

History of Indian Residential Schools Holy Angels Indian Residential School (1874 – 1974) Indian Day Schools Lasting impacts of Indian Residential Schools

Content Warning

The Truth and Reconciliation Challenge features content that is sensitive and may be distressing to some. Please take care.

If you find yourself experiencing distress, please reach out for support.

- AHS Mental Health Helpline 1-877-303-2642
- Provincial Line - 811
- Crisis Text Line – Text Connect to 741741
- National Indian Residential School Crisis Line – 1-866-925-4419
- Hope for Wellness Helpline is available 24/7 to all Indigenous People across Canada. Chat online or call 1-855-242-3310.

History of Indian Residential Schools

The residential school system was just one tool in a broader plan of “aggressive assimilation” and colonization of Indigenous Peoples and territories in Canada, created by the Canadian government and Christian churches.

The explicit intent of this system was to separate Indigenous children from their families and cultures.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were forcibly removed from their families and communities, often before the age of seven. At the residential schools, they were stripped of their traditions, cultural practices, and languages.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The children experienced extremely high levels of physical, mental and sexual abuse and extreme neglect, with no help in healing from this abuse and no repercussions for the perpetrators.

More than 160 years of Indian Residential Schools

Indian Residential Schools operated in Canada for more than 160 years. The quality of education was substandard, so students lacked basic reading and writing skills.

Children were harshly punished for speaking their own languages, and experienced physical, verbal, mental and sexual abuse.

Within Wood Buffalo, the Indian Residential School in Fort Chipewyan operated from 1874-1974. Every province and territory was home to the federally funded, church-run schools. The last school closed in Saskatchewan in 1996.



Holy Angels Indian Residential School (1874 – 1974)



TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION LEARNING EXPERIENCE



Thousands of children attended Holy Angels Indian Residential School in Fort Chipewyan during its 100 years of operation:

- According to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, **89 children lost their lives while attending this school.**
- **However, we know this number is much higher**, because of survivors sharing their experiences, and the inaccurate record keeping of the Residential School.

What does the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada say about Indian Residential Schools?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) concluded that residential schools were *“a systematic, government- sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples.”*

The TRC characterized this intent as “cultural genocide.”

Multimedia (for later viewing)

Video – Residential Schools in Canada – a timeline

[Watch this video](#) by Historica Canada for a detailed timeline of Indian Residential Schools in Canada (6 minutes).

Video – Holy Angels

[Watch the film *Holy Angels*](#), directed by Jay Cardinal Villeneuve, to listen to a real-life experience at Holy Angels Indian Residential School in Fort Chipewyan. (13m55s)

Helpful Resources (links also available via e-newsletter):

History of Holy Angels in Fort Chipewyan, with historical photos and list of children known to have died while attending the residential school.

[Holy Angels \(Fort Chipewyan\) – National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)

What were Indian Day Schools?

In addition to Residential Schools, the Canadian government and Christian churches also enforced Indian Day Schools, which were used as tools of assimilation against Indigenous children.

Unlike Residential Schools, Day School students remained in their communities and went home to their families in the evenings.

However, this also meant that the students faced cultural conflicts. They had to navigate between their traditional upbringing at home and the assimilationist education they received at school.

Day schools, like residential schools, were places where students experienced physical, verbal, and sexual abuse.

Indian Day Schools of the Region

Bishop Piche Day School (Fort Chipewyan, Alberta)
September 1, 1956 – September 1, 1985

Fort McKay Day School (Fort McKay, Alberta)
August 1, 1949 – June 30, 1963

Janvier Day School (Janvier, Alberta)
November 1, 1950 – July 1, 1963

These day schools were affiliated with Roman Catholic religious orders.

Lasting impacts of residential schools

Many people don't understand the connection between the legacy of residential schools and the negative impacts Indigenous Peoples and communities still experience today:

- Loss of language.
- Loss of culture.
- Disconnect from the land.
- Missing, Murdered Indigenous Woman and Girls as well as Two Spirited and gender diverse peoples.
- Missing or Murdered Exploited Indigenous Peoples.
- Lateral violence (displaced violence within communities)
- Struggles with addictions.
- High suicide rates.

Multimedia (for later viewing)

Video – Intergenerational Trauma: Residential Schools

[Please watch this video by Historica Canada](#) to learn more about the intergenerational trauma caused by residential schools. (2m20s).



Reflection Questions

If you wish to share any thoughts or ideas in response to the reflection questions, please write them down on this sheet and interoffice mail it to Indigenous & Rural Relations, 6th floor, Jubilee Building.

After learning about the Holy Angels Residential School in Fort Chipewyan, how does this affect your understanding of the history of the region?

What have you learned about the lasting impacts of residential schools and day schools?

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