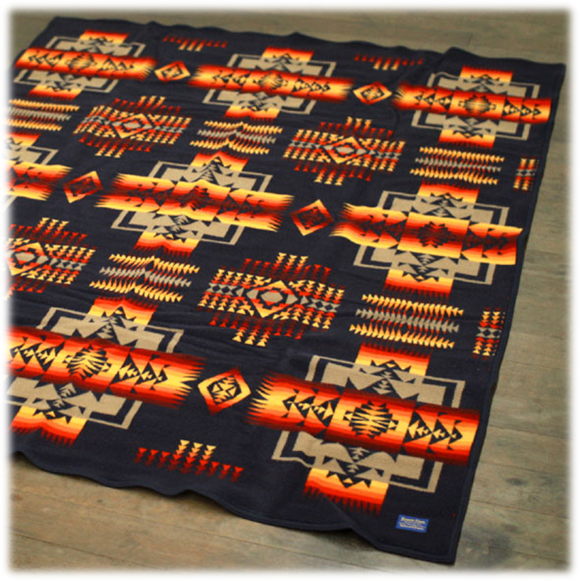
**KAIROS**

**Blanket Exercise**

**The KAIROS Blanket Exercise – *Fourth Edition*An experiential teaching tool for grades 4 – 12 and adults that helps participants understand the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.**

**Welcome to the KAIROS Blanket Exercise**This one hour participatory workshop will help participants understand how colonization of the land we now know as Canada has impacted the people who lived here long before settlers arrived. Through this exercise participants will explore the nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, how this relationship has been damaged over the years, and how they can work toward reconciliation.

**Curriculum resources linking the Blanket Exercise with curriculum expectations for Grades 4 – 12 are available free at** [**www.kairoscanada.org**](http://www.kairoscanada.org) **or by emailing info@kairoscanada.org.**

**How it works**The activity begins with blankets arranged on the floor to represent Canada before the arrival of Europeans. Participants representing Indigenous peoples move around on the blankets, as if they are using and occupying the land. A narrator reads from a script while someone playing the role of a European joins and interacts with those on the blankets.

As the script traces the history of the relationship between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in Canada, participants respond to various cues and read prepared scrolls. At the end of the exercise only a few people remain on the blankets, which have been folded into small bundles and cover only a fraction of their original area.

Created in 1997, the Blanket Exercise is a succinct overview of Indigenous rights in Canada that explores the major themes and findings of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP). You are strongly encouraged to use the exercise as part of a larger unit. At the end there is a list of resources and learning activities that compliment this workshop.

## WHAT YOU NEED

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|  | **Group of 20** | **30** | **50** |
| **Index Cards** | **White, yellow and blue. You will need enough white and yellow cards for half the participants, and two blue cards. Mark one of the yellow cards with an “X”.** | | |
| **White (Diseases)** | **3** | **5** | **8** |
| **Yellow (Residential School)** | **4** | **5** | **8** |
| **Blue (Starvation)** | **3** | **5** | **8** |
| **Blankets** | **8** | **10** | **14** |
| **Blankets: One blanket for every 3-­‐4 participants as well as one to be used as a small pox blanket and one that will represent a residential school. Some people have used sheets or fabric that has been decorated. Others have asked participants to bring blankets from home – this can heighten and intensify the impact when blankets are taken away during the exercise.** | | | |
| **Maps: Three maps from the Report of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal People*s, – “Turtle Island”, “Treaties” and “Aboriginal Lands Today”. These are available for download off the KAIROS website. They are also available on the Power Point presentation.** | | | |
| **Scrolls: The text for the scrolls is part of the script. Scrolls will need to be printed, rolled and ready to go. Hand out the numbered scrolls to participants who are comfortable reading aloud. With a small group it is okay for people to read more than one scroll. (We often have them on chairs prior to people entering the room)** | | | |
| **Ribbon: A wide ribbon about 4-5 feet in length to use for the border.** | | | |
| **Student Leaders: It has worked well to share the roles with 4 students. 2 to be narrators, and 2 to play the role of the Europeans.** | | | |
| **Talking Circle: Be sure to explain how a talking circle works. You need a talking item. Ex: rock, stick, feather, etc.** | | | |
| **Number of participants: The Blanket Exercise works best with anywhere between 15 and 60 people. With fewer participants, the challenge is to ensure not too many people leave the blankets so you will want to hand out slightly fewer than the suggested number of white and yellow index cards. The larger the group, the more difficult it is to have a good discussion or debrief at the end.** | | | |
| **Time required: Doing the Blanket Exercise requires at least 1.5 hours. It is important to have at least 25 minutes to debrief. An in-depth discussion or talking circle following the Blanket Exercise – which can easily last another hour - is encouraged. Since the Blanket Exercise can cause emotions to surface, it is helpful to provide participants with an opportunity to voice their feelings in a supportive environment.** | | | |
| **Video introduction: A good way to introduce participants to the content of the Blanket Exercise is by showing the Public Service Alliance of Canada video “Justice for Aboriginal Peoples -­‐ It’s time”** [**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5DrXZUIinU.**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5DrXZUIinU) **(This has been embedded in the PSD Powerpoint)** | | | |

**Blanket Exercise Enhancements – Deepening the Learning**

**Additions to the script:** We encourage you to make the Blanket Exercise script specific to the territory where your school or group is located by researching and writing scrolls or additions to the script with information about the local history or current situation. For example, in the part of the script that refers to residential schools, a scroll could be added about a residential school that operated nearby.

Please be respectful when doing this; if the additions you are making are not part of your own story, be sure to work in collaboration with the appropriate people.

**Inviting a First Nations elder:** You can invite an elder from the area to open and close the workshop, lead a talking circle, and speak about how the content of the Blanket Exercise resonates with them and their community. This will greatly enrich the learning experience for the participants and help them make connections between what they are learning and the area where they live. It will also help to create a safe space for participants, particularly for Indigenous participants.

**Traditional items:** Consider using traditional items at the beginning of the exercise to represent the richness and diversity of First Nations and Inuit peoples throughout Turtle Island. Participants can use these to barter and interact with one another. These could include clothing (mitts, mukluks, gauntlets, hats, etc), carvings, baskets, utensils, art pieces, medicines, furs, uluit etc. It’s a great way to “break the ice” and get people engaged and interacting early. Later, after the arrival of the Europeans, you can include Métis items as well such as sashes.

**Dolls:** You can hand out dolls to all participants when they step onto the blankets to represent Indigenous children and families - this can really humanize the exercise. You can then have the European take away some of the dolls when residential schools are discussed and again for the sixties scoop.

**Preparation**

* Determine your facilitating team ahead of time to play the role of the Narrator(s) and European(s) and give them a copy of the script to review.
* Read over the script carefully

o **Presentation Skills** needed to be practiced and polished

§ **Clear and LOUD enough to hear (you may need to use microphone)**

§ **Proper pronunciation of ALL words**

§ **Use of good inflection**

§ **Voice tone and expression to demonstrate important points**

§ **Eye contact with participants**

* Print out and roll the scrolls, identifying them on the outside by number. (put them on the chairs
* Choose the envelope with the correct # of colored cards: if the group is large, give white cards to slightly less than half the participants but if the group is small (24 or less) only one third of participants should receive white cards. (Note – chart above for number of cards needed for size of group)
* Set up room prior to participants arriving
* Lay the blankets next to each other on the floor. Put the smallpox and residential school blankets aside.
* Have participants sign in and make name tags
* Distribute the three maps, ‘Turtle Island’, ‘Treaties’ and ‘Aboriginal Lands Today’, and look them over as a group. (if you are NOT using the power point)

**Concepts and terminology to review before doing the Blanket Exercise:**

**What does it mean to be a sovereign nation?**

A sovereign nation enjoys the right to self-determination and has a governance structure and territory that is recognized by other nations. While European nations focus on the protection of individual rights, Indigenous nations focus on collective rights to land, language, spiritual traditions, and self-governance, to name a few.

Indigenous individuals rely on strong nations for their well-being. Nations protect and nurture the collective rights through which an individual finds cultural meaning and identity. The Indigenous struggle for sovereignty is a struggle for nationhood and many believe that the recognition of Indigenous nationhood will enhance, not diminish, Canadian sovereignty.   
  
**What is a treaty?**

Treaties are internationally binding agreements between sovereign nations. Hundreds of treaties of peace and friendship were concluded between the European settlers and First Nations during the period prior to confederation.

These treaties promoted peaceful coexistence and the sharing of resources. After Confederation, the European settlers pursued treaty making as a tool to acquire vast tracts of land. The numbered treaties 1 through 11 were concluded between First Nations and the Crown after Confederation.

For Indigenous peoples, treaties outline the rights and responsibilities of all parties to the agreement. In the traditions of Indigenous treaty making, these are oral agreements. In addition, they are “vital, living instruments of relationship” (RCAP) that involve all Canadians.

**What is the difference between equity and equality?**

Equality means each person gets the same treatment or the same amount of something. It involves systematically dividing something into equal parts. Equity, on the other hand, recognizes that not everyone has the same needs.

Equity is about justice and a fair process that leads to an equal outcome. It takes into account the injustices of the past and how they have placed some in positions of privilege while others face significant barriers to achieving well-being.

**Terminology**

**Indigenous peoples** is a term for which there is no one definition because it is up to each Indigenous person to define themselves, something that for far too long has been done by others. Cree lawyer Sharon Venne suggests that being Indigenous means being “descendants of the people occupying a territory when the colonizers arrived.”

Indigenous is a word that has come into widespread use through the recognition that those people who are the original inhabitants of a place, and who have been marginalized by ethnic groups who arrived later, have much in common with other peoples worldwide with the same experience.

Not only does the word speak to global solidarity amongst these peoples, but it has important legal significance as well. Indigenous peoples’ rights have been recognized at the international level in various ways but most importantly in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which was adopted by the United Nations GeneralAssembly in 2007.

When we speak of peoples, as opposed to people, it is a recognition of collective rights; that each Indigenous people is a distinct entity with its own cultural and political rights.

**Aboriginal peoples** refers to the original peoples of North America who belong to historic, cultural and political entities. Canada’s *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

There are a number of synonyms for Aboriginal peoples, including Indigenous peoples, First Peoples, and original peoples. None of these terms should be used to describe only one or two of the groups.

Because Aboriginal peoples is the term used in Canada’s constitution, it has specific importance within a Canadian legal context.

First Nations is not a legal term but replaces “Indian” in common usage. There are many First Nations in Canada: Innu, Cree, Saulteaux, Ojibwe, Haida, Dene, Mohawk, Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Blood, Secwepemc etc., each with its own history, culture, and traditions.

You can discuss with participants which First Nations are close by and whose traditional territory you are on. Some areas are the shared jurisdiction of more than one First Nation.

**Inuit** are the Indigenous Circumpolar people of Canada and other northern countries. They were formerly called Eskimo, which the Inuit consider a derogatory term. In Canada, the Inuit live in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, Labrador and, in recent years, southern Canadian cities as well.

**Métis** are the mixed-blood descendants of French and Scottish fur traders and other early settlers, and Cree, Ojibwe, Saulteaux and Assiniboine women. They have their own culture and history. As is the case with many Aboriginal languages, the Métis language, Michif, is endangered. Métis society and culture were established before European settlement was entrenched.

This term is sometimes used more generally for someone who is of mixed ancestry, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

**Assimilation** is the process of absorbing one cultural group into another. This can be pursued through harsh and extreme state policies, such as removing children from their families and placing them in the homes or institutions of another culture. Forcing a people to assimilate through legislation is cultural genocide—the intent is to eradicate a culture.

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# SCRIPT

Welcome to the Blanket Exercise and thank you for being here.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I’m from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I teach at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ school. I will be supporting our student leaders to facilitate the Blanket Exercise.

*We honour all the many First Nations, Metis and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries. We acknowledge the ancestral and traditional lands on which we gather are Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground for many Indigenous peoples, and in particular our neighbors, Paul First Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation and Alexander Cree Nation; whose territory we work, live, and play, and whose territory we stand.*

We’d like to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for joining us today to help

(name of Elder) (name of Community)

us learn together and share in this experience in a good way.

To start we will be smudging (*if you have the means and the teachings and are willing to do this*). Smudging is part of the First Nation culture and is a respected traditional teaching. It is a way to help us cleanse our body, mind, and spirit so that we might rid ourselves of any negative energy or thoughts and simply be mindful and present to the moment and to the experience. There is no right way and no wrong way to smudge. Smudging is very personal and how we choose to participate is individual. Today we will be smudging with Buffalo Sage, one of the four main ‘medicines’ used by our First Nation peoples.

In following traditional protocol, it is respectful to remove manmade things like glasses and rings when we smudge. To smudge, we simply waft the smoke over ourselves taking it in and asking for a clear mind, respectful of thought and of each other and ability to speak the truth. **Light the smudge.** As you smudge simply ask the “powers that be” or the spirit of the sage to remove all negativity and unwanted energies. **After the smudge, ask the Elder to offer a prayer to start the exercise.**

Before we begin, there are a couple of housekeeping messages for you:

* As you see on your chairs, there are scrolls, dolls and necklaces. These materials are used again and again each time this exercise is presented, so please treat them with the respect they deserve. They will all be collected at the end of the exercise.
* If you are a holding a scroll, you will notice they are numbered. Please do not open the scroll until your number is called. When it is your turn to read, it is ok if you need assistance, as there are some big words. There are many peers and adults here who can support you if and when it may be needed.
* This is a 2 hour exercise. Should you need to excuse yourself for a washroom break, we trust that you will do so without interruption to the group and that you will come back and join back in upon your return.
* If you are new to our building the washrooms are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and in the event of an emergency, the muster point is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and we will exit through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ doors.

**Have student leaders introduce themselves. (remember where you are from is important)**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I’m originally from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I attend \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ school and I am in grade \_\_\_\_\_\_. (Ex: My name is Kassidy Mercredi and I’m from Bigstone Cree Nation and I attend Memorial Composite High School and I am in grade 11.)

We will take a moment to have you introduce yourselves. Please say your name, here you are originally from, what grade you are in or what your role is in your school, and at what school. *(Do this ONLY if you are in a smaller group and only if you have time for it)*

Created by KAIROS organization in 1997 following the Royal Commission on the Aboriginal Peoples, the Blanket Exercise is a succinct overview of Canada’s timeline of events from pre-contact to contact and then to present day. You will take on the role of Indigenous people throughout this Blanket Exercise.

**Please put on the necklace that is on your chair. This symbolizes you taking on the role of an Indigenous person.**

These blankets represent the land space in Canada and what we also refer to as Turtle Island.

The content of this activity may be sensitive for some. Throughout this experience you may feel overwhelmed with emotions and it may bring up unexpected or difficult feelings, which is completely normal! At the end of the activity we will debrief with a sharing circle, where you will have an opportunity to share your feelings, thoughts and reflections in a respectful way.

To begin we will watch a short video published by the Public Service Alliance of Canada entitled ***“Justice for Aboriginal Peoples -­‐ It’s time”*** that will give you a brief overview of some of the content we will be exploring. **(Slide 2 - only view this if you have time - it sets a context)**

As we journey into the script, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will be our narrators and

(names of students)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will play the role of the European Settlers.

(names of students)

***Narrator:*** Please look at the maps. **(Slide 3)** Throughout this experience we are going to learn how we went from a time when the Indigenous peoples used all the land we now call Canada (what some Indigenous peoples refer to as Turtle Island), to a time when land reserved for Indigenous peoples is only a very tiny part of Canada. This first map, although not comprehensive, does illustrate the cultural linguistic groups throughout Canada, as well as show how the land is being used by Indigenous peoples. The blankets represent this map.

**(Slide 4)** The second map illustrates how when the Europeans arrived over 300 treaties were formed. As you can see, there are large areas without treaties.  **(Slide 5)** The third map shows the progression to reserve lands. Reserves below the 60th parallel make up less than one half of one per cent of Canada’s land mass. The Blanket Exercise will simulate how the land space gets smaller and smaller.

***Narrator:*** Please take off your shoes and step onto the blankets. By doing so, you are stepping into the roles of the First Nation, Inuit, and later Metis peoples. If you have dolls or scrolls, please bring them with you, but please don’t open them yet! There will be opportunities for you to read them aloud to the group. Please move around on the blankets – use and occupy the land as if you were living on it. Once you step on the blankets you must not step off unless asked to do so.

These blankets represent the northern part of Turtle Island, or what we now know as Canada, before the arrival of Europeans. You represent the Indigenous peoples, the people who have been here for at least 10,000 years. Long before the arrival of Europeans, Turtle Island was your home, and home to millions of people like you. You lived in hundreds of nations, each with its own language, culture, traditions, laws and governments.

There was a lot of communal support with everyone looking out for each other and no one left without. Everyone had a distinct role to play with men hunting and fishing and distributing the food to the community and women taking care of the home life. Kids also helped out and learned from the elders. Herbs were used for medicine and healing.

The area we now know as Edmonton is a place of gathering for many different groups of Indigenous people. These groups include, but were not limited to, the Cree, Nakota Sioux, Blackfoot, Tsuu T’ina **(soot-tenna**), Dene and Saulteaux (**so-doe**). People gather here for many different reasons: ceremony, trade, meetings, hunting, celebrations and rest. The Cree refer to this area as pêhonân (**pay-ho-naan**) which means “a waiting place”. kisiskâciwani sîpiy (**kiss-sis-kaa-chih-waa-nih see-pee**), otherwise known as The Saskatchewan River, is a Cree word meaning “swift-flowing river”. This was, and continues to be, an important and major waterway that flows through the area.

***Some scrolls have a title and an author. Please read the entire scroll.***

***The person with Scroll 1 - please read. (This person will continue to invite each scroll reading.)***

***Scroll 1:*** amiskwaciy (**uh-miss-kwuh-chee**) is another Cree name that refers to this region. It translates to “Beaver Hill” in the English language. Amiskwaciy Academy is a school within the Edmonton Public School District. The name for the school was chosen in consultation with Elders from the Aboriginal community.

As many of you travel across the prairies throughout the seasons, certain locations are preferred as a place of rest and food gathering. Ideal areas include sources of water and shelter which sustain both humans and animals. Many of your campsites are along waterways in the area and in the areas surrounding present day Edmonton.

Areas along the North Saskatchewan, along with the creeks and valleys which flow from it, are important places of gathering. We now know these creeks and valley systems as Blackmud, Whitemud and Mill Creek ravines. At one point, lakes existed in both the areas we call Lendrum and McKernan.

To the east, in the area we now call Elk Island, lakes such as Cooking, Astotin, Miquelon and Hastings were known camp locations. To the west, campsites are known to exist at Wabamun Lake and Lac. St. Anne. Wabamun takes it’s name from the Cree word wâpamon(**waa-puh-mun**) which means “mirror”. Lac St. Anne is the name given in both English and French, however, there are both Nakota and Cree words for it as well. The Nakota people call it “**wakâ mne”** which means God’s Lake as does the Cree word manito sâkahikan(**mun-ih-toe saa-kuh-hih-gun**).

***Scroll 2:*** My people have lived in this area since time immemorial. Evidence of our camps and quarries exist all around Edmonton including hills in Terwillegar, Rossdale and Elk Island National Park. About 6,800 years ago, a large volcano in Oregon erupted which sent ash all the way to this area. This layer of ash can still be seen along the edge of the North Saskatchewan River.

***Show the Mazama Map and River Valley picture (Slides 6 and 7).***

***Narrator:*** As communities you work together and cooperate with one another. You end disputes by making treaties with other nations. The land is very important to you. All of your needs – food, clothing, shelter, culture, your spirituality – are taken care of by the land, which is represented here by the blankets. In return, you take very seriously your responsibility to take care of the land.

***Scroll 3:*** “One of my favourite things about my culture is how we’re taught that everything on the Earth is to be respected. It’s an important part of the culture and covers everything. That includes respecting yourself. Respecting yourself is one of the most important things my culture has taught me. Also, the land, water, plants, air and animals are all very important to our culture and need to be respected. Without any of it, what would we be?”

—*Kateri, a Mohawk* *youth from a* *community in Quebec*

***Narrator:*** Things were happening in Europe in the late 1400’s that would mean a huge change for all of you. European explorers had quote-unquote “discovered” you and your lands.

***European [reads in a loud, bossy voice]:*** According to the Doctrine of Discovery nations that are not Christian cannot own land. The Indigenous peoples living on this land will be put under the power of the Christian nations that quote unquote “discover” their lands.

***Scroll 4:* Doctrine of Discovery.** “The Doctrine of Discovery is a charter issued by a Pope of the Catholic Church that gave Christian explorers the right to claim lands they "discovered" and lay claim to those lands for their Christian Monarchs. Any land that was not inhabited by Christians was available to be "discovered, claimed, and exploited.”

***Narrator:*** And so began the so-called European “discovery” of Turtle Island.

***The European steps onto the blankets and begins shaking hands, moving around and handing out the index cards.***

***Narrator:*** When the Europeans first arrive on Turtle Island there are many more Indigenous people than Europeans. The newcomers depend on you for their survival, and you help them to understand how you do things – how you teach your children, how you take care of people who were sick, how you live off the land in a way that left enough for future generations, and how your governments work.

In the beginning there is a lot of cooperation and support between you and the settlers. The settlers and their leaders recognize you, the First Peoples, as having your own governments, laws and territories. They recognize you as independent nations. They make agreements or treaties with you. These treaties explained how you are going to share the land and the water, the animals, and the plants. The Europeans understand they can’t force their laws or way of life on the people who were here long before they ever arrived. They understood that you have rights.

One result of these interactions is the birth of the Métis people, who are of mixed First Nations and European ancestry. The Métis are very skilled and play a major role in the fur trade. The Métis have their own language, Michif, which is a mixture of Cree and French. Later on, Métis communities are established in present day Lac Ste. Anne , St. Albert and in Edmonton where the river lot system is used. One prominent Métis person who owns a riverlot is Laurent Garneau which is who the Garneau neighbourhood, school and theatre in Edmonton are named after.

***European [speaking in a loud voice]:*** In the Royal Proclamation of 1763, King George the Third said Indigenous nations own their lands. The King said that the only legal way newcomers could gain control of those lands was by making treaties between the two nations.

***Scroll 5:* Royal Proclamation of 1763**. The Royal Proclamation is a document that set out guidelines for European settlement of Aboriginal territories in what is now North America. The Royal Proclamation was initially issued by King George III in 1763 to officially claim British territory in North America after Britain won the Seven Years War. In the Royal Proclamation, ownership over North America is issued to King George. However, the Royal Proclamation explicitly states that [Aboriginal title](http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/land-rights/aboriginal-title.html) has existed and continues to exist, and that all land would be considered Aboriginal land until ceded by treaty.

***Narrator*:** After a while, you didn’t get along very well with the Europeans. When the War of 1812 ended, the Europeans no longer needed you to help them with the fighting. As the fur trade dried up, the European newcomers turned more and more to farming and started looking for more land.

***European: Begin to slowly fold the edges of the blankets, making the blanket space smaller and smaller. When blankets are empty you can take them away and put them in a pile outside the activity. Very gradually fold and remove blankets until the middle of the exercise when the Indian Act is introduced and participants are placed on reserve.***

***Narrator:*** Remember, you many NOT step off the blankets. The goal is to stay on the blankets, even as they get smaller. Indigenous people have always resisted when someone tried to take the land away.

***Narrator*:** Before too long, there were more Europeans than Indigenous peoples. One reason for this was the diseases the Europeans brought with them: diseases such as smallpox, measles and tuberculosis. You, the Indigenous peoples, suffered badly from these diseases because you had never had them in your communities before. Millions of you died. In fact, there are some people who believe that half the Indigenous people alive at the time died from these diseases. In some communities, nine out of ten people died.

***The European walks to a person who does not have a card, hands them the folded blanket and reads:*** *(\*\*\* please ask this person ahead of time if they are ok with it)*

***European:*** Blankets infected with the deadly smallpox virus were given or traded to the Indigenous people by military leaders such as Lord Jeffrey Amherst. You represent the many Indigenous people who died from smallpox after having come into contact with such blankets. Please step off the blanket.

***Narrator:*** Those that have a white index card, please step off the blankets. You represent those who died of the various diseases.

***Narrator:*** Please be silent for a moment to remember those who died from the diseases.(15 s)

***The European then walks to one person in the “east” who does not have a card and reads:***

***European:*** You represent the Beothuk, one of the original people of what is now the island of Newfoundland. You also died from diseases you had never seen before. Because the Europeans over hunted some of you starved. Some of you died in violent encounters with the settlers trying to take your lands. Some of you were hunted down and killed. In 1829, the last person recognized by the Europeans as your people, Shanawdithit (Shanna-deet-dee), died in St. John’s. Your language and culture became extinct. Please step off the blankets.

***The Europeans walk to the “south” and choose two people who are standing close together on one blanket. Make eye contact with the 2 people. Lay the ribbon between them to represent the Medicine Line/Border.***

***European:*** You represent members of the Blackfoot Confederacy who became divided when theborder between the United States and British Canada was created. This border divides communities and cuts you off from each other. Please move to separate blankets.

***Narrator:*** On July 1, 1867, Canada became a nation and the Government of Canada was formed. Later on, the Royal Proclamation became part of Canadian law.

On August 23, 1876 Treaty 6 was created. It was signed by the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota and Dene who were going hungry due to over hunting of the buffalo and who were getting sick due to European diseases. It was signed at Fort Pitt and Fort Carlton in present day Saskatchewan and many chiefs were present at the signing including Chief Sweetgrass, Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop. Adhesions were signed at later dates and in different areas including a signing at Fort Edmonton in 1877. One chief who signed the adhesion at Fort Edmonton was Chief Papaschase whose band received a reserve in what is now south Edmonton.

***Scroll 6:* First Nations Treaty Benefits.** As part of the treaty agreement, First Nations understood they would receive assistance to the transition of a new lifestyle, maintenance of their cultural and spiritual rights, right to hunt, trap, and fish, education, medical assistance, reserve land, agricultural tools and support, and peaceful co-existence with the newcomers.

**Scroll 7: Settler Treaty Benefits.** Newcomers would receive a peaceful co-existence with First Nations people, access to lands for settlement, farming, railways, and future industrial development.

Treaty 6 stretches over both Alberta and Saskatchewan and is the only treaty that includes the medicine chest which is viewed as universal health care. It also includes the promise of education which leaders saw as something that generations to come would need. The text of the Treaty states that band members would receive the following: **(read slow and clear)**

* Reserve land in the amount of one square mile per family of five;
* An annual cash payment at a rate of $25 per Chief, $15 per headman and $5 for all other band members, and a one time present of $12 for each member of the band who agreed to the Treaty;
* Twine and ammunition at a value of $1500 per year;
* For each band and family certain agricultural implements such as spades, livestock, horse, and wagon;
* A school once the people settled on a reserve;
* The right to pursue hunting, trapping, and fishing;
* A medicine chest to be kept at the house of the Indian agent on each reserve;
* Rations were to be given in times of pestilence and famine;
* During the first three years after Treaty was taken, First nations who had settled on reserves and were farming were to receive $1000 in agricultural provisions.

***Scroll 8:*** “Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created.”

—*Georges Erasmus, Dene Nation, co-chair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*

***Narrator:*** For you, the Indigenous peoples, the treaties are very special and sacred agreements. The spirit and intent of the treaty is based on peace, friendship, and sharing as well as respect and honesty. But the Europeans don’t see it that way anymore. They now have a different view of the treaties. For them, land is something that can be bought and sold, and treaties are a way of getting you, the Indigenous peoples to give up your land.

***The European places a railroad ladder across Turtle Island and walk across the ladder to the “west” standing in front of one person whom you will direct the next paragraph to.***

***European: Choose one person in the west and say to them.***

In 1881, construction begins onPrime Minister John A. MacDonald’s dream of the Canadian Pacific Railway and this opens up the Prairies to settlers. Land is needed for farming and the Government of Canada buys a huge piece of land from the Hudson’s Bay Company. This is very hard for some of you who are already living here, such as the Métis and the Cree. You, the Métis, fight for your land and are sometimes joined by the Cree. You win some of these battles, but in the end you are defeated by the government’s soldiers. Leaders such as Poundmaker and Big Bear are imprisoned and Métis leader Louis Riel is hanged for treason for their participation in the 1885 Resistance. Cree War Chief Wandering Spirit, along with seven other warriors, are tried, without legal counsel, and are hanged at Fort Battleford for their role in the resistance. This has been recognized as Canada’s largest legal mass execution. Witnesses in attendance include First Nations students from the nearby Battleford Industrial School. You represent those Métis or Cree leaders who died in battle, were put in jail, or were executed. Please step off your blanket (one person only).

***Show the Manitou Stone picture (Slide 8).***

Also in the west, the sacred Manitou Stone, sometimes called ‘Old Man Buffalo’, was taken by a Methodist missionary named George McDougall. The Manitou Stone, sometimes called the Iron Creek Meteorite, is a meteor said to be placed on the plains by the Great Spirit after the flood.It is revered as protector of the buffalo and bringer of peace and prosperity. It was believed that if it was removed bad things would happen. Shortly after it was taken the buffalo disappeared, a smallpox epidemic broke out and intense warfare occurred between the Cree and the Blackfoot. The smallpox epidemic also claimed the lives of two of George McDougall’s daughters. The stone was later claimed by Victoria College in Toronto and is now on loan to the Provincial Museum of Alberta in Edmonton but has never been returned to the people. The stone continues to be revered by Indigenous people and many still visit the stone at the museum to offer tobacco and prayers.

***Show the Bison Extermination map (Slide 9).***

***The European and the Narrator walk to the “north” and chooses a small group of people.***

***Narrator:*** In the High Arctic, Inuit communities were moved to isolated, unfamiliar and barren lands, often with very negative consequences.

***Fact 1:*** The tuberculosis (TB) epidemics, for example, reached northern communities in the 1950’s. By 1956, one-seventh of the entire Inuit population was being treated for tuberculosis while one-third of the overall population was affected. Many children were removed from their homes to be sent down south for treatment in TB sanatoriums, including the now closed Charles Camsell Hospital in Edmonton, some never to return.

***Show the Charles Camsell Hospital picture (Slide 10).***

***European: (choose one person on the white blanket)*** You represent people like the Inuit and the Innu at Davis Inlet, along with many other Indigenous communities who suffered and sometimes died because you were forced to move to an unfamiliar place. Please move one of the blankets away from the others, fold it small and stand on it. (if they need help, choose a smaller white blanket)

***Narrator:*** Those with **blue** cards, step off the blankets. You represent those who died of hunger after being forced off your original land and away from your hunting grounds.

***European:*** As more of us arrived, we needed more land. Many of us as Europeans thought we were better than other kinds of people, including you. Soon, we didn’t think of you as friends and partners, but as a “problem” to be solved. We started ignoring or changing our laws to make it easier for us to take your land. Some land was taken in war. Some land was taken after you died.

In the Edmonton region, a businessman named Frank Oliver starts up Alberta’s first newspaper called the Edmonton Bulletin. Mr. Oliver thinks that the nearby Papaschase Reserve is a black eye for the settlement of Edmonton and that it is bad for business. He uses his newspaper to voice his personal opinions on the subject which include “the land being needed by better men”. As a result of propaganda, pressure from government and church officials and from the failure of the government to live up to its treaty promises the Papaschase people are forced to surrender their reserve. The surrender comes under highly questionable circumstances and many believe that it is an illegal surrender.

Later on, Frank Oliver goes into federal politics and has the Oliver Act created. This act allows the government to more easily take reserve lands away from First Nations people. Mr. Oliver’s name is associated with many reserve land surrenders across the prairies. Other local businessmen who profit off of the misfortunes of First Nations land surrenders, including the Enoch land surrenders of 1902 and 1908, include John A. McDougall, Richard Secord and James Gibbons who was the Indian Agent in Enoch.

***Narrator****:* As Indigenous peoples, you lost more than just your land. Because the land is so important to you, when it was taken away some of you also lost your way of living, your culture and, in some cases, your reason to live.

***Scroll 9: Terra Nullius (TER-ah NOO-lee-us).*** The idea of Terra Nullius, which in Latin means “empty land”, meant European countries could send out explorers and when they found land, they could claim it for their nation. These were often lands we were using.

***European:*** The land wasn’t empty and we as Europeans knew it so we changed the idea to include lands not being used by quote unquote “civilized” peoples, or lands not being put to so called “civilized” use. It was us as Europeans who decided what it meant to be “civilized”, and we decided that because you and your people were not using the land in a “civilized way”, we could take it and it was almost impossible to stop us.

***Scroll 10: The BNA (British North America) Act.*** The BNA Act, also known as the Constitution Act, 1867, put “Indians and Lands reserved for Indians” under the control of the federal government. When this happened, we lost our rights and control over our lands.

***Narrator:*** This law gave control of your lands to the Government of Canada, which at that time was made up of only people from Europe. You, the Indigenous people, were not involved in the creation of this law that would have such a big impact on your lives. More and more, the plan was to try and make you like the Europeans.

***Scroll 11: Indian Act.*** In 1876 all the laws dealing with us were gathered together and put into the Indian Act. The Indian Act completely changed our lives. As long as our cultures were strong it was difficult for the government to take our lands so the government used the Indian Act to attack who we were as peoples. Hunting and fishing were now limited and our spiritual ceremonies like the potlatch, powwow and sundance were now against the law. This didn’t change until the 1950s.

***European: [In a loud voice]:*** Now hear this! According to the Indian Act of 1876 and the British North America Act of 1867, you and all of your territories are now under the direct control of the Canadian federal government. You will now be placed on reserves. Please fold your blankets until they are just large enough to stand on.

***Scroll 12:***  “All of the reserves in every province of Canada combined would not cover one-half of the reservation held by Arizona’s Navajo Nation”.

* Robert White-Harvey, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996

***Show the Vancouver Island map (Slide 11).***

***European:*** To put that into perspective, this would be the equivalent of all of the combined reserves in Canada fitting into an area the size of Vancouver Island.

***Narrator:*** You went from being strong, independent First Nations, with your own governments, to isolated and poor “bands” that depended on the government for almost everything. You were treated like you knew nothing and like you couldn’t run your own lives.

You became the responsibility of the federal government. Through the Indian Act, the federal government continues to this day to deny you your basic rights. These rights are things that most Canadians take for granted, such as healthy schools, proper housing and clean running water.

***European: [walking slowly around the blankets]*** Also, you may not leave your reserve without a permit. You may not vote. You may not get together to talk about your rights. You may not practice your spirituality or your traditional forms of government. If you do any of these things, you may be put in jail.

***Scroll 13: Conquest Through Law.***

Resistance was rendered futile. The right to protest was taken away. Access to justice was denied. Political rights were taken away.

***Scroll 14:*** “I know what the government did in the past; they said where we had to live. I know that we’re not treated equally now, because I can feel it. We’re all Canadians and we should all be treated equally.”  
 - *Cassie, a Mi’kmaq* *youth from a* *community in Nova Scotia*

***Narrator:*** Gender inequality in the Indian Act meant that Indian status women who married non-Indian status men lost their legal Indian status. However, a non-Indian status woman who married an Indian status man gained legal Indian status. This practice ended in 1985 with the introduction of Bill C-31 which reinstated status to those who lost it.

***European - approach someone (a female if possible) who is still on the blankets and say to her:*** You represent one of the women stripped of your Indian status because of this gender inequality in the Indian Act. Please find a spot on the floor nearby. **(ask to take their necklace)**

***Fact 2: (to be read by a female)*** For many of us, women are the carriers of culture. By targeting women, you target the heart of the nation. Indigenous women have been targeted through federal legislation and policies that try to wear down our communities and in so doing, make it easier to take our lands. Residential Schools have left a legacy of violence that contributes directly to abuse, especially directed at women and children. And in wider society, everyday racism causes wounds that are both visible and invisible.

***Narrator:*** The Indian Act also tried to stop Indigenous peoples from fighting to keep their land. For example, under the Indian Act, it was against the law to raise money to fight for land rights in the courts until the 1950s.

***Scroll 15: Enfranchisement (en-fran-CHISE-ment).*** Under this federal government policy, all First Nations people who became doctors, teachers, lawyers, soldiers or who went to university lost their legal Indian status. This was called being granted “enfranchisement”.

***Narrator:*** In other words, the government would no longer legally recognize you as a First Nations person. This cut you off from your communities, including First Nations soldiers returning from war or First Nations lawyers who were not allowed to fight for the rights of their people.

***European: [choose one person who does not have a yellow card and ask them to leave their blanket and stand somewhere nearby on the floor]*:**You were enfranchised – you’re a First Nations teacher, lawyer, doctor or veteran so you’ve lost your Indian status and have left your community. **(ask to take their necklace)**

***Narrator:*** In 1878, the Michel Band enter into Treaty 6 lead by Iroquois/Métis Chief Michel Callihoo and receive a reserve just northwest of Edmonton near the present day town of Callihoo. Just like the Papaschase reserve, the Band is pressured under fraudulent circumstances to surrender much of their land to serve the needs of European newcomers. Beginning in the 1920’s, many Michel Band families are enfranchised so they could have the same rights and freedoms afforded by other Canadian citizens, such as the right to vote, pursue post-secondary education and to remove themselves from the shackles of the Indian Act. After World War II, additional pressure is placed on Michel Band members to enfranchise as there was a greater need for agricultural land for returning veterans. Some Band members who had served in the war apply for enfranchisement as they could not access veteran’s benefits that other Canadians received who had served in the same war. In 1958, the Michel Band becomes the first and only First Nation community to involuntary enfranchise under pressure from the government. In 1985, many Michel Band members regained their Indian status but have yet to receive back any of their previous land.

***European: [choose a group of people on a blanket]:*** You represent members of the Papaschase and Michel Bands who are pressured into surrendering your reserves. You are forced to give up your lands, your rights, your treaty status and are "converted to Canadian citizens." Your reserves no longer exist. Please find a spot on the floor nearby. **(ask to take their necklaces)**

***Scroll 16: Assimilation (ah-sim-ill-EH-shun).*** The government thought the “Indian problem” would solve itself as more and more Indigenous people died from diseases and others became part of the larger Canadian society. As one government employee said, the government’s goal was “to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and that there is no Indian problem and no Indian Department.”

*-Indian Affairs deputy superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott*

***European:*** You had to become more like the Europeans by giving up your rights, farming, going to school and praying in church like us. Even when you are finding success as a farmer on your reserve, the government creates new policies to make it more difficult for you to succeed. One of these policies is the 1889 “Peasant Farming” Policy. This policy forces you to abandon machine farming, which you are very successful at, and forces you to use simple hand held implements on small parcels of land which severely limit your production. This policy is created to protect the livelihood and incomes of the European settlers as many of you as Indigenous people are having more success than them with farming. Also around this time, the Pass and Permit system is introduced which has devastating effects on First Nations farming and is blamed for the failure of your farming initiatives. The Pass system comes into effect during and after the 1885 Riel Resistance to monitor and restrict the freedom of First Nations people. It gives the Indian agents and farm instructors great power in the flow of goods in and out of the reserve, where First Nations farmers have to obtain permits to sell goods. Sometimes permits are not granted or are granted too late which cause the goods to rot.

***Show Pass/Permit picture (Slide 12).***

***European: Place the residential school blanket on the floor at a distance from the others.***

***Scroll 17: Residential Schools.*** From 1820 until the 1970s, the federal government took First Nations, Inuit and Métis children from our homes and communities and put them in boarding schools that were run by churches. The official partnership between the federal government and the churches ended in the 1970’s but some churches continued to operate schools until the 1990’s. As parents, we didn’t have a choice about this. Sometimes the police arrived to take our children away. These schools were often very far from our homes and our kids had to stay at them all or most of the year. Mostly they were not allowed to speak our languages and were punished if they did. Often they weren’t given enough food. The last Indian residential school closed in 1996.

### European: *If participants have dolls, carefully take some of them away at this time and put them on residential school blanket. Separate the girls and boys.*

***Show Edmonton Indian Residential School picture (Slide 13).***

***Scroll 18: Edmonton Indian Residential School.*** In operation from 1924 to 1966, the Edmonton Indian Residential School covered grades 1 to 8 and operated on the half day system. Classes were held in the morning and vocational training, otherwise known as farming, took place in the afternoon. Students came from as far away as British Columbia and Saskatchewan. The school was located in St. Albert and the main building was lost in the year 2000 due to fire. Some buildings still remain and are located near the Poundmaker’s Lodge Treatment Centre.

***Narrator:*** All people with yellow cards, raise your hands. (pause) You must now move to the blue plaid, empty blanket. You represent those who were taken out of your communities and placed in residential schools far from your homes. **(ask to take their necklaces)**

***The European should guide the participants with yellow cards to the residential school blanket and separate males and females.***

***Show picture of Thomas Moore (Slide 14)***

***Scroll 19: Life at the Schools.*** Upon arrival at the schools, children were required to exchange their clothing for school issued clothing and each student was issued a number to identify them. Children’s hair was then cut short. Older brothers were separated from younger brothers and older sisters were separated from younger sisters. Brothers and sisters were separated from each other and they, along with other boys and girls, were rarely allowed to speak to each other. Students went from eating nutritious food that their parents hunted, fished or harvested to eating food that had little or no nutritional value. Quite often, the school staff ate very well while a lot of the children were left hungry and malnourished. The schools were very often poorly constructed which made for dangerous conditions and which lead to various health conditions for the students.

* Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015

***Narrator:*** While some students say they had positive experiences at the schools, most of you say that you suffered from very bad conditions and from different kinds of abuse. Many of you lost family connections and didn’t learn your language, culture and traditions. Because you grew up in the schools and rarely went home, many of you never learned how to be good parents. Some students died at the schools. Many of you never returned home, or were treated badly if you did.

***The European should hand the envelope with the letter folded inside to one of the residential school students.***

***Letter in Envelope***

Dear Mom and Dad,

Just thought I’d drop you a few lines to let you know that I’m all right and hoping you are the same. I just want to thank all of you for sending those wonderful presents…

Well mom and dad the main reason for my writing is that I want to go home. I’m not homesick or anything, just…this morning at 2 a.m. [he] woke us up and started to preach to us on how stupid the Indian was…Then this morning at 5 a.m. [he] got us up to go and scrub the basement. It was there I decided I’d like to go home because [he] slapped me around for not getting a haircut that morning…so don’t be surprised if you see me home pretty soon. I was planning to try to stick out the whole term, but [he] threw a monkey-wrench into my plans.

P.S. the Christmas I spent here was the worst one in my whole life.

—letter from Edmonton Indian Residential School student to his parents, Jan. 8, 1962.

***European:*** The person with the yellow index card marked with an “X”, please step off the blanket. You represent one of the thousands of children who died at the schools or who died later as a result of your experience. ***Pause for the person to leave the blanket.*** (about 10 sec)

***European: Choose someone who was not alone on their blanket and say to them:***

You can go home but those in your community, please turn your backs on the returning person.

**Wait for them to return to their blanket and if needed, quietly remind the others to turn their back on them.**

This represents the isolation that was often experienced when people came home from residential school, not being able to speak your language, not relating to your family or losing part of your identity. Those with a yellow card with **a dot on it,** please find a spot on the floor nearby. You represent those whose connection to your family and community was broken and you never made it home.

***Narrator:*** Please be silent for another moment to honour those who died, were shunned or lost connection to their family and community because of residential schools. (about 10 seconds)

***Scroll 20:*** “I want Canadians to understand that (the legacy of residential schools) does not just affect the lives of the person who actually attended the school, but family members, such as spouses and children, are also very deeply affected about this sad legacy in history.”

* *Johanne Coutu-Autut, spouse of former Turquetil Hall resident*

***Scroll 21:*** “You have to remember that the Canadian government has done a lot to Aboriginal people that was meant to make us become like Europeans. For example, in residential schools, my grandmother told me you couldn’t speak our language or you’d get beaten; you couldn’t see your parents – things like that. We didn’t have voting rights for a long time. We also lost a lot of our culture.” - *Heather, a Cree youth from a community in Saskatchewan*

***Narrator***: The residential schools are not just part of our history. Children and grandchildren of people who went to the schools feel the impacts. Many former students are alive today and some have had a chance to tell their story to Canadians through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But Indigenous children are still treated differently. Your schools don’t get as much money. Today you are even more likely to be taken from your communities but this time you are being placed in foster care.

***Scroll 22:*** From the 1960s to the 1980s, thousands of First Nations and Métis children were forced illegally from their homes and adopted or fostered, usually by non-Aboriginal people. This period is known as the 60s scoop. Many of these kids experienced violence, racism and abuse and lost connection to their identity and culture. Like residential schools, the purpose of the 60s scoop was assimilation.

***European - go up to someone who is still on their blanket and ask them to stand next to the Foster Home/Adoption House. Say to them****:* You represent a child apprehended from your community during the 60s scoop. You were not able to reintegrate into your extended family and territory, leaving you with a sense of loss.**(ask to take their necklace)**

Please be silent for a moment to pay tribute to the children taken from their homes. **(Play Mommy’s Little Guy - Slide 15)**

***Europeans S L O W L Y and GENTLY collect remaining babies, carrying them like babies and place them in the Foster Care/Adoption bin.***

***European: Approach one of the residential school survivors and say the following:*** As a result of the poorly constructed schools, the lack of proper clothing and the poor diet you encountered at the residential school, many years later you continue to suffer from various health conditions such as chronic bronchitis and diabetes.

***European: Approach the residential school survivor who went home and say the following:*** After you left residential school and returned to your community, you struggled with finding your identity. You no longer spoke your language which caused you a lot of shame. You had difficulty with relationships including those with your family. You eventually had children, including a daughter, who became one of the estimated 1,200 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada. Today, you continue to search for her in order to find out what happened and to bring some closure to your life.

***Scroll 23:* Shannen’s Dream.**Shannen Koostachin, a youth education advocate from Attawapiskat First Nation in Ontario, had a dream: safe and comfy schools and culturally based education for First Nations children and youth.

***Scroll 24:*** Shannen said “I want to tell you what it is like to never have the chance to feel excited about being educated....It’s hard to feel pride when our classrooms are cold, and the mice run over our lunches and when you don’t have proper resources like libraries and science labs. You know that kids in other communities have proper schools. So you begin to feel as if you are a child who doesn’t count for anything... We want our younger brothers andsisters to go to school thinking that school is a time for hopesand dreams of the future. Every kid deserves this.”

***Narrator:*** Shannen worked tirelessly to try to convince the federal government to give First Nations children a proper education. Unfortunately, she passed away in a car accident at the age of 15 before her dream could come true. But her dream did come true. On June 22, 2012—the day Shannen would have graduated—construction started for a new school in Attawapiskat. The [new school opened in August 2014](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/new-attawapiskat-school-opens-today-1.2750480). Shannen remains an important role model for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people who continue to carry her dream for safe and comfy schools for all First Nations children in Canada. Please unfold one corner of your blankets and give yourselves a round of applause for the young Indigenous leaders like Shannen who are bringing about positive change.

***Show Shannen Koostachin Monument (Slide 16).***

***Scroll 25: Broken promises.*** Over the years, more than 70 per cent of the land set aside for us in the treaties has been lost or stolen and big companies are allowed to make lots and lots of money from Indigenous lands and natural resources. One example is the De Beers Victor Mine which is [one of the richest diamond mines in the western world](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/07/26/biggest_diamond_ever_found_and_processed_in_canada_unearthed_near_attawapiskat.html). Just east of the mine is Attawapiskat, one of the most poverty-stricken First Nations communities in the province. We, the Indigenous peoples, get little but the pollution from any of the companies that don’t respect the Earth and future generations are left to clean up the mess**.**

***European: Approach one of the residential school survivors and say the following:***

After you left residential school, you struggled to deal with the abuses you encountered. You eventually turned to drugs and alcohol which lead to unemployment and homelessness. You lived for years in the inner city streets of Edmonton and the hard life you lived finally caught up to you. Family members were unaware of your passing and they did not attend your funeral. Please have a seat.

***Narrator:*** The government tries in many different ways to assimilate you. For example, in 1969 they introduced the White paper that tries to get rid of your Indian Status, reserve lands and treaties which threatens your rights and identity. Harold Cardinal of the Indian Association of Alberta helps lead the resistance and creates what becomes known as the Red Paper. The Red Paper says that “the only way to maintain Indian culture is to remain as Indians.”

***Scroll 26:*** “First Nations are nations. First Nations (treaty people) signed over 300 treaties with the Europeans during the 1700’s and 1800’s. The treaties agreed to share the lands and resources with the immigrants. ...Under existing legislation, treaty people are “sovereign” nations. ...The Indians surrendered over 9.9 million square kilometers of their land to the immigrants. Today, the sons of the immigrants have the largest treaty rights in Canada. The Indians have become the poorest peoples in Canada.”

* *Chief Pascall Bighetty, Pukatawagan First Nation*

***Narrator:*** Despite the Government of Canada’s centuries of efforts to take away your identity, as Indigenous peoples you have continued to resist and to pass down your languages, ceremonies, and much more.

***Scroll 27:***

Despite direct assimilation attempts

Despite the Residential School Systems

Despite the strong influences of the Church in Métis communities to ignore and deny our Aboriginal heritage

Despite not having a land base

And despite our own diversity in heritage

We are still able to say we are proud to be Métis

We are resilient as a weed, and beautiful as a wildflower

We have much to celebrate and be proud of

* *Christi Belcourt, Métis artist*

***European:*** In the midst of a nationwide policy of assimilation, there are numerous examples of Indigenous peoples who worked tirelessly to keep their culture and control of their own education. One example took place in 1970 where members of the Saddle Lake First Nation in Alberta occupied the residential school in their community. They peacefully took over the building and transformed it into the first Indigenous controlled education centre in Canada called Blue Quills College. This inspired a movement across the country for ‘Indian control of Indian education’. Many students have graduated from post-secondary schools such as Blue Quills, Maskwacis Cultural College, Yellowhead Tribal College, Old Sun Community College and Red Crow Community College which offer post-secondary programs and promote pride in Indigenous knowledge.

***Scroll 28:*** We have language immersion programs and healing initiatives based on our traditional values. Our Elders are passing on land-based skills to our youth and mothers and grandmothers are working to address violence in our nations by reinstating ceremonies that honour women. Our leaders are using the courts to have our rights recognized and many of our nations are growing. We see treaties as living agreements that, if respected, will allow people from all backgrounds to share the land peacefully and respectfully. We are strong and resilient having survived centuries of efforts to make us disappear.

***European:*** In 2007, a step was taken to improve the way Indigenous peoples are treated - the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* became part of international law. This is an agreement among the world’s governments that is a minimum standard to make sure Indigenous peoples survive. Canada was one of the last countries to agree to the *Declaration*. Now we need to make sure it’s put into action. Please unfold one small corner of your blankets to honour the people who wrote the *Declaration* and worked to get it adopted.

***Scroll 29:***“To us the answer is not about incremental change, it is not about just concrete action, it is also repairing the relationship. And the way to repair the relationship between us and Canada is to have this country acknowledge that its richness and its wealth come from their one‐sided interpretation of the treaties. There has to be henceforth a double understanding of what those treaties represent.”

* *Ovide Mercredi, Crown-First Nations Gathering 2012*

***European:*** Thanks to the courage of survivors, Canadians started to find out about residential schools. Former students negotiated a settlement agreement that included a court ordered apology. Here is an excerpt from that 2008 apology from the former Prime Minister:

***European:*** “To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and

communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.”

***Narrator:*** On June 1, 2008, and as part of the Indian Residential Schools Agreement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is launched. The mandate of the Commission is to inform Canadians about what happened at Residential Schools. The Commission travelled across Canada listening to Survivor stories and held seven national events including one in Edmonton from March 27 - 30, 2014. Initially, the Government of Canada refused to provide archived documents to the Commission which resulted in the Commission winning a court case to obtain the documents. In June 2015, the TRC releases it’s final report which documents the true history of the schools. It also releases 94 Calls to Action which call on various organizations, including government, the legal system and the education system to foster and promote reconciliation. One of the positive legacies of the TRC is the creation of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation located in Winnipeg, MB which is a place of learning and dialogue where the truths of survivor experiences can be honoured and kept safe for future generations. To acknowledge this step forward, please unfold another small corner of your blanket.

***Scroll 30:***“The role of culture within the reconciliation process, I think, is that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures alike must respect one another in light of their historical experiences - they have to see eye to eye on healing, so to speak. By this, I mean that there needs to be maximized understanding and trust built between the cultures involved.”

* *David Joanasie, from the Kinngait (Cape Dorset) Inuit Community*

***European: Approach one of the residential school survivors and say the following:***

After your return home from residential school, you eventually attended a postsecondary institution where you obtained a degree in law. You also sought out teachings from Elders where you learned about your ceremonies, culture and much more. Later on, you embarked on a career as a lawyer to help fight for the rights of Indigenous people and for Treaty rights. You continue to speak your language, attend ceremonies, be connected to your community and walk between two worlds. Congratulations **(shake their hand)**

***Scroll 31:***“Our leaders need to show the way, but no matter how many deals and agreements they make, it is in our daily conversations and interactions that our success as a nation in forging a better place, will ultimately be measured. It is what we say to and about each other in public and private that we need to look at changing.”

- *Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair*

*Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*

***Scroll 32:*** “In terms of this idea of guilt, we should know our history and our history isn’t very pretty here but I can’t answer for what happened 50 years ago. But if my grandchildren ask me what I did in my life in terms of this issue and there hasn’t been an improvement then I certainly should feel guilt and I don’t want to and I don’t think any Canadian wants to.”

* *Former Prime Minister Paul Martin*

***Narrator:*** But the violence of colonization has left a lot of pain; and all across Canada, the relationship between Indigenous people and newcomers is often broken. We don’t need more broken promises. **We need a new relationship** and **we need real change**. Good words and good ideas aren’t enough—we need to take action together. We have lots of children, youth and adults to inspire us, from lots of different backgrounds and communities. Let’s join our efforts to theirs. ( 10 second PAUSE) Look around, remember what it looked like when we started the exercise and what it looks like now. Hold these images in your minds.

***Scroll 33:*** There is much to celebrate in the First Nation culture. There is a richness and wealth of wisdom in the traditions and ceremonies. One of the ways we celebrate is through dance. The round dance is performed by Native peoples all across North America. The Plains Cree hold their Round Dances in the fall and winter, once the hunting and trapping seasons are over. Originally a healing dance, it became a social dance, and in its current form serves both social and ceremonial functions.

***Narrator:***  We began our exercise in a circle and will finish in a circle. We believe that everything is connected and part of a larger whole. And that in a circle we are all equal! All participants who are no longer on the blankets please rejoin the group and we will finish our exercise in unity and in celebration, as this is our way forward. (Play one verse of the Round Dance Song)

Please return to your chairs and we will debrief and close with a sharing circle. Our sharing circle abides by the Tribes four agreements:

1) mutual respect,

2) attentive listening,

3) right to pass, and

4) appreciations only (no put-downs).

This is your opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings about the Blanket Exercise in a safe, non-judgmental space.

***Facilitators, please share first.***

***After the sharing circle please say:***

We recognize that for some of you this may have stirred up some unexpected emotions.

It is important for you to take care of these emotions. If you need to talk, please reach out and talk to someone. Know that you can talk to your teacher, school counsellor, or principal.

This concludes the Blanket Exercise. Thank you for sharing and being a part of the Blanket Exercise today.