



*s-yéw'yáw*  
AWAKEN

FILM GUIDE



S-YÉWYÁW  
AWAKEN

Dedicated to our Elders.

Without your survival, determination and  
dedication to heal, and make changes for a  
better world, we would not be here.

We carry the intergenerational pain while also  
uplifting the intergenerational hope and healing.

Thank you.



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## STORIES OF HOPE AND HOMECOMING INTERSECT AS INDIGENOUS MULTIMEDIA CHANGEMAKERS LEARN AND DOCUMENT THE TEACHINGS OF THEIR ELDERS.

Ecko Aleck of the Nlaka'pamux Nation (Lytton, BC,) Alfonso Salinas of the shíshálh Nation (Sunshine Coast, BC,) and Charlene SanJenko of Spltasin of the Secwépemc Nation (Shuswap, BC,) are learning and documenting the traditional cultural teachings and legacies of their Elders, including the impacts of genocide resulting from Canada's Indian Residential School (IRS) system. Calling the audience's attention to the filmmaking process of narrative collaboration between an Indigenous and settler team, this character-driven documentary connects the transformative stories of three Indigenous multimedia changemakers and their four Elders. Infused by Indigenous ceremony, *s-yéwyáw: Awaken* walks alongside the process of intergenerational healing.







As parents and as Indigenous multimedia creators, we are deeply committed to healing, finding our voice and speaking our truth. We are sharing the stories of our Indigenous Elders with the world to amplify their knowledge and wisdom in collaboration with non-Indigenous allies. The teachings of our Indigenous Elders are needed now more than ever to navigate a changing world.

— Ecko Aleck, Alfonso Salinas, Charlene SanJenko

I humbly walk with this film as a settler director at the request of Indigenous friends, filmmakers and the communities who invited me to bear witness to their truths and healing journeys. Guided by Indigenous teachings to bring our whole selves to the work, this film has initiated a profound process of decolonization. I hope it will serve as a model for other Indigenous and non-Indigenous teams working together, toward personal and systemic change.

— Liz Marshall

Relationships are central to our project.  
We acknowledge the importance of  
Indigenous peoples sharing Indigenous  
stories, and that their stories remain  
sovereign with the original keepers of  
those stories.





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## INDIGENOUS PROTOCOLS

Filmed respectfully on the unceded homelands of the shíshálh and s̓k̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Peoples; x̓m̓əθk̓w̓əy̓əm and səlilwətał Territories; Splatstin te Secwepemcul'ecw; Qualicum First Nation; Nlaka'pamux Territory.

The process of this film began with upcoming Indigenous filmmakers requesting the support from a settler director friend to journey with us. We shared the importance of HOW we step into relationship and guided the tobacco, handshake and gifting protocols as we initiated the journey with our Elders. There were many moments for feedback, correction and reflection where teachings were shared and integrated in the process to the best of our abilities with the timeline given.



# SACRED SPACE CREATION

Creating internal and external sacred spaces for ourselves so we can step into learning and unlearning, while bearing witness to storytelling. This is offered by Ecko Aleck - Sacred Matriarch Creative and is part of their work in the world.



# SACRED BODIES

## INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE

**PHYSICAL** - we begin with our physical surroundings and physical body. Starting with our external environment, take a moment to identify your surroundings and how you are in relationship to those surroundings - Do you feel safe? Do you feel cared for? Are you able to adapt and adjust as needed to create yourself a brave space? Then we move to our physical body - surround yourself with some creature comforts like a blanket, comfy clothes, candle, tea, and favorite snacks. These help to address our basic human needs and nourish our senses to calm our nervous system.

**MENTAL** - When we prepare ourselves to witness, sit with and observe storytelling, there is some mental preparation that creates an openness to receive these stories, while not embodying them - yet uplifting the carriers and keepers of those stories. A mind tool to help you open to receive: Imagine that you are sitting observing a river, this river is full of life and a pace of its own - this may be different from your own natural pace and that's okay whether it moves slower or faster than you. In this river, there is an abundance of fish, each fish carries a story - you may observe the fish / story as it passes through, watch its scales catch the light, witness its impact and the ways it may be fighting upstream or calm in a pocket of water. Every so often, there will be a fish that jumps out of the water at you. Its story resonates with the message you need during this time in your own life. You make an offering and give thanks for the fish, you know that you will take it home, digest its message and it will be used to nourish your family. These stories hold the same kind of energy. That which resonates with you is meant for you during this time in your life, you may allow the flow of stories to pass by and observe them without taking every single one home with you.

Some other tools that support the receiving of stories is to write down in a reflective journal or to have a conversation with your people who journeyed with you in the receiving of those stories.

# SACRED BODIES

**EMOTIONAL** - Through emotional connection, we find our humanness in relation to each other, our lived experiences and the interconnectedness of all living beings. Our emotions relate to our heart space, where we determine who and how we let in. To bear witness to truth-telling through story, there will be moments that pull on your heartstrings and moments that hurt and moments of hope. All are elements of truth through our relationship to the stories we receive. Some tools to work with: find a rock or two to help ground you in the process. Speak to those rocks and ask for their guidance and support to help you hold the stories in a good way, and release afterwards so that you are not embodying the hurt and trauma that may be experienced. While it is important to witness truths, it is also important to not take on that which does not belong to us when the storytelling is over, but to carry its messaging and inspired action forward with us.

**SPIRITUAL** - When we allow the processing of our human selves through our Physical, Mental and Emotional Sacred Bodies, we allow space for our spirit to speak. We are of the Earth, Moon and Stars, we are of the Lands and Waters. Prior to witnessing truths through storytelling - allow yourself a moment to ground to the Land and Water, call your spirit back to you to be present in the moment, to hear, see and hold those who are sharing their truths and uplift their work to do so. As you walk away from the brave space of sharing stories, allow yourself time to process and hear any messages your spirit may have for you. Take your reflections and observations back to the land, work with the natural elements to give thanks for the truth sharers and release the experience back to our original story holders - the Lands and Waters.



Before we can have  
reconciliation,  
we must have truth.

And the truth our Elders carry,  
the stories they hold, in turn  
create pathways of healing,  
reconciling and an invitation to  
lean into the messages the  
Earth has to share for our  
collective, global healing.

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INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

# RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS



This film documents the lived experiences of 4 Indigenous Elders who share their individual truths, traumas and impacts of colonization such as residential schools, 60's scoop, and coping mechanisms. While the imagery is not graphic, the stories are the unfiltered truth of our Elders. We recognize the triggers this may cause for direct or intergenerational survivors. We honour your healing journey and hold you up in this process.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVOR SUPPORT LINE  
1-866-925-4419 (24 HOURS A DAY)



# HISTORY OF COLONIZATION

Residential Schools were among a series of intentional genocide designed by the Canadian government on Indigenous Peoples. To understand the full depths of resilience of Indigenous peoples, survivors and intergenerational survivors, it's important to step back and look at the whole picture.

- Pre Contact
- Contact 1492
- First Claim 1497
- The Royal Proclamation of 1763
- The British North America Act 1867
- The Indian Act 1876
- Potlatch Ban 1884 - 1951
- Residential Schools 1844 - 1996
- Indian Hospitals
- Sixties Scoop
- The White Paper 1969
- The Constitution Act 1982
- Child Welfare System (Ongoing)

These history markers hold an invitation to research further for settlers who are ready and willing to do the work, the work that is required to hold difficult truths, before stepping into the quest for reconciliation.

# IMPACTS OF COLONIZATION

The children that were legally torn from their homes and families, stripped of their languages and cultures, abused for their identities, grew up to be parents and teachers. They were forced to find any coping mechanism that would carry them through their days. As intergenerational survivors, the next wave of resilience is demonstrated through our navigation of those coping mechanisms and our understanding of how trauma is passed on. We continue to face these ongoing impacts of colonization and attempted genocide in our communities:

- Physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse
- Child welfare system
- Birth alerts
- Missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, 2spirit +
- Substance abuse (Alcohol, drugs and overdoses)
- Suicidal ideation
- Illnesses
- Lateral Violence
- Poverty
- Poisonous tap water
- Illegal extraction of our lands and resources

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We encourage folks who are unfamiliar, to research and further learn about these realities Indigenous peoples continue to face every day.



# LOCATING TOOLKIT

## GROUP EXERCISE



This teaching model is developed and offered by Ecko Aleck - Sacred Matriarch Creative. This is only a small glimpse to share a teaching about how we locate ourselves (environment design).

This is the workshop that opened the film. To inquire about receiving the workshop experience, visit [www.sacredmatriarch.com](http://www.sacredmatriarch.com)



# LOCATING TOOLKIT

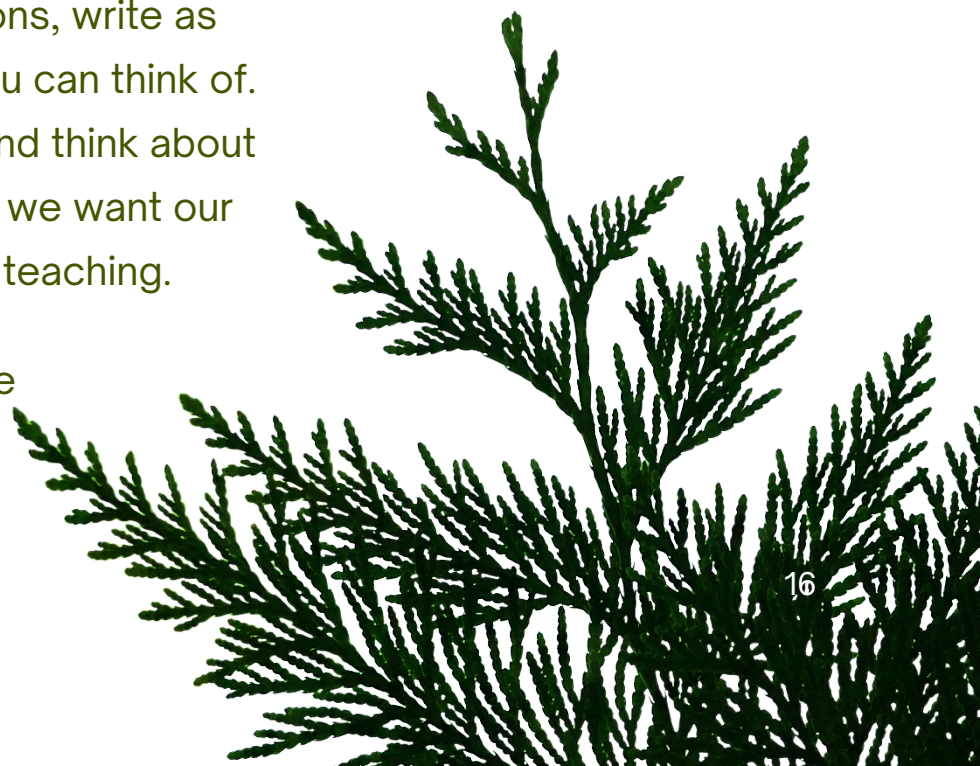
The methodologies we will partially work with are the concepts of weaving an environment that shapes our identity (our basket).

We begin with laying down cedar boughs in a circle, these boughs signify the shaping of a sacred space to build up our children and peoples. Each bough represents an element of well-being within our communities:

- 1.Spiritual & Cultural Well-being - WHO AM I?
- 2.Social Well-being - WHO/WHAT AM I SURROUNDED BY?
- 3.Economic Well-being - WHAT IS MY ROLE?
- 4.Political Well-being - WHAT DO I STAND FOR?

Ask yourself these questions, write as many answers down as you can think of. Reflect on your answers and think about the types of environments we want our children to know from this teaching.

Final question: Who are the original caretakers of the lands you walk on?





# WEAVING IDENTITY

Our understanding of each of these bodies of well-being helps to foster an environment of belonging while locating ourselves on the lands and among the people.

Once we establish our relationship with each of these cedar boughs, we can begin to weave a basket of identity.

As our connection and understanding is woven, we pull together the fabrics of our identity, realizing our place and purpose among all living creation.





# INDIGENOUS FILMMAKER REFLECTIONS

## What were the top 3 lessons you received from your Elders?

**Alfonso:** Keeping the culture alive, go deep into your spirituality, it's endless - take care of your spirit. Be proud, and don't get too big for your pants! A passion of canoeing and connection to the water, land and ancestors, enjoy and have fun!

**Charlene:** We can heal ourselves and our families in 3 generations if we keep it a priority. We are at the end of a very dark chapter - this is behind us, what lies ahead of us is up to us. Warrior up - the history of our warriors and ways they stand up.

**Ecko:** Honouring relentless healing and truth-telling. Becoming sober and you are never too old to get a tattoo! ;). To be generous with certain teachings and the importance of reciprocal relationships.

## How can we most inspire others to find their tool basket?

**Alfonso:** This film! Everyone has a story, everyone has skills, with opportunity and responsibility we feel called to step up with purpose. Through experiential/hands on learning and opportunities, things will happen the way they are supposed to.

**Charlene:** Looking for opportunities to try different things is important, you do have to find your vehicle. A lot of people carry pain - find what helps us to move forward. Notice the nature around you and when you most light up, notice what people thank you for - these things help to identify your gifts.

**Ecko:** Noticing the rhythms, patterns, and connection with nature. Lean into trusting ourselves more; so much healing happens from the things that light you up! Try it all and watch for the sparks! You can be multi-passionate, multi-talented, with multiple avenues that support your journey!

# SETTLER DIRECTOR / FILMMAKER REFLECTIONS

Liz:

## What were the top 3 lessons you received from your Elders?

- Humility - as the bedrock of what is missing in the colonized ways I've been conditioned, as a person/woman and how I've learned to survive in this world. We (settlers) don't understand the power of humility - it has been step #1 in my decolonizing journey
- Making space for silence is a powerful message, we don't always need to talk and respond through words. Always talking/responding is an unhealthy conditioning we carry as settler folk
- In making space, it changes my relationship to time. I'm really grateful for that, it opens up the moment for a more spiritual connection

## What top 3 lessons did you experience from the filmmaking process?

- To step back on set/on location/while filming, to not have to be the one who is conducting or controlling everything. To embrace the collective energy in creation.
- To bring gentle, kind, calmness into future projects
- Creating space for these stories to be told, requires nurturing timelines with adequate funding and resources. This requires a shift, a change within the documentary industry to take seriously some of the unreasonable demand expected from independent producers

## How can we most inspire others to find their tool basket?

- Using film as a tool with communities and diverse audiences helps to open up these important dialogues and questions
- To learn about local Indigenous groups and networks that are open to non-Indigenous people in solidarity who want to un-learn/learn and walk alongside
- In the commitment to systemic change, we must also look within to work on ourselves, (not in a 'self care' corporate industry way) but rather in a deep, reflective process, examining ourselves and how we are contributing to the problem

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## Questions to explore with your group:

- In the film, the 4 Elders share deeply personal experiences of their lives. Explore with your group - How might you as multi-cultural peoples hold space and lean into truth-telling? What does it look like to listen with an open heart? What does it mean to hold someone else's lived experience?
- In the film, we witness the intergenerational healing journey of 3 creators in connection with their Elders. What message did you observe from those healing journeys that you would like to carry forward? How might you carry it forward into your own journey?
- Towards the end of the film, there are woven messages that speak to Indigenous Elders' connection to the Earth. What action will you carry forward from those messages?



# ACTION

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE/INITIATIVES  
YOU CAN LEARN ABOUT FURTHER:

- **Siyaya Reconciliation Movement**
  - <https://siyayareconciliation.ca/>
- **Orange Shirt Day**
  - <https://orangeshirtday.org/>
- **Indigenous Climate Action**
  - <https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/>
- **Land Acknowledgements < Land Back**
  - A land acknowledgement without aligned action is an empty series of words continuing harm - how are you showing solidarity and supporting the healing from colonial harm?

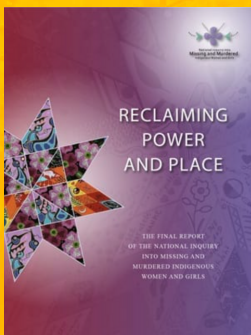
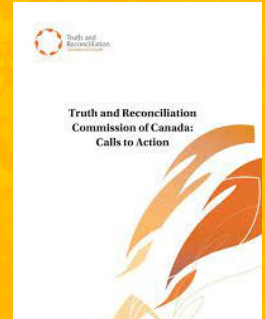




# RESOURCES

## TRC 94 Calls to Action

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls\\_to\\_action\\_english2.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf)

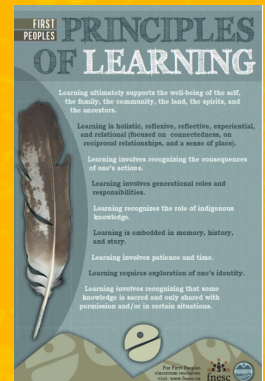


## Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls

<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

## First Peoples Learning Principles & Classroom Resources

<https://www.fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples/>



## First Nations Health Authority Resources for Indigenous Peoples

<https://www.fnha.ca/wellness>

## Sacred Matriarch Creative Learning Circles

<https://sacredmatriarch.com/>



## reGEN Impact Media Podcast

<https://open.spotify.com/show/6cVJflcCbREpZq19x01BYk?si=RNfG4x9xR5iA0VpUCzmkJA>





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 [s-yewyaw: Awaken Film](https://www.facebook.com/s-yewyaw-Awaken-Film)

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ULNUMPSH CHALAP

KUKWSTSÉTSEMC

K<sup>w</sup>UK<sup>w</sup>SCÉMX<sup>w</sup>

Written and designed by Sacred Matriarch Creative.  
To learn more visit: <https://sacredmatriarch.com/>

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