

Youth Script:

SCROLLS

Narrator: Before stepping onto the blankets: Inform participants that numbered scrolls are being handed out and each participant will unroll the scroll and read it aloud when called upon. The number and name of each scroll can be found on the outside of each scroll. (Participants can choose not to accept a scroll.) The *European(s)* and the *Narrator* present participants with the numbered scrolls. Remind participants to speak loudly and try not to rustle the paper during the activity. With smaller groups, each participant can read more than one scroll. If a mic is necessary, encourage participants to use it.

Point out that images will be projected that add more information to the activity.

Invite all participants to remove their shoes and step onto the blankets. After all participants are settled on the blankets, invite five people in the group to read aloud each of the following quotations, calling upon them one at a time. Inform participants that you will assist them with pronunciation if necessary, and to read the quote as well as its source. Remind participants that there are two types of scrolls, Hearing Indigenous Voices and Scroll # ____

Hearing Indigenous Voices 1:

“Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created.”

—*Georges Erasmus, Dene Nation, co-chair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*

Hearing Indigenous Voices 2:

"Tell the King very hard we want something for our Indians, because they take our land and our game."

—*Chief Jim Boss, Yukon, letter to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 1902*

Hearing Indigenous Voices 3:

“All Yukon belong to my papas. All Klondike belong my people. Country now all mine. Long time all mine. Hills all mine; caribou all mine; moose all mine; rabbits all mine; gold all mine. White man come and take all my gold. Take millions, take more hundreds fifty millions, and blow ‘em in Seattle. Now Moosehide Injun want Christmas. Game is gone. White man kills all moose and caribou near Dawson, which is owned by Moosehide. Injun everywhere have own hunting grounds. Moosehides hunt up Klondike, up Sixtymile, up Twentymile, but game is all gone. White man kill all.”

—*Chief Isaac in Dawson Daily News, 15 Dec. 1911.*

Narrator: These blankets represent North America before the arrival of Europeans. You represent the Indigenous peoples, the people who have been here for at least 10,000 years. Long before the arrival of Europeans, all of this was your home, and home to millions of people like you. You lived in hundreds of nations. You fished and hunted and farmed. Each community had its own language, culture, traditions, laws and governments. You traded and shared gifts through networks of trails and water routes that covered thousands of kilometres. Through your skills with canoe and kayak, you traded in goods and in many foods that we rely on today but were unknown to the rest of the world at the time: squash and corn; tomatoes and potatoes are just a few.

The land is very important to you. All of your needs – food, clothing, shelter, culture, your spirituality – are taken care of by the land, which is represented here by the blankets. In return, you take very seriously your responsibility to take care of the land.

As communities you often worked together and cooperated with one another. Like with all people, sometimes there was conflict. Before the newcomers arrived, one of the ways in which you, the original peoples, ended disputes was by making treaties.

[*Narrator* will say something like: “However, it is unlikely that Indigenous peoples stood in one place looking in one direction, listening to someone talk. Please be a part of your lands – move around on the blankets, use your trade and travel routes, and greet one another (and trade your traditional items).”]

Narrator Ask the participant that has Scroll 1 to read it.

Scroll 1: “One of my favourite things about my culture is how we’re taught that everything on the Earth is to be respected. It’s an important part of the culture and covers everything. That includes respecting yourself. Respecting yourself is one of the most important things my culture has taught me. Also, the land, water, plants, air and animals are all very important to our culture and need to be respected. Without any of it, what would we be?”

—*Kateri, a Mohawk youth from a community in Quebec*

Narrator Introduce the volunteer(s) representing the European settlers.

Narrator: Things were happening in Europe at the end of the 15th century that would mean a huge change for you. European explorers had just quote-unquote “discovered” you and your lands. This started a fierce competition between European nations.

European in a loud, pompous voice, striding around the blankets:
“*Without even consulting you, we made deals amongst ourselves and divided up control over you and your lands. Usually, whichever nation discovered your land first, took control with the blessing of the Christian church. This practice is now called the “Doctrine of Discovery.”*”

Narrator: And so began the so-called European “discovery” of North America.

European: enter from the east. Step onto the blankets and begin shaking hands, moving around and handing out the index cards.

Narrator: When the Europeans first arrived in North America there were many more Indigenous people than Europeans. The newcomers depended on you for their survival, and you helped them to understand how you did things – how you taught your children, how you took care of people who were sick, how you lived off the land in a way that left enough for future generations, and how your governments worked.

In the beginning there was lots of cooperation and support between you and

the settlers. The settlers and their leaders recognized you, the First Peoples, as having your own governments, laws and territories. They recognized you as independent nations. They made agreements or treaties with you. These treaties explained how you were going to share the land and the water, the animals, and the plants. These agreements were between you and the kings and queens of countries in Europe. The Europeans understood they could not force their laws or way of life on the people who were here long before they ever arrived. They understood that you had rights.

European (speaking in a loud voice): In the Royal Proclamation of 1763, King George the Third said Indigenous nations own their lands. The King said that the only legal way newcomers could gain control of those lands was by making treaties between the two nations. The year 2013 marked the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation.

Narrator: Later on, the Government of Canada was formed, and the Royal Proclamation became part of Canadian law. For you, the Indigenous peoples, the treaties were very special and sacred agreements. They were statements of peace, friendship, and sharing, and they were based on respect and honesty. Sharing was very important to you. The hunters shared their food with everyone and the families helped one another raise the children. In the treaties, you tried to help the Europeans understand what you meant by sharing.

European: Begin to slowly fold the edges of the blankets, making the blanket space smaller and smaller. When blankets are empty you can take them away and put them in a pile outside the activity. Very gradually fold and remove blankets until the middle of the exercise when the Indian Act is introduced and participants are placed on reserve.

Narrator: Remind participants that they must NOT step off the blankets. The goal is to stay on the blankets, even as they get smaller. The Narrator should also remind everyone that Indigenous people have always resisted when someone tried to take the land away.

Narrator: But the Europeans didn't see it that way anymore. They now had a different view of the treaties. For them, land was something that could be bought and sold, and treaties were a way of getting you, the Indigenous peoples to give up your land.

After a while, you didn't get along very well with the Europeans. When the War of 1812 ended, the Europeans no longer needed you to help them with the fighting. As the fur trade dried up, the European newcomers turned more and more to farming and started looking for more land.

Before too long, there were more Europeans than Indigenous peoples. One reason for this was the diseases the Europeans brought with them: diseases such as smallpox, measles and tuberculosis. You, the Indigenous peoples, suffered badly from these diseases because you had never had them in your communities before. Millions of you died. In fact, some people believe that half the Indigenous people alive at the time died from these diseases. In some communities, nine out of ten people died.

European: **walk up to a person who does not have a yellow or blue card, hand them the folded blanket and read -** Blankets infected with the deadly smallpox virus were given or traded to the Indigenous people by military leaders such as Lord Jeffrey Amherst. You represent the many Indigenous people who died from small pox after having come into contact with such blankets. Please step off the blanket and sit down.

Narrator: All people with white index cards please step off the blankets and take your seats. You represent the millions of Indigenous peoples who died of the various diseases to which you had no immunity. We will take a minute of silence to remember those who died.

European: As more of us arrived, we needed more land. Many of us as Europeans thought we were better than other kinds of people, including you. Soon, we didn't think of you as friends and partners, but as a "problem" to be solved. Some of your land was taken in war. Some land was taken after you died. We even started ignoring or changing our own laws to make it easier for us to take your land.

Narrator: In 1896, Tagish people discovered gold in the Klondike Valley. Within two years thirty thousand people from around the world, stampeded north, reducing Yukon Aboriginal people to a minority in their homelands, drastically altering your land, and diminishing the wildlife that sustained you.

[The European should take advantage of the reduced number of people on the blankets by taking entire blankets away, and continuing to kick aside or fold over blankets with people on them.]

Narrator: Without access to the land, and with new restrictions on hunting and trapping imposed by the settlers, it was often impossible to practice your traditional lifestyles. Many of you lost your cultures and languages.

[The *Narrator* should again remind the participants they must not step off the blankets. The objective is to stay on the blankets, even as they get smaller.

The *Narrator* should remind participants that Indigenous peoples always found ways to resist colonization; ask participants to keep this in mind (encourage acts of resistance, such as, unfolding the blanket...) as they remain in their roles.]

European: walk up to one person in the “east” who does not have a card and tell them – You represent the Beothuk, one of the original people of what is now the island of Newfoundland. You also died from diseases you had never seen before. Because the Europeans overhunted, some of you starved. Some of you died in violent encounters with the settlers trying to take your lands. Some of you were hunted down and killed. In 1829, the last Beothuk died. Your language and culture died along with them. Please step off the blankets and sit down.

European and *Narrator* walk to the “south” and choose two people who are standing close together.

Narrator: You represent the First Nations that were divided when the border between Alaska and Yukon was created. This border cut through communities and separated the Han people in Dawson from Forty Mile in Alaska...the Gwitchin people in Old Crow from family in Fort Yukon...the Upper Tanana speakers in Beaver Creek from their relatives in Northway,

and the Tlingit people in Teslin and Carcross from family in Juneau. This border cut you off from each other. Please move to separate blankets.

European guides each person to a separate blanket.

European then walks to the “west” and selects one person who does not have a card.

Narrator: Construction of the railway opened up the Prairies to settlers. Land was needed for farming and the Government of Canada bought a huge piece of land from the Hudson’s Bay Company. This was very hard for some of you who were already living there, such as the Métis, Cree and Blackfoot. You, the Métis, fought for your land during the Red River Rebellion and the North West Resistance. You won some of these battles, but in the end you were defeated by the government’s soldiers. You represent those Métis leaders who died in battle, were put in jail, or were executed. Please step off the blanket and take your seat.

European and **Narrator** walk to the “north” and choose a small group of people.

Narrator: In the High Arctic, Inuit communities were moved to isolated, unfamiliar, and barren lands, often with very bad results.

European: You represent people like the Inuit and the Innu at Davis Inlet, along with many other Indigenous communities who suffered and sometimes died because you were forced to move and live in an unfamiliar place where you could no longer live off the land. Please step off your lands & follow me.

European: Folds the blanket the group was standing on small until just large enough for all to stand on, moves their blanket far from the others, and tells them to all sit down on it.

Narrator: Those people with **blue** cards, step off the blankets. You represent those who died of hunger after being forced off your original land and away from your hunting grounds.

As Indigenous peoples, you lost more than just your land. Because the land is so important to you, when it was taken away some of you also lost your way of living, your culture and, in some cases, your reason to live.

Narrator: Invite the participants to read the scrolls below.

Scroll 2: Terra Nullius (TER-ah NOO-lee-us). The idea of Terra Nullius, which in Latin means “land belonging to no-one”, meant European countries could send out explorers and when they found land, they could claim it for their nation. These were often lands we were using.

European: The land wasn’t empty and we the Europeans knew it so we changed the idea to include lands not being used by quote unquote “civilized” peoples, or lands not being put to so called “civilized” use. It was us who decided what it meant to be “civilized”, and we decided that because you and your people were not using the land in a “civilized way”, we could take it and it was almost impossible to stop us.

Scroll 3: The BNA (British North America) Act. The BNA Act, also known as the Constitution Act of 1867, put “Indians and Lands reserved for Indians” under the control of the federal government. When this happened, we lost our rights and control over our lands.

Narrator: This law gave control of your lands to the Government of Canada, which at that time was made up of only people from Europe. You, the Indigenous people, were not involved in the creation of this law that would have such a big impact on your lives. More and more, the plan was to try and make you like the Europeans.

Scroll 4: Indian Act. In 1876 all the laws dealing with us were gathered together and put into the Indian Act. The Indian Act completely changed our lives. As long as our cultures were strong it was difficult for the government to take our lands, so the government used the Indian Act to attack who we were as peoples. Hunting and fishing were now limited and our spiritual ceremonies like the potlatch, pow-wow and sundance were now against the law. This didn’t change until the 1950s.

European: [Stands on a chair and in a loud voice]: Now hear this! According to the Indian Act of 1876 and the British North America Act of 1867, you and all of your territories are now under the direct control of the Canadian federal government. You will now be placed on reserves. Please fold your blankets until they are just large enough to stand on.

Narrator: You went from being strong, independent First Nations, with your own governments, to isolated and poor “bands” that depended on the government for almost everything. You were treated like you knew nothing and like you couldn’t run your own lives.

You became the responsibility of the federal government. Through the Indian Act, the federal government continues, to this day, to deny you your basic rights. These rights are things that most Canadians take for granted, such as healthy schools, proper housing and clean running water.

Even today the Indian Act gives the federal government to control many parts of your lives. If the government feels that a band council isn’t doing a good enough job it can force elections or take over control by appointing a manager to take charge.

European: **Walking slowly around the blankets.** Also, you may not leave your reserve without a permit. You may not vote. You may not get together to talk about your rights. You may not practice your spirituality or your traditional forms of government. If you do any of these things, you may be put in jail.

Scroll 5: “I know what the government did in the past; they said where we had to live. I know that we’re not treated equally now, because I can feel it. We’re all Canadians and we should all be treated equally.”

—Cassie, a Mi’kmaq youth from a community in Nova Scotia

Narrator: The Indian Act also tried to stop Indigenous peoples from fighting to keep their land. For example, under the Indian Act, it was against the law to raise money to fight for land rights in the courts until the 1950s.

Scroll 6: Enfranchisement (en-fran-CHISE-ment). Under this federal government policy, all First Nations people who became doctors, teachers, lawyers, soldiers or who went to university lost their legal Indian status. This was called being granted “enfranchisement”.

Narrator: In other words, the government would no longer legally recognize you as a First Nations person. This cut you off from your communities, including First Nations soldiers returning from war, or First Nations lawyers who were not allowed to fight for the rights of their people.

European [choose one person who does not have a yellow card and ask them to leave their blanket and stand somewhere nearby on the floor]: You were enfranchised – you're a First Nations teacher, lawyer, doctor or veteran so you've lost your Indian status and have had to leave your community.

Scroll 7: Assimilation (ah-sim-ill-EH-shun). The government thought the “Indian problem” would solve itself as more and more Indigenous people died from diseases and others became part of the larger Canadian society. As one government employee said, the government’s goal was “to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and that there is no Indian problem and no Indian Department.”
—*Indian Affairs Deputy Superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott*

Narrator: You had to become more like the Europeans by giving up your rights, farming, going to school and praying in church like them.

In 1942 the Alaska Highway was built. Once again tens of thousands of non-First Nations people flooded the Yukon as road builders, miners, forestry workers, military and business people. All these new people exposed Yukon First Nations to new epidemics, death, loss of land and the animals you relied upon, loss of family, and loss of community.

This new road gave easier, year round access to communities by church, police and government officials. These officials thought that European style schools were better than your traditional ways of learning and began to enforce school attendance very strictly. More and more of your children were removed from their families and communities and sent to schools far away.

European: Place the residential school blanket on the floor at a distance from the others.

Scroll 8: Residential Schools. From the mid-1800s until the 1990s, the federal government took First Nations, Inuit and Métis children from our homes and communities and put them in boarding schools that were run by churches. The official partnership between the federal government and the churches ended in the 1970s but some churches continued to operate schools until the 1990s. As parents we didn't have a choice about this. Sometimes the

police arrived to take our children away. These schools were often very far from our homes and our kids had to stay at them all or most of the year. Mostly they were not allowed to speak our languages and were punished if they did. Often they weren't given enough food. The last Indian residential school closed in 1996.

Narrator: Two large Indian residential schools operated in the Yukon, one in Carcross and one just south of Watson Lake in Lower Post, British Columbia.

All people with yellow cards, raise your hands. You must now move to a separate, empty blanket. You represent those who were taken out of your communities and placed in residential schools far from your homes.

European: Take the kids to the residential school blanket.

Narrator: While some students say they had some positive experiences at the schools, most of you say that you suffered from very bad conditions and from different kinds of abuse. Many of you lost family connections and didn't learn your language, culture and traditions. Because you grew up in the schools and rarely went home, many of you never learned how to be good parents. Some students died at the schools. Many of you never returned home or had trouble reintegrating if you did.

European: The person with the yellow index card marked with an "X", please step off the blanket and take your seat. You represent one of the thousands of children who died at the schools or who died later as a result of your experience.

Pause for the person to leave the blanket.

European: Next, choose someone on the residential school blanket who was not alone on their blanket and ask them to return to their community. Say to them:

You can go home, but please sit down on the edge of the blanket while those in the community remain standing to represent how difficult it was to learn to fit in again once you went home.

Pause while this takes place.

European: Everyone else with yellow cards, please find a spot on the floor nearby. You represent those whose connection to your family and community was broken and you never made it home. Some of you ended up in cities, others ended up in prison due to your experience at residential school.

Narrator: Please be silent for another moment to honour those who died, had trouble returning home or who lost connection to their family and community because of residential schools.

Scroll 9: “You have to remember that the Canadian government has done a lot to Aboriginal people that was meant to make us become like Europeans. For example, in residential schools, my grandmother told me you couldn’t speak our language or you’d get beaten; you couldn’t see your parents – things like that. We didn’t have voting rights for a long time. We also lost a lot of our culture.”

—Heather, a Cree youth from a community in Saskatchewan

European: Thanks to the courage of survivors, Canadians started to find out about residential schools. In 2008, the Prime Minister apologized for the residential schools. Here is an excerpt: “To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions... and we apologize for having done this. ... Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.”

Narrator: But apologizing means you have to change what you’re doing. Many people are still waiting to see if Canada will change how it treats Indigenous children.

The residential schools are not just part of our history. Children and grandchildren of people who went to the schools feel the impacts. Many former students are alive today and some have had a chance to tell their story to Canadians through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But Indigenous children are still treated differently. Your schools don’t get as

much money. Today you are even more likely to be taken from your communities; but this time you are being placed in foster care.

Scroll 10: From the 1960s to the 1980s, thousands of First Nations and Métis children were forced illegally from our homes and adopted or fostered, usually by non-Aboriginal people. This period is known as the 60s scoop. Many of these kids experienced violence, racism and abuse and lost connection to their identity and culture. Like residential schools, the purpose of the 60s scoop was assimilation.

European: Go up to someone who is still on their blanket and ask them to find a spot on the floor nearby. Say to them:

You represent a child taken from your community during the 60s scoop. You were not able to return to your family and territory, leaving you with a sense of loss; loss of identity, loss of family, loss of community.

Narrator: One way the Canadian government pressures you to leave your lands and assimilate is by failing to provide enough funds for basic services:

- Over half of the reserves have to boil their water, or ship in bottled water, because the tap water is not safe to drink.
- 85,000 new housing units are needed on reserve and 60% of existing houses are in need of repair.
- Many communities have poor access to health care. This results in more health problems for Indigenous people living on reserves. For example, rates of TB among the Inuit are 284 times higher than for non-Indigenous people.
- Indigenous women are at least three times as likely to experience violence as non-Indigenous women in Canada.
- Almost 1200 Indigenous women (39 from Yukon) have gone missing or have been murdered since the 1970s, and these are only the cases that have been reported. The real number is certainly much higher.
- Today, every one of the Indigenous languages spoken in the Pacific Northwest is critically endangered. The eight First Nations languages spoken in the Yukon are by far the most threatened in northern Canada.

Scroll 11: Broken promises. Over the years, more than 70 per cent of the land set aside for us in the treaties has been lost or stolen and big companies are allowed to make lots of money from Indigenous lands and natural resources. We, the Indigenous peoples, get little but the pollution from many of the companies that don't respect the Earth and future generations are left to clean up the mess.

Scroll 12: Treaties affirm our right to govern our territories. They are part of our right to self-determination. When the Government of Canada and Canadians do not respect Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, one result is a feeling of hopelessness, especially among our youth. Suicide rates among Indigenous youth are on average six times higher than they are for other youth in Canada, and eleven times higher for Inuit youth.

Scroll 13: An important turning point for Yukon First Nations happened in 1972 when a group of our chiefs, led by Chief Elijah Smith, met with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. The purpose of the meeting was to start the process of reclaiming our right to govern ourselves.

Narrator: The document presented to the prime minister, "Together Today For Our Children Tomorrow" provided the framework for land claim and self-government agreements that have been created with the Tr'ondek Hwechin in the Dawson area, Nacho Nyak Dun in Mayo area, and Tlingit in Teslin, among others. These are modern day treaties. However, some Yukon First Nations, such as the Kaska Dena, believe that they will lose too much by signing such agreements.

European: In 2007, a step was taken to improve the way Indigenous peoples are treated - the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* became part of international law. This is an agreement among the world's governments that is a minimum standard to make sure Indigenous peoples survive and thrive. Canada was one of the last countries to agree to the Declaration. Now we need to make sure it's put into action. Please unfold one SMALL corner of your blankets to honour the people who wrote the *Declaration* and worked to get it adopted.

Narrator: Despite the Government of Canada's centuries of efforts to take away your identity, as Indigenous peoples you have continued to resist and to pass down your languages, traditions, ceremonies, and much more.

Scroll 14: We are healing ourselves and our communities. Out on the land, skills are being passed on to our youth. Mothers and grandmothers are bringing back ceremonies that honour women. Our leaders are using the courts to have our rights recognized and many of our nations are growing. We see treaties as living agreements that, if respected, will allow people from all backgrounds to share the land peacefully and respectfully. We are strong, having survived centuries of efforts to make us disappear.

Narrator: But the violence of colonization has left a lot of pain. All across Canada, the relationship between Indigenous people and newcomers is often broken. We don't need more broken promises. We need to repair the relationship and to do this, we need real change. We have lots of children, youth, adults and Elders to inspire us. Let's join our efforts together to create a country that honours the future of all children.

Narrator: **Ask everyone to look around. At this point, there should be a few people standing on very small areas of blankets and a few more standing in areas where there are no blankets. Ask them to remember what it looked like when they started the exercise and what it looks like now. Ask them to hold these images in their minds. Then invite everyone to take a seat, and continue with a talking circle, debrief or discussion.**