



MIKE DUROCHER: BULLYING AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Focus Questions

What is bullying? What are the different types of bullying? Why do people bully others? What can we do to prevent bullying in homes, schools and communities?

Time

90 minutes

Grade Level

K-6

Learning Goals

- Define different types of bullying.
- Identify examples of bullying from Mike's story.
- Reflect on a personal experience with bullying.
- Understand that Mike was one of hundreds of Métis children that suffered because of bullying in residential schools.
- Learn strategies on how to respond to bullying.
- Develop a poster campaign to share anti-bullying strategies within the school community.

Materials Needed

- Five copies of the Matching Game card
- Mike's Story card
- Mike's story on the [Paths to Reconciliation](#) website*, available in the following formats:
 - Photos of Mike Durocher
 - Mike Durocher artworks
 - Photos of Île-à-la-Crosse school
 - Audio interviews with Mike

*Note: to access survivor stories, click on "Legend," then "Survivor Stories," and choose a survivor from the map view.

Introduction

Every child, regardless of their race, skin color, ancestry, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or abilities, deserves, and is entitled to, protection against discrimination and bullying by their government and by the educational institution which they attend. When children are the victims of harmful and damaging behaviours, such as bullying and abuse, whether or not the aggressor is an adult or a fellow classmate, their rights as young Canadian citizens are violated. As a vulnerable and impressionable population within our society, children are at an increased risk of suffering the effects of bullying. The risk is compounded for Indigenous youth who often do not have equal access to protection, advocacy or support.

Prolonged exposure to peer and adult aggression and bullying can leave child victims dealing with lasting negative consequences well into adulthood. The Indian Residential School System created environments in which prolonged exposure took place, since many pupils were forced to remain in residences away from their families for the majority of the academic year. Removing Indigenous youth from their families, depriving them of their ancestral languages, exposing them in some cases to physical and sexual abuse, and forcibly assimilating them into European culture were extreme forms of bullying and abuse that these schools exploited.

Mike Durocher, a Métis man from Île-à-la-Crosse in Saskatchewan, has contributed his story to the Paths to Reconciliation program in the hopes that his truth will spark the proper governmental recognition that residential school survivors and their families deserve.

Lesson Implementation

Minds on

Begin the lesson by telling students that you will be discussing a topic that can be hard for some people to talk about: bullying. Let them know that they are in a safe space, and that they can talk openly and honestly, or that they can choose to be active listeners instead.

Ask the class "what is a bully"? Accept all answers and consider describing different situations that can lead to bullying to help facilitate the discussion.

Have students close their eyes and rest their heads on their desks while keeping one hand visible. Now ask: Have you ever been bullied? Have students give a thumbs up if the answer is yes. Repeat the exercise with: Have you ever bullied someone else? Keep the results to yourself until the end of the lesson.

Students may or may not realize that their own behaviour, or the behaviour of others, can sometimes be a form of bullying. They may have certain situations in mind that they feel could exemplify bullying, but they may not be 100 per cent sure if those situations are in fact examples of bullying. Discuss with students that this can happen to both children and adults, and that people may not always realize



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Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework

Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Spatial significance
- Interrelationships

Inquiry Process

- Interpret and analyze
- Evaluate and draw conclusions
- Reflect and respond

Geospatial Skills

- Spatial representations

when their behaviour, or someone else's, is unacceptable. Explain that, whether consciously done or not, inappropriate and hurtful behaviour that intends to harm, intimidate or makes someone do something against their will is still considered a form of bullying.

To clarify situations that fall under the category of bullying, divide students into five groups and hand each group a Matching Game card. Give students time to match each description to the type of bullying they think best applies.

Discuss answers as a class, identifying one or two types of bullying that the groups had the most difficulty matching, and discuss students' thoughts on the different types (or if students feel any other types should be added). Be sure to address situations that resemble bullying but are not bullying in the true sense (e.g., conflict, disagreements, tattletaling).

Action

Explain to students that the next activity will include an introduction to children's rights, the connection between those rights and bullying, and a true story of a Métis man who was bullied as a child and whose rights were not respected at the school he attended.

Sometimes, severe cases of bullying can infringe on a child's rights. As a class, go over the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is an official document that outlines the political, socio-economic, health and cultural rights of people under the age of 18. If a country's government decides to follow this convention, then it is legally responsible for making sure all children's rights are being met.

Use [UNICEF Canada's website on children's rights](#) and their [child-friendly version of the Convention](#) to review the many rights that children have but that they may not be familiar with, and which can be affected by severe cases of bullying and abuse.

As a class, identify examples of a child's rights that would be infringed upon if they were the subject of one, or more, of the seven types of bullying identified in the Matching Game card. For example, if a child was being subjected to prejudicial bullying, their rights outlined in Article 2 of the Convention would not be respected. Go through several examples.

Next, explain to students that a dark chapter of Canada's past revolves around the existence of residential schools, most of which were institutions funded by the federal government, run by various religious denominations and built for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children that the government believed needed to be forced to adopt European culture in place of their ancestral cultures. Optional: show students the [Paths to Reconciliation](#) website with the locations of the different schools and the timeline of when they were open to help them understand the history of these schools.

Introduce them to Mike Durocher, a Métis man who as a child attended the le-à-la-Crosse residential school from 1961 to 1969. Share Mike's story with students by reading the Mike's Story card out loud, stopping to check for questions along the



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way. Note: photographs from Mike's life are available on the [Paths to Reconciliation](#) website, as well as additional content that is better suited to older audiences.

Discuss Mike's story in the context of the different types of bullying presented earlier and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ask students: Were any of Mike's rights violated at the residential school? Why were Mike and his peers treated differently? Did he experience bullying? Do you think it's common to experience more than one type of bullying at the same time?

Explain that Mike's story is one of hundreds that took place at residential schools that forced First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children out of their homes and into European culture, which was highly influenced by the church. When Métis children stayed at residential schools, there was no way in which they could claim human rights violations or get help. It is important to remember that all children have the right to seek help with human rights violations and that children should not be treated any differently because of their gender, family history, race, religion, spiritual beliefs, or sexual orientation.

End the activity by having students complete this statement in a personal journal: We can all help stop bullying by...

Conclusion and Consolidation

To conclude, repeat the thumbs-up activity from the Minds On section. This time, have everyone open their eyes at the end and take stock of the number of students who have experienced or contributed to bullying. Discuss how their answers may have changed since the first attempt.

Have students take part in an exercise in kindness. Have each student draft five random acts of kindness to do during the week, either at school or at home. For example, write encouraging Post-It notes and hide them in surprise places, prepare lunch for a family member, or walk a neighbour's dog. Discuss the power of community and kindness and how it contrasts with bullying and abuse.

If students have questions about why bullies choose to be hurtful, review the following sources of information with them:

- [Understanding bullying victims](#)
- [Bullying - we can all help stop it](#)
- [What is bullying and what can be done?](#)

Extensions

If time permits, work with students to design an anti-bullying campaign that uses posters, videos or social media posts on classroom accounts to clearly explain the different types of bullying and how to prevent bullying or how victims can get help.



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Modifications

- If students are very young, refer to the golden rule rather than discussing the topic of bullying directly: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Explain that we should follow this rule in our relationships with other humans in order to be good and loving neighbours.
- Summarize the Mike's Story card and have students come up with their own examples of scenarios where it might be easy or hard to follow the golden rule.
- Work as a class to create a storyboard or comic strip from Mike's story. Have them illustrate and narrate the storyboard to demonstrate their understanding of bullying in the context of residential schools.

Assessment Opportunities

- Assess student participation in discussions or their level of active listening.
- Assess Matching Game cards on an individual basis.
- Collect individual journal entries for assessment of critical thinking and understanding of the connection between the residential school system and bullying.
- Evaluate drafts of random acts of kindness.
- Evaluate posters or campaign contributions.

Sources and Additional resources

- [Shattering the Silence: The Hidden Story of Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan](#)