

## Group Facilitation - IED 373 - *Lost My Talk* - Rita Joe

### Goal - TSWBAT

- Identify poetry as a useful tool for assessing emotions
- Write a basic poem expressing emotions
- Work with group members to create a co-operative poem
- Relate poems to each other - to broader aspects of class

### Group Poem - 10 min

- Split students into groups
- Distribute Paper
- Group writes cooperative poem - Topic: Teachings in class thus far
  - Each person writing a line

### Rita Joe + Explanation & broader relevance - 10min

- Introduce the Poem
- Introduce Rita Joe
  - <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/rita-joe/>
  - <http://www.beatoninstitutemusic.ca/mikmaq/oka-song-the-video.html>
  - <http://www.ammsa.com/book/export/html/30668>
- Life
- Works
  - From - Song of Eskasoni: More poems of Rita Joe
- "I was born in Whycocomagh in 1932. When mother died in 1937 there were many foster homes until I was twelve years old. I put myself into the Indian Residential School in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia. That school plays an important part in my life, along with native upbringing by many mothers."
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- My education is by my people - I have a front seat to see and feel their needs, the major one being that we, too, live with ideal productiveness. The label is deeply rooted and the stroke of a native pen does wonders, especially for the coming generation.
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- The importance of my country is why I try to portray the Indian as they are, so that others may see the part we play in our society. If I get too sentimental in my choice of words, excuse me. I have to call attention to the gentle people of Canada. My song is gentle, bear with me. I still want to offer my hand in friendship, the Indian of today."
- "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" -  
<http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=The+Ecstasy+of+Rita+Joe>
- Connect to residential schools
- Explain how poetry can be used to tackle tough subjects

Poem Discussion - 15-20min

- Give each group a sheet with a similar poem to I lost my talk (residential school based)
- Groups can read and discuss - Similarities/differences to lost my talk
- Each group will share with whole class their findings
- Each student to write their own poem - feelings of not belonging

Guiding Discussion Questions:

1. How does this poem relate back to Rita Joe's poem?
  2. What is the author describing?
  3. What are the feelings you get?
  4. What part stands out the most?
- Speak about differences between the two poems

Poem Writing Activity - 10min

- Each student is given blank sheet of paper
- Each student writes a poem (any form) - Topic: What comes to mind after exploring poetry as an avenue for emotional release
- Poems are placed in the middle of the circle - WITHOUT NAMES
- Poems are pulled from the pile and read anonymously

## **Resources**

### **Lost My Talk**

I lost my talk  
The talk you took away.  
When I was a little girl  
At Shubenacadie school.  
You snatched it away:  
I speak like you  
I think like you  
I create like you  
The scrambled ballad, about my world.  
Two ways I talk  
Both ways I say,  
Your way is more powerful.  
So gently I offer my hand and ask,  
Let me find my talk  
So I can teach you about me.

Rita Joe

### **My First Count**

The eagles cry.

Are the fish with mercury?

And northern lands are filled with coal dust from industries all around home.

So you tell me Mr. H you give this money that will most likely come down the channels too late.

The deals you speak of from the conservative way are pledging dollars to the environment.

Nobody will say anything because they fear for their jobs.

Nobody will care because they all bought plots in the south pacific to exploit the next lot.

They have been here just over 100 years.

They came to save my people from their savage ways.

Who are the savages now?

Cheri Jubinville

(Canada)

## **Identity**

I never felt so empty  
Forced to experience this emotion  
Alone  
Tears race  
Falling hard  
Pain screams  
Louder  
Time stands still  
Emptiness  
I never asked for this  
Why loneliness  
My eyes sore, my sadness nauseating  
Heart ache at every beat  
I pray to the Creator  
Asking for guidance  
Hold my hand  
Please lead me  
Closing my eyes  
I promised "I will be strong"  
I will heal  
Awakened to the power of  
existence  
A voice whispers  
"I am always here for you"  
Realizing my identity was  
fading  
Today I stand strong  
I have control  
This is my identity

Carlene George  
(Canada)

### **The Sun Will Rise**

Rage in my heart  
Rage out on the streets  
Person to Person  
It's passing through everyone  
What a horrible feeling  
We're fighting for our past  
not yet able to be in our future  
Crying and suffering will never be gone  
happiness is not yet here  
hopefully when people understand  
the sun will rise  
and sunlight will be received by everyone  
then our healing will begin  
Our past will be in our past  
though never forgotten  
Our future will be our future  
and with hope and gratitude  
that we will move forward  
and keep on going  
peeking back, learning from peoples mistakes

Crystal A.J. Smith  
(Canada)

**The forgotten one**

Sorrow does not forget  
Wounds open from the cutting edge  
I hear your cry  
We hear your cry  
Arrows are always in flight  
Confusion sets the scene  
Words are always forgotten  
Our actions are all that be  
Your anger is seen  
Your temperature rising  
Warning all that see  
Forgiveness – is it to late for us to see?

Brandon Bob

**Kinchela (The stolen kids)**

The years have gone now  
Not sure what sorry can do  
For  
Us boys

Abused  
Lonely

Not just black  
Black and blue

So who loved us?  
Then

Who watched the watcher?  
As he made love to me  
And  
Lusted over my young body

We climbed through windows  
We ran away  
Criminals

Just  
For being black and stolen

Paul Buttigieg  
(Australian)



### **Word of a Ghetto Child**

Every night I watch the sky  
thinking of childhood memories as they pass me by.

Year after year we watch out people disappear  
and those of society along with them.

The ones close to us leave without a simple good-bye,  
but yet we learn how to carry on because in the end we all die.

Correct me if I'm wrong  
but most of us have been living this life all along,  
we search for the answers high and low  
to live a life far beyond bar windows

This life made me who I am today  
and I refuse to live a life that is a lie  
just to make people who I hate happy

I live the way I live because I chose this lifestyle,  
ain't nobody was there to tell me how to live my life.

Don't get me wrong I love my family until my very death,  
but they were never around to watch me grow.

Now people who I always hated try to tell me what I already know.

But in this life you have to trust,  
the no-no life is a mystery.

Ray Sailor  
(Australian)

**Self Education Political Conscious**

We want to be free from political schizophrenia  
that drugs us and incarcerates us.

We want humanitarian law for our families and communities  
exploited by bad policies depriving our human needs.

We want mining sovereignty of our lands to benefit our people  
as one state of people and one group that benefits from the mining wealth.

We want our political party to be recognised in the Federal Parliament  
without intimidation or violence on our peoples and families.

Justin Walker, AC  
(By an Australian)

## **Hated Structure: Indian Residential School, Shubenacadie, N.S.**

If you are on Highway 104  
In a Shubenacadie town  
There is a hill  
Where a structure stands  
A reminder to many senses  
To respond like demented ones.

I for one looked into the window  
And there on the floor  
Was a deluge\* of a misery  
Of a building I held in awe  
Since the day  
I walked into the ornamented door.

There was grime everywhere  
As in buildings left alone or unused.  
Maybe to the related tales of long ago  
Where the children lived in laughter, or abused.

I had no wish to enter  
Nor to walk the halls  
I had no wish to feel the floors  
Where I felt fear  
A beating heart of episodes  
I care not to recall.  
The structure stands as if to say:  
I was just a base for theory  
To bend the will of children  
I remind  
Until I fall.

*Rita Joe - Mi'kmaw (Nova Scotia)*

### **My Little Residential School Suitcase - Originally Written in French**

*The first time I left for residential school,  
my mother carefully prepared my  
little suitcase . She took care to put in it everything  
I would need . My clothes, some  
toys I would never see again. I was  
six years old on this first trip.  
In my little suitcase, my mother had also put  
all the love she had, without forgetting the love from my father.  
There were also embraces,  
tenderness, respect, for me  
and for others , sharing, and many  
other qualities she had taught me.  
The trip lasted 12 years.  
When I returned home, my  
little suitcase was heavy. What my  
mother had put in it was gone; love  
embraces , all those beautiful things had  
disappeared. They had been replaced  
by hatred , self-rejection, abuses of all  
kinds (alcohol, drugs, sexual abuse) by  
violence , anger and suicidal thoughts.  
That is what I carried for  
a long time.  
But I've been cleaning out this  
suitcase . I put back everything my mother had put in it when I left the first time: love,  
respect for myself and others, and a great  
many other qualities.  
Oh yes...added sobriety and  
especially spirituality. My little  
suitcase is very light. It is full  
of good things I can  
share with everyone  
I meet along the way.  
Regardless of skin colour—  
white, red, black, yellow—we  
are all human beings, we  
are all God's creatures.  
Marcel Petiquay (2007) - (Quebec)*

