

# Indigenous “Education”



A story of Residential Schools and Beyond



# Territorial Acknowledgement

Place a check mark by the closest residential school to your own childhood school



**CANADA**

# Our Goals for Today

→ Our aim today is to explore this topic using the arc of a narrative- the beginning, middle and future. What is the *story* of residential schools? We will examine the operation of these schools, the aftermath and the plans for integrating this knowledge into our collective futures as educators.

## Some questions to consider:

*What do we want to focus on as a classroom?*

*What stories about residential schools do we know, and what stories would we like to know?*

*What's the purpose of teaching something that isn't nice?*

# History of Residential Schools

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# The Beginning

- January 1, 1831: The first of Canada's Residential Schools begins accepting boarders
  - ◆ Indigenous children had already been attending religious mission schools for 200 years
- April 1, 1920: Residential schools become mandatory for Indigenous children between the ages of 7 and 16
  - ◆ Including Inuit and Métis children
- January 1, 1930: More than 80 institutions are in operation across Canada
  - ◆ Over 17 000 students are enrolled
- January 1, 1979: 28 Residential schools remain open and operational in Canada
- January 1, 1996: The last federally operated residential school closes

# Residential “School”

- Early treaties included commitments to education for Indigenous children that were never fulfilled
- These “schools” only provided the most basic education
  - ◆ Often spent more time as physical labourers than students
- Religious education was the most important aspect

# An Aversion to Education

“Learning became very hard for me because I associated learning with being beat or, you know. So learning was very terrifying for me.” - Myrna Kaminawaish

“Can I go to grade 12?” And that supervisor said, “You don’t need to go that far,” he says. He says, “Your people are never going to get education to be a professional worker, and it doesn’t matter what lawyer, or doctor, or electrician, or anything, that a person has to go to school for.” He says, “You’re going to be working jobs that the white man don’t want to do.” - Walter Russell Jones



# Documentary Clip

Woman speaking about her day to day at Kuper Island

# Breakout Groups

- What discussion questions/activities, etc. could be done with a documentary like this with students for deeper learning/understanding?
- What barriers are there to presenting this?
- What topics are appropriate for age range?
- What is the point of teaching non-nice topics?

# After Residential Schools (Impacts)

## Intergenerational Trauma

*“..and we are still paying the price today. We are paying the price today and we will continue to pay for some time to come unless - and I say unless - our leaders decide that healing is critical to the future of our people, and that healing means coming face to face with the whole residential school experience.”*

(Phil Fontaine)

## Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbkEJEXhV7Y&app=desktop>

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# Issues in Education: A Background

- Disillusionment with residential schools and Amendment of Indian Act
- Opposition to policy

## **Dorothy Ross:**

“I was one of the first students from the Okanagan band that was integrated in the 1950s, into the public schools ... We had horrific experiences because we were the savages, we were taunted. Our hair was pulled, our clothing torn, and we hid wherever we could, and didn't want to go to school. So, those kinds of stories are just as traumatic as what happened at residential school.”



# Integration and the Illusion of Control

- “Integration”: a dismissal of responsibility by the Federal Government
- “Indian Control of Indian Education” and the illusion of control



# Reflective Moment (Song)

Think about the question “Why is it important for us, as educators, to be aware of the information and history surrounding residential schools?”

Let’s take a moment of reflection as we watch this music video put together by Brentwood ... (SD 63)

<https://brentwood.sd63.bc.ca/mod/page/view.php?id=1322>

# Going Forward

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# More Recent Developments in First Nations Education

In 2011-2012, three different reports were released on First Nations Education:

- **First report** by the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples
- **Second report** by the National Chief of Assembly of First Nations & the federal minister of Aboriginal Affairs
- **Third report** by three First Nations organizations (FNEC, NAN, FSIN)

Together these reports had two core points:

- ★ Sustainable funding is necessary
- ★ Greater aboriginal control is necessary





**“Aboriginal peoples themselves must lead and control the process of change”**



# Canadian government's initial response to the reports

“Heavy-handed and reminiscent of the same attitudes that inspired residential schools”

In 2013:

- *Blueprint*
- *First Nations Education Act*

A “far cry” from the joint development process the reports advocated for

# The First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act (2014)

The bill would establish:

- minimum education standards on the reserve
- commitment to sustainable funding

It was questioned and rejected by many Aboriginal leaders → highlighting the deep rooted **distrust** between aboriginal peoples and the Canadian government



# TRC Calls to Action

Equity in Funding and Transparency: addressing these issues is necessary if the gap in rates of educational attainment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is to be closed, and if the continuation of discriminatory issues in education - both on and off reserves - dating back to residential schools (and beyond) are to be resolved.





# Example Governance Model: Kativik School Board

- Exclusive jurisdiction in 14 Inuit villages
- Training program for Inuit teachers
- Upgrading program for non-Inuit teachers
- Adult education and research department



Images source: Kativik School Board

# Other Agreements

58% of First Nation communities have tripartite agreements regarding education  
BUT not all legally binding

*First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia Act & Mi'kmaq First Nations in Nova Scotia are exceptions*

Many Indigenous people work inside the public school system to better meet the needs of Indigenous students

1999 First Nation Education Steering Committee in BC - public schools must provide programs on the culture of local Indigenous peoples



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First Nations Education  
Steering Committee

# Concerns about partnership agreements

- Piecemeal approach, not lasting solutions
- Negotiations (and renegotiations) take time and resources many Indigenous groups don't have
- Need to develop legislation in genuine partnership with Indigenous groups
- Need lasting change that honours treaties and rights to self-determination
- Need to ensure no child left behind



Image source: <https://twitter.com/fnesc>

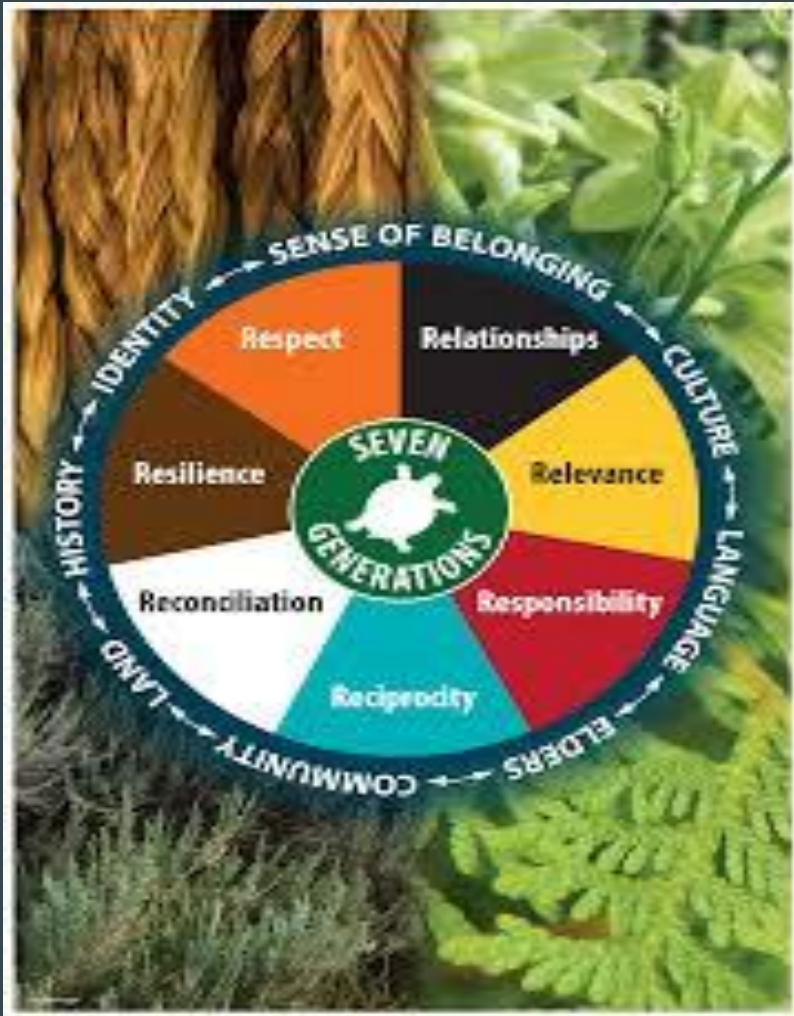
# Classroom Practices

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# The Aboriginal Lens- Education for Reconciliation

A framework to help guide educators in promoting Indigenous ways of knowing and being and challenging traditional Eurocentric classroom practices



- Respect
- Relationship-Building
- Relevance
- Responsibility
- Reciprocity
- Reconciliation
- Resilience



## Respect Requires:

Listening to and learning from  
Indigenous voices

## Relationship-building Requires:

Supporting and bringing together Indigenous  
students, Elders and community members

# Relevance Requires:

Recognizing the legacy and continuing impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples

# Responsibility requires:

Understanding that each of us has a role to play in supporting the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

# Reciprocity Requires:

Teaching and learning must be as an interactive sharing of knowledge; students should not be viewed as passive recipients of knowledge.



# Reconciliation requires:

Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to Indigenous history

Establishing ways for Indigenous students to see themselves reflected in school curriculum and communities.

# Resilience:

Acknowledging that despite over 150 years of forced assimilation policies, First Nations, Inuit and Métis continue to assert, defend and develop their identities and cultures.



The WSÁNEĆ 13 moon calendar, SKÁUŁTE  
<https://greenangels.com/blog/13-moon-calendar-wsanec-traditional-culture>

# Place-Based Education

Reconciling First Nation people to their own knowledge “should be a restorative feature of education for the future of First Nations”

- Marie Batiste

“Not enough to only know about places, its history or narrative, but a learner must experience them both physically and emotionally, achieved through rituals, and visitations” - Leroy Little Bear

“Indigenous science embodies a holistic view of the world in which all human, animal, and plant life are perceived as being connected, related and interdependent” - Marie Batiste



Image source: Kativik School Board

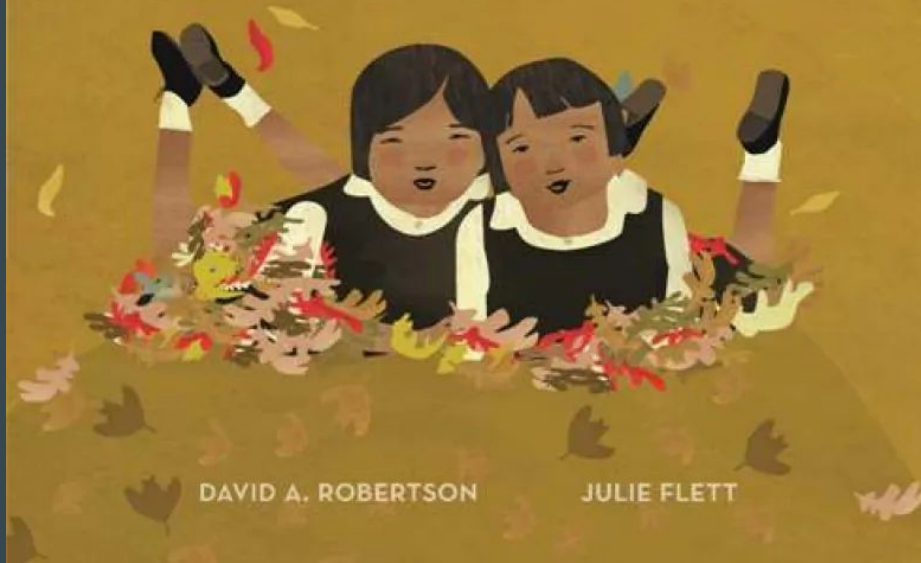


# Ideas for teaching the subject of Residential Schools:

- Emphasis on understanding past to create a better future
- Ensure a safe classroom environment
- Sensitivity is key
- Teacher not an expert, but a facilitator
- Be cognizant of different backgrounds, cultures, relationships with the topic that will result in varied reactions/emotions
- Allow adequate time for discussion, questions
- Bring in Indigenous voices
- Provide further support as necessary (e.g. school counsellors, Indigenous resources...)



# When We Were Alone



DAVID A. ROBERTSON

JULIE FLETT







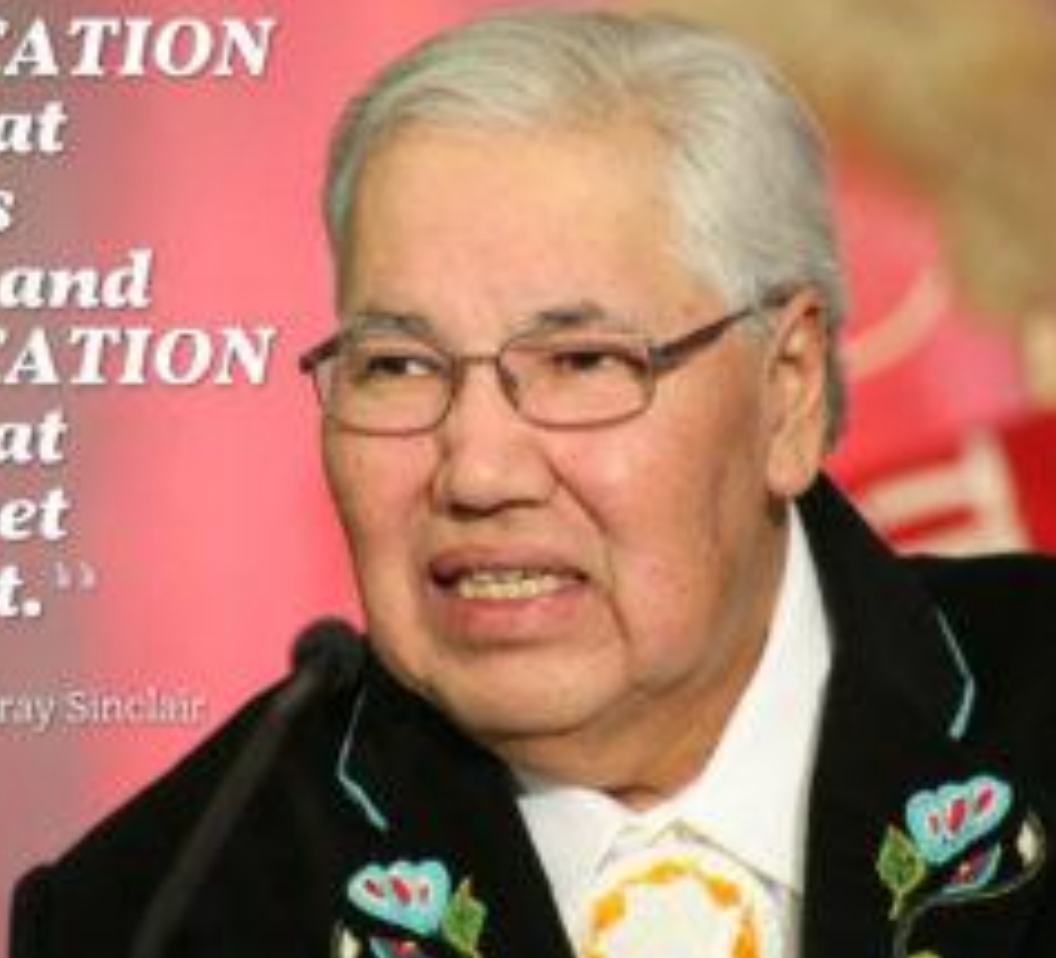


# Breakout Groups

- Classroom practices - what is our role/responsibility as educators?
- Can you come up with strategies you can imagine implementing in the classroom in teaching students about residential schools?

“**EDUCATION**  
*is what  
got us  
here, and*  
**EDUCATION**  
*is what  
will get  
us out.*”

Justice Murray Sinclair



**HÍSW\_KE!**

Thank you!

Questions?

Comments?

# Resources

- Video: KUPER ISLAND (43 min) ~ Residential School Survivors Documentary ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_uVBE6AXs4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_uVBE6AXs4))
- Reading: Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy - Chapter 2: The Failure to Educate (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt19rmbqj.5.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A2b2946fe3e2a3f90272c206e48d668a5>)
- Music video: <https://brentwood.sd63.bc.ca/mod/page/view.php?id=1322>
- Kativik School Board <https://www.kativik.qc.ca/>
- When We Were Alone <https://highwaterpress.com/product/when-we-were-alone/>
- Residential Schools Timeline: <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/residential-schools>
- Aboriginal Lens- Education for Reconciliation document <https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/AboriginalEducation/AboriginalLens.pdf>