

# On the Side of the Angels





# On the Side of the Angels

A Memoir by Jose Amaujaq Kusugak

Teaching Guide

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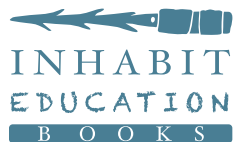
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## Content note

This teaching guide includes subject matter related to residential schools. Some content may be disturbing and/or triggering for readers and their families.

Before beginning to use this teaching guide with students, it is strongly recommended that you speak with your school support team and inform parents and guardians in your community. Please read this entire teaching guide before beginning your classroom unit.

Below is a list of resources you and your students can access for support:

- **Kids Help Phone:** Use the online chat at [kidshelpphone.ca](https://kidshelpphone.ca), call 1-800-668-6868, or text CONNECT to 686868 (24/7)
- **The LifeLine App** (provides call, text, and online chat services) (24/7)
- **Crisis Services Canada:** Use the online chat, call 1-833-456-4566 (24/7), or text START to 45645 (4:00 p.m.–12:00 a.m. EST)
- **Hope for Wellness Help Line:** Use the online chat or call 1-855-242-3310
- **Indian Residential School Survivors Society:** 1-800-721-0066

**Before beginning to use this teaching guide, consult your school's protocol regarding disclosures of abuse.**



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# Introduction

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## About Qinuisaarniq

Qinuisaarniq (“resiliency”) is a program created to educate Nunavummiut and all Canadians about the history and impacts of residential schools, policies of assimilation, and other colonial acts that affected the Canadian Arctic.

Each resource and accompanying teaching guide in the program has been carefully written and reviewed to include level-appropriate opportunities for students to learn about colonial acts and policies that affected Inuit. Topics covered include the residential school system, relocations to settlements and the High Arctic, sled dog slaughters, the use of E and W numbers, and others. These acts and policies created long-lasting impacts on Inuit individuals and communities, which are still being felt today.

The resources in this program include personal interviews, testimony, and writing, non-fiction informational resources, and information about traditional Inuit practices. For a complete list of resources, visit [www.inhabiteducation.com](http://www.inhabiteducation.com).

### Acknowledgements

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Government of Nunavut Department of Education  
Legacy of Hope Foundation  
Nunavut Arctic College  
Qikiqtani Inuit Association

**I** Nunavummiut means  
“the people of  
● Nunavut.”

Qinuisaarniq was originally intended for Nunavut teachers and students. This teaching guide has been adapted for use outside of Nunavut.

# The residential school system<sup>1</sup>

For over a century, beginning in the mid-1800s and continuing into the late 1990s, Indigenous children in Canada were taken from their homes and communities and placed in institutions called “Indian residential schools.” The residential school system was a collaboration between the Government of Canada and the mainstream churches to educate Indigenous children in an environment that removed them from the influences of their families, culture, and language. The schools were attended by children as young as four or five years of age.

Separated from their families and prohibited from speaking their languages and practising their culture, the vast majority of the over 150,000 children who attended these schools experienced neglect and suffering. The impacts of sexual, mental, and physical abuse, shame, and deprivation endured at residential schools continue to affect generations of residential school survivors, their families, and communities today.

**Note:** The information in this section is intended to give you, the teacher, a brief historical overview of the residential school system in Canada, especially in the North. You do not need to teach this information to your students, but you may wish to give them some of this information for context.



Students at Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School, Chesterfield Inlet, September 5, 1958. 1st row: Rene Otak is on far left; 2nd row: Peter Irniq is on the far right, beside him is Paul Manitok; 3rd row: Nick Amautinauq is on the far right; 4th row: Raymond Kalak is seated second from the left.

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this guide have been adapted with permission from: Legacy of Hope Foundation, *We Were So Far Away: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools—Activity Guide* (Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation, December 2015); Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Nunavut, and the Legacy of Hope Foundation, *The Residential School System in Canada: Understanding the Past—Seeking Reconciliation—Building Hope for Tomorrow*, 2nd edition (Yellowknife, Iqaluit, and Ottawa: Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Nunavut, and the Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013).

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## ***Inuit and the residential school system***

While residential schools existed in Canada since 1831, it was not until the 1950s that a significant number of these schools were operating in the Canadian North. By 1964, over three-quarters of school-aged Inuit children were attending residential schools.

The purpose of residential schools was to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the dominant colonial culture by removing children from the care of their parents and community, placing them in institutions far from their homes, teaching them Christian and European ideologies, and prohibiting them from speaking their Indigenous languages or practising their cultures.

## ***Residential school system timeline***

On the following pages you will find a timeline of important events in the history of residential schools in Canada, with a special focus on events that affected Inuit. For more detailed histories, see the list of resources following the timeline. The word *Indian* is used in a historical context and refers to non-Métis and non-Inuit Indigenous people.

This timeline begins in 1867, with the creation of the Dominion of Canada. Before that, there were scattered attempts to bring Western- and Christian-centred education to Indigenous communities—including early residential schools—but residential schools did not become a formalized system until the 1870s.

Although this timeline ends in 2019, the effects of residential schools continue to be felt today, and reconciliation work is ongoing.

1867

The *Constitution Act* creates the Dominion of Canada. The new country includes Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.



*The Fathers of Confederation at the London Conference.* John David Kelly, c. 1889.

1876

The *Indian Act* is passed. The Act gives the federal government the exclusive right to create legislation regarding “Indians” and “Indian lands.” It also defines who is an Indian and establishes related legal rights. Inuit are not included in the Act.

1879

The *Davin Report* recommends the creation of residential schools for Indian and Métis children, so that children can be removed from the influence of their parents.

1880

England transfers all of its land and interests in the High Arctic to Canada. Under the policy of the transfer, Northern Indigenous peoples, including Inuit, are to be left as much as possible to their own devices.



Inuit at Stupart Bay, Quebec, 1884.

1883

Prime Minister John A. Macdonald authorizes the creation of residential schools in the Canadian West.

1894

The *Indian Act* is amended to make a European-style education compulsory for status Indians. Children are forbidden to speak their own language and practise their own culture and spirituality and are forced to learn and adopt English, Western culture, and Christianity.

1920

Residential school attendance is made compulsory for every Indian child between 7 and 15 years of age.



Class portrait at Cross Lake Indian Residential School, Cross Lake, Manitoba, 1940.

1934

The federal government conducts research into Inuit education. The leader of the research recommends that Canada provide formal education to Inuit.

1939

Inuit become a federal responsibility, including in the areas of education and health.

1944

Drs. Andrew Moore and G. J. Wherrett study Northern education and health. They recommend that the government increase education and health programming in the North immediately.

1944

The Family Allowance program is introduced in federal Parliament to support families through wartime inflation. This program would become a major factor in Inuit attending residential schools; in order for their families to receive the benefit, Inuit children had to attend school until they turned 16. For most Inuit, this meant going to residential school.

1949

Newfoundland and Labrador become part of the country of Canada. Inuit in those areas are now subject to the *Indian Act*.

Early 1950s

The federal government revises its earlier policy of leaving Inuit to their own devices as much as possible. Inuit are now to be integrated into mainstream Canadian society.

1950s-1960s

Over 20 residential schools and federal hostels open in the Western Arctic.

1952

The Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources assumes responsibility for Inuit.



Three Inuit children (names unknown) on a toboggan, between 1928 and 1944.



Inuit children (left to right: Lily Carpenter, Jean Atigikyoak, Amy Komak, Lorna Harley, Harold Kayoia, Thomas Stewart, Hank Rodgers) at residential school in Inuvik, Northwest Territories.

1970

Responsibility for the education of Inuit is transferred to the territorial Government of the Northwest Territories and the Province of Quebec.

1991

Phil Fontaine (later the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations) and others begin to speak publicly about the abuses they suffered at residential schools.

1997

The last residential school, Sir Alexander Mackenzie School in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, closes.

1999

The Nunavut territory and government are established.

2008

The Government of Canada formally apologizes to former students of residential schools. Survivors of residential schools in Newfoundland and Labrador are omitted from the apology.

2008

The Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission is established.

2015

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada releases its 94 Calls to Action.

2017

The Government of Canada formally apologizes to residential school survivors in Newfoundland and Labrador.

2019

The Government of Canada presents its final report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, declaring that “abuses and violations committed and condoned by the Canadian state represent genocide against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA individuals.”



Sir Alexander Mackenzie School in 1968 or 1969.



Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Mary Simon, and First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine, June 11, 2008.



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## Resources for further reading

- Legacy of Hope Foundation. 2013. *Inuit and the Residential School System*. Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation.
- —. 2014. *Hope and Healing: The Legacy of the Indian Residential School System*. Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation.
- —. n.d. "Missing History: Recovering Canada's Lost Histories." [www.missinghistory.ca](http://www.missinghistory.ca).
- —. n.d. "Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools." <http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/>.
- Qikiqtani Inuit Association. 2013. *Illinniarniq: Schooling in Qikiqtaaluk*, Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Thematic Reports and Special Studies, 1950-1975. Iqaluit: Inhabit Media.



## Residential schools and your classroom

The histories, memories, and impacts of the residential school system are complex. There are many details, policies, different perspectives, and unique features that are challenging to understand fully even after years of study. Here are some important things to think about as you prepare to use this teaching guide in your classroom.

- **No one can know everything that happened at residential schools.** Try not to position yourself as an “expert.” Even if you have a connection to the content, try to remain open to the possibility that participants may have more knowledge or experience than you.
- **There are few generalizations that can automatically apply to all residential schools.** Each school, in its particular location, under its particular administration, and at a particular time, had unique features. It is important to listen for, recognize, and discuss differences. This should be made clear to participants.
- **Residential schools in some parts of the North were not in operation for as long as schools in other regions of Canada.** This means that in some places, fewer generations of children attended residential schools. This does not diminish or simplify the experience of students and their families from the North. It does mean that their experience was different. For example, a greater number of Inuit students were able to retain their traditional language and cultural knowledge despite attendance at residential schools.
- **Some of the activities in this teaching guide deal with difficult subjects, and emotional responses may be triggered in participants as a result.** It is vital to create a supportive environment when presenting these materials—one in which participants can express their feelings and thoughts openly.

### **What is a trigger?**

- At some points in this teaching guide, we talk about something being “a trigger” or about someone being “triggered.”

A “trigger” is something that sets off a negative emotional response, which can be fear, sadness, panic, flashbacks, pain, or a variety of other responses. Triggers can occur when a person remembers a traumatic event that has happened to them.

Triggers often cause a stronger emotional reaction if the person did not have any prior warning. That is why it is important to give your students advance notice about the disturbing content they may encounter as they read the book and go through the activities in this teaching guide, so that they can be prepared to encounter triggers and have the option to leave the classroom and avoid the triggers if necessary.

## ***Dealing with disturbing content***

Discussing the impacts of residential schools can involve being confronted with stories of traumatic experiences, such as separation from family, mistreatment and neglect, abuse of many kinds, and children who did not survive. While these experiences may seem to be from the distant past, they may provoke strong emotions and feel close to home today. Strong feelings may well up unexpectedly or seemingly without explanation and may connect to experiences individuals have had themselves, or manifest as “vicarious trauma” (the transfer of trauma from the victim/survivor to the “witness,” or person who is hearing their story).

The impacts of residential schools continue into the present for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. These can manifest in a variety of ways, including domestic, sexual, physical, and spiritual abuse, substance abuse and addictions, disconnection with family, racialized and sexualized violence, lack of language and/or cultural skills, intergenerational transmission of racism, and suicide, among others. It may be difficult to raise these issues when there are participants who are, or may be, directly affected by these situations. However, naming and talking about these issues openly is part of breaking the cycle of trauma.

**When should I lead these activities?**

We recommend not leading activities on subjects related to residential schools on Fridays. This is so that if students need support after a lesson, they can come to you later that day or the next day rather than waiting for the weekend to end. It also gives you the chance to observe students after lessons to see if they need support. For the same reason, we recommend leading activities earlier in the day rather than toward the end of the day.

Many residential school survivors have shown courage in speaking out, resiliency while on their healing journeys, and willingness to participate in the reconciliation process. They have shared memories and stories so that we can be better informed in the present and contribute to constructing a better future. While it is sometimes difficult to make sense of what happened, listening is an important act of respect and support.

### What to watch for in students

While you read and discuss this book, you may notice some students experiencing strong emotions. These feelings are normal, and students should be encouraged to express how they feel in a safe and respectful way. However, be sure to watch for signs that a child may need help or intervention. If a student's behaviour becomes extreme or out of the ordinary (such as acting aggressively, or being very quiet when they are usually outgoing), reach out to the child's parents and/or the appropriate supports. You may also wish to share **Handout 1: Resources for Support** with your students' parents and guardians to provide them with their own support system.

**Review your school's protocol regarding disclosures of abuse before beginning the activities in this teaching guide.**

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## Self-care

It is important that teachers practise self-care for their own well-being and because they are responsible for teaching about the book and supporting students. Take care of yourself, emotionally and spiritually, and talk about these ways of coping with your students. Consider the following suggestions for ways to practise self-care:

- Each day, write down three things you are grateful for.
- Engage in reflective or spiritual practice, like meditation or attending church.
- Do yoga, a sport, or another kind of exercise.
- Spend time outdoors.
- Participate in hobbies you enjoy, like sewing, cooking, or playing cards.
- Talk with a friend.
- Make time for relaxation.
- Talk with your school's principal or school support team about your feelings.

### Teaching tip

Before beginning this book study, it is strongly recommended that

- you make other members of the school community aware that you plan to teach this subject matter. Discuss with your administration about the best way to approach this.

## *Communicating with parents and guardians*

It is important that parents and guardians are informed that students will be learning about residential schools. Students may come home with questions or materials that could be upsetting or triggering to their family members. Talk with your school's administration and school support team about the best way to do this. Some ideas include:

- Sending a letter home to parents and guardians (see the "Reproducible resources" at the end of this teaching guide for a letter you can photocopy and send home with students)
- Informing other school staff at a meeting and asking them to spread the word
- Posting an announcement on your school's Facebook page

As much as possible, we recommend that resources in the Qinuisaarniq program be taught by educators with strong background knowledge of Indigenous issues and residential schools. However, if you are new to this subject matter, here are some tips for using these materials:

- Research on your own about Inuit experiences of residential schools. Recognize that these experiences are both similar to and different from First Nations and Métis experiences. See "Resources for further reading" earlier in this teaching guide for starting points.
- Research on your own about other topics related to Inuit culture, language, and history. Some starting points include:
  - Qikiqtani Inuit Association ([qia.ca](http://qia.ca)) and the Qikiqtani Truth Commission ([qtcommission.ca](http://qtcommission.ca))
  - Kivalliq Inuit Association ([kivalliqinuit.ca](http://kivalliqinuit.ca))
  - Kitikmeot Heritage Society ([kitikmeotheritage.ca](http://kitikmeotheritage.ca))
  - Inuktut Tusaalanga ([tusaalanga.ca](http://tusaalanga.ca))
  - Isuma TV ([isuma.tv](http://isuma.tv))

- 
- Seek out local Indigenous events in your community and visit your local Native resource centre, if there is one close by. Larger cities may have organizations for urban Inuit that you can contact to find out about events and outreach opportunities.
  - Be prepared to encounter difficult feelings from your students and from yourself. Particularly if you are not Indigenous, you may experience feelings of guilt, or encounter blame (direct or indirect) from your students. It is important to acknowledge these feelings and address them (see the suggestions in the “Self-care” section earlier in this guide) without asking or expecting anything from your students.
  - Acknowledge to your students that you don’t have all the knowledge about residential schools, and that you are learning together.

Remember that by learning about residential schools and guiding your students through the materials, you are participating in the reconciliation process.

## About the book

Originally published by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, this memoir describes Jose Amaujaq Kusugak's early childhood in Naujaat (then Repulse Bay), Nunavut, his experience of being taken away from his family for residential school in Chesterfield Inlet, and his memories of life at Turquetil Hall, the residence he lived in while at school. He also discusses what it was like to reunite with his family during school breaks, and his feelings upon hearing the government's apology for residential schools in 2008.



## About the author

Jose Amaujaq Kusugak was born in 1950 in an iglu in Naujaat (then Repulse Bay), Nunavut. Both of his parents worked for the Hudson's Bay Company; his father was a handyman, and his mother worked as a cleaner and fur washer. Jose went to school in Chesterfield Inlet and Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, and Churchill, Manitoba. He attended high school in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. After graduation, he returned to Nunavut to work at the Eskimo Language School in Rankin Inlet. Later, he taught Inuktitut and Inuit history at Churchill Vocational Centre.



Jose became active in Inuit politics in 1971, shortly after the founding of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) (then Inuit Tapirisat of Canada). He persuaded the new organization of the critical need to standardize the written Inuit language, which is primarily an oral language. However, funding for this project had been delayed, so Jose worked as an assistant at ITK and introduced the concept of land claims to Inuit in the Arctic. In 1974, he went to Alaska to study how the land claims process worked there. From 1980 to 1990, Jose worked as the area manager of CBC in the Kivalliq region. He served as president of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, one of four regional organizations that make up ITK, from 1994 to 2000. He was elected president of ITK in June 2000. He described the relationship of Inuit to Canada as "First Canadians, Canadians First."

Jose Amaujaq Kusugak died in 2011 in Rankin Inlet.

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## About this teaching guide

The information and activities in this guide have been designed for teachers to use with students in Grades 7 to 9 before, during, and after reading the memoir *On the Side of the Angels*. By using this teaching guide and its activities, you will be providing students with the opportunity to read a personal memoir by an Inuk residential school survivor and to learn about how residential schooling changed everyday life for Inuit.

Through thoughtful class discussion and extended learning activities, students will explore concepts and themes such as family, education, history, organized religion, justice, the government apology for residential schools, geography, children's rights, and memoir (as a narrative genre).

### How to use this teaching guide

This teaching guide supports you through activities before, during, and after reading *On the Side of the Angels*.

Before starting to work with your students, read the entire book and this teaching guide. Note any sections that might be particularly difficult for your students, whether because of comprehension issues or disturbing content (see earlier in this resource). Let members of the school community and parents and guardians know about the subject matter you will be teaching. (See earlier in this resource for ideas about how to do this.)

### Before reading

Conduct the pre-reading activities suggested in this guide.

- In the first activity, you will discuss the genre of memoir.
- In the second, you will conduct a whole-class discussion about students' prior knowledge of residential schools, and create rules about how to safely and respectfully discuss this difficult topic.

“Inuit” means “the people” in Inuktitut, the language of Eastern Arctic Inuit. The singular form is Inuk. Avoid using “Inuits” or “Inuit people.”



**When should I lead these activities?**

We recommend not leading activities on subjects related to residential schools on Fridays. This is so that if students need support after a lesson, they can come to you later that day or the next day rather than waiting for the weekend to end. It also gives you the chance to observe students after lessons to see if they need support. For the same reason, we recommend leading activities earlier in the day rather than toward the end of the day.

Give students the option to leave the classroom if they feel overwhelmed or triggered by anything in the material.

Distribute **Handout 1: Resources for Support** to students. Let them know that this handout includes numbers they can call and websites they can visit if they want to talk to someone about the feelings that come up for them. Encourage them to talk about these resources with their families. You may also want to post this list in a prominent place in the classroom.

Distribute **Handout 2: Rules for Discussion** to students. Read the rules out loud to the students, or ask for volunteers to read each rule. Then ask if students want to add any rules to the handout. You may wish to post these rules in a visible place in the classroom. Throughout class discussions, remind students to look at the rules and keep them in mind.

## During reading

It is strongly recommended that you use *On the Side of the Angels* as a read-aloud. A read-aloud is a teaching tool in which the teacher reads a text out loud to students, modelling fluent and expressive reading and providing the opportunity for students to experience a text they might not be able to read on their own. Using this book as a read-aloud is recommended for two main reasons:

1. It allows all the students in your class to participate in the reading, regardless of their reading ability.
2. It allows you to pause and ask questions or explain some aspects of the reading that students might not understand, and it allows students to ask questions as you read.

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In this teaching guide, the reading is divided into short sections. We recommend reading one section out loud and then conducting a whole-class discussion. Then you may wish to complete an activity for further learning. You could read one section each day for a few days, or give students a few days in between each reading. However, we recommend completing only one section a day at the most.

The teaching guide includes the following for each section:

- **Summary:** This provides a short summary of the section you will read out loud to your students.
- **Preparing for the lesson:** This tells you what you should do before beginning the read-aloud.
- **Additional information:** Some sections include historical background about an issue mentioned in the section of the text. This is just for you to provide some context to what you are reading, but you can read it out loud to your students if you think it would be useful.
- **Discussion prompts:** Here you will find questions to lead your students through a whole-class discussion after the reading. Every question is open ended, and there are no right or wrong answers. Students should be encouraged to share their thoughts and listen to others without judgment. Students should also know that it is okay not to share during the discussion if they don't want to.

#### **Talking circle**

You may want to conduct discussions in a talking circle, a format for discussion that comes from First Nations traditions.

Have students sit in a circle and explain that in a talking circle, everyone's opinions are equally valid. You may want to use a talking object, like a rock or a pencil. When the talking object is placed in someone's hands, it is that person's turn to share, without interruption. The object is then passed to the next person in a clockwise direction.

Anyone who does not want to share simply says, "Pass," and hands the object to the next person. The discussion continues until everyone who wants to speak has had a chance.

- **Opportunities for further learning:** Here you will find some opportunities for students to think further about what they have learned through additional discussions and activities. Many of these activities are personal responses. Students should be encouraged to respond in any medium they wish—writing, drawing, or creating another kind of art, speaking to the class, or something else.

### After reading

After reading and discussing each section, it is normal for students and you to feel tired, angry, sad, confused, and many other emotions. Dealing with disturbing content is draining emotionally, mentally, and even physically. Encourage students to take a five-minute physical break (such as stretching or jogging on the spot) before moving on to your next classroom activity.

After finishing the reading as a whole—which may take days or even weeks—see the “Extension activities” section in this teaching guide for a list of possible ways students can respond to the book as a whole. These activities are optional and can be used in many different ways.

### Reproducible resources

The last section of this teaching guide provides materials you can easily photocopy and distribute to students, post in the classroom, or send home for parents and guardians.

# Lessons

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## Pre-reading activities

### *Pre-reading discussion: Memoir as genre*

A memoir is a form of narrative writing in which the writer explores a particular part of or several related events in their life. This may be the first time some students have read this type of narrative writing. Consider teaching students about memoir as a genre and how memoirs are different from other types of narrative writing, such as stories. Ask students what they already know about memoirs, and if they have ever read a memoir before.

### About memoirs

Memoirs are similar to autobiographies. Both memoirs and autobiographies tell about the life of the author. The main difference between memoirs and autobiographies is that memoirs are about a specific part of the author's life, rather than providing a complete picture of their life.

When appropriate, as you read the book out loud, highlight common elements of memoirs as they appear in the book. Keep the following in mind as you read:

- **Memoirs have a specific focus on an event or series of related events.** A memoir is not a complete chronology of the author's life—that is what an autobiography is used for.
- **Memoirs usually describe events that had a big impact on the author.** The author shows why the events were significant by including thoughts and feelings about the events.
- **Memoirs are written in first-person point of view.** For example, *I lived...I ate*. This can give the impression of experiencing the described events on a first-hand basis. Memoirs often include dialogue.

- 
- **Memoirs are truthful but not necessarily focused on facts.** They are written with a focus on a description of events the way the author remembers them.
  - **Memoirs are not always chronological.** Although memoirs are written in narrative form, the author can go back and forth in time and not tell a story with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

### *Pre-reading discussion: Residential schools*

Distribute **Handout 2: Rules for Discussion** to students, if you have not already done so. Ask for volunteers to read each rule out loud. Then ask if students want to add any rules to the handout. You may wish to post these rules in a visible place in the classroom. Remind students to keep these rules in mind as you lead the following discussion. This discussion provides students with the opportunity to share what they know about the residential school system.

Before beginning your discussion, be sure to do some research about residential schools and the residential school system in the North. See “The residential school system” and “Resources for further reading” earlier in this teaching guide for starting points.

When talking with students, remember that you are not looking for “correct” answers to questions. The pre-reading discussion will help you learn what the students already know about and what they might be curious about. The discussion may also help you identify and prepare for topics that may require extra support.

Your students’ knowledge about residential schools will vary greatly from school to school and from student to student. If students do not have much knowledge of residential schools, consider leading a lesson based on the information on pages 9-14 of this teaching guide.

Consider using the following question prompts:

- What were residential schools?
- What do you think of when you hear the term *residential schools*?
- Who went to residential schools?
- What was the purpose of residential schools?
- Where were residential schools located?
- When did residential schools first open? When did they close?
- What are some of the impacts of residential schools that we can see across the country?

Consider using a talking circle for this discussion (see earlier in this guide for information about how to conduct a talking circle).

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# The Bay

Pages 5-9

## Summary

In the first chapter, the author introduces when and where he was born. He explains some of the history behind the Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) presence in the North, the relationship between Inuit and HBC employees, and the introduction and influence of organized religion.

## Preparing for the reading

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading.
- Read the additional information about the Hudson's Bay Company.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see "Opportunities for further learning").

## Reading

- Read out loud from pages 7 to 9. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

**Note:** Remind students that memoirs may include information about historical events, and that these facts are presented from the author's perspective. In this chapter, the author describes some of the history of the HBC's presence in the Arctic, and the attitudes of his mother and other Inuit toward HBC's employees. These attitudes might be different from those of other Inuit who lived through the same period.



## *Additional information*

### **The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)**

The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) originated from the 1660 expedition of two French explorers who sailed from Europe to eastern Canada to trade for furs with the First Nations in the area. Although the English had not negotiated with the Indigenous peoples in the area, on May 2, 1670, the King of England gave the Hudson's Bay Company control over all trade and commerce in the lands whose rivers drained into Hudson Bay, a huge area known thereafter as "Rupert's Land." The HBC eventually sold Rupert's Land to Canada in 1870.

Between 1670 and 1684, the HBC began to build trading posts along Hudson Bay and James Bay. By the 1700s, the HBC had expressed a renewed interest in charting the Northwest Passage, a long sought-after sea passage through the Arctic. In 1771, Samuel Hearne landed at the Coppermine River (near present-day Kugluktuk) and claimed the region for the HBC.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the HBC intensified its move to the North and began to open posts in the Arctic. In 1914, the HBC opened a trading post at Ward Inlet (near present-day Iqaluit), and by the 1920s, it was setting up trading posts throughout Baffin Island. By the early 20th century, fur-trading posts had been set up at what are now many of Nunavut's communities. Inuit who had previously traded with whalers now traded furs (mostly Arctic fox) with HBC members for rifles and other hunting tools, canned goods, and luxury items like tea and sugar. This type of economy affected the lives of Inuit and traditional community practices. Some people began to hunt for furs in addition to food and to settle in areas closer to the posts.

In the 1930s, the fur industry began to decline, and the HBC began to turn its focus to other goods and products. By the 1950s, the HBC was a major dealer in Inuit art to the south. Today the Hudson's Bay Company operates retail stores throughout Canada and in some parts of Europe.



---

## *Discussion prompts*

Why do you think Jose was so proud to get a sucker candy from the HBC workers on his birthday?

.....

Why do you think the HBC workers learned Inuktitut?

.....

Why do you think the HBC workers needed to learn so much from Inuit?

.....

What do you know about Inuit shamanism?

.....

What is Jose's view of the church? What do you think shaped Jose's view of the church?

.....

Why do you think Jose's mother did not like that the HBC stockpiled furs?

.....

Why did Jose's mother work so hard to prepare the furs?

**Note:** Remind students to look at Handout 2 and follow the Rules for Discussion.

## *Opportunities for further learning*

### Exploring memoirs

As is typical with memoirs, the author starts right into the narrative without much introduction and begins to tell his story. You may wish to review with students some of the characteristics of memoirs that were discussed in the pre-reading activity. Some elements that are exemplified in the first chapter include:

- The book is written in first-person point of view.
- The author includes details about what he thought, felt, and sensed (for example, the smell of mothballs).
- The book focuses on events the way the author remembers them.

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# An Arctic Childhood (Part 1)

Pages 11-14

## *Summary*

In the first part of this chapter, the author tells what his life was like growing up. He describes how he and his family used the fur traders' magazines for practical reasons and to play games. He tells a funny story related to his childlike understanding of things he learned from the Catholic Church. He also describes the traditional roles of Inuit boys and girls, and how the oral tradition was used to pass on the rules of life from one generation to the next. The end of the first section of the chapter explains how Inuit see themselves as part of the ecosystem.

## *Preparing for the lesson*

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading. It is recommended that the read-aloud of this chapter be broken up into two lessons. The discussion prompts for this lesson address content up to the end of the second paragraph on page 16.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see "Opportunities for further learning").

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from page 13 to the end of the second paragraph on page 16. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

## Discussion prompts

Planes were not very common in Naujaat in the 1950s. How do you think Jose and his family felt when they saw a plane coming into the community?

.....

Why do you think Jose's mother used old magazines to wallpaper their *qarmaq*?

.....

Jose talks a lot about the childhood games that he played with his brother. What kinds of games did you play as a young child? Are they similar to Jose's games or different? Why do you think that?

.....

What are some of the benefits of oral history? What are some of the challenges?

**Note:** Remind students to look at Handout 2 and follow the Rules for Discussion.

---

## *Opportunities for further learning*

### **Jose's childhood**

Have students think about good memories they have from when they were the age Jose was in this section of the book. Are there any similarities to what Jose remembers?

### **Oral histories**

Invite an Elder, a traditional knowledge keeper, or another guest into your classroom to share a few stories. After the guest shares, do a shared writing activity where you record one of the stories that you heard. After writing, discuss: *What is gained by writing down the guest's story? What is lost?*

## An Arctic Childhood (Part 2)

Pages 16-20

### *Summary*

In the second part of the chapter, the author describes some of the social practices used to encourage order and honesty within Inuit society. This included the equitable distribution of resources, such as food. The author also talks about shamanism and describes how his father had spent time down south and shared stories of modern southern conveniences he had seen. Jose's older brother was in a residential school at the time, and he also had stories to tell. The author describes his childhood with warmth and fondness, and explains that he and his younger brother, Cyril, were inseparable.

### *Preparing for the lesson*

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading. The discussion prompts for this lesson address content from the last paragraph on page 16 to the end of the chapter.
- Read the additional information about tuberculosis.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see "Opportunities for further learning").

### *Reading*

- Read out loud from the start of the third paragraph on page 16 to page 20. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

## Additional information

### Tuberculosis (TB)

Tuberculosis, also known as TB, is a respiratory illness. Tuberculosis affects the lungs and airways and is an airborne disease, meaning the bacteria is spread through the air when a person coughs or sneezes. It is very contagious. TB was introduced to North America by European settlers in the 1700s, and to Inuit in particular in the late 19th century as trade and European settlement increased in the North.

Although people across Canada continue to be infected with TB, today it is curable with rigorous medical treatment. Before drugs were available to treat TB, people across Canada who became infected were sent to hospitals and sanatoriums. Sanatoriums were facilities for the long-term treatment of illnesses like TB, and patients would stay for sometimes years at a time.

In the 1950s and 1960s, TB became an epidemic in Inuit communities, and many Inuit were sent south for treatment at hospitals and sanatoriums. Between 1950 and 1970, a ship called the *C. D. Howe* (pictured at right) made annual summer trips to communities in the Eastern Arctic. These ships brought doctors with them to diagnose people with TB. Once people were diagnosed, they were sent to the south on the ship, often without having the chance to make arrangements or speak with family and friends. It was not unusual for patients with TB to be gone for years at a time, or to die during treatment. In many cases, Inuit were not notified of a family member's death. Many Inuit who died during TB treatment were buried in the south in common graves paid for by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

The TB epidemic had traumatic effects on Inuit communities, which continue today. Inuit who received treatment in the south often found themselves among strangers and in an uncomfortable environment, where they were often not able to communicate with medical or government officials. Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., in cooperation with the federal government of Canada, has created a database called Nanilavut (Let's Find Them) to help families find out what happened to relatives who went missing during the TB epidemic. Communities in the North continue to struggle with TB infections today.

In 2019, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau formally apologized on behalf of the Canadian government for how Inuit were treated during the TB epidemic.





## *Discussion prompts*

Why was it so important for Inuit to share food when Jose was a child? Do you think sharing food is still important? Why or why not?

.....

Jose has traditional beliefs and Christian beliefs. Why do you think he has both sets of beliefs?

.....

What do you think it would have been like for Jose to hear about what his father and older brother experienced when they spent time away from the community?

.....

In what ways was your childhood similar to Jose's childhood? In what ways was your childhood different?

.....

Why do you think it was important for Jose and his siblings to play, do chores, and observe the people around them? Do you think it's important for children to do this now? Why or why not?

.....

What does Jose say about shamans and shamanism?

**Note:** Remind students to look at Handout 2 and follow the Rules for Discussion.

---

## Opportunities for further learning

### Written/visual response

After the discussion, have students respond to what they have heard in Jose’s memoir so far. They may do this in writing or as a visual response, such as a drawing, painting, or collage. Consider providing the following prompts to help students get started:

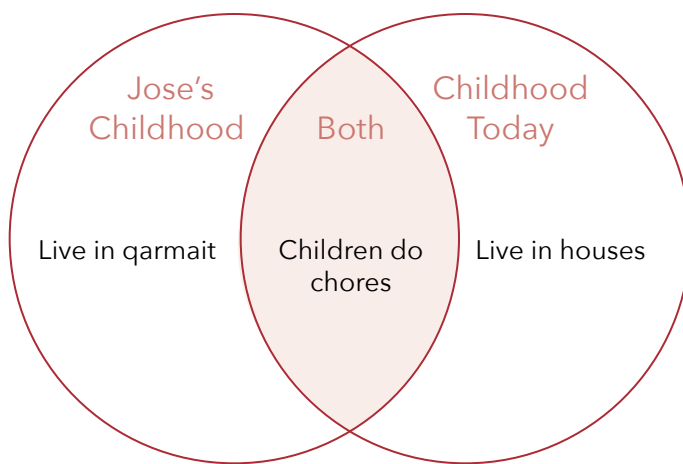
- Describe what you like or don’t like about Jose’s memoir so far.
- What do you think will happen next? Why do you think that?

Make sure to remind students to share only what they are comfortable with. Also remind students that Jose’s story reflects his personal experiences, and that it’s okay for them to have different perspectives.

### Compare and contrast

Draw a Venn diagram on the board or chart paper, with one circle labelled “Jose’s Childhood” and the other labelled “Childhood Today.” Where the circle overlaps, write “Both.”

Ask students to brainstorm ways that childhood in your area today is similar to Jose’s childhood, and ways that it is different. Record students’ answers in the appropriate places on the Venn diagram. An example has been provided for you.



# Being Taken

Pages 21-26

## *Summary*

In this chapter, the author describes the day he was taken to Chesterfield Inlet Residential School with his older brother, Michael. He describes how scared and confused he felt, and how he hung onto his older brother for the entire journey.

## *Preparing for the lesson*

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see “Opportunities for further learning”).

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from pages 23 to 25. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

---

## *Discussion prompts*

Jose was a young child when he first went to residential school. He spoke Inuktitut, and his parents were not with him. What sorts of challenges do you think he faced when he arrived at the non-Inuktitut-speaking residential school?

.....

Jose says that he thought, "Perhaps, as always, the pilot would have a sucker for us, but this time the sucker was me." What do you think he means by that?

.....

Why do you think Jose was so careful to observe and copy his brother Michael's actions on the plane?

.....

How do you think Jose's parents felt when Michael and Jose were taken away that day? How do you think Cyril felt?

**Note:** Remind students to look at Handout 2 and follow the Rules for Discussion.

## Opportunities for further learning

### Gallery walk

- Write the name of each person in the memoir (Jose, Cyril, Michael, Jose's mother, Jose's father, HBC worker, pilot) on the top of a piece of chart paper.
- Tape the pieces of chart paper up around the room. Divide the students into small groups and provide each group with a marker.
- Assign each group a person to start with. Ask: *How do you think this person felt when the plane took Jose and Michael away?*
- Encourage students to write and/or draw their responses.
- After a few minutes, have student groups rotate clockwise around the room to the next piece of chart paper. Have students consider the same question for each person in the memoir, adding to the previous groups' responses.
- When all groups have responded for all the people in the memoir, gather together as a class. Discuss the responses for each person.

---

# The School (Part 1)

Pages 27-32

## **Content warning**

This chapter includes an explicit reference to masturbation, and one of the discussion prompts asks students to think about why masturbation was not allowed at the residential school Jose attended. This is a tricky topic to discuss with students, and they may become uncomfortable or act silly in response. Remind students that it is normal to feel uncomfortable when we discuss uncomfortable topics, but that they should always remain respectful.

## **Summary**

In the first part of this chapter, the author describes what he observed when he arrived at the residential school and entered the hostel. He tells of being separated from his older brother and being put to bed but needing to pee. That night he peed the bed and hid his soiled clothing under his pillow. His first full morning went well, but things changed when he went back to the hostel for lunch.

## **Preparing for the lesson**

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading. It is recommended that the read-aloud of this chapter be broken up into two lessons. The discussion prompts for this lesson address content up to the end of the first paragraph on page 31.
- Read the additional information about Turquetil Hall.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see “Opportunities for further learning”).

## Reading

- Read out loud from page 29 to the end of the first paragraph on page 33. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

### *Additional information*

#### Turquetil Hall

Joseph Bernier School and its residence, Turquetil Hall, opened in 1955 in Chesterfield Inlet with a capacity of 70 students. By 1967, it had significantly exceeded its capacity, but students continued to be sent there despite the overcrowding.

Until 1964, Turquetil Hall was the only hostel in the eastern Arctic, so many Inuit from the area were sent to hostels in the western Arctic, often thousands of kilometres away from their families.

The school in Chesterfield Inlet was reported to have used extensive physical abuse as a method of punishment. Turquetil Hall and Grollier Hall (in Inuvik, Northwest Territories) also both became notorious for many cases of sexual abuse. However, some Inuit students have spoken positively about the education they received while living at Turquetil Hall. Turquetil Hall closed in 1969.



Joe Atauttaaluk, Raymond Kaslak, Nicholas Pauktuut Arnatsiaq, Paul Manotick, Piita Irniq, Francois Nanorak, Yvo Kunuk, Timothy Qirnguk, and other students standing in the school playground in Chesterfield Inlet, September 5, 1958.

---

## *Discussion prompts*

Why do you think Jose felt so alone and sad when he first entered the residential school?

.....

Why do you think the Sisters made the children eat so quickly?

.....

How do you think Jose felt sleeping alone for the first time? Why do you think the boys had to all sleep apart?

.....

Why were the children asked to sleep with their hands above the covers? Why do you think the Sisters did not want students masturbating in their beds?

.....

Why do you think Jose had the dream about the boy and the thimble?

**Note:** Remind students to look at Handout 2 and follow the Rules for Discussion.



## *Opportunities for further learning*

### **Learning from family, community, and the environment**

Before being sent to residential school, Jose learned from his family, from his community, and from his environment. He describes how he learned the “rules of life” that were taught through the oral tradition. In the next part of this chapter, students will read that Jose learned differently at residential school.

In this activity, students will think about what they have learned from their own family, community, and environment.

- Sit in a talking circle with the students. Briefly discuss some of the things that Jose describes learning from his family, his community, and his environment in the first few chapters.
- Next, discuss some of the things students (and you) have learned from your family, your community, and your environment. It might be useful for you to share some ideas first.
- After students have shared, have them think of an important thing they have learned from their family, their community, and/or their environment. Ask them to think of something they could create to share this learning with others. This could take many different forms: students could write an essay, draw a picture or create another type of visual art, make a craft or tool, give a presentation, or even make a short film.
- After choosing a way to share their learning, have students create what they have chosen. This project can be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

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# The School (Part 2)

Pages 32-36

## **Content warning**

This section deals with disturbing content, including physical abuse, violence, and bullying. Emotional responses may be triggered in students as a result. It is important to maintain a supportive environment when reading this section and to exercise care when discussing the content. Before reading, explain to students that what they are going to hear will be uncomfortable, and provide them with a safe alternate space to go if they are feeling overwhelmed during the reading or discussion (such as a neighbouring teacher's classroom).

Provide your students with phone numbers, websites, and other supports they can access if they need support. A list of resources is included as a reproducible resource at the end of this teaching guide. Consider laminating the reproducible resource and posting it in a visible space in your classroom, as well as distributing copies to your students. Make sure that all these numbers work in your community.

**Before beginning this section, review your school's protocol related to disclosures of abuse.**

## ***Summary***

Jose describes how he was made to clean his sheets and pyjamas. He describes how he enjoyed school and learning new things. He tells of how he was the youngest in school and was bullied by the other children, but he made a deal with another boy in the school, who protected him. He also describes a terrible incident when he saw a nun dragging a girl down the stairs by her hair.

## ***Preparing for the lesson***

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading.
- Reread the advice on pages 16 and 17 of this teaching guide about dealing with disturbing content in the classroom.
- Ask your School Community Counsellor and/or a local Elder to be available for students who want to talk about the emotions raised by this lesson.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see “Opportunities for further learning”).

## ***Reading***

- Read out loud from the second paragraph on page 33 to page 35. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

**Note:** This section includes descriptions of peer-on-peer bullying, which was common throughout the residential school system.

- Survivors have discussed their experiences with peer-on-peer bullying and abuse, saying that reporting the violence to staff did little to stop it. In fact, many survivors explain that their supervisors would not believe them. Some students were even punished for reporting bullying and abuse.

Students might have questions about the abuse and bullying that Jose discusses in this chapter. It is important to explain that when people are oppressed, as children were at residential schools, it is not uncommon for them to oppress each other as a way to feel like they have some kind of power in their situation. Children learn behaviours from the adults around them, and some children in residential schools copied the abusive acts they saw and experienced from adults at the schools.

You can read more about peer-on-peer bullying in *The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, which is available as a free PDF online from [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca).

## Discussion prompts

Jose had to clean his sheets after he wet himself during the night. Do you think this was fair? Why or why not?

.....

Why did Jose not know how fish could be frozen in the summer?

.....

Jose says that “school was fun” and that he enjoyed learning new things. Why do you think he would say that school was fun even though so many bad things had happened?

.....

Children can learn how to be bullies from adults around them. Sometimes people react to their own sadness, anger, or frustration by bullying others. What are some better ways to process anger, frustration, and sadness?

**Note:** Remind students to look at Handout 2 and follow the Rules for Discussion.

## *Opportunities for further learning*

### **Mental and emotional well-being**

Discuss ways to deal with negative feelings associated with bullying and other forms of abuse. Consider the following coping strategies and points of discussion:

- Review your school's bullying policy with your students. Identify what bullying looks like, feels like, and sounds like, and what students can do to address it and prevent it in your school.
- Remind students of the adults they can speak with in their community if they are being abused or bullied: Elders, counsellors, family members, mental health workers, and trusted teachers and nurses.

Ask students to share things they do to feel better when they have negative feelings.

### **Peer-on-peer bullying**

Discuss the peer-on-peer bullying that Jose describes in this chapter. Ask students why they think students bullied other students in residential schools. Why did the bullies want or need power and control?

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# Abuse/Bad Times, Good Times/Going Home

Pages 37-48

## **Content warning**

This section deals with disturbing content, including sexual abuse.

- Emotional responses may be triggered in students as a result. It is important to maintain a supportive environment when reading this section and to exercise care when discussing the content. Before reading, explain to students that what they are going to hear will be uncomfortable, and provide them with a safe alternate space to go if they are feeling overwhelmed during the reading or discussion (such as a neighbouring teacher's classroom). Remember that some students, support staff, and other adults in the school may themselves be victims of sexual abuse. Stop reading if the content becomes too overwhelming and pick it up on another day.

Provide your students with phone numbers, websites, and other supports they can access. A list of resources is included as a reproducible resource at the end of this teaching guide. Consider laminating the reproducible resource and posting it in a visible space in your classroom, as well as distributing copies to your students. Make sure that all these numbers work in your community.

Before beginning this section, review your school's protocol regarding disclosures of abuse.

**Note: “Good Times”**

Many residential school survivors have bravely shared their experiences of extreme trauma, abuse, and neglect at residential schools. However, like Jose, many survivors also recall happy memories and times of fun. Some commentators have wrongly pointed to these positive memories as evidence that residential schools were “not that bad” and that their negative impacts have been exaggerated.

The positive memories survivors share of residential schools are part of their truth. However, they should not be used to minimize the trauma they faced or the negative impacts residential schools have had on Inuit, First Nations, and Métis communities. Retaining positive memories from a horrible time is an example of resiliency. After the reading, there is an opportunity for students to discuss resiliency and how it is demonstrated in this memoir.

## *Summary*

In the first of these three chapters, Jose explains how he had heard about abuse happening at the school and explains that his older brother was a victim. In the following chapter, Jose describes happier times, including decorating for bishop visits. In the third chapter, he describes how spring brought feelings of hope as the time to return home approached, but how his family had changed a lot during the 10 months he was away.

## *Preparing for the lesson*

- Read the chapters and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading. Be aware that the first chapter in this section is disturbing and includes explicit descriptions of sexual abuse.

- 
- Reread the advice on pages 16 and 17 about dealing with disturbing content in the classroom.
  - Ask a school counsellor and/or a local Elder to be available for students who want to talk about the emotions raised by this lesson.
  - Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see “Opportunities for further learning”).

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from pages 39 to 48. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read, as well as to check in with your students and suggest a break if needed.



**Reminder:** This section, particularly the first chapter, deals with disturbing content. Students may try to make sense of what they have read by asking you some difficult questions. Consider and prepare for the following types of questions you may get from your students:

- Why did the adults at the schools abuse the children?
- Why did the Brother in Jose’s memoir force the boys to perform sex acts on him?
- Why were the schools only “happy” places when the bishops came to visit?
- Why would people take children away from their parents and treat them so harshly?
- Did parents know their children were being treated this way at residential school?

## Discussion prompts

How do you think Jose’s time at residential school affected him later in life?

.....

Jose talks about some of his classmates being sexually abused at residential school. How do you think those experiences might have affected them later in life?

.....

Jose describes his experience at school as both bad and good. Why do you think Jose has good memories and bad memories of residential school? How does this show resiliency?

.....

Why do you think the residential school was decorated for the bishop’s visit? Why was the school not nicely decorated at other times of the year? What do you think about the school’s decision to decorate the school for bishop visits?

.....

**Note:** Remind students to look at Handout 2 and follow the Rules for Discussion.

---

Jose says that even though he spent a year at school, he had not “aged at home.” What do you think that means?

.....

Why do you think Jose’s family acted differently around Jose when he returned from residential school?

## *Opportunities for further learning*

### Children's rights

The abuse that happened at residential schools violated children's rights in many different ways. Distribute **Handout 3: The Convention on the Rights of the Child** to students. This handout is the text of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, written in child-friendly language. You might read the text out loud to students, or students could take turns reading each article out loud.

Discuss which of these rights were violated during Jose's time at residential school. Ask children why they think children's rights are important for both children and adults to know and discuss ways for students to advocate for their own rights and the rights of others. Provide students with the contact information of support lines and advocacy groups and encourage them to seek help if they need it.

A colour version of the handout can be printed in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, and English at <http://rcynu.ca>.

### Resiliency

In this section, Jose describes some difficult and disturbing experiences that he had to endure at residential school. Despite these traumas, he was still able to find some positive moments in his time at school. Jose demonstrates great resiliency during this time. Conduct a discussion with students about resiliency.

Resiliency is a person's ability to recover from a negative incident or trauma (such as a death in the family, an illness or accident, or being sent to residential school). However, being resilient does not mean that someone was not affected by the trauma, and being resilient does not minimize the trauma someone experienced.

The title of this program, Qinuisaarniq, roughly translates as "resiliency" in English.

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### Resiliency discussion 1

Have a discussion with your class about resiliency. Give students a chance to share what they think this word means, and then give them the definition provided above. Have students find examples of resilient people in the book. Extend the discussion to identify resilient characters from other books the students have read and resilient historical figures, and times in the students' lives when they have shown resiliency.

After your discussion, give students some time to think about how their friends, family members, and community members have shown resiliency. To protect people's privacy, these stories do not need to be shared out loud.

### Resiliency discussion 2

Have a discussion with your class about Jose's ability to have good memories of a traumatic time. Discuss other situations in which people found positive things during horrible times. For example, students may be familiar with Anne Frank, who wrote about moments of joy and fun in her diary during the two years she spent hiding from the Nazis. Remind students that being resilient does not mean that someone was not affected by trauma, and being resilient does not minimize the trauma someone experienced. Instead, resiliency helps people cope with the trauma they suffered.

# Year of the Apology

Pages 49-55

## *Summary*

Jose describes his inner conflict about the positives and negatives of his experience at residential school. Then, he recounts his experience of listening to Prime Minister Stephen Harper deliver the federal government's apology for the residential school system and the memories and emotions that it brought out in him. He finishes his memoir by giving thanks to those who made the apology happen, and ends with a poignant message: "Remember, though, we are all accountable for things we do and for things we do not do."

## *Preparing for the lesson*

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading.
- Read the additional information about the federal government's apology for residential schools.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see "Opportunities for further learning").

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from pages 50 to 54. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

---

## *Additional information*

### *The apology*

On June 11, 2008, Stephen Harper, then prime minister of Canada, delivered an apology on behalf of the government of Canada and all Canadians for the Indian residential school system and its impacts on Indigenous peoples, asking for “the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of [Canada] for failing them so profoundly.”

The apology came about as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action lawsuit in Canadian history, as well as the concentrated efforts of Indigenous organizations across Canada, including the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), who filed the lawsuit, and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Many people across Canada perceived the apology to be the first step in the process of reconciliation between the government of Canada, settler (non-Indigenous and non-immigrant) Canadians, and Indigenous peoples. The apology was listened to and received in the House of Commons by Mary Simon, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; Phil Fontaine, national chief of the AFN; Patrick Brazeau, national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples; Clément Chartier, president of the Métis National Council; and Beverly Jacobs, president of the Native Women’s Association of Canada. It was also broadcast across Canada.

Reactions and responses to the apology ranged from the positive to the skeptical. Mary Simon said, “I am filled with optimism...a new day has dawned, a new day heralded by a commitment to reconciliation and building a new relationship with Inuit, Métis, and First Nations.” Yet, Justice Murray Sinclair said years later, “Words are not enough.”



## Discussion prompts

Jose explains that he has a conflicted view of residential schools. He sees value and failure in the system. Think about what Jose says. Do you agree or disagree with Jose? Why?

.....

Jose says that he always “sided with the government and the churches” because he thought that “they were on the side of the angels.” What do you think Jose means when he says, “I thought they were on the side of the angels”? Why did he think this?

.....

On June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the Canadian government for the wrongdoings at residential schools. Why was the apology so important?

.....

Why do you think Jose missed his mother when he heard the apology?

.....

Apologies are a great first step in fixing something that you have done wrong, but they must be followed up by action to show that you are truly sorry. What would you like to see the Canadian government do for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to show that they are truly sorry for the wrongdoings at residential schools?

**Note:** Remind students to look at Handout 2 and follow the Rules for Discussion.

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## Opportunities for further learning

### The apology

Distribute **Handout 4: The Apology** to students. Read the full apology that Prime Minister Stephen Harper made on behalf of the Canadian government. You could read the text out loud to students, or students could take turns reading it out loud. Identify parts of the speech that your class thinks make for a good apology and things that you think are missing from the apology. Record students' thoughts in point form. Have students choose one of the points missing from the apology to write a short paragraph about. As a group, you and your students will describe what you would say about that point if you were writing the government's apology today.

### Assimilation

Jose mentions that attempts to assimilate Inuit into southern Canadian culture and society were "intentional," and the apology acknowledges why the government attempted to do it. Discuss with students the concept of "assimilation" and why it was wrong to try to assimilate Inuit into southern Canadian culture.

Assimilation is when members of a minority group take on aspects of the dominant group and lose some of their own culture. Forced assimilation (sometimes called "cultural genocide") is when the dominant group forces the minority group to change aspects of their culture, such as language, practices, and religion. The goal is to completely eradicate the minority group's culture. Some of the methods the Canadian government used to try to forcibly assimilate Indigenous peoples were:

- Banning traditional practices like throat singing and powwows
- Forcing children at school to speak English or French instead of their native languages



- Banning the use of traditional medicines and shamanism
- Making it difficult for Indigenous people to gather in large groups
- Relocating Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories

In a talking circle, ask students to share answers to the following questions:

- Why did the Canadian government want to forcibly assimilate Indigenous peoples?
- Why was this wrong?
- Why didn't the Canadian government succeed in completely assimilating Indigenous peoples?

### How we learn

In this memoir, Jose talks about the things he was able to learn in residential school and the things he did not learn because he was in residential school. Jose says that for him, there was "good and...bad" in his experience there.

As a shared writing activity, discuss the three traditional activities Jose mentions that he missed out on learning about while he was at school: hunting, skinning, and iglu building. Brainstorm some other skills that are typically not learned in school. Examples might include cooking, caring for children, and fishing. Talk about who students could learn or have learned those skills from. Explain that the learning we do outside of school is called "informal learning," and that it is as important as, or sometimes more important than, the formal learning we do in school.

Then, have students respond to the idea of informal learning in writing. Students could:

- Write a thank-you letter to a person who has taught them something outside of school, describing how they appreciate learning from that person
- Write a fiction or non-fiction story about learning a skill from someone
- Think about something they know how to do and write a guide for a younger student

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## Extension activities

- **Discuss the title of the memoir.** Reread the passage where the title comes from:

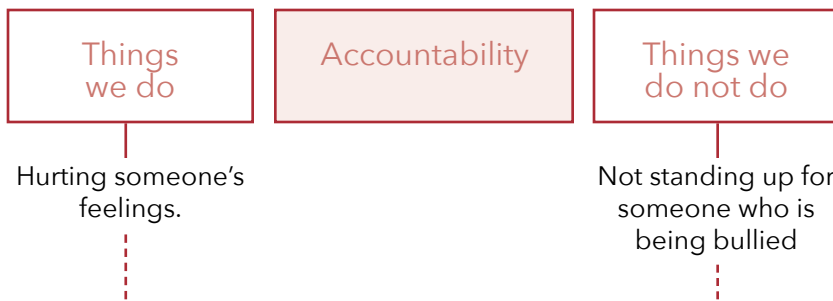
“For many years I had argued within myself over the good and the bad of going to residential school. I always sided with the government and the churches, as I thought they were on the side of the angels.”

Why did Jose think the government and the churches were on the side of the angels? Does he still think that? Why or why not?

- **Have students respond creatively to the memoir.** Students can create:
  - A piece of visual art
  - A song
  - A dance
  - A radio play
  - A podcast
  - A poem
  - A short film
  - A story
  - A collage
  - A spoken-word piece
  - A rap
  - Any other form of creative expression

They can react to the memoir, depict something that happens in the memoir, or illustrate how they felt as they listened to the memoir. Choose the type of response that is most appropriate for your class, or provide options and let students choose for themselves.

- **Discuss the last sentence of the book.** Jose ends his memoir with this important message: “Remember, though, we are all accountable for things we do and for things we do not do.” In a talking circle, discuss what “accountability” means (taking responsibility for something) and what students think Jose means in this message.
  - As a group, brainstorm things that we do that we must be accountable for (such as hurting a classmate’s feelings) and things that we do not do that we must be accountable for (such as not standing up for someone who is being bullied).
  - Record students’ answers on chart paper, using the accountability mind map framework below. Consider posting the mind map somewhere in the classroom.
  - Finish the discussion with the following question: Why do you think Jose chose to end the memoir with this message?



- **Write a memoir.** After finishing the book, return to the pre-reading discussion about memoirs. Review (or teach) the concept of memoirs, using this book as an example. Have students write their own memoir. Before students begin writing, explain that the memoir can be shared with the whole class or just with the teacher. Consider providing the following prompts to get students started:
  - Did you ever have a problem that you resolved? How did you resolve it?
  - Did you ever have a memorable trip?
  - Imagine yourself 10 years in the future and write a memoir from the perspective of your future self.



# Reproducible resources

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In this section, you will find resources that can be easily photocopied and distributed to students, posted in the classroom, or sent home to parents or guardians.

## Letter to parents/guardians

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Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's class is participating in a book study using a book from the Qinuisaarniq program. This program has been created to educate people of Nunavut and all Canadians about the history and impacts of residential schools, policies of assimilation, and other colonial acts that affected the Canadian Arctic.

For the next several weeks, students will be spending some classroom time reading and discussing *On the Side of the Angels*, a memoir by Jose Amaujaq Kusugak about his experiences attending residential school in Chesterfield Inlet, Nunavut. This memoir includes disturbing content, including descriptions of abuse (including sexual abuse), violence, family separation, bullying, and trauma.

Learning about residential schools provides the opportunity for students to understand how historical events continue to affect Inuit and all Canadians today. The discussions we have about residential schools will be challenging, but they are an important part of recognition, healing, and reconciliation. To learn more about the residential school system, visit [www.legacyofhope.ca](http://www.legacyofhope.ca).

Please be aware that your child may come home with questions and resources about residential schools.

### ***School and Community Supports***

Reading about and discussing residential schools and the impacts they have had can be very difficult. During this book study, effort will be made to ensure that a counsellor, Elder, or other member of the school support team will be on-site to help students experience their emotions in a safe way.

## Letter to parents/guardians

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Students will also be informed about phone numbers they can call, websites they can visit, and other resources they can access for support outside of school. A list of these resources is provided below.

If there are any other ways that we can support your child during this book study, please let us know.

The class will begin the study on \_\_\_\_\_. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to discuss this book study further, please feel free to contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

### Resources for Support

Below is a list of places where you and your child can get support:

- Kids Help Phone: Use the online chat at [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca), call 1-800-668-6868, or text CONNECT to 686868 (24/7)
- The LifeLine App (provides call, text, and online chat services) (24/7)
- Crisis Services Canada: Use the online chat, call 1-833-456-4566 (24/7), or text START to 45645 (4 p.m.-12 a.m. EST)
- Hope for Wellness Help Line: Use the online chat or call 1-855-242-3310
- Indian Residential School Survivors Society: 1-800-721-0066

## Handout 1: Resources for Support

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**Here are some numbers you can call and websites you can visit if you need help:**

- Kids Help Phone: Use the online chat at [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca), call 1-800-668-6868, or text CONNECT to 686868 (24/7)
- The LifeLine App (provides call, text, and online chat services) (24/7)
- Crisis Services Canada: Use the online chat, call 1-833-456-4566 (24/7), or text START to 45645 (4 p.m.-12 a.m. EST)
- Hope for Wellness Help Line: Use the online chat or call 1-855-242-3310
- Indian Residential School Survivors Society: 1-800-721-0066



## Handout 2: Rules for Discussion

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- Always believe that people are telling the truth.
- Respect others' thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- Think before you speak.
- It is okay to feel discomfort, sadness, anger, or other emotions. It is okay to take a break if these feelings become too much.
- It is okay to laugh and show humour, but it is not okay to laugh at others.
- Only share your own stories—ask before you share someone else's story.

### Other Rules:

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Handout 3: The Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Adapted from <http://rcynu.ca/sites/rcynu.ca/files/English%20CRC%20Poster.pdf>

Every child in Canada and around the world has rights. Rights are what you should have or be able to do to survive, thrive, and meet your full potential. All rights are equally important and are connected to each other. You are born with these rights, and no one can take them away.

### **Article 1**

Everyone under 18 has these rights.

### **Article 2**

All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

### **Article 3**

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

### **Article 4**

The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.

### **Article 5**

Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.

### **Article 6**

You have the right to be alive.

### **Article 7**

You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

## Handout 3: The Convention on the Rights of the Child

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### **Article 8**

You have the right to an identity—an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.

### **Article 9**

You have the right to live with your parent(s), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.

### **Article 10**

If you live in a different country than your parents, you have the right to be together in the same place.

### **Article 11**

You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.

### **Article 12**

You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

### **Article 13**

You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing, or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

### **Article 14**

You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

### **Article 15**

You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

### **Article 16**

You have the right to privacy.

## Handout 3: The Convention on the Rights of the Child

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### **Article 17**

You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being from radio, newspapers, books, computers, and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.

### **Article 18**

You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.

### **Article 19**

You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

### **Article 20**

You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.

### **Article 21**

You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.

### **Article 22**

You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

### **Article 23**

You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can have a full life.

### **Article 24**

You have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

### **Article 25**

If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

## Handout 3: The Convention on the Rights of the Child

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### **Article 26**

You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

### **Article 27**

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live, and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

### **Article 28**

You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

### **Article 29**

Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment, and respect other people.

### **Article 30**

You have the right to practise your own culture, language, and religion. Minority and Indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

### **Article 31**

You have the right to play and rest.

### **Article 32**

You have the right to protection from work that harms you and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

### **Article 33**

You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

### **Article 34**

You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

### **Article 35**

No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

## Handout 3: The Convention on the Rights of the Child

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### **Article 36**

You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

### **Article 37**

No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way.

### **Article 38**

You have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

### **Article 39**

You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected, or badly treated.

### **Article 40**

You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.

### **Article 41**

If the laws of your country provide better protection than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

### **Article 42**

You have the right to know your rights! Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.

### **Articles 43-54**

These articles explain how governments and international organizations like UNICEF will work to ensure children are protected with their rights.

## Handout 4: The Apology



### *Statement of Apology – to former students of Indian Residential Schools*

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child". Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Most schools were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches. The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system.

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever again prevail. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey.

The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities, and Aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership. A cornerstone of the Settlement Agreement is the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

On behalf of the Government of Canada  
The Right Honourable Stephen Harper,  
Prime Minister of Canada

June 11, 2008

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## Image acknowledgements

**p. 9:** Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School (Turquetil Hall), group of students working at the desks in a classroom, Chesterfield Inlet (Igluligarrjuk), Nunavut, September 5, 1958. [1st row: Rene Otak is on far left; 2nd row: Peter Irniq is on the far right, beside him is Paul Manitok; 3rd row: Nick Amautinaq is on the far right; 4th row: Raymond Kalak is seated second from the left.] Charles Gimpel / Library and Archives Canada / e004923401

**p. 11**, in order from top to bottom:

- *The Fathers of Confederation at the London Conference*. John David Kelly, c. 1889, Alberta, Canada. Library and Archives Canada / C-006799
- Inuit at Stupart Bay, Quebec, 1884. Robert Bell / Library and Archives Canada / C-086377
- Class portrait of students, two priests and eight nuns at Cross Lake Indian Residential School, Cross Lake, Manitoba, February 1940. Canada. Dept. Indian and Northern Affairs / Library and Archives Canada / e011078116

**p. 12**, in order from top to bottom:

- Three Inuit children on a toboggan, between 1928 and 1944. Henry Larsen / Library and Archives Canada / e010787420
- Inuit children with books in their laps while at residential school. Library and Archives Canada / National Film Board fonds / e011177264

**p. 13**, in order from top to bottom:

- Sir Alexander Mackenzie School, Inuvik, in 1968 or 1969. Dr. N. E. Hunt Photo Collection
- Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Mary Simon, and First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008. Fred Chartrand / Canadian Press



**p. 21:** Jose Kusugak, Nuuk, Greenland, July 1, 2011. Photo by Leiff Josefsen, Semitsiaq

**p. 31:** Hudson's Bay Co. warehouse, Cambridge Bay, south of Victoria Island, N.W.T., 1928. L. T. Burwash / Library and Archives Canada / PA-099699

**p. 38:** Crowd gathering on the Hudson's Bay Company wharf for the arrival of C.G.S. *C. D. Howe* (Pannirtuuq Fiord, 1951). Wilfred Doucette / National Film Board of Canada / Library and Archives Canada / PA-166472

**p. 45:** Group of male students standing in the school playground, Chesterfield Inlet (Igluligaarjuk), Nunavut, September 5, 1958. Charles Gimpel / Library and Archives Canada / e004923400

**p. 61:** Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine, centre right, and other Aboriginal leaders receive applause before the PM's apology. Fred Chartrand / The Canadian Press File Photo

# ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS

## TEACHING GUIDE

This teaching guide is designed for teachers to use with students in Grades 7 to 9 before, during, and after reading the memoir *On the Side of the Angels* by Jose Amaujaq Kusugak. By using this teaching guide and its activities, teachers will provide students with the opportunity to read a personal memoir by an Inuk residential school survivor and to learn about how residential schooling changed everyday life for Inuit.

Through thoughtful class discussion and extended learning activities, students will explore concepts and themes such as family, education, history, organized religion, justice, the Canadian government's apology for residential schools, geography, children's rights, and memoir (as a narrative genre).

Qinuisaarniq ("resiliency") is a program created to educate Nunavummiut and all Canadians about the history and impacts of residential schools, policies of assimilation, and other colonial acts that affected the Canadian Arctic.

