**Dialogue Guide for**

**Theatre for Living’s Play** ***šxʷʔam̓ət (home)***

Hello Community Organizers! Thank you for taking the time to organize and share space to dialogue about *šxʷʔam̓ət (home)* in your community. We know that the play was packed with many layers of issues and barriers towards Reconciliation, and we raise our hands to you for having the courage to take these issues to heart and into the community.

**At the heart of this document and this production is community building and relationships.** We hope that these materials will be helpful to you and your community as you go about this work. All of the resources in this guide are thought sharing pieces and not necessarily meant to be completed in the order that they are presented. At the heart is a desire to build relationships in an honourable way. We know that how this takes shape will be different in each community.

In addition to planning and facilitation tips, an outline for a dialogue gathering, and resources, this guide contains suggestions that could be adapted for small, informal groups and individual reflection.

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**This guide was created by**

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| **Michael Harris** is of the Gitxsan Nation. He is a tugboat captain and has been involved in the marine industry for 46 years. This career has allowed Michael to dedicate much of his adult life to working for the betterment of First Nation people. Michael has focused on Truth and Reconciliation for 25 years. He is a STAR Elder with MCFD supporting Aboriginal families and youth and a knowledge keeper who works tirelessly to support First Nations healing and education in a broad range of societies and organizations.  **Meredith Martin** is of Coast Salish Ancestry from the Snuneymuxw Nation (Nanaimo). She has a Master’s Degree in Counselling Psychology, has worked for many years in Aboriginal child and youth mental health, and co-facilitates Truth and Reconciliation workshops. She has also been involved in community development, working toward culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal people. Currently, Meredith works for Island Health as an eating disorder therapist and has her own private counselling practice. She has passionately dedicated 15 years toward Truth and Reconciliation work. |

**Meg Roberts** – Meg’s ancestors came from England, Wales, Sweden and Norway and were settlers on the prairies. As a creative spirit, she worked years ago in professional theatre and has returned with the role of “Sarah” in Theatre for Living’s play šxʷʔam̓ət (home). As a Unitarian minister, she does consulting work part-time with the Comox Valley Unitarian Fellowship and with the First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo. Co-chairing the Canadian Unitarian Council’s Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Reflection Guide resource team, she learned a lot as they pulled together excellent existing Indigenous educational opportunities and offer processes so all-ages Unitarian communities can engage in the journey of reconciliation. She trained with David Diamond in Theatre for Living techniques, and facilitates workshops for communities exploring issues they struggle with. Through this process, participants can access underlying causes, develop strategies to address these, and integrate their learning into their work, organization, and lives.

To share feedback about your experience using any of these Play Dialogue Guides, please email

Meg Roberts at [mroberts@uuma.org](mailto:mroberts@uuma.org) and/or David Ng, Theatre for Living Outreach Coordinator at [outreach@theatreforliving.com](mailto:outreach@theatreforliving.com).

**Many Thanks!**

For this guide to be created, we are grateful for:

* The partnership between [Theatre for Living](http://www.theatreforliving.com/index.htm) and the [Canadian Unitarian Council](http://cuc.ca/)’s [*Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Reflection Guide*](https://sites.google.com/view/thrrg-introductiontoallguides/welcome) project, as well as a grant from the First Unitarian Church of Victoria’s Innovation Fund;
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* [Reconciliation Canada](http://reconciliationcanada.ca/) for their work, including making their Community Action Toolkits publicly available (in this case, [*The Kitchen Table Guide for Reconciliation Dialogue*](http://reconciliationcanada.ca/staging/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/KTD-Guide_dec2016.pdf)).

**Planning a Dialogue**

You know your community, so if you feel some pieces may work and some not, then adapt, change, rewrite - whatever you think is best!

**Some general thoughts**

* A big thing to consider before the gathering is who is going to be in the room? Who has signed up to be a part of this dialogue? Which voices are present and (more importantly) who is missing?  Does there need to be a networking and outreach step to engage voices, particularly Indigenous peoples’ voices, in this process?
* Consider the original intention of coming together, was it to plan action or to allow for discussion and begin relationship building? This will help guide your choice of which activities the group may be responsive to.
* The materials we have provided are suggestions. The intention is to create a brave space to share and to build respectful connections.
* Theatre for Living keeps an archive of their work, for more information about the production, including the play creation, focus of the production, and the common themes that emerged in forum interventions, please check out the website.
* For a more detailed guide and supporting documents for facilitators of this process, *see the public google drive folder* <https://drive.google.com/open?id=16DSXEK06BqH1U8hrMmwbUcns-LCZewcB>

**Pronunciation:**

The title of this production, **šxwʔam̓ət,** is based on a hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ (a Coast Salish dialect) word used to reference home. This word has so many different meanings to all of us who are living on this land. The following is a pronunciation guide to facilitate your engagement with hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓. Content developed courtesy Musqueam Language and Culture Department 2017.

**šxwʔam̓ət**: š is pronounced like English “sh”. xw sounds like the “wh” in “which” (as opposed to the “w” in “witch”). Stress is on the first syllable, like in the name “Amit”. ʔam̓ sounds like the first syllable in the word “omelet”. ət sounds like the second syllable of the word “comet”.

See <http://www.theatreforliving.com/present_work/sxwPamet/index.html>. After April 2018, Theatre for Living’s website will be updated, so you will be able to find the pronunciation under the tab “past work”.

**Circle Practice**

If you, as the organizer or facilitator, and/or a number of people are new to circle practices, you may wish to take time to learn and be able to explain the significance of the process, including the difference between a discussion and a dialogue. Even just beginning and ending with a circle helps set the tone. Sitting in circle is a time to listen deeply as each person speaks. For people who have not participated like this before, it helps develop patience. This isn’t a time for discussion, questions, or comments between people. It is a time for listening, to speak for yourself, and to speak from the heart. Also, remind people that they have the right to “pass” at any point and not participate in activities. Participants should be reminded to take care of themselves, and step out between moments when are people sharing if they need to.

Beyond circle practices, you could choose to lead different facilitated activities for this dialogue, and your choice may vary depending on cultural practices and context. For more on *facilitation styles,* *please see the resources at the end of this guide*.

Request that someone suitable acknowledge the territory and say a prayer – an Indigenous community, group, or organization will know of an Indigenous elder or leader you can ask. Please plan to provide an appropriate gift.

If you are able to have support people and/or healers attend, let participants know who is there as a support and in what capacity, and that they will be participating throughout your time together.

Suggest a maximum of four (4) group agreements, to help create safe ways of interacting with each other. For example: Listen with openness and curiosity. See the recommended sections of *Reconciliation Canada’s Kitchen Table Dialogue Guide,* listed at the end of this guide.

**Special Consideration**

Consider ways to help participants become more aware of their various social identities and be able to describe your own positionality. That is, the ways your social position may affect how you understand yourself and others, including assumptions you may make about others. Consider your cultural background and identity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and economic situation. All of these factors and more make up what is called intersectionality (how our social identities intersect and impact the privileges and/or oppression we experience).

In framing questions and comments, consider how to include people of colour, as well as people whose ancestors came as settlers. Consider also, newcomers/immigrants/refugees who may be in the room. Everyone’s experiences will be different due to power imbalances within communities.

Be aware that emotions, sometimes intense emotions, may come up. Possible words that could be shared are: We are inviting people to share openly and from the heart, and as facilitators we may step in to help communication flow and to be sure we communicate with respect. There might be painful moments; we might feel triggered at times, so we will step in to assist if necessary.

Guilt and shame may come up as people learn more about the real shared history. It’s a good idea to address this near the start. Some words on guilt could include: we may not have been a part of the history but we are here now, and it is our responsibility to become more aware and realize we can perpetuate inequality or we can continue to learn and question. Some words on shame could include: shame creates a wall between us - if I am feeling shame, it causes me to look inward and forget about the person who has been injured/impacted. If our focus is reconciliation, then we need to move through the shame to be present to what is really happening.

It’s especially important to be familiar with circle practices and allow people to express their emotions and current states of being. If people are feeling guilt and shame, that may be what they need to feel in the moment and they may need time to be able to work through that – both during the gathering and after – without having to feel that they need to suppress those emotions or feel shame about them.

As people consider various reconciliation initiatives, invite them to honour the complexity of the issues.

* For non-Indigenous participants, remind those who may be newer to engaging these issues, that many Indigenous people have been working on these issues for their lifetimes and those of their ancestors.
* It is important for everyone to understand that what is discussed is not an exercise but integral to many Indigenous people’s lives. Non-Indigenous people can choose to turn away or ignore these issues but that is not a choice for most Indigenous people because it is a part of their everyday.

**Outline for a Dialogue Gathering**

***Welcome, Territorial Acknowledgment and Prayer***

Welcome everyone who has come and introduce the person who is going to offer a territorial acknowledgment and prayer or some sort of invocation. After this acknowledgement, facilitators can introduce themselves and offer a few words to set the intention of sharing experience of the play.

***Encourage Self Care***

Introduce any healers and support people and explain their role in the event. Describe where people can go to access cultural healing practices and emotional support. Encourage people to practice self-care during the event and describe the circle practices you are using for this dialogue.

***Participant Introductions***

Going around the circle, ask people to share their name and suggest people name their ancestry is they wish (and if they know it) as well as anything else they would like to say about who they are. Ask people to keep their introductions brief so that there will be enough time to participate in the planned activities. You can begin as an example of content and length.

***Re-Engage the Experience of the Play***

Remind participants that the play was created to investigate the blockages we all face in making reconciliation real and meaningful. Describe how they will be able to revisit some of what they had learned or experienced during the play through different activities.

Note: when choosing activities, remember the amount of time you will have for the event overall, including the opening and closing activities. All of the activities listed below would take approximately six hours, without meals or breaks, so choose only the ones you feel will be key, remembering there will be opportunities to continue conversations in the future, based on the relationships that are built today.

***Suggested Activity: Partner Up to Debrief Your Experience at the Play***

Ask participants to partner up as they are going to share reflections on four questions. Facilitators should ask one question at a time, inviting participants to share without commenting on what their partner shares. A simple, thank you between partners, then continuing to share for the time allotted that question. Suggested timing: 1-2 minutes per question per partner.

* What did I notice/what got my attention?
* How did I feel?
* What I was surprised by?
* What am I going to do with this?

After the time in partners, then two partners get together, creating groups of four. They again share responses to the same four questions. Optional: Ask each group to have one of them write their responses to the fourth question OR once back in the larger circle, ask participants to share back popcorn style and responses can be recorded then.

**Time for activity: 30-40 minutes**

***If you have time, you may want to include additional questions*** for the same groups of four so they can talk about how they experienced some of the interventions:

* Did you feel any of the interventions went sideways?
* What did you hope to see happen?
* What issues were brought up about struggles within Indigenous communities? Within settler communities? Between Indigenous and settler communities?

If needed, remind participants of some of the key themes that emerged during the interventions.

**Time for activity: 30 minutes**

***Possible activity:  Where Are We in Terms of Reconciliation in This Community (Town/City/Region)?***

Example questions for discussion:

Where do you think things are at in our communities?

Are we just starting out or are we some way along in the journey?

What do we look like, what’s the view?

To start the dialogue and get a sense of what people think, you may invite them to create a line of people along a continuum.

Ask people who want to join in to walk over and place themselves on a “reconciliation continuum for this community/town/city” (based on where they think the larger community in your town/city/region is in terms of reconciliation). Here’s the visual for the continuum “line”:

In separate worlds---------------------------------------------------------------------------Reconciliation is happening

Once people have put themselves in the line, ask those who are willing to share, why they put themselves at that place on the continuum. You may choose to start on the end where the worlds don’t meet and listen to a few people, then move down the continuum.

Once back in the large circle, you may wish to facilitate a discussion: What does this continuum say about where we want to go from here as a larger community? How do we create true and honourable reconciliation here in this place and time?

**Time for activity: 30-60 minutes**

***Activity: What Does Reconciliation Mean to Me?***

Invite people to quietly reflect on each question for a minute before sharing with a partner, a small group, or in the larger circle (depending on the size of your group and other activities you are including in the event). State only one question at a time, provide a time limit for sharing, and remind participants when it is time to let their partner or the next person in their group share.

Here are some optional questions to choose from:

* What does reconciliation mean to me?
* Why does reconciliation matter to me?
* How do we reconcile? How do we walk together?
* How do our values, cultural traditions and practices support us on the road to reconciliation?

**Time for activity: 30-40 minutes**

***Activity: What Now?***

Choose one of the following two options to allow participants to consider “What now?”

1) Reflect then share

* Invite people to take some time in quiet to imagine what it would look and feel like to be reconciled (participants can sit and think, or write, or draw).
* Next, participants can share in small groups.
* Finally, participants can share back with the larger group and post ideas according to themes and then (optional, depending on timing) break into theme-based groups for follow up planning.

**Time for activity: 30 minutes**

OR

1. In groups of three, have participants share one thing they have decided to do in light of what they experienced at the play and/or during the event today. Options to record: ask participants to write up their commitment for everyone to see and, with their permission, take a picture, post the photos on Facebook or another website to inspire others OR record ideas anonymously on flip chart paper and post photos of those AND/OR have participants draw what they would like to do and take anonymous photos of those.

**Time for activity: 30 minutes**

If you have chosen to focus on activities that included discussion on actions participants would like to make, you may decide to meet again to allow for more organized planning or you may choose to form groups to talk about next steps in planning. Groups could be based on:

* + Areas of focus;
  + Individuals making commitments for action;
  + Groups that can carry the planning forward through their work or some other means;
  + Organizations (either in their organizational groups or how community organizations can work together at that level).

***How Do We Continue the Conversation?***

Before finishing the event, review any concrete actions coming out of this event and whether people are planning to stay in contact. Even if the event is a stand-alone gathering, mention that organizers hope people will walk away with ideas of how to incorporate their experiences and learnings into their lives and work and communities to effect real change so we can create true and honorable reconciliation.

***Closing Circle, Thanks, and Prayer***

Offer thanks to everyone who came and those who were there as a support, the facilitators, and anyone who helped make the event possible. In the big circle, you may want to use a talking stick or stone, and ask people to share one word or a sentence, such as “What I am taking away today is…” or “What I am giving today is…”. Plan to end with an elder’s words and prayer.

***Sharing Food and Time Together***

After the dialogue session, or during, take time to get to know one another better over food. Some communities may even want to have a feast at the end and offer gifts to participants.

**Facilitation Resources:**

***Talking Circle Guidelines***

Used by Harley Eagle and the Indigenous Issues Forum to create safe and respectful family-centered environments to talk through tough issues. In particular, see page 21 of *Starting to Talk: A Guide for Communities on Healing and Reconciliation from the Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*.

<http://projectofheart.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Starting-to-Talk-Handbook-Halifax.pdf>

***Reconciliation Canada’s Kitchen Table Dialogue Guide***

This guide, meant to facilitate conversations on Reconciliation, includes particularly helpful pieces for creating safety. See page four, “Norms for Sharing Circles” and “Ideas for Impactful Dialogue

<http://reconciliationcanada.ca/staging/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/KTD-Guide_dec2016.pdf>

***Albion Faeries: Heart Circles***

A heart circle is a place where people meet in sacred space to speak and be listened to from the heart. Communicating openly this way is a felt experience and an ability developed by taking part in this ritual over time. <https://www.albionfaeries.org.uk/heart-circles/>

Also see <http://www.cascadiafaeries.org/heart-circle/>

***The Circle Way***: <http://thecircleway.net>

<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/55597e72e4b0f7284bff49e0/t/56e340a1f8baf38bbe1d00f6/1457733793606%20/TCW+Guidelines+English.pdf>

**Resources:**

Learn more about reconciliation efforts and how you can get involved. <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/>

**For a comprehensive list of resources on Indian Residential Schools and Reconciliation**, see

<http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/IRSR-additional-resources-002.pdf>

as developed by the First Nations Education Steering Committee.

***Articles and Guides***

***“*White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”**, includes notes for facilitators  
<https://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>

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**“Are People of Colour Settlers Too?”** by Malissa Phung, *Speaking My Truth* <http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=647>

***First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers***

<http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/First-Peoples-A-Guide-for-Newcomers.pdf>

**Support**

**The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line (1-866-925-4419)** is available 24 hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of his or her residential school experience.

**Indian Residential School Survivors Society**

The Indian Residential School Survivor Society (IRSSS) is a British Columbia organization with a twenty-year history of providing services to Indian Residential School Survivors. They can provide workshops to any groups teaching about Colonization, History and the impacts of Indian Residential Schools. <http://irsss.ca>