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IMAGINE A CANADA

Celebrating Youth-Visions for Reconciliation

CONTENTS

WELCOME <i>page 5</i>	<i>Madeleine Morrison</i> ROYAL BAY SECONDARY SCHOOL <i>page 11</i>	<i>Robin Chokomolin</i> CANADORE COLLEGE <i>page 19</i>	<i>Gina Costantino</i> GRANT PARK HIGH SCHOOL <i>page 24</i>	<i>Anahi Palomec McKenna</i> EARL MARRIOTT SECONDARY SCHOOL <i>page 29</i>
<i>Laurick Corriveau</i> AURORA VIRTUAL SCHOOL <i>page 7</i>	<i>Azumi Konaka</i> KITSILANO SECONDARY SCHOOL <i>page 12</i>	<i>Onadee McKenna</i> ÉCOLE PEACE ARCH ELEMENTARY <i>page 21</i>	<i>Paytyn Robinson</i> R.D. PARKER COLLEGIATE <i>page 25</i>	<i>Kristin Flattery</i> UNIVERSITY OF MANTIOBA <i>page 31</i>
<i>Josiah Ferguson</i> LANGLEY MEADOWS COMMUNITY SCHOOL <i>page 8</i>	<i>Christopher Sanford Beck</i> HOME SCHOOL <i>page 13</i>	<i>Ella MacNeil</i> LANGLEY MEADOWS COMMUNITY SCHOOL <i>page 22</i>	<i>Kayla Beaulieu</i> ÉCOLE GOLDEN VALLEY SCHOOL <i>page 26</i>	
<i>Nevaeh Murray</i> WEST KENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL <i>page 9</i>	<i>Megan Benoit</i> LORD TWEEDSMUIR SECONDARY SCHOOL <i>page 17</i>	<i>Lara Poulin</i> ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE PIERRE- ELLIOTT- TRUDEAU <i>page 23</i>	<i>Brennan McCullagh</i> ST. JOHN'S- RAVENSCOURT SCHOOL <i>page 27</i>	
<i>Drake Trudeau</i> ASSIGINACK PUBLIC SCHOOL <i>page 10</i>	<i>Angeline Gutierrez-Rain</i> QUEEN ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL <i>page 18</i>		<i>Ariel Shatsky</i> ST. JOHN'S- RAVENSCOURT SCHOOL <i>page 28</i>	



WELCOME

The relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada has been indelibly shaped by the history of residential schools. Through these schools, education was often used as a tool to deny Indigenous peoples the right to raise their children, to speak their languages, to practice their ceremonies and culture. In essence, the residential schools were used to further the policy of assimilation of Indigenous peoples.

The path of reconciliation that lies before us—as individuals, organizations and as a nation—is about creating a better Canada. It is about creating a Canada where Indigenous ceremonies, languages and cultures are celebrated, honored and treasured; where all stand equal in their opportunities for success; where Indigenous knowledge is honored; and where the brutal sting of racism, discrimination and prejudice is forever silenced. It is about creating a just society where social justice and equity prevail.

The *Imagine a Canada* national essay and art initiative seeks to empower youth to play a leading role in this conversation. The young people of Canada will inherit the legacy that we leave to them, and the challenges that lay before them are great. They will have to come to terms with profound environmental challenges, to reverse the tide of hundreds of years of misguided colonial practice and, most importantly, to forge a path of peace and harmony for all.

The featured materials in this anthology represent the selected submissions in this inaugural year of the event. I trust you will find them as inspiring, moving and compelling as the national selection committee has. I wish to thank our partners on the national selection committee: Legacy of Hope Foundation, KAIROS Canada, Canadians for a New Partnership, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and Canadian Teachers' Federation.

The future is filled with hope with these bright young minds leading the way. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is honoured to share their voices with you.

Sincerely,



RY MORAN
DIRECTOR
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TRUTH
AND RECONCILIATION





**LAURICK
CORRIVEAU**

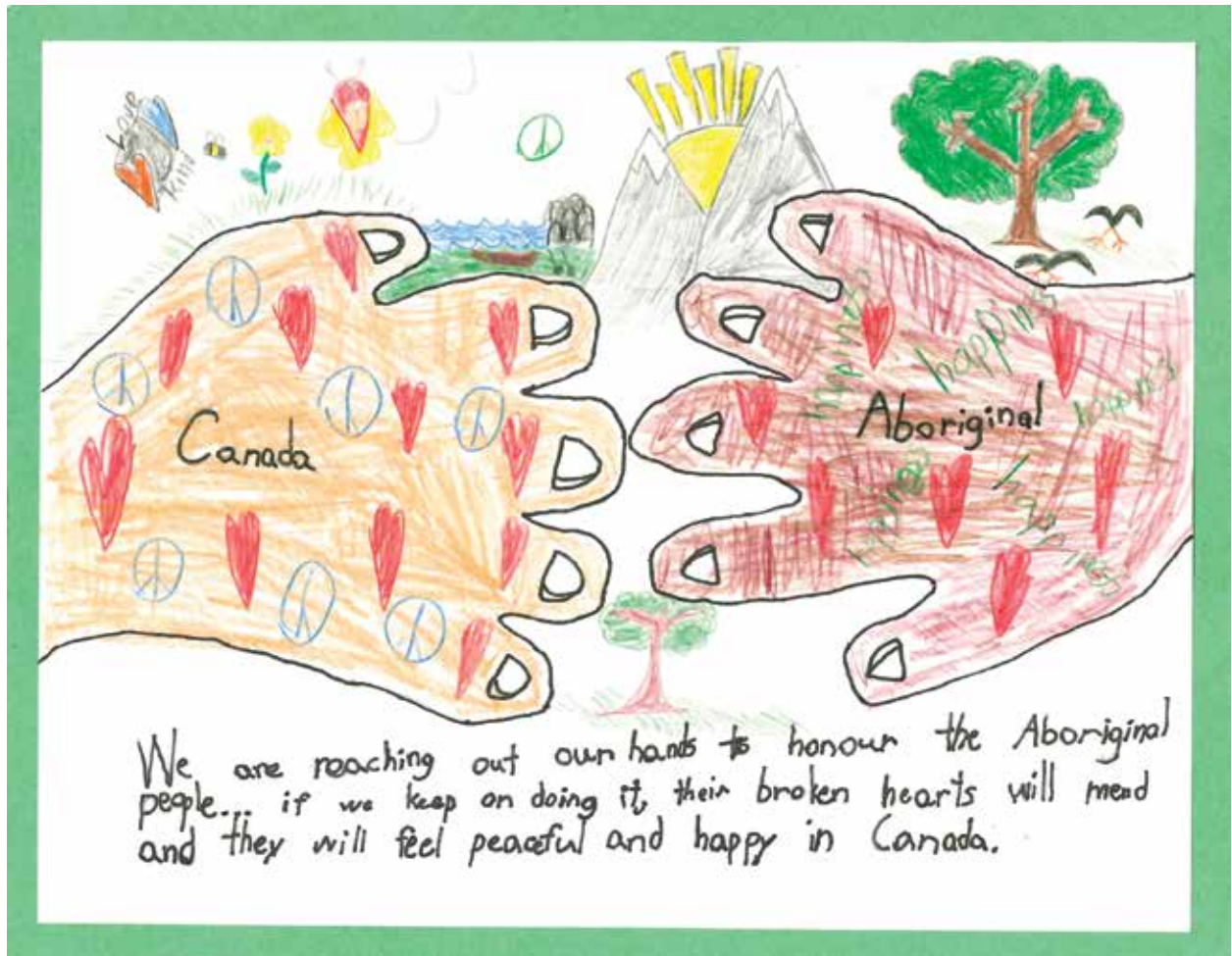
Recipient

AURORA
VIRTUAL
SCHOOL

Carcross, Yukon

GRADE 2





**JOSIAH
FERGUSON**

Recipient

LANGLEY
MEADOWS
COMMUNITY
SCHOOL

*Langley,
British Columbia*

GRADE 3



**NEVAEH
MURRAY**

Recipient

WEST KENT
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL

*Charlottetown,
Prince Edward Island*

GRADE 6



**DRAKE
TRUDEAU***Recipient***ASSIGINACK
PUBLIC
SCHOOL***Wikwemikong,
Ontario***GRADE 6**

Mskoomnehs diznakaaz, Drake zhaaganashi diznikaaz. Chechock Dodem, Odawa Endow. Mnidoo Mnissing Doojiba, Wiikwemkoong endaaying.

Boozhoo.

My Nookmis went to residential school in Spanish, Ontario, when she was a little girl. You see, her family life at home wasn't great, so the family thought it was best to let my Nookmis and her sisters go away to school. My Nookmis is smart and really busy, always going to meetings and working at being Anishinabe.

I go to school at Assiginack Public School in the neighbouring community off the reserve, even though there is a school on my reserve. My parents tell me that the services are not same, because there aren't enough helpers in the classroom, and my parents wanted to make sure I get help. When I first went to school at Assiginack, there were many things I found to be different. There is a district-wide speech competition that I never had to participate in before. There was music and a choir. I got to go on trips to see plays, ski trips, and half of our school got a week at Tim Horton's camp. So far, the kids on my reserve aren't getting the same chance to experience those things.

At Assiginack Public School, we can use the classroom iPads, chrome books, and laptops, and we complete a lot of assignments through a classroom link through the internet for learning. The

kids on my reserve won't be able to compete with the rest of the kids because there isn't enough money to buy iPads for every class to use on the reserve.

On some days, the kids on my reserve have different PD days than the school district. My parent tell me its because the reserve school is a private board.

Imagine if not just the off-reserve kids got iPads for learning, and got to learn using modern technology like the rest of us?

Imagine if there was enough help in the classroom with teachers' aides to help students keep up?

Imagine if there were no off-reserve and on-reserve differences?

My Nookmis is busy using her language and culture because the residential schools wouldn't let her use Anishnabemowin. Imagine if I knew more Anishnabemowin than just my name and where I live.

Imagine if you understood what I said in the beginning. Imagine a Canada where we all understand each other? It would be more beautiful.

Imagine!

**MADELEINE
MORRISON***Recipient*ROYAL BAY
SECONDARY
SCHOOL*Colwood,
British Columbia*

GRADE 9

IMAGINE A CANADA

Imagine a Canada of growth:
A racist joke not uttered.
A tree sprouting with
acceptance,
Leaf by leaf, branch by branch.
A clean slate,
Everyone an equal.

Imagine a Canada of respect:
Condolences expressed,
6,000 lives remembered,
150,000 more kept in mind.
Culture and language are celebrated,
The boom, boom, boom of drums are
not mocked,
But embraced.

Imagine a Canada of hope:
An opportunity at every door,

Each and every person achieves
their full potential.
We are open,
We are passionate,
We thrive.

Imagine a Canada,
Where the background we
hold is not strange,
Just unique and cherished.

Imagine Canadians, who
all have courage,
And stand as one.



**AZUMI
KONAKA***Recipient***KITSILANO
SECONDARY
SCHOOL***Vancouver,
British Columbia***GRADE 9****IMAGINE A CANADA...**

The First Nations people of Canada are mistreated. From the residential schools to the missing and murdered Aboriginal women, Indigenous people have suffered through the last couple centuries. I can imagine the painful struggles that Aboriginal people face daily, just like I can imagine a better Canada.

Indigenous cultures, traditions and languages have been disappearing ever since the creation of the residential school system. The physical, mental and sexual abuse that Native children endured in these schools is a horrible part of Canadian history and still has negative effects on Indigenous people to this day. In my vision of an ideal Canada, I imagine a Canada where Native people regain what the residential schools stole from them. Where Aboriginal people are able to rediscover their Native cultures.

Not only did Canada take away Native cultures, they took Native territories. When I visited the Musqueam reserve last summer and I saw how small that reserve was, I was confused and frustrated. I did not understand why the people who have lived on this land for thousands of years get such a small percentage of the land when the Europeans who “discovered Canada” a few hundred years ago get most of the land. When I envision the future of Canada, I imagine a country where everybody is able to share the land and resources amongst each other. I imagine a place where Canadians respect that

they are living in Native homes and that they are visitors, not owners.

The ongoing cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women are another issue we have in Canada. Many Aboriginal people have close relatives who have been missing or murdered. The government has known about this problem for many years, yet the numbers continue to grow each year. In my vision of a perfect Canada, I can see a country that is able to keep these Native women safe from violence and make sure that they are no longer the victims. I envision a Canada that is free from racism and human rights violations. I can imagine a Canada where Indigenous people are respected and acknowledged. Where everybody is treated equally no matter where they come from or what they believe. Where First Nations people are able to speak their languages, practise their traditions and pass on their Native cultures to future generations.

I can imagine a Canada where the real history of this country is taught in schools so that every Canadian citizen knows about the torture Canada has made Native people go through. When will this imagination become the reality?

**CHRISTOPHER
SANFORD
BECK**

Recipient

HOME SCHOOL

*Cochin,
Saskatchewan*

GRADE 10

Treaty Six Territory
June 21st, 2036

Looking back on the past twenty years, I am ever-surprised at how far Canada has come. When I was a boy, growing up in a farming community in rural Saskatchewan, what I am doing now would have never happened. I am taking my two daughters to the local First Nations reserve—for the third day in a row—to attend the culture festival. Quickly becoming an annual tradition for everyone in the area, the culture festival is a week long event celebrating Indigenous history and tradition in Canada. As a country-wide event, each reserve customizes it to reflect its own history and traditions. This has emerged as an extremely effective way to encourage us white folks—and other newcomers to Canada—to learn and grow not only in our own cultures and traditions, but to share in the rich traditions of Canada's First Peoples. The fact that it builds and strengthens intercultural communities is a side benefit. Yesterday there was a powwow, the day before that we partook in a feast and smudge, and today we are gathered for a re-commitment ceremony of the treaty promises that were made so long ago.

Events such as these are not new to me. Growing up in the Saskatoon inner city and attending an elementary school where my siblings and I were the only white students, I was exposed to many Cree traditions and cultural values as a youngster. For that I am forever grateful. It is now my profound joy that these rich teachings can be shared not only with my own children, but with all of the families who live around us. To see the grown-up children from what had been the most racist families in the area bringing their little ones to an event like this warms my heart in a way words can not ade-

quately describe. That now—instead of something that a select few white people would attend for solidarity's sake—everyone in the community can gather together to smudge, feast, and dance.

I think that this is an almost magical shift from where things were at twenty years ago. When I look even further back into the past my awe only multiplies. For someone fifty years ago to imagine a future where farmers and people from the reserve could hold hands together and share in the beauty Canada has to offer would have been unheard of. There would, of course, have been people dreaming of a time like that, working for it, striving for it. But to imagine that an on-reserve culture festival would have become a mainstream tradition may have surpassed even their hopeful imaginations.

When I delve back even further into the past, into things that were already a subject of near legend during my childhood—despite their only recent eradication—I am blown away. To think that one hundred and fifty, even one hundred years ago, children were being forcibly removed from their families and traditions; thrust into an unfamiliar and hostile environment; stripped of their traditional clothing, teachings, and language; and abused, 'educated', and assimilated is unthinkable. Nowadays the residential schools and their legacy sound like a dystopian novel. This is Canada's history.

If I were to tell you that the legacy of the residential schools has completely faded I would be a liar. And is truth not the very basis of reconciliation? Without truth there can be no understanding, no reconciliation, no future. So, as I do not want to undermine how far we have come



since Gordon Indian Residential school—a school run by my own church in my own province—closed its doors in 1996, I will not lie to you: the legacy of residential schools is still alive. Poverty, addiction, and a cultural disconnect are still present in Saskatchewan’s cities and reserves. The difference now is how it is dealt with. There are countless functional support systems in place to guide people—young and old—on their journeys through life. Prisons are no longer filled with poor people and disillusioned youth. In fact, today we are as close to a traditional First Nations society as we have been since first contact. The young people are cared for and mentored by the elders, and likewise, the youth provide for elders and people in need. Cultures and traditions are taught in all schools; to white and Aboriginal people alike. Day by day racism, poverty, and injustice are being replaced with love, understanding, and reconciliation. Every morning is a fresh page in the tome of Canada’s history, and today’s authors are geniuses.

My wife and I each hold the small, tender hand of one of our daughters. The four of us savour the time together as we walk from our farmstead by the lake towards the reserve. It’s mid-summer now and the sun, still high in the sky, warms us pleasantly as we walk. As we pass tall grasses and poplar groves, a rustle at the side of the road grabs our attention.

“What is it, Daddy?”

I peer into the grass for a minute. “I don’t know... Maybe it’s Wesakechak!”

My daughter laughs, imagining her favourite character from Cree legend hiding out in the grass. “Maybe...”

It takes us less than two hours to walk to the reserve; a personal record for us. As we make our way to the powwow grounds we see Mr. Wilson chatting with Mr. Lightfoot and wave at them. Their kids are playing together a few feet away. Tommy Wilson just had his birthday and is admiring the gift from Eagle Lightfoot. My own daughter runs over and says hello to them before rejoining us.

“How goes the battle?” someone behind me asks.

I turn around to see Harold Swiftgrass and his wife, Elaine. Her pregnant belly is protruding even more than the last time we crossed paths. I think I’m as excited for another kid in the community as they are.

“It’s going really well,” I respond with a smile. “Just finished bringing in the hay last week.” “I’m a bit behind on mine. Too many trips into town for ultrasounds and the like, you know how it is.”

“Do I ever,” I respond, remembering how far behind my farm work got when our second child was born. “You know what, Harold, I’ve got a couple free days next week. How’d it be if I came over and helped out for a while?”

Harold grins. “That would be great. In fact, bring the whole family! It’s been too long since we’ve had your whole clan over for supper.”

“Sounds like a plan,” I say.

When we get to the powwow grounds it is packed with people. It looks to me like the whole district has made its way to the reserve. My family’s light skin isn’t out of place at all here. In fact, there’s an incredible mix of backgrounds and cultures gathered here today. A wide mix of people congregated to pay homage to promises that were made so many years ago, and to learn to better understand each other.

I see the new Nigerian family who just moved onto Henry Smith’s old quarter getting to know the Bears. It has been their goal to get to know as many people in the area as they can, and their quest has been accepted by everyone around. As I turn my head, I’m not surprised to see the Ahmadi family helping to set up another tent. They were refugees who made it to Canada about twenty years ago during the Syrian civil war. Ever since then they’ve been a big part of the community.

As well as these relative newcomers I see many faces that have been on this land for generations. In fact, there are families on this reserve that are direct relatives of influential chiefs like Big Bear and Poundmaker. Though leadership of the band has passed through many different families over the

years, they are still a large part of leading the community. Their family background still holds much gravitas. In fact, the great granddaughter of Big Bear is taking on a role as an elder in today's ceremony. It fills my heart with joy to see the unique, multi-cultural blend of people coming together for events like these. From people with roots in the land almost as old as the ground itself, to people just arriving in a new country. This is the joy of reconciliation.

We are all standing side by side, hand in hand, in a great Circle. I see people from all reaches of the globe standing intertwined in a beautiful symbol of togetherness. In the centre of the circle stand the two elders selected for this ceremony: one Cree and one European. Everyone in the circle watches as the two of them look into each others eyes for a moment, allowing the gravity of the gathering to grow fuller in everyone's heart. It is a special moment. A sacred moment. I watch in trepidation as the elders release each others hands and gesture to two small children standing nearby. A boy brings forward a long piece of paper that has been rolled into a tube and tied with ribbon. A girl holds a small wooden box. As the elders take the items from the children, the ceremony commences.

Treaty Six is read out loud for everyone to hear. Unlike the very first time this was declared, there is more to this than the recitation of a legal document. As the vows are read out, each and every person in the circle is asked to reiterate and reconsecrate these promises. And in doing so the very meaning behind the document is shifted. It is no longer a list of give and take, but rather a sacred promise. A promise of interdependence and interconnectedness. Of mutuality.

As the final words of the document are read, all of the people affirm again their commitment to each other. In the pregnant pause that follows, I hear a crash ring out around the powwow grounds. A murmur runs through the crowd.

"What was that?"

The question echoes around the circle.

Just as people are deciding that it was something from the highway, or maybe a thunderclap from above

another town, an old man charges into our circle. His hair is long, grey, and wild. He is dressed all in traditional buckskin clothing and wearing moccasins. His brown, weather-beaten face is a testament to being a man of the land. When he makes it to the centre of the circle he throws himself onto the ground before the elders. His whole body is shaking in exertion and his breath comes in short gasps.

"Mooshum, Kookum," he rasps.
"The-the Sacred Stem."

As he says this, he procures a deerskin pouch from his robes and hands it to the Cree elder. She takes it from him with a gasp.

"It can't be..."

Something from the back of my mind is suddenly joggled. It pushes its way through the muddled confusion of my thoughts until it finally reaches the forefront. I remember an elder telling me something a long time ago... the Sacred Stem is an item of legend in the First Nations tradition, almost like the Holy Grail or the Ark of the Covenant. It is said to be the stem of the pipe smoked at the original signing of the treaty. Sometime after that event, it was lost. As the years passed steadily by, so did its memory, until only a small number of elders even knew its story.

I watch, as slowly, carefully, the elder unwraps the bag and removes something from it. It is a wooden pipe stem. Its smooth length is devoid of any ornamentation, but its beauty is in its simplicity. Though it is in perfect condition, its age is evident in the maturity of its wood.

The elder kneels down to the old man, who has seated himself in the dirt. She whispers something into his ear and then turns her lips to his forehead. She gently kisses his brow and then takes his hand in her own and helps him to his feet. Harold steps forward from the circle and brings the old man to join the rest of the assembly.

I watch, enthralled by the recent happening, as an oskapew steps out from the circle. The young man picks up a pouch of tobacco and a wooden box of



matches from his feet and takes them to the elders. He then takes the wooden box that the little girl had presented and opens it. Inside are two parts of a pipe—the stem and the bowl. He takes out the bowl and hands it to the elder who holds the Sacred Stem. She puts them together and hands the assembled pipe back to the young man. Continuing with the ceremony, he opens up the pouch of tobacco and fills the pipe bowl. When the bowl is full he hands it back to the elders. The two of them hold it between them and bow their heads in a silent prayer. I see them slowly spin the pipe in a circle, pausing as it lands on each of the four directions. I recognize this ritual from my childhood and allow myself an inward smile. When they have completed their prayers, the pipe is proffered to the young man, who lights the tobacco. The elders then smoke the pipe and seal the vows between the people they represent. As the smoky aroma ascends, we all hope that our prayers can be taken with it to the Creator, to seal our covenant.

Once the elders have finished smoking the pipe, they hand it back to the young man. He takes it, and holding it by the bowl, walks clockwise around the interior edge of the circle. When he has completed his round he takes the pipe back to the elders, who smoke it once more. This procedure is repeated three more times until it has made it around the circle four times. Having completed the ceremony, the pipe is emptied, taken apart, and replaced.

“This ends the Treaty Ceremony, but our work for the coming year has just begun,” the elders say together.

At this, everyone in the assembled crowd break into applause and cheering. I release my daughters’ hands and my family joins in the primal cheer. Somewhere behind us a drum begins to beat. As the noise from the circle recedes, the drum music picks up. Its volume heightens until its beat seems to fill my very soul. It merges with my heartbeat and becomes a part of my being, connecting me to the earth and to everyone around me. As a singer’s voice picks up, everyone in the circle begins to dance in a slow, two step rhythm. Around and around we dance. As the music grows louder we begin to spin faster. Our feet

pound the ground beneath us and kick up clouds of dust. The music fills our bodies and souls so much that to dance is all we can do. The beat of the drum, the singer’s voice, and our own rhythmic footfall fill the area and connect us to the earth and each other in a way that no words can. How important it is for us to move together in this sacred rhythm. How important to hear the treaties reiterated, reconstituted, and reconciled. To publicly agree, as a community, on something that has been our way of life for the past decade. To make a public and personal commitment to each other. To affirm our love for one another. To work to reconcile the damages incurred when white people first colonized the Great North.

How important it is for my daughters to hear this, to learn about our history, and to look towards the future. A future which, unlike the future from my childhood, is not just filled with hope for love and understanding, but also for the continued growth of these things. During my childhood we were headed in the right direction. Steps were being taken towards the road of growth. But now, as I think of my daughters and the way they see the world around them, I know that we are finally walking the Good Road together. We already have one foot in the hopes of the past and the dreams for the future. We are already experiencing reconciliation each and every day. We are already experiencing acceptance and understanding each and every day. And we are already experiencing love each and every day.

Cree legend says that the first people to sign the treaties saw them as much more than a legal document. More even than a promise, commitment, or vow. The treaties were entities in and of themselves. Living, breathing, changing beings that were to be respected and honoured. And as our community danced that day to the beat of the drum, on Treaty Six territory, I did not have to see the young man dressed in traditional clothing that had not been with us when the song began to know that the spirit of the treaty was very much alive and with us that day.

**MEGAN
BENOIT***Recipient*

LORD
TWEEDSMUIR
SECONDARY
SCHOOL

*Surrey,
British Columbia*

GRADE 10

This piece of art is an abstract interpretation of the medicine wheel. While one cannot erase the turmoil that the Aboriginal people have experienced, and still experience to this day, one can attempt to sew it back together. The medicine wheel represents four main concepts; physicality, emotionalism, mentality and spirituality. These core concepts have been tarnished, and they will never be the same. But one can hope that eventually it will heal, leaving only a scar.

*This piece is called
Medicinal Healing.*



ANGELINE GUTIRREZ- RAIN

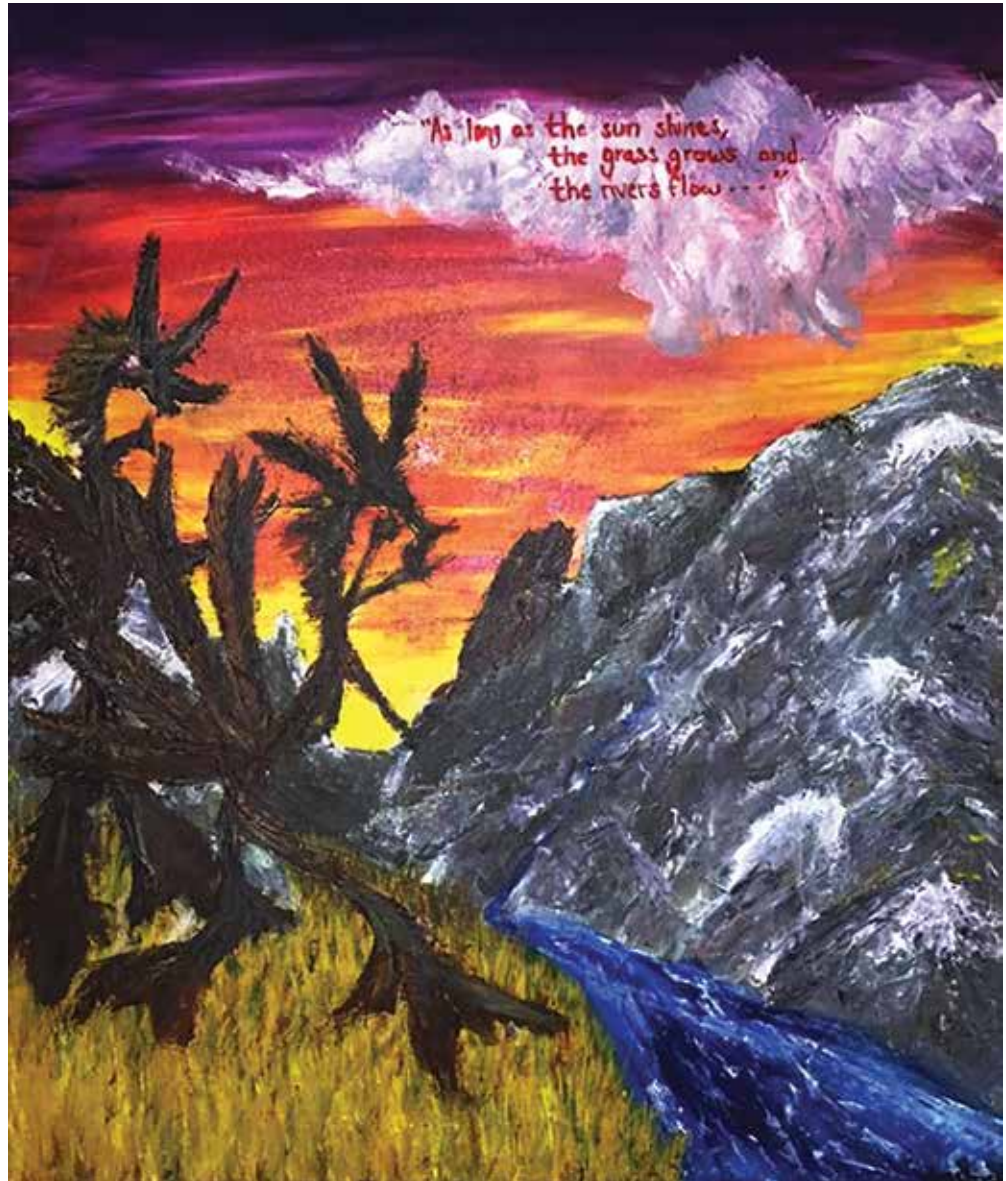
Recipient

QUEEN
ELIZABETH
HIGH SCHOOL

Edmonton, Alberta

GRADE 12

You will interpret it as you will, but the mountains are the grandfathers... can you see the face? The trees are the traditional dancers. The clouds an eagle. I took part of the Treaty and incorporated that as well—sun, grass and river.



**ROBIN
CHOKOMOLIN***Recipient*CANADORE
COLLEGE*North Bay,
Ontario*POST-
SECONDARY

RECONCILIATION

growing up in Wahgoshig First
Nation I grew up afraid

I've witnessed so much trauma
for somebody my age.

The things I have seen in the
community I was raised

lead me to be anxious,
nervous and ashamed.

Ashamed of who I am, ashamed
of where I'm from

scared of my future, scared
of what I may become

Reconciliation to me, would
mean the healing of my land

The healing of my community members,
and being proud of who I am

I'm beginning to understand, the
pain my people are feeling

the struggles they have had to face,
and the long process of healing

They need support along the
way, and so I wish to learn

So I know how to help and guide
my peers when I return

I want to free my community, from
the addictions they use to hide

I want to show them it's okay to
feel, I want to be their guide

Their guide to a better life, a
life of forgiveness and hope

A life that they no longer have to
use drugs or alcohol to cope.

I want the children in my community
to grow up in homes of love,

and have a life and family they
don't have to be ashamed of.

I see that with education, we
can rise above our past

that when someone asks me where
I'm from I won't regret they asked

With reconciliation, our
people will be free.

Our people can be whole again,

and see how strong we can really be.



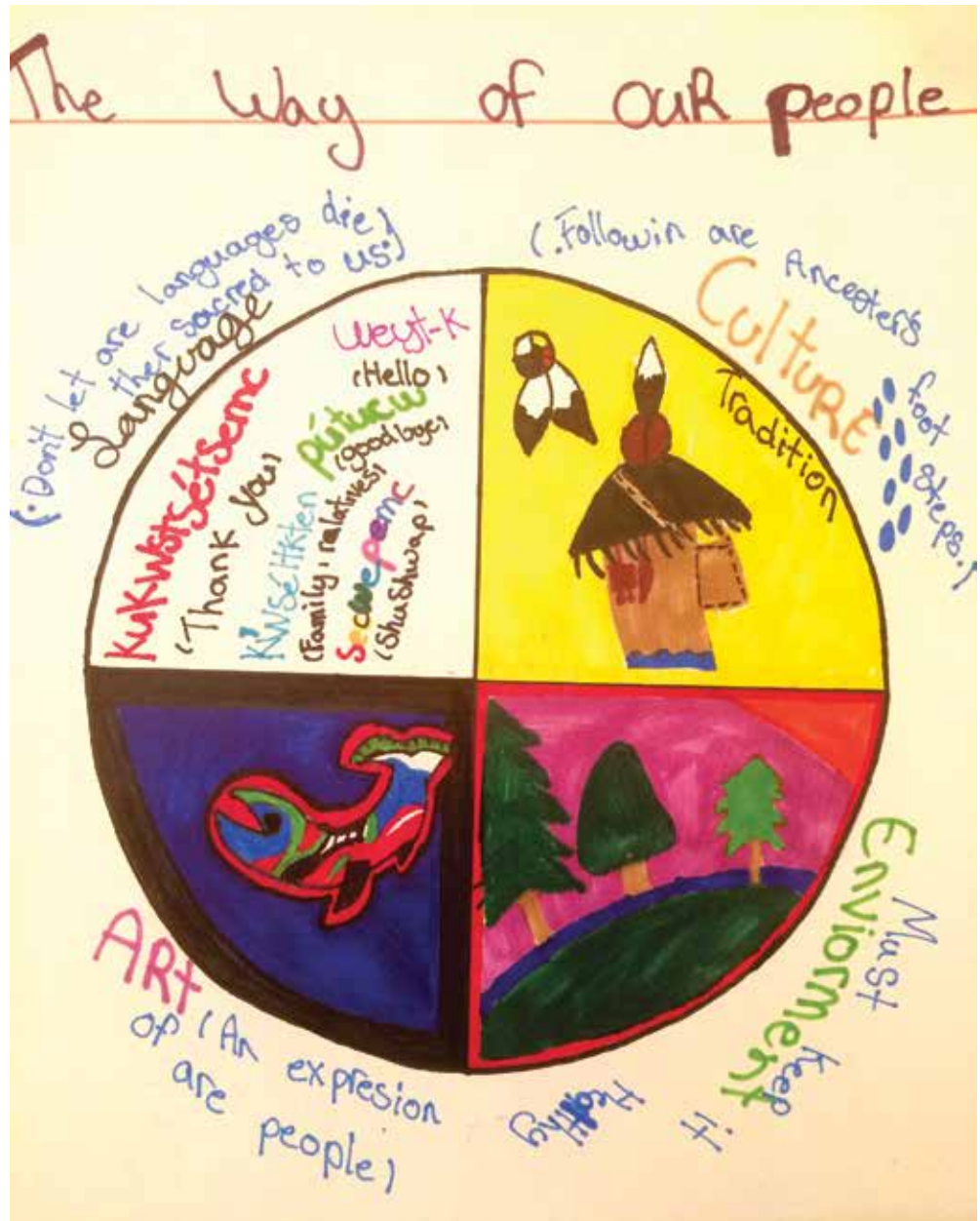
**ONADEE
MCKENNA**

*Honourable
Mention*

ÉCOLE
PEACE ARCH
ELEMENTARY

Surrey,
British Columbia

GRADE 5



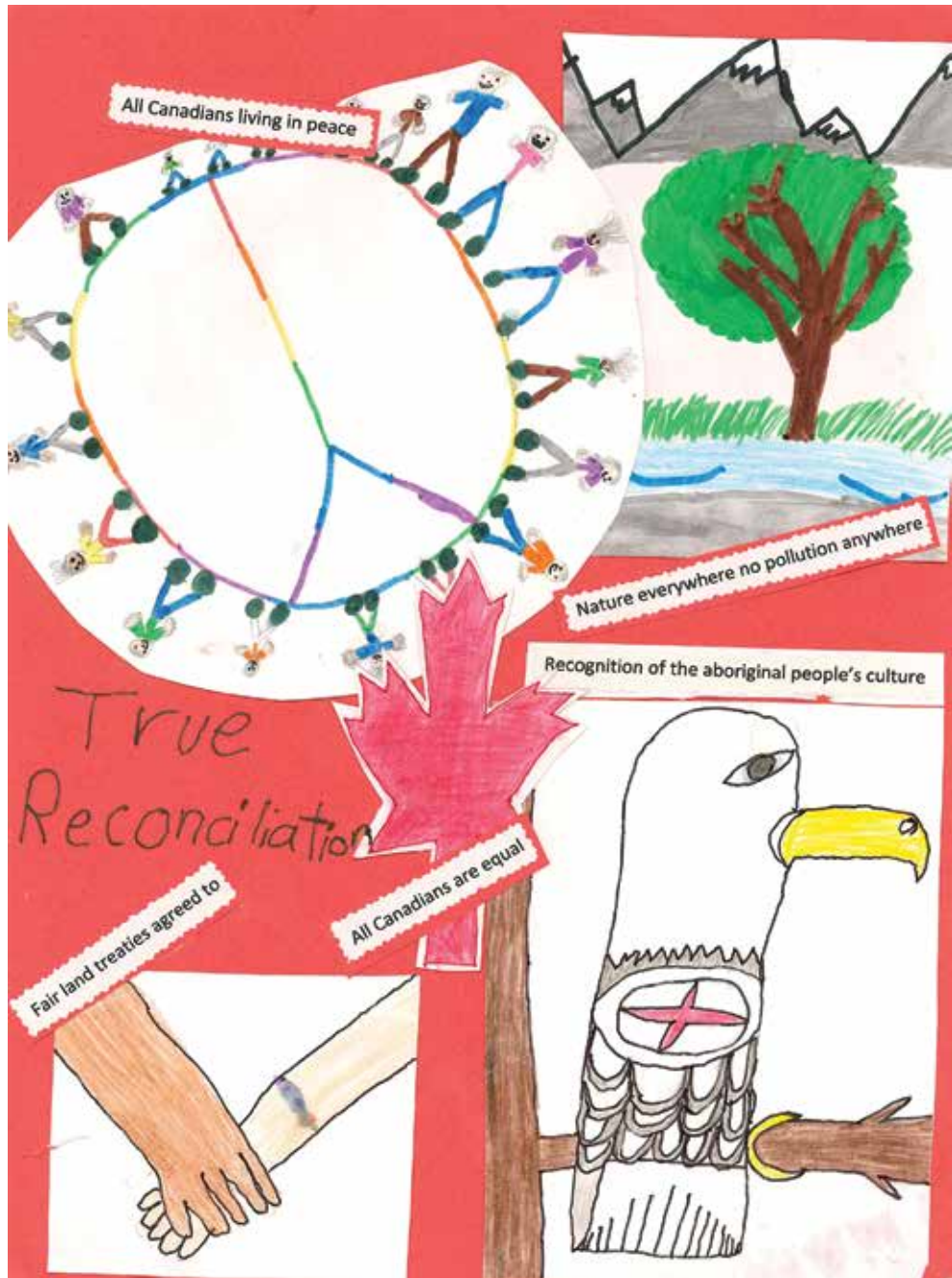
**ELLA
MACNEIL**

*Honourable
Mention*

LANGLEY
MEADOWS
COMMUNITY
SCHOOL

*Langley,
British Columbia*

GRADE 5



LARA
POULIN

*Honourable
Mention*

ÉCOLE
ÉLÉMENTAIRE
CATHOLIQUE
PIERRE-
ELLIOTT-
TRUDEAU

Nepean, Ontario

GRADE 5



**GINA
COSTANTINO**

*Honourable
Mention*

**GRANT PARK
HIGH SCHOOL**

*Winnipeg,
Manitoba*

GRADE 9

When you walk in the street
what do you see?

Do you see just one race?

Do you see just one kind of face?

No it's not just one race

It's not just one face

We have more to show

There's a lot more to know

We are proud of who we are

No matter how far

We will bring you hand in hand

To come to our home and native land.



**PAYTYN
ROBINSON***Honourable
Mention***R.D. PARKER
COLLEGIATE***Thompson,
Manitoba***GRADE 9****RECONCILIATION:
WHAT DOES IT MEAN
FOR THE FUTURE?**

What does reconciliation mean?

For some people, it is just another word in a book, so they don't give it much thought. For Indigenous people, reconciliation is what needs to be done, not only for Indigenous people, but also for non-Indigenous people. All of us, as Canadians, need to understand and to heal. But we can't do that unless all our rights, including equality rights and treaty rights, are respected, and unless there is a new nation-to-nation relationship with the Government of Canada.

Before colonization, hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and just living off the land is how most Indigenous people lived, and we taught youth our traditional ways and knowledge. The Government of Canada decided that they would take that away by sending the children to residential schools. This made a big impact on us because we were treated differently. Now we need to get the government to really understand what rights they took away and what all of that did to us.

The whole meaning of reconciliation is bringing back what we once had. We can do that by having respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. No one is born hating another person. And a way we can have that respectful relationship is through education. Just as the National

Centre for Truth and Reconciliation said, "People should be learning and understanding our history from kindergarten to university." We cannot know what we want for the future if we don't know what we had in the past.

One thing the Government of Canada is supposed to do is help Indigenous people with their community investments, such as good, safe housing. Many people can't afford what they need and can't get the jobs they want. This leaves many of our people in First Nations homeless or in bad housing. In some communities, people can't provide education for themselves and their children because they either can't afford it, or the school can't afford it. In Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, to take another example, having safe drinking water has been a big problem and they have had boil water advisories for decades. We can only have real reconciliation in Canada if all of these problems get solved.

Reconciliation means nothing if we don't have equality rights. We demand to be treated like any other human being, fairly and equally. We demand our treaty rights and to be able to live off the land. We want to build respectful relationships that respect one another's identities. Together, we must do all the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Otherwise, the word reconciliation means nothing.



**KAYLA
BEAULIEU**

*Honourable
Mention*

ÉCOLE GOLDEN
VALLEY SCHOOL

Val d'Or, Québec

GRADE 10



BRENNAN MCCULLAGH

Honourable Mention

ST. JOHN'S-
RAVENSCOURT
SCHOOL

Winnipeg, Manitoba

GRADE 11

In many ways, Canada has infringed the basic human rights of Indigenous people throughout history. These actions have had a catastrophic effect on the loss of Indigenous culture. Reconciliation is an important process that must take place to right these wrongs. According to Justice Murray Sinclair, "Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts."¹ Canada must create a strong relationship with the First Nations and provide compensation for actions in the past.

There have been many suggestions as to what Canada can do to form a better relation with Indigenous people. First Nations people need to be treated as equal and not discriminated against. However, in government they are normally not treated as equal. Canada's government is responsible to the citizens of Canada, and have elected representatives to represent their opinions, although First Nations opinions are not as well represented in our government. This is a problem that needs attention and must be resolved. One way Indigenous people can be better represented is to give them the right to self-govern. According to article four of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, "Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government . . ."² Indigenous people should be given more freedom to govern themselves. There traditions are much different than ours and Canada can not govern them well without fully understanding them. First Nations also have different ways of restoring justice. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, "We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for

Aboriginal offenders..."³ The First Nation's justice system involves more restorative justice and must be considered when dealing with Aboriginal offenders. Using our justice system with the First Nations may not be as effective or reasonable as using their traditions and beliefs to restore justice.

If Canada uses reconciliation to compensate for actions in the past, a more positive relationship can be created with Indigenous people. Indigenous people would be treated more equally and would have the same rights as all Canadians. Issues between the First Nations and Canada could be resolved in a more positive manner as well. Brad Badiuk is a good example of how using restorative justice can have a more genuine impact. After Badiuk made racist comments on social media, Grand Chief Derek Nepinak dropped all charges. Instead, Nepinak used restorative justice to resolve the problem. Nepinak said, "We employed some traditional ceremonial methodology in terms of sitting down and resolving the issue."⁴ This had a more positive impact and created a better relationship between Badiuk and Indigenous people. Reconciliation creates better relationships and is a very important step in repaying for Canada's negative actions through history involving the First Nations.

There are many different ways Canada can use reconciliation to improve our relationship with Indigenous people. First Nations need to be given more freedom, especially involving government and justice. Giving the First Nations the right to self-govern can allow them to govern themselves based on their own culture. Also, allowing Indigenous people to use their own justice system is very important. It would be more just than putting First Nations people through our system. This would create a stronger relationship between Canada and the First Nations and create more equality.

1 "TRC." TRC . N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>>.

2 "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." SpringerReference (2008): 4. Web. 10 Jan. 2016. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf>.

3 "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action." Calls to Action (2015): 7. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada . Web. 10 Jan. 2016. <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf>.

4 Dangerfield, Katie. "Grand Chief Drops Charges against Winnipeg Teacher." Global News . N.p., 06 Jan. 2016. Web. 10 Jan. 2016. <<http://globalnews.ca/news/2436171/>>.

**ARIEL
SHATSKY***Honourable
Mention***ST. JOHN'S-
RAVENSCOURT
SCHOOL***Winnipeg, Manitoba***GRADE 11****TOMORROW**

Faced, are never-ending horrors

relocation, accusation

and many closed doors

Relations are important

for all to succeed

For with respect for one another

there will be no greed

Together, let us take a step

toward a brighter tomorrow

Imagine a someday,

where we leave behind our sorrow

We shall strive to be united and strong

to set goals for the future

and to overcome our wrongs

We seek equality and respect

for those who are next,

for generation after generation

we will see our effect

Pray for those missing and rarely found

for there still is disconnect

Those lying in the bottom of the river

while their families reflect

We will soon become our elders

hoping for the sun

to bring the reparation

for all of those to come

We need to teach,

not punish,

those who don't understand

We need to be there for each other

and to lend a helping hand

I hope that tomorrow we can

stand, live and breathe together

in our home and native land.

**ANAHI
PALOMEC
MCKENNA**

*Honourable
Mention*

**EARL MARRIOTT
SECONDARY
SCHOOL**

*Surrey,
British Columbia*

GRADE 12

MOVING FORWARD

Chief Dan George once said, “If the legends fall silent, who will teach the children of our ways?” Through the residential school system many of Canada’s First Nations traditions have been lost and, regretfully, our society continues to watch Aboriginal culture die out. The reconciliation of Canada’s Indigenous people is not only bringing the travesties of assimilation to light, but also resolving the inter-generational trauma that affects communities today. The use of Indigenous language and culture, as well as the progression of the missing and murdered Indigenous women cases, will consequently contribute to the healing of the residential school experience and bring pride back to the community.

With so many different tribes losing their traditions, this generation needs to emphasize the restoration of Indigenous practices. Fifty years into the future, our elders will be able to pray in their languages and teach their children the cultural ways. I imagine a Canada where there are not only French immersion schools, but Shuswap, Cree and Ojibwa immersion. It is a place where I look out from the bus window, driving through town, and see First Nations people being treated positively. Instead of hearing the whispering of discriminatory stereotypes behind my ears, I listen to words that uplift our First Nations people. I want to live in a Canada where I hear a round dance song about true love instead of the loss of another Native woman, missing or murdered. This will be my Canada through the eyes of reconciliation.

Though many people would like to see reconciliation in action, there is a perpetual obstacle that stands in the way: the lack of Indigenous linguistic renaissance. The

reason behind such a low representation of these languages often boils down to one question: “Why would I learn a language that does not benefit my lifestyle in a modern society?” Although First Nations dialects are much less common amongst a sea of other nationally used languages, they are important to the cultural diversity of Canada. In 2012, UNESCO said “Loss of language and culture is frequently accompanied by large human and social costs, including poverty, poor health, drug and alcohol abuse, family violence and suicide.” Without learning the traditional ways, Aboriginal people are falling victim to many of these possible outcomes. In 2015, Canada’s unemployment rate stood at 7.4%, where First Nation’s off-reserve unemployment was at 19.1%. Unfortunately, the rate is even higher, at 29%, for people living on reserve. With the incomes earned on reserves being some of the lowest in Canada, something needs to be done immediately. One solution is assuring that Indigenous youth have the option of Aboriginal language based courses implemented in their school systems. An example of this type of program can be seen at the “Chief Atahm School,” located on the Adam Lake reserve near Chase, British Columbia. Their Secwepemc immersion program provides the necessary tools for a thriving education and positive community environment. Statistics Canada states that immersion students outperform non-immersion students in English language arts skills such as reading comprehension and writing. With all the benefits of restoring cultural practices through language, it is important to acknowledge the strong impact of these traditions and embrace their reintegration into Canadian culture.

The repression of Native languages today goes hand in hand with conformity that



First Nations people faced, less than fifty years ago. “Assimilation,” according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition, is the act of causing a person or group to become part of a different society or country, changing their social characteristics. But today, we are still trying to assimilate First Nations people by saying it is solely their responsibility to revive a dying culture. During the early stages of residential school, one phrase described the church’s agenda perfectly. By “taking the Indian out of the child,” different denominations across the country could blatantly eradicate First Nations culture, preventing the current generation from passing on their traditions. Besides removal from their homes and communities, these children suffered emotional, physical, psychological and sexual abuse. From over 150,000 children that attended these schools, a minimum of one in every twenty-five would die in the institution. After all of this trauma, people still wonder why these children were called “residential school survivors.” It is not uncommon to hear “Isn’t it high time that they get over it?” or “That was a thing of the past” when we talk about the effects of assimilation. It is fine to forgive the past mistakes, but not to forget the history behind them. To reconcile the issue at hand, the greatest resource is the awareness of our own communities’ role in the recovery of language and culture. Some of the changes that need to be made, could be as simple as the application of Native language into the public school system, for Native and non-Native children alike. Canadians could come forward and share the load of linguistic resurgence. In turn, the burdens weighing down on the hearts of Aboriginal people for time immemorial, can end with the allocation and normalisation of Indigenous traditions.

The only way to truly understand the weight that lies on Aboriginal people is by looking at the world through their eyes. Imagine you are the mother or father to an Aboriginal girl, for whom you have done everything in your power to protect from the harshness of the outside world. Nevertheless, your girl is still a mere statistic in the big picture. Your daughter is four times more likely to become a murder victim and three times more likely to endure a violent crime, within her lifetime. Without the protection of the government, more and more First Nations women

are attributing to the already excessive number of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Since the Canadian federal election, there have been some major priority checks concerning the government’s approach towards pertinent issues in Canada; in particular, the safety and well being of Aboriginal women. Before 2015, this issue was simply accepted by governmental authorities and, therefore, nothing changed. In fact, it only got worse. Nonetheless, the national assembly is already making some big changes. During the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Inuit throat singers and a young Native boy were prominently featured singing the traditional songs of their territories. It was a showcase of Indigenous pride and community, not an exotic party trick that happens once every couple of years. With the sound of national inquiry in the air, reconciliation is making a comeback. First Nations women are the life givers, the teachers and the storytellers. They are the heartbeat of their communities, and in order to stay alive, the heart must beat on. Resolution of the missing person cases and elimination of the stigmas surrounding First Nations women contributes to the over all empowerment of Aboriginal people. This is the first of many long steps towards reconciliation.

The path to truth and reconciliation is the process in which two or more separate ideas exist in harmony with one another. It is not about having the separation between Canadians and Indigenous people. In my Canada, it is the unification and blending of cultures because it is far more important to have a culturally rich country, than one with an insignificantly smaller deficit. It will be a place where Indigenous people are reminded that they are important to the history and future of their country; where Aboriginal women are not endangered by their appearance, their ancestral roots. As a member of this generation, it is crucial to see all Canadians contributing to the renaissance of Native culture as well as having Aboriginal people make a difference. I want to tell my children one day of the time that our traditional ways were reinstated, a time when Aboriginal people were given the opportunity to make decisions over their own people. My reconciliation is watching different Nations across Canada gain the courage to restore the power and pride of their heritage.



**KRISTIN
FLATTERY**

*Honourable
Mention*

UNIVERSITY OF
MANTIOBA

Winnipeg, Manitoba

POST-
SECONDARY

This work is divided into four sections to represent the four spiritual doors as well as the four cardinal directions, seasons, etc. It represents the reconciliation process through colour. I abstracted a beaver, as a beaver represents courage. The water the beaver swims in almost looks like delicate teal glass to show the

fragility but also the strength of our culture. The last section is intended to be a close-up of threads or new relationships being mended together. Each quadrant represents a different moment of our history.



CONTACT:

*National Centre for Truth
and Reconciliation*

*Centre national pour la vérité
et la réconciliation*

University of Manitoba

*Chancellor's Hall
177 Dysart Rd.
Winnipeg, MB
R3T 2N2*

*Phone: 204-474-6069
Toll Free: 1-855-415-4534
(North America)*

*Email: NCTR@umanitoba.ca
umanitoba.ca/nctr*



**National Centre for
Truth and Reconciliation**

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

**Centre national pour la
vérité et la réconciliation**

UNIVERSITÉ DU MANITOBA