2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

SECTION 2: DID YOU KNOW? Q & A

(2002)

LANGUAGE ARTS, HISTORY

MAIN IDEA

There are many questions that Nishnawbe Aski Nation youth have regarding the topic of residential schools. Questions need to be answered so that there is better understanding and awareness about residential schools.

LEARNING OJECTIVES:

- Student will be introduced to some common questions that have been asked regarding residential schools and as small groups they will present the answer to the class.
- Student will have a chance to come up with their own questions about residential school to determine what would they like to learn and find out about residential schools.

ACTIVITIES

- 1. Divide students into 6 groups. Have each group pick a question out of a hat. Whatever question they receive provide that group with the appropriate answer.
- 2. Once the group is aware of their question and answer have them create a presentation regarding the information provided to them. It should be no shorter than 15 minutes/group. Some may be longer depending on the amount of information to be presented.
- 3. Make sure that each person speaks at some point during the presentation. Have student record each individual's role in preparing and presenting the information.
- 4. Tell them to be creative and to use chart paper and markers (try not to read from the paper).
- 5. Once done have them fill out a group evaluation.
- 6. After all of the presentations have been completed distribute the mini-quiz. Have students complete the quiz. After the quiz, ask students if they have any questions and record them on the blackboard or on chart paper.
- 7. EXTRA: the teacher should try to answer a few questions for them as there may be a lot, or have students research their own question and present it to the class at a later date.

ASSESSMENT

Formative: Group work and class participation. Diagnostic: Mini-quiz

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QUESTION #1

WHAT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS?

The government had a deliberate policy to disrupt the social structures and economies of First Nations, by forcibly removing children from their traditional cultures, spirituality and educational means. First Nations governments were displaced and nations disintegrated as a result. Languages were extinguished; traditional healing, spirituality and ceremonies were driven underground.

Quite simply, from 1894-1969, the Canadian government sought to assimilate Aboriginal people—by giving their children Christian education, teaching English (or French), taking them from their family environments and replacing their values with European values. Part of the plan was to train them to be farmers or housekeepers (but not so skilled as to be a threat to the outside economy (*Haig-Brown*, *p.67*). These schools were funded by the federal government. Further, the Indian Act included a clause that attendance was mandatory and failure to comply could result in fines or imprisonment of the parents.

During their schooling, students often experienced a variety of abuses inflicted in part from the racist values of society at the time and from the people who administered the schools.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended a public inquiry to hold public hearings to document and investigate the origins and effects of residential schools policies and practices; and to recommend remedial action such as apologies, compensation of communities and funding for treatment for affected individuals and their families.

Source: Residential School Update, AFN Health Secretariat, March 1998, p. 4



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QUESTION #2

WHAT WAS THE AIM OF THE CHURCHES INVOLVED IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS?

Four churches were involved in the operation of residential schools from Indian children: various orders of the Roman Catholic Church; the Church of England (or Anglican Church); the Methodist (or United) Church; and the Presbyterian Church. An estimated 100, 000 to 150, 000 Aboriginal children attended residential schools fro a time, representing about 20% of the potential First Nation status population.

The Churches wished to spread the gospel, the help young people to survive in a world where the old ways of life seemed to be vanishing, such as the buffalo hunt. For example, the Oblates (order of the Roman Catholic Church) sought "the development of a child's character in accordance with the concept of Christian education". (*Haig-Brown*, p. 57) All the Churches wished to evangelize—bring Christian gospel to Aboriginal people. Sometimes this was done in conjunction with Native spirituality—usually it was at the expense of Native traditions.

However, whatever the good intentions of the Churches involved, they now admit that the consequences were tragic for First Nations people. The good intentions could not hide the injustice of the system. During the time they operated residential schools, the Churches explicitly supported the federal government's assimilation goals in running the schools. Government paid for capital expenditures and staff salaries through operating grants; the Churches had responsibility for the day to day atmosphere and school activities. After 1969, the Churches withdrew from running the schools and control passed to the federal government and individual Bands.

Source: Residential School Update, AFN Health Secretariat, March 1998, p. 4



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QUESTION #3

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE EFFECTS OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLING ON FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE?

The effects of residential schools have been far-reaching and diverse. Some commentators consider the residential schools an instrument of genocide. Every First Nations groups has suffered a disintegration of political and social institutions, of culture, language, religion and the economic existence. The destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity and even the lives of First Nations individuals has been felt by successive generations and in very sector of First Nations societies.

The essence of genocide is a purposeful intent to destroy a group out of existence. In many ways, this intention was achieved. Scores of First Nations children died from disease while in the care of residential schools; others were emotionally and spiritually destroyed by the harsh discipline and living conditions. Confinement, humiliations, lack of privacy, physical, sexual and psychological abuses resulted in dislocation, loss of pride and self-respect, and loss of identity within family, community and nation.

We speak of multi-generational effects. The grievous levels of suicide, alcoholism, solvent abuse and family violence in some First Nations communities are attributed to the lingering effects of residential schools. This includes the psychological pain which could not be mentioned; the sufferings which could not be named, but which ripple through the lives of survivors and children.

The schools alienated Aboriginal people from their culture by separating children from their families, forbidding them to speak their languages or to honour their traditions. This has taken a toll on succeeding generations. For example, one generation of children were punished for speaking their languages; when they became parents, they did not teach their children their native tongue, to protect them; the third generation was denied an opportunity to learn their languages, cultures, traditions and is now attempting to recover that knowledge.

It is widely believed that those who attended residential schools lost their ability to parent, and their identity as Aboriginal people. This psychological would has been passed on to subsequent generations of children. The long term cumulative effects of the schooling upon those who suffered has been termed "residential school syndrome".

Source: Residential School Update, AFN Health Secretariat, March 1998, p. 4

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QUESTION #4

WHY WERE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS HARMFUL?

Not all residential school experiences produced unhappy or tragic experiences and we therefore must be cautious about over generalizing. However, supported by a broad government policy of assimilation, residential schooling had detrimental effects on the overall health and well being of First Nations.

Residential schools "were the product of a particular era, an era where Indians and Inuit were not highly valued by the nonnative community. The schools were a product of the time when the relationship was not healthy. The attitude among those who put together the schooling program was essentially that the Indian people were to be eliminated.

While outright extermination was considered inhuman by the Churches and Government of the day, they believed the Indians could be "civilized". The goal was to encourage them to give up their traditions. These would be replaced with values to assist them to blend in with the newly-formed Canadian society. These values included formal schooling, Christianity and work experiences.

The way in which these values were transmitted was dramatically different from the way First Nations children were educated traditionally. The book replaced the spoken word; strangers from another culture replaced family, elders and community members as teachers; learning through memorization of text replaced learning through observation and by example. Education was no longer a lifelong, organic process or the responsibility of the entire community. In fact, the community was portrayed by the new teachers as backward, ignorant and useless to the children.

Many, many people testified to the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples that after residential school, they experienced confusion about their identity and that afterwards they could fit into neither Native or mainstream society. Some parents began to drink after their children were in residential schools (Haig-Brown, 1957-63 period, p. 84)

Source: Residential School Update, AFN Health Secretariat, March 1998, p. 4



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QUESTION #5

WAS THE DISCIPLINE AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS ANY DIFFERENT THAN AT SCHOOLS FOR NON-ABORIGINALS?

Views about discipline and punishment were a lot different back then. According to historians, the discipline at residential schools was different in severity and purpose from that of the mainstream schools during that period.

Historians suggest that discipline was more harsh in residential schools than at their counterparts. For example, Professor J.R. Miller, an authority on the subject of residential schools, told a meeting for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in 1991, "There was a great deal of physical abuse. There was a use of things which would not have been accepted in Euro-Canadian institutions at the time," these methods included isolation cells, severe floggings and whippings, and public humiliation. (Miller, 1991 address, p. 25)

There was also a great difference in how Aboriginal children and their families regarded what was happening. Physical discipline and punishment was accepted by the mainstream population at the time. The idea that a child could be hit with a ruler on the palm of the hand from not knowing an answer at school was not usually challenged. Mainstream child rearing allowed for spanking and strapping as routine methods used by parents and teachers to punish disobedient, "lazy" and uncooperative children—boys more so than girls.

However, First Nations child-rearing practices did not condone the use of physical violence with children. Many European observers commented on the lack of force used with children and lack of coercion used by the parents. To European eyes, Aboriginal children "ran wild", since they were not expected to be silent and still but to run and play, to explore their environment and use their bodies.

Traditional parenting methods used such tools as teasing, modeling good behaviour and ignoring naughty behaviour, putting older siblings in charge of younger ones, and using storytelling to instruct. Above all was the principle of non-interference.

These different cultural expectations meant that a non-Native child accepted that his or her parents, teachers and other guardians would use physical force if deemed necessary, and discipline was unpleasant part of living under adult authority. For Aboriginal children, coercive and violent action by adults would likely be seen as abusive and terrifying, being outside their normal experiences and expectations. (Miller, 1991, p. 24)



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QUESTION #5 continued...

Routine stories of bad food, cold dormitories, head shavings upon admission to schools and issuing of uniforms are reported by residential school students. Sometimes it seemed that punishment and mistreatment might more accurately be called torture as were now understand it to be; for example, sticking needles in the tongues of children who spoke their Native languages must be considered as excessive and cruel. Reports of beatings inflicted on children who attempted to run away were considered excessive even at the time by school inspectors and non-Native neighbours.

Source: Residential School Update, AFN Health Secretariat, March 1998, p. 4

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QUESTION #6

WHAT ABOUT THE STUDENTS WITH GOOD EXPERIENCES?

We need to be aware that not every residential school was run by sadist and child molesters. Much depended on the school administrator. He or she set the tone in terms of how the students were treated, as souls to be Christianized, as hands to work in the school machine shops, as minds to be educated. Some administrators encouraged their staff to learn Native languages, allowed and accommodated parental visits, provided recreation, and fought for more money for better food and shelter. Others were indifferent, unprepared to be put in charge of children, and some were sadists.

Some students asked to be sent to residential school and are grateful for the education they received. However, nearly every community is aware of children who did not have good experiences. These had a ripple effect on families and communities.

Further, beyond the question of individual abuse is the underlying purpose of residential schools, which was to assimilate First Nations people into mainstream society by discouraging their languages, spirituality, and cultural practices. The corroded the structures of First Nations and the self-esteem of First Nations families.

Source: Residential School Update, AFN Health Secretariat, March 1998, p. 4



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		DID YOU KN	NOW?		
1.	From 1845 to 1969, the Canad	lian government	sought to assimilate Aboriginal People.		
		True	False		
2.	During school, students often experienced a variety of abuses.				
		True	False		
3.	There were 6 Churches involved in the operation of residential schools for Aboriginal				
	children.	True	False		
4.	Name the churches that were	involved in resid	ential schooling.		
5.	Churches never admitted that Aboriginal people.	the consequence	s of the residential schools were tragic for		
		True	False		
6.	Residential schools alienated Aboriginal people from their culture, language & traditions.				
		True	False		
7.	All residential school experien	ices produced un	happy or tragic experiences.		
		True	False		
8.			urage children to give up their traditions and istianity and work experiences.		
		True	False		
9.	Traditional Aboriginal child-rewith children.	lid not condone the use of physical violence			
		True	False		
10.	Some Aboriginal students askeducation that they received.	ed to be sent to re	esidential school and are grateful for the		
		True	False		



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TEACHER MASTER COPY QUIZ ANSWERS

1. True

DID YOU KNOW?

2.	True
3.	False [4 Churches involved]
4.	The Roman Catholic Church, Church of England (Anglican), Methodist (United) Church, Presbyterian Church.
5.	False [whatever the good intentions of the churches involved, they now admit that the consequences were tragic for Aboriginal People.
6.	True
7.	False [not all residential school experiences produced unhappy or tragic experiences and we therefore must be cautious about generalizing.
8.	True
9.	True
10.	True