



ARE YOUR
RELATIONSHIPS
RECIPROCAL WHEN
YOU WORK WITH
UNDERSERVED
COMMUNITIES?



HOW DOES YOUR
SCRIPT
COLLECTION
REFLECT A
DIVERSITY OF
STORIES + VOICES?



WHAT **PRACTICES
OF UNWELCOME**
CAN YOU
EMPOWER YOUR
STUDENTS TO
ELIMINATE?



READY TO UNPACK
YOUR INVISIBLE
KNAPSACK
**(POWER +
PRIVILEGE)** WITH
YOUR STUDENTS?

TOWARD ANTIRACIST THEATRE EDUCATION

The above questions are part of the much needed analysis ongoing at the ABCDE. Offering meaningful learning opportunities while maintaining safe learning spaces is a top priority in all of our schools. This applies not only to our continued pandemic pivots, but also to **our individual and collective antiracist actions.**

A metaphor defined by Beverly Daniel Tatum in her book “Why Are All of the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria” invokes a moving walkway, like at the airport, as a parallel to racism: Active racist behaviour (supported by inequitable policies) is equivalent to walking fast on the moving sidewalk. But, passive prejudice or silence in the face of active discrimination is equivalent to standing still on the same walkway. The conveyor belt will move the bystanders along to the same destination. Unless you are walking with purpose in the opposite direction - actively antiracist - you will most certainly find yourself carried along with the others.

The ABCDE is committed to continued learning, unlearning, leadership and support - for the diversity of students we teach and for the current and future innovators we are proud to call our colleagues.

~~BACK TO NORMAL~~

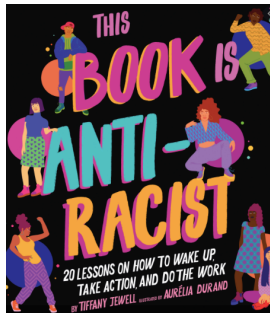
Forward to Better.

A **SOCIALLY JUST** learning environment is:

- where everyone is included, respected, supported, and safe.
- where positive connections are made through communication, collaboration, and cooperation.
- a space where...

everyone is heard, everyone is seen, and everyone is valued.

Build your foundation: Check out **This Book is Anti Racist** by Tiffany Jewell with illustrations by Aurélia Durand.



Lesson plans inspired by this book can be found on the [ABCDE Google Drive](#) under Antiracism Resources.

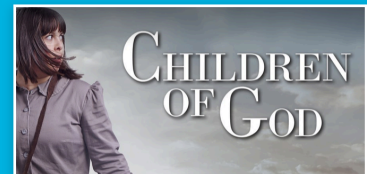
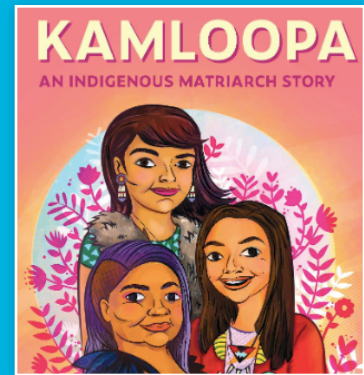
ISBN-13: 978-0711245211

Publisher: Frances Lincoln Children's Books (January 7, 2020)

Order your books from Massy Books!
100% Indigenous-owned

www.massybooks.com

How about studying...



Salt Baby by Falen Johnson

Kamloopa by Kim Senklip Harvey

Children of God by Corey Payette

This excerpt from **Kim Senklip Harvey**'s keynote at our last in person ABCDE Pro D conference (*October 2019*) is worth revisiting. Kim is an alumni of Brookwood Secondary.

“As drama teachers, as creatives, you have one of the greatest opportunities to not just change a young person's life...you actually change society.

In your classrooms is where you need to be flexing your power and utilizing your privileges as drama teachers.

How many of you have Indigenous students?

How many of you have taught an Indigenous play in your school?

What stopped you from teaching or producing Indigenous theatre in your schools?

I believe one of the prevailing reasons why non-Indigenous and even some Indigenous people, don't engage in the new relationship we need is: Fear.

We are scared. I believe fear is at the root of everything that stops us...we freeze...

And I need you to unfreeze yourselves.

The discomfort you feel cannot be more important than the safety and well being of your students, and the lives of Indigenous peoples. And you need to spend some time with that because it is our Truth.

The convenience of non-Indigenous people, Settlers, has been prioritized over the well being of Indigenous peoples and that is not okay.

We need to build a new culture that is founded on vulnerability, courage and respect and you have some of the greatest opportunities to lead and open these portals for the new relationality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It starts with your influence, and the stories you presence in your classrooms.

(continued from previous page) If you don't bring Indigenous stories, art, and plays into your classrooms you are then complicit in holding up Canada's agenda of 'eradicating the Indian'. You become complicit in maintaining the Canadian narrative that Indigenous peoples are only found in textbooks.

I fight on a daily basis to be seen, heard and respected. Indigenous peoples are positioned to fight for our dignity all too often because Canadians are too scared or frozen in shame to stand with us, especially when *we are not there (with you, in the room)*. And that my slaxts, is when you need to really be doubling down on Indigenous content - when we're not there.

And I know that's one of the scariest times, because you don't have a Indian ally in the room to give you the nod...

You should also not rely on the one or two or any Indigenous student to make you feel comfortable in teaching Indigenous content. My English 8 teacher did that to me waaaaay too often, "Right Kim, this is what the Haida did?" I don't know! I'm a fucking Interior Salish; we were too busy surviving the harsh winters and summers and did not have time for button blankets and totem poles so stop asking me!

You have to go and do the work...because you've been hiding behind your comfort and it's been at the expense of Indigenous peoples.

Artists and storytellers are some of the most respected and cherished community members in Indigenous country, and YOU are artists and storytellers, and thus have a huge responsibility to break through your fear and bring Indigenous content into your curriculum.

We as creators and artists have the responsibility to create worlds not yet realized, we have the responsibility to illuminate the stories that have been oppressed and marginalized and you are the provocateurs of the cultural evolution that this country so desperately needs. I know that Drama teachers, all of you, have the ability to let a Trickster live in a part of you. I know that (in the) drama room or theatre, something inside of you ignites.

I am in theatre because I believe it to be the most powerful modality... to understand one another's humanity. We have to embrace and leverage that.

Do not let this opportunity go...our society urgently needs you right now.

Your Indigenous students are waiting in the circle for you and your non-Indigenous students need to hear these stories, learn how to be in circle, and grow up to become socially conscious members of society who understand and empathize with Indigenous peoples' humanity because their high school drama teacher passionately prioritized and presented Indigenous art, stories and people." **Find more and follow at kimsenkliharvey.com.**



**"NOT EVERYTHING THAT IS FACED CAN BE CHANGED,
BUT NOTHING CAN BE CHANGED
UNTIL IT IS FACED."**

-JAMES BALDWIN

Take Action in Your Classroom!

BEST PRACTICES INCLUDE:

- Establishing and teaching INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION.
- Check your TEACHING SPACE for subtle practices of unwelcome: who is represented on the walls, on the bookshelves?
 - CREDITING your sources and inspirations.
- AMPLIFYING Indigenous, racialized or intersectional creators.
- Building CONTEXT with social media content, articles, videos and podcasts (for example, play the “Are You Full Native?” episode of CBC’s Inappropriate Questions podcast before analyzing scenes from “Salt Baby” - <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/cbc-podcasts/414/episode/15784842>)
 - Using a TEAMS channel for current antiracist resources.

LIFE LONG LEARNING

FREE bystander resources and online training from [Hollaback!](#) to ready yourself (and your students) to respond effectively in the face of hate or harassment.

Student engagement [handbook](#) for the Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

How to start conversations about Anti Asian racism with your students or family with [NPR’s Code Switch](#).

“Let me make of my words a fire/a purpose/a front line/a service/a choir/an engine/the matches/and the urn.”

- Jillian Christmas, *The Gospel of Breaking*



Spotlight on...

SHARMILA MILLER,

Performing Arts educator

ABCDE Member since 2018

Sharmila grew up in the small Kootenay town of Rossland, BC.

After graduating high school she went to UVic to complete a BFA in Theatre.

She then found herself back in Rossland where she worked for their summer musical theatre company and was introduced to the role of teacher when she taught Theatre and Film workshop-courses at the local independent school.

From there she moved to Vancouver to work in the film industry where, after a few years and a frank conversation with herself about her life priorities, she discovered that a change of career into education was exactly what she was supposed to do. So she went back to school and upon graduation from UBC, received a position at Garibaldi Secondary teaching Theatre.

Sharmila's **ADDRESS TO STUDENTS** is a call to action in the form of a letter to her students and can be found on the **[ABCDE Google Drive](#)** (Antiracism Resources).

Here is a short excerpt:

Knowledge is power. I hope you choose to use your power to help yourself, and others, navigate the world around you safely[...] With help from each other we will all be able to learn about other peoples' experiences in the world and how better to help each other out in the moments where we are a bit overwhelmed. The major first step is to be aware of what is happening in the world. With the information in this letter, I hope that you are now able to identify and understand more of what is happening around us.

Ms. Miller

Some key terminology:

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. A complicated and inadequate term as explained [here](#) and [here](#).

Let's use **racialized**, unless we are identifying the heritage of specific people more accurately.

*(Let's also remember that we are talking about supporting members of the **global majority** as leaders and creators in Drama classrooms at every level.)*

Decolonizing: Undoing colonial impacts like erasure, while surfacing our own assumptions and the ways that we learned them.

Indigenizing: centring the ways of Indigenous peoples beyond tokenism and commodification.

Reconciling: repairing relations, redressing harms, balancing benefits for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

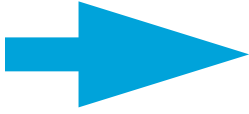
(The above three definitions are provided by Ta7taliya Michelle Nahanee, Squamish Nation, who also identifies 5 stages of grieving one's complicity in Settler-Colonialism. The stages are Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Sadness, Acceptance/Activating change. Read her work [here](#).)

Prejudice: A judgment or opinion that is formed on insufficient grounds; learned and can be unlearned.

Oppression: The combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups (often called “target groups”) and benefits other groups (often called “dominant groups”).

Privilege: Rights, advantages or immunities granted often to members of dominant group identities. Characteristically invisible to people who have it. Here is a good video about [white privilege](#) for you and your students.

Racism: A system of supremacy supported by attitudes, behaviours, social structures, policies, and institutional power.



**Canadian Theatre History:
Focus on Black Theatre in Canada**

The following is an excellent submission from **Christa Duttchen** at Britannia Secondary, and her full lesson including assessment rubric can be found in the [ABCDE Google Drive](#) (under Antiracism Resources).

From the Drama 9 Curriculum:

“Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through dramatic experiences”

Looking at the Core Competencies, I want my students to develop a Positive Personal & Cultural Identity echoing the articulated belief, “People who have a positive personal and cultural identity value their personal and cultural narrative and understand how these shape their identity. They exhibit a sense of self-worth, self-awareness, and positive identity to become confident individuals who take satisfaction in who they are and what they can do. They contribute to their own well-being and to the well-being of their family, community, and society.”

LEARNING:

I can identify and celebrate the contributions and innovations of one Black Theatre Artist or Black Theatre Company.

I can represent their work and give credit to the sources of my research.

I can contribute to the classes knowledge by creating a 1-2 slide presentation of the artist or company I am celebrating.

I can read and learn from the work of my peers.

Task:

Choose a Black Canadian Theatre Artist or Theatre Company from the sources on Teams.

TASK:

Research the artist or company to find the following:

- a) a picture of the artist, a brief biography,
- b) identify their work (date started, education, places their work or they have performed, where they are located in Canada/ World),
- c) identify how this work is important or innovative in the world,
- d) and finally list your sources. Grade 9-12: list of websites as one of your slides is fine for this task.
- e) Create a 2-3 slide presentation of your artist.
- f) Read the presentation of your classmates.

Land Acknowledgement Basics:

1. My name is _____ and my pronouns are _____.*

**she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs*

2. I am joining you online today from the ancestral, traditional and unceded territory of _____** or, I am speaking to you today from Treaty _____ Territory.

Example: the Kwikwetlem First Nation within the shared abundance of the Tseil-Waututh, Katzie, Musqueam, Squamish and Sto:Lo Nations. Search your address here: <https://native-land.ca>. **Check with your local band office or friendship centre.

3. I come from _____*** where I grew up in _____****.

****city, region or territory, and then name the traditional territories or treaty lands where you are from if that applies.*

*****Examples: a settler family, a First Nations family, with immigrant parents, the foster care system...stretch to offer something of yourself here.*

Remember: Acknowledgement is only a basic step on the road toward reconciliation. We invite you to position your identity as part of an ongoing and complex historical narrative. And PLEASE practice your pronunciation!

“An informed acknowledgement is authentic, accurate, respectful, and spoken with heartfelt sincerity. It is not a platitude. The exercise of doing the research to find out on whose land a meeting or event is taking place is an opportunity to open hearts and minds to the past and make a commitment to contributing to a better future which is the essence of reconciliation.”

- Bob Joseph

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. www.ictinc.ca

Spotlight on...

Peter Abando, teaching artist

ABCDE Member since 2003

When he's not teaching K-7 music in West Van, you can find Peter composing, improvising, directing, or performing music somewhere around Metro Vancouver. Select music direction credits includes Spring Awakening (Phantom Moon Collective, 2017), Dogfight (Semper Fi Collective, 2016), the Jessie nominated production of Edges (Two Monkeys Production, 2015), the Ovation nominated Connected: The Musical (Whirlwind Theatre, 2013), and a super fun workshop of [title of show]. Recent productions include a special charity concert of Dear Evan Hansen with Laughing Matters Theatre, 9 to 5: The Musical at Capilano University, and the Ovation nominated 2019 Vancouver Fringe hit, Amélie, with West Moon Theatre. You can find him regularly conspiring with Jennifer Pielak, Chris Lam, and Coco Roberge.



Since 2016, I've been lucky enough to attend the annual Broadway Teachers Workshop in New York during the month of July. I'm always applying and incorporating what I learn into my practice, both as a music and drama teacher, and in my work in the local music and theatre industries.

I've had opportunities to conduct and play with Broadway musicians and music directors, discuss song interpretation and vocal coaching with experienced professionals, and challenged myself in choreography, directing, and writing workshops - plus I get to see a pile of B'way shows, and network with folx from all over the world over drinks at Sardi's.

Due to the pandemic, 2020's BTW took place over Zoom, yet still managed to be increasingly relevant, brilliantly inspiring, and practical for adapting to online and hybrid forms of instruction. It was also a direct reminder of the need for more diversity, inclusiveness, and a challenge to the status quo (both visible and invisible) in theatre and theatre education.

I'd like to share a relevant moment.

One of the people we had the opportunity to speak with was the incredible Billy Porter. His story was moving and inspiring, and the whole thing is available online. I was lucky enough to have my question answered during his session:

“You’re both a performing artist and vocal activist - what should we be doing as performing arts educators to tackle systemic prejudice and racism in our communities and institutions?”

NOTE: Gordon, the session host, says vocal artist, not activist when reading my question - I don’t hold it against him, it had been a very long day for all of us online!

— <https://www.broadwayteachinggroup.com/billy-porter> [the question starts @ 33:50] —

Here’s my transcription of Billy’s answer - fair warning, it’s not a quick one:

“The first thing, that I think needs to happen, is that all teachers, must embrace and begin to understand all cultures.

Everybody isn’t the same. You know, one of the things that was not so great for us at Carnegie Mellon, for us Black kids and for us gay kids, is that - there was no template as to, how to move beyond the status quo, the status quo being, white, generally European, with no room for cultural interpretation.

I remember doing a Shakespeare play, once I had graduated. I was doing, uh, Merchant of Venice, and I was playing one of them Salanio, Salerio people, I don’t remember which one. But you know... there was a 400-year old joke that wasn’t landing, and I fought with the director, because I wasn’t, it wasn’t scanning. I wasn’t doing the scansion properly.

And I related myself to the material, so I could land the fucking joke. Who cares about the scansion at this point? What am I saying? This joke is 300 years old! It’s not landing, and I’m the one with egg on my face, you don’t have egg on your face! I’m the one with the egg on my face. So yeah, I went to my blackness, and I pulled out something that got you your fucking laugh, and you’re attacking me!

It’s like, embrace where people come from, embrace the totality of what everybody brings into the room, you might learn something - you might hear something different when it comes out of my mouth, than you will when it comes out of somebody else’s mouth. And it’s not all the same, it’s not standard. You know, there’s a, there, there was, when I was going to school there was standard. You know, they beat it out of me, they beat my accent out of me, they beat my dialect out of me, so much so to the point where I didn’t have anything left!

I’m not saying that you don’t teach standard American speech, yes. But you don’t teach it as a replacement for who you are, you teach it as an expansion to what you already have. Use who the people are, and expand from that, as opposed to trying to change people, or replace something. Does that make sense?”

It made sense to me.

- Peter Abando

~~BACK TO NORMAL~~
Forward to Better