

The Peaceful Place I Found - Renno Ikezawa

When I think about a peaceful place, I don't imagine luxury or wealth, but rather a world where everyone is seen, heard, and respected. As a high school student spending my precious time as a teenager in a boarding school on an Island where transportation is essential, surprisingly, this is where I found my peace. Living next to the calm waters of Shawnigan Lake led me to a realization that peace isn't just about the absence of war; it's also about living in harmony with other mates, connecting with the land, realizing the beauty of nature and the truths of our shared history with Indigenous culture.

In British Columbia, I've had the privilege of learning about the history and cultures of Indigenous peoples. When I first read "*Indian Horse*" by Richard Wagamese as a class, it opened my eyes to the painful legacy of residential schools: how children were taken from their families, stripped of their identities, and made to feel ashamed just because of who they truly were. True peace, I realized, begins with acknowledging this painful past and committing to reconciliation.

Being surrounded by the natural beauty of Shawnigan Lake: towering trees, access to still clean waters, and views of night skies in a wide open field, such views have shaped my understanding of peace every single time. Many Indigenous worldviews see the Earth not as a resource, but as a living relative to be respected. This perspective has reshaped my own definition of peace; extending it beyond human relationships to include our connection with the land.

In the peaceful world I envision, Indigenous knowledge would be woven into how we live and learn. Protecting our environment would be an act of respect, not just policy, and treating it with understanding. It means valuing oral traditions and ancestral wisdom as legitimate sources of truth. It means ensuring that Indigenous communities have the power to shape their own futures just like anyone other human.

After acknowledging this peace, I've taken small steps toward fostering peace in my school. We begin our assemblies with land acknowledgements, and I've participated in workshops led by Indigenous artists and storytellers. These experiences have shown me that peace isn't some far-off dream and nothing near impossible; it's built through listening, respect, and a willingness to learn from different perspectives.

We will never be able to go back to our pasts, but we can choose how we will build our future and respond to our pasts. We can create a future where reconciliation isn't just a symbol, but an actual reality. Where peace is not made through quiet acceptance, but through active justice and understanding.

As I look out at the stillness, and the “peacefullness” of the lake every evening, I am always reminded of true peace: “True peace begins when we have the courage to face our mistakes of our history, and the wisdom to learn from it, and strive to create the better place.”.