

## THE KAIROS BLANKET EXERCISE (KBE)

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### ABOUT THE EXERCISE //

Created in 1997, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise (KBE) was developed to raise awareness of the nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. The KBE uses critical pedagogy to deepen understanding of the human rights violations, dispossession and denial of Indigenous peoples' nationhood throughout Canadian history. The Exercise has been carried out hundreds of times, with thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of all ages and backgrounds as a way to open, or continue conversation about decolonization. KBE participants will:

- 1) explore the major themes and recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP - 1996);
- 2) examine how federal policies and programs impacted and continue to impact the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada; and
- 3) identify what Indigenous peoples and their allies are doing to bring about positive change.

### WHY THE KAIROS BLANKET EXERCISE IS INTEGRAL TO DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE //

For many years, Development and Peace has supported popular and Indigenous movements around the world in their struggle for social and economic justice. In the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it behooves us as a pan-Canadian social movement to self-reflect and engage in the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in our own country. As the official organization of the Catholic Church in Canada for international development, we have signed onto the declaration, "*The 'Doctrine of Discovery' and Terra Nullius: A Catholic Response*," effectively recanting the Doctrine, in March, 2016: <https://www.devp.org/en/pressroom/2016/comm2016-03-30>. Our involvement in the process of reconciliation must also be reflected in actions. As a member and founding partner of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Development and Peace promotes the use of experiential education exercises such as KBE that help us to understand the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada in historical and contemporary contexts and inspire action for reconciliation.

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**OBJECTIVE //** To understand the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada in historical and contemporary contexts and inspire action for reconciliation

**TIME //** 90 -120 minutes

**GROUP SIZE //** Ideally, 15-60 participants

### MATERIALS //

- 1 blanket per 3-4 participants, plus two extra blankets to be used as the 'small pox blanket' and the 'residential school blanket.'
- Chairs for everyone in the group
- Tissue (It is not uncommon for participants to cry during the KBE.)

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### MATERIALS (continued) //

- Print off several of the following documents from Health Canada on “Coping with Emotional Reactions” for participants: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/alt/pdf/publications/healthy-living-vie-saine/mental-health-sante-mentale/coping-emotional-faire-face-emotivite-eng.pdf>
- Print the 1) three maps, 2) the scrolls and 3) scripts for the KBE found here: <http://kairosblanketexercise.org/resources/scripts>
- Prepare white, yellow, and blue index cards – enough white and yellow cards for half the participants, and two blue cards.

### Optional:

- Computer, projector and speakers (for the introductory video)
- Traditional items such as clothing, carvings, baskets, utensils, art pieces, medicines, furs, uluit, etc. to be traded among participants
- Dolls: Some facilitators like to give these to participants to represent children and family members, *but proceed with caution as this can trigger intense emotional reactions among some participants and might be a distraction for others depending on age and maturity level.*

### PREPARATION & IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS //

- Watch the following short introduction to the KBE and prepare to screen this for the participants: <https://vimeo.com/107962612>.
- Familiarize yourself with the KBE official website, resources and tools, particularly the “Facilitators” section at <http://kairosblanketexercise.org/> and the “Education Resource Kit” at <http://kairosblanketexercise.org/edu-kit>.
- Invite an elder or representative of a local First Nations community to open the Exercise in prayer, guide the Talking Circle and speak to how the Exercise resonates with them. This will greatly enrich the learning experience for the participants and help to create a safe space for Indigenous ones. If you are having trouble identifying an elder to assist, local Native Friendship Centres can be a place to start. Likewise, KAIROS staff are a good resource in this endeavour, and can also help in identifying regional facilitators who might be available to help out as well. You can contact them through the following coordinates:

Toll free: 1-877-403-8933  
[info@kairoscanada.org](mailto:info@kairoscanada.org)

- Think about how you will thank the elder. An honorarium or a gift may be appropriate.

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- Several Development and Peace staff across Canada have also been trained in facilitating the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, so feel free to contact your regional animator. To find the Development and Peace regional office closest to you please see: <https://www.devp.org/en/contactus/address>
- *The KBE has been known to provoke strong reactions. In trying to create a "Safe Space" for all participants you can:*
  - » Insist that what is said in the Talking Circle stays in the Talking Circle to protect the confidentiality and privacy of all participants.
  - » Read over the "Health Support" section of the KBE webpage: <http://kairosblanketexercise.org/find-facilitator/health-support>
  - » End the KBE with a breathing exercise (after the Talking Circle)
  - » Invite an elder to participate in the KBE
  - » First Nations participants experiencing emotional distress can be referred to the First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line at **1-855-242-3310**. It's toll-free and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Print and cut out scrolls
- Identify at least two leaders to help you facilitate - one to narrate and one to play the role of the European.
- If at all possible, try to do a bit of research about the First Nations communities in your own locale or region and include some of their history in the Exercise. Or use the information as an entry point after screening the video. Ideally, you would have the elder share from her or his perspective, if they are from the region.
- Count out **white cards** for a little less than half the participants.  
**NOTE:** With a smaller group (less than 30 people), count white cards for only one-third of participants. With a very small group (12 or less), give only 2 white cards.
- Count out **2 blue cards**. For a smaller group (less than 30 people), give only 1 blue card.
- Count out **3 yellow cards**, one with an "X" on it. For a large group (more than 40 people), give 6 yellow cards. For a small group (less than 20 people), give only 2 yellow cards.

### ACTIVITY GUIDE //

Follow the step-by-step instructions from the script provided at the link above. Time permitting, you might want to preface the Exercise with the introductory video at the link above.