2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

SECTION 4: ABUSES SUFFERED IN RES SCHOOLS (2002)

HEALTH, HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES

MAIN IDEA

For Nishnawbe Aski Nation students and all Aboriginal students across Canada abuse in these schools did flourish. Records show that everything from speaking an Aboriginal language, to bedwetting, running away, smiling at children of the opposite sex or at one's siblings, provoked whippings, strappings, beatings, and other forms of abuse and humiliation. In some cases children were 'punished' for no apparent reason.

LEARNING OJECTIVES:

- Student will learn that NAN members who attended residential school were either abused or witnessed abuse.
- Student will learn the effects of this abuse and that sadly the students who went to residential school carried these effects with them when they left the schools.
- Students will write a letter home in the role a student at residential school in order to try and gain an understanding of life for Aboriginal students at residential school.

ACTIVITIES

- 1. Explain to students the Main Idea (above) of this lesson.
- 2. Show the students the **Impacts of Residential School Wheel** and explain to the students that the children at residential school experienced impacts in all of these areas.
- 3. Read to the class the **NAN Survivor Stories** relating to each section on the wheel: "Physical, Mental, Spiritual, Emotional.
- 4. Hand to the students fill out the **Notes Organizer** and have them fill it out in point form as you read to them **To Kill the Indian in the Child** (give them time after as well to record any further thoughts that they may have).
- 5. Review with the students the general format and purpose of personal letters. Develop a list of criteria for a very personal letter and record these on the board or chart paper.

Ask: What might you find in a personal letter that you wouldn't find in a business letter? What would be in a business letter that you wouldn't find in a personal letter?



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- 6. Using their notes from their worksheet have students write a personal letter in the role of a student at residential school. This letter will be to a family member or friend from their home community. Titled: **A Letter from School**
- 7. Have students share their letters in a **Think-Pair-Share**. Divide the class into pairs or have students choose a partner. In each pair, students will exchange letters and offer helpful comments and reactions to one another. Students can revise their work based on their partner's comments.
- 8. Invite students or community counselor to discuss the problems of abuse that yong people face today and the strategies they might apply to deal with abuse.

ASSESSMENT

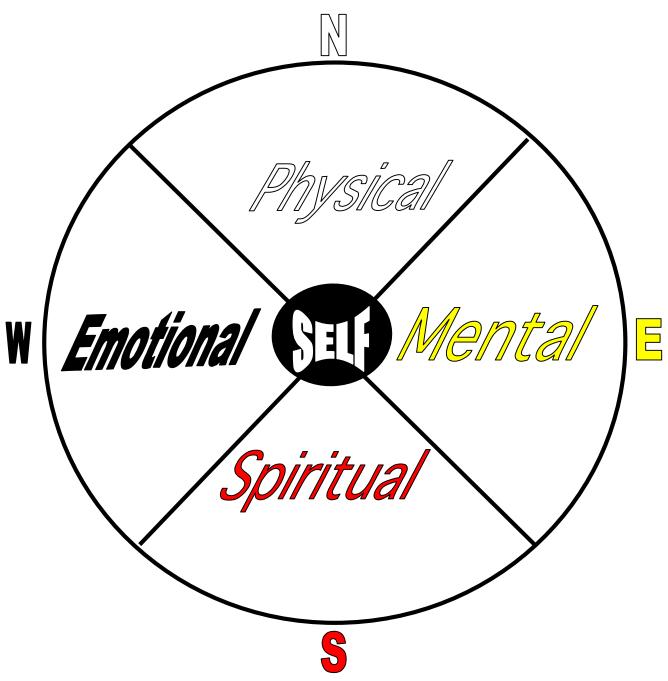
Formative: Notes Organizer, Personal Letters



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HANDOUT

IMPACTS OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL



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READING

NAN SURVIVOR STORIES

PHYSICAL

HOW EMBARASSING!

When I went to residential school in Moose Factory I remember getting a spanking in the big room where we played games. I cannot remember why I got spanked, but I did. I had to take my pants down and lean over a chair that had been placed in the middle of the room. All of the boys had been assembled to form a circle around the chair so they could see what was happening to me. I think this was done so the other boys could see what would happen to them if they were bad, or did not obey orders. The supervisor came up to the chair, looked at me and then moved around behind me. He had a belt in his hand. Then he proceeded to slap the belt across my bare bum. I think he hit me with that belt about ten times. I don't know what hurt more the actual spanking, or the fact that all the other kids were standing there watching me get a spanking with my pants down.

EMOTIONAL

DON'T BE A "CRY BABY"!

When I had been at the Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School for a couple of months some bad things happened. The first thing that happened was that my cousin, who was crippled, died. I did not know he had died until I heard some of the older girls talking about his death. I never knew what was wrong with him, when he died, or where he was buried. No one told me anything even though I was related to him. When I heard the girls talking about his death I started to cry. One of the supervisors told me to quit being "a cry baby" because big girls didn't cry. When my father died I cried, and again I was told by the dormitory supervisor to stop. Even some of the other girls called me a "cry baby". No one expressed any sympathy to me and no one offered to help me or hold me or to comfort me. I never felt so alone in all my life. I was so lonely and hurting sad and I missed my family. At night, after the lights were



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READING
NAN SURVIVOR STORIES continued...

turned off in the dormitory, I cried. For a long time I cried inwardly all of the time. Eventually I quit crying. But I think I lost something when I could no longer cry. I felt a great sense of loss but I was not allowed to express my grief through crying.

MENTAL

PROUD OF WHO I AM

I always thought I had problems that I needed to deal with. I sought assistance from a man in my community who was an elder and a traditional healer. He helped me to review why I had problems. He made me acknowledge that I was taken away from everything I had ever known when I was 8 years old, was separated from my family for seven years and only saw them when I went home one Christmas, and was separated from my siblings and my friends. He helped me to see that my cultural connections and education had come to an abrupt halt -- I no longer learned the language; failed to learn bush skills from my father; and was no longer able to roam on the land, or see the trees, animals and birds unique to the area in which I lived; and that none of these things were my fault. With the elder's assistance I also acknowledged that while I was at the school I was in a foreign land, at a foreign school, run by foreign people; that I was forced to learn to speak, read and write a different language; and that I was forced to eat different foods. He taught me that when I was strapped for making a mistake; spanked for breaking the rules; teased by the other students because I spoke a different language; and humiliated when I was forced to participate in sexual activity for the gratification of someone else, that it was not because I was a bad person. The elder showed me that these things made me become angry; to hate white people; and to dread becoming like them. He helped he to see how I was passing my anger on to my wife and my children. The elder helped me to understand that I was still an Anishnawbe in spite of all the things that happened to me; and that I should be proud of who I was.

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READING
NAN SURVIVOR STORIES continued...

SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL

DISCARDED

When I was a girl I had nice long black hair. My mother used to brush my hair for me and make braids. I would let the braids hang behind me or I would move them over my shoulders so they hung down front. I liked it when they were in front because I could see those little colored ribbons and they reminded me of my mother. Before I left home for the Catholic residential school at Kenora my mother did my hair up in braids so I would look nice when I went to school. The first thing they did when I arrived at the school was to cut my braids off and throw them away. I was so hurt by their actions and I cried. It was as if they threw a part of me away – discarded in the garbage.

YOU MUST SPEAK ENGLISH

When I went to the Cecilia Jeffrey school near Kenora I was told shortly after I got there that I could not speak to anyone in my own language, that I had to speak in English. They said this was a rule at the school and if I talked Oji-Cree I would get punished. I could not speak English and did not know any of the words to describe anything, or even to hold a simple conversation. One day when I was in the playground with four other kids from home we were talking in our language. One of the staff heard us and took us to the Supervisor's office. The Supervisor made us stand in the corner for the afternoon. Later, each one us got a spanking.



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TO KILL THE INDIAN IN THE CHILD NOTES ORGANIZER

IMPORTANT	MY FEELINGS	QUESTIONS AND
STATEMENTS	MY REACTIONS	COMMENTS I HAVE

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READING

TO KILL THE INDIAN IN THE CHILD ABUSE AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

"When the full extent of abuse is finally revealed, we'll find the most extensive case of child sexual, physical, mental and spiritual abuse ever recorded in human history." Phil Lane, Director of the Four Worlds International Institute in Southern Alberta (Lethbridge Herald, November 24, 1997)

Residential schools were founded on the idea they could transform Aboriginal children from 'savages' into 'civilized' members of Canadian society. "To kill the Indian in the child", the department aimed at severing the artery of culture that ran between generations and was the profound connection between parent and child sustaining family and community". (RCAP, p. 365)

According to *E.R. Daniels' report*, residential schools were modeled, also in part from the 'Davin Report', on an English reform school for juvenile delinquents visited by Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Education in Upper Canada, in 1836. Daniels' report notes that this influence on residential schools is evident, for example, in the "numerous references in government files and reports to pupils at these schools no as students but as inmates" (Daniels, p. 20).

Given this, it is not surprising that strict discipline enforced by severe punishment became the common mode of operation of the schools. Punishment, it was believed, was an acceptable method for 'teaching' children those lessons the schools deemed necessary. In the case of Aboriginal children, the key lesson were to stop using Aboriginal languages and practicing traditional beliefs and rituals.

"But of course the residential schools did not confine themselves to a corrosive paternalism which tore apart Aboriginal families and devalued Native culture. Presumably because they viewed the children in their care as somehow less than human, authorities at all levels within the system failed to give them the care and protection to which they were entitled. Sexual and other forms of abuse took root and flourished. Unlike the cultural paternalism, this cannot be seen as an understandable



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READING TO KILL THE INDIAN IN THE CHILD continued...

but regrettable excess of the day. At no time has it been part of this country's values to allow the brutal exploitation of defenseless children in institutions charged with their care." Globe and Mail editorial, January 8, 1998

Abuse did flourish. Records show that everything from speaking an Aboriginal language, to bedwetting, running away, smiling at children of the opposite sex or at one's siblings, provoked whippings, strappings, beatings, and other forms of abuse and humiliation. In some cases children were 'punished' for no apparent reason.

Not surprisingly, children in these schools lived in fear. Survivors speak of "the fear—initially of the unknown, but later the fear that developed and that was instilled in their hearts and minds as little children" (Linda Bull, "Indian Residential School," p. 41)

"A lot of people say, "OH, in residential school our kids always smile." I call that the smile of fear. You have to smile. That's the smile of fear. I became one of the them. For the longest time I didn't have a real smile, I didn't." (former student Dave Belleau)

Source: Residential School Update, AFN Health Secretariat: March 1998, p. 12-13

In an environment where physical abuse is tolerated, denied, and protected, and where potential victims are powerless and afraid, sexual abuse can also flourish. And throughout the residential school system, it did.

"They learn to work under direction which doesn't require, and even discourages, any individual acting or thinking on the part. Punishment goes to those who don't keep in line." (A. McKenzie)



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READING TO KILL THE INDIAN IN THE CHILD continued...

Another kind of abuse occurred in residential schools which should not be overlooked. Though its impact may be less obvious, every student who attended residential school cannot have escaped the abuse of those "little atrocities" and everyday miseries that arise in a system that is racist, colonial, and convinced of the inferiority of those under its control.

...for every horror story of abuse, we have heard a hundred stories of the less dramatic indignities and abasements that made up life at Indian Residential School: the constant stream of racist slurs that accompanied lessons; the regimented moment-to-moment attention to one's activities; the haircut and school uniform; the persistent undercurrent of hunger; the impenetrable loneliness; and so on. As well, we hear of good times, times that reveal barrenness of the rest of the existence at Residential School; the delight of being allowed an hour's play with a Christmas or birthday present sent months earlier, but withheld; the relish in eating a good meal when an inspector or other dignitary was visiting; the swell of pride in an eleven year old child that has learned to handle the machinery or do the job of a full-grown adult; the explosion of joy at getting a visit from one's parent. (Chrisjohn and Young)

For many residential school survivors the impact of growing up in an institution rather than a family, of being raised by a system that is racist, neglectful, devoid of love, and highly regimented has be profound. For many the result was a loss of identity, low self-esteem, and a lack of parenting skills. Some suffered difficulty coping with non-institutional life and developed a tendency to be more comfortable in institutions such as jails. Others learned to use abusive behaviours such as bullying, threats, and violence to control others. Some learned to live in fear. A great many learned to hate themselves or their cultures.

Sadly they carried all of the this with them when they left the schools. They carried it to their communities and to their families. They carried it within themselves. And it has shown itself in high rates of suicide, sexual abuse, domestic violence, neglect of children and multitude of health and social problems which continue to afflict our nations today.

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READING
TO KILL THE INDIAN IN THE CHILD continued...

Teacher Use Only: Article summarized into abuse categories

PHYSICAL:

- Physical abuse did flourish. Records show that everything from speaking an Aboriginal language, to bedwetting, running away, smiling at children of the opposite sex or at one's siblings, provoked whippings, strappings, beatings, and other forms of abuse and humiliation. In some cases children were 'punished' for no apparent reason.
- Sexual abuse and other forms of abuse took root and flourished.
- Undercurrent of hunger.

EMOTIONAL:

- Not surprisingly, children in residential schools lived in fear. Survivors speak of "the fear—initially of the unknown, but later the fear that was developed and that was instilled in their hearts and minds as little children." (Linda Bull, "Indian Residential School." p. 41).
- "A lot of people say, "OH, in residential school our kids always smile." I call that the smile of fear. You have to smile. That's the smile of fear. I became one of them. For the longest time I didn't have a real smile." (former student David Belleau).
- Impenetrable loneliness and longing for family.
- Living in fear.

MENTAL:

- Children "learned how to work under direction which doesn't require, and even discourages, any individual acting or thinking on the part. Punishment goes to those who don't keep in line." (A. McKenzie).
- Another kind of abuse occurred in residential schools which should not be overlooked. Through its impact may be less obvious, every student who



2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

READING TO KILL THE INDIAN IN THE CHILD continued...

Teacher Use Only: Article summarized into abuse categories

attended residential school cannot have escaped the abuse of everyday miseries that arise in a system that is racist, colonial, and convinced of the inferiority of those under its control.

- Devoid of love.
- Highly regimented lives.
- Racist slurs.
- Learned the hate themselves (low self-esteem).
- Neglected.
- Lack of parenting skills.
- Learnt to be abusive, learnt to bully and use violence to control others.

SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL:

- The key lessons Aboriginal children learned was to stop using their Aboriginal languages and practicing their traditional beliefs and rituals.
- Loss of language, traditional beliefs and rituals.
- Loss of identity.
- Learned to hate their culture.