

Excerpt of Garnet Angecone (Anishinabe)

Pelican IRS (Ontario)

Separation: The residential school years (Pg. 15-16)

Shortly after my dad was well again, I was forced to go to the Pelican Indian Residential School where Harry was already a student. I attended the residential school and lived in the school dormitories until 1969. My older brother was there until 1968. My sister Florence was forced to go in 1968, and eventually my younger brothers Ronald and Gordon followed. Although I saw my brothers, I had no contact with my little sister because boys and girls were kept separate.

My father had attended this same residential school as a little boy. He was the ninth student enrolled when the school opened in 1927. He attended for five years. When he talked about it, he talked only about working on the farm. The 'students' were actually unpaid farm laborers – there was very little classroom teaching and instruction of any kind except, perhaps, for whatever religious teaching the children received when forced to attend chapel.

When I attended Pelican Indian Residential School in the mid-1960s there were about 250 of us students ranging in age from six to twelve.

Excerpt from Jose Amaujaq Kusugak (Inuit)

Chesterfield Inlet Residential School (Northwest Territories)

(Pg. 104)

Michael, my older brother, was already going to residential school in Chesterfield Inlet when I really started to remember things. There is little I do not remember after he came home after his first year. It was about the same time that my father also came home after spending time at a sanatorium in Manitoba for tuberculosis. They both had amazing stories from the south. From his experience down there, my father told us of plugging wires or ropes into walls to make lights work, of record players and of other implements. He also spoke of tokens people had in their pockets and that they could trade these tokens at any store. Michael told us of the language he was learning in school and of the huge buildings he shared with many other Inuit of many different dialects.

The school (Pg. 106-107)

Entering "the hostel", it was impossible to ignore all your senses. Strange voices and languages could be heard in the distance, strange new smells permeated the air at the doorway, and everything was painted in white, in contrast to the people in black. My brother and I were immediately separated, as we were seemingly separated by size. Now I was alone, alone as I had never been before. A cry was in my throat, but being there with other children my size, it was not the right thing to do. I did not cry and did as little as possible to attract the sisters' attention. We were taken to the kitchen and mess hall and then given tea and "Roman Catholic" biscuits. In Repulse Bay, Roman Catholic biscuits were rare so we always ate

them slowly to see who would have the last enviable mouthful. But in my new world, “vite!” was the word being repeated. One of the nuns would put her hand under the childrens’ chins, making them chew faster and repeating this word, “vite, vite!” From that moment on, vite became a normal word, as we were to do most things in a hurry. When we did not vite, we were half-lifted by the ear and made to vite.

Abuse (Pg. 111)

One day I heard there was “abuse” at the school. It reminded me of my mother, who had spent time at a nun convent, telling us before we left for the residential school that we should never be touched on certain parts of our body. I guess she knew “things” about certain priests or brothers. Later on, her words served me well, and, apparently, my older brother, as many of the victims were terribly sexually abused. (I only learned of this as an adult after the residential schools issue started coming out.) These were some of the boys I went to school with, and they never shared any of this as they were kept silent with threats. One of them told me they were made to sit side-by-side naked while they were waiting to be taken to the brother’s bed to service him one-by-one. When he was done, he would have to tell the next boy it was his turn, and so on.

I have not heard these horrible stories about nuns except from one boy, who I do not believe as he lied about too many things. He claims to have been sexually abused by nuns, but I think he is just ashamed to admit it was from the same brother.

Excerpt from Rita Flamand (Metis)

Christ the King School (Manitoba)

(Pg. 121)

My mother was Metis and the only reason she was in the residential school was to fill up the quota while they were busy rounding up Treaty Indian children from the north to fill up the school. In the meantime, Metis children would do. After six or seven years in the residential school, my mother could barely write her own name. It always bothered her that she could not read or write. My dad would just hold that over her. After all, he went up to grade 4. She would ask him to teach her to read and write, and inevitably, their sessions would end in a fight with mom accusing dad of teasing and laughing at her. She wanted her children to have the education she never had. Little did she know that her children and grandchildren, second and third generation, would suffer some of the same fate with the priest and nuns, although we went to a Catholic day school.

School (Pg. 124)

We lived a mile from the school. It was hard trudging to school through the high snow in wintertime and in water in the spring. I was six when I started school. I could not speak English. I only spoke Michif. The schoolroom was overflowing with kids – there were kids standing all around the room. Our teacher was a young Ukrainian man. All I remember was us kids standing around him while he was doing a strange dance called the Klomeika. His long legs were flying off the floor. We were used to juggling, but this was a new twist.

Day School (Pg. 125)

When I went back the following year, there was a change in our school. It was now called Christ the King School, and the nuns from the residential school were in charge. We were not allowed to speak our language. Everything was in English. I learned two languages in school, English in the schoolroom and Saulteaux out in the schoolyard. A quarter of us kids spoke Michif and the rest spoke Saulteaux. I understood some Saulteaux words because my mom and my kohkum used to speak Saulteaux when they did not want us to understand something. English was totally alien, but coming from a day school, we did not lose out language completely because we spoke it at home in the evenings.

The nuns would arrive by horse and buggy every morning with their supplies and lunch for the day. They would start warming up their food at around 1130am. They would fry potatoes in butter. Oh, how that used to smell so good! By the time we went home for our lunch or ate it in the corner at school, it was hard to swallow bannock and lard or the morning's cold porridge with that smell lingering in your nose. The priests were always there having lunch with the nuns. After lunch, a priest would play with us and take us girls to the mission on the pretense of helping him in the Shomoo Hall. There, he would grab and touch us inappropriately. I did not feel right, but he was like God after all. That is how holy we thought they were.

Excerpt from Richard Wagamese (Ojibway)

Son of Residential School Survivors (Ontario)

(Pg. 154.)

All the members of my family attended residential school. They returned to the land bearing psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical burdens that haunted them. Even my mother, despite staunch declarations that she had learned good things there (finding Jesus, learning to keep a house, the gospel), carried wounds she could not voice. Each of them had experienced an institution that tried to scrape the Indian off of their insides, and they came back to the bush and river raw, sore, and aching. The pain they bore was invisible and unspoken.

For a time, the proximity of my family to the land acted as a balm. Then, slowly and irrevocably, the spectre that followed them back from the schools began to assert its presence and shout for space around the communal fire. When the vitriolic stew of unspoken words, feelings and memories of their great dislocation, hurt and isolation began to bubble and churn within them, they discovered that alcohol could numb them from it. And we ceased to be a family.

(Pg. 155-157)

When I was a toddler, my left arm and shoulder were smashed. Left untreated, my arm hung backwards in its joint and, over time, it atrophied and withered. My siblings and I endured great tides of violence and abuse from the drunken adults. We were beaten, nearly drowned, and terrorized. We took to hiding in the bush and waiting until the shouting, cursing, and drinking died away. Those nights were cold and terrifying. In the dim light of dawn, the eldest of us would sneak back into camp to get food and blankets.

In the mid-winter of 1958, when I was almost three, the adults left my two brothers, sister and me alone in the bush camp across the bay from the tiny railroad town of Minaki. It was February. The wind was blowing bitterly and the firewood ran out at the same time as the food. They were gone for days, drinking sixty miles away in Kenora. When it became apparent that we would freeze to death without wood, my eldest sister and brother hauled my brother, Charles, and me across the bay on a sled piled with furs.

They pulled us across that ice in a raging snowstorm. We huddled in the furs on the leeward side of the railway depot, cold, hungry and crying. A passing Ontario provincial policeman found us and took us to the children's aid society. I would not see my mother or my extended family again for 21 years.

I lived in two foster homes until I was adopted at age nine. I left my home at age sixteen; I ran for my safety, my security and my sanity. The seven years I spent in that adopted home were filled with beatings, mental and emotional abuse, and a complete dislocation from anything Indian or Ojibwa. I was permitted only the strict Presbyterian ethic of that household. It was as much and institutional kidnapping as a residential school.

For years I lived on the street or in prison. I became a drug user and an alcoholic. I drifted through unfulfilled relationships. I was haunted by fears and memories. I carried the residual trauma of my

toddler years and the seven years in my adopted home. This caused me to experience post-traumatic stress disorder, which severely affected the way I lived my life and the choices I would make.

The truth of my life is that I am an intergenerational victim of residential schools. Everything I endured until I found healing was as a result of the effects of those schools. I did not hug my mother until I was 25. I did not utter my first Ojibwa word or set foot on my traditional territory until I was twenty-six. I did not know that I had a family, a history, a culture, a source for spirituality a cosmology, or a traditional way of living. I had no awareness that I belonged somewhere. I grew up ashamed of my Native identity and the fact that I knew nothing without it. I was angry that there was no one to tell me who I was or where I had come from.

Excerpt from Anglican Church Apology

My Brothers and Sisters:

Together here with you I have listened as you have told your stories of the residential schools.

I have heard the voices that have spoken of pain and hurt experienced in the schools, and of the scars which endure to this day.

I have felt shame and humiliation as I have heard of suffering inflicted by my people, and as I think of the part our church played in that suffering.

I am deeply conscious of the sacredness of the stories that you have told and I hold in the highest honour those who have told them.

I have heard with admiration the stories of people and communities who have worked at healing, and I am aware of how much healing is needed.

I also know that I am in need of healing, and my own people are in need of healing, and our church is in need of healing. Without that healing, we will continue the same attitudes that have done such damage in the past.

I also know that healing takes a long time, both for people and for communities.

I also know that it is God who heals, and that God can begin to heal when we open ourselves, our wounds, our failures and our shame to God. I want to take one step along that path here and now.

I accept and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God.

I am sorry, more than I can say, that we were part of a system which took you and your children from home and family.

I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity.

I am sorry, more than I can say, that in our schools so many were abused physically, sexually, culturally and emotionally.

On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I present our apology.

I do this at the desire of those in the Church like the National Executive Council, who know some of your stories and have asked me to apologize.

I do this in the name of many who do not know these stories.

And I do this even though there are those in the church who cannot accept the fact that these things were done in our name.

Statement of Apology



Statement of Apology – to former students of Indian Residential Schools

On Wednesday June 11, 2008 at 3:00 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time), the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, made a Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools, on behalf of the Government of Canada.

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools 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.

One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Most schools were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches. The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system.

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever prevail again. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey. The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

Nous le regrettons
We are sorry
Nimitataynan
Niminchinowesamin
Mamiattugut

In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities, and Aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership.

A cornerstone of the Settlement Agreement is the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together

with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

On behalf of the Government of Canada
The Right Honourable Stephen Harper,

Prime Minister of Canada

Ideally students should get the following key points out of the readings:

- Not every student had a bad experience at IRS
- Many students were physically, sexually, or emotionally abused or neglected
- A small portion of students died
- Every student who attended the schools suffered from loss of culture, heritage and language
- IRS did not provide students with a quality secular education
- Many survivors of IRS's had trouble later on in life getting and keeping a job, having healthy relationships, raising children properly, and battling substance abuse.
- Children and grandchildren raised by IRS survivors or the children of IRS survivors have similarly suffered from trouble later on in life getting and keeping a job, having healthy relationships, raising children properly, and battling substance abuse.
- Aboriginal languages and cultures are now significantly weaker and less-widespread.

Final Question for students:

In your opinion, why do you think it is important for all Canadians to learn about Residential Schools?