

Planning Foundational Learning Lessons

Red Dress Day Lesson Plan

Date: May 5

Duration: 60 minutes (adjustable)

Materials: Short reading text, red dress or images, short video (optional)

Background information: <https://calp.ca/blog/what-is-red-dress-day-2026-04-23>

What is Red Dress Day?

Red Dress Day is an awareness day in Canada. It is observed on May 5th. The day honours Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-spirit people (MMIWG2S+). Red dresses are used as a symbol to represent those who are missing or have been killed. The empty dresses remind us that many families and communities continue to seek truth, justice and safety. Red Dress Day encourages people to learn, remember, and take action to support Indigenous Communities.

#1 Check-in with learner (5 minutes)

Goal: Introduce awareness days and create a respectful learning space.

Facilitator Prompts:

- Welcome everyone.
- Ask “What is an awareness day?”
- Ask “Why do people wear certain colours or symbols on special days?”

#2 Check on previous lesson if applicable (10 minutes)

Goal: Connect Red Dress Day to previous sessions (if applicable)

Facilitator Prompts:

- Remind participants what they have learned about Indigenous Peoples in previous lessons.
- Share photos of red dresses on display.

#3 Access learner’s prior knowledge of new topic (5 minutes)

Goal: Activate curiosity and connect new content to what learners already know.

Facilitator Prompts:

- Ask “Have you seen red dresses displayed before?”
- Ask “What do you think they represent?”
- Ask “Why is remembering people important to families and communities?”

#4 Skill development activity (15 minutes)

Goal: Practice vocabulary that connects to the Red Dress Day text.

Key vocabulary:

- Awareness
- Remember
- Justice
- Symbol

Discuss meanings using examples rather than definitions.

Practice (Learner Involvement):

Invite participants to write the new vocabulary down in a notebook.

#5 Explicit teaching with practice activities (20 minutes)

Goal: Encourage empathy and respectful discussion based on a reading passage (below).

Ask participants to read the text and answer the questions in pairs or small groups.

Discussion questions:

- Why is it important to remember people who are missing?
- How can symbols help people learn about social issues?
- How can communities show respect and support?

Practice (Learner Involvement): Ask participants to answer these questions in their notebook.

Comprehension Questions:

- What is Red Dress Day?
- When is it observed?
- Who does it honour?
- What do red dresses symbolize?
- Why is this day important?

Encourage sentence starters such as, “I think this is important because...” and “We can show respect by....”

#6 Review of Lesson (5 minutes)

Goal: Reinforce key messages.

Summarize key ideas:

- Red Dress Day honours MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+.
- Symbols can help remember and raise awareness.
- Learning and respect are ways to support reconciliation.

Facilitator Prompt:

- One thing I learned today _____.

#7 Practice Between Lessons (5 Minutes)

Goal: Encourage continued respectful actions.

- Research Red Dress Day online.
- Participate in Red Dress Day community awareness walks.
- Share one way to show respect and care for others.
- Learn where to find help or support in the community.

To support multiple learning styles, this lesson includes opportunities to:

See Red Dress or image

Hear Discussion and storytelling

Touch Red Dress

Say Discussions, personal sharing, and reflection

Do Participation and awareness actions