

John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights

Advancing Reconciliation in Education

Three Day Professional Development Series for Teachers

In 2016, the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights engaged in a collaborative pilot project with five schools in Edmonton Catholic and Edmonton Public School Boards. The program applied a reconciliation through a human rights-based lens, exploring a variety of topics including the history of Residential Schools, the Blanket Exercise, Treaty, Worldview, Indigenous Language, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Children's Rights. After the first exploration, Advancing Reconciliation in Education facilitated the participation of students in a process of building their own calls to action. Those calls to action were captured in art forms, videos, documents, a zine, and concrete actions that affected their school communities in positive ways. Permanent displays featuring student learning and messages to survivors of residential schools and a treaty recognition poster contest are some of the school-wide initiatives that students have moved forward on.

This project inspired the creation of a pedagogical resource directed to teachers and community trainers with a full curriculum (lessons, activities, etc) to provide teachers across the province with a meaningful process to educate on reconciliation. The relevance of this toolkit is strengthened by the fact that it was built with community and student participation and based on the experience of Human Rights educators who piloted the sessions in schools with the support and guidance of local indigenous knowledge holders and elders.

<https://www.jhcentre.org/reconciliation-in-schools/>

The Advancing Reconciliation in Education Professional Development Series workshops provide the opportunity to work through the toolkit and learn skills and processes to apply that knowledge in the classroom. JHC will provide a framework for teachers to introduce and work through Canada's complex and challenging history, while inspiring action and understanding in schools and the broader community.

This series equips teachers with skills to be in accordance with the new Teacher Quality Standard set by Alberta Education in the areas of Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Metis, Inuit, Fostering Effective Relationships, and Establishing Inclusive Learning Environments.

"Education, or what passed for it, got us into this situation, and education is what will lead us out. Schools seem to us to be one of the best vehicles to create and sustain a change in the attitude of all Canadians to the nature of the relationship that must exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this country."

Murray Sinclair

Session One: Starting the Conversation

The first full day workshop provides a starting point to open conversations about our shared history and a framework for introducing Truth and Reconciliation in the classroom. This first day aims to create a safe and supportive space for teachers to work through some important questions about teaching reconciliation in an age appropriate way. In this session facilitators introduce the toolkit and provide a grounding in some foundational principles for reconciliation: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and local Treaties. Participants have the opportunity to learn from a local Elder/Knowledge Keeper who lead us in ceremony, share teachings and help work through some of the questions and barriers that may arise. Cross cultural dialogue about reconciliation in schools is fundamental to the day, as well as the sharing of best practices and introducing the sessions of the toolkit.

Session Two: Truth Before Reconciliation

The second full day workshop provides participants the opportunity to delve deeper into activities and topics of the toolkit. This session demonstrates collaborative, participatory learning activities to discuss Treaty, UNDRIP and Reclaiming Indigenous Language and Worldview in education and explore alternative pedagogies for the classroom. The JHC models age appropriate ways to bring these concepts into the classroom and engages with a local Indigenous knowledge keeper to explore the local context of these topics.

Session Three: Turning Knowledge into Action

This third and last session is also a hands on workshop designed to explore how teachers can hold space for difficult topics and use student participation and art-making to help students process our colonial history, express their feelings about Canada's past, and bring students to recognize their agency through art and activism. The Calls to Action process is an important way for students of all ethnic and racial backgrounds to recognize that their voices are valued, that they can be agents of change, and contribute to meaningful conversations and actions in their school and community. In this workshop, we model process, present concrete examples of students' work, and provide teachers with practical tools and examples to implement the process in their classroom. Teachers also walk away with a clear idea and strategy of how to respectfully connect with local community resources to support the journey they will begin with their students.

Facilitator Bios:

Lead Facilitator

Chelsea Burke

Education Lead and Program Facilitator

Having grown up in East Vancouver, on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish People, Chelsea has been steeped in a quintessentially Canadian multicultural, multiple perspective environment. She has an Education degree from the University of Alberta with a minor in Social Studies. Chelsea's focus in education is based on discovery and inquiry and in connecting learning to the many innovations in indigenous knowledge, social movements, art, media and technology to facilitate a sense of agency and connection to our communities. She values grassroots action that comes from a sense of personal passion and commitment to help work through the myriad of issues facing humanity today; and is honoured to work with an organization like John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights that has been doing this so passionately for many years.

Co-Facilitators (one additional facilitator depending on availability)

Maigan van der Giessen

Creative Lead and Program Facilitator

Maigan van der Giessen was raised on Treaty 6 territory and works as an artist, activist, human rights facilitator and youth mentor. She graduated from the UofA's Political Science department in 2012 with a minor in Middle Eastern and African studies. Maigan is passionate about the intersection of artistic expression and artistic resistance. In her role as Creative Lead for the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights, Maigan uses community arts and dialogue as tools to facilitate deeper understanding and exploration of social justice issues. Her approach to creating social change focuses on providing space and opportunities for marginalized voices and grassroots movements to document and express their perspectives on critical issues.

Angelica Quesada

Program Facilitator

Originally from Colombia, Angelica is a PhD student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta where she is working on the relations between settlers, immigrants, newcomers and Indigenous peoples in Canada. She leads facilitation and coordination of a Prairies region hub for Righting Relations, an initiative to strengthen economic and political justice and decolonization in Canada through adult education and community organizing. Angelica also has served as a Settlement Practitioner with the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association (EISA) and continues her work in this area today in her work teaching courses in the Immigrants/Refugees Specialization of the Community Support Worker Program (CSW) Program at NorQuest College.

Tisha Raj

Project & Communications Coordinator

Tisha Raj immigrated from tropical Malaysia to Edmonton in 2008. She graduated from MacEwan University in 2016 armed with a major in sociology and a minor in political science. During her time at MacEwan University, she successfully published a feature article in Earth Common Journal, titled "Who is the King of Sarawak's Rainforest?" describing Canada's role in the mass deforestation happening in Malaysia due to power politics and corruption within the Malaysian government. Tisha credits her family to having a deep interest in the world of journalism and travel. She is in constant pursuit to learn about the human rights work of local organizations and communities across the globe. At the moment, she is on a journey of drawing parallels on

post-colonialism between Malaysia and other countries specifically Turtle Island. When she is not swimming in work and learning, Tisha enjoys a good brunch outing with friends, petting dogs and writing snail mail to friends and family around the world. She hopes to one day pursue her dream career in the world of international development and environmental sustainability.

Renée Vaugeois

Executive Director

Originating from Wildwood Alberta in Treaty Six territory, Renee has been building and facilitating human rights education, dialogue and training for fifteen years. Renee has her Master's of Arts in Political Science from the University of Alberta with a focus on political economy and global governance. She is an active community organizer leading advocacy work with groups such as the Edmonton Coalition for Human Rights and Justice. She has founded and is current Treasurer of Ainembabazi Children's Project, an organization that since 2005 has been committed to strengthening children's rights in East Africa through building self reliant families and communities. She is also a long standing member of the Alberta Hate Crimes Committee; a coalition of law enforcement and organizations working to address hate in the province through strengthening community response as well as law enforcement standards and capacity.