



Truth & Reconciliation Day Paths of Reconciliation



Foreword

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is a time to honour the children who attended residential schools, recognize the strength of Survivors, their families, and communities, and commit to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

Inspired by *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola I. Campbell, this activity invites students to reflect on the importance of family, culture, language, traditions, and the land. Throughout the story, Shi-shi-etko prepares to leave home by holding close the people, places, and teachings that shape her identity.

Michif translations for Orange Shirt Day:

Heritage Michif: la zhoornii di shmiizh oraanzh

Northern Michif: l'zarrâñsh la shimîsh okîsikâw

Michif French: la zhourii di shmiizh oraanzh

Overview

This package includes teaching materials for two activities, you may choose to teach one or the other, or both:

- River of Reconciliation: teaches what happened (history, reconciliation, impacts)
- Threads of Reconciliation: focuses on what survived (resilience, relationships, revitalization, community)

Both activities include adaptations for different grades. Please adapt as you see fit. The finished products can be displayed in honour of reconciliation. Teachers can choose to do one or both activities, and are encouraged to collaborate with other classrooms in the school.

Included Materials

- Activity Instructions
- A copy of the book *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola I. Campbell
- Blank Water Drop Template (Pre-K–Grade 3) – Appendix 1
- Lined Water Drop Template (Grades 4–8 & 9–12) – Appendix 2
- "River of Reconciliation" Poster (for bulletin board) – Appendix 3
- Blank Quilt Template (Pre-K – Grade 3) - Appendix 4
- Lined Quilt Template (Grades 4–8 & 9–12) – Appendix 5
- "Threads of Reconciliation" Poster (for bulletin board) - Appendix 6
- A QR code linked to the *Métis Gathering* Website, which houses free, accessible language learning resources and lesson plans for commemorate days of significance to Métis people



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River of Reconciliation (Inspired by Shi-shi-etko)

The River of Reconciliation is a collaborative classroom or school-wide activity inspired by Shi-shi-etko. Students will reflect on the importance of remembering and protecting the people, places, languages, traditions, and stories that shape identity.

For Métis people, rivers have long been more than waterways– they have been lifelines that connected families, communities, languages, trade, and stories. Rivers such as the Red River, South Saskatchewan River, North Saskatchewan River, and Qu'Appelle River have played an important role in Métis history, carrying people, knowledge, and traditions from one generation to the next.

Like a river, culture is strongest when it continues to flow. Every water drop created through this activity represents a story, memory, language, or tradition that we choose to carry forward. Together, these drops form one River of Reconciliation, reminding us that reconciliation is a shared responsibility and that every act of learning helps ensure Indigenous histories, languages, and cultures continue to thrive for future generations.

As students complete their individual water drops, they contribute to a collective River of Reconciliation display. This activity uses the river as a symbol of continuity, illustrating how stories, memories, languages, and traditions continue to flow from one generation to the next when we choose to learn, remember, and carry them forward.

Activities

Pick one that best suits your group:

- Activity 1: Pre-K to Grade 3
- Activity 2: Grade 4 to Grade 8
- Activity 3: Grade 9 to Grade 12

Activity 1 (Pre-K to Grade 3)

1. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Before reading, introduce students to the idea that every child deserves to grow up surrounded by the people, language, traditions, and places they love.

Explain that for many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, residential schools separated children from their families and communities. Many children were prevented from speaking their languages, practicing their cultures, or being with the people who love them.





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2. Read-Aloud & Discussion

Read (or find an online read-aloud) of the book *Shi-shi-etko*, and pause throughout the story, pointing out to students the things Shi-shi-etko wanted to remember, and how those things represent her culture.

After reading, ask students to list things Shi-shi-etko wanted to remember, draw them on chart paper or the whiteboard so that students can use that as a guide when they move into the activity.

3. Activity

Using the template (Appendix 1), have students draw something Shi-shi-etko wanted to remember (family, nature, animals, language, songs, or traditions). Refer to chart paper or whiteboard lists and drawings. Students may draw or write, make adaptations as needed for your group.

4. Closing

Students bring their completed work to pin/staple/tape to the school (or classroom) display. Before doing so as a group, inform students that every water drop joins together to form one River of Reconciliation, symbolizing that stories, memories, and acts of reconciliation continue to flow from one generation to the next.

Activity 2 (Grade 4 to 8)

1. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Discuss the purpose of residential schools and the lasting impacts they have had on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

Explain that many children lost opportunities to learn their language, participate in cultural practices, and spend time with their families. Despite these challenges, Survivors, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and communities have worked tirelessly to revitalize languages and preserve cultural traditions.

2. Read-Aloud & Discussion

Read (or find an online read-aloud) of the book *Shi-shi-etko*, to students, and end with a few discussion questions.

Example discussion questions:

- Why did Shi-shi-etko's family encourage her to remember the land?
- What role do family and community play in shaping identity?
- Why is language important?
- Why do you think traditions are worth protecting?
- How does remembering history help create a better future?
- What responsibilities do we have in supporting reconciliation?

3. Activity

Using the lined water drop template (Appendix 2), have students respond to one, or both of the prompts:

- How can we help protect languages and traditions for future generations?
- What is one action you can take to support reconciliation?





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4. Closing

Students bring their completed work to pin/staple/tape to the school (or classroom) display. Before doing so as a group, inform students that every water drop joins together to form one River of Reconciliation, symbolizing that stories, memories, and acts of reconciliation continue to flow from one generation to the next.

Activity 3 (Grade 9 to 12)

1. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Open the conversation by asking students what they know about residential schools. Guide the discussion around:

- What the goal of residential schools was
- What the outcome was

Explain that residential schools were part of a government policy of assimilation designed to disconnect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children from their families, languages, cultures, and identities. Although the last federally operated residential school closed in 1996, the impacts continue to be felt by Survivors, their families, and communities today.

This means if you attended grade 1 in 1996, you would only be 36 years old today. So really, it wasn't that long ago. Some 36-year-olds who attended likely have children around your age. This means that some Canadians in your age group would have parents that attended residential schools. So, for some people in Canada around your ages, their parents attended residential school. They say it will take 7 generations to heal, and some families are still at generation one.

Definition of Assimilation: The process of encouraging or forcing a group of people to adopt the language, culture, values, and way of life of another group, often at the expense of their own identity, traditions, and heritage.

Ask students what they know about **reconciliation**.

Guide the discussion around:

- What it means
- What it looks like
- What is the goal



Optional: There are several reputable videos that further explain residential schools, their cause and effects, and the efforts of reconciliation. To strengthen student understanding, you may wish to play one of these videos before moving on to step 2. If you do, ensure you watch it beforehand, to prepare students for any potential **trigger warnings**.



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2. Read-Aloud & Discussion

Read the book *Shi-shi-etko*, (or find a read-aloud, or let students read or listen to the book individually). Have students pull out and jot down themes (such as identity, family, loss, culture, and resilience).

Break students into five groups. Give each group a discussion question and roughly five minutes to discuss. Have the groups share aloud afterwards.

- Why do you think *Shi-shi-etko*'s family focused on helping her remember rather than focusing on what she was about to lose?
- How does the story challenge or deepen your understanding of residential schools?
- What role do memory, language, and cultural traditions play in preserving identity?
- Why is it important for all Canadians, not only Indigenous peoples, to learn about residential schools?
- What does meaningful reconciliation look like beyond simply learning about history?



3. Activity

Using the water drop template (Appendix 2), have students respond to one of the following prompts:

- Choose one theme from *Shi-shi-etko*. How does this theme shape your understanding of the role young people have in advancing reconciliation?
- Choose one theme from *Shi-shi-etko*. How can education, language revitalization, or storytelling help preserve this theme and contribute to reconciliation?
- Choose one theme from *Shi-shi-etko*. What is one meaningful action you can take to honour or strengthen this theme in your school or community, and why does it matter?

4. Closing

Invite students to place their completed water drops onto the classroom or school River of Reconciliation display.

Remind students that reconciliation is an ongoing commitment. Just as every water drop contributes to the strength of a river, every informed conversation, respectful relationship, and meaningful action contributes to a future where Indigenous histories, languages, cultures, and perspectives are recognized, respected, and carried forward for future generations.





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River of Reconciliation (Inspired by Shi-shi-etko)

The Threads of Reconciliation is a collaborative classroom or school-wide activity inspired by *Shi-shi-etko*. Students will reflect on the people, memories, languages, traditions, and teachings that shape identity and continue to connect us across generations.

For many Indigenous peoples, blankets represent far more than warmth. They symbolize love, care, belonging, protection, and the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next. Every stitch and every thread contributes to something stronger than itself, reminding us that families, communities, and cultures are strengthened when everyone has a role in carrying traditions forward.

Residential schools attempted to separate children from the people, languages, and cultures that wrapped them in love and belonging. Despite these efforts, Survivors, families, Elders, and communities have protected and revitalized Indigenous languages, teachings, and traditions. Like the threads of a blanket, these connections continue to endure.

As students complete their individual quilt squares, they contribute to a collective Community Blanket display. Each square represents a unique story, memory, teaching, or commitment to reconciliation. When joined together, the blanket reminds us that reconciliation is built through many individual actions woven together into one stronger community.

The blanket also reflects an important Métis perspective. Blankets were an important part of daily life, travel, trade, and family. They provided warmth and comfort, were exchanged through relationships, and became part of the stories and experiences passed from one generation to the next. Today, blankets are often gifted symbolically. This activity uses the blanket as a symbol of connection, illustrating that reconciliation is strengthened when we weave together truth, respect, and shared responsibility.

Activities

Pick one that best suits your group, adapt as needed:

- Activity 1: Pre-K to Grade 3
- Activity 2: Grade 4 to Grade 8
- Activity 3: Grade 9 to Grade 12

Activity 1 (Pre-K to Grade 3)

1. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Prior to reading, ask students what blankets are for (to stay warm, to feel comforted, to feel safe). Ask students what else makes them feel safe (ie. their families).

Explain that families wrap around you like a blanket and help you to feel safe and loved. Explain that many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children had to leave their families and go away to a school where they could not go home to see their families, and everything was unfamiliar. They could not speak their language, wear their traditional clothing, keep their long hair, or hug their families. It was like going outside without a blanket.





Truth & Reconciliation Day Paths of Reconciliation



2. Read-Aloud & Discussion

Read (or find an online read-aloud of) Shi-shi-etko, pausing throughout the story to outline the people, places, and traditions that gave Shi-shi-etko comfort and helped shape her identity.

After reading, ask students to identify the people and things that helped Shi-shi-etko feel connected to her family and culture.

3. Activity

Using the quilt square template (Appendix 4), have students draw something that represents love, family, language, culture, or a special memory they would carry in their hearts. Something that would wrap around them and keep them warm if they were in Shi-shi-etko's circumstance. Students may draw or write, adapting as needed for your group.

4. Closing

Students bring their completed quilt squares to add to the classroom or school Community Blanket display. Explain that every square helps create one blanket, reminding us that everyone has an important place in keeping stories, cultures, and traditions strong.

Activity 2 (Grade 4 to 8)

1. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Ask students to think about what a blanket represents. Beyond keeping us warm, blankets can represent comfort, protection, family, and a sense of belonging. Just as every thread helps make a blanket stronger, every family member, language, tradition, and teaching helps strengthen a community.

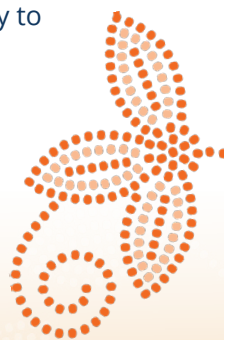
Discuss the purpose of residential schools and the lasting impacts they have had on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

Explain that many children were separated from the people and traditions that made them feel safe. They lost opportunities to speak their languages, participate in cultural practices, and spend time with their families. Despite these challenges, Survivors, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and communities have worked tirelessly to revitalize languages, preserve cultural traditions, and strengthen the threads that connect generations.

2. Read-Aloud & Discussion

Read (or find an online read-aloud of) Shi-shi-etko and end with a few discussion questions:

- What provided Shi-shi-etko comfort prior to departing for residential school?
- Why are family and community important in shaping identity?
- Why do you think language and traditions help people feel like they belong?
- How do stories help keep culture alive?





Truth & Reconciliation Day Paths of Reconciliation



3. Activity

Using the quilt square template (Appendix 4), have students draw something that represents love, family, language, culture, or a special memory they would carry in their hearts. Something that would wrap around them and keep them warm if they were in Shi-shi-etkos place. Students may draw or write, adapting as needed for your group.

4. Closing

Students bring their completed quilt squares to add to the classroom or school Community Blanket display. Explain that every square helps create one blanket, reminding us that everyone has an important place in keeping stories, cultures, and traditions strong.

Activity 3 (Grade 9 to 12)

1. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Ask students what a blanket symbolizes aside from warmth. Guide the discussion towards:

- Comfort
- Safety
- Belonging
- Protection
- Family
- Connection



Explain that every family and community passes down things that cannot be held in your hands, such as stories, traditions, languages, values, songs, and ways of caring for one another. These teachings help shape who we are and create a sense of belonging.

Although residential schools attempted to interrupt these connections, they did not erase them. Survivors, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, families, and communities have worked tirelessly to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions. Today, many people continue this work by learning from Elders, speaking Indigenous languages, celebrating culture, sharing stories, and building strong relationships.

Have students do a two-minute quick-write responding to one of the following:

- What traditions or values have been passed down in your own family or community?
- Why is it important to preserve languages, stories, and cultural traditions?
- How can learning about Indigenous cultures help strengthen relationships and understanding?



Truth & Reconciliation Day Paths of Reconciliation



2. Read-Aloud & Discussion

Read *Shi-shi-etko* (or have students read or listen independently). As students read, ask them to pay attention to the people, places, memories, and teachings that surround Shi-shi-etko with love and belonging before she leaves for residential school.

Break students into five groups. Give each group one discussion question and approximately five minutes to discuss before sharing their ideas with the class.

- What people, places, or teachings gave Shi-shi-etko a sense of belonging? Why were they important?
- How do family, community, and culture help shape a person's identity?
- What lessons or values did Shi-shi-etko's family hope she would carry with her?
- How do stories, traditions, and language help strengthen communities across generations?
- What responsibilities do we have in ensuring future generations continue to feel connected to their cultures and communities?

3. Activity

Using the quilt square template (Appendix 5), have students respond to one of the following prompts:

- What person, teaching, tradition, or memory has helped shape who you are? How does it contribute to your sense of belonging?
- Choose one teaching or tradition from Shi-shi-etko. Why is it important to preserve and pass it on to future generations?

4. Closing

Invite students to place their completed quilt squares onto the classroom or school Community Blanket display.

Explain that every quilt square represents a unique story, teaching, memory, or act of care. On its own, each piece is meaningful, but together they create something stronger—a blanket that symbolizes the relationships, cultures, and shared responsibilities that connect us. Like reconciliation, building strong communities takes many people working together, one thread at a time.





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Appendix Overview

Appendix 1

Blank Water Drop Template (Pre-K–Grade 3)

Appendix 2

River of Reconciliation Poster (for bulletin board)

Appendix 3

River of Reconciliation Poster (for bulletin board)

Appendix 4

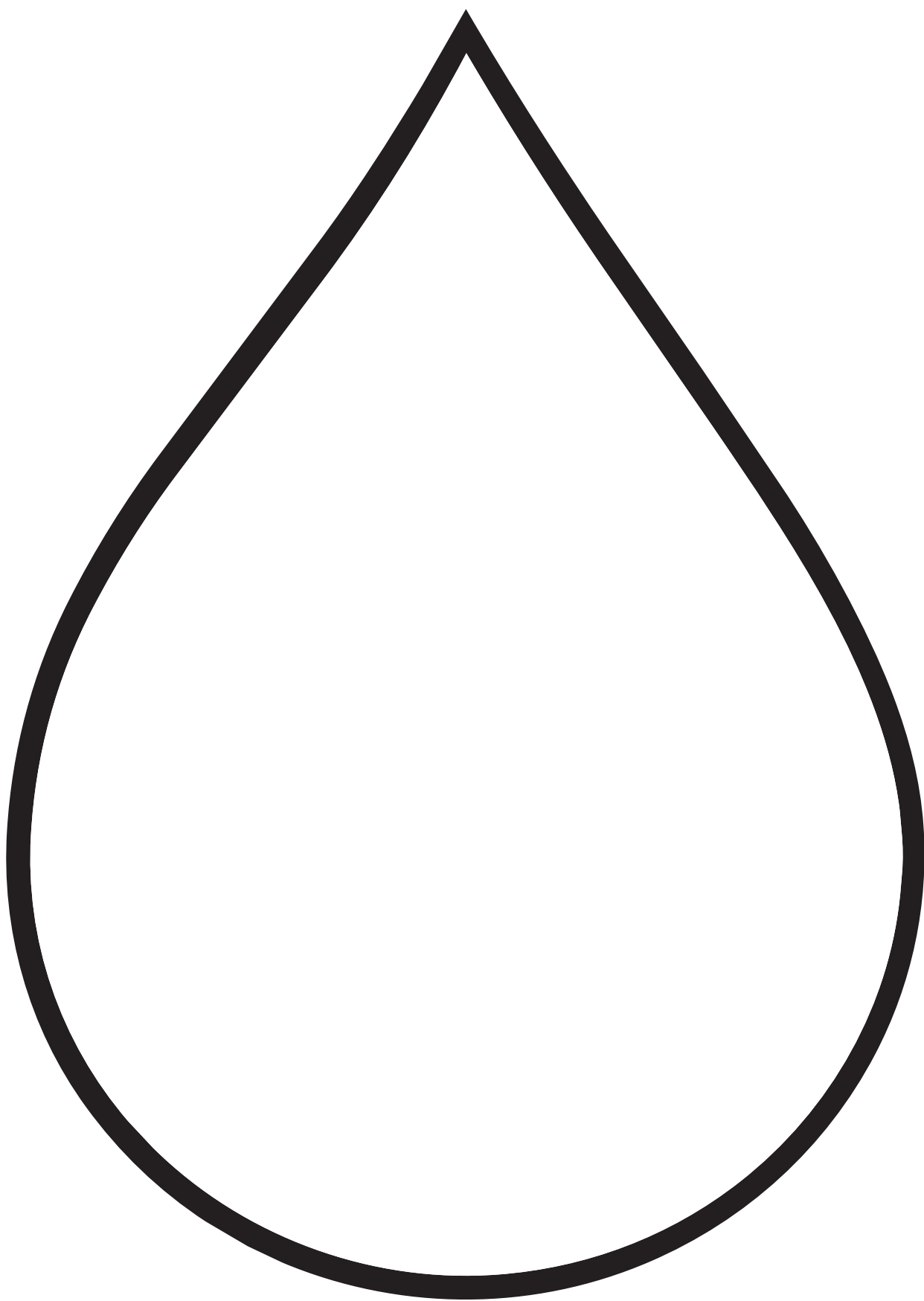
Blank Quilt Template (Pre-K–Grade 3)

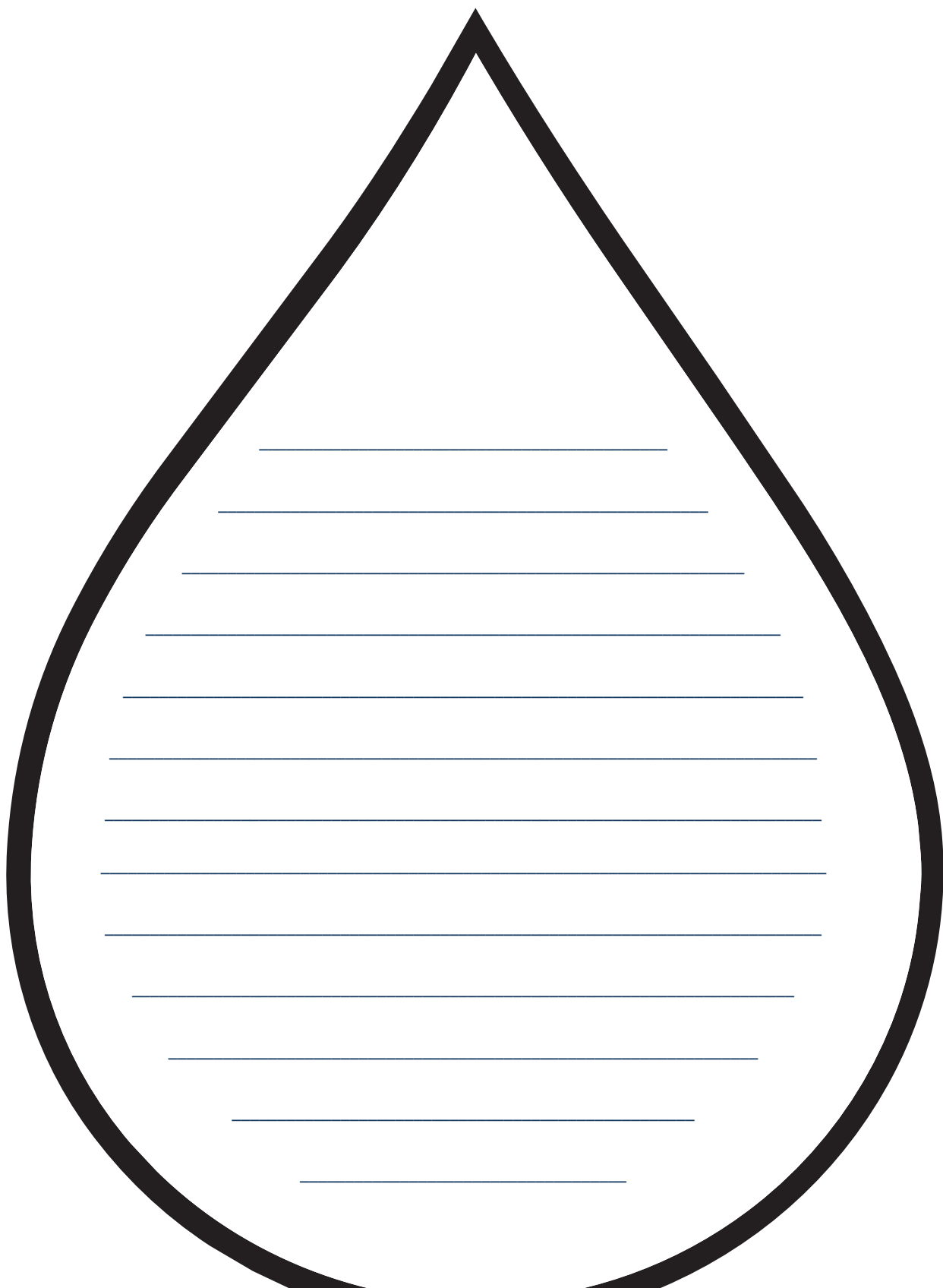
Appendix 5

Lined Quilt Template (Grades 4–8 & 9–12)

Appendix 6

Threads of Reconciliation Poster (for bulletin board)



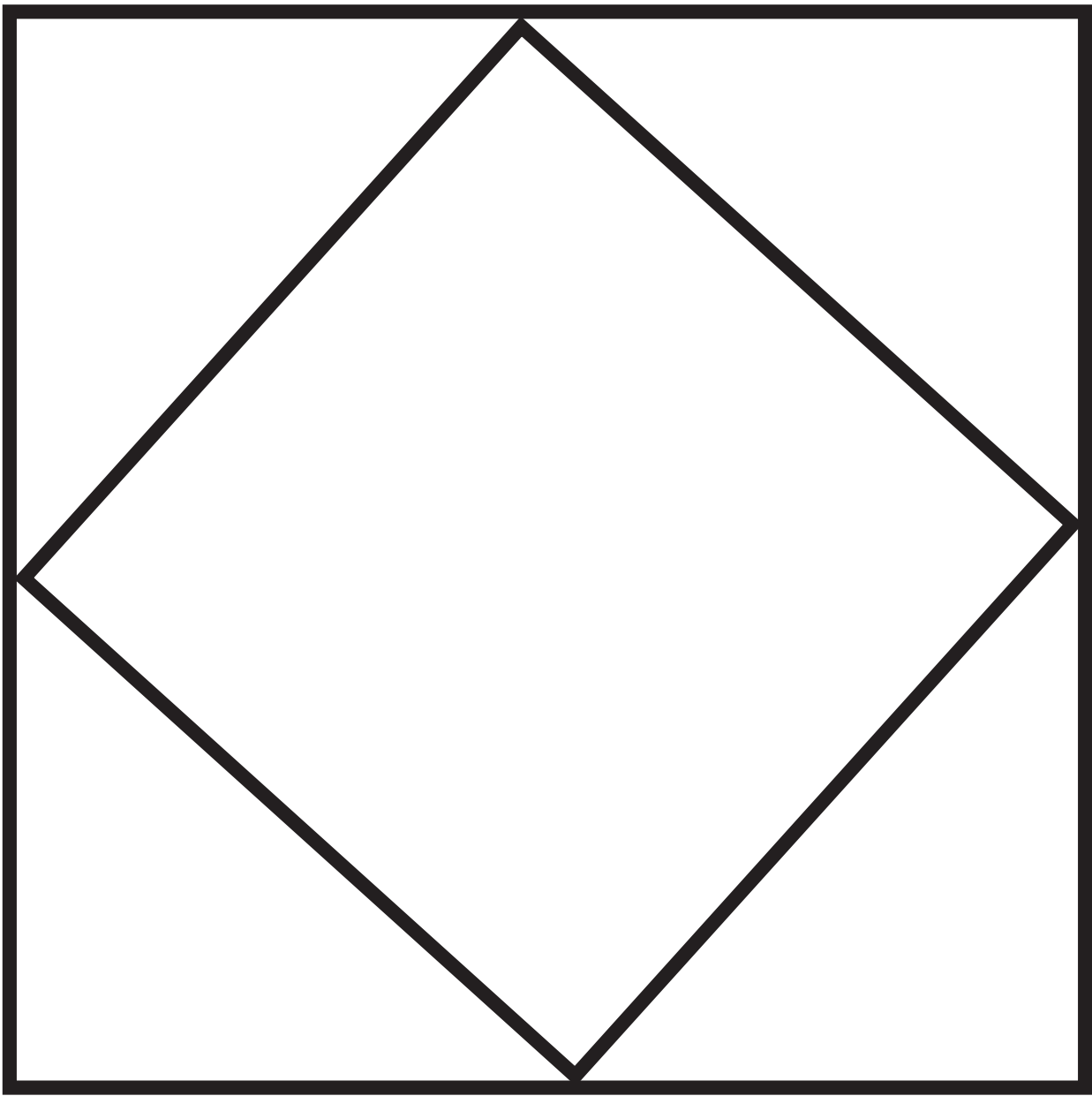


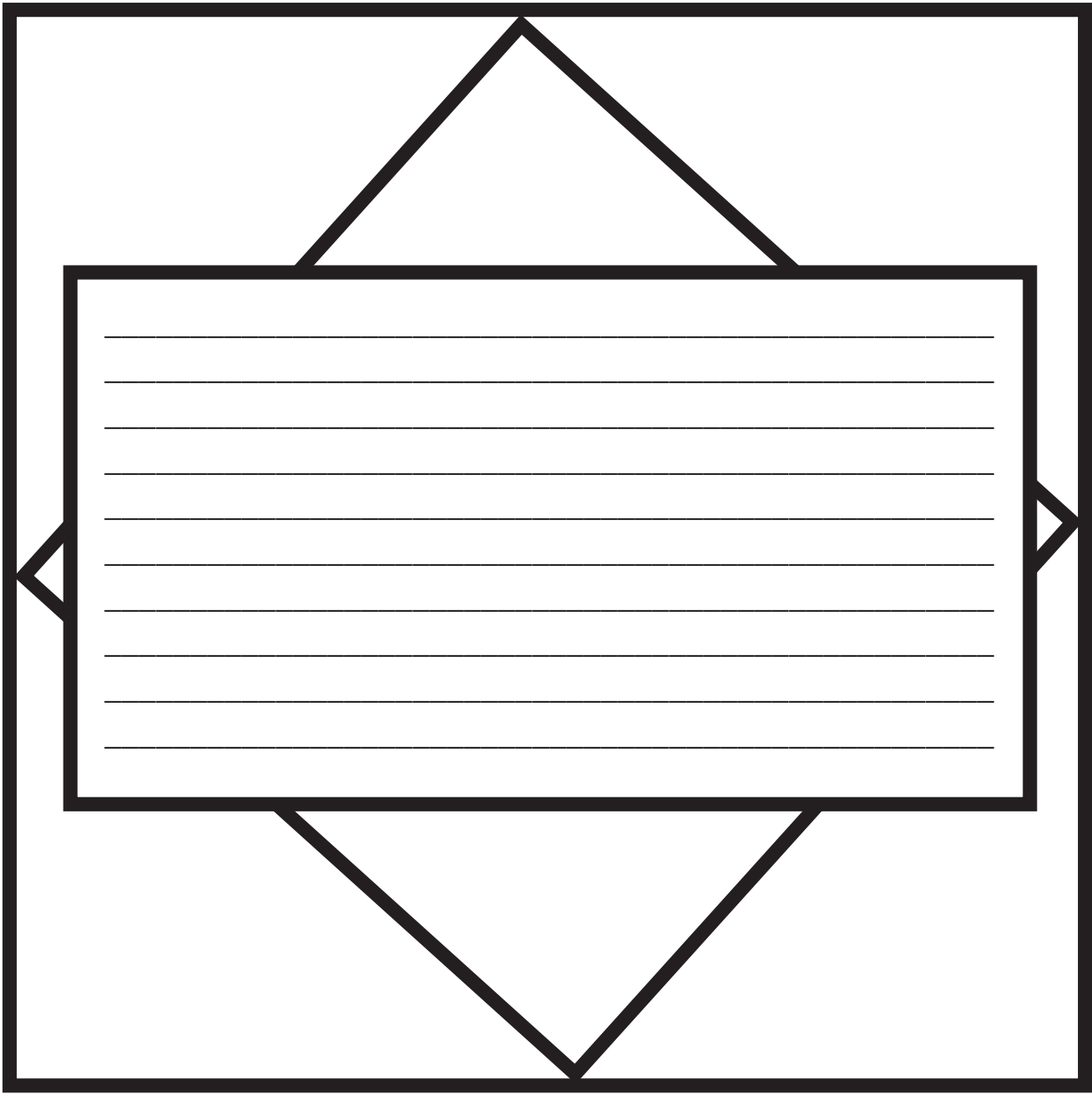
River of Reconciliation

Like a river, culture is strongest when it continues to flow. Every water drop created through this activity represents a story, memory, language, tradition, commitment, or reflection that we choose to carry forward.

Together, these drops form one River of Reconciliation, reminding us that reconciliation is a shared responsibility and that every act of learning helps ensure Indigenous histories, languages, and cultures continue to thrive for future generations.







Threads of Reconciliation

Like a blanket, communities are strongest when every thread is valued and woven together.

Every quilt square created through this activity represents a story, memory, language, tradition, commitment, or reflection that we choose to carry forward.

Together, these squares form one Community Blanket, reminding us that reconciliation is built through relationships, shared responsibility, and the collective work of protecting and carrying Indigenous histories, languages, cultures, and traditions forward for future generations.

