

STUDENT VOICE SERIES

Truth and Reconciliation

What is it about?

A discussion booklet for the classroom



Canadian Teachers' Federation
Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants



National Centre for
Truth and Reconciliation
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Centre national pour la
vérité et réconciliation
UNIVERSITÉ DU MANITOBA



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What is it about?

A discussion booklet for the classroom

Grades 5 to 12

MESSAGE FROM THE CTF PRESIDENT

Dear Teachers,

What does the truth mean to me? As a teacher and a citizen, it means that I have a right to know everything about my personal and family history, as well as the history of my country. As a fellow human being to my brothers and sisters that inhabit this land we call Canada, it is my duty as a teacher to share the truthful knowledge with those around me and with those I teach. The truth isn't always comfortable, but we need the truth so that we don't make the same mistakes again.

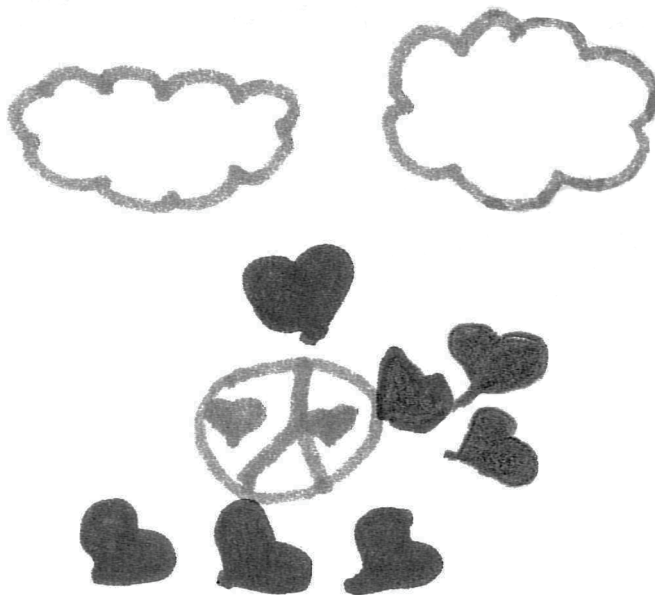
What does reconciliation mean to me? Now that I am learning about the truth, I need to share that truth. As a teacher, this is my reconciliation. I need: to learn; to listen; to talk; to dispel myths and stereotypes; to embrace all brothers and sisters that share this land with me; to understand; to help heal; and, most importantly, to validate different cultures, different languages, different brothers and sisters. I need to share in the sorrows, and in the joys. I need to listen and learn, every single day, so that I can build a kinship with my earthly brothers and sisters, the descendants of this country's true first inhabitants.

As teachers, we understand only too well that knowledge is the most important tool to the development of individual and collective growth honouring respect, equity and democracy. As teachers, we continue to nurture these on a daily basis by the process of sharing truth and seeking reconciliation. This resource offers first voice content from students across the country on the issue of truth and reconciliation. Some of those voices are Indigenous and some are not, yet they come together in a strong and resonant voice of reconciliation.

In solidarity,



Heather Smith
President, Canadian Teachers' Federation



Pedagogy:

Lesson plans have been developed to support the use of this discussion booklet in the classroom. Teachers can access the lesson plans on the CTF Imagineaction teacher platform www.imagine-action.ca, under the Teacher Resources tab. Teachers must be logged in to Imagineaction to access the resources.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE NCTR

We live in a time in our country's history where we need vision, bold ideas and long-term thinking to help address some of the great challenges we face moving forward. The call for reconciliation demands that we look at our past, present and future through a new lens.

Young people are already leading many of the conversations about reconciliation and social justice in Canada. Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth are speaking up. They are ready to lead and they are looking to their teachers for information.

This resource, *Truth and Reconciliation: What is it about?*, gives us the opportunity to come together, students, teachers, the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, to keep our promises to survivors: the promise to educate all Canadians about what really happened in the residential schools, about the strength and resilience of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people and the promise to move forward in a good way for reconciliation.

The students that fill our classrooms will inherit the world from us, both the good and the bad that we have created. They need to be well-equipped to deal with both the opportunities of the future and the challenges of the past on this journey of reconciliation.

This resource is an opportunity for us to get education right – a fair and accurate discussion of our past and present so that our students are given the knowledge they need on their journey of reconciliation.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is honoured to collaborate with the Canadian Teachers' Federation on this resource. We applaud the teachers in schools across the country who are working hard to educate themselves on the history and legacy of residential schools and pursuing reconciliation in their classrooms and their schools.



Ry Moran
Director, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

P eace
E ducation
A ction
C ompassion
E ffect

Note:

The development of this student voice discussion booklet is a collaboration between the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. This collaboration was undertaken with the view to enhancing knowledge, furthering understanding and promoting social action by youth leading to positive change in society.

INTRODUCTION

Based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Report:

"Canada's residential school system for Aboriginal children was an education system in name only for much of its existence. These residential schools were created for the purpose of separating Aboriginal children from their families, in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture—the culture of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society, led by Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. The schools were in existence for well over 100 years and many successive generations of children from the same communities and families endured the experience of them. That experience was hidden for most of Canada's history, until Survivors of the system were finally able to find the strength, courage, and support to bring their experiences to light in several thousand court cases that ultimately led to the largest class-action lawsuit in Canada's history. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was a commission like no other in Canada. Constituted and created by the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which settled the class actions, the Commission spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada to hear from the Aboriginal people who had been taken from their families as children, forcibly if necessary, and placed for much of their childhoods in residential schools."¹

Part of the TRC's mandate was to educate all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, about the hidden truth of residential schools, an important part of Canada's history. The TRC coordinated six Education Day events across the country, bringing together students and survivors to uncover the hidden truth. A selection of participating classrooms were recruited to answer up to 15 questions to enable the development of this booklet, as a first point of reconciliation from the education perspective. The idea was to offer truth and the opportunity for discussion and critical thinking. In turn, this would hopefully lead to local community action intended to continue to inform and enlighten the general public about this unfortunate part of Canada's history.

SUGGESTED USE

In this booklet, you will find student responses to questions and classroom discussions, residential school survivor statements, visuals, and key information from the reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Using this booklet as a resource, youth will have opportunities:

- to develop critical thinking skills by questioning:
 - the existence of residential schools;
 - the fact that this historical truth remained hidden for so long;
 - the impact of the residential schools on the Indigenous culture;
- to develop empathy and understanding in acknowledging that reconciliation is necessary;
- to create a dialogue to nullify existing stereotypes and myths surrounding Indigenous people in Canada;
- to take action towards reconciliation.

The Student Voice Series is a resource to support discussions about complex societal issues using the voice of students. These student voices form the content of the booklets from which lesson plans are developed. These booklets help teachers to encourage students to discuss important issues, to challenge the status quo societal response, and to take action to increase awareness among the school population and the local community. The three Student Voice Series booklets are: *Poverty, What is it?* (2014), *Mental Health Stigma: Challenging it together!* (2016), *Truth and Reconciliation: What is it about?* (2016).



Imagineaction is a CTF social justice program that supports school-community social action projects. We offer resources and lesson plans, and we also offer small subsidies to support student engagement in social action projects. CTF invites you to challenge your students to come up with creative ideas towards reconciliation, at school or in the community, and to access a funding subsidy (payable to the school) to make your project happen. Visit www.imagine-action.ca.

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Note:

Now that Canada has conditionally endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the term "Aboriginal" tends to be replaced more and more with the term "Indigenous". In this booklet, the term "Aboriginal" has been kept in quotations in an effort to be true to the voices of their authors.

Before After



A FACT

“Canada separated [Indigenous] children from their parents, sending them to residential schools. This was done not to educate them, but primarily to break their link to their culture and identity. In justifying the government’s residential school policy, Canada’s first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, told the House of Commons in 1883:

When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.”²

“The legislation was based on the assumption that in order to function within Canada, Aboriginal people needed to adopt a ‘Canadian’ identity and abandon their cultures and traditions.”

– *Student*

“The whole part of the residential school was a part of a bigger scheme of colonization. There was intent; the schools were there with the intent to change people, to make them like others and to make them not fit. And today, you know, we have to learn to decolonize.”³

– *Shirley Flowers, survivor*

IF YOU WERE WRITING AN ENTRY FOR A DICTIONARY, HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE TRUTH?

To tell the truth is to show **RESPECT** and **TRUST**. It is to open up your mind and heart not only to someone else but to yourself.

The definition of the word truth in my own words is the **RIGHT THING** and the actual thing that **HAPPENED**.

To speak of things **AS THEY ARE**, not falsely adjusted, or omitting things.

Truth is the **TOTAL OPPOSITE** of what the government did with telling us what happened in all the **RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS**.

Truth is about taking **RESPONSIBILITY**.

Truth is the basics for **JUSTICE** in our society and the **BUILDING BLOCKS** to our society.

NOT HOLDING BACK any information no matter how horrible it is.



Truth represents a **FACT** that someone has voiced.

The people who ran the residential schools were **NOT TRUTHFUL** to the students or their families.

Truth in the meaning of residential schools would be **SPEAKING OUT** about what **HAPPENED** and the real truth about it.

Truth is not what everybody **AGREES** with, because some “truths” are false truths.



“I want Canadians to understand that [the legacy of the residential schools] does not just affect the lives of the person who actually attended the school, but family members, such as spouses and children, who are also very deeply affected about this sad legacy in history.”⁴

– Johanne Coutu-Autut, spouse of a survivor

IT TOOK OVER 100 YEARS FOR THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT TO RECOGNIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS. WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG FOR THE TRUTH TO BE RECOGNIZED?

Perhaps because they [the government] weren't **AFFECTED** by them and don't know how much the schools **DESTROYED** families.

Because it was a very **TRAUMATIC** experience [for those who attended residential schools] and most of them didn't want to **TALK ABOUT IT**.

It took so long for the government to recognize the residential schools' **GENOCIDE** because they were **ASHAMED** of it and didn't want to admit **BLAME** to the event.

I think the government waited that long to give **RECOGNITION** because it would be an admittance of **GUILT**.

In my opinion, Canada wanted its peaceful, developed, safe **REPUTATION** to be **UPHELD**. Canada is known as the country that helps those in need and provides a high quality of life. The Indian Residential School System turned that belief on its back. Canada's **CREDIBILITY** has been lost.

They weren't **NOTICING** what was happening to the kids.

The **CULTURAL DAMAGE** wasn't apparent [to the government] until decades later when [Indigenous] languages started to **DISAPPEAR**, customs were **FORGOTTEN** and many survivors died of **SUICIDE** or substance **ABUSE**.

Canadians had to **FACE** the truth to stop **DENYING** what happened.



“They took my language. They took it right out of my mouth. I never spoke it again. My mother asked me why, why you could hear me, she's, like, 'I could teach you.' I said, 'No.' And she said, 'Why?' I said, 'I'm tired of getting hit in the mouth, tired of it. I'm just tired of it, that's all.'”⁵

– Rose Dorothy Charlie, survivor

WE'RE SORRY, THEY SAID

We're sorry, they said
We took the time to clear our head
It wasn't really top of the list
We got to it though, aren't you happy?
This is all behind us now

It only took us 100 years
To see the truth through all the tears
It took some time for your stories to come through
The truth was buried inside countless lives
What else could we have done?

Through all the torture, rape, and pain
We know how much you had to gain
We gave you skills for your own success
With only a few minor problems
Here and there

We're truly embarrassed by our actions
Even if we didn't make any infractions
What happened to the few individuals
Was highly grotesque
A sad time from our history

We want everyone to be the same
Do we have to take ALL the blame?
We had no idea
We needed the time
We're sorry, they said

WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS?

Some [kids] were only used to eating **HUNTED** food and had to learn to eat **UNHUNTED** food.

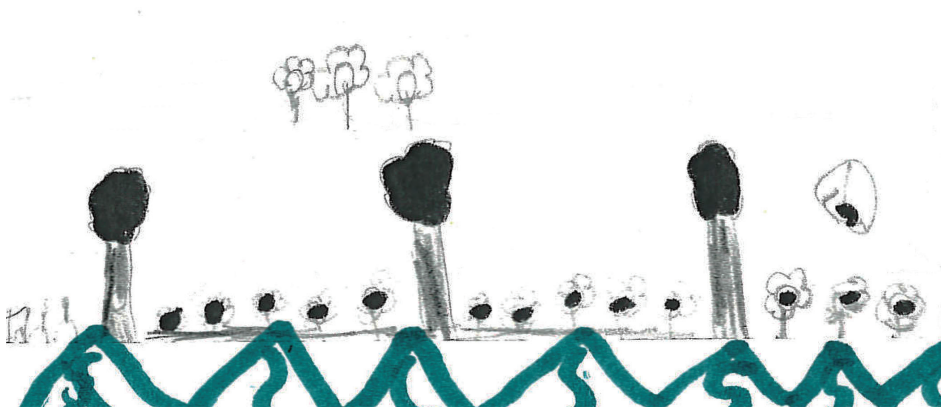
Sometimes the kids got to **GO HOME**, but they had to **GO BACK**.

Whenever someone would **ESCAPE**, it wouldn't matter, they would get **CAUGHT** and brought **BACK** right away.

When they came, they **SHAVED** off their hair.

They made them speak a different **LANGUAGE** than what they knew, and eat foods they **NEVER** had before.

The people at the residential schools were **SCARRED** for life for countless **TRAGIC** years.



The government tried to TAKE SOMETHING AWAY that wasn't meant to be taken away.

It's astounding how many CHILDREN DIED at the school.

The children who attended were stuck with the AWFUL MEMORIES and SCARS from when they were TAKEN from their families. They were left with NO CHILDHOOD MEMORIES to keep them close with their families.

ACCEPT people. To get rid of all the STEREOTYPES and look at people equally. Every single person has the right to be HAPPY for who they are without people JUDGING them.



“My name was Lydia, but in the school I was, I didn't have a name, I had numbers. I had number 51, number 44, number 32, number 16, number 11, and then finally number one when I was just about coming to high school [...] All our clothes and footwear, they all had number 32, number 16, whatever number they gave me.”⁶

– Lydia Ross, survivor

A TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Hearing the stories of residential school survivors has made me thankful for my own school experience and my family, and given me perspective about my privilege. It has also reinforced the need for me to want to take action, become transformative by letting other educators know about today's experience so they can continue the important job of informing all of Canada's students about such a tragic piece of our Canadian history. Participating in Forum Theatre has made me realize that I need to encourage more drama opportunities at school because the level of engagement was incredibly high even from a group of students who had no previous relationship with each other – a powerful tool to begin the discussion about difficult topics.



WHAT IMPACT DID THE STORY OF A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVOR HAVE ON YOU?



Devastated

Sadness

Heartbreak

Emotional

Powerful

Personal

Depressing

Unfair

Wrong

Horrible

Painful

Hard

Scared

I'M SO SORRY

To see someone's real **EMOTION** to how they were treated does not begin to compare.

He was **ABUSED** and it affected him and he became an alcoholic.

It showed us the **DAMAGE** it did to their family.

The residential schools had a massive emotional **IMPACT** on me because I had no idea this had even happened.

It [a residential school survivor's story] was completely **DEVASTATING** since as Canadians we value **DIVERSITY** but we once tried to eliminate an entire culture of people whose only crime was being **DIFFERENT**.

One of the first things I thought of after [hearing the story] was what if that had happened to me? What if my family had to **SUFFER** the way hers did? Putting **MYSELF IN THEIR SHOES** and imagining what they would have gone through, makes me realize how awful they were **TREATED**, how lost they must have all **FELT**.

It was **GENOCIDE** of the First Nations culture.

“ [We have] seen this army covered wagon truck, army truck outside the place. And as we were walking towards it, kids were herded into there like cattle, into the army truck. Then in the far distance I seen my mother with my little sister. I went running to her, and she says, ‘Leona,’ she was crying, and I was so scared. I didn’t know what was going on, I didn’t know what was happening. ”⁷

– Leona Bird, survivor

There will never be a big enough **APOLOGY** from our country on the way they were treated.

Meeting a survivor affects me in a way I cannot even **DESCRIBE** – emotional and **OVERWHELMING**.

I am **SHOCKED** and **SADDENED** that this happened to someone I know and love. I don't know if my birth parents went to residential school but I am sure that my family is living with the **EFFECTS** of residential schools. Maybe my family would be all together but I will never really know.

“The only building that I knew up to that time, that moment in my life was the one-storey house that we had. And when I got to the residential school, I seen this big monster of a building, and I've never seen any buildings that, that large, that high. And I was, I've always called it a monster, I still do today, because of not the size of it, but because of the things that happened there.”⁸

– Calvin Myerion, survivor



IF YOU MET A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVOR, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THEM?

Ask to **HEAR** their story and experiences **IF** they are comfortable **SHARING** it.

I would praise them for their **BRAVERY**.

This is one of the **DISAPPOINTMENTS** of Canadian history.

I would tell them how sorry I am that they had to **SUFFER** through something as **HORRIBLE** as that.

I would say that I **WISH** something would have been **DONE** for their families **SOONER**.

For me to just say **SORRY** wouldn't even begin to make up for the situation but I would mainly want them to know I was there to **LISTEN** and **HELP** in any way I could.

I am a **STUDENT** who was possibly the age you were when you attended residential school.

I will never fully **UNDERSTAND** what you went through but I will try my best.

“Just right away they assumed all of us had bugs, Aboriginal. I didn't like that. I was already a teenager. I was already taking care of myself. I knew I didn't have bugs. But right away they assumed I did because I'm Aboriginal.”⁹

– Ricky Kakekagumick, survivor

I would commend them on their exceptional **STRENGTH**, courage and **PRIDE TO SURVIVE** in a place like that. I would also **THANK** them for sharing their stories and **EDUCATING** the next generation.

You are **LOVED**.

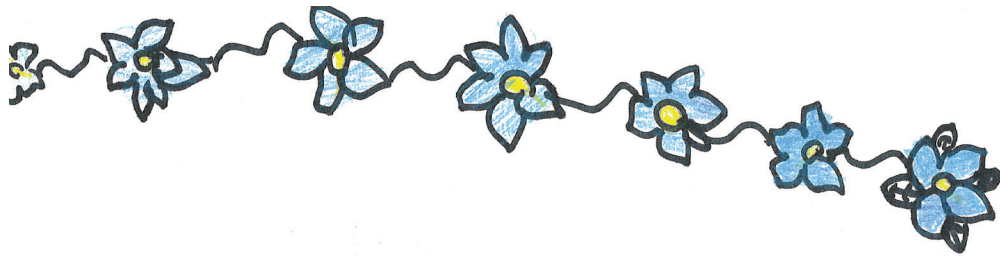
Thank you for **BEING YOU**.

I would like to tell you, you are an **AMAZING** person and I thank you for staying **STRONG**. Thank you for not **GIVING UP** and for keeping our culture **ALIVE**. Stay strong, you are a **BEAUTIFUL** person inside and out.

We're sorry we **DENIED** the truth.

We're sorry we denied **HISTORY**.

We are no longer OK with the history as it was **TOLD** for so long. It's time to **REWRITE** history books and for those who have kept silent to be able to talk.



“The clothes we wore were taken away from us too. That was the last time we saw our clothes. I never saw the candy that my parents packed into my suitcase again. I don't know what they did with it. It was probably thrown away or given to someone else or simply kept. When I was given back the luggage, none of the things that my parents packed were still in there. Only the clothes I wore were still sometimes in the suitcase.”¹⁰

– Elizabeth Tapiatic Chiskamish, survivor

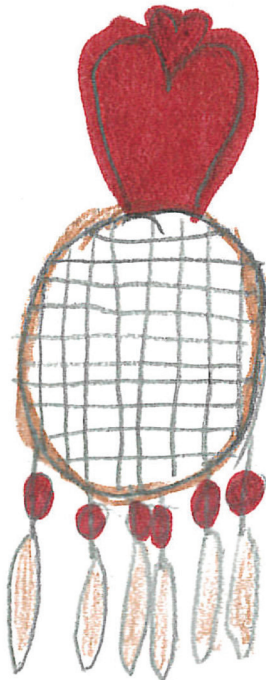
IF YOU WERE WRITING AN ENTRY FOR A DICTIONARY, HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE WORD RECONCILIATION?

Reconciliation is about **UNITY** and **RESPECT** between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

It's a survivor whose heart is **WARMER** than a fire, even when life is hard, and a kid who's **HAPPY** for the future even when they're **CRYING** for the past.

The reformation of **BONDS** between people.

The **RESTORATION** of the **RELATIONSHIP** between a group or person that was wronged and the group or person that wronged them.



Coming to the conclusion that you have done someone wrong or an injustice, and try to make **THINGS RIGHT** and **REBUILD TRUST**.

It's about bringing communities **TOGETHER**.

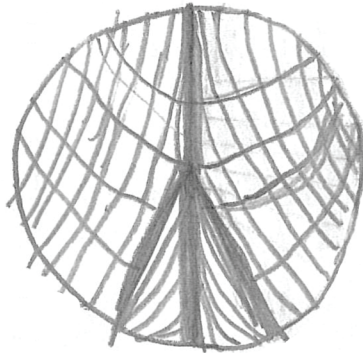
It's a **HEALING** process for the families.

An act of restoring the two sides to be on **GOOD TERMS**.

Relationships [that] are built on a foundation of **OPENNESS, DIGNITY, UNDERSTANDING** and also **HOPE**.

Reconciliation is restoring **MUTUAL RESPECT**.

It's not an excuse, but a way to **HELP** people **HEAL**.



“There can be no doubt that the founders of Canada somehow lost their moral compass in their relations with the people who occupied and possessed the land... While we cannot change history, we can learn from it and we can use it to shape our common future... This effort is crucial in realizing the vision of creating a compassionate and humanitarian society, the society that our ancestors, the Aboriginal, the French and the English peoples, envisioned so many years ago—our home, Canada.”¹¹

– Gerry St. Germain, survivor

WHY DO YOU THINK RECONCILIATION IS AN IMPORTANT NEXT STEP AFTER LEARNING TRUTH ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS?

It will help and begin to **REPAIR** the relationships **BROKEN** and rebuild trust.

To make sure atrocities like this **NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN**.

The best way for reconciliation is through **EDUCATION** since one day the youth will become leaders of this country.

We need to start **MAKING IT UP** to Aboriginal People and showing them that they have our **SUPPORT** and that they won't have to go through this **ALONE** anymore.



Knowing the **TRUTH** is only half of it—it's what you do with it that **MATTERS!**

It's trying to bring both sides to **PEACE** with what happened because there is no possible way of going back to **UNDO THE WRONGS** of the residential schools. It's definitely a start in the right direction.

RECOGNIZING a problem is a first step for **SOLVING** the problem.

The best way to **APOLOGIZE** and get to a better place in the world would be to finally **ACCEPT** the Aboriginal culture and people as more than the stereotypes. But this isn't going to be easily **ACCOMPLISHED** until every last person is aware of what has been done.

To **CELEBRATE** Indigenous people's **CONTRIBUTIONS** to Canada and to recognize the horrible things that happened in history. To make sure it never happens again.



“The healing is happening—the reconciliation... I feel that there's some hope for us not just as Canadians, but for the world, because I know I'm not the only one. I know that Anishinaabe people across Canada, First Nations, are not the only ones. My brothers and sisters in New Zealand, Australia, Ireland—there's different areas of the world where this type of stuff happened... I don't see it happening in a year, but we can start making changes to laws and to education systems... so that we can move forward.”¹²

—Alma Mann Scott, survivor

IF YOU COULD SEND A MESSAGE TO OUR GOVERNMENT, KNOWING THEY MADE AN APOLOGY IN 2008, WHAT WOULD THAT MESSAGE SAY?

The apology was not genuine, **STAGED** and **POORLY EXECUTED**. It was not spoken from the **HEART**.

I would tell them why I am **NOT AS PROUD** a Canadian today, now that I have **LEARNED** the truth. Until we come together as a **COUNTRY** and truly **TAKE ACTION** to fix this matter, I am and will not be a proud Canadian.

Keep the **PROMISES** as guaranteed by the **TREATIES**. Respect the original agreements.

Take steps **FORWARD** toward increasing the **PROFILE** of residential schools and reconciliation. Similar to Black History Month, a period of time that **SPREADS AWARENESS**.



Aboriginal studies should be **MANDATORY** considering this isn't our land.

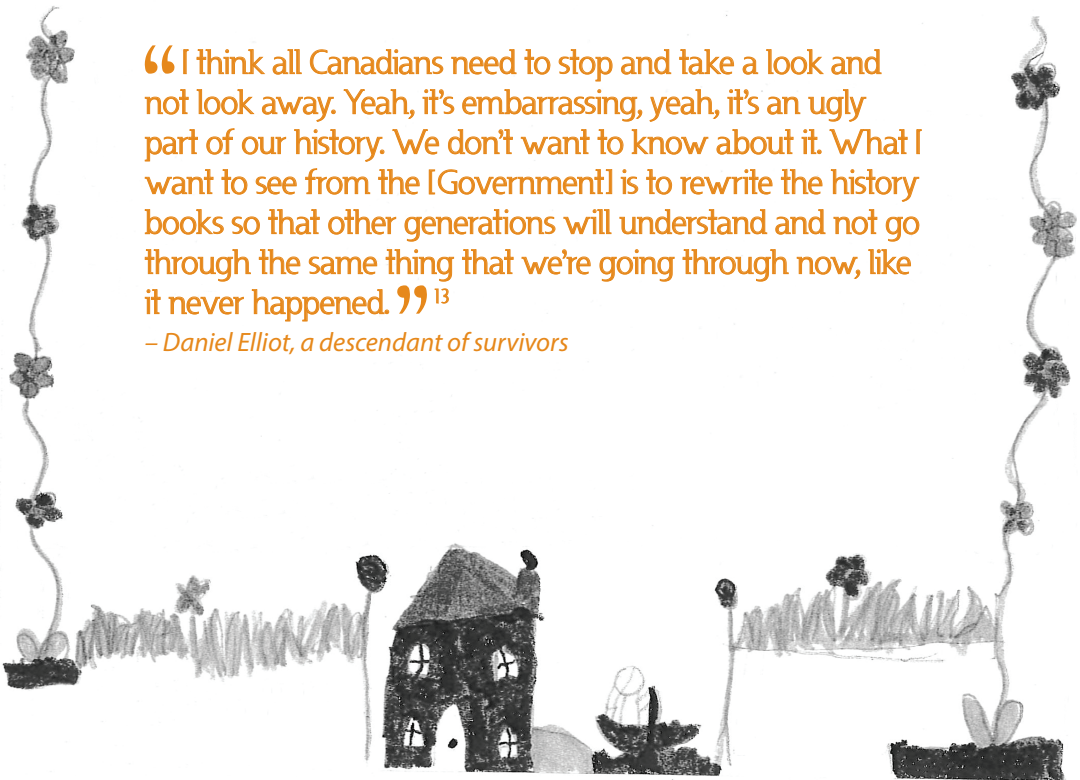
I hope you **DON'T FORGET** the promise you made to the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] telling them that you **AGREED** to do the **RECOMMENDATIONS** they had planned for you to do, because we are all still waiting for that to **HAPPEN**.

It's never too late, but we must **FOLLOW UP** and continue to provide **OPPORTUNITIES** for dialogue.

Healing will take **TIME**.

“I think all Canadians need to stop and take a look and not look away. Yeah, it's embarrassing, yeah, it's an ugly part of our history. We don't want to know about it. What I want to see from the [Government] is to rewrite the history books so that other generations will understand and not go through the same thing that we're going through now, like it never happened.”¹³

– Daniel Elliot, a descendant of survivors



MOST IMPORTANT LESSON LEARNED?

The act of trying to rid someone of their **IDENTITY** can result in **TRAGIC** and sometimes lethal **CONSEQUENCES**.

We can **NEVER** forget it!

The fact that they were **RAPED, ABUSED** and **BEATEN** is devastating and I'm glad that it was **BROUGHT TO LIGHT**.

They [residential school survivors] were very **STRONG** and **BRAVE**.

They didn't get a **PROPER EDUCATION**.

Everything we do **MATTERS**, and everything has a **RIPPLE EFFECT**.

If we do one **LITTLE** thing to help someone out, it ends up making a **BIG** difference.

A majority of Canadians view Nazis as so **TERRIBLE** which they are, for having concentration camps, but **FAIL** to recognize the **SIMILAR** treatment we give Aboriginals.

AWARENESS of the hidden truth about residential schools creates more **ACCEPTANCE** among cultures in Canada because we will not let history **REPEAT** itself.

Even through tragedy we can come **TOGETHER**; we need to move **FORWARD** together.

It's a very **IMPORTANT** conversation and it's a long **CONVERSATION**.

It was a very **TRAUMATIC** time for families.

I was **UNCOMFORTABLE** on how there weren't any good people around to put a stop to it [residential schools].

We shouldn't **EXPECT** Aboriginal people to **FORGIVE** all of this.

Just because it happened in the **PAST**, doesn't mean it is forgotten.

We must make sure it **DOES NOT HAPPEN AGAIN** so that no other person has to go through the **SORROW** the people at the residential schools did.

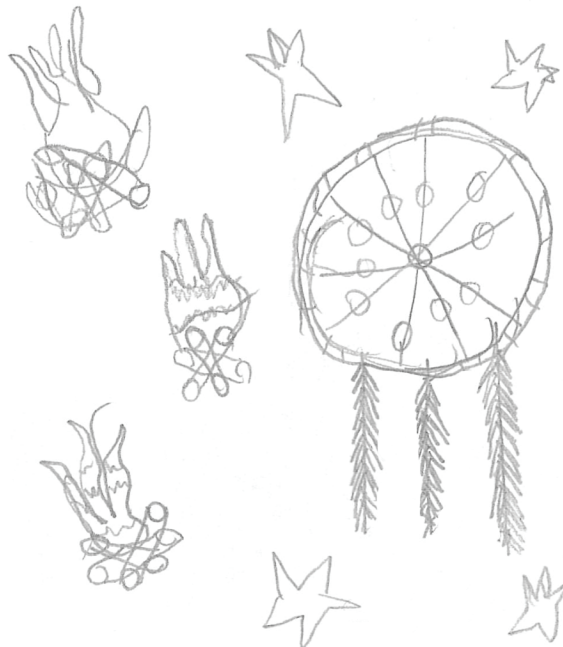


“The first few years we were there, I never had a teacher, a real teacher. The nuns that taught us weren't teachers; they weren't qualified. They had no qualifications whatsoever to... to be able to teach. Their only mandate was to Christianize and civilize; and it's written in black and white. And every single day we were reminded.”¹⁴

– Mary Courchene, survivor

FROM A STUDENT'S HEART

When I went to the TRC Education Day, I was surprised about what happened and the stories told by residential school survivors—how they were abused, brainwashed into learning a religion, and also having their language and culture taken away. When I was listening to the stories I was emotional about how they couldn't see their parents or learn their traditions on how to hunt, trap, fish, and many more. Later on, I could see the Aboriginal culture come back to life, people learning the traditional cultures and languages. There is already a huge difference starting... This generation, the "8th", will be stronger and will rise up and speak for themselves about the tough times the First Nations people have been through.



FROM A STUDENT'S HEART



I knew that my adopted mom had been to residential school but I didn't know all of the details. After having gone to the TRC (Education Day) event I am shocked and saddened that this happened to someone I know and love. I don't know if my birth parents went to residential school but I am sure that my family is living with the effects of residential school. We need everyone to learn about this; everyone should know about the startling past. And then we need to give people help.... Maybe my family would all be together but I will never really know. For me, it was a door being opened to show me it wasn't my fault that my mom couldn't raise me. For me it gave me drumming. I now go to First Nations events in my community and feel that I have a place. I have role models and a mentor at the friendship centre. So as shocking as the TRC event was confronting this history, it has given me a cool new direction in my life, a sense of belonging.

WHAT CAN 'I' AND 'WE' DO TOWARDS RECONCILIATION?

I CAN

Try and get family and friends to **RESEARCH** and to help them understand **RECONCILIATION** to make sure nothing like this happens again.

Get **INVOLVED** in events and learn about the culture. We have to **WORK** together!

Spread the truth and **TEACH** people to be respectful to what Aboriginal people have gone through.

Make sure to always be an **ACCEPTING** and open-minded person.

Make a **DOCUMENTARY** of one of the students.

QUESTION adults, media and teachers about history.

Create **AWARENESS**.

NEVER forget!



WE CAN

Wear an **ORANGE** shirt to school on “Orange Day” to show we **CARE** and **RECOGNIZE** residential schools and out of **RESPECT** to the kids who lost their lives.

SUPPORT Aboriginal families and **ATTEND** events to support the reconciliation process.

Continue the **TALKING** at assemblies, classrooms.

INVITE a residential school survivor to visit our **SCHOOL** and talk with us.

Write something for the **NEWSLETTER** for parents and talk to the Parents Advisory Group.

Talk to grade groups of teachers for grades 6 and 7 and **ASK** for more **INFORMATION** about the residential schools to be used in the social studies **CURRICULUM**.

Teach others what we have **LEARNED**.

Use **SOCIAL MEDIA** to catch people’s attention.

Show the **PICTURES** to others and read the **TESTIMONIES**. It is hard not to believe pictures and **STORIES** told by survivors.

NEVER forget!

“...The perpetrators are wounded and marked by history in ways that are different from the victims, but both groups require healing... How can a conversation about reconciliation take place if all involved do not adopt an attitude of humility and respect?... We all have stories to tell and in order to grow in tolerance and understanding we must listen to the stories of others.”¹⁵

– Reverend Stann McKay, survivor

FROM A STUDENT'S HEART



I went to see St. Michael's Indian residential school being decommissioned in February this year (2015). It was so powerful to see the traditions, the drumming, the respect that people paid to the ceremonies. Everyone was hugging and looking out for each other. Hereditary Chiefs, Elders and survivors of this residential school spoke. We got to light candles while special prayers were said. I suddenly had a thought as we were leaving the ceremony to go to the big house. Did the Elders who were saying the prayers see the lost ones—the children who never made it out of that school? Did the Elders see their souls released and go up into the sky in peace? I certainly hope so.

KEY POINTS TO HELP THE CLASSROOM DISCUSSION ALONG

1. In 1831, the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Upper Canada, became Canada's first residential school; it was run by the churches. At first, the school only admitted boys. Girls were admitted in 1834.¹⁶
2. "The federal Indian Act, first adopted in 1876, like earlier pre-Confederation legislation, defined who was and who was not an 'Indian' under Canadian law. The Act also defined a process through which a person could lose status as an Indian. Women, for example, could lose status simply by marrying a man who did not have status. Men could lose status in a number of ways, including graduating from a university."¹⁷
3. The last federally-run facility, the Gordon Residential School, in Punnichy, Saskatchewan, closed in November 1996.¹⁸
4. Indian residential schools became mandatory in 1920. The Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs at that time believed in the federal government's policy of 'civilizing' Aboriginal children by "aggressively assimilating them in the white European society. The stated goal was 'to kill the Indian in the child.'"¹⁹

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department...²⁰

– *Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 1920*

5. "The decision to invest in residential schools was based on a belief that the cultural and spiritual transformation that the government and churches sought to bring about in Aboriginal people could be most effectively accomplished in institutions that broke the bonds between parent and child."²¹
6. For over 150 years, residential schools operated in Canada. Over 150,000 children attended these schools. At least 6,000 children died while in residential schools in Canada.²²
7. "The government mandated that English (or in Québec, French) be the language of instruction [...] [I]n many schools, students were punished for speaking their [Indigenous] language."²³
8. "The assault on Aboriginal identity usually began the moment the child took the first step across a residential school's threshold. Braided hair (which often had spiritual significance) was cut, homemade traditional clothing was exchanged for a school uniform, Aboriginal names were replaced by Euro-Canadian ones (and a number), and the freedom of community life was replaced with the regimen of an institution in which every activity, from morning to night, was scheduled. Males and females and siblings were separated and, with some exceptions, parental visits were discouraged and controlled."²⁴
9. "For administrative reasons, Indian Affairs and the school administrators assigned each residential school student a special number. In many schools, these numbers were used on a daily basis instead of names. Many students found the experience degrading and dehumanizing."²⁵
10. "Hastily and cheaply built schools often had poor or non-existent sanitation and ventilation systems. With few infirmaries in which students with contagious diseases could be isolated, epidemics could quickly spread through a school with deadly results [...] Often, parents were not informed if their children became sick, died, or ran away."²⁶

11. "For most of the system's history the federal government had no clear policy on discipline. Students were not only strapped and humiliated but in some schools, they were also handcuffed, manacled, beaten, locked in cellars and other makeshift jails, or displayed in stocks. Overcrowding and a high student-staff ratio meant that even those children who were not subject to physical discipline grew up in an atmosphere of neglect."²⁷
12. "Many students have positive memories of their experiences of residential schools and acknowledge the skills they acquired, the beneficial impacts of the recreational and sporting activities in which they engaged, and the friendships they made. Some students went to public schools so they could graduate and attend post-secondary institutions and develop distinguished careers."²⁸
13. "For most students, academic success was elusive and they left as soon as they could. On return to their home communities they often felt isolated from their families and their culture. They had lost their [first] language and had not been provided with the skills to follow traditional economic pursuits or with the skills needed to succeed in the Euro-Canadian economy. Worst of all, they did not have any experience of family life or parenting."²⁹
14. "On June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued an apology to the former students of Canada's Indian residential school system, calling it a 'sad chapter in our history.' That chapter is part of a broader story; one in which the Canadian government gained control over Aboriginal land and peoples, disrupted Aboriginal governments and economies, and sought to repress Aboriginal cultures and spiritual practices."³⁰
15. In September 2009, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper addressing the G20 Summit, stated "We [Canada] have no history of colonialism." This was stated after the 2008 federal government apology read by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper.³¹

“ Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things. ”³²



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Elementary Schools

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- Royal School of Winnipeg, Man. – Grades 5, 6

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND LINKS FOR TEACHERS

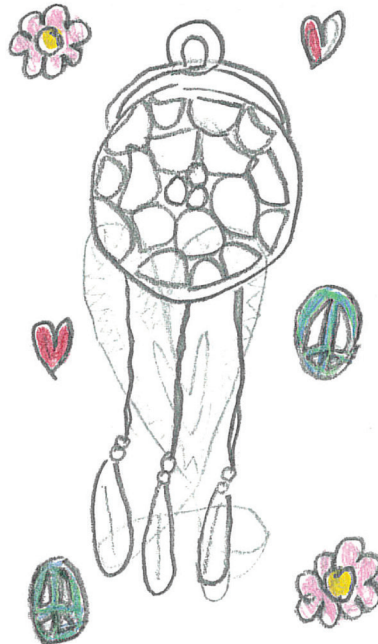
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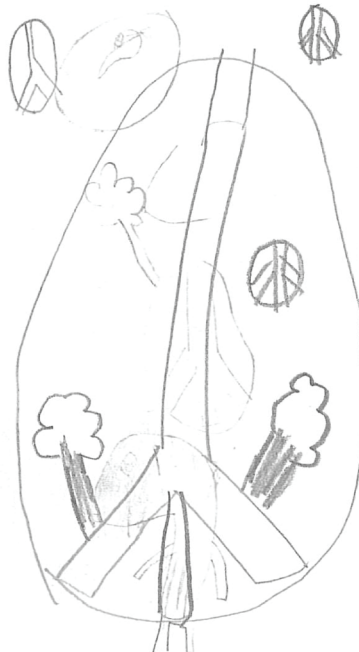
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