

## Call to Action

- 5) We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.

## Education

The residential school system failed as an education system. It was based on racist assumptions about the intellectual and cultural inferiority of Aboriginal people—the belief that Aboriginal children were incapable of attaining anything more than a rudimentary elementary-level or vocational education. Consequently, for most of the system’s history, the majority of students never progressed beyond elementary school. The government and church officials who operated the residential schools ignored the positive emphasis that the Treaties and many Aboriginal families placed on education. Instead, they created dangerous and frightening institutions that provided little learning.

In their mission to ‘civilize’ and Christianize, the school staff relied on corporal punishment to discipline their students. That punishment often crossed the line into physical abuse. Although it is employed much less frequently now, corporal punishment is still legally permissible in schools and elsewhere under Canadian law. Section 43 of the *Criminal Code* says: “Every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances.” The Commission believes that corporal punishment is a relic of a discredited past and has no place in Canadian schools or homes.

## Call to Action

- 6) We call upon the Government of Canada to repeal Section 43 of the *Criminal Code* of Canada.

The objectives of the schools were to strip away Aboriginal children’s identities and assimilate them into Western Christian society. Doris Young, who attended the Elkhorn residential school in Manitoba, described the experience as a systematic attack on her identity as a Cree person.

Those schools were a war on Aboriginal children, and they took away our identity. First of all, they gave us numbers, we had no names, we were numbers, and they cut our hair. They took away our clothes, and gave us clothes ... we all looked alike. Our hair was all the same, cut us into bangs, and straight short, straight hair up to our ears.... They took away our moccasins, and gave us shoes. I was just a baby. I didn’t