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## The Indian Residential School System

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**Customarily, Aboriginal histories, traditions, beliefs and values are passed on from one generation to the next through experiential learning and oral storytelling. So what happens when there are no more children to pass this knowledge on to? What happens when the children no longer understand the language of their Elders or the landscape of their people?**

### **Content Objectives**

In this unit, students will:

- learn about the history of the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) and its long-term impacts on the children who attended these schools, their families and their communities
- learn what the Canadian government is doing to help IRSS survivors and their families
- learn about the purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)
- learn about the national TRC event held in Vancouver in September 2013

# Imagine

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## Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)

CLB competency objectives are included for each section in this teacher's guide.

### CLB Competency

**Speaking 7 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions and feelings; express reservations, approval, disapproval, possibilities and probabilities one-on-one and in small group discussions or meetings.

**Listening 6 – IV** Understand short group interactions and discussions on familiar topics.

### Teacher's notes:

This section begins with a brief narrative of a young Aboriginal girl. Brief narratives by this imagined little girl are included in the Unit on Traditional Education and throughout this unit as she goes to Indian Residential School, returns to her village, has her own children, and finally becomes a grandmother who is going through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process.

These narratives are NOT based on one real person's life. Rather they are a compilation of information from a variety of personal narratives told by Indian residential school survivors. These narratives have been taken from numerous sources including the Musqueam Nation's website, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Legacy of Hope Foundation and the Indigenous Foundations program at UBC. The purpose of these narratives is to give a personal voice/perspective to this topic so that students will be able to better understand the impact of Indian Residential Schools on individuals and communities.

# Imagine



**Photo:** Onion Lake Catholic Indian Residential School, residential school girls (c. 1950).  
Credit: Canada. Dept. of Indian Affairs and Northern Development/Library and Archives Canada. PA-202480.

*“Four more sleeps before I go to school. All of the older children in our village, including my brother, have already gone. My brother went to school 2 years ago when he was 6 like me. He doesn’t talk about school much when he is home for summer, so I still don’t know what it is like. Grandma tells me that I am going to learn many things, many useful things. But she says that I must also try hard to remember what she has taught me. Mom has been sad lately. I don’t think she wants me to go to school. I told her I would stay with her, but she says I have to go. She told me I must not forget the songs.”*

## Talk about it

The little girl in the above story is about to go to an Indian residential school run by the Catholic Church. She will not see her family again until the spring. With your partner, discuss the following questions.

1. How does this little girl seem to feel about going to school?
2. How do you think this little girl might feel about school after she arrives there?
3. What are some things she might learn at school?
4. What do you think the biggest challenges will be for her?
5. Did you go to a residential school as a child? If so, tell your partner about your experience. How did you feel about it? What were some of the challenges?

**Teacher’s note:** The following links lead to a 6 minute video which is part of a longer short film titled *Shi-Shi-Etko*, directed by Kate Kroll. This video is based on a book titled *Shi-Shi-Etko* by Nicola Campbell. The video introduces a little Aboriginal girl and her family as they prepare for her departure for Indian Residential school. The actors speak Halq’eméylem (the language of the Sto:lo First Nation), but there are English subtitles. Teachers may need to pause the video occasionally to allow the students to read the subtitles depending on the level of the class. The text above is adapted from this video. Teachers may wish to use the text, the video or both to introduce this unit.

Excerpts from *Shi-Shi-Etko*:

<http://www.bravofact.com/2012/01/23/shi-shi-etko-2009/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKerhCGjSDE>

The following questions are not included in the student materials. They could be asked or handed out to students before they watch the video. These questions will give the students something specific to listen and watch for. They will also help the students think critically about the video content and pick up on small important details. There are no exact/correct answers to these questions, but possible answers and hints are supplied below.

1. Where does this family live?
2. What year is it?
3. What season is it?
4. Why does the little girl spend one day with each of her family members?
5. Do you think this is her usual routine?
6. What is she learning from each of them?

### **Possible Hints and Answers**

1. Where does this family live?  
On a reserve in a small village or town
2. What year is it?  
Hints: the clothes, the house, the furniture, the car
3. What season is it?  
Hints: people's clothes, brown leaves floating in the river, school often begins in early September – perhaps late summer, early fall
4. Why does the little girl spend one day with each of her family members?  
to have memories of them? to learn from them? to spend time with them before she goes?
5. Do you think this is her usual routine?  
Perhaps. In traditional Aboriginal cultures, children were encouraged to participate in daily activities with adults so they could learn from them. However, she may also be doing this to spend time with each of them before she leaves.
6. What is she learning from each of them?  
Mother – daily routine, mom is also showing her/explaining something to her while standing in the river  
Grandmother – uses of local plants  
Father – spiritual connection to/history of the land

# Consider

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## CLB Competency

### Listening 7 – IV

Understand short group interactions, discussions and meetings on generally familiar topics.

### Speaking 7 – IV

Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions and feelings; express reservations, approval, disapproval, possibilities and probabilities one-on-one and in small group discussions or meetings.

#### Teacher's note:

The following questions are meant to get students thinking about the topic before they read, and give teachers a chance to assess their students' level of understanding of this topic. The answers given include information from the readings as well as other background information that teachers may find useful when going through the answers with their class **after the reading task**. See the reference list at the end of this teacher's guide for sources.

## Consider

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### Think, Write, Share

What do you know about Indian Residential Schools? Look at the pictures. On your own, write answers to as many of the questions below as you can. If you are not sure about an answer, write what you think the answer might be. Then share your answers with your partner(s).

1. What is an Indian residential school?
  - A place where Aboriginal children lived and went to school
2. How many years did a child usually attend Indian residential school for?
  - This depends on which year the child was sent, but typically children attended these schools for a number of years (it is not important for students to come up with a specific number here; it is important for them to understand that children spent a good portion of their childhood at Indian Residential Schools)
  - Some children whose village was located far away from the school stayed there all year, others returned home for the summer
  - In 1920, the federal government made it mandatory for Aboriginal children between the ages of 7-15 to attend residential school, but some children were sent when they were 4 or 5 years old
3. Who funded the Indian Residential School System in Canada?
  - Schools were funded by the federal government because under the Indian Act the education of Aboriginal peoples was the responsibility of the federal government
  - Schools received a set amount of money for each child; this amount was considerably less than the amount used for Canadian children in public schools
  - Indian Residential Schools were chronically underfunded, so students, teachers and administrators often lived and worked in very poor conditions
  - Teachers' salaries were lower at Indian Residential Schools than at other schools
4. Who ran Indian Residential Schools?
  - Schools were run by Christian churches
  - Most of the schools were run by the Catholic Church
  - Other schools were run by the United Church, the Anglican Church, and the Presbyterian Church

5. Why were Indian Residential Schools created?
  - The main purpose of Indian Residential Schools was to “civilize” Aboriginal children and assimilate them into Euro-Canadian culture by forcing them to forget their languages, cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs
  - The churches who ran the schools intended to Christianize the children
  
6. What year did Indian Residential Schools first begin? What year did the last one close?
  - 1831: Mohawk Indian Residential School opened in Brantford Ontario. (Legacy of Hope Foundation)
  - 1996: the Gordon Indian Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan closed. (Legacy of Hope Foundation)
  - The Legacy of Hope Foundation has created an excellent timeline that teachers can download from its website. <http://www.legacyofhope.ca/home/> / <http://wherearethechildren.ca/>
  - Schools can also order Edu-kits from the Foundation. <http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/resources/#510>
  
7. What did children learn at Indian Residential Schools?
  - During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission many school survivors expressed deep sadness and frustration at the low levels of education they received.
  - Many children only received a grade 5 level of education because:
    - a) A common belief was that Aboriginal children didn't have the intelligence to learn academic subjects.
    - b) Schools focused on teaching the children manual labour skills such as farming, carpentry, metal work, shoe-making, sewing, cooking, etc.
    - c) Students were often taken out of class to do work around the schools such as cleaning, farming, cooking, laundry, etc. because the schools were too underfunded to hire adequate staff.
    - d) The goal of some schools was to teach Aboriginal children sewing, cooking, farming etc. so that they could get jobs as servants or labourers for Euro-Canadian families.

## Keywords

### Teacher's notes:

The following activity gives learners a chance to practice using the context of a reading to guess the meaning of new vocabulary. If students have not done this type of activity before, teachers may need to do part of this as a whole class activity. The vocabulary has been divided into groups of 5 words to

- 1) make guessing the meaning easier for students, and
- 2) give teachers more flexibility in how they use this activity.

### Possible procedures:

#### Option A

1. Teacher and students work through the first group of words together as a whole class.
2. In pairs, students work through the second group of words. Then check answers with whole class.
3. Individually, students complete the third group of words. Then check with a partner or the whole class.

#### Option B

1. Divide the class into 3 groups.
2. Assign one set of words to each group. Students work with their group to identify the clues and meanings for each word.
3. Regroup students into new groups of 3 that have one person from each original group.
4. Students share their answers with new group members. They must explain what the clues are and why they chose the meanings they did.
5. Students check all answers using an English-English dictionary, or with the whole class.

## Keywords

Use the context of the sentence to match the word to its meaning. Write the correct letter on the line. Then underline the clue in the sentence that helped you understand the meaning of the word. Compare your answers with a partner.

Word	Clue from Reading
<b>b</b> appreciation	If people learn about the history and legacy of the Indian Residential School System, they will have a better <b>understanding</b> and <b>appreciation</b> of some of <b>the challenges that Aboriginal people in Canada have faced and that they continue to deal with today</b> .
<b>d</b> assimilation	<b>Instead of wanting to learn about and maintain the various Aboriginal cultures and languages</b> that were found throughout Canada, the Canadian government decided that <b>assimilation</b> of Aboriginal people into Euro-Canadian society would be the best thing for Canada.
<b>a</b> complexity	When European settlers arrived in what is now Canada, they <b>did not understand</b> or appreciate the <b>complexity</b> of Aboriginal <b>languages, cultures, and spiritual belief systems</b> .
<b>e</b> conditions	Unfortunately, the <b>conditions</b> of these schools and the quality of education that these children received were very poor.... Many of the <b>school buildings were old, or built quickly with cheap materials, so they had poor heating and ventilation, or air flow</b> .
<b>C</b> convert	Their hope was that through education, they would be able to <b>convert, or change</b> , Aboriginal people to Christianity.

## Meaning

- the many details, elements or parts of something that that make it hard to understand
- an understanding of the importance or meaning of something
- to encourage or persuade someone to change to a different religion
- the process of becoming an accepted member of a country or group by learning and using that country or group's language and cultural practices
- the situation or environment in which people live or work, specifically the physical things that affect the quality of their lives

## Keywords

Use the context of the sentence to match the word to its meaning. Write the correct letter on the line. Then underline the clue in the sentence that helped you understand the meaning of the word. Compare your answers with a partner.

Word	Clue from Reading
a deal with	If people learn about the history and legacy of the Indian Residential School System, they will have a better understanding and appreciation of some of the <b>challenges that Aboriginal people in Canada have faced</b> and that they continue to <b>deal with</b> today.
d establish	The <b>first missionary school</b> opened in 1620 near Quebec City, and after that many other missionary schools for Aboriginal children were <b>established</b> throughout Canada.
a inadequate	However, the amount of <b>money given for each student was very small</b> , so the students' food and clothing were often <b>inadequate</b> .
c inferior	Many settlers thought that Aboriginal people were savages and they believed that Aboriginal societies were <b>inferior</b> or <b>much less advanced</b> than their own. They remember being told that Aboriginal culture <b>is strange</b> and <b>inferior</b> , and that Aboriginal beliefs and practices <b>are wrong</b> .
b legacy	If people learn about the history and <b>legacy</b> of the Indian Residential School System, they will have a better understanding and appreciation of some of the challenges that Aboriginal people in Canada have faced and that <b>they continue to deal with today</b> .

## Meaning

- to handle a problem or difficult situation, to do something to solve a problem
- something that happens or exists today because of things that happened in the past
- not good, or not as good as someone or something else
- to start a company, organization or school that is intended to exist for a long time
- not good enough for a particular purpose

## Keywords

Use the context of the sentence to match the word to its meaning. Write the correct letter on the line. Then underline the clue in the sentence that helped you understand the meaning of the word. Compare your answers with a partner.

Word	Clue from Reading
e mandatory	Furthermore, in 1920 the government of Canada made it <b>mandatory</b> for Aboriginal children between the ages of 7 – 15 to attend an Indian residential school. Therefore, Aboriginal parents <b>could no longer choose</b> whether or not to send their children to these schools.
a punish	<b>Although</b> many of the children <b>did not speak English or French</b> , they were <b>punished</b> if they used their Aboriginal language.
d reconcile	And through this awareness, all people living in Canada will be able to <b>reconcile</b> the past and <b>begin to move forward into the future in a more positive and united way</b> .
b spiritual	They believed that the <b>spiritual</b> practices of Aboriginal people were strange and primitive. Therefore, in order to teach Aboriginal people about the <b>Christian faith</b> , <b>many churches</b> began to build missionary schools near Aboriginal villages.
c vocational	They attended class for only half a day, and often spent afternoons doing <b>vocational</b> training. This training included learning how <b>to sew, cook and clean</b> for girls, and learning how <b>to farm and do trades such as woodworking and shoemaking</b> for boys.

## Meaning

- to make someone suffer because they have done something wrong or broken a rule
- relating to religion or belief systems
- relating to skills a person needs in order to do a particular job
- to find a way to accept a difficult or unpleasant situation; to build a positive, trusting relationship between people after a misunderstanding, a fight or mistreatment
- when the law says that something that must be done

### CLB Competency

#### Speaking 7 – IV

Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions and feelings; express reservations, approval, disapproval, possibilities and probabilities one-on-one and in small group discussions or meetings.

#### Reading 7 - IV

Understand moderately complex extended descriptions, reports and narrations on familiar topics.

#### Writing 7 – II

Reduce a text of up to about 2 pages to an outline or summary.

### Jigsaw (A/B)

Read the article. In the space provided, write down the main ideas and important details. Then use these notes to tell your partner about this information.

### The Indian Residential School

For more than one hundred years, Aboriginal children in Canada were educated through the Indian **Residential** School System. This system consisted of 140 Indian **Residential** Schools, which were located in all provinces and territories across Canada, except New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. These schools were funded by the federal government and run by Christian churches. More than 150,000 Aboriginal children attended these schools. With so many children attending so many schools over such a long period of time, it might be surprising to learn that very few people living in Canada know about this part of Canadian history. Only recently have schools begun teaching Canadian children about the history and **legacy** of Indian **Residential** Schools. It is part of Canada's history that some people would rather not talk about. It is part of Canada's history that some people would rather forget. However, it is also part of Canada's history that all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living in this country should know about. If people learn about the history and **legacy** of the Indian Residential School System, they will have a better understanding and **appreciation** of some of the challenges that Aboriginal people in Canada have faced and that they continue to **deal with** today. And, through this awareness, all people living in Canada will be able to **reconcile** the past and begin to move forward into the future in a more positive and united way.

#### Partner A - What was the Indian Residential School System?

When European settlers arrived in what is now Canada, they did not understand or **appreciate** the **complexity** of Aboriginal languages, cultures and **spiritual** belief systems. Many settlers thought that Aboriginal people were savages and they believed that Aboriginal societies were much less advanced than their own. Also, the churches that had been set up in Canada at that time did not **recognize** that Aboriginal communities had their own **complex** form of **spirituality**. Instead, they believed that the **spiritual** practices of Aboriginal people were strange and **primitive**. Therefore, in order to teach Aboriginal people about the Christian faith, many churches began to build **missionary schools** near Aboriginal villages. Their hope was that through education, they would be able to

**convert**, or change, Aboriginal people to Christianity. The first missionary school opened in 1620 near Quebec City and, after that, many other missionary schools for Aboriginal children were **established** throughout Canada.

As more and more settlers came to Canada, Aboriginal people **recognized** that their way of life was going to change. Many Aboriginal Chiefs and Elders knew that if their communities were going to survive and flourish in this new society, community members would need to learn the skills and languages of the settlers. In fact, in the early and mid-1800s in what is now Ontario, some Aboriginal leaders worked with the churches and government officials to create schools for the children in their communities. At these schools, Aboriginal children learned reading, writing and math as well as farming and trade skills. The Chiefs wanted these children to know both their own Aboriginal language and culture and the language and culture of the colonialists. They felt that this knowledge would **ensure** that their people would continue to **prosper** even though the society was changing so quickly.

However, the same curiosity and respect for another people's culture was not shown by the Canadian government at that time. Instead of wanting to learn about and maintain the various Aboriginal cultures and languages that were found throughout Canada, the Canadian government decided that **assimilation** of Aboriginal people into Euro-Canadian society would be the best thing for Canada. This meant that Aboriginal people would need to give up their languages, **spiritual** beliefs and cultural practices. The federal government understood that adult Aboriginal people would be unable or unwilling to **assimilate** into the mainstream Euro-Canadian culture. Therefore, they focused on the children. They decided that Aboriginal children should be segregated, or completely removed, from their villages; separated from their parents, communities and all Aboriginal influence. This was the beginning of the Indian Residential School System.

The first government funded Indian Residential Schools were opened in the early 1830s. The schools were paid for by the federal government, but run by churches because the churches had already set up many schools. One of the differences between Indian Residential Schools and the earlier missionary schools was that they were very far away from the children's villages. Therefore, Aboriginal children lived at residential schools for months or years at a time rather than going home every day after class. This meant that many of these children did not see their families for very long periods of time. Furthermore, in 1920 the government of Canada made it **mandatory** for Aboriginal children between the ages of 7–15 to attend Indian Residential School. Therefore, Aboriginal parents could no longer choose whether or not to send their children to these schools. In fact, parents who tried to keep their children with them at home could be fined or even sent to prison. The last federally-funded Indian Residential School didn't close until 1996.

**Teacher's note:**

The introduction for Jigsaw (B) is not included again in this section, but is included on Student Materials.

**Partner B - What was Indian Residential School like?**

The purpose of Indian Residential Schools was to “civilize” Aboriginal children, so that they could **assimilate** into Euro-Canadian society. The hope was that by attending Indian Residential School these children would forget their language and their culture, and would not be able to pass them on to the next generation. Therefore, anything to do with Aboriginal culture was forbidden. When the children arrived at the schools, their clothes and belongings were taken away, their hair was cut short and they were dressed in identical uniforms. Children were not allowed to speak their Aboriginal languages or practice their **spiritual** beliefs. Many of the children did not speak English or French; however, if they used their Aboriginal language they were **punished**. Boys and girls were often separated, and brothers and sisters were not allowed to see or speak to each other. Children slept in large rooms that had rows and rows of beds. They attended class for only half a day, and often spent afternoons doing **vocational** training. This training included learning how to sew, cook and clean for girls, and learning how to farm and do trades such as woodworking for boys. Some of these children were taken out of class altogether and had to spend all day working for no pay. The idea was that when these children finished their schooling they would work as labourers for Euro-Canadian families.

Unfortunately, the **conditions** of these schools and the quality of education that these children received were very poor. This is because there was not enough funding from the federal government to support the large number of Indian Residential Schools that were being **established** by the churches. Many of the school buildings were old, or built quickly and with cheap materials, so they had poor heating and ventilation. This meant that the insides of the schools were very hot in the summer and extremely cold in the winter. The schools were also overcrowded because the government paid the church a certain amount of money for each student it had. The more students at the school, the more money the church would receive. However, the amount of money was still very little, so the food and clothing that the students were given were often **inadequate**. Cold temperatures, lack of food and clothing and overcrowding often led to the spread of disease in these schools. In fact, thousands of children who attended these schools died due to these poor **conditions**.

The quality of education that the students received at Indian Residential Schools was also poor. Many students left with only a grade 5 education. This is because the churches could not afford to hire qualified teachers. Many of the teachers who worked in these schools did not have any professional training, and some did not even have high school diplomas. Also, children were often taken out of class to do chores such as cleaning, cooking and maintenance because the churches did not have enough money to hire proper staff for these schools.

But perhaps the worst part of Indian Residential Schools was the physical, psychological and sexual abuse that some Aboriginal children experienced. There are some Aboriginal people who have fond memories of their time at Indian Residential School. They remember kind, loving teachers, nuns and priests. They remember good times with their friends. However, for the majority of people who attended these schools, the memories are not pleasant. Instead, they remember feeling lonely, hungry and scared. They remember being told that Aboriginal culture is strange and **inferior**, and that Aboriginal **beliefs** and practices are wrong. Many of the people who attended Indian Residential Schools left with very little education, no ability to speak their Aboriginal language and a **belief** that it is shameful to be an “Indian”.

## References

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## Comprehension

After you have shared your information with your partner, look at the pre-reading questions again and check your answers. Add any missing information.

**True/False**

Answer the following questions on your own. Circle T for true and F for false.

1.  T  F Not all provinces had Indian Residential Schools.
2.  T  F Most Canadians know about the Indian Residential School System and its impact on Aboriginal people.
3.  T  F Generally, European settlers did not understand how developed Aboriginal cultures were when they arrived in what is now Canada.
4.  T  F Churches wanted all Aboriginal people to become Christians.
5.  T  F Indian Residential Schools were the first schools that Aboriginal children went to.
6.  T  F Aboriginal people wanted their children to assimilate into Euro-Canadian society.
7.  T  F Indian Residential Schools were operated by the federal government.
8.  T  F Many Indian Residential Schools were poorly built and had too many students.
9.  T  F All Aboriginal children received a good education at Indian Residential Schools.
10.  T  F When Aboriginal people left Indian Residential Schools and returned to their homes and villages, they faced many challenges.

## Thinking Critically: Impacts of Indian Residential Schools

Write answers to the following questions. Then share your answers with your group.

### Teacher's note:

The goal of this activity is to give students a chance to think about or digest what they have read and begin to consider the impacts of the Indian Residential School system on different levels of society (in preparation for the following listening activity). This is a speculative activity, so answers will vary. Students should be encouraged to think of as many answers as they can. Teachers should remind students that each person's experience at Indian Residential School was unique.

The answers below are based on a number of Indian school survivor testimonies, but do not represent all of the experiences of former students. These answers include more information than the following listening, so teachers have extra background information.

1. How do you think attending an Indian residential school might have affected individual students?

#### Negative Impacts:

- Identity loss – some students felt ashamed of being Aboriginal, but also didn't feel "Canadian"
- disconnection from family and community
- loss of language
- loss of cultural knowledge
- loss of connection to traditional territory/land
- difficulty communicating with the opposite sex (boys and girls were often not allowed to interact with each other)
- struggles with substance abuse – many survivors turned to alcohol and drugs to forget experiences
- health problems – malnutrition and tuberculosis were widespread in Indian Residential Schools
- limited employment opportunities after school due to lack of education

#### Positive Impacts

Some former students have stated that they had positive experiences at Indian residential school

Here are some possible positive impacts:

- learned English language
- learned how to read and write
- close connection with caring teachers, nuns, priests (Although there have been many accounts of physical, sexual and emotion abuse in Indian Residential Schools, not all schools were the same. According to some survivors, staff and administrators at some schools were very kind.)
- learned skills necessary to take part in Euro-Canadian society

2. How do you think attending an Indian residential school might have affected a person's relationship with his or her family?
  - some children who were away for many years at a time may have felt estranged from family members
  - loss of language may have made it hard for some survivors to communicate with family members
  - loss of cultural knowledge may have made it hard for some survivors to participate in family traditions
  - some survivors have said they felt ashamed of their families after they returned to their community because they and their lifestyle were “too Indian”
  - Indian residential school students may not have learned valuable parenting skills, so they may have had difficulty raising their own children
  - abusive behaviours learned at Indian Residential Schools may have been passed on from generation to generation
  
3. In what ways do you think Indian Residential Schools have impacted Aboriginal communities?
  - numerous Aboriginal languages are now extinct
  - many communities have lost traditional practices and stories
  - substance abuse is high in some communities
  - suicide rates are high in some communities

## Stories

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### CLB Competency

#### Listening 7 – IV

Understand extended descriptive or narrative monologues or presentations about personal experiences, general knowledge or familiar work-related topics, even when some information is presented out of sequence.

#### Speaking 7 – IV

Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions and feelings; express reservations, approval, disapproval, possibilities and probabilities one-on-one and in small group discussions or meetings.

#### Writing 7 – II

Reduce short oral discourse (such as live or recorded phone messages, pre-recorded public information, podcasts or short presentations) to notes.

## Listen

Listen to this short speech about the impacts of Indian Residential Schools and add notes to the table. Then use your notes to retell the information to your partner.

People	Effects of Indian Residential Schools
Individual Students	
Families	
Communities	
Non-Aboriginal People	



Effects of Indian Residential Schools : <http://youtu.be/eWndmJPFR24>

### Audio script: The Effects of Indian Residential Schools

Some people in Canada think that the Indian Residential School System is part of the past and that Aboriginal people should just forget it and move on. Unfortunately, it is just not that simple. The Indian Residential School System has had profound effects on the students, their families, their communities and Canadian society. And sadly these effects can still be seen in many communities today.

There were many negative effects on students who attended Indian Residential Schools. First, many students left the schools feeling that they didn't quite fit in anywhere. When they returned to their home community, they could no longer speak their Aboriginal language. This often meant that they could not communicate easily with family members such as grandparents, and they could no longer understand the language that was used to share important family and community stories. Also, while they were in school they had been told many times that Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal traditions, and Aboriginal beliefs were primitive and strange. Therefore, when some students returned home they felt embarrassed and ashamed of their family's lifestyle, and they no longer wanted to practice Aboriginal traditions. However, these same students did not fit in to Euro-Canadian society either. Their education at Indian Residential Schools was often poor, so it was difficult to find work. And many settlers at the time did not want Aboriginal people living and working in their communities. In this way, many of these former students did not feel that they belonged anywhere. This feeling of not belonging along with memories of physical, emotional and sometimes sexual abuse was very difficult for many people to deal with. Some people were able to find support

and help from their families and communities, but others used alcohol and drugs to try to cope with or forget these negative feelings and memories.

However, it is not only the individual students of Indian Residential Schools who felt the effects of this system. Family members were also affected. For example, parents and grandparents did not have the opportunity to raise their own children. Brothers and sisters were separated at school, so they did not have a chance to play together and get to know each other. Also, even the children and grandchildren of Indian Residential School students were sometimes affected. This is because many Aboriginal people who went to Indian Residential Schools never had the chance to learn how to be parents. They were raised by the nuns, priests and teachers who lived with them at the school. Often there were many children and only a few adults, so many students did not get the attention, love and guidance that parents may have given them. As a result, they did not learn how to be good parents to their own children, and their own children did not learn valuable parenting skills either. This is one example of the intergenerational impacts of Indian Residential Schools.

Along with individuals and families, entire Aboriginal communities have also been affected by Indian Residential Schools. When a community loses its children, there is no one to teach the language, culture and spiritual practices to. Therefore, many Aboriginal languages that were spoken in Canada are now gone, and many of the cultural and spiritual practices have been forgotten. In this way, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada have been negatively affected by this system of assimilation. Aboriginal people have lost their traditional languages, cultural practices and sometimes even their identities. And non-Aboriginal people living in Canada have lost the opportunity to learn about and experience many of these rich, complex cultures.

Thankfully, today many people across Canada are recognizing this great loss and working hard to learn more about and save Aboriginal cultures and languages so that they can become part of everyday life once again.

**Teacher's notes:**

There are many videos available online that give the history and effects of the Indian Residential School System. There are also many videos of survivors talking about their experiences. Although the content of these videos varies greatly, some students may find these videos difficult to watch. Below is a list of websites where teachers can find these videos if they wish to share them with their class. However, it is strongly advised that teachers watch the videos before playing them in class to assess whether or not they are appropriate for their particular group of students.

***Where Are the Children: The Legacy of Hope Foundation***

This video tells the history, purpose and effects of the Indian Residential School System. It contains many pictures of different schools, as well as some interviews with survivors. <http://bit.ly/1abcWvr>

- The following link leads to a site with numerous videos of survivor interviews. <http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/stories/>
- The following link leads to a site with a video on the Inuit experience of residential schools. It contains interviews with different survivors. Some students may find these stories difficult to watch. <http://weweresofaraway.ca/>

# The Facts

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## CLB Competency

### Listening 7 – IV

Understand short group interactions, discussions and meetings on generally familiar topics.

### Speaking 6 – IV

Ask for and give information in some detail; express opinions, feelings, obligation, ability and certainty one-on-one and in small group discussions or meetings.

### Reading 7 – IV

Interpret information contained in moderately complex formatted texts (such as tables, graphs, diagrams and flow charts or website navigation menus).

### Writing 7 – II

Reduce short oral discourse (such as live or recorded phone messages, pre-recorded public information, podcasts or short presentations) to notes.

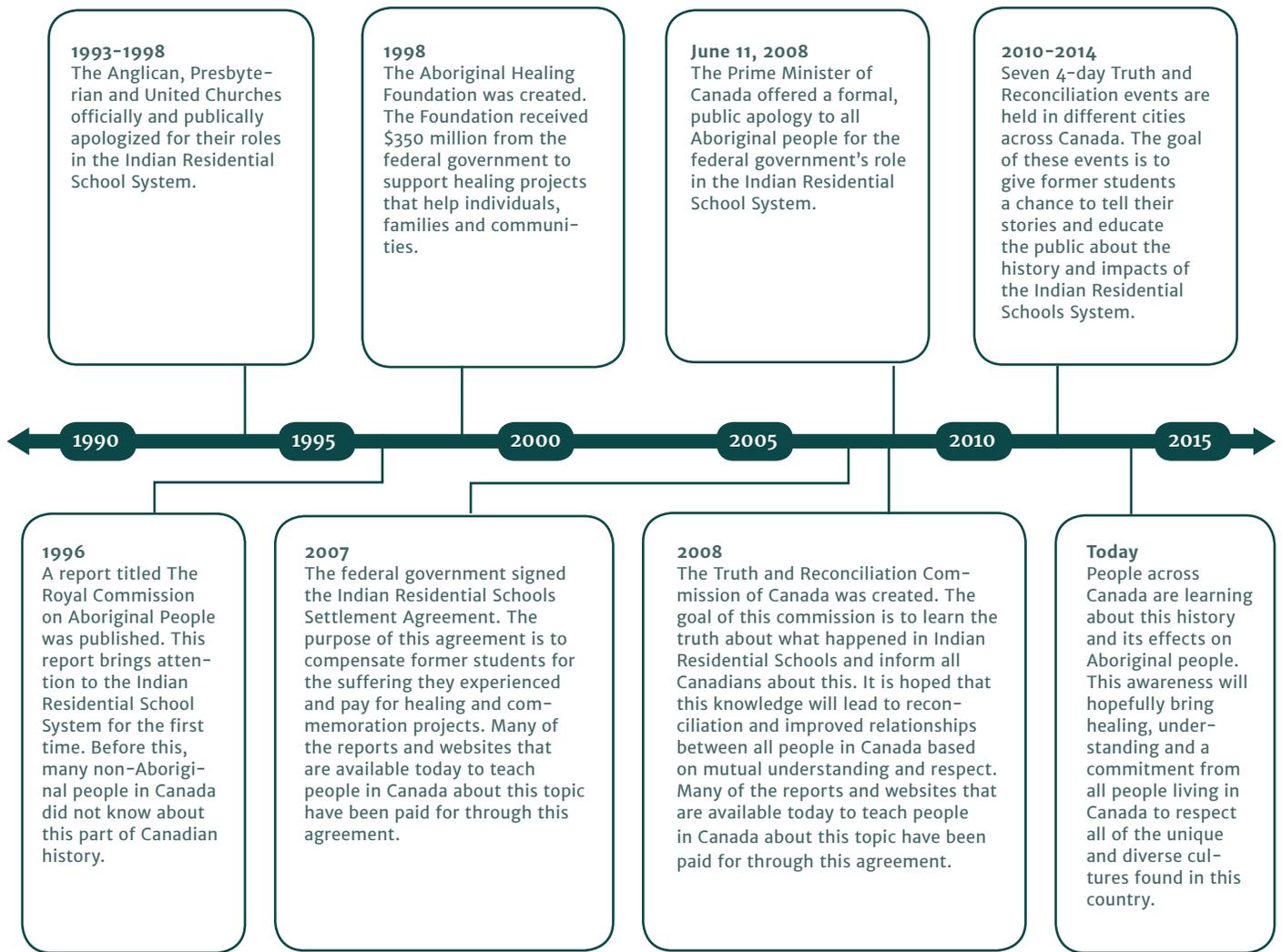
**Healing the Past**

Recently, more and more Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have been learning about the history and legacy of the Indian Residential School System. This awareness has prompted the federal government and the churches to take responsibility for their roles in this part of Canadian history.

The government, churches and Aboriginal organizations are taking steps to help former students of Indian Residential Schools and their families recover from the negative impacts of these schools. The following timeline outlines some of these actions.

**Timeline of Reconciliation (Partner A/B)**

Work with a partner. You and your partner have different information on your timelines. Ask your partner about the dates that are blank on your timeline and fill in the information using note form.





Photos (Above & Right) Prime Minister Harper offers full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential School System (2008). Courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada



### Moving Forward

*“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.” Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.”*

— Prime Minister Stephen Harper, official apology, June 11, 2008



*“To know this history requires the courage of survivors to speak to understand it requires the courage of others to listen a better future requires that we all join together and act.”*

—Indigenous Foundations UBC

Photo (Above) Phil Fontaine, National Chief of Assembly of First Nations. Courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada



#### AN APOLOGY

Today the Prime Minister officially apologized to the Aboriginal people of Canada for the government's role in creating and implementing the Indian Residential School System. I watched his apology on TV with my children and grandchildren. And today I finally told my family that I went to a residential school.

**CLB Competency****Listening 8 – IV**

Understand extended monologues or presentations on topics that are generally familiar and related to general knowledge or technical/work-related issues in own field.

**Speaking 7 – IV**

Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions and feelings; express reservations, approval, disapproval, possibilities and probabilities one-on-one and in small group discussions or meetings

**Writing 7 – II**

Reduce short oral discourse (such as live or recorded phone messages, pre-recorded public information, podcasts or short presentations) to notes.

## Before you Listen

On September 2013, a Truth and Reconciliation event was held in Vancouver. You are going to listen to a short description of this event. Before you listen, read the questions and make predictions about the answers. Share your predictions with a partner.

1. What is the purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?
  - to listen to and document the experiences of Indian residential school survivors and create a public record of these experiences and their effects on Aboriginal individuals, families and communities
  - to give younger generations of Aboriginal people and other Canadians the chance to learn more about the Indian Residential School System and its devastating impacts
  - to build understanding and heal relationships between Aboriginal Peoples and all Canadians
2. What was the “Learning Place” at the PNE?
  - a large open area where people could find out more about the Indian Residential School System
  - a place with educational displays, maps, pictures, pamphlets and representatives from organizations whose mandate it is to teach the public about the Indian Residential School System and its legacy
3. Who attended the TRC event in Vancouver?
  - survivors, their families, school children, Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people (general public)
4. What did the survivors of Indian Residential Schools do at this event? Why was this important?
  - They shared their personal experiences of attending Indian residential school and the impacts that had on their lives.
  - It was important because it gave survivors an opportunity to tell their story and have their personal experience be formally recorded and acknowledged, and it's important because it gives all Canadians a chance to hear these stories and truly understand the impact of this system.
5. What happened on “Education Day”?
  - 5000 school children came to the PNE, took part in educational activities and heard survivor statements to learn about the Indian Residential School System.
  - Some of the children that attended the BC National TRC Event Education Day respond to what their have learned in a 4 min video – “Educating Our Youth”(Oct. 1, 2013) <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>

**Did you know?**  
 Vancouver's mayor  
 Gregor Robertson  
 officially declared June  
 21, 2013 – June 20, 2014 as  
 a Year of Reconciliation  
 in Vancouver.

*“We are embracing reconciliation through a year-long initiative as a way to mend the past, build shared understanding, and create a legacy for meaningful change in society.”*



**Photo** Mayor Robertson (Right) with Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, before the Walk for Reconciliation  
 Courtesy of the Vancouver Mayor's Office

6. What happened on September 17th? Why was this event important?
  - There was an All Nations Canoe Gathering in False Creek.
  - It was important because it formally recognized the unceded traditional lands of the Coast Salish People as the territory of this event.
  - It was important because it was a formal, ceremonial welcome to the survivors and other visiting “Nations” including all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people by the Coast Salish People.
  
7. How did the TRC event in Vancouver end?
  - It ended with the Reconciliation Walk through the streets of downtown Vancouver. Tens of the thousands of people participated
  - "Walk for Reconciliation: A Short Video" (Sept. 24, 2013) shows highlights the TRC event: <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/explore/video-stories>
  
8. What other types of events do you think could be organized in the future to continue to acknowledge and support Indian residential school survivors and educate the public about this part of Canada’s history?
  - answers will vary

## Listen

Listen and write short answers to the following questions.



Moving Forward: Truth and Reconciliation: <http://youtu.be/DiPhkXSSlyg>

### Audio script – Truth and Reconciliation

For one week in September 2013, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC for short, came to Vancouver. The purpose of the TRC is to listen to and document the experiences of Indian Residential School survivors and create a public record of these experiences and their effects on Aboriginal individuals, families and communities. This process gives Indian Residential School survivors an opportunity to share their stories; to have their stories formally heard and formally acknowledged. It also gives younger generations of Aboriginal people and other Canadians the chance to learn more about the Indian Residential School System and its devastating impacts. This is the “Truth” part of the TRC, and it is hoped that once this truth is shared and understood, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada can begin to move toward reconciliation.

The TRC event in Vancouver was held at the Pacific National Exhibition, or PNE, a large exhibition grounds that includes many large buildings. One of these buildings housed the “Learning Place,” a large open area where people could find out more about the Indian Residential School System. Here people could read large educational displays and talk to representatives from the many organizations that are trying to teach the public about this piece of Canada’s history. There were maps of where the Indian Residential Schools were, pictures of some of the schools and the children who attended them, and pamphlets that explained the history. There were also films and documentaries and art exhibits.

In another large building, hundreds of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people sat silently in a large room and listened while individual survivors shared their experience of attending an Indian Residential School and talked about the impacts that that experience had on the rest of their lives. Many of these survivor statements, or stories,

included painful memories, but they were also filled with descriptions of personal strength and triumph. While the speakers talked, audience members listened respectfully and when they finished the audience stood and showed their heartfelt appreciation and support by clapping and cheering. There were many tears, many hugs and many words of thanks shared between the survivors and the audience members. It was an opportunity for the survivors to share their stories, to be acknowledged and to be supported, and it was an opportunity for the public to hear firsthand just what it meant to attend an Indian residential school.

The Learning Place and Statement Gathering sessions were open to the public every day, but there were also many specific events that took place during the week. One of these events was the All Nations Canoe Gathering in False Creek on September 17. Members of numerous different First Nations along with Indian Residential School survivors paddled large cedar dugout canoes from Vanier Park to Science World and were welcomed in a traditional ceremony to the Coast Salish lands. This journey was a formal way for the visiting First Nations people to recognize the Coast Salish People as their hosts during the TRC event. It was also a formal way for the Coast Salish People to recognize, welcome and honour the survivors who were coming to tell their stories.

Another event that took place during the Vancouver TRC event was “Education Day.” On this day, 5000 school children from all over BC and their teachers came to the PNE to learn about the Indian Residential School System and its impacts. Along with viewing the educational materials and films found in the Learning Place, the students also took part in a variety of educational activities specifically designed for them.

But perhaps the one of the most powerful and inspirational events that happened during the TRC event took place on the final day. On a very cold, rainy September 22, tens of thousands of people participated in the Reconciliation Walk. Under thick coats and colourful umbrellas, thousands of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people marched through the streets of downtown Vancouver for hours to show their support for the thousands of Aboriginal people who were forced to attend Indian Residential School. Organized by Chief Dr. Robert Joseph and his daughter, Karen Joseph, from the Gwawaenuk First Nation, the walk was intended as a healing journey between Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians, a way to acknowledge the problems of the past and find a new way to move forward. It was a walk for reconciliation; it was a walk for peace.

### Supplemental Materials on the TRC

- TRC Vancouver Event Program <http://www.trc.ca/websites/vancouver/File/TRC-073.06%20BCNE%20program-web.pdf>
- Video – “Educating Our Youth”(Oct. 1, 2013) – Some of the 5000 children that attended the BC National TRC Event Education Day in Vancouver respond to what their have learned. <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>
- Video – “What is Reconciliation?” – Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the TRC of Canada shares what is meant by reconciliation and why it is needed. <http://www.trc.ca/websites/reconciliation/index.php?p=312>
- Video – “Walk for Reconciliation: A Short Video” (Sept. 24, 2013) <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/explore/video-stories>

# My Perspective

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## CLB Competency

### Listening 7 – IV

Understand short group interactions, discussions and meetings on generally familiar topics.

### Speaking 6 – IV

Ask for and give information in some detail; express opinions, feelings, obligation, ability and certainty one-on-one and in small group discussions or meetings.

### Reading 7 – IV

Interpret information contained in moderately complex formatted texts (such as tables, graphs, diagrams and flow charts or website navigation menus).

### Writing 7 – II

Reduce short oral discourse (such as live or recorded phone messages, pre-recorded public information, podcasts or short presentations) to notes.

# My Perspective

## Projects & Assignments

These projects and assignments give you a chance to share your ideas and perspective on this topic.

### Teacher's note:

The following tasks are meant to give students a chance to reflect on the information they've learned in this unit and apply some of the ideas to their own lives. Teachers should use their discretion when choosing which and/or how many activities to do with their class.

### Journal/Blog

- Compare what you knew about Indian Residential Schools before this unit to what you know now.
- Describe how the information in this unit has changed your understanding of Aboriginal peoples' lives.
- Write a 2–3 paragraph narrative that outlines a different history for Canada's Aboriginal people that does not include Indian Residential Schools. How would the lives of Aboriginal people be different today?
- Many children around the world attend residential schools and, unlike Indian Residential Schools in Canada, many of these schools are excellent. Are there residential schools in your country? If so, describe them.
  - What do these schools look like?
  - Who attends these schools?
  - Why do these children attend residential school?
  - What kinds of programs are offered at these schools?
  - What types of jobs/post-secondary education do the children who attend these schools get after they graduate?

### Teacher's notes:

Here is the link to the City of Vancouver website for more information and a short video.

<http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/year-of-reconciliation.aspx>

# Sharing & Connecting

## CLB Competency

### Speaking 6 – IV

Give presentations about moderately complex processes, to tell stories (including future scenarios), or to describe, compare and contrast in detail 2 events, jobs or procedures.

### Writing 7 – II

Write 2 or 3 connected paragraphs to relate a familiar sequence of events, make a comparison, or provide a detailed description of a person, system, routine or procedure.

### Reading 7 – IV

Access, locate and integrate information from online reference sources.

## Projects & Assignments

These projects and assignments give you a chance to share your ideas and perspective on this topic.

### Indian Residential School - Presentation

In small groups, prepare a presentation on the history and legacy of Indian Residential Schools for other classes in your school.

#### Teacher's notes:

This activity is only included in the teacher's guide as an optional inquiry-based activity.

#### Project of Heart

The following link leads to a site that explains Project of Heart: <http://poh.jungle.ca/step-3-how-it-works>

The following link leads to a home page with examples of some school projects undertaken on this project thus far: <http://poh.jungle.ca>

As a class, students can come up with a project of their own to commemorate the survivors and families of the Indian Residential School System.

In groups, Ss can research one of the schools that operated in their area, create a report on it and do a brief presentation for other students in the class. Reports should answer the following questions:

- Who ran the school?
- How long did the school operate?
- How many children attended that school?
- Which Nations were represented?

## Learning About Aboriginal Peoples - Research Project

Today, many Aboriginal people are working hard to save and relearn the languages and cultural practices that were almost lost through the Indian Residential School System. Although in the past education was used to try to eliminate Aboriginal languages and cultures, today more and more schools are offering Aboriginal language classes, and all school districts in BC have signed Aboriginal Enhancement agreements with the provincial government. These agreements ensure that education about Aboriginal culture and languages is offered to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students throughout BC. Today, education is playing a big role in the preservation and celebration of these rich cultures. This research project will allow you to also learn more about some of these unique cultures.

Help your students learn more about Aboriginal people in BC, their languages and their cultures. Have students work in small groups and research one of BC's First Nations. Then have students present their information to the class. Some things to include in your presentation are:

- the name of this First Nation
- the territory of this Nation – look for a map of BC that outlines the traditional territory of this Nation <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/map.htm>
- the language of this Nation – Students could perhaps teach 3 - 4 words to their classmates.
  - The First Voices website lists many First Nations languages, has recordings of many words and phrases in each language, and even has games to help people learn and remember the language. <http://www.firstvoices.com/en/index-canada-west>
  - The First Peoples Language Map of BC website shows the First Nations languages in BC. Click on different parts of the map to learn about the language and Nation of each area. <http://maps.fphlcc.ca>
- traditional and contemporary styles of art of this Nation
- the location of a Cultural Centre where students and their classmates can go and learn more (Note: not all areas in BC have Aboriginal cultural centres)
  - Aboriginal Tourism BC <http://www.aboriginalbc.com>
  - Hello BC <http://www.hellobc.com/british-columbia/things-to-do/arts-culture-history/aboriginal-experiences.aspx>

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## Resources

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- Link to the federal government's website that has Prime Minister Harper's official apology  
<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015651/1100100015655>
- Link to the federal government's official statement of apology  
<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649>
- Printable timeline of 100 years of Loss – this timeline could be posted in the classroom, or used for a reading activity in small groups.  
<http://www.legacyofhope.ca/downloads/100-years-print.pdf>
- They Came for the Children – The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada  
[http://www.attendancemarketing.com/~attmk/TRC\\_jd/ResSchoolHistory\\_2012\\_02\\_24\\_Webposting.pdf](http://www.attendancemarketing.com/~attmk/TRC_jd/ResSchoolHistory_2012_02_24_Webposting.pdf) and  
<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=580> (link to TRC webpage with document)
- Truth and Reconciliation – links and resources page (provides many links to other resources on Indian Residential School, Aboriginal Organizations, Government of Canada websites, etc.: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=9>)
- Reconciliation Canada  
<http://reconciliationcanada.ca>
- Canadian Encyclopedia – a good video provides information on Indian Residential Schools (1:58 mins)  
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/residential-schools>
- Project of Heart – home page  
<http://poh.jungle.ca>
- Project of Heart – steps to project (step 1)  
<http://poh.jungle.ca/step-1-investigation-into-the-history-and-legacy-of-indian-residential-schools-in-canada#resource>
- Flyer for Aboriginal Focus School in Vancouver  
<http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/Aboriginal%20Focus%20School%20Flyer%20-%202012-2013.pdf>