

TEACHER'S GUIDE

100 Years of Loss

Canada
100th Edition

Glossary

Not all Survivors will feel that these descriptions reflect their personal experience as each Survivor's experience was unique.

Aboriginal Peoples

In *Constitution Act, 1982*, three peoples are recognized as "Aboriginal"—Indians, Inuit, and Métis.

Alternative healing approaches

Approaches to healing that incorporate strategies including, but not limited to, homeopathy, naturopathy, aromatherapy, reflexology, massage therapy, acupuncture, acupressure, Reiki, neurolynguistic programming, and bioenergy work.

Assimilation

The process in which one cultural group is absorbed into another, typically dominant, culture.

Colonization

The establishment of a settlement on a foreign land, generally by force. It is also often used to describe the act of cultural domination.

Elder

Generally means someone who is considered exceptionally wise in the ways of their culture and spiritual teachings. They are recognized for their wisdom, their stability, their humour, and their ability to know what is appropriate in a particular situation. The community looks to them for guidance and sound judgment. They are caring and are known to share the fruits of their labours and experience with others in the community.

Enfranchisement

Enfranchisement can be a means of gaining the vote and is viewed by some as a right of citizenship. Under the *Indian Act* until 1960, enfranchisement meant the loss of Indian status. Indians were compelled to give up their Indian status and, accordingly, lose their treaty rights to become enfranchised as Canadian citizens. It wasn't until 1960 that First Nations people were granted the right to vote without having to surrender their treaty rights and Indian status.

Eurocentric

A focus on Europe or its people, institutions, and cultures—assumed to mean "white" culture—and is often meant to be arrogantly dismissive of other cultures.

First Nation(s)

This term replaces "band" and "Indian," which are considered by some to be outdated, and signifies the earliest cultures in Canada.

Genocide

Article II of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide state:

Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Healing journey

The participation of Survivors or people affected intergenerationally by the legacy of residential schools in any number of healing approaches.

Historic trauma

The historical experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis during centuries of colonial subjugation that disrupted Aboriginal cultural identity.

Indian

The term "Indian" collectively describes all the Indigenous peoples in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. Three groups of Indians in Canada: Non-Status Indians, Status Indians, and Treaty Indians.

Indian Act

The *Indian Act* is the shortened title for *An Act respecting Indians*. It first came into law in 1876 as a statute that concerned registered Indians, their bands, and the system of Indian reserves. The *Indian Act* was an extension of earlier acts passed by the Colonial government which provided Canada's federal government exclusive authority to govern in relation to "Indian and Lands Reserved for Indians." It was an attempt to codify rights promised by George III in the *Royal Proclamation* of 1763. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is responsible for the act.

Innu

Innu are the Naskapi and Montagnais First Nations peoples who live primarily in Quebec and Labrador.

Intergenerational impacts

The unresolved trauma of Survivors who experienced or witnessed physical or sexual abuse in the Residential School System that is passed on from generation to generation through family violence, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, loss of parenting skills, and self-destructive behaviour.

Inuit

In Canada, Inuit are the culturally distinct Aboriginal peoples who live primarily in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, northern parts of Quebec, and throughout most of Labrador.

Land

The air, water, land, and all the parts of the natural world that combine to make up where one comes from. The "land" is another way of saying "home."

André, Julie-Ann and Mindy Willett, We Feel Good Out Here, (2008).

Lateral violence

This includes bullying, gossiping, shaming and blaming others, and breaking confidences. Lateral violence hurts others within families, organizations, and communities. It occurs in homes, schools, churches, community organizations, and workplaces.

Legacy of residential schools

Refers to the ongoing direct and indirect effects of the abuses at the residential schools. This includes the effects on Survivors and their families, descendants, and communities. These effects may include family violence, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, loss of parenting skills, loss of culture and language, and self-destructive behaviour.

Métis

Historically, the Métis are the descendants of First Nations women, largely (but not exclusively) from the Cree, Saulteaux, Ojibwa, Dene, and Assiniboine nations, and fur traders, largely (but not exclusively) of French, Scottish, and English ancestry. The Métis developed distinct communities based on their economic role and it was their sense of distinctiveness that led them to create political institutions and sentiment by the early 19th century. The Métis nation today is comprised of people that descend from the early Métis.

Today, although they may or may not share a connection with the historic Métis nation, a growing number of Canadians of mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry self-identify as Métis.

Non-Status Indians

Non-Status Indians are people who consider themselves Indians or members of a First Nation but who are not recognized by the federal government as Indians under the *Indian Act*. Non-Status Indians are not entitled to the same rights and benefits available to Status Indians.

Paternalism

A style of government or management or an approach to personal relationships in which the desire to help, advise, and protect may negate individual choice, freedoms, and personal responsibility.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

A severe anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to any event resulting in psychological trauma. This event may involve the threat of death to oneself, to someone else, or to one's own or someone else's physical, sexual, or psychological integrity.

Racism

Prejudice or animosity against people who belong to other races. The belief that people of different races have differing qualities and abilities and that some races are inherently superior or inferior.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the process by which individuals or communities attempt to arrive at a place of mutual understanding and acceptance. There is no one approach to achieving reconciliation, but building trust by examining painful shared histories, acknowledging each other's truths, and a common vision are essential to the process.

Reserve

The *Indian Act* of 1876 states: "The term "reserve" means any tract or tracts of land set apart by treaty or otherwise for the use or benefit of or granted to a particular band of Indians, of which the legal title is in the Crown, but which is unsurrendered, and includes all the trees, wood, timber, soil stone, minerals, metals, or other valuables thereon or therein." Occasionally, the American term "reservation" is used but "reserve" or "Indian reserve" is the usual terminology in Canada.

Residential schools

These federally funded, church-run institutions were born out of a government policy of assimilation. Aboriginal children were removed from their families and sent to these schools so that they would lose their culture and language in order to facilitate assimilation into mainstream Canadian society. These may include industrial schools, boarding schools, homes for students, hostels, billets, residential schools, residential schools with a majority of day students, or a combination of any of the above. At the request of Survivors, this definition has evolved to include convents, day schools, mission schools, sanatoriums, and settlement camps. They were attended by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students.

Resilience

The capacity to spring back from adversity and have a good life despite emotional, mental, or physical distress.

Resistance

Defiance or opposition that may be expressed in overt or covert acts. One of the most frequently cited acts of resistance by residential school students was the stealing of fruit, bread, and meat from kitchens or pantries. One of the most dangerous and difficult acts of resistance was running away.

Status Indian

Status Indians are people who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government. Only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the *Indian Act* and are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law.

Stereotype

An oversimplified image or perception of a person or group. A stereotype can also be an image or perception of a person or group that is based exclusively on well-known cultural markers—such as all Inuit live in igloos.

Survivor

An Aboriginal person who attended and survived the Residential School System in Canada.

Traditional healing

Approaches to healing that incorporate culturally based strategies including, but not limited to, sharing circles, healing circles, talking circles, sweats, ceremonies, fasts, feasts, celebrations, vision quests, traditional medicines, and any other spiritual exercises. Traditional approaches also incorporate cultural activities such as quilting, beading, drum making, and so on. Others include on-the-land activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering medicines.

Treaty Indian

A Status Indian who belongs to a First Nation that signed a treaty with the Crown.

Western healing

Health care approaches that incorporate strategies where the practitioner follows a more institutional approach to healing including but not limited to psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, medical doctors, and social workers.

Pages 2-4 are adapted from: *The Residential School System in Canada: Understanding the Past – Seeking Reconciliation – Building Hope for Tomorrow*, Second Edition. Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Nunavut, and the Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013.

Framing

The histories, memories, and impacts of the residential school system are complex. There are many details, policies, different perspectives, and unique features of the experiences that are challenging to grasp fully, even after years of study. These lessons represent a first step, for many of us, in exploring these stories.

Here are some important things for teachers to think about as they prepare to deliver these lessons. It may be a good idea to revisit these considerations throughout the lessons.

1. **No one can know everything that happened at residential schools.** As the teacher, 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 students or community members may have more knowledge or experience than you.
2. **It is not essential for students to know many specific facts, or demonstrate mastery of a great deal of detail in order to meet the learning objectives of these lessons.** It is more important that students engage with examples, listen respectfully to a range of ideas about residential schools, grasp the major concepts, and demonstrate critical thinking and personal responses to the issues raised.
3. **Residential schools were/are not inherently 'bad' simply because students live(d) there.** Residential schools were harmful to students because of the assimilation policies, lack of oversight that allowed abuse to occur, separation of students from families, and restrictions on developing language and cultural skills, among many other reasons. One of the most harmful aspects of these schools was the

lack of choice or control on the part of the parents and students involved. Some residential schools did not have negative effects on students or parents, conversely, some day schools created a great deal of harm.

4. **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 can, and should, be made clear to students.
5. **In some parts of the North, residential schools were not around as long as in other regions of Canada.** This means that in some places, fewer generations attended residential schools and the overall impact occurred in a shorter period of time. For example, a greater number of Inuit students were able to maintain their language skills despite attendance at residential schools.
6. **Residential schools are one tool/process/system in a greater, long-term process of colonization.** Several activities try to situate residential schools within the greater context of the 'civilizing mission.' Understanding the larger colonial context and the many ideas that guided assimilation policies, involves a great deal of complexity. Teachers will need to gauge how much time to spend on it, relative to the levels of understanding of their students.
7. **It is easy to put emphasis on the negative experiences of former students of residential schools without giving due attention to the difficult realities of teachers and parents involved.** It is important to note that some students had positive experiences. Another layer of complexity is that, in some instances, students were hurting each other in residential schools. *Individual stories and experiences are so diverse that we cannot label one group of people 'victims' and others 'perpetrators.'*

Discussing the history of residential schools frequently involves students being confronted by stories of traumatic experiences, such as separation from family, mistreatment and neglect, abuse of many kinds, and children who did not survive. This kind of content can be referred to as 'difficult knowledge' or 'tough stuff.' While these experiences may seem to come from the distant and far away past, the emotions that arise in response can trigger strong feelings and feel close to home. Sometimes, strong feelings well up unexpectedly or seemingly without explanation. Strong feelings may connect to experiences individuals have had themselves, or manifest as 'vicarious trauma' (the transfer of trauma from the actual victim/survivor onto the 'witness,' or person who is hearing their story).

The impacts of residential schools continue into the present and can be seen in some Indigenous families and communities, and can manifest in a variety of ways including a lack of parenting skills, domestic abuse, substance abuse/addictions, disconnection with family, lack of language and/or cultural skills, and suicide, among others. It may be difficult to raise these issues in the classroom when there are students who are, or may be, directly affected. However, naming and talking about these issues openly is part of breaking the cycle of trauma and may help students, families, and communities understand what is happening, as well as encourage them to access healing supports.

Many former students have shown courage in speaking out, resiliency in their healing journeys, and willingness to participate in the reconciliation process. They have given us—all Canadians—their memories and stories as gifts, 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, simply listening is an important gesture of respect and support. The activities in this teacher's guide are intended to help students recognize the strength that individuals have shown in the process of seeking truth and reconciliation, and to connect to their own strength.

The Residential School System in Canada: A Backgrounder

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 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."

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.

*See glossary for definition of First Nations.

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 Report of 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.

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. The schools existed in almost all provinces and territories. In the North, the Residential School System also took the form of hostels and tent camps. At its peak in the early 1930s, 80 residential schools operated across Canada with an enrollment of over 17,000 students.

The Residential School System, as defined by the federal government, is limited to 139 schools that operated across Canada between 1831 and 1996. This definition is disputed and does not represent Survivors who

attended provincially administered schools, as well as hostels and day schools.

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 children up to age 15.

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.



H.J. Woodside, *A Group of Nuns with Aboriginal students*, ca. 1890. Library and Archives Canada, PA-123707.

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 permitted 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.

Intergenerational Impacts

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were often separated from their parents for long periods of time, which prevented the discovering and learning of valuable parenting skills. The removal of children from their homes also prevented the transmission of language and culture, resulting in many Aboriginal people that do not speak their traditional language and/or are not familiar with their culture.

Adaptation of abusive behaviours learned from residential school has also occurred and caused intergenerational trauma—the cycle of abuse and trauma from one generation to the next. Research

on intergenerational transmission of trauma makes it clear that individuals who have suffered the effects of traumatic stress pass it on to those close to them and generate vulnerability in their children. The children in turn experience their own trauma.

The system of forced assimilation had consequences that are with Aboriginal peoples today. The need for healing does not stop with the Survivors—intergenerational effects of trauma are real and pervasive and must also be addressed.



Ben and Sam brought out by A.M.F. [Bp. Fleming] to Lakefield School for one year as a tryout. The experiment was not repeated. General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, P8495-101.

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 *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.

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

What does resistance look like today? In late 2012, the Idle No More movement was started in Saskatoon, SK by Nina Wilson, Sheelah Mclean, Sylvia McAdam, and Jessica Gordon. This was largely in response to the Harper government's attempt to push through omnibus Bill C-45 which included numerous legislative changes, many of which weakened environmental protection laws and threatened Indigenous treaty rights. Across Canada, the Idle No More movement gave rise to many flash mob round dances, teach-ins and protests over the federal government's general disregard for the environment and Aboriginal rights. Many settlers joined in solidarity. On December 11, 2012, on Victoria Island (a traditional Algonquin gathering place located in the Ottawa River), Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat began a hunger strike to protest the erosion of the Crown's relationship with Canada's Aboriginal Peoples. She vowed to continue her hunger strike until the Prime Minister, the Queen or a representative, sat down with First Nations leaders to rebuild the broken and unbalanced relationship between the Crown and First Nations. A meeting between a delegation of First Nation leaders, Prime Minister Harper, and Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, John Duncan, took place on January 11, 2013. Initially Chief Spence accepted the invitation to attend the meeting, but later declined as Governor General David Johnston, the Queen's representative, would not be in attendance. She ended her hunger strike on January 24, 2013.

Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement

After many years of resistance, protest, and activism on the part of many Aboriginal peoples and others, the first major steps towards healing began. These efforts to redress the harm done to Aboriginal peoples through the Residential School System have contributed to healing for some Survivors, their families, and communities. While these strides are extensive, it must be remembered that healing does not stand as the only action being taken. Compensation for the suffering is also a component of the attempts at redress being made to Survivors and their families.

In 2007, the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement* (IRSSA) was signed by First Nations and Inuit representatives, the government, and churches. Initiated by Survivors, it represents the largest out-of-court settlement in Canada to date. The IRSSA provides programs for financial restitution, funding to continue community-based healing initiatives, and a fund for commemoration projects. Components of the settlement agreement include the: Common Experience Payment (CEP) to compensate all surviving former students of federally administered residential schools; Independent Assessment Process (IAP) to address compensation for physical and sexual abuse; establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)**; establishment of healing initiatives; and, creation of a fund for commemoration projects. These programs were established to address the long-standing and destructive legacy of the Indian Residential School System, which includes lateral violence, suicide, poverty, alcoholism, lack of parenting skills, weakening or destruction of cultures and languages, and lack of capacity to build and sustain healthy families and communities.

** The TRC was established with a mandate to learn the truth about what happened in the residential school, and to inform all Canadians. The TRC hopes to guide and inspire First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and all Canadians in a process of truth and healing leading toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Church and Government of Canada Apologies

By 2008, most of the church denominations responsible for the operation of the residential schools in Canada had publicly apologized for their role in the neglect, abuse, and suffering of the children placed in their care. Most of these organizations apologized through their national offices, except for the Catholic Church who left it up to individual dioceses to make apologies (Pope Benedict XVI offered an expression of regret to a delegation from the Assembly of First Nations in 2009). Apologies were issued as follows:

- United Church of Canada (1986);
- Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (Roman Catholic) (1991);
- Anglican Church (1993); and
- Presbyterian Church (1994)

In June 2008, the Government of Canada also apologized for their historical role in the Residential School System. By saying "we are sorry," Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged the Canadian government's role in over a century of isolating Aboriginal children from their homes, families, and cultures. Harper called residential schools a sad chapter in Canadian history and indicated that the policies that supported and protected the System were harmful and wrong.

For the thousands of Survivors watching from across Canada, the government's apology was an historic occasion, though responses were mixed. The Aboriginal leaders who heard the apology from the floor of the House of Commons called it a "positive step forward," "even though the pain and scars are still there."

Most believe there is still much to be done. "The full story of the Residential School System's impact on our people has yet to be told," said Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Summit, an umbrella group of BC First Nations.

Abuse Survivor Charlie Thompson watched the apology from the House gallery and said he felt relieved to hear the Prime Minister acknowledge the horrible legacy. "Today I feel relief. I feel good. For me, this is a historical day."

Healing Movement and Cultural Revitalization

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 people sought out knowledge holders to revive traditional spirituality and to reintroduce healing practices like smudging, the sweat lodge, the use of the sacred pipe, traditional medicines, fasting, feasting, vision quests, and activities on the land. At times these practices conflicted with

Christian teachings that had become a part of some Aboriginal communities, but efforts were made to find common ground.

Mainstream perspectives on health and healing began to change, and this led to a movement that centered on health promotion and healthy communities. In 1978, the World Health Organization defined health as "not only the absence of disease," but also as sharing control over those things that lead to health, a view in harmony with traditional Aboriginal concepts of healing. 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.

Residential School Survivor, Nancy Scanie, from Cold Lake First Nation weeps as she watches Prime Minister Stephen Harper officially apologize for abuses suffered by former residents of native residential schools. Bruce Edwards/Edmonton Journal



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.

See glossary for definition of Métis.