

THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.



Renee Nahanee, Audrey Rivers, and Lila Johnston
of the Squamish Nation
Photo: Ward Perrin, PNG

Truth and Reconciliation

Adapted from *The Vancouver Sun*

Level 3

What were residential schools?

Aboriginal children were taken away from their homes. They were forced to live at schools away from their families.

The schools were called Indian Residential Schools.

The children were not allowed to speak their language. They could not practice their culture and traditions. They were often abused and underfed.

Over 150,000 Aboriginal children went to residential schools. The children who attended these schools are called 'survivors'.

Families and communities were left with no children to teach and nurture. The children did not have the support or guidance of loving parents.

In 1996 the last residential school closed.

Churches operated the schools. They have said they are sorry for their treatment of the children.

In 2008, Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, apologized for all Canadians.



Aboriginal children at Residential School
Photo: Library and Archives Canada, PA-185530

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St. Michael's Indian Residential School, Alert Bay, BC
Photo: D-Stanley / CC, Flickr

What is Truth and Reconciliation?

Truth and Reconciliation is a process for healing. It's also a process for moving ahead.

The word 'reconciliation' means to make better relationships.

"It's an opportunity for all of us to come together and start on a new path of hope for the future," said Chief Wilton Littlechild.

The process involves:

- survivors telling about their experience in the Indian Residential schools
- witnesses listening and re-telling the stories
- everyone celebrating Aboriginal heritage

How will this be done?

Events are being held across the country. They have already happened in Manitoba, Inuvik, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Quebec. In September British Columbia hosted a week-long event.

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"We are calling on you as survivors to talk about the past. We are making you look backwards but it is necessary if we are going to turn around and look into the future."

Renee Nahanee, a representative of the Catholic Church

Links available on the website:

Residential School Survivor Margaret Commodore speaks about physical and sexual abuse on this video.

Find out more about the Truth and Reconciliation Events in BC.

Learn more about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Visit the *Westcoast Reader* website at:
www.thewestcoastreader.com

Article search term: "Truth and Reconciliation"

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Reading Exercise

Truth and Reconciliation

Choose the right word and put it in the blank.

1. Aboriginal children were forced to attend _____ schools.
2. _____ tell about their experience in the Indian Residential Schools.
3. The churches that operated the schools have _____ for their treatment of the children.
4. Truth and _____ is a process for healing.
5. _____ listen and re-tell the stories
6. Over 150,000 _____ children went to residential schools.

Choose from these words.

reconciliation

survivors

apologized

witnesses

residential

Aboriginal

(... answer key on page 4)

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Answer key

Truth and Reconciliation

1. Aboriginal children were forced to attend residential schools.
2. Survivors tell about their experience in the Indian Residential schools.
3. The churches that operated the schools have apologized for their treatment of the children.
4. Truth and Reconciliation is a process for healing
5. Witnesses listen and re-tell the stories.
6. Over 150,000 Aboriginal children were placed in residential schools.