

Part Four

The Healing Journey

Summary

Part Four first looks at what happened to the students when they returned home from Indian Residential School, and the intergenerational impact of the schools. Then the road to reconciliation is examined.

Essential Questions

- What issues faced students when they returned home after residential school?
- How did Indian Residential Schools affect family life for First Nations families, from one generation to the next?
- What is the purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?
- How can all Canadians gain a full understanding of the effects of the residential school system?

Key Concepts

- While some students had positive experiences at residential schools, the very nature of the institution's form and function meant an overriding negative effect of Aboriginal societies.
- When students returned home from Indian Residential Schools, they often felt estranged from their families and communities.
- In many cases parenting skills were lost because children had no role models to follow; the effects accumulated over generations.
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established by the government to provide all Canadians with a fuller understanding of Indian Residential Schools and their legacy.

Resources

- *A Stranger at Home*. Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton. Annick Press, 2011
- Blackline Master 13, The Effects of Indian Residential School, page 71
- Blackline Master 14, Apology by Government of Canada, page 74

Activity 4.1

Returning Home



Resources

- *A Stranger at Home*

Summary

In this activity students consider what happened to students when they returned home. Were they able to fit into their families and communities, or were they outsiders? They use the book *A Stranger at Home* to find out about one example of such experiences.

Key Concepts

- When students returned home from Indian Residential Schools, they often felt estranged from their families and communities.

Key Questions

- What problems did Indian Residential School children face when they returned home?

Background

- Olemaun Pokiak arrives in Tuktoyaktuk to meet her family after being at residential school in Aklavik for 2 years. However, her homecoming is not what she expected. Her mother doesn't welcome her, treating her like a stranger. She couldn't eat the food her mother served, and she could barely speak her own language. She felt like she no longer belonged to her family.
- *A Stranger at Home* is a sequel to Christy Jordan-Fenton's book *Fatty Legs*.
- For additional ideas see a novel study online: <http://prmsastrangerathome.blogspot.ca/>

Suggested Activities

1. Thinking About Returning Home

Lead a discussion about what the experience might have been like for students returning home from Indian Residential School after being away for a year or more.

2. Reading *A Stranger at Home*

Use the book *A Stranger at Home* as a read-aloud or as a novel study.

- Questions for discussion:
 - What were Olemaun's expectations as she returned home? What really happened when she was reunited with her family?
 - How did she try to adapt to living with her family again?
 - What were her feelings towards the strange man who came into the store?

3. Comparing With Other Stories

Compare the experiences of characters in several stories that have been read.

- Compare Shin-chi's homecoming with that of Olemaun.
- Compare this ending with that of Joey's story in *No Time to Say Goodbye*.

Activity 4.2

Legacies of Indian Residential Schools

Resources

- Blackline Master 13, The Effects of Indian Residential Schools, page 71

Summary

In this activity students think about some of the lasting effects of the Indian Residential Schools on the students and their families. To make sure it is age-appropriate, it focusses on effects on personal identity and feelings, loss of parenting skills, and loss of language.

Key Concepts

- Many students of Indian Residential Schools experienced a sense of inferiority or lack of self confidence.
- The impacts of Indian Residential schools passed on from one generation to the next.
- One significant legacy of Indian Residential Schools was the loss of language.

Key Questions

- What were the lasting effects of Indian Residential Schools on how people felt about themselves?
- What were the lasting effects of the schools on families and communities who did not go to Indian Residential Schools?

Background

- Source of quotes:
 - Barbara; Eileen: *Amongst God's Own. The Enduring Legacy of St. Mary's Mission*. Terry Glavin and Former Students of St. Mary's. Mission BC: Longhouse Publishing 2002.
 - Bev: *They Called Me Number One*. Bev Sellars. Vancouver: Talon Books 2013.
 - Robert: *Behind Closed Doors. Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School*. Penticton: Theytus Books, 2006. p115.

Suggested Activities

1. Lasting Memories

Suggest that students who attended Indian Residential Schools had memories of their years there. Some were good memories, some were bad memories.

- Ask the class to suggest some memories that the students in Indian Residential Schools might have taken away with them. Discuss what evidence they have to support these conclusions.
- Ask students what memories of Indian Residential Schools might last a long time.

2. Lasting Impacts

Discuss with students how these memories of Indian Residential Schools might affect their lives after they left school. How did residential schools make people feel about themselves? How might the effects of the residential schools be passed on from one generation to another? Ask them to consider these questions:

- How did the experiences at Indian Residential Schools affect how people felt about themselves and their personal identity?
- In what ways could the impacts affect children who did not go to residential school?

Possible strategies for investigating these questions:

- Read some quotes from Indian Residential School Survivors to learn about some of the legacies of the residential school system. Distribute copies of Blackline Master 13, Survivor Quotes.
- Gather evidence from other sources read previously. Refer to what students learned in Activity 2.1.

3. Language Loss

Discuss the significance of traditional languages to First Nations people and their communities. If possible, relate the discussion to the local language instruction which may take place in your school or community.

- Invite a speaker of the local First Nations language to discuss the significance of knowing the language, and some examples of its use.
- View a map of the diverse First Nations languages spoken in British Columbia. Some suggests sources are:
 - First Nations People’s Cultural Council has an interactive map online at: <http://maps.fphlcc.ca/>
 - The Museum of Anthropology at UBC has an online map. Search keywords “moa language map.”
 - The First Nations Languages Program has a list of all the languages, including those that are extinct, as well as a map. <http://fnlg.arts.ubc.ca>
- Ask students the questions:
 - How did Indian Residential Schools contribute to the loss of language and culture?
 - What were the consequences of language loss for people and communities?

Activity 4.3

Towards Reconciliation

Resources

- Blackline Master 14, Apology by Government of Canada, page 74

- Video *All Nations Canoe Gathering*
<https://vimeo.com/75805827>

- Video *Educating Our Youth: Vancouver Event Student Responses*.
<https://vimeo.com/75812900>

Vocabulary

apology
reconciliation

Summary

This activity introduces students to the concept of reconciliation and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Key Concepts

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established by the government to provide all Canadians with a fuller understanding of Indian Residential Schools and their legacy.

Key Questions

- What is the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Background

- By 2005, the Government of Canada was facing a large number of court cases seeking restitution from damages suffered by survivors of Indian Residential Schools. That year the survivors and the government reached a negotiated settlement, known as the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. It provided financial compensation to survivors and established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- In 2008 the Government of Canada issued a formal apology for the Indian Residential Schools. Part of the apology included this statement about the goals of the TRC:

A cornerstone of the Settlement Agreement is the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

Suggested Activities

1. The Apology

Present the Government of Canada's 2008 Apology to students. A portion of the statement is found on Blackline Master 14. You may want to show video clips of the Prime Minister delivering the statement, as well as the response of some First Nations and other leaders. These can be found on the internet.

- Discuss the idea of apologizing at a personal level. When and why do we apologize? What are the motivations and the end results? Ask students to give examples of times they have apologized, and what happened afterwards.

2. Truth and Reconciliation Commission

View two short online videos from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

- All Nations Canoe Gathering <https://vimeo.com/75805827>
- Educating Our Youth: Vancouver Event Student Responses. Online at <https://vimeo.com/75812900>
- Discuss the meanings of “truth” and “reconciliation.”
- Work together as a class to determine the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Use resources such as
 - The TRC website: trc.ca
 - Recent news articles
 - Video taken at various regional events, particularly the Vancouver event in the fall of 2013.
- Ask students the question, “What will reconciliation look like when it is achieved?”

Activity 4.4

Taking Action

Resources

- It Matters to Me website. (search “TRC it matters”)
- Project of Heart website: www.projectofheart.ca
- Reconciliation Canada website: <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/>

Summary

In the final activity students plan an activity that helps them pass on their understanding of the Indian Residential Schools

Key Concepts

- Individuals and groups across Canada are coming together to take action for reconciliation.

Key Questions

- What positive actions can be taken to bring about reconciliation?

Suggested Activities

1. People Taking Action

Find examples of projects and events students and others have done to promote reconciliation. See the Project of Heart website and Reconciliation Canada website for ideas and examples. Project of Heart, created by a teacher Sylvia Smith, has become an important site for reporting on what schools across Canada are doing to promote reconciliation.

- Ask students why they think it is important that all Canadians need to understand about what residential schools have done.

2. Plan an Activity

Plan with students an activity that helps pass on what they have learned about residential schools to others (perhaps for another class, or their families)

- Ask students to review all the objects in their Memory Bags. They should make new objects for Part Four. Which objects seem to hold the most significance to them?
- Discuss what are the most important things to know about the history of Residential Schools as Canadians.
- Have students carry out the activity and evaluate its success.

Part Four Assessment Activities

1. *Why It Matters*

Ask students to reflect on why it matters to them to understand the importance of knowing about the history of Indian Residential Schools.

- Refer to the TRC website, “It Matters to Me” (keyword search “trc it matters”)

2. *Memory Bag*

Ask students to use the items in their Memory Bags as a culminating activity.

- Challenge students to create a project that connects the various objects to what they have learned in the unit. Let the students guide the creative possibilities of how the objects can be transformed.