

STORY SHIFTERS

HOLD SPACE
REFLECT DIALOGUE
UNSETTLE
DISRUPT





A TRUTH ABOUT STORIES...

In his Massey Lecture, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, Thomas King (2003) reiterates a simple and profound statement:

“The truth about stories is that that’s all we are.”

STORY SHIFTERS is based on the belief that we are the stories we keep – the stories we inherited, those we hold right now, those we are passing on.

Our goal is to create space and tools for non-Indigenous people to begin the work of decolonization by interrupting their narratives.

We invite people to repeatedly identify, unpack, and unsettle personal and cultural colonial stories. In so doing, we hope to disrupt settler ways of knowing, and interrupt long-established relationship patterns between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

We realize that the idea of truth is highly complex, personal, and fluid.

For these reasons, we hold King’s words close as we continue to shape this process and offer it to others who want to unearth and agitate their stories, though we would offer one slight adjustment:

***A truth about stories is that
that’s all we are.***

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

“My interest here lies in rethinking the relationship, so that instead of posing the question about reconciliation as a matter of what “they” want – recognition, compensation, land – and what “we” can live with, the subject under closest scrutiny becomes “ourselves.” In other words, the subject is not the “Indian problem” but the “settler problem”. ~ Roger Epp

RECONCILIATION is a term that has recently become popular in Canada.



Usually people use it to refer to a process that aims to heal past harms done to Indigenous peoples by our governments. But what about current wrongdoings? How do we reconcile when colonial violence remains so prevalent in our communities? Indigenous people live daily with the impacts of historic and current colonization.

We witness our Indigenous family members, friends, and neighbours work internally and externally on colonial issues.

We notice that we, as non-Indigenous people, can choose not to do this work.

We do not want our exploration to be another thing “put on” Indigenous peoples. We want to accept responsibility for our part of the work towards decolonization.

STORY SHIFTERS has built a slow and thoughtful process for settlers (non-Indigenous people) to come together and do internal work to unpack and acknowledge our settler stories as we live on unceded territories.

Our processes nudge settlers to disrupt their stories; to check in on their social privilege; to unlearn and re-frame.

We believe this internal work is critical if we want to change the current colonial practices that we have inherited, and in turn, alter the course of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships.

PRACTICE LAB

STORY SHIFTERS is a practice lab for non-Indigenous settlers who want to further explore and think critically about how our personal stories (and the public narratives we hear) work to recreate colonial attitudes, laws and policy in Canada.

We call it a practice lab because it is a space for non-Indigenous people to analyze and question difficult, emotionally-charged, real-life issues in front of others. Here, non-Indigenous people unpack their role in current colonial practices such as land exploitation and social and economic injustice. This creates vulnerability. It also creates trust and relationship. When people choose to maintain a stance of inquiry rather than settling on an answer, what we know, or think we know, is disrupted. This inner work of testing colonial beliefs and bias in front of others enables people to be more respectfully unapologetic when they challenge colonial stories, attitudes and policy out in the world.



To create a safe environment and to ensure that our work does not become a process that helps to further settle non-Indigenous people, we rely on frames of dialogue, reflection, and reflexivity.

DIALOGUE encourages conversation where all voices are heard, and people remain reflective, curious, critical and open to different perspectives.

REFLECTION helps people to explicitly examine how their agenda and assumptions, beliefs and emotions influence how we understand our “place” in this world.

REFLEXIVITY reminds people to ask questions of themselves (in front of others) and to agitate personal biases and beliefs. This, in turn, helps create internal (and eventual external) shifts in how we relate to self and to the world around us.



REFLECTIONS

We asked participants to share their thoughts about what was key for them in this process...

An exchange
of ideas and
opinions

DIALOGUE

“What has been key for me in this process has been a space for trying out new perspectives, voicing old ones, and being supported, encouraged and allowed to recognize shifting thoughts and stories about Canada, my community, my family and myself. There is often little space to bring our entire selves into our work--Settler Dialogue is different--this dialogue framework requires our authentic selves to be fully present.”

Structured
deep thought

REFLECTION

“Reserving space and time to reflect and learn more about my relationship to this land and the people who live here. Engaging actively on these topics with others has allowed me to stand a bit straighter amidst the messiness of day to day life.”

Always
holding space
between me
and another

REFLEXIVITY

“Settler dialogue has allowed me to interpret my culture and woken me up to how the stories of my family and culture and what they emphasize or ignore, can perpetuate white privilege. I have had opportunities in the past to reflect on and criticize oppressive social structures but the reflection from a settler perspective helps me see how I am entangled in those structures.”

JOIN US

The Story Shifters team members live and work on unceded territories of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en people. Although we are place-based, we offer our processes to others willing to unsettle and disrupt their settler stories in their own localities.

We offer a choice of three highly interactive introductory activities that invite people into Story Shifters work.

The Stories We Hold is a one-day workshop where participants explore the cultural stories that influence their perceptions and interactions in everyday life. Through storytelling and mapping, participants unpack ways that personal experience and Canadian public narratives influence how they each tell and hear stories of difference. People gain tools that help them develop a readiness to engage with difficult topics such as decolonizing and reconciliation.

Unsettling our Stories is a workshop that can be offered over **one day** or as a **three-part series**. Here, we give individuals and organizations a safe space to practice dialogue, reflection and reflexivity as they consider their personal and cultural stories and how they are intricately connected to historical and current colonization. This workshop launches participants into a Settler Dialogue series by helping people disrupt common assumptions and perspectives in their relationship to self, community, society and place.

Settler Dialogue Series is a year-long reflective dialogue series, similar to a book club. After participating in the Unsettling our Stories workshop, small groups of up to 8 people are given a detailed guidebook and coaching support to hold regular dialogue sessions. Groups self-organize to meet every 4 to 6 weeks to reflect on pre-selected articles or podcasts. Six months into the process we offer a workshop on any topic a group wishes to explore. At the end of the process we bring multiple groups together for a final gathering.

COACHING is offered one-on-one, or to small groups who wish to commit to creating space for deeper personalized exploration to disrupt their settler story.

CUSTOMIZED PROCESSES are co-designed with our coach/facilitators for groups who wish to use Story Shifters to unpack specific real-life situations.

CONTACT US Be part of a movement for transformative social justice. Find out more:
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