Journey to Reconciliation

Education Core Studies 100

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My idea for my journey to reconciliation project came to me in one of the toughest times of my life. Sometimes when I'm upset, I want to bottle up all the pain I am feeling or bottle my tears. In the middle of the night, I woke up and realized that I am not the only one who feels this way. I realized this feeling would represent the Indigenous perspective after colonization. I wanted to make a jar of hurt that would show how they feel. I wasn't sure how I was going to achieve this. At first, I thought I would draw the jar and have the words written inside, but I wanted to make the jar physically. It took me a long time to figure out how to achieve the look I had pictured in my head. I purposefully chose a glass jar; I wanted it to be made out of a material that breaks. I tried to convey the feeling that it might crack like a person would breakdown. I ended up using the plastic from a clear disposable cup and taping teardrops with words and phrases of hurt onto it. The water in the jar represents the tears, while the teardrops with words are a microscopic view of the hurt behind the tears.

I wanted to honour the learning I did in high school social studies classes. I did this with phrases such as assimilation, annihilation, and segregation, which we learned were terms that applied to residential schools and the pass system. I felt it was important to honour what I had previously learned, as it was something that not everybody had learned in high school. What we learned was far from the big picture, but it helped me to have the building blocks to challenge racism and racist thoughts. Throughout ECS, I have learned to challenge these thoughts further as I realize the hurt the First Nations community has been through. Reflecting on my privilege helps me to realize my point of view on issues is much different than those who do not have the same privileges that I do. This realization will help me as I now have a better perspective on reconciliation.

I took a lot away from the lesson on Place-Based education. We expanded further on it in Indigenous 100 class. My perspective changed when I realized all that the land and place impact for Indigenous people. When the First Nations people lost their place, they lost their identity, cultural practices, language, connection to nature, and many other things. Their traditional ways of knowing were changed, and how they related to the world was lost. We watched a Ted Talk from Larry Merculieff called Native Knowing. It was so interesting to hear how he learned at his own pace from the community. He learned by example and doing, rather than being told what to do and how to do it. He said he was encouraged by everybody, and I think that is a principle that is so important in education. For me, this was the moment I realized how important it will be to connect nature and the land to my lessons in the future. Many of the phrases of hurt are from my learning in Indigenous 100 class. Some phrases like Aboriginal Healing Fund seem like a positive. We learned in Indigenous 100 that the Aboriginal Healing Fund did not help as much as it could. Just when Indigenous people started to trust and utilize the services, the funding was cut, and the programs were lost.

Many of my phrases came from the Truth and Reconciliation booklet. I pulled the word trust from the pages about how you would define truth. Trust was broken for Indigenous people many times. I also took things like cut their hair, loss of language, and overall loss of culture from the pages on residential schools. All the words in the jar of hurt are things I one day would like to teach to students. Teaching these things will be essential for passing knowledge to the next generations so they can become informed and caring citizens. This understanding would be a good step in building relationships and rebuilding trust. With an understanding of the views of First Nations, I know how I need to incorporate that into the classrooms I work in. I know I need to challenge others when they say untrue and ignorant things towards First Nations. I also now know I need to start doing these things today.

Resources

Merculieff, L. (2011, November 9). Retrieved November 5, 2019, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6cmKeRV3Z0.

Canadian Teachers Federation. (2016). *Truth and reconciliation: what is it about?* Ottawa.