

BLM 8 – *The Official Apology*

After watching and reading the text of the apology, look at the following quotations taken from Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Answer the reflection questions following each quote.

“In the 1870s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools.”

- Why did the government feel it was their obligation to educate First Peoples children?
- Why was the government unaccepting of traditional ways of teaching First Peoples children?

“...to kill the Indian in the child”

- What does this quotation mean to you?
- Were residential schools successful in doing so?

“The government of Canada recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation.”

- Why is an apology an important part of reconciliation?
- Why does an apology hold so much power?
- How did hearing “we are sorry” make you feel?

“...it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions...”

- Why didn't the government have these views in the 1800s?
- Why did the government continue to remove children from their homes for more than one hundred years?

“The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long.”

- How can the government carry some of this burden?
- Does an apology help lessen the burden on both sides?

“The Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential School system.” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission)

- Why do you think many Canadians are still unaware of the 100-year legacy of the Indian Residential School system?
- Why do all Canadians need to be educated about this “dark chapter in our history”?
- What can be done to increase public understanding and sensitivity to the effects of the residential schools' former students, families and communities?

“...a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward...”

- Do you think it's possible for former abused students to “respect” their oppressors such as the government, their former teachers, etc.?
- How do we reconcile with our past experiences?
- How do we reconcile with others?