



Imagine a Canada Educator's Guide:

<https://nctr.ca/education/educational-programs/imagine-a-canada/>

1. Tips and tricks for the Art and Essay stream (with examples)
2. Tips and tricks for the Project stream (with examples)
3. The Process: How it all works and what to expect
4. Legal information
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1. Tips and tricks for the Art and Essay stream:

Art and essay submissions are reviewed using a rubric that examines not only the submission itself but also the accompanying write-up on the submission form.

The NCTR is looking for a submission that reflects **creativity** and **uniqueness** and are absent of clichés. We encourage **personalization** which will help a submission stand out and connect the youth to the topic.

We look for submissions that demonstrate **individual thinking** and an **understanding of the topic** of Reconciliation based on the youth's age and ability. We encourage youth to think about the future with a Reconciliation lens.

What is a "Reconciliation Lens"?

A Reconciliation Lens is one where we look at the world around us and see that the TRC's 94 Calls to Action, MMIWG 231 Calls for Justice, and the 46 articles of UNDRIP are fully implemented.

It is a world where Truth and Reconciliation is being addressed by Federal, Provincial/Territorial, and Municipal governments and can be found in the homes, communities, workplaces, schools of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

What would Canada look like if...

- We had an Indigenous Prime Minister?
- We recognized Indigenous languages as official languages?
- We addressed all boil water advisories?
- There were safe and comfy schools in all communities?
- We eliminated negative health consequences as a result of residential schools?

Submissions can come in many forms including paintings, mixed media, poetry, screenplays, songs, and even video documentaries. The only limit on submission type is the youth's creativity!

We suggest that art pieces focus on art, without extraneous text and that text pieces focus on text. Blends are possible and permissible, but will likely stand out less compared to pieces that are just art or just text.

Submission forms should be fully filled out including signatures and essay questions.

Essay questions which are used to understand symbolism, the deeper meanings within the piece, and the youth's understanding of Reconciliation. Incomplete submission forms will not be included in the review process.

Before a youth submits their project, ask:

- Is it creative, unique, and absent of clichés?
- Is it personalized?
- Is it thoughtful, reflective, and impactful?
- Is it forward looking and does it speak to Reconciliation?
- Is it developed, spell-checked, and polished (based age and ability)?

Examples of successful submissions:

1) *Who Am I?* by Liam in Grade 5



What stands out about it:

- The drawing **expresses the honouree's experience** in coming to understand their Indigenous identity as an adoptee living far from their home community. It's **personalized** and highlights their heritage and the importance of recognizing their 2 families.
- In their essay, Liam expressed **a desire to continue to learn** about what it means to be Tlicho from the Northwest Territories while living in the south.

2) *Reconciliation* by Danah in Grade 8

What is reconciliation?

Is it the mending of broken relationships?

The acceptance of wrong doing?

Refusing to live in ignorance?

Is there only one way or does it come in many forms?

To reconcile is to restore

It's to celebrate what they tried to destroy

It is not anger, resentment, and hate

*But love, coexistence and change
It is to acknowledge the brokenness, the pain and the suffering
Reconciliation is healing
Slowly but surely
It is not to all be done by one
It is also not to be ignored
It is coming together as one to bring back the beauty that was once all around us
It is for us to have pride in all our radiance
It is to fill that void of darkness and bring back that balance*

*Reconciliation is different for each and every one of us
We all have a vision of reconciliation
But it is up to us
We cannot change the past
We cannot be sure of our future
It is up to each and every one of us
Now, in the present
To make sure that we pass down to our descendants, a nation truly worth of pride
a reconciled Canada*

What stands out about it:

- The poem is **well-written, thoughtful, and reflective**.
- The honouree, a newcomer to Canada, brought a unique perspective to their poem and expressed **a solid understanding** of the factors needed to see real Reconciliation.

3) *Reconciled Canada* by Katerina in Grade 11



What stands out about it:

- The painting is **inspiring** and **hopeful**. It depicts **Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in harmony** represented by beautiful scenery (sunset and sky) as well as doves (symbol of peace). It includes traditional Indigenous clothing and the Métis, Nunavut, and Anishinaabeg flags on a shared banner with the Canadian flag.
- Katerina also wrote a moving and **insightful essay on Reconciliation** which expressed the importance of “addressing historical injustices, fostering cultural respect, and building a more inclusive society.”

3. Tips and tricks for the Project stream:

Project submissions are reviewed using a rubric that examines the project outline, budget, and accompanying write-up on the submission form.

The NCTR is looking to support projects that have a **reasonable** and **achievable timeline** and **well-thought-out budget**. We encourage projects that are **inclusive** and involve as many people as possible (class, school, or community).

Like the art and essay submissions, we are looking for projects that reflect the theme of Imagine a Canada. We look for projects that demonstrate **individual thinking** and an **understanding of the topic** of Reconciliation **based on addressing a need** youth observe in the school or community.

Submission forms should be fully filled out including the essay questions and include a letter of support.

Essay questions are used to understand why the project was taken on, who are youth leads involved, and how Indigenous Peoples are involved such as residential or day school Survivors, Elders, or Knowledge Keepers. Projects that have Indigenous consultation or involvement are more likely to receive funding.

Incomplete submission forms will not be included in the review process.

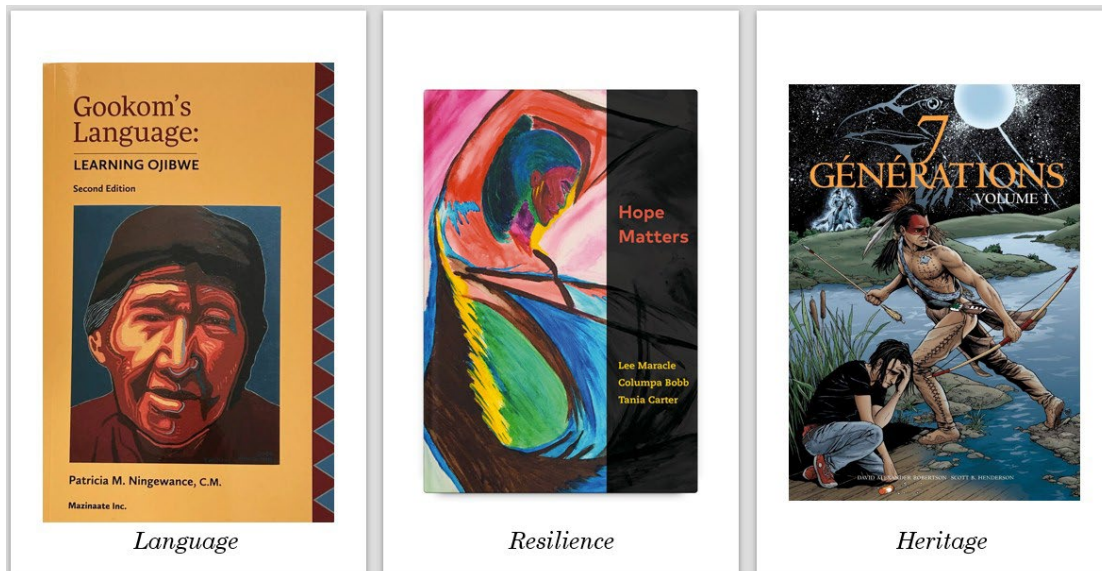
Before a youth submits their project, ask:

- Is the project creative, unique, and personalized?
- How does this project address a need or advance Reconciliation?
- How broad is the impact?
 - Does the project benefit a class? A school? A bigger community?
 - Is there benefit to an Indigenous community?
- Was there consultation/guidance provided by a Residential School Survivor, Knowledge Keeper, or Elder?
- Is the project feasible?
 - Will it realistically be completed based on the budget and timeline?

Examples of projects chosen for funding:

1) Prison Libraries Project by St. Paul's High School

The St. Paul's project was led by four high school students who assembled a collection of books on Indigenous topics of interest and ways of healing to circulate through Manitoba's correctional institutions for Indigenous inmates.



What stands out about this project:

- The project has the potential for **broad positive impact** for the Indigenous population in correctional institutions. This shows an **understanding of the ongoing impacts of the residential school system** and the gaps that exist in supporting this population.
- Youth were **guided by Knowledge Keepers and Elders** in implementing the project.
- The project was **flexible in its scope** no matter how much funding it received. For example, the number of books purchased was adjustable.

2) Cultural/ceremonial space by École Okotoks

Three youth, amongst a group of 450 students, led a project to create an outdoor space to be used for learning and ceremony both by the school as well as the broader community.

What stands out about this project:

- The project has the potential to **impact their school and wider community** and **involved the entire school** and considered **accessibility and public access**.
- The project was **based on Blackfoot cultural teachings**.
- The youth leads **worked with a number of mentors** including an Elder, the school division's Indigenous Learning Coordinator, and the Town of Okotoks' Indigenous Advisor. The amount of support and involvement of Indigenous consultations showed the youth were committed to the project.

4. The Process: How it all works and what to expect:

Art & Essay stream

Step 1: Submission

A youth or group of youth creates a piece for the Art and Essay Stream by the **submission deadline of January 23rd, 2026.**

Step 2: Selection

The NCTR reviews the submission forms and identifies honourees based on region, age, grade, community, and language representation. Selected honourees are notified by email. Email notifications are sent to the youth, their guardian(s), and their teacher – the more information included on the form the better.

A Code of Conduct will be shared for review and signature which outlines the expectations of honourees who participate in the program.

[Move to step 4!]

Project stream

Step 1: Submission

A youth or group of youth creates a piece for the Project stream sends in a project description, timeline and budget by the **submission deadline of January 23rd, 2026.**

Step 2: Selection

The NCTR reviews the submission forms and identifies honourees based on region, age, grade, community, and language representation. Selected honourees are notified by email. Email notifications are sent to the youth, their guardian(s), and their teacher – the more information included on the form the better.

A Code of Conduct will be shared for review and signature which outlines the expectations of honourees who participate in the program.

Step 3: Critical Paperwork

For the Project stream, financial information needs to be collected before funds can be distributed. Only a school or a supporting organization, not an individual, can receive the funding on behalf of the project.

The school or supporting organization needs to submit an invoice to the University of Manitoba to receive project funds and requires the organization to be added to the University's vendor system.

This part can be confusing! Don't hesitate to ask us for advice on how to fill out the Supplier Request Form. The NCTR is hosted by the University of Manitoba and is bound by its fiscal procedures. Funds cannot be distributed without this critical paperwork.

Step 4: Leadership Training

The honourees and youth and mentors involved, will be invited to **two days of online education and training**. These sessions take place in April and typically run from 10:00am-2:00pm (central) with breaks but due to working with youth across Canada the timing of these breaks may not align with the usual lunch time. Depending on time zones, they will likely need to eat their lunch during the training as well.

Day one will focus on residential school experiences and Indigenous cultural teachings. Day two will focus on leadership and entrepreneurship and is geared specifically toward the Project stream participants (but is open to all honourees).

We would strongly recommend that you make every effort to accommodate your youths' ability to attend, by finding them a quiet space and a laptop, headphones, etc, to attend from.

Step 5: Travel for the National Celebration

Arrangements will be made for each youth and one guardian to travel to Winnipeg for the National Celebration and Honouring Ceremony in June. The NCTR will pay for travel, accommodation, and meals of the youth and their guardian.

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Last-minute cancellations or missed flights will be charged to the guardians. If families would like to bring additional family members or extend their stay, they will be expected to assume those costs.

Step 6: National Celebration and Honouring Ceremony

The national celebration will be livestreamed and available on the NCTR's YouTube channel.

If youth are unable to travel to Winnipeg, it will be possible for them to present their work over Zoom or through a pre-recorded video. There may be media or interviews with students, in which case photo/video consent waivers will be signed.

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4. Legal information – signatures:

In submitting an art piece or essay, signatures are required from both the youth and their guardian in order to transfer the moral rights to the University of Manitoba.

This step is required in order for the NCTR to be able to make edits to the piece such as resizing, cropping, or other edits done for the publication of the art booklet, posting to social media, and sharing it on the website.

If you have any questions or concerns about the transfer or moral rights or other legal notes, please feel free to reach out to imagineacanada@umanitoba.ca

5. Final thoughts:

The NCTR has seen some truly mind-blowing visions of how our country could look with true Reconciliation, and it's the youth of today whose dreams and words are lighting that way forward.

We would really encourage you to nudge your artists and writers, your dreamers and advocates-in-the-making, your future policy-shapers, to consider putting their creative

energy into a reconciliation project or a depiction of how this country could look with reconciliation.

This program has also opened doors for past participants. A former participant who observed negative health impacts in her host community entered into the faculty of medicine with the aim of returning to provide health care with the NCTR's support. The Centre has hired honourees to speak and perform at NCTR events such as the live youth empowerment event for Truth and Reconciliation Week. Schools involved in the program have also been selected to host Survivor talks for Truth and Reconciliation Week.

This program is just the beginning, so please: accept our invitation to get your students and classes to participate in dreaming of a better Canada to come!