



RAVENS:

MESSENGERS OF CHANGE



Ravens are such common birds that when we see them, we often don't give them a second thought. However, the robust existence of this species across North America is strong evidence of the raven's capacity for resilience and its ability to adapt. Ravens, have long memories and excellent communication skills, which have contributed to their survival, and they have proved that they can survive in almost any environment.

To many Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) Peoples, ravens are also a familiar character in traditional stories within their Nations. They are often regarded as important messengers whose warnings tell of an impending danger or truth that must be faced, or somehow exposed. In some stories, they may be portrayed as sneaky or as a trickster. A trickster may be a character in a story that exhibits a great degree of intellect or secret knowledge, and uses it to play tricks or otherwise disobey normal rules and conventional behavior, but most often, the raven's actions end up benefitting humankind.

Imagine what long-ago ravens would have seen as they flew over Turtle Island, the land that we now know as North America? They would have seen clean air and water, rich animal and plant life, and many Indigenous communities living in balance and harmony with the land around them. For thousands of years, there were many Indigenous Nations, each with their own governance structures and justice systems, and many of them connected through wide-ranging trade markets, and specific family roles and responsibilities. Although there were, and continue to be, many different Indigenous Nations and cultures, they all share a strong belief in respecting Mother Earth, and respect for water, air, fire, and all living creatures in a way that both protected the present and ensured the sustainability of future generations.

Later newcomers from across the oceans began to arrive on Turtle Island. At first, the Indigenous Peoples welcomed them as friends and ensured their survival by teaching them how to live on the land. Treaties, agreements, and partnerships were made to coexist with one another in peace and harmony, however, as more settlers arrived over the centuries, new settlers began to want to shift away from prior agreements made with Indigenous Peoples and moved towards actions that displaced the Indigenous Peoples and destroyed the relationships, and much of the plant and animal life that sustained them. Settlers created laws and policies such as the *Indian Act*, which created reserves and prevented



Indigenous Peoples from occupying their traditional territories. More laws followed within the *Criminal Code* that removed Indigenous Peoples from their lands and prevented them from leaving reserves, criminalized their traditions and practices, spirituality, and culture so that the settlers could have more and more control over them. Eventually, settlers began the process of removing Indigenous children from their families to send them to attend Residential Schools under the guise of assimilating them by providing them with a "settler-education" in return.

Indigenous Peoples already had rich systems of education, but laws were put into place to criminalize any parents who did not submit to the process. Generations later, when parents were no longer criminalized, some hoped their children might benefit by being introduced to western education, not knowing the abuses they would be exposed to in the schools. The reality was that children did not receive a balanced education. Instead, what they learned transitioned from generations of critical land-based knowledge, familial and cultural teachings to lessons that emphasized western religions and involved students doing physical labour. Up to seven generations of Indigenous children grew up in the schools with little to no connection to family or healthy loving relationships and with no comforts of home. By interrupting Indigenous family connections, forbidding cultural and traditional practices, children also lost their languages and traditional knowledge.

By this point in time, our ravens would have witnessed a significant and rapid change across the lands. If the raven could speak, the message would surely be of impending danger for Indigenous Peoples. An example of a real-life messenger can be found in the works of Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce, who was both the Chief Medical Officer for Residential School children from 1904 to 1922, and a passionate environmentalist. Dr. Bryce tried to warn the Canadian Government of the harm being done to Indigenous children, including their starvation and death due to illnesses, which could have addressed by vaccines that all other Canadian school children were receiving. His thorough investigation brought attention to the horrible conditions that the children endured while in the Residential Schools. He detailed the effects of these conditions upon the children, including vast amounts of disease, hunger, overcrowding, as well as deaths. In a time when Indigenous Peoples were seeing their rights removed by legislation and policies, Dr. Bryce insisted on speaking out about the harms being inflicted upon Indigenous children in Residential Schools. After reporting back to the Government and being disheartened by the lack of change, in the 1920s, he

self-published a book which exposed the alarming conditions and death rates of children called, "the Story of a National Crime: Being an Appeal for Justice to The Indians of Canada," the schools and practices continued for another 70 years.

Dr. Bryce also cared a great deal about the health of our forests. In papers, he made recommendations that we meet the dire need of protecting our forests from further damage before it was too late. Back then, forests were valued as sources of timber with little, or no, concern for the environmental effects of their removal. His views were unpopular and regarded as impeding the progress of civilization, jobs and profits.

Dr. Bryce once said, "To most of us the value of our forests, as direct revenue producers, must naturally appeal first... but few, indeed, have carefully considered how far-reaching are the influences which their existence, or their nonexistence, may exert upon the public health." For his warnings of upcoming danger (climate change) and speaking truths we need to face (damaged caused to Indigenous children, families, and Nations from their time in Residential Schools). Dr. Bryce was an early ally of Indigenous Peoples and may be considered a real-life 'raven messenger.' He recognized Indigenous experiences, tragedies and harms caused and added his voice to theirs.



It was not that long ago that the land existed in balance - the water, the air, the plants, the animals, and humanity – all thrived in an interdependent and sustainable cycle. Although this balance was disrupted by the arrival of settlers, Indigenous Peoples and Canadians have worked together in the past and we can work together once again. Today, Indigenous Peoples continue to experience racism and injustices in Canada. They are also amongst the first to feel the pains of climate change. Facing multiple challenges, Indigenous Peoples are hard at work to change things for a more equitable society and a healthier environment, both for the present and for future generations of all people who share this planet. Indigenous Peoples' traditional land stewardship is finally starting to be recognized as important, and validated by generation of teachings and practices and now backed by scientific evidence in the face of the concerns of climate change. Yet it can be difficult to get the word out, on environmental issues impacting on social health and well-being for all. Now, more than ever is the time to restore the balance and protect our future generations. Will you join us in looking through the raven's eye and spreading this message of change?



ACTIVITY 1:

BUILDING A TREE OF RECONCILIATION

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Age level: This Activity can be adapted for a wide age range from elementary school age to adulthood.

Supplies needed:

- Sticky notes or Appendix D, Leaf cut-outs and tape
- Print-outs of Appendices A, Levels of Action; B, Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *94 Calls to Action*; C, Raven coloring page; and D, Leaf cut-outs.
- Coloured pencils or markers
- Optional: a copy of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Facilitator Preparation

This exercise has drawn upon the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model developed by First Nations members in partnership with the Canadian Council of Learning (2007). In this model, First Nations individuals are understood as trees, collectively supported by four domains of social or collective well-being, including spiritual and cultural, social, economic, and political. The tree's roots represent domains of knowledge.

Home Variation

This Activity is adaptable for individuals and families who wish to embark on additional learning about Reconciliation from home. These variations will be highlighted by green text.

The end goal of this Activity is to help participants of the KAIROS Blanket Exercise take their newfound understandings a step further into more concrete actions to continue their journey as informed allies.



If you have not taken part in a KAIROS Blanket Exercise, please visit www.kairoscanada.org to learn more about Reconciliation work, Indigenous issues, and more, as well as future events. A visit to www.legacyofhope.ca will connect you with additional teaching resources to help grow your knowledge of the historical oppression and colonial acts against Indigenous Peoples.

Read the introductory text to your participants so that they fully grasp the connections between disruptions of colonialism and allyship.

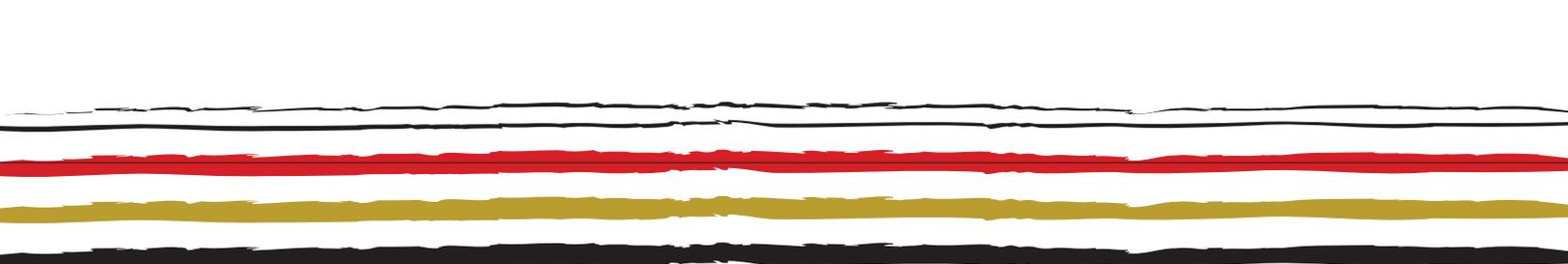
The Exercise can be simplified for younger participants who also want to be messengers of Reconciliation. For younger learners, after they colour or decorate the raven (Appendix C), they can choose to attach to the back of their raven artwork one of the leaf-cutouts with a Reconciliation Action Statement (Appendix D). These ravens can be sent individually or in a group envelope to the Prime Minister's or Member of Parliament's office, free-of-charge at the addresses provided below.

Activate

This Activity is intended to work in conjunction with the KAIROS Blanket Exercise. At home, substitute the KAIROS Blanket Exercise with the Legacy of Hope Foundation's information brochure, *Hope and Healing* which is available to download at legacyofhope.ca. In order to have a good understanding about Indigenous history and the impacts of the *Indian Act*, the Residential School System, the Sixties Scoop, and Day Schools and the intergenerational trauma that has affected more than seven generations.

Use the following information to explain to participants.

- Summarize the key teachings, understandings, and experiences gained from participating in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise;
- Inform participants that we will attempt to transfer those understandings and lessons to new practices beyond today's experience; and,
- For this next Activity, we will be relying on some conceptualizations made by Indigenous participants in a Canadian Council of Learning Project to develop Indigenous models of learning.



Nature metaphors can be very useful for Indigenous concepts and understandings and to help us think through how positive action can be taken. Borrowing from an Indigenous concept of the self and learning, if we imagine an Indigenous person as a tree, we could see them as being supported in their roots of their family, their clan, their community, and Nations. Trees draw benefits above ground as well, through the leaves on their branches. These positive inputs come from different branches. It may be useful to imagine these branches under the following headings: spiritual and cultural; social; economic; and political. Each of these represents critical parts of the Self. If we look at history as highlighted through the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, we can see how many of these leaves were stripped from Indigenous Peoples, making it much more difficult to grow healthily and in a balanced way.

Ravens are a well-known animal in Indigenous teachings, and often represented as intelligent messengers bringing wisdom and teachings. In this Activity, participants will be taking on the role of the raven, carrying to the tree things that would be beneficial to its well-being. Today you will take on the role of ravens.

Explore

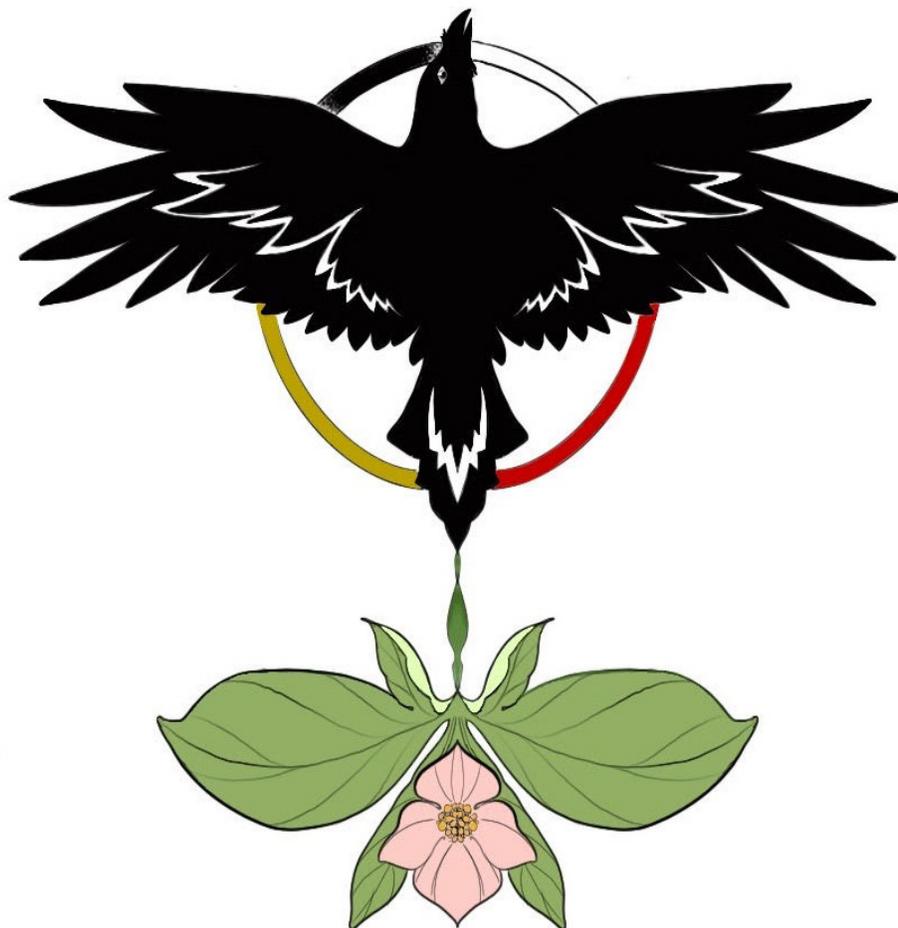
For this next Activity, we are going to try to see how we can help rebuild the health of these trees as raven allies.

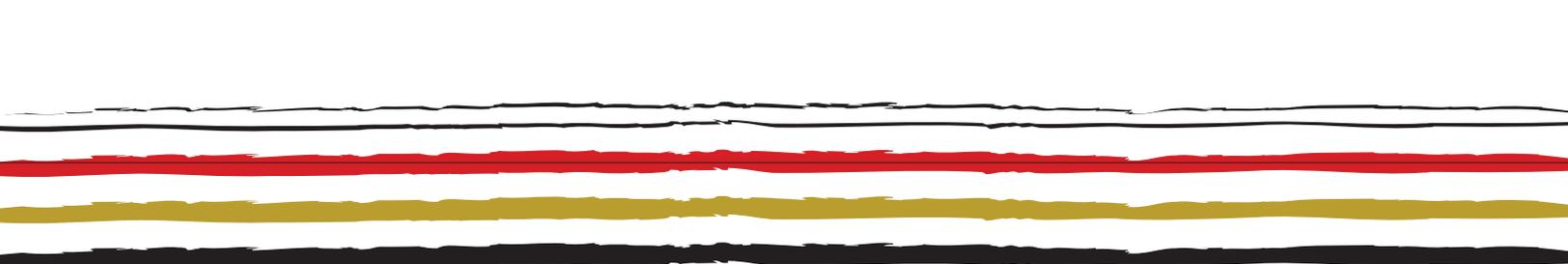
Draw a tree on a chalkboard; alternatively, you can draw it on flip-chart paper, poster board, or similar methods. It should have four branches that are bare. Label them: spiritual & cultural; social; economic; and political.

Read the following text to participants: We have before us the four categories (spiritual & cultural; social; economic; and political). We will try now to conceive of ways that we can support these four areas by coming up with concrete steps to take after leaving here.

We want to make these practical and doable, so consider the following in support of your brainstorming:

1. Remember that it is perfectly fine and acceptable to start with the self, such as, "I will learn more about the political issues, racism and injustices Indigenous Peoples continue to experience today."
2. If you feel very knowledgeable about Indigenous Peoples, you can tackle coming up with leaves on your own. If you feel less knowledgeable, you can work on creating leaves in pairs or small groups.
3. Duplicates are okay. More people can do a valuable action. It does not have to be only one person doing one thing.





The following are some helpful guides to think about what one might write.

- Share with participants Appendix A and Appendix B.
- Review these appendices as a group. If learning independently, consider writing your reflections in a journal, or having a discussion with a friend or family member.
- Distribute sticky notes or leaf cut-outs from Appendix D to participants. If using the Leaf cut-outs, participants use the blank sides on which to write their own statements, which will then be placed on the tree.
- Inform them that these will be the leaves that they, as ravens, will carry over to the tree to help repair it. As allies, their actions should aim to be self-informative and in partnership with or in support of Indigenous Peoples. This is in strong contrast to approaching things from a 'rescue' perspective.
- Provide participants with 5-10 minutes to brainstorm what they might do and to write this down on a sticky note or leaf cut-out. If they choose, participants can write out more than one idea. Use the Appendix A, Levels of Action to get things started and fill in the blanks either with your own answer or taking suggestions from participants.
- For participants who are more familiar with Indigenous issues and Indigenous history, they can complete leaves on their own. For those who are less familiar, they can work in pairs or small groups to complete them. Or you may want to have someone who is more knowledgeable to work with someone who is not.



Have participants place the sticky notes or tape cut-out leaves on the different branches (spiritual and cultural, etc.) that they think their leaf may fit best. It is okay for leaves to be cross-category. Participants can pick the branch that is most closely aligned to their action or actions. Do not limit participants to expressing their ideas as text, some may want to illustrate their concept.

Assess

Review the suggestions from participants. Consider asking the following:

- If there are more leaves on a particular branch, ask participants why they think that branch was gravitated towards or alternatively, why they gravitated away from another branch.
- Are there some actions that seem more doable – if so, why?

Close

Reflect with participants on the overall Activity. Go around in a circle and ask them some or all of the following:

- What are they taking away from the Activity in terms of their understanding and experience?
- Do they feel a particular affinity to one of the leaves, theirs or someone else's, that they are most likely to start with? If so, why?

Participants can also choose to color or decorate the Raven Outline (Appendix C) and on the back of their artwork write their messages of Reconciliation to be sent to the Prime Minister or Member of Parliament.

Mail may be sent postage-free to the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament at the following addresses:

Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

OR

Name of Member of Parliament
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

You can search for your Member of Parliament using your postal code at this website: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en/search>

Finally, encourage participants to take a picture of the completed tree. In completing this Activity, they will continue to be ravens, now looking out for the tree by carrying forward the messages on the leaves. As the facilitator, consider providing participants with an image of the tree after the session via email. Please email a copy to the Legacy of Hope Foundation at reception@legacyofhope.ca so that we can showcase your work too.



APPENDIX

Appendix A: Levels of Action

The following list is intended as a guide for helping you think through possible categories of action, ranging from the Self to Nation. The Self for the most part is focused on your own individual efforts that mostly affect you. Nation would be a category where you are still engaged, but instead your efforts effect other people, potentially at a very broad and national level.

Levels of Action	
Self	I can learn more about _____. I can start following Indigenous news sources.
Family - Friends	I can share what I have learned about _____. I can dispel myths and speak out against stereotypes and generalizations and informs others about Indigenous history and contributions, including the history of injustices and discrimination to better inform others and to address racism and foster empathy and understanding of Indigenous Peoples.
Community	I can reach out to an Indigenous organization or community to see if there are opportunities to work with them or show them support in some way. I can start or join a community group to partner with an Indigenous organization/community/etc., on a project that_____.
Region	I can contact my Member of Provincial Parliament to find out what they are doing on a specific issue that impacts Indigenous Peoples and send them a list of concerns. I can ask them what they are doing to address five top issues that will improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples. I can research what Indigenous groups are saying to get ideas about their priorities. These may include topics such as _____.
Nation	I can contact my Member of Parliament Federally to find out what they are doing on specific issues that directly impact on Indigenous Peoples. I can invite a Member of Parliament to my community, school, etc., to answer questions on promoting equity for Indigenous Peoples at the Federal level.

Appendix B: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) 94 Calls to Action

The following samples are drawn from the TRC 94 Calls to Action and may either be used directly or taken as inspiration for participants to come up with their own ideas. This is by no means a complete list of the 94 Calls to Action; participants are encouraged to review the entire list on their own for other areas of action. The term Aboriginal and Indigenous can be used interchangeably as they both represent First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

TRC 94 Calls to Action	Examples	Possible Extensions
Child Welfare	1. We call upon the Federal, Provincial, Territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care. . .	1. I will write to my MP or MPP to urge them to take stronger action to reduce the number of Indigenous children in care.
Education	7. We call upon the Federal Government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will find out if the local school/s have Indigenous-specific supports to promote their educational success; • I will see if there are opportunities to tutor students locally; and/or, • I will start a letter-writing campaign to urge the Federal Government to take stronger actions in closing the Indigenous education gap.
Language & Culture	13. We call upon the Federal Government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights.	• I will learn about whose territory I am on and the treaty associated with it. I will incorporate that knowledge into any Land Acknowledgements I may do for work or school.

<p>Health</p>	<p>23. We call upon all levels of government to:</p> <p>I. Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.</p> <p>ii. Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.</p> <p>iii. Provide cultural competency training for all healthcare professionals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will inquire as to whether the local health care services have employed Indigenous professional working in health care; and/or, • I will ask whether non-Indigenous health care providers working with Indigenous Peoples have received cultural competency training and if they have knowledge of Indigenous history; and/or, • I will ask organizations what they are doing to support retention in Indigenous communities; and/or, • I will connect healthcare management and employees with the Legacy of Hope Foundation and KAIROS to receive Training and Workshops to improve their cultural competency when dealing with Indigenous Peoples; and/or, • I will learn about Restorative Justice Circles to advocate for as alternative justice measure other than imprisonment.
<p>Justice</p>	<p>30. We call upon Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal Peoples in custody over the next decade, and to issue detailed annual reports that monitor and evaluate progress in doing so.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will learn about programs and activities that work at the local level to prevent contact with the judicial system for youth and look to get them enacted in my community; and/or, • I will encourage local police to seek training and partnerships with organizations such as KAIROS and the Legacy of Hope Foundation to address discrimination and racism when dealing with Indigenous Peoples; and/or, • I will learn about Restorative Justice Circles to advocate for them as alternative justice measures other than imprisonment.



Reconciliation

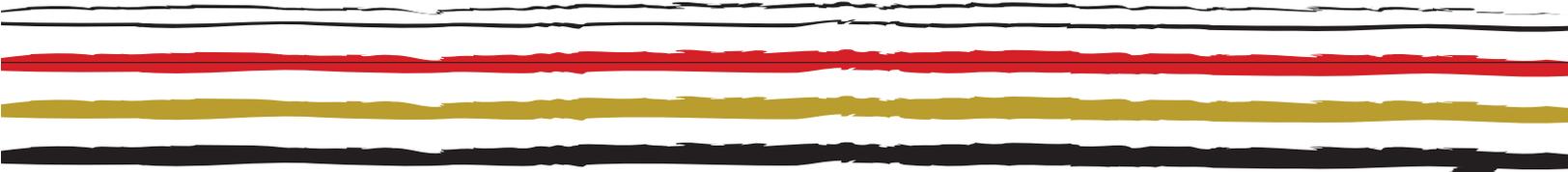
43. We call upon Federal, Provincial, Territorial, and Municipal Governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.

- I will learn more about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and,
- I will contact my Member of Parliament and advocate for Canada's full adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



Appendix C - Messenger Raven





I want Indigenous children to see their own history and culture in the curriculum.



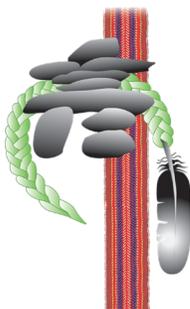
I want Indigenous Peoples to have clean drinking water.



I want Indigenous children to have the opportunity to learn their languages and cultures.



I want schools to teach more about Indigenous Peoples.



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