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## SECTION 3: A TYPICAL DAY AT RES SCHOOL (2002)

### LANGUAGE ARTS, HISTORY

#### **MAIN IDEA**

Church-run residential schools mainly operated on a half-day school curriculum, meaning that only half of the day was spend learning academically and the other half of the day consisted of chores and other work duties.

#### **LEARNING OJECTIVES:**

- Student will learn about the half-day school curriculum.
- Student will learn about what a typical day in residential school was like.
- Students will read true stories told by NAN RS Survivors about their day in school.

#### **ACTIVITIES**

- 1. Share Background Information with the class
- 2. Show a **Typical Day at Residential School** overhead to the class and review it together.
- 3. Read to the class or as a class A Typical Day at Residential School NAN Survivor Stories.
- 4. Divide students into groups of three or four and have them compare: what they learn at school in the present time with what students learned at residential schools in the past. (Once completed have them present their comparisons to the class)
- 5. Then have students individually complete the worksheet to be handed in for marking, about a Typical Day at *their* School.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

Formative: Group work, presentation and worksheet.

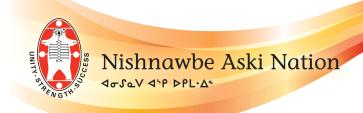
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#### **TEACHER USE**

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The church-run residential schools operated on a half-day curriculum. Nishnawbe Aski Nation students would spend approximately only 2 to 4 hours per day in the classroom, compared to 5 hours or longer for non-Aboriginal students who were in the regular school curriculum. The rest of the day was spent on trades and domestic chores. NAN children laboured for many hours in order for these schools to remain operational. Some residential schools would often sell their surplus farm produce to local markets in order to generate some extra income. The intent of the half-day curriculum was for NAN students to be socialized in to mainstream society with practical skills. Assimilation was the ultimate goal.

The half-day system failed primarily for two reasons: the curriculum and the poor teaching instruction often done by unqualified teachers. Most NAN students never got beyond the primary grades of 1, 2, or 3. This was due to the fact that the residential schoolteachers were primarily missionaries and nuns, who were not qualified teachers. The main focus of their teaching was based on religious instruction which triumphed over secular knowledge, but this would only seem natural given the churches' mandate was for conversion from Native Culture into Christianity. It was not until the 1950s that Indian Affairs offered comparable wages on par with non-Aboriginal schools to attract certified teachers to the residential schools.



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#### **INFORMATION**

### A TYPICAL DAY AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

**5:30 am:** Boys are doing the morning chores

Milking the cows Feeding the animals

**6:00 am:** Everyone else got up

### Went to Chapel for morning Mass

**Breakfast:** Sticky porridge cooked by students the night before

A piece of bread with butter

A glass of milk

#### Morning cleaning duties

**Classes:** The first hour was religious studies

The next two hours were academic studies (math, reading, writing)

### Work Time/Chores

Girls learned to sew, laundry, cook and clean Boys learned to farm, grow a garden, and chop wood Some boys learned basic carpentry and shoe repair Cleaning groups cleaned their designate part of the school

Study hour Supper Clean-up Recreation time Prayers Bedtime

Source: This refers specifically to the Kamloops IRS and is taken from the book "Resistance and Renewal" by Celia Haig-Brown

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#### STORIES

#### MORNING ROUTINE

I went to the Pelican Lake school in 1948 when I was fifteen years old and I was there for three years. Everyday we had to make our beds, put our clothes away and clean up the washroom after everyone had finished washing and brushing their teeth. Once a week, usually on Saturdays there were lots of chores to do. Some of the students had to clean the washrooms while others had to scrub floors. I used to clean up outside and do a variety of work in the yard. I also worked on the garbage crew from time to time.

#### **PRAYERS**

A part of the weekly routine at the Anglican residential school I attended was participation in religious activities. When we went to class in the morning we started the day with the "Lord's Prayer". We had to say our prayers every day before we went to bed. We knelt at the side of our beds and recited the "Apostles Creed", the "Lord's Prayer", and a number of other prayers. We had to attend mass at the church every Saturday evening and Sunday morning. At times like Christmas and Easter we seemed to be in church all the time. We were expected to participate in Church life. Every spring, several of the boys and girls participated in a ceremony called "First Communion". In the summer the Bishop would come to the school and conduct a "Confirmation" ceremony for the older boys and girls. Everyone was expected to participate in religious activities.

#### **MY LITTLE NUMBERED SHOES**

I had a difficult time getting used to the daily routines when I first attended residential school. At home we really did not follow a routine. When we got up we ate and then attended to our chores. At residential school, every aspect of our life was controlled by some routine. Everything was so regimented. I got up at seven o'clock in the morning. After I got out of bed I went to the wash room, washed my face and hands and got dressed. I would get my numbered clothing out of my little closet, put them on and then put on my little numbered shoes. After I made my bed, I swept the floors and helped to clean up the washrooms. I lined up with the other students for breakfast, after which, I attended classes from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. with an hour break for lunch. After school I had to work at homework until supper time. After supper, if I did not have any homework I could go outside in the playground. I brushed my teeth, washed up and had to be changed into my pajamas and be ready to go to bed by 9:00 p.m. At bed time I had to kneel, as did the other boys, and say my prayers.

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STORIES continued...

#### **BED-TIME**

I went to the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School when I was nine years old and I was there for four years. One of the things that I remember about the school was that there was a routine for everything. For example, our bed-time routine was that we all went upstairs to our dormitory, changed into our pajamas, folded our clothes and put them away. Then we went to the washroom, brushed our teeth, washed our hands and face and cleaned up the sinks after we had finished. Then we went to our beds, knelt by the side of our beds, said our prayers and got into bed. After all of the girls were all in bed the dorm supervisor turned out the lights and we were expected to go to sleep right away.

#### WHY I DON'T LIKE TO KNEEL

When I was nine I went to the St. Anne's Indian Residential School in Fort Albany. I remember that all of the students had chores to do at the school. There were daily chores and weekly chores. What I remember most is that every Saturday morning I was on my hands and knees scrubbing floors along with several other students. We would get pails full of hot soapy water and added some kind of disinfectant, such as Lysol, to the water. We would get down on our hands and knees and scrub the section of the floor that had been assigned to us with a brush which had stiff bristles. Then we had to wash the floor with a cloth and hot soapy water and then rinse it with clean warm water. All of this was done on my knees and I remember how sore they used to get. My hands also hurt because they would get soft in the water and they always got scraped on the floor or the brush. When you had a cut on your hands and put them in that hot water with the disinfectant in it, your hands would really sting. After lunch when the floor had dried we had to get back down on our hands and knees and wax the floor. The wax was that hard stuff in cans that you had to put on a cloth and rub it into the floor. After the wax dried then we had to get back down on our hands and knees and polish it. I was on my hands and knees for so long it felt like I had been praying in church for a week. So that is why I don't like to kneel.

### THE HORSES WERE NICE

Everyone had chores to do when I was at the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School. I liked my chores and I worked very hard at them. One of my chores was cutting firewood for the school. I helped a man cut firewood for the furnaces at the school. Two or three other boys also came out to cut wood with us. I liked cutting wood because I got to go outside and into the bush. I did not like class because the teachers were always mean to the students and gave them the strap whey they made a mistake. The man I worked with was very nice. He liked me because I worked so hard and I spent most of my time at school cutting wood with him. I also liked cutting wood because by doing so, I avoided going to classes. The man even let me drive the horse now and then and let me feed them. The man was nice, and the horses were nice.



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**HANDOUT** 

HANDOUT	Name:	
A TYPICAL DAY AT	S	SCHOOL