

The Gifts We Carry: Youth Empowerment Event Honouring Residential School Survivors



National Centre for
Truth *and* Reconciliation

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

What is the NCTR?

- The National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation is a place of learning and dialogue where the truths of the Residential School experience will be honoured and kept safe for future generations.
- The NCTR educates Canadians on the profound injustices inflicted on First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation by the forced removal of children to attend residential schools and the widespread abuse suffered in those schools.

Truth and Reconciliation Week 2025

- Truth and Reconciliation Week 2025 is a transformative five-day journey for students (grades 1-12), educators, and the broader community to engage with the poignant history and enduring spirit of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.
- A highlight of the week is the live youth empowerment event. This year's theme, "*The Gifts We Carry*," speaks to the strengths, stories, and wisdom that live within each of us. It reminds us to honour our identities, languages and traditions. These gifts – whether they are talents, teachings from our Elders, or the resilience carried through generations – are meant to be recognized, nurtured, and shared.
- This **90-minute live educational gathering** will immerse 5000 students (grade 7-12) in the rich tapestry of Indigenous culture, music, dance, and history while honouring Residential School Survivors. It is designed to open a dialogue with young people about the truth of Canada's residential school system.
- Students will hear from residential school Survivors and take in performances by Indigenous dancers and singer-songwriters. They will also hear from Elders, change-makers, knowledge-holders and authors.

Truth and Reconciliation Week 2025



The Gifts We Carry 2025 – Halifax

- **Why Halifax?**
- The Youth Empowerment event commenced 4 years ago taking place in Mississauga, Ottawa and Winnipeg and now Halifax is a vital stop on the national tour
- Residential School Survivors in Mi'kma'ki want to tell their story and share the history and culture of Mi'kmaq in Kjiptuk
- HRM's commitment to **reconciliation, equity, and inclusion**
- This event aligns with the **Halifax Regional Council's anti-racism, cultural, and reconciliation goals**

A person in traditional Indigenous regalia, including a large feathered headdress and a beaded necklace, is performing on stage. The background is a vibrant red with a bokeh effect. The person is holding a drumstick and is in the middle of a dance. The stage is lit with blue and purple lights.

The Gifts We Carry 2025- Halifax

The Gifts We Carry – The Program

- 5000 students grade 7-12 from across Nova Scotia and other parts of Canada will attend the program at the Scotiabank Centre
- Over 500 Honoured Guests are invited to attend, Survivors, Elders, dignitaries from across the country, community leaders, educators, knowledge keepers, changemakers
- There will be a Breakfast Reception pre-show, Mayor Fillmore will be invited to give words of welcome
- Pre-show activities for students include a cultural partnership with the Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre that will include a Sacred Fire and Cultural Demonstrations in Grand Parade
- The concourse area of Scotiabank Centre will feature interactive exhibits presented by partners such as the Museum of Human Rights, Museum of History, etc



The Gifts We Carry – The Program

- Production takes the audience through a journey based on the theme The Gifts We Carry
- Me’j Tekweyulkul Kina’matnewe’l wjit teli-Kpma’tultimk translated means, we still carry with us the lessons on how to treat one another with the greatest respect
- There are four chapters each opened with an animated vignette that reflects the theme of that chapter
- Musical performances featuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit performers that fit the theme of each chapter

The Gifts We Carry – The Program

- This year we will focus on Mi'kmaq artists:
 - Emma Stevens
 - DJ Matty Galaxy
 - Devon Paul
 - DeeDee Austin
 - Drives the Common Man
 - Michael R Denny
 - Stoney Bear Singers
 - Nova Scotia's Neon Dreams
 - Frances Sylliboy- Rita Joe's daughter
 - Mi'kmaq Dancers led by Jennifer Maloney
 - Illustrator Ceilidh Isadore



The Gifts We Carry – The Program

- Also national Indigenous artists:
 - Julian Taylor
 - Ivan Flett Memorial Dancers
 - Mimi O'Bonsawin
 - APTN host Lance Cardinal



The Gifts We Carry – The Program



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The Gifts We Carry – The Program

- Interviews with Residential School Survivors
- Carrying of the Memorial Cloth – students and honoured guests will carry the cloth throughout the Scotiabank Centre to DeeDee Austin's original song, Buried Truth

The Gifts We Carry – The Program



The Gifts We Carry – Impact for Halifax

- Indigenous visitors to Halifax
- Hotel bookings
- Use of Halifax suppliers, sound/light production, event management, venue rentals, car rentals, catering, artist bookings, printing/signage, travel agent, and more
- National media coverage, APTN, CTV, CBC, Global, print media, radio, social media
- Recognition opportunities for HRM (branding, speaking opportunities, media inclusion)
- Alignment with HRM's values (diversity, reconciliation, inclusion, public engagement)

The Gifts We Carry – Marketing

- The Gifts We Carry Youth Empowerment event, over the past several months, has been marketed by NCTR across all social media platforms promoting Halifax as this year's site for this special program.
- Pre-event publicity- NCTR will be promoting the event in the local market liaising with local media through outreach, press releases and PSAs
- The event is promoted to schools across Nova Scotia and in fact, across the country to either attend in person or view the live stream or recording of the event that is broadcast during TRW. The event lives on on the NCTR youtube channel
- “Day of “publicity- Major national media outlets attend the event and provide national news coverage that will see Halifax named as the host of this year's event.
- NCTR partners with CBC Kids News who are involved in the program and provide national coverage

The Gifts We Carry – Legacy

- Kijipuktuk (Halifax) has been the home of the Mi'kmaq since time Immemorial, this event honours the Mi'kmaq and will educate thousands on the Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous cultures
- Halifax over the past several years has hosted many national Indigenous events, NAIG, Grand Chief Membertou 400 and Mawio'mi 2011, APTN's Indigenous Day Live, Assembly of First Nations National Conferences and now will be the 4th city to host the NCTR Youth Empowerment event
- Truth telling and Reconciliation- it is critical that youth in our region hear the truth of Residential School history and see the resilience of those who lived to tell their stories – teachers across the country share and discuss the program
- Youth attending will hear from Indigenous youth in this program and will be educated through powerful contemporary music, they will see and hear the successes of these artists as they carry their culture into the future



The Gifts We Carry – Legacy

The Gifts We Carry – Funding

- This program is made possible by funds from all levels of government and corporate support
- We thank HRM for seeing the importance of NCTR's youth empowerment program

The Gifts We Carry



The Gifts We Carry – Conclusion

- *The Gifts We Carry* is more than a youth program — it's a powerful step forward in truth-telling, healing, and reconciliation. By supporting this project, HRM will help create space for Survivors' stories to be heard, for communities to connect, and for future generations to learn from our shared history. We invite you to walk with us on this journey — to carry these gifts together.
- Wela'lin, Miigwech, Merci, Marrsî, Thank you



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