

# ABORIGINAL HISTORY AND REALITIES IN CANADA

## GRADES 1-8 TEACHERS' RESOURCE

**E**TFO's *Aboriginal History and Realities in Canada: Grades 1-8 Teachers' Resource* incorporates and embeds the history of Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in scaffolding thematic units related to Lands and Peoples, Treaties, Environment and Residential Schools. With separate guides for primary, junior and intermediate teachers, the resource offers age-appropriate lessons that include learning goals, success criteria, materials, background information, curriculum connections, links to other resources and printable blackline masters (BLMs) in English and French. Some lessons address assessment *as learning*, while others address assessment *for learning* and assessment of learning. Included in the resource is a historical timeline poster of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada.

The excerpts that follow are related to the Residential Schools theme and include background information published in the primary, junior and intermediate guides, as well as a sample lesson from each of the guides.

*Aboriginal History and Realities in Canada: Grades 1-8 Teachers' Resource* is available for purchase through [shopetfo.ca](http://shopetfo.ca).

### RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

#### Important Residential Schools Preamble

The residential school era has been recognized as one of the most horrific periods in Canadian history. For over 100 years, Aboriginal children were removed from their homes, separated from their loved ones, languages, cultures and spiritual practices, and raised in government-funded, church-run residential schools that operated with the aim of “killing the Indian in the child” (Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932).

Attendance at one of the 132 residential schools across Canada was mandatory for Aboriginal children, and failure to comply with this law led to punishment of parents and family members, including imprisonment. The effective assimilation of Aboriginal peoples was considered a productive means of “solving the Indian problem” (D. Scott). Every type of abuse imaginable happened in these schools, and the effects of intergenerational trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and loss of parenting skills are still felt in our communities today.

Education is the key to transforming these attitudes, for by learning and speaking the truth of Canada's colonial legacy, we are laying the foundation for a future where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples can move forward together in mutual un-

derstanding and in partnership (Michelle Corneau, 2014 – Student Success Teacher, TDSB Aboriginal Education Centre).

“Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, ‘to kill the Indian in the child’” (Prime Minister Stephen Harper official apology, June 11, 2008 – [aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015677/1100100015680](http://aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015677/1100100015680)).



COVER DESIGNS BY YONAH LEWIS. COVER ILLUSTRATION BY NUSCHOOL.





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**“... BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT’S AND THE CHURCHES’ INTENT WAS TO ERADICATE ALL ASPECTS OF ABORIGINAL CULTURE IN THESE YOUNG PEOPLE AND INTERRUPT ITS TRANSMISSION FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT, THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM IS COMMONLY CONSIDERED A FORM OF CULTURAL GENOCIDE.”**

– Erin Hanson  
*Indigenous Foundations  
Web Resource*

### Historical Context

“Residential schools systematically undermined Aboriginal culture across Canada and disrupted families for generations, severing the ties through which Aboriginal culture is taught and sustained, and contributing to a general loss of language and culture. Because they were removed from their families, many students grew up without experiencing a nurturing family life and without the knowledge and skills to raise their own families. The devastating effects of the residential schools are far-reaching and continue to have significant impact on Aboriginal communities. Because the government’s and the churches’ intent was to eradicate all aspects of Aboriginal culture in these young people and interrupt its transmission from one generation to the next, the residential school system is commonly considered a form of cultural genocide.” – Erin Hanson, *Indigenous Foundations Web Resource*

“The residential school system is viewed by much of the Canadian public as part of a distant past, disassociated from today’s events. In many ways, this is a misconception. The last residential school did not close its doors until 1986. Many of the leaders, teachers, parents and grandparents of today’s Aboriginal communities are residential school survivors. There is, in addition, an intergenerational effect: many descendants of residential school survivors share the same burdens as their ancestors even if they did not attend the schools themselves. These include transmitted personal trauma and compromised family systems, as well as the loss in Aboriginal communities of language, culture and the teaching of tradition from one generation to another.” – John S. Milloy, *A National Crime*

### PRIMARY – PART A: Assessment as Learning

**Teaching/learning strategy:** Talking Circle, Interpreting Photos, Vocabulary, Group Discussion

#### Lesson steps:

**1. Build background knowledge and introduce the talking circle.** Use teacher talk/questions to promote critical thinking.

*We are sitting in a circle today, because it is a good way to remind us that we are all connected and it is a place where we can feel safe and comfortable sharing our ideas and thoughts. I have the rock in my hand now and I will hold it while I am talking. When I am finished, I will pass the rock to the person on my left (clockwise direction). If you have a question to ask or a comment to share, you are welcome to do so when you have the rock. If you receive the rock and you would rather not speak at that point, just say, “I pass,” and give the rock to the person beside you. Remember, not everyone is obliged to speak, but everyone is obliged to listen.*

**2. Begin the discussion.** *Today, we are going to talk about how what we say or do can have an impact on another person’s feelings about themselves. Sample questions: When you started school this year, how did you feel when you first came into the classroom? If you were nervous, did someone help you to feel better? How did they do that? Whom do you see when you go home from school? What do you do after school? What is your dinner time*

like? What do you like best about dinner time? What about when you get ready for bed? Do you have a story time or a chat before you go to sleep? How do you feel when you are ready to sleep? Has someone in your family helped you to feel happy? How did they do that?

**3. Show the photos** [samples of photos large enough to share with the class that show people expressing different emotions (e.g., joy, grief, surprise, anger, frustration, affection, etc.)] and ask, What do you think someone may have said or done to this person to make them feel this way? Pass the rock so students may speak.

**4. When the rock comes back to you, introduce vocabulary that will help students communicate their responses.** Vocabulary: residential school, Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, government, settler, European, etc.

**5. Pass the rock around the circle again so students may share any questions.**



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## JUNIOR – PART B: Assessment for Learning

Teaching/learning strategy: Visual Art, Sharing Circle

### Lesson steps:

As the *Project of Heart* website states:

*Project of Heart* is an inquiry-based, hands-on, collaborative, intergenerational, artistic journey of seeking truth about the history of Aboriginal people in Canada. Its purpose is to

- Examine the history and legacy of Indian Residential Schools in Canada and to seek the truth about that history, leading to the acknowledgement of the extent of loss to former students, their families and communities.
- Commemorate the lives of the thousands of Indigenous children who died as a result of the residential school experience.
- Call Canadians to action, through social justice endeavours, to change our present and future history collectively (*Project of Heart*, [poh.jungle.ca/step-3-how-it-works](http://poh.jungle.ca/step-3-how-it-works)).

The *Project of Heart* is available online. However, if you are unable to access the website directly, you can contact the *Project of Heart* by mail and receive the resources and kit. It is important to follow the steps and recommendations set out in this project as it can be very difficult to learn about some of the abuse the children suffered in the schools. Please review the material before you begin using it with your students.

**1. Investigation into the History and Legacy of Indian Residential Schools in Canada.** The novel study of *Arctic Stories*, *Fatty Legs* and *Stranger at Home* – each about an Inuit child who goes to residential school – has prepared students with background knowledge they can use to start the *Project of Heart*.

**2. Government Apology.** In a talking circle, tell the students that you will be reading the government apology together. (The full text is available online. Alternatively, you may wish to have students watch a video of Prime Minister Harper delivering the apology himself, which is available at [pm.gc.ca/eng/node/15259](http://pm.gc.ca/eng/node/15259).) Ask them to listen carefully for words that have a strong meaning for them and which create an image in their

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ILLUSTRATION BY NUSCHOOL

**“DISPLAY THE POSTERS OR MURAL IN A SCHOOL CORRIDOR AS A WAY TO ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION AND AWARENESS. YOU MAY ALSO WISH TO SHARE SOME RESPONSES TO THE APOLOGY FROM, FOR EXAMPLE, ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS NATIONAL CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE.”**

minds; they should record the words as you read. After reading the apology, have the students draw three or four (or more) words from their list on 11 × 17 art paper to make an apology poster.

Another option is to take a roll of mural paper and make a graffiti wall filled with words from the apology. (For example, the word SEPARATED can be drawn with hands pulling the syllables apart; HELPLESS can be drawn with letters in the form of children.) Display the posters or mural in a school corridor as a way to encourage discussion and awareness. You may also wish to share some responses to the apology from, for example, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine ([aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015697/1100100015700](http://aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015697/1100100015700)).

**3. Decorating Tiles to Commemorate Children Who Died in Residential School.**

You can request (from a *Project of Heart* coordinator) the name of a residential school in the North for your students to commemorate. Using a fine tip permanent marker, each student will write the name of the residential school on the back of their tile. Using a permanent black marker, have students colour in the sides of the tile to form a kind of frame. With permanent markers of many colours, have students decorate the front of the tile with any image, word, or combination of images and words that they would like to use to honour, respect, and remember an Inuit child who died in a residential school in Canada’s North.

**INTERMEDIATE – PART C: Assessment of Learning**

**Teaching/learning strategy:** Dual-Perspective Poem, Creative Writing, Critical Thinking

**Lesson steps:**

- Ask the students to consider all that they have learned in this unit. This knowledge will be put into a dual-perspective poem.
- A dual-perspective poem is like two poems in one, where the perspectives and experiences of two different characters are presented. Different techniques of sharing these points of view could be alternating stanzas or a dialogue to let the characters ‘speak.’ Each perspective should be written so that ideas are clearly expressed and there is a flow to the poem. Avoid randomly associated images or perspectives, but rather seek to create a *connection between the perspectives* to show the history of residential schools from both sides. Use vocabulary from the list to enrich the poem and to demonstrate comprehension of the language associated with this history.
- Have students share their writing with the class, and present their poems to the school community.

**EXTENSIONS**

- *Project of Heart* (see Junior Unit, Lessons 7–8)

**Suggested books:**

- *Goodbye Buffalo Bay* by Larry Loyie
- *My Name Is Seepteeza* by Shirley Sterling
- *Fatty Legs* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
- *A Stranger at Home* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
- *Sugar Falls* by David Robertson
- *No Time to Say Goodbye* by Sylvia Olsen and Rita Morris