

Colonial Clash

Why were First Nations parents forced to send their children to Residential School? To see why, we have to look into Canada's past.

First Nations people lived in Canada for thousands of years. About 300 years ago, people from Europe came to Canada. The new settlers believed they were superior to First Nations. They did not understand or respect the traditional ways of the many First Nations cultures or their beliefs. The settlers wanted First Nations to become just like them.

One thing the newcomers didn't understand was First Nations' beliefs about ownership of the land. In truth, all the land was part of the territory of one group or another. They respected it and lived on it for many many generations. But it was not owned by individuals. The land belonged to each group or nation collectively.

The settlers thought the land wasn't owned, so they built homes where they wanted to. The new settlements were called **colonies**. They were controlled by the government in England or France. Europeans also set up colonies in many other parts of the world.

At first First Nations people welcomed the settlers and helped them survive, but soon they saw that the newcomers did not respect the **rights** of the First Nations people. When Canada was made a country on its own in 1867, the new government made a law that was only for First Nations people. It is called the Indian Act. It took away all the power people had in their lives. The government was the only authority, and First Nations people were treated like children. This law is still in effect today.

The new settlers of Canada supported the government and its laws. One way they tried to control the First Nations people was to send the children away from their homes so their parents and grandparents could not teach them their traditions, culture and language. That is why the Residential Schools were started.