

Activity #4

Keeping Promises

Treaties

What the TRC says about reconciliation

It requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship. Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of Aboriginal people, and the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one.

Inviting an Indigenous speaker

The best way to learn about Indigenous people is from an Indigenous Elder. Contact a [Friendship Centre](#). For protocols for inviting Elders, see page 6 in the Introduction to this resource.

Who are Indigenous people?

The Indigenous (or Aboriginal) people in Canada are First Nations, Inuit and Métis. See page 4 in the introduction for definitions.

Communicating with Parents

These activities and the conversations may affect children (and adults) differently. Read the section about communicating with parents in the Introduction on page 6. Each activity includes a sample letter for parents and includes suggestions for what you may say to parents about the activities. Adapt them to suit your group's needs.

Self-Care for Leaders

The facts about colonization, residential schools and other discriminatory practices in Canada can be difficult for people of any age to learn. To help yourself and others, read "Pastoral Care" on page 5 in the Introduction to Reconciliation Activities.

Objectives

This activity includes a game about sharing space and resources followed by a craft response. The children will:

1. Play a game where teams must share space and materials.
2. Learn about how Indigenous people viewed land and resources differently from the Europeans.
3. Reflect on how Indigenous people were affected when treaties were ignored.
4. Create a symbol to help remember the importance of keeping promises.

Overview for Leaders

Please note that this activity is not suited for groups with predominantly young children (e.g. all five and six year-olds). It is better suited for children with mixed or older ages.

Before Europeans first came to the land we now know as Canada, the land was populated by many different communities of Indigenous people. Despite the differences in languages, culture, tradition, laws and government, Indigenous communities cooperated with one another and shared their resources like land, water and wildlife. When there were disagreements or fights, Indigenous people would resolve them by making treaties. A treaty was a spoken promise that was never to be broken and it was often marked by a ceremony or in some symbolic way.

When Europeans arrived, they were initially dependent on Indigenous people's knowledge and experiences of the climate and the land, learning how to organize a sustainable way of life in a very different and often harsh natural environment. Over decades they became trading partners, formed alliances against outsiders, and together defended the territories they shared. In fact, written treaties were made between the settlers and the Indigenous people. These written treaties explained how the land's resources would be shared, showed respect for Indigenous people and their independent nations, and acknowledged their rights.

Over time it became evident that Europeans had a very different way of thinking about the land. It was an attitude well-ingrained in Europeans since the 15th century when Pope Alexander proclaimed that non-Christian people or nations cannot own land. Therefore, Indigenous people, living on land discovered by Christian nations would lose their rights to the land. This mindset was not a predominant theme at the beginning of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but became more prominent. As time went on, Europeans neglected their treaty responsibilities. Breaking these promises is one of the contributing factors to the inequality that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada today.

In 1867, Canada was founded and its Constitution Act (the British North America Act or BNA Act) stated that Indigenous people and their lands came under the control of the Government of Canada. In 1876, the Indian Act not only reinforced this but added to it: Indigenous people had to live on reserves. It also attacked Indigenous culture and spiritual traditions by out-lawing them (e.g. the potlach, the pow-wow).

"It is important to honour the promises made in agreements. Speaking with honesty and truthfulness is very important. First Nations people believe in only making promises that they can fulfill. They honoured the promise with integrity. Long ago, if you made a promise, you would give up something special to the other party. If one does not live up to the promise, things do not work out too well..."
Elder Gladys Wapass-Greyeyes, Thunderchild First Nation, Saskatchewan

For more information read "Treaty-Making, Promise-Keeping" on page 39 and see these references:

Treaties in Canada: Education Guide

http://education.historicacanada.ca/files/104/Treaties_Printable_Pages.pdf

Treaties and Cultural Change

http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_treaties/fp_treaties_two_views.html

Preparation

You will need:

- ◆ Balls (that can be easily tossed)
- ◆ Plastic cups (for stacking)
- ◆ Markers and pieces of paper
- ◆ Masking tape
- ◆ Envelopes for Challenge Cards
- ◆ Timer
- ◆ To prepare Team Challenge Cards and Secret Messages
- ◆ To prepare the space
- ◆ To understand the game and read over the script a few times
- ◆ Supplies for the response craft and the Closing

About the game:

- ◆ This game is ideally played in a gym or other large, open room indoors with teams of six or fewer children.
- ◆ These instructions are for playing with two or three teams. If you anticipate having more than 18 in your group, set up the space for four teams and double the Two-Team Version
- ◆ Each team will have a set of six challenges to complete in a particular order in 10 minutes. (See Challenge Lists on pages 42-43.)
- ◆ Each team will have some of the materials needed to complete their challenges; some of the materials will need to be borrowed from other groups. In order for each team to complete all of their tasks, they will need to find ways to create agreements about sharing materials and working together so that they can all finish their list of challenges.
- ◆ Their goal for completing all of the challenges is to receive one of the “secret messages” from you. These are the three secret messages for you to print on three different pieces of paper:

“Two people are better than one. They get more done by working together.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

“It is said, that when God made this world he made many different things; that is why the newcomers and First Nations people must help each other and work together.” (Elder Louie Dih ttheda, Black Lake First Nation)

“Let us think about each other and help each other to show love and do good deeds.” (Hebrews 10:24)

(Note: Only the first two are needed for the Two-Team Version. Add in the third for Three-Team Version)

- ◆ The main “catch” is that players are not allowed to enter another team’s side unless they ask permission: they need to call out to someone on the other team

and ask, "May I enter?" The member of the other team can decide to answer, "no, you may not" or "yes, you may enter."

- ◆ The challenges are set up in a particular order so that teams will be able to complete the first couple of challenges using the materials they have in their own space.
- ◆ To complete the later challenges, the teams will need more materials from other teams; they will need to cross into another team's space; and they will even need to work with another team to accomplish the task.
- ◆ Throughout the game, the children will experience the benefits and struggles of sharing resources and land with each other, and why making agreements and promises are so important.
- ◆ Following the game, there is a suggested guideline for debriefing and sharing the history of treaties in Canada.

Prepare the space:

1. Divide the room into even sections, one for each team, using masking tape to create lines on the floor.
2. In each team's area, set out their required materials; they can be spread out in any order. The required materials are:
Two-Team Version: Team 1: a ball, 5 cups, 4 markers; Team 2: 5 cups, 4 pieces of paper
Three-Team Version: Team 1: a ball, 4 markers; Team 2: 4 cups, 6 pieces of paper, 4 markers; Team 3: 10 cups
3. Once the playing area is set up, place each team's list of challenges in an envelope (to add suspense!). Hold on to them or place them in their space.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

Find out whose traditional territory you are on. See page 8 for resources on how to do this. Say:

We gather today and stand on the traditional territory of *[name the Indigenous people who lived here before you]*. We understand

- ◆ that this land was very important for Indigenous people who lived on it before us;
- ◆ that this land is still important for Indigenous people today;
- ◆ and that Indigenous ways of living with each other, and their ways of relating to the Creator, have always been connected to this land and its creatures.

Keeping promises – Playing a game

As children come in, evenly divide them into the different teams and instruct them to sit in their team's assigned area, but not to touch the materials there. Leaders can be dispersed evenly between groups. Begin saying:

I need everyone to listen very closely. Today I have a challenge for each of you and I want to explain this quickly so you can get started as soon as possible! Now, you are already sitting in the teams that you need to be in, which is great – so we're almost

ready to get started! In the envelopes, I have placed a list of challenges for each group to complete. Each team's list is a little different. Your team will need to work together to complete as many challenges as you can in 10 minutes. For some of these challenges, you might need certain materials and objects that are not in your team's space and will have to look around the entire room to see what you can use. When you have completed all your challenges, you will receive a special secret message from me.

Now, there are a few rules that you **MUST** follow when completing these challenges:

1. You **MUST** stay inside this room. Everything you need to complete the challenge is in this room!
2. You must work to complete all of the challenges in your list **IN ORDER**.
3. And this is very important: each team has their own space marked off with tape (point to the masking tape lines). Each team also has their own materials that belong to them (point to the different materials in each team's area). You **MUST NOT** cross over the tape and enter into another team's area, and you **MUST NOT** take another team's materials **UNLESS** you ask **AND** you receive permission. Your team has its own space and its own materials, and the other team(s) has its own space and its own materials.
4. You **MUST** ask **AND** receive permission to cross the lines into another team's space. You might want to do this if you are faced with a challenge on your list and you don't have what you need in your space but you see it in another team's space.

If you want to step into another team's area, you **MUST** call out to someone on the other team and ask: "May I enter?"

The person on the other team has a decision to make. And they can call back "No, you may not enter!" Or they can call back, "Yes, you may enter!"

Option: Practice this by having someone from one team walk up to, but not crossing, the tape line and call out "May I enter?" to the team on the other side. Have someone from that team answer (choosing either the yes or no reply). Do this again with a person from the other team initiating it, and someone from the other team giving the opposite reply so that both examples are demonstrated.

Now, I am about to start our timer and then you can open the envelopes. Does anyone have any questions? (*Answer any questions.*)

Remember, if you need to use another team's materials, you need to ask before you take them, and they can decide if they want to say yes or no. And remember, you must work to complete all of the challenges in your list **IN ORDER**, using the objects in this room. If you need to cross into another team's area to get an object, you **MUST** ask first; and if you need to use an object from another team's area, you **NEED** to ask them first.

Hand out envelopes, and start timer for 10 minutes. When a team completes all its challenges, hand out one of the secret messages. (It doesn't matter which team gets which message.) Instruct them to figure out what it means and why it's important until the timer goes off.

When the timer goes off, gather all the teams together as one group and sit in a circle for a discussion. If a team did not finish their challenges before the timer went off, reassure them that everyone did a great job working together, and hand them their secret message.

Discussion

Ask someone from each team to read aloud their secret message one at a time. Then encourage comments and discussion by asking questions such as:

1. Where does your message come from?
(If needed, you can explain that one is from the Bible, and one is a quote from a Dene (de-nay) Elder from Black Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan. Explain that the Dene are a First Nations group who were among the Indigenous people living on the land now known as Canada when the European settlers came. Their traditional territory is in Northwestern Canada.)
2. What do you think your message means?
3. Why do you think this might be an important message?
4. How do you think the messages connect to the game?
5. What was one of the easy challenges that your group had to do? Why was it easy?
6. What was one of the hard challenges that your group had to do? Why was it hard? *(Hopefully someone will say the challenges where they had to go to another group's area were harder.)*
7. How difficult was it when you had to borrow another group's materials, or work with another group to complete your challenge?
8. How did you and another group decide if you were going to share?
(Prompt them to remember what they thought about making the agreement, or deciding to work together.)
9. The one message is from a Dene Elder, an Indigenous person. *(Ask someone to read it again.)* What do you think this game has to do with Indigenous people?

Treaty-Making, Promise-Keeping

Ask the children to think about how the Indigenous people were living on the land we call Canada for over 10,000 years – long before the explorers and settlers came from Europe. At first the Europeans cooperated and the Indigenous people shared the land and its resources and their knowledge to help the newcomers. They even made treaties about this sharing and cooperation. Can any of you tell me what a treaty is? *(Encourage and be accepting of their ideas.)*

A treaty is an agreement between two groups of people who want to share the same space and the things on that space. Doesn't this sound a bit like the challenge game we just played? *(Encourage children to respond and talk about how they made agreements.)*

When you make an agreement, it's sort of like making a promise, isn't it? What is a promise? *(Encourage responses.)*

A promise is when you tell someone that you will definitely do something. So in our game, we were making promises and agreements by saying that other people could come into our team's area and by agreeing that they could use our materials.



We all agreed to respect each other's area and to not enter it without permission.

A treaty is like that – it's like a promise made between two groups of people. Treaties are promises about what each group of people will do. Indigenous people were used to making treaties with each other so that they could get along in peace, sharing the land they lived on and the places they hunted and fished. Those treaties were spoken, not written down, and celebrated with ceremonies and maybe by making something special as a symbol and as a reminder. When the European settlers learned about treaty-making, they started to make treaties with the Indigenous people. They wrote down that they promised to share the land and all the things from the land needed for life, so they could live together as good neighbours. Sort of like how we made agreements to share our balls, and cups, and paper to complete our challenges!

Has anyone ever broken a promise that you made, or a friend made to you? How did that feel? (Encourage responses.) It feels really bad when people promise to do something and then they break their promise, doesn't it? How do you think you would feel if a team told you they would let you use one of their materials, like their ball, but then they actually took the ball away from you and didn't let you? (Encourage responses.)

It isn't fair when a promise is broken, is it? But this is what happened to the treaties the Europeans made. It didn't take very long before they started to break their promises and take over land that didn't belong to them. They started to tell Indigenous people what land they could live on and what land they couldn't, where they could fish and hunt, and where they couldn't. The Europeans made it very difficult and sometimes impossible for Indigenous people to get enough good food to eat. The Europeans broke their promises, over and over again, and caused a lot of hardship for Indigenous people living in Canada. The settlers broke their promises and when promises are broken, relationships between people are also broken.

Today Indigenous people are reminding Canadians about the many, many broken promises, and the treaties that have not been respected. They are asking us to learn about the broken promises, to remember and tell others, and together find ways for all of us to keep our promises so that we will be good neighbours, living together and helping each other.

Response

You will need: A variety of art supplies like coloured paper, Play-Doh, lacing, beads, feathers, paper, coloured markers, scissors, glue, tape.

Instructions:

Recap for the children that when Indigenous people made a treaty with each other, they did not write down the agreement. Instead they might have held a celebration or a ceremony or made something special as a symbol and a reminder about the agreement. Set out the craft supplies and invite the children to make or draw something to remind them of the activity today; perhaps something that will help them talk about it with others. For example, if there is a space on their creation for some words help them print the words that they think of, such as "I promise", "Keep promises", "Make treaties", "Love our neighbours."

Closing

You will need: a Bible and the Book of Praise.

Read from the Bible

Remind the children that the Bible talks a lot about people making promises to be in right relationship with God, each other and all creation. Jesus asked us and showed us about how to love one another. Ask an older child or a leader to read aloud Hebrews 10:23-25.

"Let us hold firmly to the hope that we have confessed. We can trust God to do what he promised. Let us think about each other and help each other to show love and do good deeds. You should not stay away from the church meetings, as some are doing. But you should meet together and encourage each other." (International Children's Bible)

Sing to the tune of hymn #328

It's the Creator's world
O happy day to see
the rocks and trees, the skies and seas
God loves us, you and me!

Pray

Dear God, thank you for loving everyone.
Help us to be good listeners to Indigenous brothers and sisters.
Help us to keep our promises to you, to Indigenous people, and to everyone.
And help us to remember that when we work together, and share what we have, we can do amazing things!
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Challenge Cards: Two-Team version

Cut out along dotted lines

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Team 1 List of Challenges

1. Pass a ball between all of your group members three times
 2. Hop on one foot from one end of the room to the other (remember to ask permission if you are crossing another team's area!)
 3. Make up a handshake for your group that everyone can do together, and show it to the leader
 4. Make a pyramid using 10 cups
 5. Hold hands with another group and sing the ABCs
 6. Draw a picture of everyone in your group with their names on it
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Team 2 List of Challenges

1. Make up a handshake for your group that everyone can do together, and show it to the leader
 2. Pass a ball between all of your group members three times
 3. Hop on one foot from one end of the room to the other (remember to ask permission if you are crossing another team's area!)
 4. Draw a picture of everyone in your group with their names on it
 5. Hold hands with another group and sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"
 6. Make a pyramid using 10 cups
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Challenge Cards: Three-Team version

Cut out along dotted lines

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Team 1 List of Challenges

1. Pass a ball between all of your group members three times
 2. Hop on one foot from one end of the room to the other (remember to ask permission if you are crossing another team's area!)
 3. Make up a handshake for your group that everyone can do together, and show it to the leader
 4. Hold hands with another group and sing the ABCs
 5. Make a pyramid using 10 cups
 6. Draw a picture of everyone in your group with their names on it
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Team 2 List of Challenges

1. Draw a picture of everyone in your group with their names on it
 2. Make up a handshake for your group that everyone can do together, and show it to the leader
 3. Pass a ball between all of your group members three times
 4. Hop on one foot from one end of the room to the other (remember to ask permission if you are crossing another team's area!)
 5. Hold hands with another group and sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"
 6. Make a pyramid using 10 cups
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Team 3 List of Challenges

1. Make a pyramid using 10 cups
 2. Make up a handshake for your group that everyone can do together, and show it to the leader
 3. Hop on one foot from one end of the room to the other (remember to ask permission if you are crossing another team's area!)
 4. Draw a picture of everyone in your group with their names on it
 5. Pass a ball between all of your group members three times
 6. Hold hands with another group and sing "The Wheels on the Bus"
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Handout for Home: Keeping Promises

Dear parent or guardian,

Today we played a game and talked about the history of relationships between Indigenous people (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) and European settlers in Canada.

In the game the teams had a defined space that was theirs. Certain materials were in each space. Each team was given a list of challenges to complete. However, they could not complete all the challenges unless they had permission to cross into another team's space and, sometimes, permission to borrow materials that belonged to the other team. During the game the children learned to share space and work out agreements among themselves so that they could accomplish their tasks. Afterward we talked about the experience, and how they would have felt if the other team had not kept to the agreements.

This led us to talk about what it means to make, keep and break promises. Information was introduced about the history of European settlement in Canada and the impact on Indigenous people. The children learned how there was cooperation at first; that the settlers made treaties with Indigenous people, outlining how the land and its resources would be shared. However, over time, and especially after the founding of Canada in 1867, laws were introduced that gave power over the land to the Europeans and restricted Indigenous people to living on small pieces of land where it was often difficult for them to continue their traditional way of life.

The children learned that today Indigenous people are reminding Canadians about the broken promises and treaties that have not been respected. By learning about this history and by talking about it with others, we talked about making changes so that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can live together as good neighbours, helping each other. This is what reconciliation is all about. The children could then create crafts that would help them remember today's experience and the importance of keeping promises.

To help your child

- ◆ Ask about what he/she thinks about treaty-making and keeping promises. Wonder together about what your family could do to help repair broken relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada (e.g. learn more, tell others).
- ◆ Learn more about the history of treaty-making by looking up these resources

Treaties in Canada: Education Guide

http://education.historicacanada.ca/files/104/Treaties_Printable_Pages.pdf

Treaties and Cultural Change

http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_treaties/fp_treaties_two_views.html

If you have any questions about this activity, contact

Name: _____ Organization: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

We believe that reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada requires us to learn and to take action. Through this activity we are trying to encourage this process. For information about reconciliation in Canada, see www.trc.ca.