

URBAN SOCIETY FOR
ABORIGINAL YOUTH



Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth

Needs Assessment

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Introduction

Mount Royal University students in the Information Design program have been presented with the opportunity to create a complete lesson package for the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY) that complements the topics and artwork presented in the “Remembering Our Children” trail of the IndigiTRAILS app. This teaching and learning package is intended for students or allies who wish to learn more after engaging with the app.

Organizational Description

About USAY

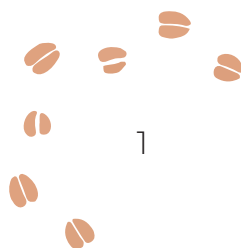
Borne of Redmond Little Chief’s 1999 “Wake Up Call” for awareness of suicide in Indigenous youth, the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY) was established in 2001, with support from Family and Community Support Services, United Way, the Métis Nation of Alberta and Alberta Community Development, as a not-for-profit organization aimed at supporting Indigenous youth in the City of Calgary. More than twenty years later, through programming, board, and volunteer opportunities, USAY continues to support Indigenous youth to “live healthy and successful lives in the City of Calgary.”

Mission

The Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY) will enrich the lives of all urban Indigenous youth by nurturing self-empowerment and fostering healthy collaboration and communication to ensure healthy future generations (<https://usay.ca/mission-and-values/>).

Vision

The Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY) will be recognized as a fundamental organization in society, empowering urban Indigenous youth to envision and attain a healthy sustainable future while upholding traditional Indigenous values (<https://usay.ca/mission-and-values/>).



Values

Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY) upholds the following core values that assist in providing direction to decision-making and relationships within the organization at all levels: governance, operations and membership, including external working relationships with various partners, funding agencies, and the community at-large.

- Traditional Indigenous values and culture
- Diversity
- Involvement and commitment of youth leadership in USAY governance
- Involvement of Indigenous youth at all levels and throughout development of the organization
- Capable, well-trained and reliable staff
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Respect; Adaptability to change that includes resiliency and versatility
- Accountability
- “Fun” as a teaching value - learning by having fun

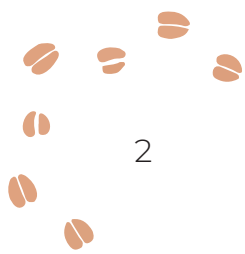
(<https://usay.ca/mission-and-values/>)

Activities

USAY co-creates programming with Indigenous youth, partners, and Elders, which aims to meet the direct needs of the Indigenous youth they serve, and how they see success, to create change in the community. (<https://usay.ca/programs/>)

Programs and activities currently offered include:

- AR murals and posters which can be accessed by downloading the USAY AR app. These provide content that communicates the stories of Indigenous people and their experiences.
- VR games or escape rooms, which are designed to foster engagement and increase awareness and understanding.
- IndigiTRAILS, which is an app that uses GPS or location services to allow audiences to take part in digital art galleries and other activities within Calgary.
- Acting as a bridge to local resources and programs in the city.



Design Challenge

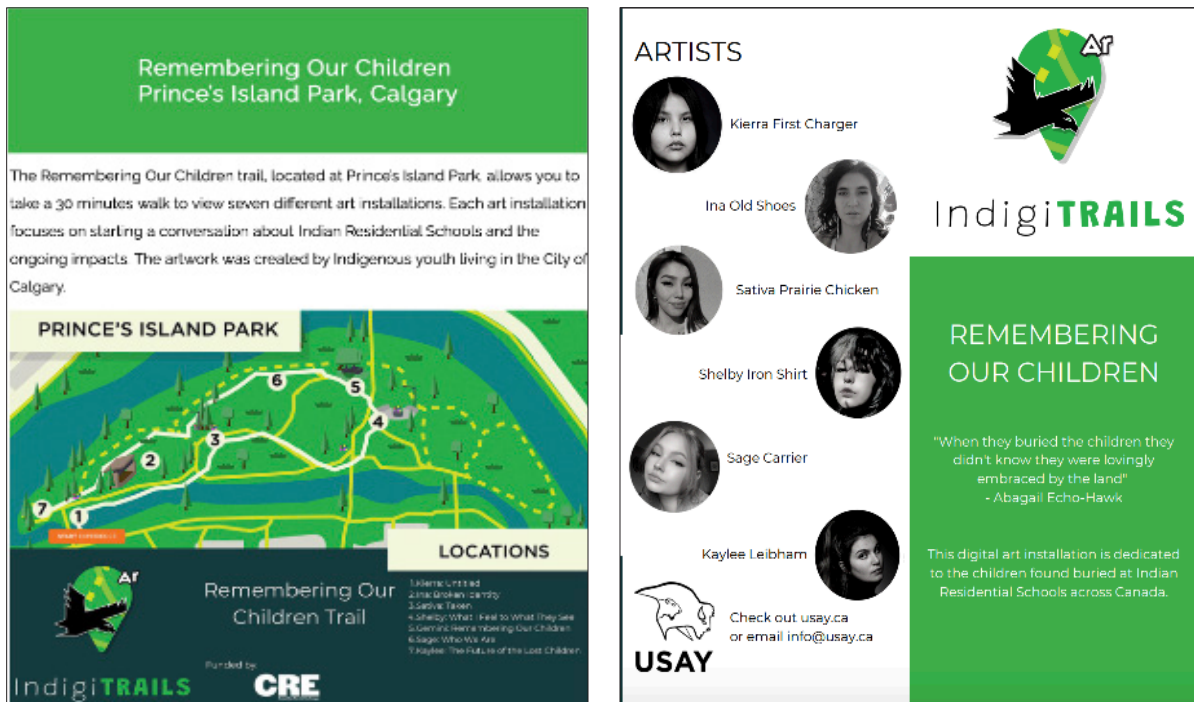
USAY has been approached by clients for additional resources to further the discovery and discussion prompted by engagement with the IndigiTRAILS app. Currently, no such materials are available for distribution to clients. USAY envisions a complete teaching and learning package that supplements the content presented in the IndigiTRAILS app.

The clients who engage USAY with the highest frequency of requests for supplemental learning material are comprised of grades 7-9 teachers and students. The trail on the IndigiTRAILS app that receives the greatest number of inquiries is that of “Remembering our Children,” which addresses the legacy of residential schools.

Given the positive response and affirmation of these requests from clients for material that furthers discussion and understanding of this subject, USAY seeks to provide a learning package for grade 7-9 students that facilitate further engagement in the classroom.

Current Training

Beyond what is currently available on the IndigiTRAILS website, teachers and students do not have access to additional information directly from USAY that is related to the app content. They are aware of the topic of the app, which is provided by the website, but not of the installations nor the specific content presented in the app.



Screenshots of USAY website and PDF of IndigiTRAILS app “Remembering our Children” showing trail map and featured artists.

Performance Gaps

There are two video links on the USAY website that instruct users on how to set up the app (i.e. enable location functionality, sound, etc.) and orient users to features of the app, such as the navigation experience and interactivity with the app. Users can also download a PDF of a visualization of the trail map as well as a page that describes the artists whose work is featured in the trail in question. Further instruction and discussion questions associated with the app experience are not available to users.

Outside of USAY, Alberta Education provides guidance, as part of “Education for Reconciliation,” in the form of online professional learning tools available to support teachers. A number of these resources address understanding and ensuring accuracy, appropriateness, and authenticity in communicating Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing:

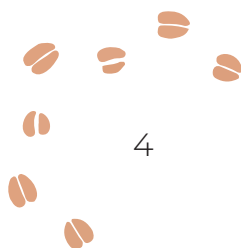
- [Guiding Voices: A Curriculum Development Tool for Inclusion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives](#) (Alberta Education)
- [Walking Together: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum](#) (Alberta Education)
- [Indigenous Education and Walking Together](#) (Alberta Teachers’ Association)

Some resources provide guidance to teachers on the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing in their instruction:

- [Empowering the Spirit](#) and [Education Resources to Support Reconciliation](#) (Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (ARPD))

A search of the LearnAlberta site for resources that specifically address residential schools yielded twenty-four resources, and of these, thirteen are suitable for students in grades 7 to 9. These resources consist of short films, interviews, and documentaries about the trauma and hardships of survivors, and the lasting impacts on culture, language and identity.

These resources for teachers may not relate directly to the content and context provided by the IndigiTRAILS app, which may therefore be challenging for teachers to incorporate in-class as a continuation of the IndigiTRAILS experience.



Project Constraints

USAY indicates that the majority of requests for supplemental materials come from junior high school teachers (grades 7-9), with a particular focus on the “Remembering Our Children” trail. Some project constraints include:

Content

- Content in the supplemental material must be age-appropriate for junior high students.
- Material presented in-class should align with Alberta Education curriculum guidelines.

Format, Distribution, & Availability

- Supplemental materials must be cost-effective, easily accessible for individuals, and available for download.

Goal Statement

Based on the needs of the primary and secondary clients (i.e. USAY and grades 7-9 teachers and students, respectively), we seek to create a learning package that consists of content and activities that complement the “Remembering our Children” trail of the IndigiTRAILS app, and are suitable for use in the classroom by grade 7-9 teachers and students. This package aims to support ongoing discussion and reflection, as part of the IndigiTRAILS app experience, without requiring prior knowledge nor significant instructional preparatory time on the part of teachers.

Desired Outcomes

1. Provide USAY with a learning package that aligns with USAY’s values and supplements the content on the “Remembering our Children” trail of the IndigiTRAILS app.
2. Foster engagement with and compel deeper understanding among grade 7-9 teachers and students of the history and legacy of residential schools.



Target Audience Personas

Junior High School Teacher

Name: Imani Williams

Age: 37

Role: Teacher

Location: Calgary, Alberta, Canada



Values:

- Strives to impart knowledge in a respectful and meaningful way, with the attention it deserves
- Alignment of instruction with Alberta Education curriculum
- Wants to make sure the students take the field trip and materials seriously and deliver a quality education

Needs:

- A concise lesson plan
- Summaries that she can use to provide instruction without having to conduct extra preparatory research
- Materials that the whole class can engage with, requiring minimal facilitation
- Materials that can be easily prepared

Target Audience Personas

Junior High School Student

Name: Mike Anderson

Age: 12

Role: Grade 7 student

Location: Calgary, Alberta, Canada



Values:

- Enjoys learning but is bored easily and finds it difficult to focus
- Finds things easier to learn when he is able to move around and do things

Needs:

- An activity that engages him, so that he does not become distracted
- To feel connected to the material and therefore invested



Target Audience Personas

Junior High School Student

Name: Sadie (Seo-Yoon) Choi

Age: 15

Role: Grade 9 student

Location: Calgary, Alberta, Canada

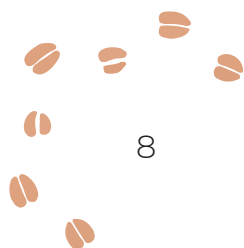


Values:

- Her parents are immigrants from South Korea, so she is interested in learning more about Indigenous peoples and the history of Canada
- She has a strong attachment to her own cultural heritage and is interested in others

Needs:

- Some form of reward or acknowledgement for a job well done
- Materials she can take home with her and information on more resources she can look into



Design Precedents

Facing History: Stolen Lives

Facing History’s “Stolen Lives” program serves to guide participants and facilitators through the historic significance and legacy of destruction from Canada’s ‘Indian Residential Schools’. Activities serve to foster meaningful discussions which encourage students to reflect on these topics in the context of Canada’s history and their position in the world today (<https://www.facinghistory.org/en-ca/resource-library/stolen-lives-indigenous-peoples-canada-indian-residential-schools>).

Suggested activities include: use of poetry to evoke insightful discussions about current events as they relate to the content, mock debates wherein students take a stance on a controversial subject to garner meaningful inquiry and alternative perspectives, and a self-reflection activity which seeks to inspire students to explore their names, their languages, and the ways in which they benefit from these factors. For example, the activity entitled Big Paper explores silence as a tool to explore sensitive topics in depth through a collaborative sharing exercise (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/big-paper-building-silent-conversation>).

Additionally, Facing History offers teaching resources as chapters consisting of (1) a set of introductory “guiding questions”, (2) written materials for students to follow along with during each section of the corresponding lessons, and (3) a set of follow-up questions sought to elicit thoughtful discussion which explore the connection to Indigenous history, truth & reconciliation, student positionality and worldviews.

The National Centre for Collaboration of Indigenous Education (NCCIE)

NCCIE connects teachers with authentic resources to help infuse Indigenous knowledge, history, and ways of knowing in their lessons from an informed position with the consent of those involved. NCCIE offers a ‘Resource Library’ which features a searchable catalogue of all their offerings, sorted by topic, media, and area, along with their “Knowledge Space”, a collaborative interactive digital space for Indigenous voices and knowledge (<https://www.nccie.ca/knowledge-space/>).

NCCIE’s website offers a free “Teaching Resource Centre”, which explores lesson plans, skills, and materials to engage K-12 students in a combination of otherwise mainstream subjects, such as science and language arts, with a strong emphasis on demonstrating Indigenous-based approaches and understanding of social studies, art, history, and governance (<https://www.nccie.ca/teaching-resource-centre>).

Additionally, the “Lesson Plan Search” enables teachers to browse lesson templates and learning materials sorted by subject, grade, age group, province, and using key terms, for example: decolonization, reconciliation, and/or healing. Resources are available as videos, PDF, audio recordings and interactive web-based activities (<https://www.nccie.ca/lesson-plan-search>).

