**Focus Q #1: Teachers, Knowledge, Building Relationships: Invitation and Hospitality**
**Using your own educational experiences to date, how did you see teachers honouring different ways of knowing and doing in the classroom? In what ways did teachers build a sense of community in the classroom? In what ways can teachers build hospitable and invitational educational environments and relationships with all students?**

In my experiences at school growing up there was not a lot of variety in the classrooms. We often had a set time for everything we did and a certain way were expected to do things. Some ways I do remember teachers trying different ways of knowing and doing was by applying games to topics we would learn to keep it interesting or getting students more involved in the class to keep students engaged. My grade 6 teacher would switch up our seating plans often, how the desks were arranged and also who we sat with. I enjoyed this because I felt it gave us more chances to meet new students, see how they approached school and to learn more about different ways people lived. In high school is where I personally experienced a lot more variety in the ways we were supposed to learn. Some teachers taught us that there are many ways of learning and they can all be right, that people learn in many different ways. Taking on group projects, getting the freedom to take your own approach to assignments and picking your own classes were all fairly new thing for me in high school and it was a welcomed change. Feeling a sense of community has been hit and miss for me, some years I have had teachers who have felt like a parent, where they made the class feel like a second home. You felt like they had your best interest at heart, they wanted to see you succeed and everyone had a role in your classroom community. Some teacher would go above and beyond on birthdays and holidays to make it extra special and I believe that went a long way for some kids, me being one of them. I believe being communicative with students can help teachers build better, lasting, relationships with them. That letting them know you are available and can listen is important to sparking the trust needed to create an invitational and hospitable learning environment. Being genuine is also important, I strongly believe students are smarter than some teachers believe and they know when an adult genuinely cares and when they do not. Lastly, I believe treating students with respect is a big factor in how they view your relationship and how they take to the learning environment you set out for them. I believe your learning environment should be fluid, open to change to suit your students needs.

**Focus Q #2: Students & Learning Environment: Focus on places, spaces, and boundaries**
**Using your own educational experiences, what did the learning environment look like? Describe and draw a sketch of what your classrooms looked like as you went through the grades. How did your classroom space indicate power relationships in your classrooms? Did the space in your classrooms provide you with opportunities to engage with all students in your classrooms? How did this space make you feel? What could teachers do to make classroom spaces more relational?**

For my learning environment in elementary school, I remember it being very “cookie cutter” with classrooms being very similar, a regular set up was the teacher at the front with their desk to the side or in the middle and the students being in single desk rows. Some classrooms had cubicles where you could set your bags and jackets, in elementary every morning we were expected to wait to be greeted by our teacher at our cubicle. In high school is where I experienced different learning environments like getting to choose where you sat, having table set ups instead of desks and having larger class sizes. From a young age, the power dynamic was pretty clear in the classroom. The teacher was often at the front of the class, sometimes their desks being on a raised platform so you got the sense they oversaw and overheard everything. In some classrooms you were not allowed to leave your desk unless you asked and one of the sayings we all heard was, “the bell does not dismiss you, I dismiss you!” which was always a good reminder as to who held the power in the classroom. In my opinion, the classrooms that had tables or group seating provided us students with a lot more chances to meet new kids and get to know those you may not normally talk to. From my experiences teachers who were not keen on trying new things were more likely to sit you in singe file rows which I felt hurt the ability for kids to socialize. For me, some days classrooms were a nice escape, a place to socialize and grow as a kid so it I would get a good feeling entering a class I enjoyed even though sometimes there would be an intimidation factor depending on your relationship with the teacher. Finally, I believe teachers can make classrooms more relational by making them more open concept, adding variety to seating plans/groups and making it a place that is open to change. You can let your students know that yes you are the teacher but you respect them as well and acknowledge that they also hold power in the classroom setting. That your classroom is a place of trust, a shared space that is not defined by one thing.

**Focus Q #3: Truth & Reconciliation
Core Questions: Describe what you learned in your K-12 education about Indigenous history in Canada. What have you learned as an adult through media, family, friends and other learning experiences? As you read through the TRC booklet-Truth & Reconciliation: What is it about? What messages resonate with you? What do you need and want to learn more about? What would you do for a call to action?**

In my younger years of education, I do not recall learning much about residential schools, the genocide of the native people of Canada or the impact it has had to this day. My grade 8 year was the only time I remember we had a speaker, an elder, speak to our entire school but that was about traditional ways not the darker side we know about now. In high school I took the native studies course all 4 years instead of social and that was the first time in a classroom setting that I really learned about residential schools and the different bands, traditions and cultures they had. We learned about the near extinction of the buffalo and why it happened while being taught a different view point on life from our indigenous teacher, Mr. Joe Pelletier. As an adult, most of my learnings on indigenous history has come from speaking to people in person or taking my own time to read articles and watch documentaries/clips. Most of my life I have grown up around aboriginal people, seeing their ways at home and hearing the older people in their families pass down stories orally. My girlfriends father attended residential school here in Saskatchewan and it has been a privilege learning more about his experiences as he comes to terms with his trauma and opens up. Hearing the passion that comes from them through all the pain also made me want to learn about my indigenous history as my people descended from the maya. I believe the TRC booklet was about education our youth about the wrongs our government has done and how we can work to repair these destroyed relationships. One of the messages that strongly resonated with me from the booklet was that telling the truth about what happened is a powerful sign of respect, acknowledging the wrongs is a huge step towards reconciliation. Secondly, while it is very important to educate yourself and others, its even more important to take action. Going forward I would love to learn more about how we can help those impacted recover while also supporting them as they teach others their history. It is my opinion that passing down the horrible but very real history of what happened in our country is an important part of healing for our entire society.