

# Reflections from *Them Days*

A Residential School Memoir  
from Nunatsiavut





# Reflections from Them Days: A Residential School Memoir from Nunatsiavut

As told by Nellie Winters  
Transcribed and edited by Erica Obendorfer

Teaching Guide

Published in Canada by Inhabit Education Books Inc.  
www.inhabiteducationbooks.com

Inhabit Education Books Inc.  
(Iqaluit), P.O. Box 2129, Iqaluit, Nunavut, X0A 1H0  
(Toronto), 191 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario, M4P 1K1

Design and layout copyright © 2021 Inhabit Education Books Inc.  
Text copyright © 2021 Inhabit Education Books Inc.  
Images copyright as indicated

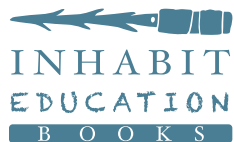
Student text and images © 2019 Nellie Winters

All rights reserved. The use of any part of this publication reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or stored in a retrievable system, without written consent of the publisher, is an infringement of copyright law.

Parts of this teaching guide were adapted from materials published by the Legacy of Hope Foundation.

Printed in Canada.

ISBN: 978-1-77450-543-4



## 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](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

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



---

# Contents

## Introduction

- 8 | About Qinuisaarniq
- 9 | The residential school system
- 15 | Residential schools and your classroom
- 21 | About the book
- 21 | About the author
- 22 | About this teaching guide

## Lessons

- 27 | Pre-reading Activities
  - 30 | Foreword
  - 34 | Home in Okak Bay
  - 38 | Fishing out to Cut Throat
  - 41 | Going Away to School
  - 46 | The Boarding School
  - 50 | Mealtimes
-



---

55	Strict Rules
60	Working
64	Playtime
67	Running Away/We'd Talk Home
69	Going Home in Spring
73	Extension Activities

## Reproducible resources

Handout 1: Resources for Support	78
Handout 2: Rules for Discussion	79
Handout 3: Nunatsiavut Fast Facts	80
Handout 4: Canada's Food Guide	81

82	Image acknowledgements
----	------------------------

---



# Introduction

---

---

## 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

The following organizations participated in the development of the Qinuisaarniq program and this teaching guide:

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

■ 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 Amautinaq 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).

---

## *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.



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

1920

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

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.



---

### *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.**

---

## 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 members of the community*

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

This memoir by Nellie Winters recalls the author's experience at the Nain Boarding School in Nunatsiavut. In this memoir, she recalls life before residential school, her experiences at the school, and what it was like to come home.

The memoir is accompanied by Nellie Winters's original illustrations.

## About the author

Nellie (Andersen) Winters is an Elder from Okak Bay living in Makkovik, Nunatsiavut (Labrador). She was raised in Okak Bay, on the north coast of Labrador. Her family was relocated to Makkovik in 1956 when services to Okak Bay were cut off by the provincial government. Nellie Winters is a respected artist whose work is commissioned and exhibited by galleries, museums, and private collections both in Canada and internationally. Her artistic work includes sealskin boots, caribou tufting, embroidery, coats, caps, dresses, beading, jewellery, carvings, grasswork, wall hangings, dolls, purses, paintings, and even a sealskin lamp. In 1976, Nellie Winters was personally invited to demonstrate her artistic work at the Montreal Olympics. For many years, Nellie Winters has contributed to artistic life in Nunatsiavut as a skills instructor, as an original board member of the Makkovik Craft Council, and as an active member of the Makkovik Ladies' Sewing Circle. In addition to her artistic contributions, Nellie Winters is widely respected as an Elder, knowledge holder, translator, author, and educator.

---

## About this teaching guide

The information and activities in this guide have been designed for teachers to use with students in Grades 4 to 6 before, during, and after reading the memoir *Reflections from Them Days* by Nellie Winters. 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 from Nunatsiavut 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, traditions, 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 *Reflections from Them Days*.

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 abilities 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 memoirs as a genre of narrative writing.
- In the second activity, you will learn about the Inuit region of Nunatsiavut.

- In the third activity, 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.

**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.

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 *Reflections from Them Days* 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.

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. Each section will take roughly 20 to 30 minutes to complete. You could complete one each day for a few days, or give students a few days in between each section. 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 of the section.
- **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 (in Inuktitut and English) 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 many different emotions. 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

---

## 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 their life 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. If you have not discussed memoirs with your students yet, you may consider explaining them simply, such as: *Memoirs are true stories, and they tell about a specific part of the author's 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 usually describe an event or series of events.** The author shows why the events were significant by including their 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 events first-hand. 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 the events to have happened.



- 
- **Memoirs are not always chronological.** Although 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: Nunatsiavut*

Spend some time discussing Nunatsiavut with students.

Show students where Nunatsiavut is on a map. Then find your own area on the map and see where it is in comparison to Nunatsiavut. Ask students what they know about the region.

Distribute **Handout 3: Nunatsiavut Fast Facts** to students. This handout lists some interesting facts about Nunatsiavut.

On the top of a piece of chart paper, write “I wonder...” Read **Handout 3: Nunatsiavut Fast Facts** to students. Read each fact one at a time. After reading each fact, ask students what they wonder about that fact. Have students talk quietly with a partner and then invite them to share their answers with the class. Record their answers on the chart paper. Save the list and revisit the questions and comments after finishing the book to see what questions have been answered.

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

Distribute **Handout 2: Rules for Discussion** to students, if you have not already done so. Read the rules out loud, or 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 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?
- How did residential schools affect the people who attended them?

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

---

# Foreword

Pages 3-7

## Summary

In the foreword, editor Erica Oberndorfer provides some context for Nellie’s memoir, explaining when she was born and a bit about her early life. The foreword explains how children were traditionally educated, and how the influence of Moravian missionaries and Newfoundland’s joining of Confederation changed children’s education in Nunatsiavut: “boarding schools” (residential schools) were introduced, and many children had to live away from their families for the first time. The foreword also explains how Erica and Nellie met and describes Nellie’s use of drawing in her storytelling.

**Note:** Before the reading, discuss the concept of a foreword with students. See the “Additional information” section.

## Preparing for the reading

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

**Note:** The foreword is at a higher reading level than the rest of the book. Consider simply summarizing the foreword for students rather than reading it in its entirety.

## Reading

- Read out loud from pages 3 to 7. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

## *Additional information*

### *What is a foreword?*

Before reading this section of the text, ask students if they have ever read a book that had a foreword, and what they know about forewords.

Explain that a foreword is a brief introductory piece that is usually (but not always) written by someone other than the author. Usually the foreword is written by someone who has a close personal or professional relationship with the author. It explains a little bit about the author of the book and the book itself. Reading a foreword can help the reader understand what was happening in the world beyond the book and why the author chose to write the book.

In this case, the foreword was written by Erica Oberndorfer. Ask students to find her name elsewhere in the book. They should notice that the title page says “Transcribed and edited by Erica Oberndorfer.” This means that the author, Nellie Winters, told her story orally to Erica Oberndorfer, who recorded the story and then turned it into a book. The foreword gives some information about that process, as well as about Erica’s relationship with Nellie.

---

## Discussion prompts

Where did Nellie grow up?

.....

The book gives two main reasons for parents sending their children to residential schools. What were the two reasons? Why else do you think parents might have sent their children to the schools?

.....

Why do you think Nellie likes to draw as she tells stories?

.....

What are *inukuluit*?

.....

Nellie talks about why she draws pictures and shares stories of her time in residential school. What are some of the reasons she gives? How do you like to share stories?

.....

The cover illustration shows Nellie's summer fishing camp. Why do you think Nellie drew this picture? Why do you think this picture was chosen for the cover?

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

## Opportunities for further learning

### What Will We Learn?

A foreword usually explains why the author chose to write the book. Nellie says, “Back them days, work and learning was our pastime. In boarding school, it wasn’t always good, but whatever we went through we learned a lot. Others had it worse than us. If I don’t share my memories, my own children won’t know the stories. This book will keep it in their memories too... If people can learn anything from my stories, it’s that we’re put on earth to do things, and to make the earth more wonderful.”

Have students think about what Nellie says. Discuss the following questions:

- Why is it important to share both good memories and difficult memories?
- Why is it important for us to read and listen to Elders who share their memories?
- What can we learn from memories other people share?

Have students think about, predict, and record, in writing and illustrations, what they might learn from Nellie’s stories. Then have students share their predictions in a whole-class discussion. After reading the entire book, students will revisit their predictions.

### Traditional Education

The foreword explains that before formal schools were introduced in Nunatsiavut, “children were traditionally educated by their families by living and working alongside them, actively developing knowledge and expertise.”

Together, brainstorm a list of what children would have learned by living and working alongside their families. Write students’ ideas on chart paper.

**Note:** For more on this subject, see the book *Making a Whole Person: Traditional Inuit Education* by Monica Ittusardjuat.

---

# Home in Okak Bay

Pages 9-13

## *Summary*

Nellie talks about where she grew up and the people around her during her childhood. She explains what the family would do in each season, emphasizing that there was always work to be done. A lot of the work centred around hunting, harvesting, food preparation, and food storage. As a child, she spent a lot of time learning from her parents and practising independence by helping Elders. Finally, she briefly describes her father's job as a mail carrier.

## *Preparing for the reading*

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

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from pages 9 to 13. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

## *Additional information*

### *Voice*

Students might have questions about the way the book is written. The author often uses unconventional grammar, including phrases like “we was five families” and “It was all kinds of stuff we used to do, them days.” This is part of the author’s use of voice.

Voice is also referred to as “tone,” “mood,” or “style.” It refers to the individual character of a piece of writing. Some texts, like research essays, have a very formal voice. Some texts, like this one, have a more informal voice.

Explain to students that Nellie Winters originally told her story out loud to the editor, Erica Oberndorfer, who transcribed, or wrote down, her words. The use of unconventional grammar contributes to the feeling that we are listening to a speaker tell a story rather than reading the story on the page.

Students should note that unconventional grammar is different from incorrect grammar. Unconventional grammar is used on purpose to create an effect. The meaning still gets across, but in a way that gives a certain effect to what is said.



---

## Discussion prompts

Nellie's family lived near only four other families. What would be fun about living near so few people? What would be hard?

.....

Nellie talks about the different names she, her brother, and Aunt Lena Onalik used for each other. Do you call anyone by a different name than their given name? Why are these names special or important?

.....

Why do you think Nellie says it was important for her family to not "waste stuff?"

.....

Why do so many of Nellie's daily activities centre around food and clothing?

.....

Nellie describes the things she enjoyed learning from her parents. What do you enjoy learning from your family, friends, and others?

.....

Nellie describes how her father would deliver mail during the winter. How do you think people got mail during the other seasons?

.....

What are some similarities and differences between the way Nellie grew up and the way children grow up today in your area?

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

## Opportunities for further learning

### Compare and contrast

Draw a T-chart on the board or chart paper, with the left column labelled “Then” and the right column labelled “Now.” Title the chart “Sending and Receiving Information.”

Ask students to brainstorm ways that sending and receiving information in Nunatsiavut was different in Nellie’s childhood versus their own. If students are having difficulty, reread the section about Nellie’s father’s job delivering mail, and have them consider how long it might take for a letter to get to its destination. Then, have them think about how long it takes them to send a text, email, or make a phone call to family or friends who are far away. Ask students: *What would you write in a letter to a loved one if you knew it would take a very long time to get to them? How might this be different from what you would write in an email or text message?*

### Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Several of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles can be seen in Nellie’s description of how she grew up. Display a list of the IQ principles and discuss their meanings one at a time. After discussing each IQ principle, ask students to identify what principles they can see Nellie, her friends, and her family following in this part of the memoir. Give specific examples. Answers may include:

- Nellie describes how she and her family “didn’t used to waste stuff.” They used every part of the animals they harvested. This shows the principle of *avatimik kamattiarniq* (environmental stewardship).
- When Nellie and her friend Judy haul water for Elders in the community, they demonstrated the principles of *inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (showing respect and a caring attitude for others) and *pijitsirniq* (the concept of serving).
- *Pilimmaksarniq* (skills and knowledge acquisition) can be seen in how Nellie learned by watching and doing what her parents did.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit refers to Inuit beliefs, laws, principles, values, skills, knowledge, and attitudes. It roughly translates to “that which Inuit have always known to be true.” For more information, see: <https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/files/Inuit%20Qaujimajatuqangit%20ENG.pdf>

---

# Fishing out to Cut Throat

Pages 15-19

## *Summary*

Nellie describes how she and her family spent summers fishing in Cut Throat Harbour. She lists the chores they had to do to get ready for summer and what life was like in Cut Throat, including the excitement of a visit from a southern ship. She talks about going berrypicking on Ladybug Island and seeing strange boats, a sign of changes happening in the area. When summer ended, her family began preparing for the winter. As she explains, there was always a lot of work to do.

## *Preparing for the reading*

- 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 13 to 19. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

## Discussion prompts

What chores did Nellie and her family do to get ready to spend their summers at Cut Throat Harbour? Have you ever gone camping? What did you do to get ready?

.....

Why do you think the arrival of the schooners was so exciting?

.....

What kinds of things did Nellie and her family make to trade with the people on the schooner?

.....

Why did everything stop on Sundays?

.....

How do you think Nellie felt when she saw what she thought were warships?

.....

Why do you think Nellie's family helped others so much when they had a lot of work to do themselves?

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

---

## Opportunities for further learning

### Creative Writing

As an independent writing activity, have students imagine they are Nellie or one of the other kids on Ladybug Island watching the “strange boats” come in. Students should put themselves in Nellie’s position and write about how they would feel seeing a strange, new kind of boat come into their familiar harbour. What would they think the boats were? Would they be frightened, excited, or something else? Encourage students to write freely, without worrying too much about spelling or grammar. The exercise is intended to stretch their imaginations. After the writing, students can share what they wrote if they wish.

### Windchargers

Nellie explains that her community used windchargers to power their electric devices. Windchargers are machines that harness the power of the wind. Today, most electricity comes from fuel, like diesel or coal, but wind power is a renewable form of energy that is becoming important again. Conduct a class discussion about using wind for power.

*Ask: What might be some of the advantages? What might be some of the disadvantages? What are some other technologies from the past that might be useful today?*

As an extension activity, have students choose one technology from the past that they think would be useful today. With writing and illustrations, have students explain how that type of technology could be used to improve their community.

# Going Away to School

Pages 21-22

## Summary

Nellie describes her experience of taking the *Winifred Lee* to boarding school. She explains that children had to go to school in order for their families to receive the family allowance (see the “Additional information” section). She says that it was a difficult journey, especially for the younger kids, and that the captain was not nice to the children.

## Preparing for the reading

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

## Reading

- Read out loud from page 21 to page 22. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

---

## *Additional information*

### *The Family Allowance*

Nellie says in this chapter: “We had to go to school because when Joey Smallwood was elected, children got what they called a family allowance. But it was only six dollars a month. If we didn’t go, our family wouldn’t get it. It wasn’t very much, but it was a help.”

Joey Smallwood was one of the main forces behind Newfoundland joining the Canadian Confederation in 1949. Before then, Newfoundland was a dominion of Great Britain. In 1948, Newfoundland held a referendum to decide whether to join Canada. Although the people were strongly divided, a small majority voted to join Confederation. This made Joey Smallwood the first premier of Newfoundland.

The *Family Allowance Act* was a major factor behind many people’s decision to vote to join Canada. Under the Act, every family received a certain amount of money for each child under 16 in the family. As Inuit began to move into communities and away from their traditional lifestyle, they became more dependent on welfare programs like family allowance. However, in order to qualify, children in the family had to be enrolled in the school system. For most Indigenous communities, this meant sending their children to residential schools far from home.

The *Family Allowance Act* has been cited as a major factor behind residential schools for Inuit. Families could technically refuse to send their children to school, but to do so meant they would not receive money they needed to live. Some people have testified that they were never informed they had a choice at all in whether their children went to school. Regardless, the family allowance was one reason parents found it almost impossible to refuse to send their children to residential schools.

## Discussion prompts

Nellie gives two reasons for why her parents sent her to school.  
What are the two reasons?

.....

Why do you think the government held back money from families who did not send their kids to school?

.....

Nellie says it was hard going away to school for the first time. What do you think would be hard about being sent away from home for the whole school year?

.....

Why did the skipper want the younger kids to stop crying? What else could he have said?

.....

How do you think Nellie felt on the boat ride to Nain?

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



---

## Opportunities for further learning

### Gallery Walk

Write the following titles on separate pieces of chart paper:

- Nellie
- The younger kids
- Nellie's parents
- Skipper Joss Winsor

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 or people to start with. Ask: *How do you think this person or these people felt when the boat was leaving for the boarding school?*

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 to all the pieces of chart paper, gather together as a class. Discuss the responses.

### Punctuation Exercise

There are two sentences that include ellipses in this chapter:

- "Sometimes it used to get quite lonesome and stuff, but..."
- "It wasn't so bad for some of us, we were older, but the younger ones, like seven and eight years old....Oh my, crying."

Talk about the function of an ellipsis and how ellipses affect the way we read. In both of these cases, ellipses represent a point where the author "trails off."

Write the first sentence on the board or chart paper. Read it out loud to the students. Then, erase the "but..." part and replace it with a period so that the sentence reads like this: "Sometimes it used to get quite lonesome and stuff." Read the new sentence out loud. Discuss with students how punctuation affects the way the sentence is read. Does the sentence evoke different emotions one way or the other? What other types of punctuation change the way we read a sentence?

---

# The Boarding School

Pages 23-24

## *Summary*

Nellie describes how the school and residences were set up and who the teachers were. She says that students were often punished by being made to stand in the corner. She says that they were taught in English and did not receive Inuttitut classes, but the students were allowed to speak in Inuttitut. She tells about where the boys and girls who lived at the school slept.

## *Preparing for the reading*

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

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from page 22 to page 24. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

## *Additional information*

### *Language*

Many residential school survivors, including Inuit, have testified that they were not allowed to speak their Indigenous languages at school. They describe harsh punishments if they spoke a language other than French or English. Speaking to the Qikiqtani Truth Commission, July Papatside from Pangnirtung testified: "Children who spoke Inuktitut were punished. I remember their first punishment: they had to put their hands on the desk and got twenty slaps on the back of their hand. The second time they got thirty slaps on their bare bum in front of all the class. They were forced to eat a bar of soap. They would throw up for two or three days. They were told that it was because they spoke an evil language." This has contributed to extreme language loss in many Indigenous communities.

Nellie acknowledges that this happened, but she did not experience it personally; she says that her classes were in English but that "We [the students] usually spoke English and Eskimo, both of it." This is a good illustration of the idea that there is no one "true" or "universal" experience of residential schools. While all survivors have some things in common, every survivor story is unique.

---

## Discussion prompts

What do you think Nellie means when she says, “You had to start over”?

.....

Why did students have to stand in the corner? How do you think that would feel?

.....

Do you think a sealskin sleeping bag would be comfortable? Why or why not?

.....

How would it feel to live in the same place you go to school? What would be different about that experience versus living at home and going to school during the day?

.....

Nellie says that she and her classmates “spoke English and Eskimo, both of it,” but all their classes were in English. What do you think happened to the students’ skills in their first language when all their teaching was in English?

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

## *Opportunities for further learning*

### **Illustrations**

In the foreword, Erica Obendorfer says that “Aunt Nellie had illustrated memories from her days at the boarding school at Nain.” In this chapter, we see the first illustration of the boarding school. Have students examine the illustration and compare it to the illustrations in previous chapters, which show Nellie’s life before she went to school. What similarities and differences do they see?

---

# Mealtimes

(Pages 25-27)

## **Content Note**

This chapter deals with disturbing content related to food deprivation. Students in your class may struggle with food insecurity, and emotional responses may be triggered 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).

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

## Summary

In this chapter, Nellie describes what the food was like at the boarding school. Most of the meals sound monotonous and not very healthy. She explains that they mostly ate porridge with molasses, and she talks about a time when they were made to eat porridge that had been cooked with salt instead of sugar. Dinner was usually pea soup with a bit of meat and hard bread. She adds that the students' families would bring country food in, and that the ministers at the school had vegetable gardens, but the students didn't get to enjoy that food: "I don't know where that food all went, but it didn't go on our plates."

**Note:** Country food refers to wild food from local plants and animals. In Nunatsiavut, country food would include such foods as seal meat, fish, and wild berries.

## Preparing for the reading

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

## Reading

- Read out loud from pages 25 to 27. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.



---

## Additional information

### Food Insecurity

Like Nellie, many students in residential schools across Canada were denied the quality and quantity of food they needed. In the Truth and Reconciliation report called *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*, many survivors remember being “always hungry,” with food always at the top of students’ minds. Government inspectors at the time confirmed the truth of these stories, many reporting “barely sufficient” and “inadequate” food supplies for the children at the schools they monitored. Many students resorted to supplementing their diet by buying extra food with the little money they had, hunting small game when they could, or even “raid[ing]” the cellar” of the school.

Like Nellie, many other students also missed traditional foods, and the unfamiliar food that they were fed in the schools often made them sick. Survivors also reported that the staff of the schools ate much better than the students. Students would often look forward to working in the kitchens for the teachers and priests in hopes that they would be able to eat their leftovers, which were better than the students’ own meals.

As with many aspects of residential schools, the trauma surrounding a lack of adequate food is still found in communities today. The high cost of food in remote and Northern communities means that many families and children in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities are not able to buy the food they need. Hunting is an alternative but also carries costs, like for firearms, ammunition, and gasoline.

As you read this book, and particularly this chapter, be mindful of the discussions around food. While Nellie’s story happened in the past, some of your students may be living with food insecurity and could be triggered or made uncomfortable by the discussion. The section “Dealing with disturbing content,” found earlier in this resource, may help you prepare for students who may be triggered (or for those same feelings in yourself).

## Discussion prompts

Why do you think the minister banged the students' elbows on the table? Do you think the kids had the same rules during meals at home, like not having their elbows on the table? How do you think they felt about having to follow these rules?

.....

Why do you think the students at the school had a snack but no lunch? How do you feel at school in the afternoon if you have no lunch?

.....

Nellie says that families used to bring country food from Nutak, but that the students never got to eat it. Why do you think this food was taken away from them?

.....

Who ate the food from the vegetable gardens? Why do you think the teachers and ministers didn't eat with the children?

.....

Overall, what do you think about the food Nellie and the other students ate at the boarding school? How do you think Nellie feels about it?

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

---

## Opportunities for further learning

### Healthy Food

Distribute **Handout 5: Canada's Food Guide**. This handout shows the government of Canada's most recent recommendations for a healthy diet. Read the recommendations to the class or ask for volunteers to read them. (You might want to point out that this guide is intended for people who mostly eat store-bought food. People who eat a wide variety of country food are getting all the nutrition they need.)

Then, ask students to compare what Nellie describes eating most days to the recommendations in Canada's food guide. Students should especially notice that Nellie's diet did not seem to include any fruits or vegetables, other than an apple at Christmas and sometimes blackberries. By contrast, Canada's food guide recommends that at least half of your food come from fruits and vegetables. Nellie's diet also did not include much of what the food guide calls "protein foods," such as eggs, meat, or beans.

Ask students: *Was Nellie fed a healthy diet while at the boarding school? What was healthy about it? What was unhealthy about it? Why did the school make the food choices that they did?*

As an extension activity, have students work in pairs to think of a healthy breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack for one day based on Canada's food guide. Students can write or draw their ideas.

# Strict Rules

Pages 29-31

## Content Warning

- This section deals with disturbing content, including discussions of physical punishment for rule breaking.

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 be themselves victims of physical 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 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 regarding disclosures of abuse.**

---

## *Summary*

The author talks about going to church twice every Sunday, where service was conducted in both Inuttitut and English. She explains that the students were not allowed to go into the community of Nain and had to stay on school grounds at all times, except for one hour on Sunday. She tells about how students who broke the rules were "pounded," sometimes with a cat o' nine tails (a kind of whip which was particularly painful).

## *Preparing for the reading*

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading.
- Read the additional information about the cat o' nine tails.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see "Opportunities for further learning").

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from pages 29 to 31. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

### *Additional information*

A cat o' nine tails is a type of whip with multiple ends. Each of the nine ends is knotted, so that each strike causes multiple lashes. This type of whip was commonly used in prisons up to the middle of the 20th century.

The cat o' nine tails was a very violent form of punishment. If students ask about it, carefully consider how much information to provide. Older children will generally be able to handle more information, but also take into account the individual students in your classroom. Students with trauma may be triggered by a discussion about this violent device. Read the "Content Warning" above before reading this chapter to ensure you have supports in place for students, and make sure you monitor your own emotional responses when reading disturbing content.

---

## Discussion prompts

Why did the church have service in both Inuttitut and English?

.....

Why do you think the students had to stay inside the fence all week?  
How do you think that would feel?

.....

How do you think Nellie felt when she got to leave school grounds for one hour on Sundays?

.....

What would you do if you could go into town for only one hour a week?

.....

How do you think Nellie felt when the boys accidentally broke the lamp and she had to tell the minister what happened?

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

## Opportunities for further learning

### Rules



**Review your school's protocol regarding disclosures of abuse before conducting this activity.**

Conduct a whole-class discussion about the rules students need to follow at school, at home, and in the community. Ask students:

- What are some rules we have at school?
- What are some rules you need to follow at home?
- What are some rules that everyone in the community needs to follow?
- What happens when someone breaks one of these rules?
- What do you think is a fair way to discipline someone who breaks a rule? What are some unfair ways?

Then, discuss how at Nellie's school, if someone broke a rule, they were punished by being "pounded." Ask students to think about how that would feel. This might be a difficult question for students to answer, so take care and pause the discussion if students are having difficulties.



---

# Working

Pages 33-36

## *Summary*

This chapter describes some of the work that students had to do at the school: picking berries, sewing and knitting, hauling water, lugging wood, and cleaning floors. Nellie says that the students had to work hard, and adds that “there’s things we had to do I wouldn’t even say.”

## *Preparing for the reading*

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading.
- Read the additional information about the work children did at residential schools.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see “Opportunities for further learning”).

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from pages 33 to 36. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

## *Additional information*

### **Working at School**

Like Nellie, many residential school survivors recall doing a lot of hard work while at school. At some schools, students spent half the day in lessons and the other half doing chores, such as cleaning, cutting wood, sewing, cooking, and so on. A lot of work was required to keep a residential school going, and much of that work fell on the students. Ellen Smith, a survivor who attended three different schools in the Northwest Territories, said: "From the morning you get up, seven o'clock in the morning, you were cleaning, cleaning, cleaning 'til you went to school. They kept us busy around the clock; right 'til we went to bed."

Sometimes this work took precedence over education. Andrew Speck, a survivor of Shubenacadie Indian Residential School in Nova Scotia, recalls: "I spent most of the time working in a barn and duty. I got in there a little bit, you know, little bit of education or whatever they were commissioned to give to me, I didn't get."

Like Andrew, Nellie talks a lot about the work she did at school, but she does not say much about the education she received.

---

## Discussion prompts

Nellie says that she never used to see black bears when she was a child, but now “they wants to be amongst the people.” What do you think has changed to make the bears come closer to communities?

.....

What do you think about the fact that the students had to embroider a skirt as a gift for the minister’s wife?

.....

Nellie describes how the older boys at the school would make the younger boys do all the work when they were hauling water. Sometimes, the older boys would hit the younger boys as they worked. Why do you think the older boys did that? How do you think the younger boys felt about that? What would you do now if you saw someone hurting one of your classmates?

.....

Why do you think the boarding school students had to do hard work all weekend? How would you feel if you had to clean, haul water, and do other chores for your school all weekend?

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

## *Opportunities for further learning*

### **Working at Home, Working at School**

In this chapter, Nellie describes the many chores she and her fellow students had to do at school. Earlier in the book, she describes the chores that she did when she lived with her family at Okak Bay and Cut Throat Harbour: “Seems like there was work to be done in the spring, and in the fall, in the summer, and in the winter.”

Make a T-chart on the board or chart paper, with one column labelled “Chores at Home” and the other labelled “Chores at School.” Ask students to recall the different chores that Nellie describes doing in both places. Ask students to note any differences between the chores, and any chores that are the same.

Then, have a whole-class discussion about Nellie’s attitude toward her chores at school and her chores at home. Ask: Do you think Nellie feels differently about the chores she had to do at school and the chores she had to do at home? Why or why not? Students should point to specific examples from the text.

---

# Playtime

Pages 37-39

## *Summary*

In this chapter, Nellie talks about some of the things she and the other students did when they had time for play. She fondly recalls going sliding on sealskins, although she also remembers that it wasn't just for fun: "We used to work all the evenings sometimes, softening them up after we'd been sliding on them." The students also skipped rope, sang songs, played on a seesaw, and went skating. In the final paragraph, she recalls being made to sew outside an igloo for a visitor to see.

## *Preparing for the reading*

- 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 37 to 39. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

## Discussion prompts

Do you go sledding? Do you enjoy it? What do you use as a sled?

.....

How did Nellie and her classmates soften the sealskins?

.....

What things did Nellie and her classmates do for play that are similar to what you do? What do you do now when you play that is different?

.....

Why did Nellie have to sit outside the igloo and sew when a visitor came? What do you think the school was trying to show the visitor?

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

---

## *Opportunities for further learning*

### **Elder Discussion**

Invite an Elder or another community member into your classroom to discuss how and what they played when they were young. Before having the Elder come into your classroom, prepare a list of questions to ask the Elder with students. If they are able, invite students to ask some of the questions you came up with.

When the Elder leaves, have a short discussion. How was Nellie's experience similar to the Elder's? How was it different?

### **Playing Then and Playing Now**

Prepare three big pieces of chart paper, one with the heading "Then," one with the heading "Now," and one with the heading "Then and Now."

As a class, brainstorm activities that children did for play "then" (in the 1940s and 50s), and activities that children do for play "now." If there are any activities that children played then that they still play now, put them on the paper headed "Then and Now."

Discuss the "Then and Now" activities with students. Ask: Why do you think kids still like to play these games?

# Running Away/We'd Talk Home

Pages 41-44

## *Summary*

In the first of these two short chapters, Nellie describes an unsuccessful attempt to run away from school with her younger classmate, Abe Flowers. In the second, she tells about how the students would go on the radio once a month to talk to their families. Although the students could not hear their parents, they could communicate messages to them, and "it made us feel happy to be talking to them."

## *Preparing for the reading*

- 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 41 to 44. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.



---

## Discussion prompts

Why do you think the older students had to take a younger student for a walk on Saturday afternoons?

.....

Why do you think Nellie and Abe ran away?

.....

What do you think might have happened if they had made it to the store in Kauk?

.....

How do you think it would feel to not speak with your loved ones from home for a whole year?

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

## Opportunities for further learning

### Talking Home

As an individual writing exercise, have students imagine that they are far from home and have the opportunity to go on the radio to send a message to their loved ones. What would they want to say? Give students time to write down their ideas. Students can share their writing with the class if they would like.

# Going Home in Spring

Pages 45-49

## *Summary*

In the final chapter, Nellie describes going home from the boarding school in the spring—they had to leave by April, before the rivers thawed. The first year she returned home by dogsled, which was a difficult journey, and they had to spend one night in an iglu, which she did not enjoy at all. The second year she went home by plane, which was a surprise to both her and her family. Back at home, she “got back to doing all the things I loved to do,” like partridge (ptarmigan) hunting and helping her dad with chores.

## *Preparing for the reading*

- Read the chapter and review the suggested discussion prompts for after reading.
- Read the additional information about the Innu relocation from Davis Inlet to Nutak.
- Optional: Prepare an extension activity (see “Opportunities for further learning”).

## *Reading*

- Read out loud from pages 45 to 49. Pause to allow students to ask questions as you read.

---

## *Additional information*

### **Innu Relocation**

The Innu are a traditionally nomadic people, meaning that they moved from place to place with the seasons. They hunted in the interior for most of the year, only visiting the coast during the summer months. When Europeans began to settle in Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec, the Innu would also bring furs to the newly established trading posts at the coastal locations of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet. As the posts grew and more European settlers came, the Innu were forced out of their traditional hunting grounds and spent more times at the coast. Because of this, they had less access to caribou, their main food source, and became more dependent on store-bought food. However, because they could no longer access caribou and trap lines in the interior, they had fewer furs with which to trade. Therefore, many Innu began to rely on government relief, which was provided at these trading posts.

In 1948, just before Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation, the Newfoundland government closed the post at Davis Inlet and relocated the Innu to Nutak, which was far outside their traditional lands. However, by 1949 or 1950, many Innu had returned to Davis Inlet, as Nutak was unfamiliar to them.

## Discussion prompts

How do you think Nellie felt when she learned she was going home for the summer?

.....

Have you ever been inside or slept in an iglu? Did you like it? Why did Nellie not like sleeping in the iglu?

.....

Nellie describes her journey home by komatik as being quite difficult. Why do you think they were taken by plane instead of komatik the following year?

.....

How do you think Nellie's parents felt when Nellie and her brother Harold came home?

.....

What would be the first thing you would do at home if you had been away for a year?

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

---

## *Opportunities for further learning*

### **Flying Home**

The second year Nellie went home from boarding school, she explains that it was a surprise to both her and the people in Nutak: “When we landed there in Nutak, no one knew.” As a creative writing exercise, have students write a story about being one of Nellie’s parents in Nutak and learning that their daughter has just arrived home, without any prior warning. Students could also perform a sketch or even make a short film if they prefer.

If you have younger students, you may want to begin the story as a shared writing exercise. In your shared writing, establish the setting and mood of the story. Have students independently finish the dialogue.

## Extension Activities

- **Write a letter to the author.** Ask students to write a letter to the author, Nellie Winters. Students should include a proper letter opening and closing. In the body of their letter, students should tell Nellie what they liked about the book and ask her one or two questions about the book or about her life.
- **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.

- **Focus on illustrations.** Have students choose one illustration from the book that they particularly like. Have them prepare a brief oral presentation (about two minutes) explaining what is happening in the illustration and what they like about the illustration. Students could also create a brief dramatic sketch, using dialogue and events from the book.
- **Arrange an Elder visit.** Have an Elder or knowledge holder from the community visit the class and speak about the chores that children were expected to do in times past. Have students prepare questions for the Elder about these chores and about what children learned from doing these chores.



# Reproducible resources

---

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 and guardians.



## Letter to parents/guardians

---

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

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

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

Dear parents and guardians,

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 *Reflections from Them Days: A Residential School Memoir from Nunatsiavut*, a memoir by Nellie Winters about her experiences attending residential school in Nain, Labrador. This memoir includes disturbing content, including descriptions of physical abuse, withholding of food, family separation, 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 might 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

---

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 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

---

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

- Kids Help Phone (English): 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 (English): 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 (English, some Inuktitut): Use the online chat or call 1-855-242-3310
- Indian Residential School Survivors Society: 1-800-721-0066

## Handout 2: Rules for Discussion

- 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: Nunatsiavut Fast Facts

---



- Nunatsiavut is one of the four Inuit regions of Canada. The other three are Nunavik, Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.
- Nunatsiavut is in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The language of Inuit in Nunatsiavut is called Inuttitut.
- Nunatsiavut means “our beautiful land” in Inuttitut.
- About 2,500 people live in Nunatsiavut. Of these, 89 percent identify as Inuit.



Canada's  
food guide

# Eat well. Live well.

Eat a variety of healthy foods each day

Have plenty  
of vegetables  
and fruits

Eat protein  
foods

Make water  
your drink  
of choice

Choose  
whole grain  
foods

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Health, 2019  
Print: Cat. H164-2371-2019E ISBN 978-0-660-28706-4 PDF: Cat. H164-2371-2019E.PDF ISBN 978-0-660-28703-7 Pub. 162094

Discover your food guide at  
**Canada.ca/FoodGuide**

---

## 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 Amautinuaq 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





# REFLECTIONS FROM THEM DAYS

## TEACHING GUIDE

The information and activities in this guide have been designed for teachers to use with students in Grades 4 to 6 before, during, and after reading the memoir *Reflections from Them Days* by Nellie Winters. 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 from Nunatsiavut 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, traditions, and memoir (as a narrative genre).

This teaching guide is part of 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.

