# The Mush Hole

# Truth, Acknowledgement, Resilience

Created, Directed and Produced by Santee Smith

Remount Produced by Kaha:wi Dance Theatre

# **Study Guide**

# Introduction

This guide was co-written by Santee Smith and Marjie Chud in 2019 and has been updated in 2025 by Santee Smith and Jenni Saslove. Santee, a multidisciplinary artist from the Kahnyen'kehàka Nation, Turtle Clan, Six Nations of the Grand River, is the creator, director and producer of The Mush Hole and artistic Director of Kaha:wi Dance Theatre. Along with her artistic practice, Santee is the 19th Chancellor of McMaster University. Marjie is a second generation Canadian from Tiohtià:ke who now lives in Tkaronto. She is a theatre artist, arts educator, and sometimes administrator, and member of the Ontario College of Teachers. Marjie is committed to learning the truth about the history of Turtle Island through continued engagement with Indigenous Peoples and stories. She acknowledges that her contributions to this study guide are from a settler perspective.

As you scroll through the guide, you will find the usual sections included in all our guides: curriculum connections, discussion questions, units of study and more. If you wish to create your own lesson plan from the study guide copy, we have created a lesson plan template for your use. We hope you will find this guide to be a useful resource. Should you have any questions or feedback or have inquiries about the use of this guide, please contact Karen Gilodo, Associate Artistic Director, Education at <a href="mailto:kgilodo@youngpeoplestheatre.org">kgilodo@youngpeoplestheatre.org</a>.

• <u>Download the Lesson Plan Template.</u>

# **Content Advisory**

This production is a theatrical portrayal of the environment and experiences of students at the Mohawk Institute – a Canadian Indian Residential School. The play also depicts the memories and impacts on families and community of other Residential School Survivors. Their experiences include physical abuse, fighting, sexual abuse, emotional trauma, family conflict and substance abuse.



The Mush Hole opens in the classroom. The brick crosses symbolically represent the colonial architecture and Christian indoctrination of the residential school, as well as the students' numbers which replaced their names. The characters have poorly cut hair, which was the first initiation into the school – a layer of removing their Indigenous identity. Photo Credit: Ian R. Maracle.

# **Thematic Overview**

"The Mush Hole reflects the realities of the Mohawk Institute Residential School experience and offers a way to open dialogue and to heal, through acknowledgement and honouring the spirit of Survivors and families that were impacted. The Mush Hole moves through the devastation of Residential School with grace and hope for transformation. Opening a small window into the atrocities inflicted on thousands of Indigenous children, it attempts to close the door on historical amnesia. A haunting portrayal weaves through memories of Survivors, reliving traumas, school life, stripping away of Indigenous culture, remembrance, returning to find each other and the lifting of shame associated with abuse. Residential School and the continuing institutionalized erasure and extermination of Indigenous lives and culture is an issue that affects all Canadians." – Santee Smith, creator, director and producer of **The Mush Hole.** 

The Mohawk Institute (a.k.a. the Mush Hole) is the oldest Residential School in Canada, after which all others were modeled. Operated in Brantford, Ontario from 1828 to 1970, it

served as an industrial boarding school for First Nations children from Six Nations, as well as other communities throughout Ontario and Quebec. It was a key tool in the effort to assimilate First Nations children into European Christian society, and to sever the continuity of culture from parent to child, leaving a legacy of trauma.

Initially, some Mohawks wanted their children to receive an education to keep up with rapid acculturation but did not foresee what this request would become. The New England Company financed the development and operation of the Institute. In 1867, through the British North America Act, Canada became a Confederation with John A. MacDonald becoming Canada's first Prime Minister and Minister of Indian Affairs. He was a resolute advocate for the establishment of Indian Residential Schools, and the removal children from the influence of their parents, families, and cultures.

"When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly impressed upon myself, as head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men." – John A. MacDonald, 1883 – Prime Minister of Canada

Appointed by Anglican Church officials, Reverend Abraham Nelles led the Mohawk Institute until 1870, teaching the boys trades and girls domestic skills. Over 142 years, the school shifted from military-style training to an Ontario curriculum, but violence and abuse persisted. It was under Reverend Robert Ashton that the Mohawk Institute banned Indigenous languages, enforced uniforms, replaced names with numbers, and imposed strict discipline. His children and later headmasters continued his regime and ending with worst offender Reverend William Zimmerman.

Indigenous children aged 2-16 learned very little in the way of schooling, but rather served as labourers. Whether sent, kidnapped or orphaned, children experienced a range of mistreatment including sexual abuse, imposed food deprivation experiments and severe corporeal punishment at the hands of faculty and staff.

After closing in 1970, the Mohawk Institute reopened in 1972 as the Woodland Cultural Centre. In 2013, the results of a Six Nations of the Grand River community referendum reflected a 98% vote in favour of restoring the Residential School as opposed to demolishing it. The reasons for restoration of the site are to:

- transform it into an educational site, to continue to expose and reflect on the truths of the Canadian government/church assimilation policies.
- remember and support Survivors and their legacies and confront inter-generational traumas.
- uphold the spirit of children that "served time" in the schools, such as runaway Joey Commanda, a 13-year-old Algonquin boy who was struck and killed on the Oakville train tracks on September 3, 1968 while trying to return to his home in Golden Lake.

"He was described in the official report as a 'trespasser', not as a brave and hungry Native boy on his way to a distant home. No one was held responsible for the death of Joseph William Commanda. I don't know if a ceremony was ever done at the place where he was hit by the train, on the number 3 track in those railyards, I hope his spirit is not confined at the Mush Hole." - Doug George-Kanentiio, Residential School Survivor

In 2014, the Mohawk Institute "Save the Evidence" campaign began and as of September 30, 2025, the Mohawk Institute reopened as an Interpretive Historic Site and Educational Resource dedicated to truth-telling, remembrance, education, and reconciliation.

Since 2016, the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario has offered production support, creation residencies and work-in-progress showcase performances. Santee Smith began the initial concept for this dance performance during the University of Waterloo's Mush Hole Project 2016 in association with the Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford. The Mush Hole addresses the Truth and Reconciliation Report's Calls to Action: the Covenant of Reconciliation (#46); Education and Reconciliation (#62, #63); and Newcomers to Canada sharing of true histories of Canada including Residential School legacy (#93). Santee's vision began as a short performance installation created inside the Boys' Playroom of the Mohawk Institute

**The Mush Hole** was created in connection with Residential School Survivors incorporating their writings, interviews and the Survivor Series Talks as part of the process of commemorating and healing through the sharing of truth. Survivors had a chance to witness and offer feedback to the performance along the way, and they continue to shape and deepen the portrayals of truth.

"The Mush Hole performance brought back memories and was very validating emotionally. I was able to relate to the chaos and turmoil in a relationship that was so similar to my own. I lived that life I was seeing on stage. The impacts of Residential School are deep and left me with emotional and psychological scars." - Roberta Hill, Residential School Survivor

"If only we could have danced..." - Doug George-Kanentiio

"My great grandmother and grandfather attended the Mohawk Institute. And like most people, I grew up not knowing about the atrocities that occurred inside the Canadian government and Anglican Church governed schools." - Santee Smith



The photo depicts the two generations of Mohawk Institute survivors inside the Six Nations homestead kitchen. The older performers represent the mother and father dealing with the loss of their own children to the Mohawk Institute. The youth in white pyjamas dance as ghost children, imagined by the mother. Photo Credit: Fred Cattroll.

# **Synopsis**

The Mush Hole performance portrays the Mohawk Institute in the 1950's era, under the rule of Rev. William Zimmerman, a tyrant who was known to severely strap the children with his leather strap and sexually abusing girls including inside the Mohawk Chapel.



This photo displays Reverend William Zimmerman with students of the Mohawk Institute.

The New England Company hired Zimmerman despite the call from Six Nations community to employ one of their own educators: J.C. Hill. This decision would be fatal.

**The Mush Hole** travels into the spaces and experiences of Residential School students, as well as the outcomes for their parents back home. It incorporates the bricks and mortar of the grounds and rooms of the Mohawk Institute where experiences took place.

- The Boys' Playroom is represented as a place where boys were made to fight, where there was once a small jail cell, and no toys. This basement room was where boys hugged the hot water pipes for warmth, and the window where they looked out down the long driveway, waiting for parents or family who might take them home or not.
- The cubbyhole under the staircase was barely a room and was used for solitary confinement.
- The boiler room was loud and concealed Survivors' cries from sexual abuse, mostly perpetrated on boys.
- The laundry room was where the girls laboured, and was another loud room where acts of abuse could be hidden.
- The visitation room was where parents had supervised visits and where gifts and packages were taken away from children by staff. These visits were so stressful for children and parents that the majority of time was spent crying.

The "Mush Hole" is the nickname the students and the Six Nations community gave to the school because mush was the staple food. Mush was often served three times a day and

was sometimes wormy. Hunger and lack of food was a regular part of the Residential School experience.

Two generations of Survivors are represented in the dance performance, demonstrating the intergenerational effects and the long history of Residential Schools. Impacts on parents included the lack of parenting skills, alcoholism and posttraumatic stress disorder issues. Students were dehumanized by having to be identified by their school number, not their names. Survivors' numbers, graffiti in brick scratches and hidden chalk and pencil scribbles are all still present at the Mohawk Institute.

Every aspect from design to music is purposeful. The performance's musical score amplifies the sounds in the rooms, such as the sound of a lock and key jangling and the boiler. The old country songs represent the music of the time and music anthems within the community. The contemporary songs are storytelling with their lyrics and sound.

The performance depicts moments of resilience and strength for example trying to remember a traditional song, holding hands after many missed connections, and at the end the walking forward presenting the walk out the long laneway of the school grounds and leaving behind.

However, the memories and intergenerational affects linger as does what Canada deems the "Indian problem".

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem...our objective is to continue until there is not an Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department..." – Duncan Campbell Scott, 1920 – Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs from 1913 until 1932



The photo represents the roll call in the classroom. In the score, a voice of the principal is heard yelling "Line Up", followed by student numbers, showing the military style of life for the students. For the mother character, this is a memory of what she experienced and what her children went through as well. Photo Credit: Fred Cattroll.

# **Ancestral Teachings/Gifts**

- Bravery
- Truth

# **Themes**

- Engaging with Truth and Reconciliation and the legacy of Residential Schools
- Importance of family and love
- Breaking down stereotypes
- Resilience
- Empathy

# **Curriculum Connections**

- Social Studies Heritage and Identity
- Social Sciences & Humanities Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice
- Social Sciences & Humanities Equity and Social Justice: From Theory to Practice
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies
- Canadian and World Studies Canada: History, Identity, and Culture

- Language/English
- The Arts: Drama and Dance
- Health and Physical Education Social-Emotional Learning Skills

# **Note about Cultural Appropriation**

We encourage teachers to have important conversations with their students while being mindful of the dangers of cultural appropriation. As represented by the phrase, "nothing about us without us" it is recommended to always include Indigenous peoples and resources when planning your lessons and teaching Indigenous curriculum, especially when telling cultural stories. Here are some resources that may be helpful:

- TDSB Urban Indigenous Education Centre
- OISE Understanding Indigenous Perspectives

# **Glossary**

**Choral Speaking**: The reading or reciting of a text by a group. Preparation for a performance may involve interpretation of the text and experimentation with language, rhythm, volume, pace and different numbers of voices.

**Creative Conventions**: Different methods for communicating ideas and emotions in the arts. For example, in theatre one might use music, set design, costumes, etc.

**Mirroring:** A type of improvisation. Two students face each other. Student A initiates the movement, while student B follows, maintaining eye contact as appropriate. Students switch roles after a set time.

**Monologue**: A long speech by one character, intended to provide insight into the character.

**Movement vocabulary**: A repertoire of steps, movements and sequences that are used in creating a dance piece. They can be particular to a specific dance form (e.g., traditional dance) or more personal (e.g., creative dance).

Narrative: A spoken or written account of connected events; a story.

**Perspective**: A character's particular attitude toward something.

Point of View: Focus on a particular character or voice telling the story.

**Resilience**: The process and outcome of adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands.

**"Serving time"**: The way Survivors qualify their time spent at the Residential School, and its parallel with imprisonment.

**Spoken Word**: A broad designation for poetry intended for performance. Though some spoken word poetry may also be published on the page, the genre has its roots in oral traditions and performance. Spoken word can encompass or contain elements of rap, hiphop, storytelling, theatre, jazz, rock, blues and folk music. Characterized by rhyme, repetition, improvisation, and word play, spoken word poems frequently refer to issues of social justice, politics, race and community.

**Stream of Consciousness**: A literary style in which a character's thoughts, feelings and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogue.

**Tableau**: A frozen image to represent a scene, theme, abstract idea or an important moment in a narrative.

# **Pre-Show Discussion Questions**

#### Ask students:

- 1. What do you know about the Indigenous people who lived on this land, their heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs?
- 2. What ancestral land do you live on? (If students don't know, show them the website: www.Native-Land.ca)
- 3. What do you know about Canada's historic relationship with First Nations people?
- 4. What do you know about Residential Schools?
- 5. Why were Residential Schools created, and what was their objective?
- 6. How important is it to feel loved?
- 7. How would you define "home"? "Truth"? "Resilience"?
- 8. How does it feel to be powerless in a situation? What can you do to gain power?
- 9. How can somebody's body language show how they feel?
- 10. What shapes people's view of others? The world?
- 11. What are some steps you can take to learn something new?

# **Pre-Show Unit**

# **Pre-Show Activity #1: Issues Affecting Indigenous Communities in Canada**

# Objective:

Using the drama convention of tableau, students will explore issues that affect Indigenous communities in Canada.

#### **Curriculum Expectations:**

By participating in these exercises, students will:

### DRAMA

- engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on examining issues and themes in fiction and non-fiction sources from diverse communities, times and places;
- plan and shape the direction of the drama or role play by collaborating with others to develop ideas, both in and out of role;

- understand and apply the elements of drama, including character, relationships, setting, tension, focus and emphasis;
- use the elements of drama to suit an identified purpose and form in drama presentations.

# SOCIAL STUDIES, HISTORY, SOCIAL SCIENCES, and FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, and INUIT STUDIES

- use the social studies inquiry process to investigate different perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experiences of a few distinct communities, including First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit communities, in Canada
- demonstrate an understanding of significant experiences of, and major changes and aspects of life in, various historical and contemporary communities, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, in Canada
- use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of the history of Indigenous peoples within the boundaries of contemporary Canada from precontact to the present day
- describe challenges faced by various racial, cultural, and national communities in Canada and the contributions these communities have made to this country
- demonstrate an understanding of a range of historical and contemporary Canadian equity and social justice issues

### **Materials:**

Space to move; resources to research issues affecting Indigenous communities in Canada (see Reference Material at the end of the study guide); laptops or computers.

#### **Directions:**

Warm-Up (Name/Action)

- 1. Define the word tableau (see Glossary).
- 2. Standing in a circle, ask students, one at a time, to say their name aloud while freezing in a tableau that describes an activity they enjoy doing (i.e. "Naz/painting", "Sam/playing video games"), after which the class repeats each student's name and action.

#### Exercise (Tableau Objects)

- 1. Instruct students to begin moving around the space in silence. Call out a number, such as five, directing students to form groups corresponding to that number. Repeat with several numbers.
- 2. Once students are comfortable with joining in groups, call out the number two and direct students to create a tableau with their partner to represent one object together, such as a chair. Repeat the exercise with various numbers and objects. Examples of objects can include: castle, robot, rocket ship, laundry machine, etc.

#### Ask students:

- What are some of the challenges in making tableaux?
- What are the steps your group used to collaborate?

### Culminating Activity (Tableau Narratives)

- 1. Continue the exercise above using the following words: family; power; struggle; respect; inequality; support; negotiation; community; collaboration; justice; injustice.
- 2. Discuss what are some issues affecting Indigenous communities in Canada? (See resource list at the end of this study guide and provide time for research if necessary.)
- 3. Divide students into groups of five or six and direct them to create a tableau to represent the issue of their choice (reminding them to use character, space, gesture, facial expressions and levels to communicate the message of their image). Name this tableau #2.
- 4. Next, ask the same groups to create a tableau to represent what they believe to have caused this problem (tableau #1) followed by a third tableau (tableau #3) to represent what they believe to be an action towards resolution.
- 5. Finally, direct each group to connect their tableaux together to create a story (1-2-3 or beginning-middle-end).
- 6. Present.

### **Debriefing Questions**

#### Ask students:

- How could you tell the meaning of the tableaux when there were no words used?
- Were there common themes in the issues shared?
- Should these issues be of concern for all people in Canada, and why?

#### **Extension Activities:**

- 1. Write stories or create scenes from the tableaux.
- 2. Further research issues affecting Indigenous communities.

# **Pre-Show Activity #2 - The Meaning of Home**

# **Objective:**

In these activities, students will explore the meaning of home through personal narrative, poetry and spoken word.

#### **Curriculum Expectations:**

By participating in these exercises, students will:

#### **DRAMA**

- work individually and collaboratively to generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience;
- apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas and understandings in response to a variety of drama works and experiences;
- use the elements of drama to suit an identified purpose and form in drama presentations.

#### DANCE

use dance as a language to communicate ideas from their own writing or media works

### SOCIAL STUDIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES, and CANADIAN AND WORLD STUDIES.

- assess contributions to Canadian identities made by various groups and communities, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, and by various features of Canadian communities and regions
- demonstrate an understanding of how personal values, knowledge, and actions can contribute to equity and social justice, and assess strategies that people use to address equity and social justice concerns
- analyse how various individuals and groups have contributed to the development of identity, culture, and citizenship in Canada

### LANGUAGE /ENGLISH

 apply listening, speaking, and non-verbal communication skills and strategies to understand and communicate meaning in formal and informal contexts and for various purposes and audiences

#### **HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION:**

• apply skills that help them develop self-awareness and self-confidence as they participate in learning experiences in health and physical education, in order to support the development of a sense of identity and a sense of belonging

#### **Materials:**

Paper and pens, cue cards, laptops or computers.

#### **Directions:**

Warm-Up (Reflection)

- 1. Ask students to list some of the locations or places they have lived.
- 2. Now ask them to close their eyes and picture one location in their mind.
- 3. Ask them to imagine what they see, smell, hear and do there.
- 4. Instruct students to open their eyes and list as many words as possible that came to mind from their reflection.

#### Exercise (Poetry Writing)

- 1. Define the term stream of consciousness (see Glossary).
- 2. Using the prompt, "Home feels like...", direct students to write continuously for two minutes.
- 3. Direct students to review their writing and cross out unnecessary words; i.e. the words that are not needed or directly related to the theme. This will be different for each student.
- 4. Hand out one cue card to each student. Instruct students to stream the remaining words together in an order they would like and record their written piece on a cue card. Advise them that they will be sharing this with the class.

#### Ask students:

- How did it feel to eliminate some of the words you wrote?
- How did you decide which words to keep?

### Culminating Exercise (Choral Poetry)

- 1. Ask students what they know about choral speaking (see Glossary). Brainstorm some of the ways in which the words they wrote can be spoken (i.e. whisper, scream, repeat, etc.).
- 2. Group students in pairs or groups of three and instruct them to share their work with each other. Challenge them to collaborate in creating a collective piece of poetry based on their writing about "home", which they will then perform for their class.
- 3. Present.

# **Debriefing Questions:**

- What strategies worked well when collaborating on a piece with others?
- Did any groups use choral speaking techniques to enhance their performance? If so, which ones stood out to you and why?
- Did you notice any similar themes when talking about "home"?
- How do you think the concept of "home" connects to residential schools?

#### **Extensions Activities:**

- 1. Add music as background to the poetry pieces. How does this affect the performance?
- 2. Add movement to the group poetry pieces.
- 3. Revisit personal poetry to expand on it and create spoken word pieces (see Glossary).

# **Post-Show Discussion Questions**

#### Ask students:

- What are the creative conventions used to tell the story of The Mush Hole?
- How does the audience understand what is happening in a scene when there is very little or no speaking involved?
- What movement techniques does the ensemble use to convey these ideas to the audience?
- How is power demonstrated in the performance?
- How are each of the characters in the play affected by Residential School?
- What do you imagine are the long-term effects of Residential Schools?
- There are many public schools named after Sir John A. MacDonald in Canada and recently some schools/street names have been changed due to the past actions of that individual (i.e. Ryerson to TMU, Dundas Square to Sankofa Square) Do you agree with this practice?
- What actions can people take to learn more about other cultures?

# **Post-Show Unit**

# Post-Show Activity #1 - Residential Schools, Perspectives and Points of View

# **Objective:**

Students will explore connections to themes of **The Mush Hole** by engaging in activities exploring character emotions, as well as gestures for meaning.

#### **Curriculum Expectations:**

By participating in these exercises, students will:

#### **DRAMA**

- describe some of the ways in which people's roles, relationships and responsibilities relate to who they are and what their situation is, and how and why changes in circumstances might affect people's roles, relationships and responsibilities as well as their sense of self;
- construct personal interpretations of drama works, connecting drama issues and themes to their own and others' ideas, feelings and experiences;
- apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas and understandings in response to a variety of drama works and experiences;
- explain how dramatic exploration can contribute to personal growth and selfunderstanding.

# SOCIAL STUDIES, HISTORY, and FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT STUDIES

- describe various significant people, events, and developments in Canada between 1850 and 1914, including the Indian Act, treaties between Indigenous nations and the Crown, and the residential school system, and explain their impact
- use the social studies inquiry process to investigate different perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experiences of a few distinct communities, including First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit communities, in Canada
- demonstrate an understanding of significant experiences of, and major changes and aspects of life in, various historical and contemporary communities, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, in Canada
- use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of the history of Indigenous peoples within the boundaries of contemporary Canada from precontact to the present day
- analyse how beliefs, values, and contributions of various individuals and groups helped shape the development of Indigenous rights, identities, and heritage in different regions of Canada between 1763 and 1969
- describe various factors that affected interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada between 1876 and 1969

#### LANGUAGE, ENGLISH

- apply listening, speaking, and non-verbal communication skills and strategies to understand and communicate meaning in formal and informal contexts and for various purposes and audiences
- apply critical thinking skills to deepen understanding of texts, and analyze how various perspectives and topics are communicated and addressed in a variety of texts, including digital, media, and cultural texts
- plan, develop ideas, gather information, and organize content for creating texts of various forms, including digital and media texts, on a variety of topics

#### **HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION:**

• apply skills that help them to recognize sources of stress and to cope with challenges, including help-seeking behaviours, as they participate in learning experiences in health and physical education, in order to support the development of personal resilience

• apply skills that help them identify and manage emotions as they participate in learning experiences in health and physical education, in order to improve their ability to express their own feelings and understand and respond to the feelings of others

#### **Materials:**

Space to move, paper and pens/pencils or computers to write with.

#### **Directions:**

Warm-Up (Emotional Counts)

- 1. Ask students to find a space in the room for themselves
- 2. Using the emotion "happy", direct students to demonstrate the emotion without words. Explain that you will now count from zero (least) to five (most) as they explore different levels of the emotion.
- 3. Ask students to notice how their bodies change as the emotions become more extreme.
- 4. Repeat with "sad", "angry" and "scared".

### Exercise (Gestures)

- 1. In pairs, ask students to communicate the following gestures non-verbally: stop; shhhh; leave; please.
- 2. Invite volunteers to share other non-verbal gestures with the class.
- 3. With the same partners, create non-verbal gestures for the following sentences: "Come over here!", "I can't hear you!", and "I didn't do it!"
- 4. Invite volunteers to demonstrate other non-verbal phrases for the class to guess.

#### Ask students:

- Did you know what was being communicated, and if so, how?
- If you did not understand, what could have helped?
- How do you think this exercise is connected to The Mush Hole?

#### **Culminating Activity (Perspective, Point of View and Resilience)**

- Ask students to close their eyes and reflect on the play as you read the song lyrics of Find My Way aloud (see Appendix A).
- Discuss what and how the song makes them think and feel.
- Share the following information with students on the board, an anchor chart or a handout:
- The Mush Hole Characters:
  - #48/Ernest: a son, father, husband
  - #29/Mabel: a daughter, mother, wife. Ernest and Mabel met at Residential School and had a family, a son and a daughter.
  - #34/Walter: a son, brother, student
  - #17/Grace: a daughter, sister, student
  - #11/A girl with no name or family, the runaway: "the one who got away"
- Discuss the meanings of perspective and point of view (see Glossary). Ask for examples about what these lyrics might mean to each of the characters in the play.
- Have students write a letter to a character in the play. What would you like to tell this character?

### **Debriefing Questions**

Ask students:

- What are some of the ways people cope in difficult situations?
- What is resilience?
- Why is it important to learn about the history of Residential Schools in Canada?

#### **Extension Activities**

 Explore the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (linked under Reference Material) with students and create individual/personal and class/collective calls to action.

# Post-Show Activity #2 - Movement, Power, and Storytelling

### **Objective:**

Through identification of the production elements in **The Mush Hole**, students will explore the use of music to create movement and story.

# **Curriculum Expectations:**

By participating in these exercises, students will:

#### DANCE

- apply the critical analysis process to communicate their feelings, ideas and understandings in response to a variety of dance pieces and experiences;
- use dance as a language to communicate ideas from their own writing or media works;
- use the elements of dance and choreographic forms to communicate a variety of themes or moods;
- construct personal interpretations of the messages in their own and others' dance pieces, including messages about issues relevant to their community and/or the world;
- identify and give examples of their strengths and areas for growth as dance creators, interpreters and audience members.

#### **DRAMA**

- interpret short drama works and identify and explain their personal response to the works:
- explain how dramatic exploration can contribute to personal growth and selfunderstanding;
- identify aesthetic and technical aspects of drama works and explain how they help achieve specific dramatic purposes.

#### **SOCIAL SCIENCES**

- analyze a range of historical and contemporary equity and social justice issues and the impact of economic and environmental factors on these issues
- analyse, in historical and contemporary contexts, the dynamics of power relations and privilege as well as various factors that contribute to power or marginalization

#### Materials:

Space to move.

#### **Directions:**

- Instruct students to walk around the room, focusing on filling up any empty space. Encourage them to add some variation to their movement by adding different gestures as they walk around (for example, they might move their arms, take different sized steps, change their posture, change their speed, etc.).
- Choose one student to be the "leader." Instruct everyone else to follow the leader around the room, matching their movements exactly. You may wish to change the leader every few minutes.
- Repeat the exercise, this time telling students that they are allowed to choose to break away from the leader and start moving independently. Students who have broken away from the main group may choose to return at any point.

### **Debriefing Questions:**

Ask students:

- Was it easier or harder to move around the room when you had to follow someone else's movements?
- How did you feel when you were leading the group?
- If you chose to break off from the group, what led you to that decision?
- If you chose to follow the leader rather than break off from the group, what led you to that decision?
- Was it easier to comply with what the rest of the group was doing, or to not comply and break away?

# Post-show Activity: Using Movement to Tell a Story

#### Objective:

Students will use movement to communicate meaning and explore how a story can be told without using words.

#### Materials:

Space to move around, speakers for playing music.

#### **Directions:**

Warm-Up (Mirroring)

- 1. In pairs, students choose who will be A and B.
- 2. Students face each other. Ask them to be still, as if looking in a mirror. Student A initiates a movement while student B follows and maintains eye contact throughout. Encourage students to move slowly and with intention.
- 3. Repeat the exercise with B leading. After a while, challenge the students to take turns leading without verbal decision-making.

# Ask students:

- What did it feel like to be in both the A and B role?
- How does it feel to be in control/controlled?
- How does the theme of power connect to The Mush Hole?

### Exercise (Fairy Tale in a Minute)

- 1. Divide students into groups of four or five.
- 2. Each group will choose one fairy tale.
- 3. Ask students to re-tell their fairy tales with their group one sentence at a time, reminding everyone of the details.
- 4. Tell students they will perform their fairy tale for each other, and give them some time to rehearse.
- 5. When students are ready to perform, add the time restriction of performing in only one minute.
- 6. Have groups perform one after the other and lead directly into the debriefing questions below.

#### Ask students:

- How did it feel to be given the last-minute time restriction?
- As a performer, what did you have to do to ensure the whole story was told?

# Culminating Activity (Movement and Storytelling)

- 1. Discuss the production elements in The Mush Hole (i.e. music, sound, lighting, props, set, costume, etc.).
- 2. Brainstorm how the use of production, design, staging and movement elements enhanced the telling of the story of Residential Schools.
- 3. Discuss what issues arise for youth today.
- 4. Divide students into groups of four or five.
- 5. With only one minute, ask each group to choose an issue that affects young people today.
- 6. Play the music clip below and ask students to listen silently. Tell students they will be creating a story to this music with movement only.

#### **Audio Player**

- 1. As the music plays again, ask students to choose what characters might be in this story. They only have two minutes.
- 2. Repeat step seven, only this time students must choose the setting for their story during their two-minute discussion.
- 3. Repeat, only this time groups discuss what the story will be about (beginning/middle/end).
- 4. Ask students to listen to the music, improvise physically and create the story with movement only.
- 5. When ready, ask students to stop and give them two minutes to discuss what they discovered during that process and what revisions they wish to make.
- 6. Play music again so students can rehearse their movement (without conversation). Follow-up with two minutes for students to discuss further notes or revisions.
- 7. Share the movement stories.

### **Debriefing Questions:**

#### Ask students:

- 1. What is it like to express yourself in different forms: through movement, orally or in writing?
- 2. What did it feel like to have time restrictions on your creations?
- 3. How did the music inform your choices?
- 4. How did it feel to perform without words?
- 5. Were there similarities in each of the performances? Discuss.
- 6. When were the stories you saw most clear? Why?

# Reference Material

#### Mohawk Institute:

Woodland Cultural Centre - <a href="http://woodlandculturalcentre.ca/">https://woodlandculturalcentre.ca/</a>/wcc-announces-grand-reopening/
National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation - <a href="https://nctr.ca">https://nctr.ca</a>

### **Residential Schools:**

https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/06/13/aboriginals-push-to-save-former-ontario-residential-school-known-as-mush-hole.html%E2%80%A8%20https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/headlines/residential-school-survivors-grateful-for-truth-now-comes-reconciliation-1.3111125

#### **General Resources:**

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - Calls to Action:

https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-

content/uploads/2021/01/Calls to Action English2.pdf

https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs.html

https://aptnnews.ca/https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenoushttps://policyoptions.irpp.org/m

agazines/february-2019/first-nations-water-problems-crisis-canadas-making

https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/un-raybould-indigenous-treatement-1.4659893

https://www.aiai.on.ca/newsroom/news-release/ontatio-chiefs-province-discuss-key-

issues-affecting-first-nations-communities/

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/spoken-word

https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience

### **Additional Context:**

https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/18-01-22-Dismantling-the-Doctrine-of-Discovery-

<u>EN.pdf%E2%80%A8%20https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wpcontent/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\_E\_web.pdf</u>

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# **Appendix A**

# Find My Way - Song Lyrics adapted for The Mush Hole by Nick Sherman

I tore this school down a thousand times in my mind Watched it burn into the same ground I lost my heart I crawled this far all by myself without your help

I'll reach farther, I'll get back my heart Every day is a year but I'll start I'm on the same ground I made it this far I will find my way in this dark

I don't think ice is going to turn me around
I don't think this air is going to freeze my lungs
If I ask for help to get back on my feet
To walk on this goddamn earth where there's nothing left of me

Stand up cold morning frozen hands fields are calling
I haven't seen my family since I was 6 years old
Find my way back home
From the Mush Hole, folded Sunday clothes from the kid before

If I can't run away I'll stay sick for days, stolen candy
If I can't see your face I'll find another way
To survive this place
Called the Mush Hole, folded Sunday clothes, let me go



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