

Dear families,

Your child(ren) and their peers will soon be beginning a series of ten sessions on the theme of Truth, Healing and Reconciliation between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people in the land known as Canada. We will be including you in this journey through “Taking-it-Home” letters, which will keep you informed about what we’ve done each week, and will provide suggestions for how to continue the reflection together throughout the week.

Ongoing feedback on the Reflection Guide experience is welcome, as these are living documents that will grow and change as we do. If you have feedback as family members of a child in this group, please pass it on to the facilitators.

Below are the Adult Enduring Understandings and their child-friendly versions that we hope will be shared by all children by the end of the program:

- J As Unitarian Universalists, the work of Truth, Healing and Reconciliation is grounded in our seven Principles which we live out through our actions.
 - o *We do the work of Truth, Healing and Reconciliation because of our seven Unitarian Universalist Principles.*

- J Reconciliation requires affirming each person’s worth and dignity and better understanding ourselves and others.
 - o *Understanding ourselves and others is the key to creating a better world.*

- J Uncovering implicit bias and privilege is essential when developing meaningful relationships and partnerships
 - o *To move forward with a good relationship, we have to learn from the past, respond to the hurt in the present, and treat each other with respect and dignity.*

- J Truth-telling about our shared history and present realities is a first step and at the heart of the journey of reconciliation. In order for that to be effective, it must be done in a way that touches our hearts, minds, bodies and spirits.
 - o *In order to heal from the past, we have to listen to the stories of the people who lived it and their families.*

- J Settler colonization has been an intentional, systemic undertaking to assimilate Indigenous peoples into a European way of life in order to gain control of their traditional lands and resources. This process is ongoing and complex.
 - o *Settler colonization is the process of one group of people arriving in another group’s territory, claiming it for their own, and trying to make everyone who lives there look, think, act, and live like them. This is what is happening in Canada.*

- J Despite centuries of attempted cultural genocide, Indigenous peoples and many of their cultures are resilient, adaptive, and contemporary.
 - o *Indigenous peoples have done more than survive; today, they are sharing their cultures as they grow and change.*

- J Our strength lies in appreciating and learning from the similarities and differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews which contribute to fair, inclusive and healthy communities for all people.
 - o *We all become better when we share with and learn from people who live differently than us.*

- J Reconciliation is a complex process involving acknowledging the truth about our history, addressing current injustices and restoring balance in the power relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. As Unitarian Universalists, we commit to this journey with open spirits, hearts, minds, and hands.
 - o *It's important to acknowledge the different kinds of power we all have in order to treat each other fairly.*

- J Non-Indigenous people are responsible for learning how to be useful allies to Indigenous peoples in their ongoing struggles for justice and healing.
 - o *Non-Indigenous people should follow the lead of Indigenous people while we work for justice together.*

- J As Unitarian Universalists, we promise to do the work of Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation with open hearts, minds, spirits and hands.
 - o *As Unitarian Universalists, we promise to do this with open hearts, minds, spirits, and hands.*

The activities we do at church have a better chance of being integrated into your child(ren)'s developing understanding of the world if they are also supported at home.

After each session...

Show curiosity about what your child(ren) is/are experiencing. The topics and activities will vary from week to week, and it is likely that your child(ren) may have some strong emotions and thoughts surface at any point. Provide a safe space in which to process these thoughts and feelings. Validate their feelings and remind them that knowing this history is not about feeling guilty, but rather about learning from the past. Remember that there are people in the church community that are available to support both you and your child, such as [your minister, DRE/DSE/DLL, etc.].

Explore the topic further together...

Discuss what your child(ren) is(are) learning. What did they know about colonialism before beginning the Reflection Guide? What did they learn that was new? How is their prior knowledge or lack of knowledge related to their identities and experience? How do they feel about this?

Try a family activity. Ask me for more suggestions; I will have a copy of a Resource List that includes relevant books and multimedia resources for upper and lower elementary ages. Ask your librarian for recommendations of children's books about the Indian Residential School System. Make efforts to learn more about the Indigenous nations who traditionally occupied the land you live on. Look up any family friendly activities that are hosted by a local Indigenous group and attend them together.

Engage in your own process of learning and reconciliation. Find out if your congregation is offering any programs for adults on the theme of Reconciliation and if you are able, participate.

We look forward to walking with your family on the journey to reconciliation. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

In faith,

Pamela Smith-Loeters
Director of Lifespan Learning at the Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga
905 276 5622 dll@uucm.ca