

Truth & Reconciliation Day

Tribute to Lost Languages

Foreword

Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) recognizes the deep loss of language and culture experienced in Métis communities as a result of colonization and residential schools. MN–S is committed to revitalizing these traditional practices and ensuring they are carried forward with pride. By acknowledging the past, we honour what was lost and make a promise to protect and preserve the Métis spirit for generations to come.

Overview

This package includes enough supplies for 50 participants to contribute to the activity. This activity can be adapted across several different ages and settings, it can be done among a community, local, or in a classroom environment. Please adapt to suit the needs of your group as you see fit.

Included Materials

- A copy of the book *“Stolen Words”* written by **Melanie Florence** and illustrated by **Gabrielle Grimard**
- A copy of a reconciliation crossword activity (to be photocopied to accommodate the size of your group)
- One paracord rope (100 feet in length)
- One roll of orange ribbon (25 yards in length)
- A list of “heart” words in Michif
- Stickers
- A business card with a QR code leading to the Métis Gathering website, to access lesson plans and activities for future commemorative days

Activities

Pick one that best suits your group

1. READ THE STORY *STOLEN WORDS* TO YOUR GROUP

APPENDIX 1 FOR CORRESPONDING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

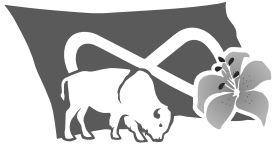
In the story, the grandfather lost his language at residential school. His granddaughter was able to give him a gift, she gave him his words back. This was very powerful because he started to remember. He found his words and was able to connect with a piece of his culture that had been taken from him.

2. WATCH *ÎLE-À-LA-CROSSE MÉTIS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL DOCUMENTARY*

APPENDIX 2 FOR CORRESPONDING ACTIVITY

The documentary follows Métis specific experiences of several residential school Survivors from Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan. As you view the documentary, have your group fill out the reconciliation crossword and reflection.





Truth & Reconciliation Day

Tribute to Lost Languages

TRIBUTE ACTIVITY

Today, on National Truth and Reconciliation Day, we acknowledge the Indigenous languages and cultures that were stolen through colonization and residential schools. We give the gift of a word in honour of Indigenous people and families who were impacted by these losses. This tribute activity is a collaborative art project that invites participants of all ages to contribute, creating an interactive display that reflects our shared knowledge and understanding of reconciliation.

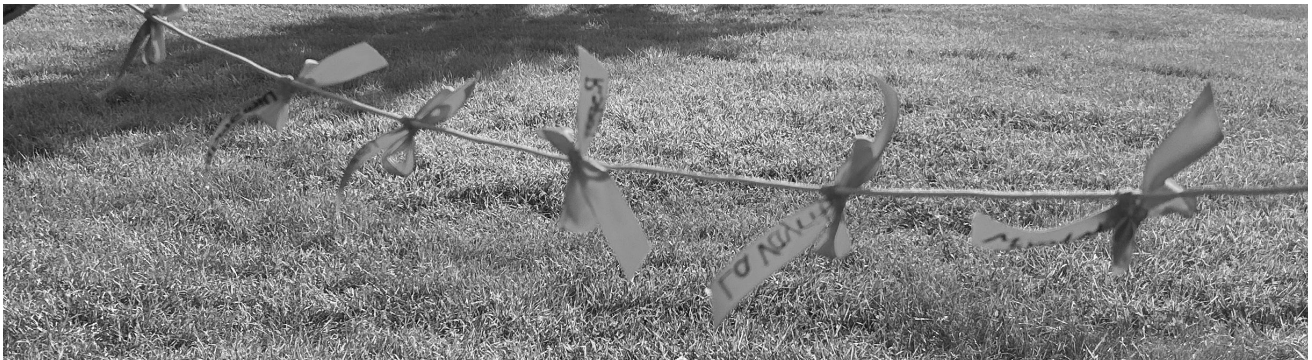
By tying a ribbon that carries a word in a Michif language that represents your region (Northern Michif, Michif French, Heritage Michif), you are participating in reconciliation. You are helping to lift up voices, stories, and words that were once taken, but are now being reclaimed.

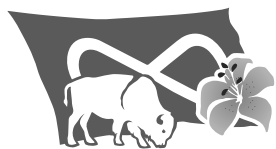
Today and everyday, we celebrate the strength, resilience, and beauty of Indigenous languages.

Instructions Steps:

- Measure and cut the ribbon in 18-inch sections
- Select a Michif “heart” word from the list below, or, choose a word of your own that holds special meaning to you
- Write the word on your ribbon
- Tie your ribbon to the cord, spaced 6-inches from other ribbons
- Hang your completed tribute along the school hallway, outside the building, along a fence, along a walkway, in a park, or anywhere that speaks to you and your group

Exemplar:





Truth & Reconciliation Day

Tribute to Lost Languages

CLOSING (OPTIONAL)

For a moment of quiet reflection, prompt your group to think about their answers to one of the following questions:

- What does the word you wrote on your ribbon mean to you?
- Why is it important to remember and respect Indigenous languages and cultures?

You can choose to have the responses written down individually, or share as a group.

To close in a good way, invite your group to carry this activity forward. The ribbons stay here on display, but our responsibility to reconciliation continues. We can continue to honour Indigenous voices by taking time to listen, to learn, and to show respect for the languages and cultures that surround us.

English	Michif French	Heritage (Southern) Michif	Northern Michif
Respect	rispay	li rispay	miyotôta
Truth	la vayritii	la vayritii	tâpwêwin

Download the apps below for pronunciation:



Appendix 1

Stolen Words Activity

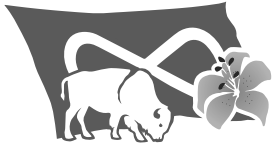
1. DISCUSS BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- **Background knowledge:** What is culture? Culture is often passed down from elders, family, and community. Culture means the way a group of people live. It includes things like:
 - The language they speak
 - The food they eat
 - The clothes they wear
 - Their music, art, and stories
 - Their beliefs, values, and traditions

2. READ-ALOUD STOLEN WORDS

3. DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING AS A GROUP

- How would you feel if someone told you that you were not allowed to speak your language?
- Why is language an important part of someone's culture?
- Have you ever lost something that was really important to you? How did it feel?
- Why is culture important? What might happen if something meaningful to your culture was taken away?



Truth & Reconciliation Day

Métis Residential School Survivors

Appendix 2

Documentary Activity

This activity is best suited for learners in grades 8-12 and is projected to take 30 minutes to complete. Please photocopy relevant pages to distribute to your group so they can participate in the activity.

Content Warning: The video used for this activity does contain themes of abuse, including sexual abuse. Please prioritize your well-being during viewing, and take breaks as needed.

PRE-LEARNING

In an effort to pursue reconciliation, the provincial and federal governments of Canada recognized and compensated the Survivors of residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established, which provided the Survivors with a platform for their stories to be heard. From 2007-2015, the TRC travelled to all parts of Canada and listened to over 6,500 Survivors and witnesses. From this, the TRC developed their final report which included the 94 Calls to Action.

However, for a long time the suffering caused by the Île-à-la-Crosse residential boarding school was not recognized by the provincial and federal governments. Only recently has the experiences of these Survivors been acknowledged. On March 4, 2025, it was announced that an Agreement-in-Principle has been reached. The signing of the Agreement-in-Principle is a significant milestone for Survivors of the Île-à-la-Crosse residential boarding school who suffered cultural loss and abuse at the school from January 1, 1860, to December 31, 1976. The Agreement-in-Principle outlines individual compensation for having attended, as well as future focused investments to support commemoration, healing, language, and culture.

Today and every day, we acknowledge the decades long battle faced by these Survivors in order to receive recognition, and we listen to their stories with open hearts and minds.

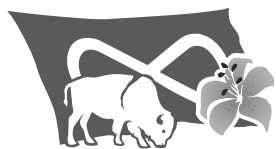
[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)

[Reports - NCTR](#)

[Île-à-la-Crosse School Survivors and Canada sign Agreement-in-Principle - Canada.ca](#)

**Please visit these sources to learn more, and to view quotes from those impacted by the Agreement-in-Principle.*





Truth & Reconciliation Day

Métis Residential School Survivors

INSTRUCTIONS

Watch the video: *Île-à-la-Crosse Métis Residential School Documentary* – Summary (17:52)

As you watch the video, fill in the crossword puzzle below. If it is helpful, you can fill in the blanks first, then complete the crossword after the video. Please note that the prompts are in order.

CLUES

3 Down: Île-à-la-Crosse is the _____ oldest community in Western Canada.

14 Across: In 2026, Île-à-la-Crosse will be _____ hundred and fifty years old.

11 Down: Michelle Leclair talks about what was lost due to residential schools _____ and culture.

1 Across: Île-à-la-Crosse Mayor Duane Favel mentions that the Survivors don't have _____, because the government has failed to recognize the existence of this residential boarding school.

10 Down: Louis Gardiner says, "the agenda was to take the _____ out of the child."

9 Across: The commissioners of the TRC have said that excluding these Survivors from the settlement agreement is a barrier of _____.

5 Across & 12 Down: When Dorthy Dubrulle says 'Île-à-la-Crosse is the people, it's a place we call home,' she uses these two words to describe it. _____ and _____.

1 Down: Robert Merasty said we lost our names and were given a number instead. If we didn't respond to that number, there were _____.

2 Down & 22 Across: Robert Merasty said the goal was "to take the _____ away from us, and then try to make us a little more _____."

19 Across: Max Morin said, "I used to like going to school, I wanted to _____."

5 Down: Emile Janvier said, "when my grandkids come over I always hug them and tell them I _____ them, because for 10 months out of the year, I never heard I love you."

20 Across: Pat Desjarlais said there was nothing to _____ with in the yard, and we never left the yard. It was just like jail.

15 Across & 16 Down: MNC President Cassidy Caron says we've taken steps _____, in making sure people understand that Métis did go to residential schools. However, in terms of tangible _____ toward justice, we still have a lot of work to do.

21 Down & 8 Down: Jordyn Burnouf notes that when we talk about culture and heritage, they don't want to talk about _____, because that is the ultimate shift of _____.

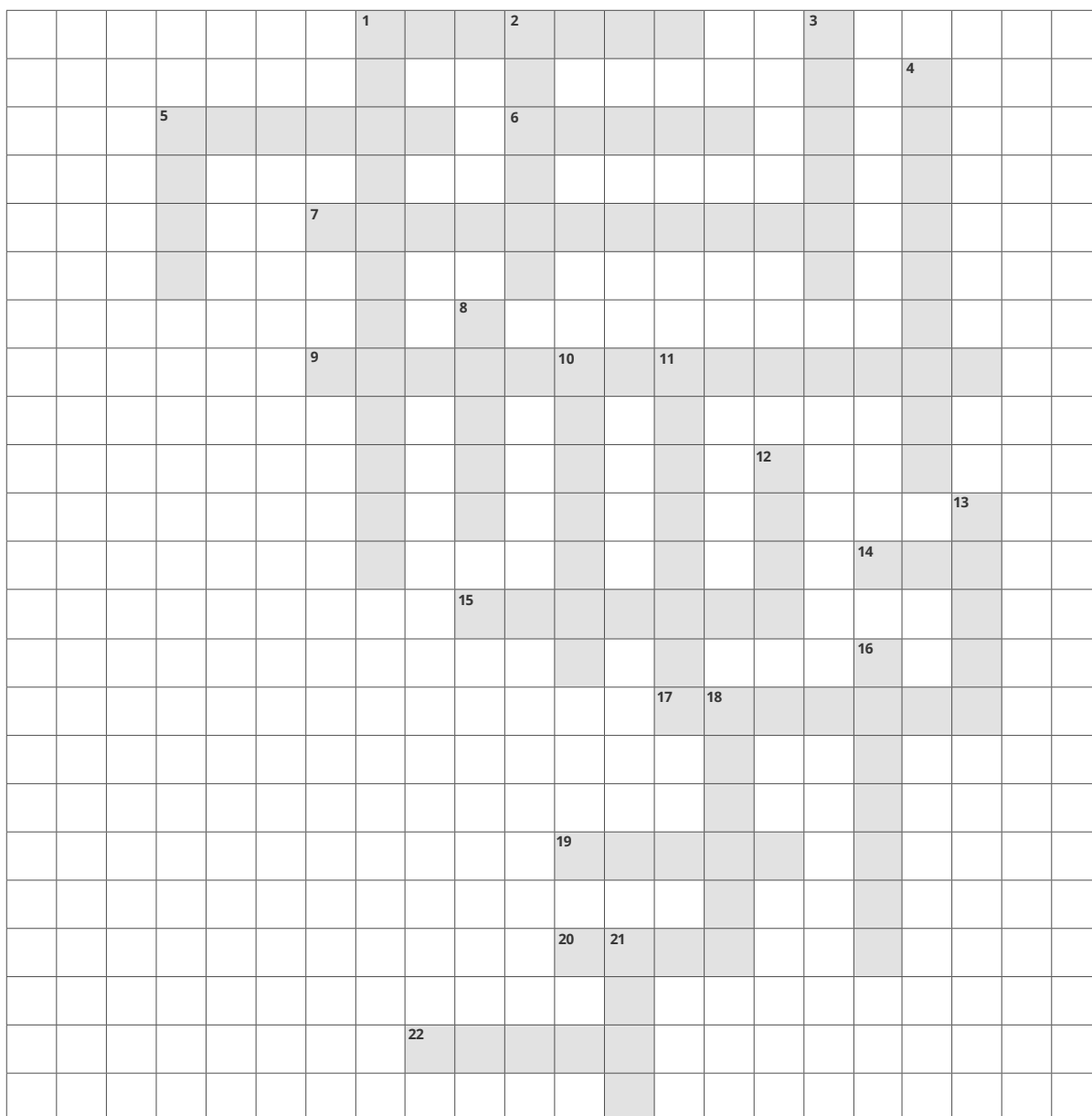
6 Across: MN-S President Glen McCallum says that this can never happen again. We need to respect each other, and come together to speak as one _____.

7 Across: Without _____ of the harm that was done, we cannot move forward with justice.

18 Down: We've lost _____ survivors in the last year, we need to get this done as soon as possible.

13 Down & 17 Across: This not just a legal obligation, but a _____ and _____ obligation.

4 Down: Those who attended the Île-à-la-Crosse Residential Boarding School are called _____.



REFLECTION

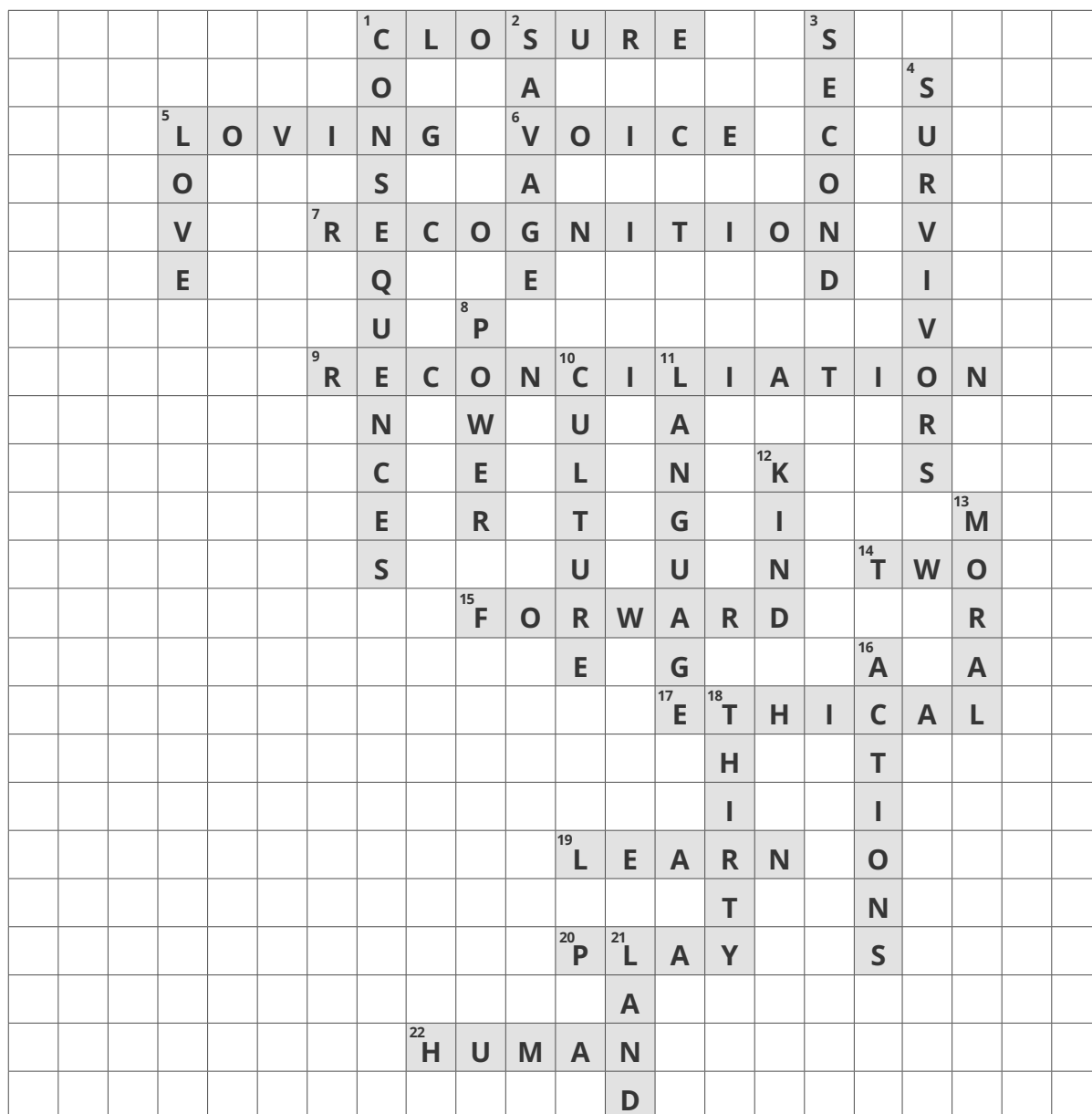
Looking at the crossword, which of these words stand out to you in a meaningful or symbolic way? Why?

Which words represent stereotypes, or the pain of the past?

Which words represent hope and healing?

What is one thing you learnt or found surprising?

Why was it important that the Survivors of the Île-à-la-Crosse residential boarding school received justice?



ANSWER KEY

Instructors Eyes Only

1 Down: Consequences

1 Across: Closure

2 Down: Savage

3 Down: Second

4 Down: Survivors

5 Down: Love

5 Across: Loving

6 Across: Voice

7 Across: Recognition

8 Down: Power

9 Across: Reconciliation

10 Down: Culture

11 Down: Language

12 Down: Kind

13 Down: Moral

14 Across: Two

15 Across: Forward

16 Down: Actions

17 Across: Ethical

18 Down: Thirty

19 Across: Learn

20 Across: Play

21 Down: Land

22 Across: Human