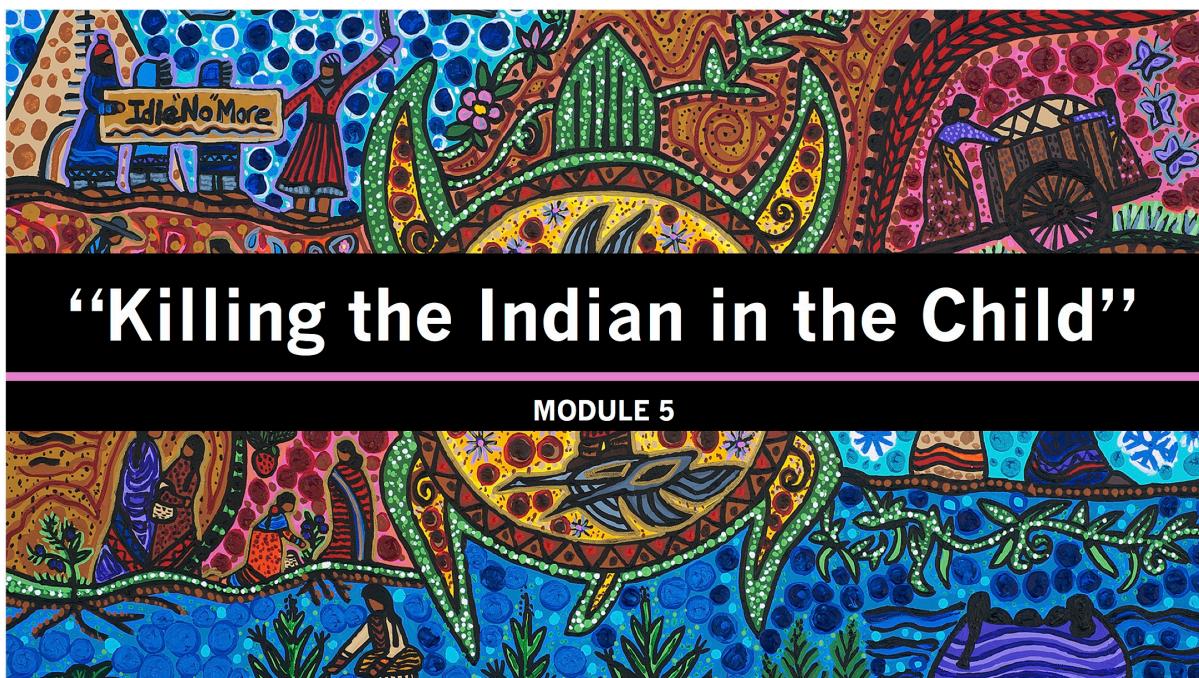


Indigenous Canada: Looking Forward/Looking Back



Cover Image: Artwork by Leah Dorion

The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory and respects the history, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our institution.

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Module 5 Introduction

For Indigenous people, education is understood as a lifelong learning process. The learning process follows a cycle that is divided into four stages – childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and maturity. At each stage a person gains certain skills and teachings. Many Indigenous peoples believe that one of the ways in which knowledge is acquired is through experience and interactions with other humans, animals, and the natural environment. This view is based on the belief that everyone is connected with all living and nonliving things (Hart 1996, 67–76). Learning is a continuous process. As we grow wiser, we are obligated to share and pass on knowledge, creating a cycle of teaching and learning.

The Mohawk, who are a part of the Haudenosaunee confederacy, understand learning by relating it to their ‘Thanksgiving Address,’ an expression and practice of gratitude. This is based on the concept of oneness with the universe and acknowledges everything in the natural world as being interconnected. The Mohawk’s belief is that “we come to one mind,” meaning we gain individual knowledge and then share with the rest of the community making it a collective knowledge. The learning process is considered a personal journey with the goal to achieve wholeness with the universe (Tsioniaon 2000, 101, 107).



Figure 1 A family gathering, 1884; Credit: Geological Survey of Canada/ Library and Archives Canada

Historically and continuing today with many contemporary Indigenous peoples, children are seen as gifts from the Creator. Children are given careful guidance and respect from members of the community. In the community, Elders serve the role of giving guidance, because they carry a large amount of knowledge and wisdom from their years of experience (Cruikshank 1990, 10).

Indigenous people value their children's power of individual thinking by following ethics of non-interference. For example, Elders do not give a direct instruction or an answer when asked for advice, but instead tell a story. This way it allows the individual to self-reflect in order to discover the answer. Through this practice, it fosters independent thinking. This allows children to become self-reliant by knowing how to survive and coexist with others in their environment (Miller 1992, 16).

Section One: Indigenous Teaching and Learning

Observational Learning

Indigenous ways of learning include observation, experiential learning, and oral storytelling. Observational learning starts at an early age, gaining information from watching the behaviours and actions of others. This watching is also known as role modelling, an important form of teaching by setting an example (Bastien 2012, 2; Hodgson-Smith 2000, 159).



Figure 2 An Inuit elder and youth, 2009; Credit: VisitGrosMorne/Flickr

Another type of learning is through experience; Elders have years of knowledge gathered from their time on Earth. One basic foundation for learning is by oral tradition. Storytelling is used for the transmission of knowledge, which is a practice of passing

down information through generations. Oral transmission is an important way of recording history, preserving and sharing knowledge. The practice of oral tradition also teaches people the value of listening (Bird 2005 and 2007; Cruikshank 1990; King 2003;).

Teaching can take place in a group through sharing circles. For example, the Nehiyawak of the Plains would gather in a circle to discuss a topic, share their views, and come to a consensus. Everyone and everything has the ability to share, teach and. Teachers can be people, plants, animals, and spirits learn (Hart 1996, 65, 70). Indigenous characteristics of teaching are instilled the value of observation, learning from experience and listening. The transfer of knowledge is strongly based on reciprocity, the exchange of information. Lastly, relationships with other living and nonliving entities are important for transferring knowledge. The Mohawk belief that “we come to one mind” is an educational concept that many Indigenous people share (Tsioniaon 2000, 101). Teaching and learning is strongly rooted in Indigenous peoples extended kinship system (Poonwassie and Charter, 2001).

Seven Generations

Teaching and learning is a reciprocal and holistic process strongly founded in relationships. Spaces for learning can take place among relatives, in sharing circles, ceremonies, and in everyday living. Within Indigenous communities, the extended family model plays an integral role in the function of children learning (Cajete, 2–24; Poonwassie and Charter, 2001).

Children are highly valued in the community, because they are seen as the future leaders and caretakers. The common concept of ‘Seven Generations’ is shared among Indigenous peoples. It acknowledges the importance of having intergenerational relationships to be able to transfer knowledge by looking seven generations in the past and the future (Mooradian, Cross, and Stutzky 2006, 87). This long view perspective allows the community to analyze previous actions and what they can do for the future generations to strive.

Many Indigenous groups have their own childrearing practices, culturally based values, patterns and languages. Often children are given guidance from their parents, grandparents, extending kin and their community. These relationships are important for the transmission of knowledge, because everyone and everything has the ability to share a lesson that helps maintain balance or contributes to the community (Binda and Calliou, 2001; Hart 1996, 64–65, 70).

Extended kin share the responsibility of teaching by mentorship, role modelling, or providing encouragement. Grandparents represent an important figure for parenting. Often at times grandparents have gained the title of an Elder holding the responsibility to pass on knowledge to the following generations. In the south, the Navajo follow the fosterage practice when grandchildren are sent to live with their grandparents either temporarily or permanently (Mutchler, Baker, and Lee 2007). As an act of reciprocity, the grandchild receives care and knowledge, and meanwhile the grandparents benefit from any assistance that may require heavy physical activity. Many Indigenous communities still practice this generational caretaking today.

Inductive Discipline

The practice of reciprocity teaches children how to receive and give back to their surroundings. Relationships with animals and the environment help a child's moral development by observing animal's behaviour and cycle of nature. The ethics of non-interference give individuals the freedom to explore and learn through trial and error (Newcomb 2001,30). From this, it allows children to learn by experiencing natural consequences (McPherson and Rabb 2012, 6; Tsioniaon 2000, 108).

Forms of discipline can be understood as inductive discipline, which shows the individual how their actions impact others. As a result of bad behaviour, the child would endure discipline through teasing, laughter, or ignoring (Newcomb 2001, 33). Children are given moral values not to lie, cheat, or steal from your community.

In some cases, legends about cannibalistic monsters, such as the Windigo in the traditional belief systems of several Indigenous peoples, help serve the purpose of

correcting bad (Brightman 1988). Multiple versions of the Windigo are tales about a being that lives in isolation and survives by the consumption of humans (Harp 1998, 70). This would teach children to listen and behave, and not to wander too far away from the community. When the older ones told stories about Windigo and the trickster, it helped encourage proper behaviour for the children.



Figure 3 Painting of a Windigo (center); Credit: Artwork by Brenda Morency

Knowledge is seen as a spirit that grows within a person through the practice of ceremony (Bastien 2012, 20). Centers for learning can take place by attending cultural ceremonies. Ceremonies also contribute to the child's growth and ensure the balance of spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects of wellbeing. For instance, the naming ceremony would help the child find their place in the community and begin to create a sense of identity within. In this way children learn about their roles and responsibilities within the community (Van de Sande and Menzies 2003, 127).

Relationships have always been a critical component in the learning process of Indigenous peoples. This includes relationships with all living and nonliving things, which have the ability to teach us a lesson. From these relationships comes the practice of exchange and reciprocity. Centers for learning can take place by spending time with nature, relatives or in ceremonies. These ways of teaching and learning have built thriving and diverse civilizations (Watt-Cloutier 2000, 114). However, in the mid 1800s a

new way of learning was introduced to Indigenous peoples. The brutal education system of residential schools changed everything.

Section Two: Residential Schooling

In 1920 Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in Canada stated to a Special Committee in the House of Commons:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are unable to stand alone. [...]

Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department [...]. (Quoted in Canada, Moore, Leslie, and Maguire 1978, 115)

A Difficult History

The first missionary-operated schools for Indigenous children were established in the early 1600s in Quebec, but it wasn't until the end of the War of 1812 when the establishment of residential schools became a priority (Miller 1996, 32). With the war's conclusion, British forces no longer saw the value of Indians in the fur trade or the need of their military alliances, and the status of Indigenous people began to decline as they went from valued allies to burdens.

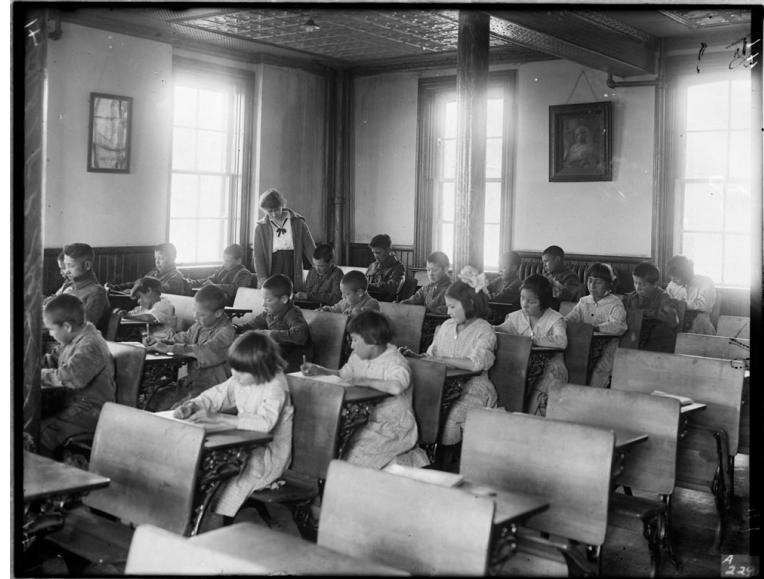


Figure 4 A classroom at a residential school in Brandon, Manitoba, 1946; Credit: National Film Board of Canada; Library and Archives Canada

In 1830, when the “Indian problem” moved from military to civilian jurisdiction, Indigenous peoples were then seen as barriers for a new nation to flourish. Strong, sovereign Indigenous nations now were the “Indian problem” (Miller 1996, 63). To fix this problem, the British government decided to assimilate Indigenous peoples. Targeting Indigenous children, who were easier to coerce and manipulate, the government had a mission to “kill the Indian in the child.” Over the course of 125 years more than 150,000 children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed into residential schools (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). The majority were held captive and isolated from their families and all their kinship ties for the entire time they attended. Others stayed 10 months of the year. Many children never returned home at all. Children ages three to seventeen years old attended residential schools. Education was a mechanism to colonize and assimilate all Indigenous children, to destroy their cultures, beliefs, languages, and sense of pride (Haig-Brown 1988).

Early European-style schools run by Catholic missionaries during the 1600s were established by New France near Quebec City. However, they had a difficult time recruiting children to these boarding schools from their reluctant parents (Miller 1996, 49). Even when they were able to recruit children, the children would run back to their families and communities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2012). This boarding school system failed and was not re-enacted again until the 1830s when the New England Company founded the Mohawk Institute, which boarded First Nations students in Brantford, Ontario. Several other boarding schools were opened. Prior to 1883 these boarding schools were church-led initiatives, which received federal government grants but were not organized or run as a government structured school system. However, in 1883 the government became much more involved when they built and funded three schools. The model for these schools used the framework of industrial schools in the United States. Industrial schools were more similar to manual labour camps than educational institutions and had aggressive assimilation tactics (Haig-Brown 1988, 70-75; Miller 1996, 157).

In 1892, the federal government entered into a legal agreement with the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, Methodist Church, and Presbyterian Church to run these Indian residential schools, which extended into the western prairies from Cross Lake in Manitoba, Prince Albert in Saskatchewan, and Blue Quills in Edmonton, Alberta.



Figure 5 A group of nuns with Aboriginal students, ca. 1890; Credit: H.J. Woodside/Library and Archives Canada

Nicholas Flood Davin stated in the 1879 *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds*:

...if anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young. The children must be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions. (Davin 1879, 12)

Techniques of Civilization

Residential schools were based on a church-operated and state-financed system. From the government's perspective, it wanted to guide children out of their current savage state to become more civilized. The mission of the churches, however, was to Christianize the children. The church educated the children, and the government covered the costs. This historical church/government relationship was based on the regulation, administration, and control of Indigenous people's lives through the education system. This disintegrated the parenting process, taught children foreign values and customs, and shamed them into rejecting their own culture, traditions, spirituality, and language. Residential school pedagogy was based on authority, control, and force. In order to survive this harsh environment, children learned to depend on themselves, act in an individualistic manner, and be competitive. These values were in opposition of their parents' and grandparents' cultural pedagogies of discovery and interdependency (Grant 1996; Haig-Brown 1988).

The Indian Act in 1876, and the education policy within, solidified the goal of assimilation in federal legislation. The release of the Davin Report in 1879 changed the pace of assimilation and standards of boarding schools. Nicholas Flood Davin's recommendations included the segregation and isolation of Indigenous children from any and every influence of their cultural traditions.

Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds:

The industrial school is the principal feature of the policy known as that of "aggressive civilization" [...] Indian culture is a contradiction in terms [...] they are uncivilized [...] the aim of education is to destroy the Indian.
(Davin, 1879 1)

Residential Schools in Full Force

The evolution of what was to become Indian Residential schools began in 1883 when Prime Minister John A. MacDonald took action on these recommendations to speed up the process of assimilation (Satzewich and Mahood 1995). Boarding schools were then set far from Indigenous communities to prevent all interactions and traces children had of their former lives. Residential schools reached a pinnacle in 1920, when it became mandatory for all Indian children from the age seven to fifteen to attend residential schools. Residential schools were primarily established for all First Nations and Inuit children (and later Métis attended as well) who were transported far away from their communities (Chartrand, Logan, and Daniels 2006). Parents who refused to send their children to residential school were prosecuted under the Truancy Provisions of the Indian Act. Punishments included fines and even imprisonment

Death, Disease, and Despair

Indian children lived in fear and isolation. Stories of those who survived describe the effects of the psychological trauma of the residential school experience, which was often permanently damaging.



Figure 6 Painting with a residential school theme. Credit: Artwork by Brenda Morency

In 1907 Dr. Peter Bryce, Medical Inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs, visited thirty-five western Canadian residential schools to investigate their sanitary conditions. The horrific conditions Bryce discovered made national headlines. An article published in the newspaper *Saturday Night* November 23, 1907, described how Indian residential schools should:

[...] compel the attention of Parliament [...] Indian boys and girls are dying like flies in these situations or shortly after leaving them [...] Even war seldom shows as large a percentage of fatalities as does the education system we have imposed on our Indian wards. (Milloy 1999, 91)

Bryce found unsanitary conditions, including the lack of ventilation and overcrowding that encouraged the spread and contamination of tuberculosis. Bryce also sent out surveys to the thirty-five schools, and the fifteen surveys he received back revealed grave statistics. The surveys showed that of the 1537 children in the fifteen schools, 368 (24%) died of tuberculosis. However, when Bryce analyzed the data further, he found in most circumstances that the death rate increased the longer the school was open. For instance, Old Sun Residential School opened in 1890, and 75% of students died during or shortly after being discharged. Keeseehousee Residential School opened in 1905, and Bryce's investigation revealed that one student died. Analyzing the data this way, Bryce projected that the death rates stemming from residential schools were closer to 42%, which was much higher than originally thought. This meant that for every 100 children that attended residential schools, only 58 would live to see their families again.

Bryce's conclusive results from the investigation garnered support from local officials but did not compel the government to launch a full investigation (Milloy 1999, 92). When the Department of Indian Affairs ignored his report, he published his own book, *The Story of a National Crime*, and described how the churches, with government approval, deliberately ignored the health issues stemming from unsanitary conditions.

In 1922, the living standards Indigenous children endured were labeled by the medical community as a “national crime” (Milloy 1999, 75). Survivor accounts are chilling and difficult to even comprehend. These narratives recite experiences of sexual assault, beatings, poisonings, electric shock, starvation, freezing, and medical experimentation. Survivors have verified that at least one school used an electric chair to punish students. St. Anne’s Catholic Residential School, open from 1904 to 1973, had an electric chair in the basement until the school was closed. Overall, the lack of federal funding for housing, food, and clothing, the assimilationist policies along with the unregulated and unchecked behaviour of the religious organizations in charge, created a system of severe abuse (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015).

Curriculum

The school curriculum was set up in a half-day system. For one half of the day, half the children were in the classroom learning how to read and write while the remaining half performed labour activities. They later switched around. Girls were given domestic duties to sew, knit, cook, and clean. Boys would engage in sports, agricultural duties, and chores (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Indigenous children were to dress in a



Figure 7 Mi'kmaq girls in sewing class, 1929; Credit: Library and Archives Canada

European civilized fashion and have their hair cut short in order to eliminate any trace of their Indigenous identity (Haig-Brown 1988, 58).

The number of residential schools in operation reached the high point of eighty in 1931. With the exception of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador, residential schools had expanded into the provinces and territories (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Without a choice, parents had to let go of their children not knowing when or if they would ever see them again.

Not including the Indigenous population, very few spoke out to question the morality of the assimilationist policies of this school system. The rare few non-Indigenous people who did speak out, like Dr. Peter Bryce, were silenced or terminated from their positions.

Personal Experience – Tracy Bear

Respecting this history, I sometimes force myself to imagine how it would be if my children were taken away and made to endure even a fraction of these terrifying and horrific experiences. As a parent, you expect that you can always protect and care for your children. What a feeling of helplessness and terror it would be for my children and I. Indigenous parents were threatened with prosecution or fines if they refused to sign over custody of their children and send them to school. If they did not, the children were taken away from their families by force.

Both my maternal grandparents were in residential school, and I wonder how did my great grandmothers and great grandfathers feel when they had to say goodbye to their children? Did they even get to say goodbye? That, I will never know; neither of my grandparents spoke to me about their residential school experience.

Métis Experience

Although the majority of survivors that attended residential schools were First Nations, Métis children did attend and survive residential schools as well. Often Métis survivor stories and experiences are not prominent in the body of residential school narratives. For Métis people, residential school attendance resulted from the complicated relationship with the Canadian government. The Canadian government did not acknowledge Métis as being within the jurisdiction of Indian Affairs and did not accept any responsibility – legal or otherwise – for the Métis people, including their education. However, Métis children were sent to residential schools as much as they were excluded from it, often used as filler to fulfill residential schools' pupil quota in order to receive funds from Indian Affairs (Chartrand, Logan and Daniels 2006, 3, 19). For those in remote areas, residential schools were the only one in the prairies. As well, Métis children attended schools, because they were seen as poor or living the "Indian way of life". A considerable number of Métis children attended residential schools, and these survivors' experiences reveal cultural abuses different from Indian survivors. As Métis, you were not white enough to fit into the dominant society, and you were not seen as Indian and therefore not eligible for Aboriginal rights (Chartrand, Logan and Daniels 2006, 22; Kearns 2013, 61; Miller 1996, 101–102).

Fall Out

The last residential school in Canada only closed its doors in 1996. Without a childhood spent with their families, speaking their language, and practicing their cultures, many Indigenous children faced harsh realities. The residential schools had raised these individuals, and now they did not know how to parent their own children. The legacy of Indian residential schools created an ongoing impact of what we see and call today as intergenerational trauma (Gardener 2000, 190).

Long Lasting Impact

For Indigenous peoples, children are seen as gifts from the Creator. Traditional ways of raising children is strongly interconnected and embedded in the extended kinship

system and their communities. Residential schools and creation of the Indian education policy resulted in communities without children and targeted the most vital part of Indigenous peoples' lives (Lawrence 2004, 105).

Residential schools replaced the traditional ways of teaching and learning and were centred on authority, control, and force. Indigenous children who were stripped away from their homes were defenseless. Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott described the goal of this education system as one that worked toward the full assimilation of Indians until there was no 'Indian question' (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

By the 1950s it was clear that the assimilationist practices through residential schools were not working. Indigenous cultures were still surviving and in some areas thriving. Indian Affairs started to question the efficiency of the residential school system. In 1951, the federal government revised the Indian Act, and although many residential schools still remained open they began to integrate Indigenous children into the public schools. The public-school system was not welcoming, and many Indigenous students faced discrimination within a very Euro-centric system. Together parents and Indigenous communities started to resist and raise concern over sending their children to residential schools. In the 1973, the National Indian Brotherhood called to put an end to all residential schools, in a document called *Indian Control of Indian Education*. The legacy of Indian residential schools would hold a long-lasting impact impairing Indigenous peoples' traditional ways of raising and teaching their children (Kirkness 2013, 74, 77–84).

Indoctrination

Because Indigenous children were forbidden to speak their native languages and forced to speak English, the cultural and language loss often eroded the ability for parents to communicate with their children. Residential schools indoctrinated Indigenous children to believe their traditional ways of life and worldviews were primitive and meaningless.

Instead of building up children's self-esteem, residential schools left a legacy of shame, humiliation, and pain (Castellano, Davis, and Lahache 2000, 25–26).

The lack of exposure to a loving family life and nurturing community disrupted the way residential school survivors raised their children. In isolation from every influence of their families and communities, residential schools had produced the dislocation of culture (Brown 2012, 22). Residential schools introduced dysfunctional family settings and destructive behaviours. Indian residential school survivors only knew how to raise children based on how they were raised.

Previously, the relationship between parents and children was embedded in love and nurture. Some survivor accounts speak of their inability to show affection for their own children, although they still loved them (Lafrance and Collins 2003, 115–117). Owing to their experience in residential schools, many survivors were unable to create intimate bonds with their children. Raised in fear and shame, they simply did not know how. Survivors only knew the strict and cold environment of residential schools, not love and affection (Lawrence 2004, 109).

Often times, the harmful actions that took place in residential schools were repeated. This has created this ripple effect of intergenerational trauma that has continued to impact survivors, their children and grandchildren (Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman. 2009; Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman, 2011; Lawrence 2004).

The effect of residential schools has been passed on through the generations. Over the years, all the resulting issues of domestic violence and abuse, alcohol and drug addiction, unemployment, and more stem back to colonialism. Indian residential schools were one of the main tools of colonialism (Nagy 2012).



Figure 8 Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School, 1885[?], with tents, carts and teepees outside the fence; Credit: O.B. Buell/Library and Archives Canada

Speaking Out

Leaving residential schools, survivors had to deal with feelings of shame and resorted to unhealthy ways to cope with their pain. In many cases, residential schools created lack of self-confidence and feelings of self-hate. Phil Fontaine, former Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, was one of the first to speak about his experiences, including sexual abuse that caused insecurity and loss of identity (Fontaine 1993). After Indigenous children had undergone years of schooling with the mission get rid of their culture, certain experiences and feelings were burned into their memory.

Unable to deal with the shame and pain, survivors found unhealthy methods to deal with the emotional distress, sometimes through the use of alcohol or drugs. As survivors grew up over the years, the aftereffects of residential schools were evident by the low levels of education and high levels of incarceration, unemployment, and children in the child welfare system (Grant 1996, 245–265).

There is enough overwhelming research, statistical data, and personal stories to make an undeniable connection between the intergenerational trauma of residential schools and the dysfunction and trauma that occurs in many Indigenous communities today. Many survivors, their children, and their grandchildren suffer from the psychological trauma caused by the conditions and abuses in residential schools. Although the federal government policies did their best to “kill the Indian in the child,” it was through the resiliency and strength of the people that Indigenous cultures continue to thrive. Further, the children who were sent to residential school have shown great courage by carrying out acts of resistance and demonstrating survival skills. Despite the scars and battle wounds, Indigenous people continue to fight for their self-determination and continue to remember, share, revitalize, and reclaim their cultures and identity (Miller 1996, 343).

Section Three: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Responsibility

Seen as a cultural invasion, Indian residential schools were built on control that disempowered and exploited Indigenous children. Indigenous peoples continue to deal with intergenerational trauma today. Only until residential school survivors began to reveal the truth about their abuses did the federal government address the need for a national reconciliation for Canada's past actions. Indigenous peoples were reclaiming their cultures, dignity, and traditional forms of learning. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report documenting the historical injustices and recommendations for Indigenous peoples' restoration was finalized in 1996, which was the same year that the last residential school closed. This five-volume, 4,000-page report provides in-depth research derived from extensive interviews with Aboriginal people, communities, and organizations.

The RCAP report also revealed historical facts about Indian residential schools and the damage they had caused to Indigenous students, families and communities. The report held the truth about the injustices, which made it possible for survivors to file a civil lawsuit against the federal government. Due to the many litigants, the size of the lawsuit had the potential to cause bankruptcy for the government. In response, the government and churches recognized the need to formally acknowledge and resolve the matter. RCAP's call for integration of Indigenous people into Canada's constitutional and institutional order, fulfilment of the promises found in Section 35, illustrates what a de-colonial process would look like in terms of government policies and action.

Statement of Apology

In January 1998, Jane Stewart, Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, released a "Statement of Reconciliation" in the *Gathering Strength* report. (Stewart, 1998) From the Gathering Strength report, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established that involved Aboriginal community-based healing

initiatives that held a mandate of eleven years ending in 2010. It focused on the physical and sexual abuses within residential schools but served as a temporary remedy.

Many residential school survivors deal with post-traumatic stress disorder from their experiences in school. Residential schools traumatized students and created enormous imbalance that affected their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual wellbeing. As a result, many survivors have continued to suffer from nightmarish flashbacks and are unable to deal with the pain. *The Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement* was implemented in 2007 and was followed by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper's national apology in 2008 that directly acknowledged the role the government had in the residential school system (Canada 2007).

While the "Statement of Reconciliation" of 1998 acknowledged the students that suffered abuse, the "Statement of Apology" of 2008 was more inclusive of all students who attended residential schools. Some argue the limitation of the apology was that it suggested the residential school system was the only form of assimilation without looking at the other assimilationist ideologies within government policies. In addition, many have criticized the sincerity of the apology and failure to acknowledge the ongoing impact by the legacy of residential schools.

The Indian Residential Settlement Agreement consisted of a core package with a compensation payment of \$10,000 for each survivor and an additional \$3,000 for each year they attended. These funds also included an assessment process of individual claims of physical and sexual abuse, healing endowment, the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and a commemoration fund.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation can be understood as attending relationships, rebuilding trust, and working out our differences. It allows us to come to terms with the past and draw attention to the future. It is important to acknowledge the past, present, and future. The phrase 'forgive and forget' is often used as a form of reconciliation; however, this implies forgetting and never looking back. Residential schools are an important part of

Canada's history, and in order to understand our present state, we must look at our past. Instead, we need to look to the voice of Anishinaabe Wab Kinew (2012) who imparts this wisdom,

The truth about reconciliation is this: It is not a second chance at assimilation. It should not be a kinder, gentler evangelism, free from the horrors of the residential school era. Rather, true reconciliation is a second chance at building a mutually respectful relationship.

The TRC allowed survivors release and renewal by promoting reconciliation with society as a whole. The TRC mandate was to acknowledge and clarify past abuses, respond to the support and needs of survivors, contribute to accountability, and address institutional responsibilities and recommendations. Lastly, it encouraged reconciliation by informing the public in the hopes of reducing conflict.



Figure 9 Figure 10 Canadians for Reconciliation, a walk-in Vancouver, 2008; Credit: Scazon/Flickr

It is vital for societal reconciliation to happen, as we must admit the truth about the past. We must acknowledge previous actions in order to understand why it happened and to prevent injustices from occurring again. The TRC helped uncover the truth and gave survivors a voice. Although the last official TRC event was in March of 2014, this does not mean reconciliation and healing are finished. Reconciliation and healing is a reciprocal process that provides hope for Indigenous peoples and understanding in Canadian society.

Reconciliation?

Residential schools deprived Indigenous children of their cultures and languages and left them to handle their own trauma from their experiences in school. Since the government implemented the Indian Residential School Settlement, it focused on ways to address the impact of the residential school system and led to the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was essential for revealing the truth about the legacy of Indian residential schools and to promote healing and renewal for survivors.

It is difficult to discuss Indian residential schools without looking at the bigger picture of colonialism. Residential schools cannot be separated from the injustices of colonialism, which play out in the oppression and racism of Indigenous peoples in everyday life. Intersecting with colonialism, residential school experiences influence high rates of suicides, overdoses, criminal and domestic violence. Reconciliation begins with acknowledging all of the effects of colonialism. The TRC highlights the importance of sharing the truth about the nature and extent of the suffering and harms of residential school students. Reconciliation is an inclusive and participatory process that involves all peoples, the survivors and their families, communities, religious groups, former employees, the federal government, and the rest of the Canadian society. The TRC was meant to examine the past to lay down a foundation that would allow for reconciliation in future.

Reconciliation includes gathering a relational truth. Relational truth takes into consideration the complexities of the experiences, the harms, and other impacts of residential schools. By this it attends to the full range of relational harms. The restorative justice and/or outcome would be considered with the relational harms. For instance, a confirmation of significant relational harms would warrant commensurate justice. Also by taking a restorative justice approach, it helps determine what should be done to restore the relationships, and produce change. Reconciling without changing the deeply seated social and political conditions would create little or no improvements for Indigenous peoples, and would not allow for full reconciliation.

Surviving

RCAP had a twenty-year plan to fulfill the recommendations. However, there has been little or no implementation of these recommendations, and therefore no improvement for Indigenous peoples. However, many Aboriginal communities have incorporated a grassroots approach with traditional teachings and ways of healing. Residential schools have created a loss of identity, as many survivors and generations afterwards lived and continue to live with uncertainty about their cultures and heritage (Grant 1996, 189–195; Mussel 2008, 331). This grassroots approach would see survivors and their children searching out knowledge keepers and Elders to learn about their cultural teachings, languages, and traditions. There are a variety of reasons why this cultural knowledge was continued on. First, not everyone went to residential schools, and there were various circumstances where some children were kept from going. Also, some residential school survivors were able to revisit, remember, and rediscover their cultural traditions, languages, and culture.

Some argue that full reconciliation would involve the process of decolonization, which is to entirely reconfigure colonial systems, institutions, and ways of understanding (Nagy 2013, 21). Reconciliation would also involve the removal of forces that keep colonial practices intact that work against Indigenous peoples (Mussel 2008, 324). Recognition and reconciliation must happen on every level for people to know the truth about residential schools and the past relationship between Indigenous peoples and their colonizers. In addition, it must allow for others to see how the effects of residential schools continue to exist in the present.

This mission to reconcile involves Indigenous peoples reclaiming their traditional teaching and learning processes. It combines the efforts to incorporate into school curriculums for Indigenous peoples their cultural teachings and provide languages courses. Also, it contains the retelling of history that incorporates stories and facts about Indian residential schools. It is a mission to have an education that values Indigenous peoples' knowledge and ways of knowing.

An individual and collective reconciliation with Indigenous peoples can lead to healthy family settings, economic self-sufficiency, governance, health and education through the changes of colonial institutions and policies. There have been many initiatives, such as the Project of Heart, that focus on education, healing and reclaiming strength and dignity of Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion



Figure 11. Fun at Kingfisher Lake, 2005; Credit: Peter Bregg

Healing

There have been many projects, programs, and campaigns that promote healing and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples. For example, the Project of Heart has received support and grants from the Anglican Church of Canada and United Church of Canada to educate the public and create awareness about the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. (<http://projectofheart.ca/>) Not only is this an examination of the history and legacy of residential schools, but it also serves as a commemoration and an honouring of the lives of Indigenous children who lost their lives in residential schools. For example, since there has been a striking increase of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system, many people are pushing for ways to address this and improve care for Indigenous children.

These projects are important, because the reconciliation of Canada's history of assimilation is a continuous process. There are 444 recommendations from the RCAP report that address how Canada can achieve reconciliation. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has distributed highly successful programs and services for healing. The TRC had their last gathering in March 2014, and since then there has been a small increase in the awareness of the legacy of Indian residential schools for the general public. However, there is still work to be done to continue efforts to reconcile and establish a better standing relationship with the government and the Canadian society.

Many issues of intergenerational trauma persist, and the impacts of residential schools are still present in Indigenous peoples lives and communities. There have been initiatives that focus on promoting education and healing. Another powerful example of one campaign called "Be a Witness!" is a collaboration of the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, which is a non-profit organization. This campaign presented their work to the Human Rights Commission and held Canada accountable for the treatment of First Nations children (<https://fnccaringsociety.com/i-am-witness>). They addressed the federal government's underfunding for child welfare services for First Nations children. Some of these other campaigns address the need to improve the growth and development of Indigenous children, include the Touchstones of Hope, Our Dreams Matter Too, and Have a Heart. All of these carry similar goals to improve the lives of Indigenous children at home and school as well as promote reconciliation (<https://fnccaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope>; <https://fnccaringsociety.com/have-a-heart>).

Indigenous people's resiliency is shown by the continuation of their cultural traditions, practices and teachings. Generations of Indigenous peoples have been forced to residential schools in order to destroy their families, cultures and languages. Yet, they continue to speak their languages, perform ceremonies, and carrying on their teachings. However, there is still a great amount of healing and reconciling that needs to take place for residential school survivors, Indigenous families, and communities.

Indigenous peoples are now reclaiming their traditional ways of educating (Kirkness 2013; Morris, McLeoad, and Danesi 1993). In order to gain true reconciliation, there is an effort to gain formal recognition of Indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing, core values, language and cultures. There are initiatives that focus on ways to further reconciliation. Even though residential school survivors were given compensation, and the government has made a declaration of reconciliation and given an apology, many Indigenous peoples continue to deal the trauma from the legacy of Indian residential schools. The ending of the TRC national gathering in March of 2014 has left the rest of reconciliation and healing up to Indigenous peoples and the rest of the Canadian society.

Credits

- Cover Image: Artwork by Leah Dorion; Credit: Leah Dorion; URL: <http://www.leahdorion.ca/index.html>
- Figure 1. Native people - Eskimo group, 1884; Credit: Geological Survey of Canada/Library and Archives Canada/PA-050820; License: Public Domain; URL: http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3366909
- Figure 2. TTT - Inuit Elder Susie at Labrador Night, May 21, 2009; Credit: VisitGrosMorne/Flickr; License: CC BY 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>; URL: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/grosmornecoop/9237292049/in/photolist-fk3sKP-9Xtacq-5YgFE5-f5gx72>
- Figure 3. Painting of a Windigo (center); Credit: Artwork by Brenda Morency
- Figure 4. Interior of class room, students working at their desks, Brandon Indian Residential School, Brandon, Manitoba, 1946; Credit: National Film Board of Canada. Photothèque collection / Library and Archives Canada / PA-048571; Restrictions on use: Nil; Copyright: Expired; URL: http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3381313
- Figure 5. A group of nuns with Aboriginal students, ca. 1890; Credit: H.J. Woodside/Library and Archives Canada/PA-123707; Restrictions on use: Nil; Copyright: Expired; URL: http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3193392
- Figure 6. Painting with a residential school theme. Credit: Artwork by Brenda Morency
- Figure 7. Mi'kmaq girls in sewing class at the Roman Catholic-run Shubenacadie Indian Residential School in Shubenacadie; Credit: Library and Archives Canada/PA-185530; Restrictions on use: Nil; Copyright: Expired; URL: http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3193832
- Figure 8. Distant view of Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School with tents, [Red River] carts and teepees outside the fence, Lebret, Saskatchewan, [May 1885?]; Credit: O.B. Buell/Library and Archives Canada/PA-182246; Restrictions on use: Nil; Copyright: Expired; URL: http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3194883
- Figure 9. Canadians for Reconciliation; Chinese New Year, 2008, Vancouver, BC; Credit: Scazon; License: CC BY 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>; URL: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/scazon/3049031463/in/photostream/>
- Figure 10. "Cody is launched into the air by his friends on a hot summer day." Photo from Kingfisher Lake, the very first Aboriginal literacy camp for First Nations youth; Credit: Peter Bregg; URL: <http://www.photosensitive.com/project-gallery-n.php?i=13&id=14&p=1>

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