

## Garnet's Journey: Historical Backgrounder

The information below is intended to support you as you teach *Garnet's Journey* in the classroom. It is by no means a complete history of residential schools, but it provides some detail on the topics that your students will explore along with Garnet's story.

### A History of Lac Seul First Nation

Lac Seul is located in north-western Ontario and is the second largest lake contained entirely within Ontario. Lac Seul is located approximately 38 kms north-west of Sioux Lookout.



Map source: "Lac Seul First Nation," *Teach For Canada*, accessed January 16, 2020, <https://teachforcanada.ca/en/community/lac-seul-first-nation/>

The Anishnaabe people have lived off the land in the area of Lac Seul for thousands of years. Historically, they lived in fishing camps and maintained trap lines throughout the region. Small communities or family groupings lived in the bay regions such as Kejick Bay, Keesic Bay, Whitefish Bay and Ningewance Bay. Garnet grew up in Ningewance Bay with the Angeconeb and the Ningewance families. Across the little bay lived the Quoquat and Bull families. There was also an original community at Frenchman's Head. In 1874, the Lac Seul Indian Reserve was created with the signing of Treaty 3. In 1930, Canada and Ontario flooded 11,000 acres of Lac Seul lands when it constructed a dam at Ear Falls. The area known as Kejick Bay became an island, permanently separating it from the mainland and splitting the community into two parts. Villages were ruined, and the culture fractured when people had to relocate.

Today, the Lac Seul reserve contains three settlements: Frenchmen's Head, Whitefish Bay and Kejick Bay. The general membership consists of about 2,700 people, two thirds of which live off-reserve. Garnet lives in Sioux Lookout with his family.<sup>1</sup>

For more information on the Lac Seul First Nation, visit their [website](#).

### Terminology

"Indigenous peoples" is the collective name for the original inhabitants of an area of land. This term is used by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and recognizes the unique and inherent rights that all Indigenous peoples in the world hold. The use of the plural "peoples" refers to the diversity and distinctiveness of different Indigenous groups and cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> "Lac Seul History: History of the Lac Seul Communities," *Lac Seul First Nation*, accessed August 2, 2019, <http://lacseul.firstnation.ca/>.

In Canada, the term “Indigenous” refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, the three groups that have lived here since time immemorial.

The term Aboriginal is also often used to describe Indigenous peoples in Canada, especially after it was used in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution in 1982. While it is still used and accepted, “Indigenous” is increasingly being used because it is internationally recognized.

First Nations peoples were incorrectly called “Indians” when European explorers first arrived in North America, as they thought they had reached Asia. This term is incorrect and is now considered disrespectful, although it does appear in many historical documents (including the legislation of the *Indian Act*, which was introduced in Canada in 1876). The term “First Nation” can be used to refer to a single group (e.g. the Lac Seul First Nation) or in a plural form to refer to many groups. The First Nations of Canada are very diverse, and distinct group names should be used whenever possible (e.g. Cree, Mi’kmaq, Nisga’a).

Inuit, an Inuktitut term that means “the people,” are the Indigenous people of the Arctic. “Inuit” is a plural noun that refers to a group of people, while the singular “Inuk” refers to one person. In Canada, their homeland is known as Inuit Nunangat and includes Nunavut, Inuvialuit (the Northwest Territories), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Labrador).

Métis peoples originated after European contact in northwestern North America. They have a unique and rich culture and history that is distinct from other Indigenous peoples and reflects their mixed heritage.

Garnet is Anishnaabe. Anishnaabeg, the plural of Anishnaabe, translates to “original people.” It refers to the collective identity of a number of peoples who speak closely related dialects of Anishnaabemowin, a language also referred to as Ojibwe. They are part of a complex and extensive social and cultural community. The traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg, Anishnaabewaki, includes the Great Lakes region, the upper Mississippi River valley, and the interior north of Lake Superior and south of Hudson Bay. European accounts of history have referred to Anishnaabeg peoples by several names, including Chippewa (an American mispronunciation of Ojibwe) and Algonquin (the French name for the linguistically linked Anishnaabe peoples).<sup>2</sup>

*For more information on terminology, see the following resources:*

- Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
- “Terminology,” *Indigenous Foundations*, <https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/terminology/>
- “Who are the Indigenous Peoples of Canada?” *Facing History and Ourselves*, <https://www.facinghistory.org/stolen-lives-indigenous-peoples-canada-and-indian-residential-schools/historical-background/who-are-indigenous-peoples-canada>.

## Treaties

In Canada, treaties are negotiated agreements in which Indigenous nations agree to share access to some of their traditional lands in return for payments or other promises from the Crown. Language barriers and a different understanding of relationships with the land often led to differences in understanding of these agreements. While settler Canadians historically saw treaties as a way to strip Indigenous title from most of the land in Canada, Indigenous peoples understand treaties as sacred covenants that confirm their rights to their territory and to self-governance. Treaties are constitutionally recognized and continue to be shaped in courts as rulings are made on treaty rights

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 29 - 68.

and how they should be interpreted. Treaty-making began when Europeans first arrived in North America, as they sought to form alliances and maintain peace with Indigenous peoples. Agreements were formed through written and oral agreements, through ceremonies, and through the exchange of symbolic gifts.

From 1871 to 1921, a series of 11 treaties known as the “Numbered Treaties” were negotiated, covering parts of what is now Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and all three territories. To expand the country westward after Confederation, the Canadian government negotiated treaties that promised land rights, cash payments, and tools for hunting, fishing, or farming. Treaty Number 3, which was signed between the Crown and the Saulteaux Band of the Anishinaabe peoples, represented more than 14.2 million hectares of land, including that of the Lac Seul First Nation and Garnet’s ancestors. Also known as the North-West Angle Treaty, it promised that in exchange for their use of the land, the Canadian government would provide reserve land, monetary payments, funding for farming equipment and other goods, and the rights of Indigenous peoples to hunt and fish on the land. Treaty 3 peoples maintain that they agreed to share the land with settler Canadians, not surrender it completely.

### Land Acknowledgements

A land acknowledgement (like the one at the beginning of *Garnet’s Journey* Module 1) is an act of reconciliation. It recognizes the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples and their connections to the land in both the past and present. Land acknowledgements prompt settler Canadians to learn about and build a relationship with the peoples whose territory they live, work, or learn on. Your school or school board may already have a land acknowledgement that is used before special events or at the beginning. However, it is important that land acknowledgements not simply be a matter of “routine.” Rather than being formulaic, land acknowledgements should vary in format depending on where, when, and why they are taking place. They should represent a commitment to change and understanding. To build one that is meaningful for your classroom:

- Find out the name(s) of the Indigenous people(s) whose territory your school is located on and, if applicable, the name of the treaty signed with those peoples. Even if a treaty has been signed, you can refer to the land as “unceded” or “unsurrendered” territory (see above for a discussion of treaties and how they are interpreted by First Nations and settlers).
- If you are unsure how to pronounce the name of a First Nation, consider respectfully asking someone from that First Nation, or someone from an organization like a Friendship Centre. You may also be able to find audio or video recordings from that First Nation’s website.
- Consider adding other details, such as the purpose of the acknowledgement or why you are grateful for the First Nation’s stewardship of the land

*For more information on treaties and land acknowledgements, see the following resources:*

- Allison Jones, “Territory Acknowledgement,” <https://native-land.ca>
- Anthony J. Hall, “Treaties with Indigenous Peoples in Canada,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-treaties> (2017).
- Chelsea Vowel, “Beyond territorial acknowledgements,” *âpihtawikosisân*, <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/> (September 23, 2016).
- Lynn Gehl, “Algonquin Anishinaabe Land Acknowledgement,” <http://lynngehl.com> (2018).

- Lynn Gehl, “Is acknowledging Indigenous territory enough?” *Policy Options*, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2017/is-acknowledging-indigenous-territory-enough/> (July 27, 2017).
- “Unceded Land,” *Canada’s History*, <https://www.canadashistory.ca/education/classroom-resources/unceded-land> (2018).

### Garnet’s Early Life on the Trap Line

In *Garnet’s Journey*, Garnet describes his early life in Ningewance Bay in the 1950s and 1960s. His family’s way of life was based around a trap line, a series of traps set up to catch animals for furs and pelts. Trappers, like Garnet’s family, use their knowledge of the land to set a route for hunting and trapping. After setting up a base camp, trappers travel by foot, snowshoe, snowmobile, or canoe, collecting furs to use for clothing, shelter, bedding, or food. When Garnet was growing up, surplus furs could be taken to the local Hudson’s Bay Company trading post to be exchanged for goods, such as metal pots or guns, or for food, such as flour or sugar. Trapping traditionally takes place in the winter when animals have the most fur and is often combined with other pursuits such as fishing, lumbering, or wage labour in the summer. Traditionally trap lines were self-regulated by Indigenous families and communities, but now trappers must acquire a provincial or territorial trapping license.<sup>3</sup>

*For more information on trap lines, see the following resource:*

- Merle Massie, “Trapping and Trapline Life,” *Our Legacy*, [http://digital.scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit\\_trapping](http://digital.scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit_trapping).

### A History of Indigenous Education in Canada

Long before European contact, First Nations in Canada had developed well-established systems of education. These holistic models of learning were collaborative, community-led, and rooted in the land. They were designed to prepare children and youth to contribute to the well-being of themselves, their families, and their wider community.<sup>4</sup> All adults were responsible for teaching children, who learned through methods such as sharing circles, ceremonies, meditation, story telling, and through observation of family and community activities.

However, this collaborative, holistic educational framework that reflected community needs was replaced with a Eurocentric, ideologically driven model after European colonization, and has never been recovered or adapted as a model of First Nations education, despite its historical efficacy. For several centuries, the history of education in First Nations communities was dominated by governments and churches, and guided not by sound pedagogy, but by the paternalistic assumption that First Nations should be assimilated into a Eurocentric, Christian vision of Canadian society.

Education with the goal of assimilating and eliminating First Nations cultures and identities began with Protestant and Catholic missionary day schools in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. With the emergence and consolidation of the Canadian state, First Nations education continued to be a major policy focus. The *Constitution Act* (1867) stated that Canada’s federal government would have authority over all matters related to “Indians and lands reserved for Indians,” including the education of First

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<sup>3</sup> Merle Massie, “Trapping and Trapline Life,” *Our Legacy*, accessed August 8, 2019, [http://digital.scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit\\_trapping](http://digital.scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit_trapping).

<sup>4</sup> “Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning,” Canadian Council on Learning, Ottawa (2007), 5.

Nations on reserve.<sup>5</sup> With the introduction of the *Indian Act* in 1876, the Government of Canada's authority to "establish, operate and maintain schools for Indian children" was reinforced. Neither document, however, referred to what would be taught in these schools or what level of quality of education First Nations were entitled.<sup>6</sup>

In the decades after Confederation, treaties signed between the Crown and First Nations also included provisions for education. Although the treaties' characterization of these provisions varied, they can be interpreted as referring to a quality education that prepares First Nations children and youth to contribute to their communities and wider society and acknowledges their self-determining rights as Indigenous Peoples.<sup>7</sup> However, the Crown did not uphold this commitment. It was assumed that these treaties were not "covenants of trust and obligation but devices of statecraft" and that the education of First Nations must be dominated by non-Indigenous values and ideologies.<sup>8</sup>

These philosophies became most clear with the implementation of Residential Schools policy by the federal government from the 1880s to the 1990s, which saw over 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children taken from their families and communities to attend schools designed to "rebuild Indian children as active participants in the industrial economy" through the destruction of their Indigenous cultures and heritage.<sup>9</sup>

*For more information on the history of Indigenous education in Canada, see the following resources:*

- Bernard Schissel and Terry Wotherspoon, *The Legacy of School for Aboriginal People* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- Jerry Paquette and Gérald Fallon, *First Nations Education Policy in Canada: Progress or Gridlock?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).
- Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, "Reforming First Nations Education: From Crisis to Hope," Senate of Canada, <https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/411/appa/rep/rep03dec11-e.pdf> (2011).

## A History of Residential Schools

When it became clear that the day schools established by Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries in Canada were not able to accomplish the goal of destroying Indigenous cultures, the federal government passed legislation to establish residential schools for Indigenous children.<sup>10</sup> The first schools were designed as "industrial schools," where students would study academics in the morning and learn labour skills, such as farming or domestic skills, for the rest of the day.<sup>11</sup>

When First Nations parents learned of the poor conditions and forced labour taking place in the schools, many became reluctant to send their children, so the *Indian Act* was amended in 1894 and 1895 to give agents of the federal government the authority to force children under the age of 16 to attend residential schools.<sup>12</sup> This legislation was seen as necessary for the schools to fully achieve

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<sup>5</sup> Katalin Koller, "Toward a political economy of on-reserve Indigenous education in Canada: Problematizing Bill C-33," M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 2015, 75.

<sup>6</sup> Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, "Reforming First Nations Education: From Crisis to Hope," Senate of Canada, 2011, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Koller, "Toward a political economy," 76 – 77.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 72 – 73.

<sup>9</sup> Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, "Reforming First Nations Education," 6.

<sup>10</sup> J.E. Paquette and G. Fallon, *First Nations education policy in Canada: Progress or gridlock?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Schissel and Terry Wotherspoon, *The Legacy of School for Aboriginal People* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2003), 43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

their goal of assimilating First Nations into a European, Christian vision of Canada. Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, articulated this vision clearly: “The happiest future for the Indian race is absorption into the general population, and this is the object of the policy of our government... The great forces of intermarriage and education will finally overcome the lingering traces of native custom and tradition.”<sup>13</sup> By 1930, there were eighty residential schools in operation across Canada.<sup>14</sup>

The residential school system also had an impact on Métis and Inuit communities. Métis were not considered to have status under the *Indian Act*, and the federal government’s standpoint on their eligibility to attend residential schools shifted frequently. The Department saw Métis as part of the population that needed to be assimilated and civilized but felt that the responsibility for doing so was part of the provincial governments’ jurisdictions. For this reason, many Métis children attended church-run or provincial schools that did not receive federal funding.<sup>15</sup>

It was not until 1939 that Inuit were considered “Indians” and therefore became the administrative responsibility of the federal government. From 1955 to 1964, the number of school-aged Inuit children attending residential schools increased from less than 15 percent to over 75 percent. Many of these students were so far away from their homes – sometimes in other provinces and territories – that they did not see their families for years at a time.<sup>16</sup>

Pelican Lake Indian Residential School, which Garnet attended, was opened in 1926 under the administration of the federal Department of Indian Affairs and the Anglican Church of Canada. The school, located on 287 acres of forested land, was accessed primarily by boat or train from Sioux Lookout, or by float plane from fly-in communities in the region. The school building was three stories high and included classrooms, a hospital, a chapel, and dormitories for boys and girls. Other buildings on the property included a residence for the principal, a barn, and a water tower. By the 1940s, approximately 160 students were enrolled at the school.

## The Residential School Experience

Residential schools were operated by Canadian Christian churches while the federal government provided funding and oversight. Funding was based on a per capita model, meaning schools received a fixed amount for each student enrolled. This amount was always lower than funding for schools for the general Canadian population, and the per capita model led churches to compete for students and increase enrolment even when they did not have enough space or resources.<sup>17</sup> Chronic underfunding led to schools that were poorly equipped and maintained, had high rates of teacher turnover, disease, and physical and sexual abuse.<sup>18</sup>

Within the schools, no attempt was made to recognize the unique educational needs or cultural backgrounds of First Nations students, as the emphasis of the curriculum was on maintaining the institutional needs of the schools and educating children in agricultural, manual, domestic, and industrial skills, as well as the English (or French) language and Euro-Canadian history and geography.<sup>19</sup> At Pelican Lake, for example, students attended classes from 9 AM to 4 PM, with half of those hours spent on academics, including religious instruction, and the other half spent on “work

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<sup>13</sup> Senate Committee on [Indigenous] Peoples, “Reforming First Nations Education,” 6.

<sup>14</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*, (2015): 6. [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Principles\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Principles_English_Web.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 37-38.

<sup>16</sup> *We Were So Far Away: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools* (Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2010): 18-24.

<sup>17</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 27 - 30

<sup>18</sup> Koller, “Toward a political economy,” 80 – 81.

<sup>19</sup> Paquette and Fallon, *First Nations education policy in Canada*, 9.

training.” Boys would work on clearing brush and caring for livestock, whereas girls’ work included laundry, baking, cooking, and sewing. School staff were hired by churches and automatically approved by the Department of Indian Affairs, which meant teachers were often chosen based on religious commitment rather than teaching ability. Many, in fact, lacked any teachers’ qualifications at all. Classrooms were severely overcrowded, and curriculum often consisted of simple memorization and repetition.<sup>20</sup>

### *Language*

The teaching of English or French was a key component of residential school curricula. At all times, even during recreation, students were forbidden to speak Indigenous languages. Students who broke this rule were punished, often through physical abuse and corporal punishment. Although students sometimes resisted by continuing to speak their languages in secret, the language loss caused by the residential school system has had long-lasting impacts on Indigenous communities.<sup>21</sup>

### *Spirituality*

Similarly, Indigenous spirituality was attacked, with students facing punishment for participating in traditional cultural or spiritual activities.<sup>22</sup> Christian teachings were a key tenet of the residential school system, as churches were responsible for administering the schools on a day-to-day basis. Indigenous culture was presented as inferior to Christianity, and children were taught that their traditional ways of worshipping the Creator were uncivilized and savage.<sup>23</sup> The loss of Indigenous spirituality continues to have a significant impact on Indigenous communities. Garnet has spoken about the ongoing struggle to find his spirituality. He has also described the tension between individuals and communities that are moving to reclaim some of the old teachings lost through residential schools and those who remain very Christian.

### *Health*

Students at residential schools were often left hungry. Their diets consisted mostly of porridge and bread, and occasionally some meat, fish, dairy or sugar.<sup>24</sup> Although many of the health records from residential schools were destroyed by the Department of Indian Affairs, we know that death rates were much higher among residential school students than they were for Canada’s general population throughout the history of the residential school system. The most common causes of death were tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia, and general lung disease.<sup>25</sup>

The government and the Canadian public were made aware of the extremely high levels of tuberculosis among residential school students by a report published by Dr. Peter Bryce, the Chief Medical Officer for the Department of Indian Affairs, in 1907. Bryce revealed that almost 25 percent of all residential school students died because of tuberculosis, an extremely contagious illness that spread due to poor sanitation, overcrowding and a reduction in natural immunity. When Bryce criticized the Department for failing to act on the issue, the Department removed him from his position.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 43-44.

<sup>21</sup> TRC, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015): 83. [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 52-53

<sup>23</sup> TRC, *Honouring the Truth*, 220.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 60 – 61.

<sup>26</sup> First Nations Education Steering Committee, “Indian Residential Schools & Reconciliation: Teacher Resource Guide,” (2015): 52. <http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/PUB-LFP-IRSR-10-2015-07-WEB.pdf>; “Bryce Report,” *Canadian Museum of History*. Last modified June 18, 2017. <https://www.historymuseum.ca/blog/bryce-report/>.

Physical culture was a significant aspect of the residential school experience. For school officials, sports, games, and physical activities were a cost-effective means of promoting discipline, obedience, and Euro-Canadian behaviours.<sup>27</sup> For students, sports offered an opportunity to develop self-confidence and to take a “break” from the oppressive school environment. By the post-war era, when Garnet attended residential school, sports and recreation were a regularly scheduled part of the school day, and extra-curricular competitive teams began to form.<sup>28</sup> At Pelican, an ice rink was built in the late 1940s and a school hockey team, the Black Hawks, was formed.<sup>29</sup> The Black Hawks played their first game in January 1949 and by the 1953-1954 season hockey culture had grown enough at the school to prompt the construction of a second rink.<sup>30</sup>

### *Abuse*

A lack of action taken by churches and the Canadian government also led to rampant abuse in residential schools. Regulations related to school discipline were unclear and not enforced, so many students were subject to strappings, beatings, and confinement. Some students had their heads shaved or were not allowed food.<sup>31</sup> As early as the 1880s, government and church officials were aware that staff were sexually abusing students, but they took no action. They would continue to ignore, dismiss, or cover up tens of thousands of cases of sexual abuse throughout the entire history of the residential school system.<sup>32</sup> At Pelican, Garnet was sexually abused by dormitory supervisor Leonard Hands, who was convicted in 1996 and sentenced to four years in prison for 19 counts of indecent assault. Garnet also faced student-on-student abuse, a common type of bullying that has a painful and often hidden legacy in Indigenous communities.

### *Resistance and Running Away*

Many parents and students in Indigenous communities resisted residential schooling. Some parents, for instance, refused to send their children or to return them after summer holidays.<sup>33</sup> Students resisted the oppressive environments of the schools by subverting disciplines or continuing to speak their native languages.<sup>34</sup> For students, running away was one of the most effective forms of resistance. Most attempted to return to their home communities. Students who did so risked dying from exposure or, if they were caught and returned to the school, severe punishment.<sup>35</sup> Parents could also be prosecuted if they did not return truant students.<sup>36</sup>

At Pelican, the most famous case of runaway students took place in October 1956. The school did not inform the police or the Department of Indian Affairs of Charles and Tom Oombash's disappearance until a month later, and the boys were never found.<sup>37</sup>

While Garnet was at Pelican, another well-known case of a runaway student took place in Kenora. Chanie Wenjack left his school in October 1966 and attempted to walk 400 miles home to his father. Wearing only a light windbreaker and equipped with only a few matches and a map, Chanie died of

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<sup>27</sup> Braden Paora Te Hiwi, “Physical Culture as Citizenship Education at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School, 1926-1970,” Ph.D. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 2015, 14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>31</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 71 – 74.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 75 – 76.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>34</sup> Paquette and Fallon, *First Nations education policy in Canada*, 11 – 12.

<sup>35</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 85 -86.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

exposure and hunger a week after leaving the school.<sup>38</sup> Chanie Wenjack's story recently became the subject of a short film and graphic novel written by Gord Downie, the former lead singer of the band The Tragically Hip, and illustrator Jeff Lemire.<sup>39</sup>

## Closure of Residential Schools

By the end of the Second World War, the ineffectiveness of the residential school system became clear and First Nations students and parents continued their resistance to the schools. A 1948 report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Affairs recommended that First Nations students be integrated into provincial or territorial public schools whenever possible.<sup>40</sup> In 1951, the Indian Act was amended to allow for this devolution of responsibility, with the goal of "bridging the economic gap between the Indian and non-Indian in Canada, and to provide each child with the education and training necessary for economic competence."<sup>41</sup> Canada's last residential school would not close until 1996, but by 1970, the policy of integration had led almost 60 percent of First Nations students to transfer to provincial and territorial schools.<sup>42</sup>

After the policy of integration began, residential schools were increasingly used as orphanages and child-welfare facilities, and by 1960 an estimated 50 percent of children in residential schools were there for child-welfare reasons. The increase in apprehension of children became known as the "Sixties Scoop" and allowed the Canadian government to continue institutionalize Indigenous children.<sup>43</sup>

Pelican Lake Indian Residential School closed as a school by 1970, just one year after Garnet left to attend high school in Sioux Lookout. It continued to act as a hostel for students attending day schools run by the Canadian government and some First Nations groups in the area.<sup>44</sup> In 1979, the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC) was formed by 24 First Nations bands in the Sioux Lookout area as part of a movement for First Nations control of First Nations education.<sup>45</sup> The NNEC later opened Pelican Falls First Nations High School in the former residential school building, offering a First Nations-controlled curriculum that blends the Ontario high school curriculum with Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and cultures.<sup>46</sup>

*For more information about the history of residential schools in Canada, see the following resources:*

- David B. Macdonald, *The Sleeping Giant Awakens: Genocide, Indian Residential Schools, and the Challenge of Conciliation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).
- First Nations Education Steering Committee, "Indian Residential Schools & Reconciliation: Teacher Resource Guide," (2015)  
<http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/PUB-LFP-IRSR-10-2015-07-WEB.pdf>.
- John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017).

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<sup>38</sup> Ian Adams, "The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack," *Maclean's*, February 1, 1967, <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/1967/2/1/the-lonely-death-of-charlie-wenjack>.

<sup>39</sup> Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire. *Secret Path* (Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2016).

<sup>40</sup> Senate Committee on [Indigenous] Peoples, "Reforming First Nations Education," 7.

<sup>41</sup> Koller, "Toward a political economy," 82; M.-A. Tremblay, F.G. Vallee, and J. Ryan, "A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies," Volume II (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, 1967), 32.

<sup>42</sup> Senate Committee on [Indigenous] Peoples, "Reforming First Nations Education," 8.

<sup>43</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 39.

<sup>44</sup> Te Hiwi, "Physical Culture," 4.

<sup>45</sup> "History," *Northern Nishnawbe Education Council*, accessed August 2, 2019, <http://www.nnec.on.ca/index.php/history/>.

<sup>46</sup> "Pelican Falls First Nations High School," *Northern Nishnawbe Education Council*, accessed August 2, 2019, <http://www.nnec.on.ca/index.php/pelican-falls-first-nations-high-school/>.

- Joseph Auguste Merasty, *The Education of Augie Merasty* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2017).
- Legacy of Hope Foundation, “100 Years of Loss: The Residential School System in Canada,” Teacher’s Guide, 2014, [http://100yearsofloss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/100YOL\\_curriculum\\_web\\_E.pdf](http://100yearsofloss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/100YOL_curriculum_web_E.pdf).
- Legacy of Hope Foundation, “Where are the Children?” <http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/>.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015), [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf).
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016).
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* (2015), [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Principles\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Principles_English_Web.pdf).
- *We Were So Far Away: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools* (Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2010), <http://legacyofhope.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/wwsfa-english-min.pdf>.

## Settlement and Apologies

In the years when residential schools were closing, Indigenous people began to individually and collectively call for the prosecution of those who abused students and for compensation for Survivors of residential schools. Survivors filed class-action lawsuits against the federal government and churches for the treatment they received in the schools, including abuse and the loss of language and culture.<sup>47</sup> The federal government was forced to negotiate a settlement for the growing number of suits, resulting in the approval of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) by the courts in 2007. This settlement included compensation and support for survivors, support for residential school commemoration, and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized to residential school Survivors and Indigenous communities on behalf of Canada, recognizing that the purpose of residential schools had been to assimilate Indigenous children into the dominant settler Canadian culture by removing them from the care of their families and communities.<sup>48</sup>

The Canadian churches that played a role in the creation and administration of the residential school system also made public apologies beginning in the 1990s, including the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the United Church of Canada.<sup>49</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission continues to call for the Pope to make an official apology for the Roman Catholic Church’s role in operating residential schools.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 98-99.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> “Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” *Bora Laskin Law Library Research Guides*, last updated June 7, 2019, <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=527189&p=3698521>.

<sup>50</sup> Mia Rabson, “Pope won’t personally apologize for Catholic Church’s role in residential schools,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 27, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-pope-wont-personally-apologize-for-catholic-churchs-role-in/>.

## The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The TRC's mandate is to research the history and ongoing impacts of residential schools and to share this knowledge with all Canadians in an effort to guide a process of reconciliation, meaning the establishment of a new, respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.<sup>51</sup> It was tasked with holding national events, gathering statements and oral histories about the history and legacies of residential schools, recommending reconciliation initiatives to be funded by the federal government, establishing a research centre to permanently house the records gathered by the commission, and issuing a report with recommendations.<sup>52</sup> When this report was published in 2015, it included 94 Calls to Action to "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation."<sup>53</sup>

The following excerpt from the Executive Summary of the TRC Final Report emphasizes the importance of understanding the past in order to work towards reconciliation.

Reconciliation must support [Indigenous] peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire [Indigenous] and non-[Indigenous] peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share. The urgent need for reconciliation runs deep in Canada. Expanding public dialogue and action on reconciliation beyond residential schools will be critical in the coming years. Although some progress has been made, significant barriers to reconciliation remain. The relationship between the federal government and [Indigenous] peoples is deteriorating. Instead of moving towards reconciliation, there have been divisive conflicts over [Indigenous] education, child welfare, and justice. The daily news has been filled with reports of controversial issues ranging from the call for a national inquiry on violence towards [Indigenous] women and girls to the impact of the economic development of lands and resources on Treaties and [Indigenous] title and rights. The courts continue to hear [Indigenous] rights cases, and new litigation has been led by Survivors of day schools not covered under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, as well as by victims of the "Sixties Scoop," which was a child-welfare policy that removed [Indigenous] children from their homes and placed them with non-[Indigenous] families. The promise of reconciliation, which seemed so imminent back in 2008 when the prime minister, on behalf of all Canadians, apologized to Survivors, has faded. Too many Canadians know little or nothing about the deep historical roots of these conflicts. This lack of historical knowledge has serious consequences for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and for Canada as a whole. In government circles, it makes for poor public policy decisions. In the public realm, it reinforces racist attitudes and fuels civic distrust between [Indigenous] peoples and other Canadians. Too many Canadians still do not know the history of [Indigenous] peoples' contributions to Canada, or understand that by virtue of the historical and modern Treaties negotiated by our government, we are all Treaty people. History plays an important role in reconciliation; to build for the future, Canadians must look to, and learn from, the past.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> TRC, *What We Have Learned*, 99.

<sup>52</sup> TRC, *Honouring the Truth*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

It is within the context of the TRC and reconciliation that Garnet chose to share his story, and that you and your students are working towards reconciliation by learning about *Garnet's Journey*.

*For more information about the TRC and the process of reconciliation in Canada, see the following resources:*

- Jeff Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi, "Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation," *English Studies in Canada* 35, no. 1 (2009): 137-159.
- Murray Sinclair, "What is Reconciliation," YouTube video, 2:55, posted February 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rue\\_fwypLk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rue_fwypLk).
- Shelagh Rogers, Mile DeGagné, Jonathan Dewar, and Glen Lowry (eds.), *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2012). (includes a chapter written by Garnet)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015), [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf).
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016).
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