

Indigenous children in residential schools



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In residential schools student deaths were so common, architects designing the schools actually planned for cemeteries to be incorporated into the design of the schools. Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent concerning the indigenous affairs, noted that, " it is quite within the mark to say that fifty per cent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education.[1]The indigenous community has been discriminated against for years. Residential schools were put in place to assimilate the indigenous people into the Canadian culture. Children were stripped of their families and their native heritage just so they would fit into society. They were made to feel ashamed of their culture and heritage. Residential schools were a culture genocide through assimilation.

Many of the indigenous children were taken advantage of. The nuns and priests who ran the schools would constantly abuse the children. If the children didn't obey, they would be beaten. Some of these children were also raped by the nuns and priests as well. Due to the abuse and neglect these children were put through many couldn't take it anymore and killed themselves. There are many stories of children killing themselves. There is one story of one girl who filled up her pockets up with rocks and walked to the bottom of a river near her residential school and drowned herself, she was 12[2]. Many children tried to run away but were either caught or died due to starvation or freezing to death. The schools were put in place to assimilate the indigenous people into the Canadian culture. Indigenous children were stripped from their families and taken to schools in remote places. In these schools the children weren't allowed to speak their native language or perform any of their native traditions. Life in the residential

school was horrible, indigenous children were taken from their families and forced to live in conditions that included physical and sexual abuse. Due to these harsh conditions, most children committed suicide as a means of escape.

The schools were first put in place to both educate and covert the indigenous youth into the Canadian culture. The indigenous community wasn't adapting to the modern-day culture so the government decided to put in these schools to help them adapt. These children were removed from their homes and parents, separated from some of their siblings and forbidden to speak their native language. When they wrote letters home to their parents it had to be in English, which many of the parents couldn't understand. If the children were caught speaking their native language, then they would face consequences such as getting their tongue burned.[3]The attempt to assimilate children began as soon as they got to the schools. Their hair was cut and they were stripped of their clothes, and given new uniforms. Everything was taken away from the children some were even given new names. When they were finally able to return home, many weren't wanted back home. After living in the residential schools and losing their native language and culture, many of the children struggled transitioning back to their home land. They forgot their way of life; native traditions or native language. Due to the abuse and neglect experienced in the schools, many coped with this by turning to alcohol and drugs. At this time there was little support for these addictions. Many died shortly after they returned due to drug overdose or alcohol. Residential schools have had a lasting negative effect on the Indigenous culture due to the devastating conditions that

existed there. This has also proven to be a rippling effect that has affected many generations since. Returning children could not adjust to their native culture due to addictions and mental health issues and would often pass these behaviors onto their own children.

The indigenous community were seen as not moving as fast a society was, so the youth were put into schools to try to help them get on the same level as everyone else. These were government run schools. To this day we are trying to help the indigenous community and help those who were put into the residential school system. The government set aside 1.9 million dollars to give to those who were affected by the residential school system. The government gave each family who had a family member in the residential school system money. \$10,000 is just a starting point, for every year after the first, survivors will get an additional \$3,000.[4] Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently apologized on behalf of the country to the Indigenous people for the treatment of their people. A heartfelt apology delivered to hundreds of former students and their families. "Saying that we are sorry today is not enough. It will not undo the harm that was done to you. It will not bring back the languages and traditions you lost. It will not take away the isolation and vulnerability you felt when you separated from your families, communities and cultures," the Prime Minister said. "We share this burden with you by fully accepting our responsibilities—and our failings—as a government and as a country." [5] The Canadian government has made many attempts to support the indigenous community for the treatment that their people experienced throughout their time in the Residential schools.

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School schools were a cultural genocide through assimilation. In order for the indigenous communities to heal, the Canadian population needs to be informed about what happened in the residential schools. Therefore, the most important action that can be taken by Canadian individuals is to acknowledge what happened to the Aboriginal people during the residential schools. The Canadian government has made many attempts to support the indigenous community for the treatment that their people experienced throughout their time in the Residential schools. Examples include a public apology and financial aid. Although appreciated, the Indigenous people will never forget the torment they went through. Effects on the culture and the government response are all examples of how the Residential Schools were a cultural genocide through assimilation. By educating the Canadian people about life in the Residential schools, people will feel empathy for this community and therefore support them and ensure history does not repeat itself.

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[1]National Shame.” At internet: [pressprogress. ca.](http://pressprogress.ca) June 2, 2015

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[5]Catherine-mcintyre” Justin Trudeau apology” At internet: [www. macleans. ca,](http://www.macleans.ca) November 24, 2017