

Sandy Bay residential school in Manitoba, created a series of twenty-four paintings to be housed permanently in the University of Manitoba's School of Art Gallery. In an interview with *CBC News* on September 24, 2013, he explained that "during the process memories came back that he had previously suppressed ... [but that] he found the whole experience cathartic. At the end, he felt a sigh of relief, a sigh of liberation."²¹¹

Over the course of the Commission's mandate, several major art exhibits ran concurrently with its National Events. During the British Columbia National Event in Vancouver, for example, three major exhibits opened, featuring well-known Aboriginal artists, some of whom were also Survivors or intergenerational Survivors. A number of non-Aboriginal artists were also featured. Their work explored themes of denial, complicity, apology, and government policy. Two of these exhibits were at the University of British Columbia: *Witnesses: Art and Canada's Indian Residential Schools* at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, and the Museum of Anthropology's *Speaking to Memory: Images and Voices from the St. Michael's Residential School*. Both exhibits were collaborative efforts that also engaged Survivors, artists, and curatorial staff in related public education initiatives, including workshops, symposia, and public dialogues based on the exhibits.²¹²

A significant number of the statements gathered by the Commission also came to us in artistic formats. Some Survivors said that although it hurt too much to tell their story in the usual way, they had been able to find their voice instead by writing a poem, a song, or a book. Some made a video or audio recording, offered photographs, or produced a theatre performance piece or a film. Others created traditional blankets, quilts, carvings, or paintings to depict residential school experiences, to celebrate those who survived them, or to commemorate those who did not. Lasting public memory of the schools has therefore been produced not only through oral testimonies, but also through this wide range of artistic expressions. The arts have opened up new and critical space for Survivors, artists, curators, and public audiences to explore the complexities of "truth," "healing," and "reconciliation."

The Commission funded or supported several arts-related projects. Early in its mandate, the TRC sponsored the "Living Healing Quilt Project," which was organized by Anishinaabe quilter Alice Williams from Curve Lake First Nation in Ontario. Women Survivors and intergenerational Survivors from across the country created individual quilt blocks depicting their memories of residential schools. These were then stitched together into three quilts, *Schools of Shame*, *Child Prisoners*, and *Crimes Against Humanity*.

The quilts tell a complex story of trauma, loss, isolation, recovery, healing, and hope through women's eyes. The sewing skills taught to young Aboriginal girls in the residential schools and passed along to their daughters and granddaughters are now used to stitch together a counter-narrative.²¹³ This project also inspired the "Healing Quilt Project," which linked education and art. At the Manitoba National Event, as an expression of reconciliation, the Women's and Gender Studies and Aboriginal Governance departments at the University of Winnipeg gave the TRC a quilt created by students and professors as part