**Focus Question Responses**

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1. using your own educational experience to date, how did you see teachers honoring 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 a hospitable and invitational educational environments and relationships with all students?

Answer – Personally I had a wonderful school experience, throughout all/both elementary and high school. I have seen my teachers in the past use knowing and doing in the classroom. One example is when they know different students in the class learn better in different ways, weather that Is being a hands-on learner, learning by doing, seeing, reading etc. They would give options that fit all students known learning ability’s and learning skills, so all students had the opportunity to excel. By them doing this the teacher took note of previously known knowledge about their students and took action to help them succeed. I went to a small school and always knew my teachers very well; they also took interest into out lives as well. That made the environment in the school welcoming, not stressful and a happy place to be, knowing your teachers had your back and knew your history. Taking the time to get to know your students is mandatory, knowing who you are teaching and not just assuming by who they are will make you a better teacher to those students.

Some ways a teacher can build a sense of community in the classroom is to add decorations, color, posters and such into the class to make it feel more welcoming and a safe place where students want to spend their time. I am excited for that part of being a teacher. Setting up the classroom in the beginning of the year, making sure it is a happy place for students to be. Which I believe is a good way to start off a trusting relationship with the students.

To grow a sense of community in the classroom most of my teachers never had seating plans for the first parts of the year. That way people were able to bond with their friends, get a sense of who their friends were. Then when there was a seating plan you were able to find other people that you worked well with and coming from a small school everyone was included and never seemed to be left out majority of the time. Invitational classroom environments were always the case at my school. You got to be friends with your teachers which made you want to come into their classes for extra help and frankly just visits. My teachers engaged in everyone of their students lives, making sure everyone knew they always had someone to go to if they needed anything. Which made school a safe, and welcoming place.

2. 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 classroom? Did the space in your classrooms provide you with opportunities to engage with all students in your classroom? How did this space make you feel? What could teachers do to make classroom spaces more relational?

Answer – Going through the grades in school was always so exciting, new classrooms, new teachers and getting older! When I look back at my classrooms from my younger years, they are colorful and bright with letters all over the walls and alphabet carpets, toys, paint, comfy pillows and blankets. As a very young child, still excited about school you’d run in and meet with your friends and play with all the toys and make a huge mess. But these classrooms always stuck with me. They shaped who I am today, and that may sound silly because its just a colorful classroom filled with desks, chairs, and a mess of toys. In that place is where everything starts, where you make lifetime friendships and memories. The alphabet carpet in the front of the room where we got to eat lunch while you sat on the first letter of your name, we always stained the carpet at lunch time. Those are the memories I love to reminisce.

My classrooms were always a safe place and was a positive atmosphere. Each teacher was different that made each classroom different. One thing that stayed the same between all classrooms was that the teacher was always at the front of the classroom with all the power in the room. You knew to listen to your teachers and to be quiet when they spoke. In the beginning of the year in elementary school, we always did ice breakers, that were very cheesy, but also so helpful to get everyone to speak. That does put some people out of their comfort zone.

My classrooms gave me the opportunity to engage with all students in the classroom. At times in the year, we would have seating plans and sometimes we wouldn’t. When we had them, we were able to get to know people we usually didn’t work with, sometimes that would lead to new friends and sometimes it wouldn’t, either are okay. When you got out of seating plan and your new friends got to still sit with you. We sometimes sat in rows, in pods, in groups or separated and changing up the room made it a good way to engage with all students in the room. It made the classrooms more rational as well.

3. 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: what is it about? What messages resonate with you? What do you need and want to learn more about?

Answer – Throughout my school years I have learned plenty about indigenous history in Canada. Starting from the medicine wheel, indigenous culture-based games, residential schools, the acts, treaty land and much more. It did seem to me that everything we learned repeated every year. We never got into the depth of it all. We learned about who Indigenous people are, we learned that they were taken to residential schools and treated so horribly. But really when I think about it every year especially in high school the main topic was always residential schools, not much more. My school always participated in orange shirt day and had a big assembly to talk about the meaning of it, and the importance of it. That helped the students learn more about orange shirt day.

What I have learned from family and friends isn’t a whole lot, unfortunately we did not talk about this topic much, since all of us weren’t educated enough to do so. I have learned lots from the media. When around Canada they found hundreds of graves and bodies from the residential schools, these graves are from the young indigenous students who died in residential school. I learned about all that from social media. I also learned about the missing indigenous women, read lots of articles in the media about that issue as well. The media can be helpful to educate yourself on these important topics.

The truth and reconciliation book shares personal stories, from real people, it shares the ugly truth, it also teaches us more about the stereotypes. Storytelling is very important for educating the non-Indigenous people about their way of life. Hearing stories from someone's real life experiences changes outsiders’ perspectives, beliefs, and opinions on Indigenous life. That is why I enjoy the story telling perspective in the truth and reconciliation book. It teaches me who is uneducated about most Indigenous topics a lot more of what they went through. Stereotypes are cruel and almost 100% of the time false. These stereotypes make good people look the opposite. Those stereotypes are created by non-Indigenous peoples that are uneducated about the topic at hand. Its good to learn about stereotypes how they are fake and not good to listen to or believe. I want to hear more personal stories from Indigenous people. The book is great and really opened my eyes to the truth.