

What is Equity?

Readers' Theatre

By Melody Martin-Googoo

Educator Notes:

This readers' theatre is a fun, creative and engaging activity that brings speaking, listening and movement into the classroom. Learners are given an opportunity to build their confidence and develop fluency in reading text. At the same time the readers' theatre encourages dialogue in the classroom on the differences among equity, fairness and equality.

Understanding the differences among equity, fairness and equality is key to Treaty Education. Mi'kmaw learners are faced with stereotypes and misconceptions every day. The Mi'kmaq have lived through a difficult history that includes treaty denial, residential schools, centralization, racism, discrimination, etc. This history has created legacies across all aspects of Mi'kmaw life. See the introduction of the Treaty Denial theme (pages 61-64 of Volume I), if you are seeking more information about the Treaty Denial period.

We all have a role to play in creating equity. Treaty Education involves understanding and working within a situation where many differences exist—historical, cultural and other. Historical legacies may be hindering learners and others. Educators are asked to work with their students in such a way that both the educators and the students help everyone move toward living a life that consider to be successful.





What is Equity?

Character List:

- Narrator 1
- Narrator 2
- Narrator 3
- Principal
- TJ
- Saln
- Hudson
- Tess
- Adara
- Madeline
- Kiki
- Meadow

Learner Instructions:

Be sure to skim through the script and highlight your speaking roles. Note that text written in brackets are only notes to the reader, they are not to be read out loud.

Take note of any vocabulary words that you may need help reading and/or pronouncing, ask a peer to help you and in return help them with any words they might question themselves.

Now, read the script to yourself and be sure to understand the plot.

Next, practice your voice; think of your character and try to visualize how they would be, use that visual to “give life” to your role! Project your voice and enjoy reading your part.

As you read and listen, follow along closely, say any words after your character’s name out loud.

Remember to have fun because theatre is fun!



What is Equity?

– SCENE 1 –

A Middle School Somewhere in Mi'kma'ki

(approximately 15 minutes)

Narrator 1: The learners are gathered around a sitting area in the foyer of their middle school. Recess is coming to a close, the learners are engaged in casual conversation and finishing up their snacks.

Hudson: Knock! Knock!

Tess: (cautiously asks)
Who's there?

Hudson: Orange

Tess: Orange who?

Hudson: Orange you going to answer the door?!

Narrator 2: Tess was not too sure if Hudson's knock, knock joke amused her, but the other learners chuckled at the fun.

TJ: Ha! You make me laugh Hudson. Got another one?

Tess: No! Please, not another knock, knock joke! But I'll take another one of those carrot sticks Hudson.

Narrator 1: Hudson's mom is making an effort to pack healthy snacks in his lunch bag every day. Carrot sticks are fun, but it was the 98th day of school and 98 days of carrot sticks weren't as exciting as the first day of carrot sticks.

Narrator 2: And so, Hudson was MORE than happy to share his snack with everyone.

Hudson: I've got carrot sticks for daysss! Take one Tess, help yourself.



Tess: Wela'lin...thank you

Narrator 1: A gentle musical chime can be heard over the school speakers. The sound is soothing and it signals to the school population that an announcement will soon be shared.

Narrator 2: The students sit up straight, ready to listen attentively and closely watch the monitor installed in the school lobby.

Narrator 3: *(*Whispers softly)*
Did anyone notice the alliteration in Narrator 1's last comment? Wink, wink. Insert smiles from teachers everywhere.

Meadow: Yahoo! I am some happy TJ's mom volunteered to sign language the principal's announcements on the new monitor in the lobby!

Kiki: Meadow, I noticed you had a hard time hearing the announcements before you got your new hearing aid. I'll bet the sign language helps too, eh?

Meadow: Yup, it sure does!

TJ: My mom's cool.

Narrator 3: Kiki and Saln each give TJ a high five. Hudson also attempts to offer TJ a high five, but his hands are filled with carrot sticks. They acknowledge each other with a friendly smile.

Hudson: Knock, knock

Kiki: Who's there?

Hudson: Ya

Kiki: Ya who?

Hudson: YA WHO! I'm excited for Meadow too!

Tess: Shhh! You all be quiet. Attentive listening! We need to listen for the Principal's announcements.

Principal: *(*In a very important Principal's voice)*
Attention ALL First Nations Students! Please report to the library after the lunch bell, there will be a short, but important meeting regarding



the upcoming Monday Mawiomi (M-ow-ee-oh-me). Again, all First Nations students report to the library after the lunch bell.

- TJ: Luckies! Why do the First Nations students get to miss class? They are so lucky. They get to do everything! It seems like our school is always doing something to teach us about being Mi'kmaq. Sheesh.
- Saln: Hey! Our school does do a lot to teach us about the Mi'kmaq. I loved seeing my Kiju come in to visit the school last week. She shared a lot of stories with my class about eeling and how to prepare eels for a traditional feast. That makes me feel proud.
- Adara: And then there was that time Uncle Gerald came in to talk about the Wood Spirits, the Wiklatmuj (woog-latta-moo-j). That was so interesting.
- Kiki: I hope I get to see a wiklatmuj (woog-latta-moo-j) someday.
- Madeline: Yeah, TJ you ran up to Gerald and gave him a big hug and told him you were 1/8 Mi'kmaw.
- TJ: I did do that didn't I?
- Narrator 3: TJ playfully scratches his head as if to suddenly remember his actions that day.
- Hudson: Could I interject? Technically the First Nations students are not missing class TJ, just the first few minutes of lunch.
- Tess: Wait a minute. TJ, why did you say that First Nations people are lucky? Why did you say that they get everything? Do you know why our school plays a good role in teaching everyone about who the Mi'kmaq are?
- Hudson: It's reckon-silly-action.
- Kiki: Nice try cousin, it's called reconciliation.
- Adara: Yup, reconciliation is restoring the friendship with the First Nations people.



- Saln: And restoring that friendship means learning about us, learning the history of my people, our people. Because our history belongs to all of us.
- Kiki: Just like the signing of our treaties isn't just important to the Mi'kmaq, but to the British and the French too.
- Saln: Actually, the treaties signed in Mi'kma'ki are important to anyone living in Mi'kma'ki, I mean, "Nova Scotia."
- Madeline: Reconciliation means we have to acknowledge our histories and move forward together, both Mi'kmaq and Non-Mi'kmaq people, all of us. Like, you and me and Adara and Meadow and everyone and you too, TJ.
- Adara: My mom told me a lot about the hurts in the past; putting Mi'kmaq people on reserves, taking away their hunting and fishing grounds, sending little kids away to residential school...
- Saln: Treaty Denial.
- Meadow: My great grandmother is from Sipekne'katik (Sib-e-nehguh- teeg) and she had to go to residential school when she was a little girl.
- TJ: I remember honouring the residential school survivors by choosing to wear an orange shirt on Orange Shirt Day. But still, shouldn't we learn about all of our different cultures in the school equally? We do live in Canada.
- Tess: TJ, my friend, that would make things seem EQUAL but would it be EQUITABLE?
*(*Tess is very proud of the new vocabulary word that she had recently learned).*
- Narrator 2: Tess was a very outgoing and vocal young lady. She has a powerful influence of strong, educated and dedicated Mi'kmaw women in her home.
- Narrator 1: Luckily for Tess, she had just returned from a visit to her auntie's house over the weekend. Auntie is another powerful Mi'kmaw woman.



Narrator 2: Tess's aunt is a Mi'kmaw water protector. Over the weekend, Tess, her cousins and her aunties attended a peaceful protest at Boat Harbour.

Narrator 3: The protest was hosted by the Chief and community at Pictou Landing First Nation.

Narrator 1: Tess asked lots of questions.

Narrator 2: One of the many questions Tess asked about were the differences between the words equality and equity.

Narrator 3: Because Tess asked so many questions, she had the utmost confidence to speak to her peers about equity.

TJ: Equity? What is equity? Isn't that the same as equal?

Tess: Equal is treating everyone the same, like your idea of equally learning about every culture in the school.

Narrator 1: The students sit back and relax on the school's newly purchased sofa chairs, which were arranged in a restorative inspired circle.

Narrator 2: Interestingly enough, the Principal had hoped the circle arrangement would encourage dialogue and relationship building amongst the students.

Narrator 1: And guess what is happening? Interesting and constructive dialogue between Tess, TJ, Saln, Madeline, Adara, Meadow and Kiki...

Narrator 2: Hudson on the other hand, might've been thinking of his next knock, knock joke.

Narrator 1: I can't forget to mention the carrot sticks. There was also an endless supply of carrot sticks.

TJ: I don't get it. I just don't.

Saln: Tess, can I try to explain it? I think I can connect it to the Mawiomi we are having on Monday.

Tess: Go for it, Saln! I'll help you when I can.



Saln: Okay TJ, let's say we are ALL going to the Mawiomi on Monday and we all want to dance but, we need moccasins. Pretend WE ALL NEED moccasins. But! We have no moccasins. No one has a pair of moccasins.

Hudson: We have a problem. We need moccasins.

Tess: Let's give EVERYONE a pair of moccasins.

TJ: You get a pair! I get a pair! Everyone gets a pair!

Saln: To make it EQUAL, we will give everyone the SAME style and size.

Madeline: Because that's equality.

TJ: But what if I don't fit the size of the moccasin you gave me?

Kiki: Or what if I don't like the style of moccasin you gave me?

Saln: But, I treated everyone EQUALLY and gave everyone the same size and style of moccasin.

TJ: I'll be devastated! I won't be able to try to dance the "two step" jingle dance with Madeline if my moccasins don't fit me!

Saln: I solved the problem. I gave everyone moccasins when they had none.

TJ: We still have a problem.

Tess: What obstacles are stopping people from getting an individual pair of moccasins?

Meadow: Sizes! I'm a size 5 and what if Saln gave out only size 7?

Madeline: Style! I have narrow feet and I need my moccasins to fit correctly or they will fall off when I am dancing.

Adara: My feet are long and I definitely do not fit size 7!

TJ: Ooooooh! I think I get it. Equality didn't solve the problem of us not having any moccasins to dance with. It kinda just created more problems.



Saln: There is no single size moccasins that will fit everyone. We all have different needs. We need different sizes, fits, and styles to make us happy.

Tess: Equality assumes everyone starts at the same place, with the same help and support.

Saln: Have you ever met a person who is exactly like you?

Adara: Have you ever met a person who needs exactly what you need?

Madeline: Have you ever met a person who faces the exact same problems you face?

TJ: No, of course not. So, what do we do now? Wait. I know the answer. Let's give everyone a pair of moccasins that are individual to their own unique needs.

Everyone: Woooo hoooo! You've got it TJ, that would be achieving EQUITY.

Tess: Right, achieving EQUITY means we all reach the same outcome, but we might need to get there in different ways. In this case, we all get to dance, but only if we all have different sized moccasins.

TJ: Equity?

Saln: Equity is giving people what they need to be successful.

TJ: How does this connect to my comment about the First Nations kids being lucky ducks?

Tess: Remember the history I shared with you earlier? How history has created some difficult times for the Mi'kmaq? The Mi'kmaq have a different history than other people here in Nova Scotia.

Kiki: Being Mi'kmaw is awesome.

Saln: There are times when being Mi'kmaw didn't feel so awesome, like when Meadow's grandmother got sent to residential school when she was a kid. Or how my great great grandfather, Chief Joseph Julien, had to fight the government for his home, so that he wasn't forced to leave Millbrook during Centralization.



Hudson: Or the fact that heart disease and diabetes is easier to get as a First Nations person—statistically I am more likely than others to have these health conditions. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't be stuck eating carrots every day. My mom is Type II diabetic, and she is super cautious of what I eat. I know this, because she reminds me every day.

Madeline: My older sister, Corrine, she plays hockey and sometimes she hears racist remarks on the ice. She tries really hard to keep her cool.

Saln: I get frustrated at times too. I want to be an actor and win an Oscar at the Academy Awards someday...but it's really hard to move to Hollywood when no one will give me acting gigs because of my brown skin and long hair. It's always "what they aren't looking for."

TJ: Stereotypes, misconceptions, and discrimination too, eh? Experiences that happened in the past mean that we have to make changes in the present to achieve EQUITY for First Nations people in the future.

Kiki: I know eh!

Saln: One time, I was in a restaurant eating brunch with my family in Halifax and I needed to go number one. So I walked into the men's bathroom and this guy looks at me with my long, braided hair, and says to me; "Hey kid! The girl's bathroom is over there."

Narrator 3: The kids all shake their heads in disbelief because how could our First Nations students still be facing issues of misconceptions and discrimination today, after all of these years?

Adara: I think it's cool that we have the choice to use an "all gender welcome" bathroom at our school.

Kiki: I know, eh!

TJ: Oh geez. I didn't realize all that stuff, Tess. Thanks for sharing all of that with me. I can't wait to go home and talk to my dad about this stuff when I see him next weekend.

Tess: No problem, TJ, what are friends for?

Adara: Thanks for listening TJ, you could've walked away from this conversation but instead you stayed and you listened. A person can't



jump to conclusions right away. My Kiju always tells me about the importance of respect and listening.

Madeline: Yeah, Kiju always says, "Listen to learn and learn to listen."

TJ: "Listen to learn, and learn to listen."

Adara: It's not about throwing away stuff you don't understand, or just forgetting about it. It's about having patience and listening and figuring things out.

TJ: I guess some groups of people face barriers because of who they are, and the way other people have treated them in the past and still treat them today. We all have to work together to create equity.

Saln: That's right, TJ. Some people must take ten steps when others only had to take only two, to get to that finish line.

Tess: Finish line? Okay Saln, you're getting too deep into this conversation now! What are you, the teacher now?
*(*Tess exaggerates and uses her best adult voice)*
Mr. Saln, please report to the office! Ha ha ha!

Saln: You started it!

Hudson: Knock, knock!

ALL: Who's there?

Hudson: Figs

ALL: Figs who?!

Hudson: Figs the understandings of equity and equality because they're broken!

ALL: HUDSON! Ha ha!

TJ: That was clever, Hudson.

Kiki: And that was one looong snack break.



Narrator 1: Strangely enough the learners all experienced a super long snack break, and it seems the Creator works in the most mysterious ways. Wouldn't you agree?

Principal: Attention all students! The bell system seems to be experiencing difficulty. This is your verbal signal to go to your next class. And a correction to that last announcement... ALL STUDENTS INTERESTED in volunteering for the Monday Mawiomi are to report to the library after the bell. Because after all, WE ARE ALL TREATY PEOPLE!

