The learning journey through Indigenous issues in Canada is one that is deeply unsettling, but is important to acknowledge. I was not taught about the dark history of Canada until an optional high school course, Native Studies 30. This class marks the beginning of my journey to reconciliation, as I continued my learning through my first years of university. I believe that education is important on this subject and stand by number 63 of the calls to action represented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. This call to action expresses the need for a k-12 curriculum on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history and training the teachers to educate students correctly on this sensitive subject. Through my research I went through waves of emotions, at times I would feel strong anger and others deep sadness. For my visual representation I made a diagram highlighting three (of many) important aspects of the journey to reconciliation: accurate and honest representation of Canadian history, education on the hard truth of our past, and honouring Indigenous ways of knowing.

For my project I used a box as a diagram base with the outer walls of the box represent how Canada represents itself presently, the inside walls represent the hidden past, and the floor of the box represents the Indigenous way of life prior to settlement. I used the Government of Canada website to conduct my research for the outer walls of the box, showing connections with the dark history laid out directly on the inside wall behind it. I used the truth and reconciliation commission of Canada, the booklet given out in class, and Muffins for Granny to represent the dark history information of my diagram. Finally, I used an Indigenous origin story to represent the Indigenous way of life.

I used major symbols, like the Canadian flag and anthem, as the background of the outer walls. In the center of the maple leaf I put a quote from the government website that said the strong relationship between the Indigenous peoples and settlers were the foundations of Canada. I used the inside walls to show what I believe is the true foundation of Canada: Residential schools, the pass system, the Indian Act and much more. I included a quote from a survivor who recognizes the lack of morality from the leaders of early Canada, but expresses his belief on proper education to prevent the past from repeating itself. On one of the side, outer walls I added the origin of the name Canada, stemming from the word “Kanata” meaning “village”. On the inner wall, I added a quote from a survivor who spoke on her loss and spite of her own language due to treatment in the residential schools and a quote from John A. Macdonald justifying the Residential School policy. On the other side outer wall I included early proposals of the Canadian flag from 1965. Maurice Bouget spoke about the symbolism being unity of the country, however at this time Residential schools were operating. On the inner wall of my diagram I put quotes from survivors of the schools and some from those that enforced the law proving that at that time, the country was far from united.

The final area of my diagram is the acknowledgment of Canada, formally known as Turtle Island. I used bright colours to represent the brighter time for Indigenous peoples prior to settlement. I used a turtle to represent Turtle Island in comparison to the Canadian flag used to represent Canada. I included the Haudenosaunee origin story of a pregnant Sky woman falling from the Skyworld and making home on Great Turtles back, which becomes Canada. Honoring, learning and including the Indigenous way of knowing into the curriculum is an important aspect of reconciliation.

The diagram represents a few things I believe in on our journey to reconciliation: Representing the accurate and real truth, acknowledging and discussing the difficult history on which Canada was built, and honouring the culture and ways of life that stood before settlement disrupted it. The layers combined represent the importance of knowledge and continuous education. My research and understanding of this topic has guided who I inspire to be as a teacher and my passion to honour the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

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