# HOPE AND HEALING

The Legacy of the Indian Residential School System



legacyofhope.ca

## LEGACY OF HOPE FOUNDATION

The Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) is a national Aboriginal charitable organization whose mandate is to educate and create awareness and understanding about the legacy of residential schools, including the effects and intergenerational impacts on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, and to continue to support the ongoing healing process of Residential School Survivors.



Since 2000, the LHF has worked with Survivors, Aboriginal communities, researchers, curators, and educators to develop resources to increase public awareness and knowledge of the history and legacy of the Indian Residential School System. Its projects include mobile exhibitions, websites, videos, publications and a bilingual education program called *100 Years of Loss–The Residential School System in Canada*.

Visit www.legacyofhope.ca for more information, to request resources, or to donate to the Legacy of Hope Foundation.

Charitable #: 863471520RR0001

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### Warning

This document contains subject matter that may be disturbing to some readers, particularly Survivors of the Residential School System. Until at least March 31, 2016, Health Canada will provide a 24-hour National Crisis Line for former residential school students at 1-866-925-4419.

### THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Indian Residential School System (IRSS), as defined by the federal government, is limited to 139 schools that operated across Canada between 1831 and 1996. This definition is controversial and excludes provincially-administered schools, as well as hostels and day schools. Residential schools existed in almost all provinces and territories, and in the North also took the form of hostels and tent camps. The earliest recognized and longest-running Indian Residential School was the Mohawk Institute, in Brantford, Ontario, which operated from 1831 to 1962. The last federally-run Indian Residential School, Gordon's School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan, closed in 1996, and was subsequently demolished, marking the end of the residential school era.

For over a century, beginning in the mid-1800s and continuing into the late 1990s, Aboriginal children in Canada were taken from their homes and communities, and were placed in institutions called residential schools. These schools were run by religious orders in collaboration with the federal government and were attended by children as young as four years of age. Separated from their families and prohibited from speaking their native languages and practicing their culture, the vast majority of the over 150,000 children who attended these schools experienced neglect and suffering. The impacts of the sexual, mental, and physical abuse, shame, and deprivation endured at Indian Residential Schools continue to affect generations of Survivors, their families, and communities today. It is estimated that 80,000 Survivors of residential schools are alive today. Remarkably, in the face of this tremendous adversity, many Survivors and their descendants have retained their language and their culture and continue to work toward healing and reconciliation.

### A BRIEF HISTORY

For over 300 years, European settlers and Aboriginal peoples regarded one another as distinct nations. In war, colonists and First Nations formed alliances, and in trade each enjoyed the economic benefits of co-operation. By the mid-19th century, however, European hunger for land increased dramatically and the economic base of the colonies shifted from fur to agriculture. Alliances of the early colonial era gave way to direct competition for land and resources. Settlers and the government began to view Aboriginal peoples as a "problem."

The so-called "Indian problem" was the mere fact that Indians existed. They were seen as

The residential school system was in operation for over 150 years and the environment of each institution would have been impacted by its location, the time in which it was operating, and the organizations and individuals who managed and staffed it. It is important to recognize that the experiences of individual Survivors is diverse and unique, and that some students had positive experiences.

an obstacle to the spread of "civilization"—that is to say, the spread of European, and later Canadian, economic, social, and political interests. Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, summed up the government's position when he said in 1920, "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. [...] Our object 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."

In 1844, the Bagot Commission produced one of the earliest official documents to recommend education as a means of assimilating the Indian population. The commission proposed implementing a system of farm-based boarding schools situated far from parental influence—the separation of children from their parents being touted as the best means by which to sustain their civilizing effects. The document was followed in successive decades by others of similar intent such as the *Gradual Civilization Act* (1857), *Act for the Gradual* 

*Enfranchisement of Indians* (1869), and the Nicholas Flood Davin publication titled *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* (1879), which noted "the industrial school is the principal feature of the policy known as that of 'aggressive civilization'." This policy dictated that

the Indians should, as far as practicable, be consolidated on few reservations, and provided with permanent individual homes; that the tribal relation should be abolished; that lands should be allotted in severalty and not in common; that the Indian should speedily become a citizen [...] enjoy the protection of the law, and be made amenable thereto; that, finally, it was the duty of the Government to afford the Indians all reasonable aid in their preparation for citizenship by educating them in industry and in the arts of civilization.

A product of the times, Davin disclosed in this report the assumptions of his era that "Indian culture" was a contradiction in terms, Indians were uncivilized, and the aim of education must be to destroy the Indian in the child. In 1879 he returned from his tour of the United States' Industrial Boarding Schools with a recommendation to Canada's Minister of the Interior, John A. Macdonald, to implement a system of industrial boarding schools in Canada.

Before long, the government began to hear many serious and legitimate complaints from parents and native leaders—the teachers were under-qualified and displayed religious zeal, religious instruction was divisive, and there were allegations of physical and sexual abuse. These concerns, however, were of no legal consequence because under the *Indian Act*, all Aboriginal people were wards of the state. School administrators were assigned guardianship, which meant they had full parental rights over the students. The complaints continued, and school administrators, teachers, Indian agents, and even some government bureaucrats also started to express their concerns—all of them called for major reforms to the system.

### MÉTIS AND INUIT CHILDREN AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Prior to the 1800s, few opportunities for formal European-based education were available for Métis children. Treaty provisions for education did not include these children who were considered "halfbreeds" and not Indians. It wasn't until the Northwest Half-breed Claims Royal Commission of 1885 that the federal government addressed the issue of Métis education. The Catholic Church, already a strong presence in Métis society, began instructing Métis children in the Red River area of Manitoba in the 1800s. Despite these efforts, many Métis parents struggled to find schools that would accept their children and would often have to pay tuition for their education.

Attendance at residential school, where the use of Aboriginal languages was prohibited, resulted in the erosion of an integral part of Métis culture. Residential schools profoundly affected Métis communities, a fact often overlooked in the telling of the history of residential schools in Canada. Although policies to manage "Indian Affairs" were being devised in Ottawa as the numbered treaties were signed across the Prairies in the 1870s, it was not until 1924 that Inuit were affected by the *Indian Act*, and not until the mid-1950s that residential schools began to operate in the North. For Inuit, the Residential School System was but one facet of a massive and rapid sweep of cultural change that included the introduction of Christianity; forced relocation and settlement; the slaughter of hundreds of sled dogs eliminating the only means of travel for many Inuit; the spread of tuberculosis and smallpox and the corresponding mandatory southward medical transport; the introduction of RCMP throughout the Arctic; and other disruptions to the centuries-old Inuit way of life.

# What You Can Do

**Ask a Teacher** if they include this topic in their classroom. The Legacy of Hope Foundation can provide FREE materials to help educators teach youth about the impacts and legacy of the Residential School System.

Write a Letter to elected officials (municipal, provincial, parliamentary). Ask what they are doing about Aboriginal issues and ask them to work to restore funding to community-based initiatives that deal with the intergenerational impacts of residential schools.

**Spread the Word**-talk to others. Ask your family, friends or colleagues what they know about the residential school issue. Let them know they can learn more by visiting www.legacyofhope.ca

**Participate** in a healing or commemoration event, visit an exhibition, or join in cultural activities in your community.

**Share Our Resources** –once you've seen our publications, DVDs, or websites, pass them along or let others know about them.

#### Visit these Websites

Aboriginal Healing Foundation - www.ahf.ca Legacy of Hope Foundation - www.legacyofhope.ca, www.100yearsofloss.ca, www.forgottenmetis.ca, missinghistory.ca, weweresofaraway.ca, www.wherearethechildren.ca Amnesty International: www.amnesty.ca/topics/indigenous-peoples Assembly of First Nations - www.afn.ca Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami - www.itk.ca Metis National Council - www.metisnation.ca Native Women's Association of Canada - www.nwac.ca/act-now Shannen's Dream- www.fndcs.com/shannensdream Truth & Reconciliation Commission - www.trc.ca Project of Heart- www.projectofheart.ca

**Contact**, **Visit**, **Volunteer** with your local friendship centre, community group, Aboriginal organization, or Aboriginal health/resource centre.

# Why It Matters

Today the schools have all been closed and much has been done to try and repair the damages caused to generations of Aboriginal peoples. Healing agencies and government support have been provided. Both the church groups who ran the schools and the Government of Canada have offered apologies for the damage that they knowingly inflicted on the innocent children in their care. Monies have been made available for compensation to the victims of abuse.

Though it will be many years before the healing is complete, it is important that all Canadians know that this is an era that will never be repeated.

Why is this issue important to all Canadians?

Why should it matter to those who didn't attend residential school?

**IT MATTERS** because it continues to affect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families—people from vibrant cultures who are vital contributors to Canadian society.

**IT MATTERS** because it happened here, in a country we call our own—a land considered to be a world leader in democracy and human rights.

**IT MATTERS** because the Residential School System is one of the major causes of poverty, homelessness, substance abuse, and violence among Aboriginal peoples—devastating conditions that are felt and experienced by our neighbours, friends, and community members.

**IT MATTERS** because Aboriginal communities suffer levels of poverty, illness, and illiteracy comparable to those in developing nations—conditions that are being perpetuated through inaction.

**IT MATTERS** because we share this land. We may not be responsible for what happened in the past, but we all benefit from what First Nations, Inuit, and Métis have had to relinquish. We are responsible for our actions today.



education and teach our history, our language and our culture. We have begun to tell our story-our history-and we want to tell it in our own words to the world, so that this will never happen to any of the other nations in the world. Shirley Williams, Survivor

2005

A class action lawsuit against the Government of anada over the legacy of the residential schools is announced.

2006

Legal representatives of former students, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives, the federal government, and churches sign the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). The IRSSA is contentious to some, and does not represent Survivors of all schools.

E: Dominion of Canada annual report of Indian Affairs for the year ended 30th June 1896. Library and Archives Canada, NL-022474.

1927

in the Davin Report, Sir John A.

f residential schools in the

1872

Major revisions are made to the Indian Act—women are allowed to participate in band democracy, prohibitions on traditional Aboriginal practices and ceremonies are removed.

1951

2006

e Oka Crisis, a conflict between the Mohawk Nation ar e town of Oka, Quebec, began on March 11 and laste

government plan was "designed to renew the relationship with Aboriginal people of Canada

he Final Report of the Roya released. It calls for a public inquiry into the effects of residential schools upo

1996

Census results published by Statistics anada indicate that Canada's rowing number of Aboriginal people exceeded 1.1 million— 3.8% of the total Canadian population.

2008

As part of the IRSSA, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is launched. It is mandated to document the truth of what happened in residential schools and by 2014 has held regional and national Survivor gatherings throughout Canada.

On June 11, Prime Minister tephen Harper apologizes 2008 on behalf of Canada to urvivors of the Residential School System.

2009

The Dominion Lands Act encourages European settlement in the prairie provinces by giving 160 acres of land away to any settler who will build a homestead on the land and cultivate at least 40 acres.



The Indian Act is passed and gives overnment exclusive right to create legislation regarding Indians and Indian lands. This act identifies who is an Indian and establishes related legal rights.

1883

The Davin Report recommends the creation of a system of industrial schools where children are intentionally separated from their parents to reduce the influence of the "wigwam."

1879

*1939* 

arminas that Inuit are to be classified" as Indians and th ally responsible for Invit

The federal government begins to apply provincial curriculum standards to residential schools and to integrate Aboriginal students into mainstream schools. Despite this, residential schools continued to be established in the North during this period.

A former supervisor at the Alberni Indian residential school pleads guilty to 16 counts of indecent assault against students and is sentenced to 11 years in prison. Across Canada, arrests and convictions of former residential school staff and officials continue into the 2010s.

1995

Pope Benedict XVI expresses "sorrow" about the abuse of residential school students during a private meeting with Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

2012

Several community-developed commemoration projects are launched. These programs add to the number of existing commemoration activities and projects like Project of Heart and the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation.

## ESTABLISHMENT AND EVENTUAL CLOSURE

The intent of the Residential School System was to educate, assimilate, and integrate Aboriginal peoples into European-Canadian society. Effectively, it was a system designed to kill the Indian in the child.

The earliest was the Mohawk Indian Residential School, which opened in 1831 at Brantford, Ontario. At its peak in the early 1930s, 80 residential schools operated across Canada with an enrollment of over 17,000 students.

In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott, the bureaucrat in charge of Canada's Indian Policy, revised the *Indian Act* to make attendance at residential school mandatory for all Indian children between the ages of seven and fifteen years.

Very gradually, the Residential School System was discarded in favour of a policy of integration. Aboriginal students began to attend mainstream schools in the 1940s.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development assumed full management of the Residential School System on April 1, 1969. Throughout the 1970s, at the request of the National Indian Brotherhood, the federal government undertook a process that saw the eventual transfer of education management to Aboriginal peoples. In 1970, Blue Quills Residential School became the first to be managed by Aboriginal peoples. The last federally administered residential school closed in 1996.

### CONDITIONS AND MISTREATMENT

Attendance at residential schools was mandatory for Aboriginal children across Canada, and failure to send children to residential school often resulted in the punishment of parents, including imprisonment. Many Aboriginal children were taken from their homes, often forcibly removed, and separated from their families by long distances. Others who attended residential schools near their communities were often prohibited from seeing their families outside of occassional visits.

Broad occurrences of disease, hunger, and overcrowding were noted by government officials as early as 1897. In 1907, Indian Affairs' Chief Medical Officer, Dr. P.H. Bryce, reported a death toll among the schools' children ranging from 15%–24% and rising to 42% in Aboriginal homes where sick children were sometimes sent to die. In some individual institutions, for example the Old Sun school on the Blackfoot reserve, Bryce found death rates significantly higher.

Though some students have spoken of the positive experiences of residential schools and of receiving an adequate education, the quality of education was low in comparison to non-Aboriginal schools. In 1930, for instance, only 3 of 100 Aboriginal students managed to advance past grade six, and few found themselves prepared for life after school—on the reservation or off.

As late as 1950, according to an Indian Affairs study, over 40% of the teaching staff had no professional training. This is not to say that experiences were all negative, or that the staff was all bad. Such is not the case. Many good and dedicated people worked within the System. Indeed, their willingness to work long hours in an atmosphere of stress and for meager wages was exploited by an administration determined to minimize costs. The staff not only taught, they also supervised the children's work, play, and personal care. Their hours were long, the pay was below that of other educational institutions, and the working conditions were exasperating.

In the early 1990s, beginning with Phil Fontaine (then Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs), Survivors began speaking publicly about abuse experienced in residential schools including:

- sexual abuse;
- beatings;
- punishments for speaking Aboriginal languages;
- forced eating of rotten food;
- widespread hunger and thirst;
- bondage and confinement; and
- forced labour.

Students were forbidden to speak their language or practice their culture and were often punished for doing so. Other experiences reported from Survivors of residential schools include mental abuse, severe punishments, overcrowding, use of students in medical experiments, illness and disease, and, in some cases, death. Generations of Aboriginal peoples today have memories of trauma, neglect, shame, and poverty. Those traumatized by their experiences in the residential schools suffered pervasive loss: loss of identity, loss of family, loss of language, and loss of culture.



View as seen by Aboriginal students approaching the Red Deer Indian Industrial School, Red Deer, Alberta, ca. 1900. United Church of Canada, Archiives, 93.049P/847N.

Over 150,000 Aboriginal children were forced to attend Indian Residential Schools across Canada. Today, it is estimated that there are 80,000 living Survivors.

### HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

In the early 1990s, Survivors came forward with disclosures about physical and sexual abuse at residential schools. Throughout the 1990s, these reports escalated, and more Aboriginal victims from across the country courageously came forward with their stories. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) confirmed a link between social crisis in Aboriginal communities, residential schools, and the legacy of intergenerational trauma.

Aboriginal peoples have begun to heal the wounds of the past. On January 7, 1998, the Government of Canada issued a Statement of Reconciliation and

unveiled a new initiative called

"Healing is a gradual process—the legacy of residential schools is still very much alive in our cities and communities and affects Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians alike. We hope you share our belief that as people learn the historical context that forms the roots for contemporary social issues faced by many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, they can foster an environment that allows reconciliation to take place." *Richard Kistabish, LHF President* 

Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan. A strategy to begin the process of reconciliation, Gathering *Strength* featured the announcement of a healing fund. On March 31, 1998, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) was created and was given a mandate to encourage and support, through research and funding contributions, community-based Aboriginal directed healing initiatives which address the legacy

of physical and sexual abuse suffered in Canada's Indian Residential School System, including intergenerational impacts. The AHF's vision is one in which those affected by the legacy of physical abuse and sexual abuse experienced in the Indian Residential School System have addressed the effects of unresolved trauma in meaningful terms, have broken the cycle of abuse, and have enhanced their capacity as individuals, families, communities, and nations to sustain their well-being and that of future generations. The AHF will cease operations in September 2014.

In 2000, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation established the Legacy of Hope Foundation, a national charity whose mandate is to educate and raise awareness about residential schools and to continue to support the ongoing healing of Survivors. The Legacy of Hope Foundation is committed to a candid exploration of Canada's real history. By promoting awareness about the ongoing impacts of residential schools and by working to ensure that all Canadians are made aware of this missing history, the conditions for healing and reconciliation for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are put in place.

Many Survivors have turned to a combination of Western therapies and traditional practices to heal. Talking circles, sweats, storytelling, ceremonies, fasts, feasts, and vision quests reconnect Survivors to their cultures and to themselves. On-the-land activities such as trapping, hunting, fishing, and gathering medicinal plants and wild foods also renew the spirit. All of these practices assist in re-enforcing and celebrating Aboriginal identities. Healing is a long-term process that occurs in stages, starting with the individual Survivor and expanding to include the whole community. The intergenerational impacts of the Residential School System—the legacy of poverty, ineffective parenting, abuse, grief, and health issues—can appear throughout the entire community, not just in the lives of the Survivors.

Healing in Aboriginal communities is affected by a community's level of understanding and awareness about the impact of the Residential School System, by the number of community members who are involved in healing, and by the availability of programs and services.

Much progress has been made as a result of the healing movement. It is the result of hard work, dedication, and commitment of thousands of individuals in hundreds of communities. Many Aboriginal peoples sought out knowledge holders to revive traditional spirituality and to reintroduce healing practices. Holistic approaches to health which emphasize healthy lifestyles, relationships, and communities—together with personal growth programs, traditional spirituality, and healing practices—have all contributed to the efforts of healing.

Through initiatives by groups such as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the Legacy of Hope Foundation and many others, Canadians are learning this history and understanding the impact that it had and continues to have on their communities.

### RECOMMENDED READING

Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School. Selected readings chosen by: Shelagh Rogers, Mike DeGagné and Jonathan Dewar. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2012.

Brass, Eleanor. *I Walk in Two Worlds*. Calgary, AB: Glenbow Museum, 1987.

Cariboo Tribal Council. *Impact of the Residential School*. Williams Lake, BC, 1991.

Dickason, Olive Patricia. *Canada's First Nations: A History* of Founding Peoples From Earliest Times. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1992.

Joe, Rita. *Poems of Rita Joe*. Halifax. NS: Abanaki Press, 1978.

Miller, J.R. *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

Milloy, John S. *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986.* Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 1999.

Regan, Paulette. Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2010.

Taylor, Drew Hayden. *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock. Education is Our Right: Two One-Act Plays.* Saskatoon, SK: Fifth House Publishers, 1990.

Wadden, Marie. *Where the Pavement Ends: Canada's Aboriginal Recovery Movement and the Urgent Need for Reconciliation*. Toronto, ON: Douglas & Mcintyre, 2008.

#### Books and Graphic Novels for Youth

Jordan-Fenton, Christy and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton. *Fatty Legs*. Toronto, ON: Annick Press, 2010.

Jordan-Fenton, Christy and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton. *A Stranger at Home*. Toronto, ON: Annick Press, 2011.

Loyie, Larry and Constance Brissenden. *Goodbye Buffalo Bay*. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2008.

Mitchell, Brandon, Tara Audibert. *Lost Innocence*. Vancouver, BC: Healthy Aboriginal Network, 2013.

#### **Books for Young Children**

Campbell, Nicola I., with illustrations by Kim LeFave. *Shin-chi's Canoe*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood/House of Anansi, 2008.

Campbell, Nicola I., with illustrations by Kim LeFave. *Shi-shi-etko*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood/House of Anansi, 2005.

Jordan-Fenton, Christy, Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, Gabrielle Grimard. *When I Was Eight*. Toronto, ON: Annick Press, 2013.

Kusugak, Michael Arvaarluk. *Arctic Stories*. Illustrated by Vladyana Langer Krykorka. Toronto, ON: Annick Press Ltd., 1998.

View of Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School shows students with Principal Father Joseph Hugonnard, staff and Grey Nuns, Lebret, Saskatchewan, 1884. Photographer: Otto B. Buell. Library and Archives Canada, PA-118765.

and the sea

"My hope for the future is to acknowledge what has happened, rise above it and become the strong people again that we were before all this happened." Marjorie Flowers, Survivor

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Legacy of Hope Foundation's belief that awareness and education are the best ways to encourage long-term reconciliation is so strong that we produce and distribute our resources free of charge. Please make a donation to the LHF today to help ensure that others will have access to this important information.

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Contact us about making a donation, or visit www.legacyofhope.ca to give online. Donations of any amount are appreciated and donors will receive a tax receipt. The Legacy of Hope Foundation's charitable registration number is 863471520RR0001.