

MÉTIS HISTORY • HISTORY OF OPPRESSION • THE MÉTIS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Learning goal: Students will understand the legacy that the Residential School experience has had on Métis children, particularly those who survived, and the residual effects that this experience has caused to individuals as well as to Métis culture and traditions.

Suggested timeline: 2–3 x 75–minute periods

Subjects: Canadian History, Law, Visual Arts, Civics, English

Prior to introducing this topic, it will be necessary to let students know that the topic of Residential Schools can be very difficult for many students. Be sure to inform your school's Student Services and Indigenous Education Workers that you are embarking on the topic of Residential Schools.

irsss.ca

WARNING NOTE: Some information detailed on our website may stir up or trigger unpleasant feelings or thoughts. The Indian Residential School Survivors Society encourages you to take time to care for your Mental and Emotional wellbeing. Please contact “The Indian Residential School Survivors Society” toll-free 1.800.721.0066 or 24hr Crises Line 1.866.925.4419 if you require further emotional support or assistance.

BACKGROUND NOTE: Métis children attended both federal residential and day schools, and provincial residential and day schools. They would have suffered through many of the same experiences in the provincial schools as compared to the federal schools. However, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC) did not have a mandate to gather the stories of the Métis children who attended provincial schools.

Lesson opener

See it:

“The existing records make it impossible to say how many Métis children attended residential school. But they did attend almost every residential school discussed in this report at some point. They would have undergone the same experiences—the high death rates, limited diets, crowded and unsanitary housing, harsh discipline, heavy workloads, neglect, and abuse—described in the other volumes of this history.”

Excerpt from “The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 3,” p. 11.

“Prior to the 1800s, few opportunities for formal European-based education were available for Métis children. Treaty provisions for education did not include these children who were considered “halfbreeds” and not Indians. It wasn't until the Northwest Half-breed Claims Royal Commission of 1885 that the federal government addressed the issue of Métis education. The Catholic church, already a strong presence in Métis society, began instructing Métis children in the Red River area of Manitoba in the 1800s. Despite these efforts, many Métis parents struggled to find schools that would accept their children and would often have to pay tuition for their education.

Attendance at residential school, where the use of Aboriginal languages was prohibited, resulted in the erosion of an integral part of Métis culture. Residential schools profoundly affected Métis communities, a fact often overlooked in the telling of the history of residential schools in Canada.”

Excerpt from Legacy of Hope Foundation “Métis and Inuit Children at Residential Schools”

“The Métis experience of residential schooling has been overlooked for too long. It is important to recognize that Métis children attended residential schools both in southern and northern Canada. Federal government policy on Métis attendance was never consistent or consistently applied. Even during those periods in which the federal government sought to ban Métis children from the schools, church leaders continued to recruit Métis students. Because provincial governments and school boards were often unwilling to build schools in Métis communities or to allow Métis students to attend public schools, Métis parents who wished to have their children educated often had no choice but to send them to residential school.... From the 1950s onwards, many Métis children attended residential schools that were operated by provincial governments in northern and remote areas. The student experience would have varied according to time and place, as it did for all students who attended the schools. There is no denying that the harm done to the children, their parents, and the Métis community was substantial. It is an ongoing shame that this damage has not been addressed and rectified.”

Excerpt from “The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 3,” p. 55.

“As provincial governments slowly began to provide increased educational services to Métis students after the Second World War, Métis children lived in residences and residential schools that were either run or funded by provincial governments. The Métis experience is an important reminder that the impact of residential schools extends beyond the formal residential school program that Indian Affairs operated. The history of these provincial schools and the experiences of Métis students in these schools remain to be written.”

Excerpt from “The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 3,” p. 11.

Essential Reading:

Canada’s Residential Schools: The Métis Experience

The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 3

nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Volume_3_M%C3%A9tis_English_Web.pdf

Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Activity #1

Introduce the topic of Residential Schools by showing students the Legacy of Hope Timeline;

forgottenmetis.ca/en/timeline/#0.

Activity #2

Watch the video “Nobody’s Children”(22:19) produced by YourEye Productions for the Métis National Council [youtube.com/watch?v=OJgHKbrm_78](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJgHKbrm_78). Have the students use the BLM XXX School Experiences Venn Diagram that has the “Métis Residential School Experience” in one circle and “My School Experience” in the other circle. Where the two intersect, have students list what school experiences that both the Métis students and themselves have in common. In the section of the Venn Diagram where the two circles do not intersect, list the experiences that are unique to the Métis students in that circle and their own experiences that are different from the Métis students in the other.

Activity #3

After watching the video and completing the School Experiences Venn Diagram, take a look at two pieces of art created by Métis artist Christi Belcourt, to acknowledge the experience of Métis (as well as First Nation and Inuit) children in Residential Schools.

The first is a painting entitled “This is How We Survived” christibelcourt.com/Gallery/gallery2000page1aDT.html (for an enlarged version) and christibelcourt.com/Gallery/gallery2000page1a.html (for a description of the painting). The second is a stained glass window commissioned by the Government of Canada, as one of the windows in the House of Commons, entitled “Giniigaaniimenaaning (Looking Ahead)” christibelcourt.com/stained-glass/giniigaaniimenaaning_complete (for an enlarged version) and christibelcourt.com/stained-glass (for a written description) and go to youtube.com/watch?v=k9i4TzBCzRw (for a verbal description of ‘Giniigaaniimenaaning’)

Activity #4

Read the CBC article “Building a sense of residential school experiences, brick by brick” cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/building-a-sense-of-residential-school-experiences-brick-by-brick-1.2590683 and watch the short imbedded interview of Cree-Métis artist, Dawn Marie Marchand. Explain the significance of the “Brick by Brick” exhibit.

Strategy/Lesson activity

Feel it:

After viewing the videos and taking a look at artwork that acknowledges the Residential School experience for Métis children, have the students share their reactions in a small group or larger group setting.

Know it:

Discuss and expand on the statement, ‘Métis were caught between two worlds.’ Which government had responsibility for the education of Métis children—Federal or Provincial? How were Métis children and families impacted by the educational gaps created by the federal and provincial governments? How were the experiences of Métis children in provincially run residential or day schools similar to the Métis experiences in federally run residential or day schools (e.g., abuse; erosion of identity, culture, language and pride; Eurocentric version of history; etc.)? How did the threat of Métis children having to go to residential school impact Métis identity, culture, language and pride? How do unresolved issues of past systemic oppression impact First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples today? How is Canada impacted in the long run when systemic oppression is strategically directed at specific groups, or allowed to happen? How can systemic oppression be prevented from happening in the future? What is an apology? What is reconciliation? What is the difference between an apology and reconciliation? Compare the two concepts using a Venn diagram.

Before forming learning teams, show students these two short videos that provide a good introduction to “Every Child Matters” and “September 30, Orange Shirt Day” youtube.com/watch?v=sZ4cq05kZo and youtube.com/watch?v=sVWiaYMuuxk. In learning teams, discuss the concept “Every Child Matters” as it relates to Residential Schools. Providing chart paper or a computer application, ask students to create a “word web” or “wordle” (word cloud) that has all of the words associated with Truth and Reconciliation for the Métis children who survived Residential School.

(Note: Orange Shirt Day originates with Phyllis Webstadt, a young First Nation girl, who wore an orange shirt to her first day of Residential School).

Assessment

Do it:

Activity 1:

Students have a choice of creating one of three different visual representations of the Métis Residential School Experience. They can do one of the following to depict their reaction to the Métis Residential School Experience:

- Create a “stained glass” design using an online Stained Glass Template of their choosing (see Christi Belcourt’s example)
- Create a “brick by brick” collage (see Dawn Marie Marchand’s example)
- Design a “t-shirt logo” using BLM XXX to promote “Every Child Matters.”

Activity 2:

Create a mission statement, and/or a personal commitment letter, regarding reconciliation.

Extension

Have a Métis Residential School Survivor come in and speak to the class. Have students prepare inquiry-based questions in advance. Pre-screen the questions.

Host a school-wide “Every Child Matters” Orange T-Shirt Day every September 30.

More information can be found at orangeshirtday.weebly.com or at nisgaanation.ca/news/orange-shirt-day-honour-and-support-residential-school-survivors

Write a letter to your local Member of Parliament, to the Government of Canada, and to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, petitioning that each year, September 30, be declared “Orange Shirt Day” to acknowledge the victims and survivors of Residential Schools.

Read the short excerpt “They taught her” from I knew two Métis Women, written by Gregory Scofield, found in section 3 of 5 in Legacy of Hope Foundation—Forgotten Métis—Exhibition (5 exhibits) forgottenmetis.ca/en/exhibition. Have students create their own short poem in reaction to what they have learned about the Métis experience in Residential Schools.

Suggested Resources:

Aboriginal Healing Foundation—Publications
ahf.ca/publications

The Healing Foundation “Métis Experience and History in Residential Schools in Canada” (2006)
ahf.ca/downloads/metiseweb.pdf

Legacy of Hope Foundation—Forgotten: The Métis Residential School Experience
legacyofhope.ca/project/forgotten-metis

Forgotten: The Métis Residential School Experience—Booklet
legacyofhope.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Forgotten-booklet_web.pdf

Forgotten: The Métis Residential School Experience—Powerpoint of Workshop Manual
legacyofhope.ca/education

Legacy of Hope—Forgotten Métis Home
forgottenmetis.ca

Legacy of Hope Foundation—Forgotten Métis—Exhibition (5 exhibits)
forgottenmetis.ca/en/exhibition

Legacy of Hope Foundation—Forgotten Métis—Timeline
forgottenmetis.ca/en/timeline/#0

Legacy of Hope Foundation—Forgotten Métis—Resources
forgottenmetis.ca/en/resources

This is How We Survived—Painting by Christi Belcourt
christibelcourt.com/Gallery/gallery2000page1a.html

Forgotten Métis—Interactive App by Tristan Interactive
itunes.apple.com/us/app/forgotten-metis/id903455704?ls=1&mt=8

Métis National Council “Nobody’s Children” (Slideshow in PDF)
metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Nobodys-children-Clem-March-28-2012.pdf

Métis National Council “Nobody’s Children: A Métis Nation Residential School Dialogue” PDF
metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/MNC-Nobodys-Children-Program.pdf

Métis National Council “Nobody’s Children: A Métis Nation Residential School Dialogue Proceedings” PDF
metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Minutesfinal-Metis-Nation-Residential-School-Dialogue-Proceedings-Mar-28-29-2012.pdf

Métis National Council “Nobody’s Children” Video (22:19) Produced by YourEye Productions
youtube.com/watch?v=OJgHKbrm_78

Métis Reaction to Prime Minister Harper’s Apology
youtube.com/watch?v=TCYjsANfKG8

Indian Residential Schools Statement of Apology—Clément Chartier, President of Métis National Council
rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015712/1571590355296

Métis Nation Reminds Canadians that Thousands of Métis Residential School Survivors Remain Unacknowledged
metisnation.ca/index.php/news/metis-nation-reminds-canadians-that-thousands-of-metis-residential-school-survivors-remain-unacknowledged

Stained Glass Window in Parliament Commemorating the Legacy of the Indian Residential Schools
aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ-AI/STAGING/texte-text/sgw_sgwdc_print_1354719743708_eng.pdf

Giniigaaniimenaaning (Looking Ahead)
christibelcourt.com/stained-glass

Remembering the Past: A Window to the Future
youtube.com/watch?v=Hs7ycuc8Qk4&list=PLOC2FA9996A64C5B8&index=2&t=0s

Residential Schools window dedicated on Parliament Hill
cbc.ca/news/politics/residential-schools-window-dedicated-on-parliament-hill-1.1186013

Chrisit Belcourt, Artist Description of ‘Giniigaaniimenaaning’
youtube.com/watch?v=k9i4TzBCzRw

CBC “Building a sense of residential school experiences, brick by brick”
cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/building-a-sense-of-residential-school-experiences-brick-by-brick-1.2590683

Where are the Children—Métis Residential School Experience/Timeline
wherearethekids.ca/en/timeline/research

Speaking My Truth—A Métis Perspective on Truth and Reconciliation, by Tricia Logan
drc.usask.ca/projects/legal_aid/file/resource177-2c540414.pdf

Canada’s Residential Schools: The Métis Experience
The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 3
nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Volume_3_M%C3%A9tis_English_Web.pdf

Every Child Matters
orangeshirtday.weebly.com
orangeshirtday.org/resources-supplies.html
nisgaanation.ca/news/orange-shirt-day-honour-and-support-residential-school-survivors

Legacy of Hope est aussi disponible en français comme “Fondation autochtone de l’espérance; N’oublie pas le Métis”
noubliepaslesmetis.ca/fr/about

Métis Nation—Métis Residential and Day School Survivors Speak
metisnation.ca/index.php/news/metis-residential-and-day-school-survivors-speak

We Are Métis
youtube.com/watch?v=6bEGwt-Ghpo