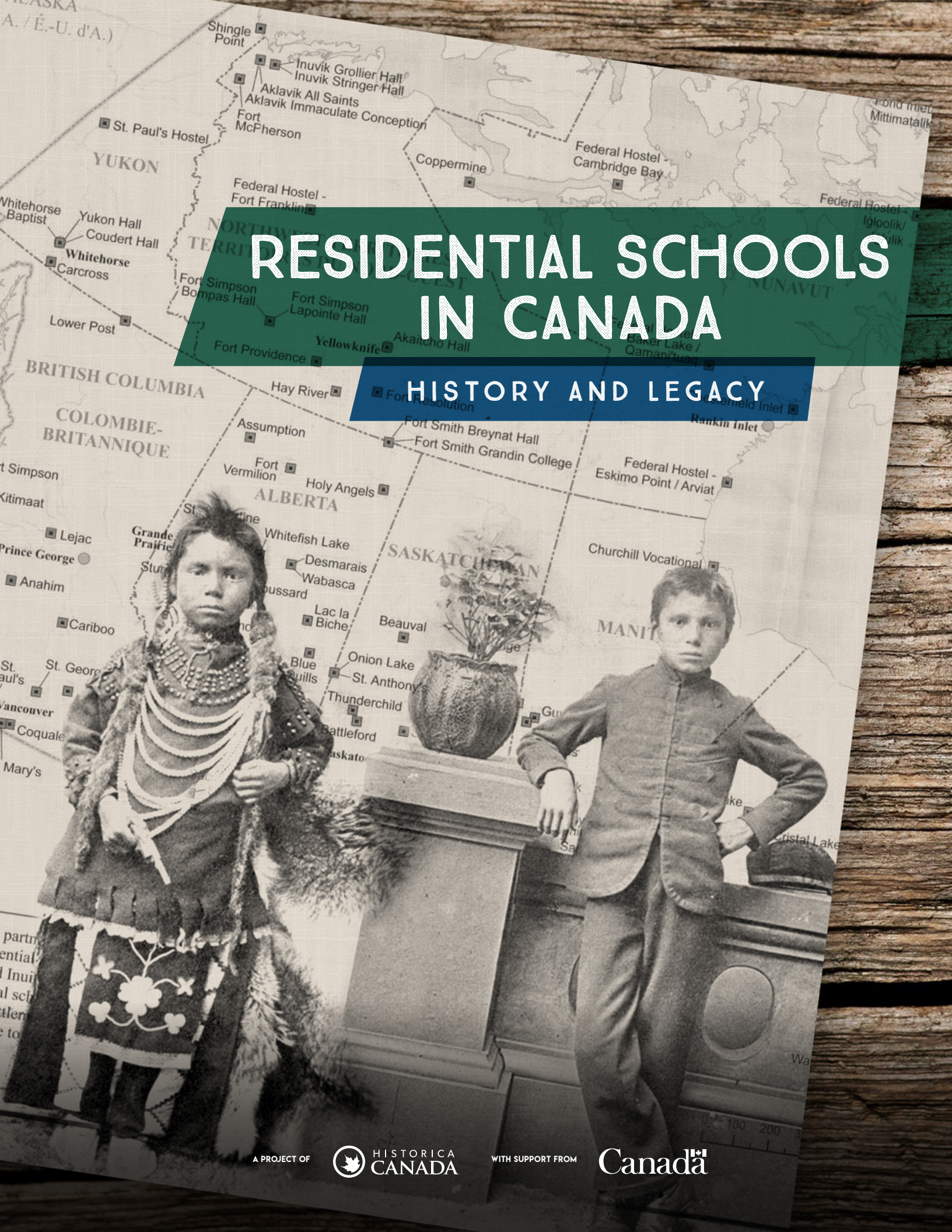


RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS IN CANADA

HISTORY AND LEGACY



A PROJECT OF



WITH SUPPORT FROM



This education guide is based on Historica Canada's 2016 **Residential Schools in Canada** Education Guide.

The guide was developed in collaboration and consultation with educators, academics, and community stakeholders, including Holly Richard, Dr. Tricia Logan, Dr. Crystal Gail Fraser, Amos Key Jr., Dr. John Milloy, and Kenneth Campbell.

INTRODUCTION: RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Residential schools were government-sponsored Christian schools established to assimilate Indigenous children into settler-Canadian society. Successive Canadian governments used legislation to strip Indigenous peoples of their basic human and legal rights and to gain control over Indigenous lives, their lands, and natural rights and resources. The *Indian Act*, first introduced in 1876, gave the Canadian government licence to control almost every aspect of First Nations peoples' lives. Amendments to the *Act* later required children to attend residential schools, the majority of which operated after 1880. These policies were applied inconsistently to Métis and Inuit communities.

One of the main goals of these schools was to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian society through a process of cultural, social, educational, economic, political, and religious assimilation, achieved through removing and isolating Indigenous children from their homes, families, lands, and cultures. This goal was based on the false assumption that Indigenous cultures and Indigenous spiritual beliefs were inferior to those of white Euro-Canadians. Assimilation policies, including education policies, ultimately aimed to undermine Indigenous rights.

Residential schools were underfunded and overcrowded; they were rife with starvation, disease, and neglect. Children were often isolated from human contact and nurturing, and many experienced rampant physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. While the experience of Survivors varied from school to school, students were often forcibly removed from their communities, homes, and parents, and forbidden from speaking their Indigenous languages or participating in traditional ceremonies.

"When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that the Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men."

— Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, Official report of the debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, 9 May 1883, 1107–1108

Thousands of children died while institutionalized at residential schools. Many more remain unaccounted for. The Department of Indian Affairs often refused to return the bodies of deceased children to their parents, claiming the cost was too high. Some children were buried in mass graves, and many graves remain unmarked. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children attended residential schools.

The residential school system caused immeasurable damage, disrupting lives and disturbing healthy communities. The damage inflicted by these schools continues to affect Indigenous peoples across Canada today. Generations of Indigenous peoples have been alienated from their worldviews, traditions, and lifestyles. But through the strength and advocacy of Survivors, their families, and communities, Indigenous peoples across the country are working toward reclaiming their lands and cultures and revitalizing traditional practices as they heal from this legacy of trauma.

This education guide aims to raise awareness of the history of residential schools in Canada and increase understanding of the important role education plays in the reconciliation process. As the Executive Summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada notes:

"Schools must teach history in ways that foster mutual respect, empathy, and engagement. All Canadian children and youth deserve to know Canada's honest history, including what happened in the residential schools, and to appreciate the rich history and knowledge of Indigenous nations who continue to make such a strong contribution to Canada, including our very name and collective identity as a country. For Canadians from all walks of life, reconciliation offers a new way of living together." — *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 21

▼ Nuns with a group of students in Quebec, c. 1890.
(courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/H.J. Woodside/Library and Archives Canada/PA-123707).



Cover: Map of residential schools in Canada (courtesy of National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, University of Manitoba). Thomas Moore, Regina Indian Industrial School, c. 1874 (courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/NL-022474).



A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

First Nations peoples in Canada were initially called “Indians” by European settlers. This term is no longer used, except in some legal and historical documents. “Indian Residential School” is a similarly historical term used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and in educational documents. This guide uses “residential school” to describe the system of boarding schools, day schools, hostels, and other institutions that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit were forced to attend. “Aboriginal” is a legal term that encompasses all Status and Non-Status First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Though “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous” are sometimes used interchangeably, we have primarily used “Indigenous” in this education guide.

▼ Residential school students at Fort George Cemetery, Québec,
November 3, 1946 (public domain/Handout/Truth and Reconciliation Commission).



“There is a world of difference between being an Indian and being Anishina[al]be. An Indian is a creation of the European imagination and is legally inscribed on us by the federal government. There were no Indians in our territories prior to European arrival. In fact, there are only Indians in contemporary terms if the federal government is allowed to take control of Indigenous identities.”

— John Borrows, *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution*, 415

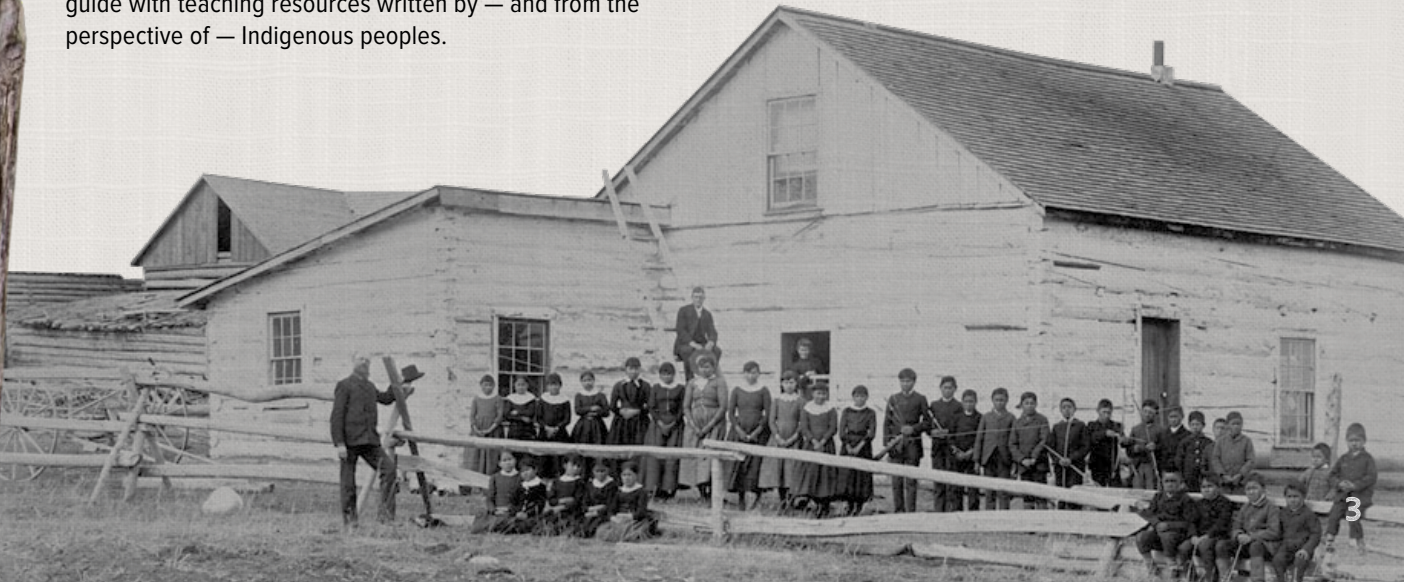
MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

To use this education guide, you will need to conduct research and lead classroom discussions about the history and legacy of Canada’s residential school system. Many of the topics covered in this guide may trigger a strong emotional response, especially among youth affected by intergenerational trauma. Teachers must be sensitive to both individual and group dynamics to ensure the classroom remains a safe environment for all learners. Set ground rules for respectful discussion and consult your school guidance counsellor for additional support if needed. We strongly advise that you watch the **Chanie Wenjack Heritage Minute** and check the links provided before sharing with students, as some content may be upsetting.

We are in the unique position of being able to hear from Survivors and intergenerational Survivors. The history of residential schools is contemporary; this is a living history. This legacy continues to affect Survivors, their families, and generations to come who will deal with the consequences of previous government policies.

It is recommended that you complement the activities in this guide with teaching resources written by — and from the perspective of — Indigenous peoples.

Students at Morley Indian Residential School – McDougall Orphanage, Morley, Alberta, c. 1885 (courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/David Ewens Collection/PA-182270). ▼



ONLINE RESOURCES: These resources are used in the guide to support its activities. You may choose to look for additional resources, either on the internet or in print.

- **The Canadian Encyclopedia:** Articles from *The Canadian Encyclopedia* mentioned in this guide can be found at www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca, where you can search for the article by title.
- All **worksheets** noted in this guide can be downloaded from the Historica Canada Education Portal at education.historicacanada.ca/en/tools/647.
- **Chanie Wenjack Heritage Minute:** <https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/chanie-wenjack>
- **National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation:** nctr.ca/map.php
- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Reports:** nctr.ca/reports.php
- **The Residential Schools podcast episodes** can be found at: <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools-podcast-series>.
- Videos (*Intergenerational Trauma*, *Lillian Elias: A Residential School Survivor's Story of Language Preservation*, and *Residential Schools in Canada: A Timeline*) can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLiE7YBxN9zmlac1qc5B8faco3fH8Y2fnJ>.

Intergenerational Survivors are people who have been affected by the cross-generational dysfunction created by the experience of being institutionalized in a residential school. This includes families of Survivors, those who have been abused by Survivors, and people who live in communities fractured by the generations of children who were separated from their families. According to Legacy of Hope's "Where Are the Children" approximately 287,350 intergenerational Survivors were living across Canada, both on- and off-reserve, in the early 1990s.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

Accommodations for Special Education, ELL, and ESL students are included under the appropriate sections, and identified as "modification."

Further educational activities and resources are available at *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. We hope this guide will assist you in teaching this important part of Canadian history.

TEACHER TIP: CIRCLE DISCUSSIONS

Circle discussions are a great strategy for cultivating community and fostering meaningful conversation in the classroom. All discussion questions in this learning tool may be addressed in circle. In this structure, students sit in a circle formation and respond to open-ended questions (usually in a sequential manner, but not necessarily).

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE CIRCLE DISCUSSIONS:

- Always begin with at least one low-risk question, e.g., What is your favourite colour? Do you prefer sweet, salty, spicy, or sour?
- Choose an object to be passed around to signify whose turn it is to speak
- Ensure that all students understand that they have the right to pass, and the right to repeat a previously given response
- Model and coach active listening skills among students
- Participate with students — circle discussions function best when all members of the classroom community participate as equals

// **MODIFICATION** If you have English-language learners in your class, you can still facilitate circle discussions by:

- Reframing the questions to elicit one-word or single-sentence responses
- Using simple language — avoid idioms and slang
- Building the responses into the question, e.g., "What is your favourite season — spring, summer, fall, or winter?"

Students practising penmanship, Red Deer Industrial Institute, Alberta, c. 1914 (courtesy of the United Church of Canada Archives/#93.049P/850). ▼



▲ Shingwauk Indian Residential School, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, May 1966 (courtesy of Archives of Ontario/I0012275/Mildred Young Hubbard Fonds/F4369-1-0-7RG 1-653).

Teacher Tip: As an alternative to circle discussions, the discussion questions in this learning tool may also be addressed using a general classroom discussion strategy or through written responses.

TIMELINE

1600

1600s–1800s

For more than 200 years, religious orders run mission schools for Indigenous children — the precursors to the Government of Canada's residential school system.

1844

The Bagot Commission Report proposes that separating Indigenous children from their parents is the best way to assimilate them into Euro-Canadian culture.



▲ *The Fathers of Confederation* by Rex Woods. The original painting by Robert Harris was installed in the Parliament Buildings in 1883 and was destroyed during the 1916 fire. This image is a reproduction by Woods, commissioned to mark Canada's centennial (courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/Acc. No. 1967-49-11).

1867

The *Constitution Act* creates the Dominion of Canada. Under the *Constitution Act (British North America Act)*, the government takes authority over First Nations and their land. This authority would later extend to the education of Status Indians.

1896

The number of schools across Canada quickly climbs to over 40. Each school is provided with an allowance per student (or "per capita payments"), which leads to overcrowding and increased illness within the institutions.

1831

Run by the Anglican Church, the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Upper Canada [Ontario], becomes the first school in Canada's residential school system. Opened in 1828 as the Mechanics' Institute day school, in 1831 the school begins to accept boarders. At first, the school only houses boys. In 1834, girls are admitted as boarders.

▲ Mohawk Institute, Brantford, Ontario, c. 1884 (courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/PA-051882).

1857

The *Gradual Civilization Act* requires male Status Indians and Métis over the age of 21 to read, write, and speak either English or French, and to choose a government-approved surname. The *Act* awards 50 acres of land to any First Nations or Métis male who has "sufficiently advanced" elementary education, and, in return, removes any affiliation with their nation or treaty rights.

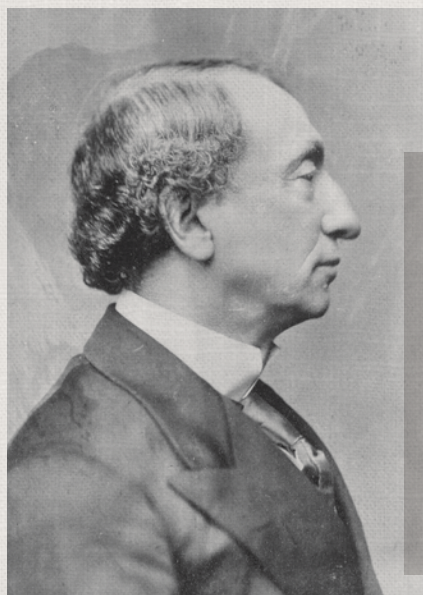
1876

The *Indian Act* gives the Canadian government control over the lives and fates of First Nations. It officially excludes Métis and Inuit, but its policies are inconsistently applied to both.

▲ Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald (courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/W.J. Moore/C-021595).

1883

Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald authorizes the creation of the Indian Residential School system, designed to remove Indigenous children from their families and sever all ties to their cultures.



Students at Alert Bay Mission School, British Columbia, c. 1885 (courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/George M. Dawson/PA-037934).



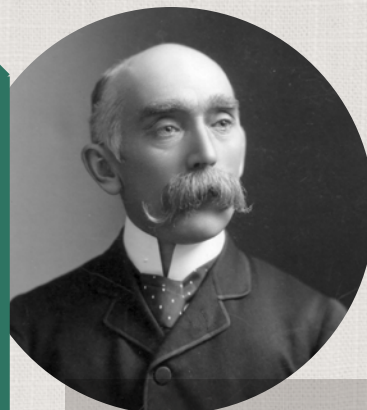


1900

1920

Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott makes attendance at residential schools mandatory for every First Nations child between seven and 16 years of age. Often, children younger than seven were institutionalized anyway.

◀ Duncan Campbell Scott, c. 1915 (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/ Dupras & Colas/C-003187).

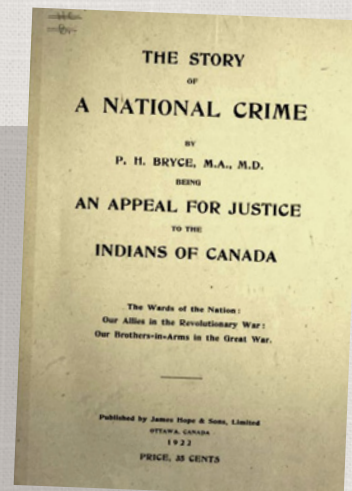


◀ Dr. P. H. Bryce, c. 1920 (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/Topley Studio/PA-042966).

▼ Dr. P. H. Bryce's 1922 report on the conditions in residential schools (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/James Hope and Sons Ltd).

1922

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce's *The Story of a National Crime* is published, exposing the government's neglect of the health of Indigenous peoples, which includes an alarmingly high death rate of residential school students. He notes a "criminal disregard for the treaty pledges."



1931

More than 80 institutions are in operation across Canada — the most at any one time — with an enrolment of more than 17,000 children.

1950s

Inuit children are officially included in the residential school system. Six schools open in the Western Arctic as the government takes over the administration of many church-run residential schools.

1948

Thunderchild Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan is destroyed by fire. Four students are investigated for arson. Others reportedly cheer as they watch the school burn. This was one of dozens of fires set across Canada by students as a form of resistance.



▶ Thunderchild Indian Residential School. S-B6808, c. 1901 (Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan)

1960s–1980s

The *Sixties Scoop* begins after amendments to the *Indian Act* give provinces jurisdiction over Indigenous child welfare. More than 20,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children are "scooped" from their homes and adopted into mainly non-Indigenous families. The long-lasting effects of the Sixties Scoop range from a loss of cultural identity to feelings of shame and confusion. Some adoptees report experiencing physical and sexual abuse in their foster homes. Today, Indigenous children remain overrepresented in the child welfare system.

1969

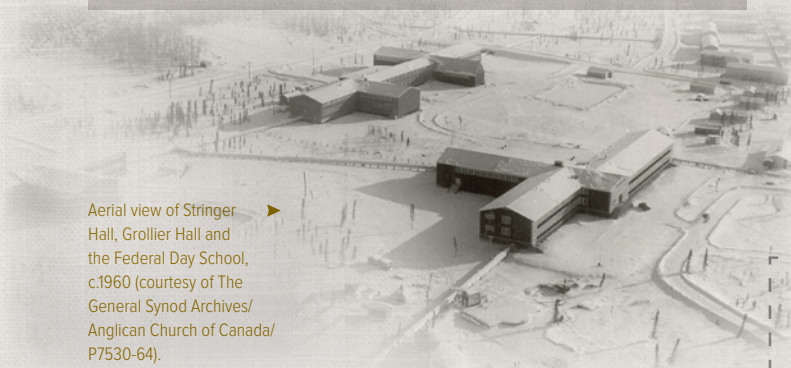
The Canadian government takes control over the administration of the remaining schools still run by churches, giving the Government of Canada complete authority over all residential schools still in operation. By 1979, thousands of students are still enrolled at the 28 residential schools that remain open.

1959

Two new residential schools, Grollier Hall and Stringer Hall, open in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, with a capacity of 500 students.

1966

Twelve-year-old Chanie Wenjack dies after escaping from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School. A formal investigation follows. During the inquest held in the Kenora Magistrate's Court, the non-Indigenous jury finds that residential schools cause tremendous emotional and psychological problems.



▶ Aerial view of Stringer Hall, Grollier Hall and the Federal Day School, c.1960 (courtesy of The General Synod Archives/ Anglican Church of Canada/ P7530-64).



▶ Personal family photo of Chanie "Charlie" Wenjack (courtesy Pearl Achneepineskum).

1990

Phil Fontaine, Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, speaks publicly of the abuse he suffered at Fort Alexander Indian Residential School. He calls for a public inquiry, which the federal government initiates in 1991.

1996

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* recommends a public inquiry into the effects of residential schools, including language loss and trauma. The 4,000-page, five-volume report includes 440 recommendations calling for changes in the relationship between Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous peoples, and all levels of government in Canada.



▲ Gordon's Indian Residential School, Punnicny, Saskatchewan, c. 1930 (Anglican Church of Canada Archives / P75-103-S7-151).

1996

The last federally run facility, Gordon's Indian Residential School in Punnicny, Saskatchewan, closes.

2008

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on behalf of the Government of Canada, apologizes to former students, their families, and communities for Canada's role in the operation of these institutions. Provincial and territorial apologies follow in the years to come.



▲ Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine (right) watches as Prime Minister Stephen Harper (left) officially apologizes for more than a century of abuse and cultural loss involving Indian residential schools at a ceremony in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, June 11, 2008 (courtesy of The Canadian Press/Tom Hanson).

2015

The *TRC* releases its final report. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who attended the ceremonial release of the report, commits his government to implementing all of the 94 Calls to Action set out in the June 2015 summary report.

▼ Remarks by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologizing on behalf of the Government of Canada to former students of Newfoundland and Labrador residential schools. November 24, 2017 (courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister).

2017

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologizes to the Survivors of residential schools in Newfoundland and Labrador. They were excluded from Stephen Harper's 2008 apology because residential schools there were not run by the federal government and were established before Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949. They were also excluded from both the TRC process and the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.



2007

After years of meetings and advocacy by Survivors and their families, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement comes into effect. The government provides compensation to Survivors, including the Common Experience Payment, and a focus on funding and supporting Indigenous health and healing services. The Agreement establishes funds for the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (the TRC).

2015

After hearing thousands of testimonies across Canada, the TRC releases a summary of its findings on the residential school system and the experiences of its Survivors, characterizing Canada's treatment of *Indigenous peoples* as "cultural genocide." It includes 94 *Calls to Action* aimed at healing relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.

2015

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation opens in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The new centre holds a permanent archive of materials and testimonies about residential schools gathered during the TRC.

2017

The federal government announces a settlement of \$800 million for Sixties Scoop Survivors. Survivors of these federal and provincial government policies experience lasting trauma as a result of separation from their birth families, communities, and cultures.

2019

The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls reveals that persistent and deliberate human rights violations are the source of Canada's staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The report gives 231 calls for justice to governments, police forces, and institutions.

TIMELINE ACTIVITY

As a class, watch the **Residential Schools in Canada: A Timeline** video or read through the timeline in the guide.

"The residential schools were designed to eradicate any sense of Indian-ness. They denied us the opportunity to learn about ourselves."

— Phil Fontaine, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations

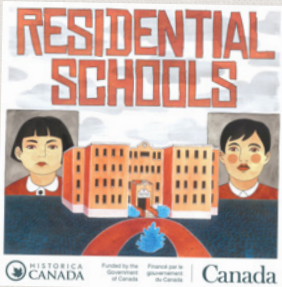
1. Each student will select one event from the timeline to focus on for more in-depth research (make sure everyone selects a different event). Your research should begin with *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, but you may also wish to conduct a broader search. Use the **Research Notes Organizer Worksheet** to take notes and consider the short- and long-term consequences of the event.

2. Using your notes, create one of the following to share your learning with your peers:

- Digital slide show (e.g., Google Slides; Prezi; PowerPoint Online)
- Poster
- Presentation
- Bulletin board display for your school

Make sure to explain the 5Ws of the event and examine and explain the event's consequences.

Extension Activity: Find a primary source related to your assigned event, and analyze this source with the help of the **Primary Source Pyramid**. Share your findings with the class.



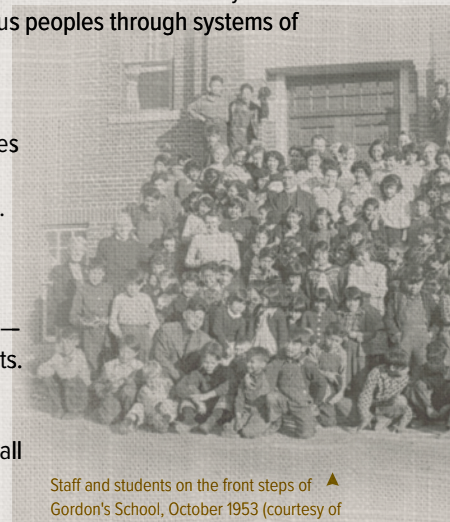
THE LEGACY OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS: PODCAST ACTIVITY

Although all residential schools in Canada are now closed, the effects on Survivors, their families, and their communities continue to manifest into the present. Many communities lack access to basic necessities like clean water, a high percentage of Indigenous people struggle with substance abuse and mental health, and Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in the Canadian prison and child welfare systems. All of these are directly related to the historical oppression and continued systemic discrimination of Indigenous peoples through systems of colonialism, which includes residential schools.

Residential Schools is a three-part podcast series created by Historica Canada and funded by the Government of Canada. The series explores the history of the residential school system from the perspectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Survivors through Survivor testimony and interviews with academics and researchers in the field. It can be found on the Historica Canada website, and on multiple podcast platforms.

As previously noted, this content may be upsetting to some listeners. It's important to be mindful of individual and group dynamics in the classroom, and to have candid conversations with students before and after listening. If possible, it is advisable to have an individual knowledgeable about the history and legacies of residential schools — such as a counsellor, Indigenous knowledge keeper, or other community health practitioner — available to students.

1. Divide the class into three groups, with each group listening to one of the **Residential Schools** podcast episodes ("**First Nations Experiences**," "**Métis Experiences**," or "**Inuit Experiences**"). You can also listen to all three episodes, and select one to investigate further.
2. Individually, complete the **Residential Schools Podcast Series Worksheet** as you listen to the podcast.
3. Individually, use your listening notes to write a news article in the style of an exposé. Imagine that you are a news reporter writing at the time one of the schools referenced in the podcast was operating. You want to inform the public about what is going on at the school, about the residential school system at large, and about what the long-term consequences of the system might be for the children and their communities. In your story, be sure to highlight acts of resistance, solidarity, and resilience in the face of oppression.



Staff and students on the front steps of Gordon's School, October 1953 (courtesy of The General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada/Grace Reed/M2008-10-P76).

Teacher Tip: Allow the worksheet to be completed as homework. Encourage students to pause the podcasts so that they can have time to catch up if needed. In order to effectively scaffold student learning, discuss the challenging terms on the worksheet prior to listening. Alternatively, you may wish to lead an informal vocabulary activity.

Gordon's Indian Residential School, c. 1926-1927 (courtesy of The General Synod Archives/Anglican Church of Canada/Mathilda Wilkings/P8801-175).



How to write an exposé: An exposé is a piece of investigatory writing that makes an in-depth inquiry into a subject, exposes a problem, and calls for change. To write an effective piece, use facts, and avoid bias and opinions. Demonstrate knowledge of the problems, causes, and consequences at play. Keep your work focused, and provide ample details, evidence, examples, and explanations to present your case for change clearly.

ANALYZING HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The photograph to the right, entitled *Quewich and his children*, was taken around 1900 at the Qu'Appelle Industrial School in Saskatchewan. Not much is known about its subjects, but this photo was frequently used by the Department of Indian Affairs to display their confidence in the residential school system.

1. Study the photograph closely and take notes. What does this photograph reveal about the policy of assimilation? What can you infer from the differences between the parent and children? What does this reveal about separation from traditional communities and ways of life?
2. Write a paragraph discussing what you think the message the Department of Indian Affairs thought was being communicated through this photograph. Use your inferences from Step 1 to guide your answer.

// **MODIFICATION** Have students answer the questions in point form.



▲ *Quewich and his children*, Qu'Appelle Industrial School, c. 1900 (courtesy of Saskatchewan Archives Board photograph collection, Brock Silversides Fonds/R-A 22202 #23965).

UNDERSTANDING RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

"[C]hildren...have rebelled against the harsh discipline by running away. Caught and brought back, they are locked in a room with just a mattress on the floor, left only their under-clothes, and put on a bread-and-milk diet."

— Ian Adams, "The Indians: An Abandoned and Dispossessed People," *Weekend Magazine* vol. 15, no. 31, 1965

1. As a class, watch the ***Chanie Wenjack Heritage Minute*** and read the ***Chanie Wenjack*** article on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Respond to the following questions together in groups:
 - Why do you think Chanie chose to run away from residential school? What does this say about the conditions students faced in the school?
 - The quote in the Minute, "Kill the Indian in the child," was frequently used to describe the aim of the residential schools. What does this tell you about the intentions of the policies that led to the formation of the residential school system in Canada? Do you think the quote accurately reflects the intentions of the residential schools?
 - What kind of impression of the residential schools does this Minute leave? Compare this to what you have learned about residential schools from other sources. Why is it important to explore different perspectives and use multiple sources?
 - How do you think this story might be different if it were told from the perspective of the school's principal or a teacher? What does this teach you about historical perspective and how we remember the past?
 - According to his family, Chanie Wenjack's name was changed to "Charlie" by the people who ran the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School. What does this tell you about cultural repression and assimilation? How would this contribute to feelings of disconnection and isolation? What do you think were the goals and the impacts of name changing?

The ***Chanie Wenjack Heritage Minute*** was originally released in 2016. In 2019, a **new version of the Minute** was released in Chanie's mother tongue, Anishinaabemowin.

// **MODIFICATION** Ask students to identify and define five new words from the Minute. Students can write a point-form timeline of the events in the Minute. Going scene by scene, have students make a list of words describing Chanie's emotions, and a list of their own emotional responses to what they are viewing.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

"It is the absolute destruction of our ways, our languages, our families and identities. From my perspective it is a stepping stone in the right direction to call it cultural genocide. It is the starting point to a much larger process of awareness, recognition, and reconciliation."

— Dr. Kahente Horn-Miller, Kanien:keha'ka/Mohawk; Assistant Professor in the School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies, Carleton University

"Cultural genocide" is a term used to refer to the intentional eradication and destruction of cultural artifacts and structures, the banning of cultural activities, and the obliteration of social structures rooted in unique cultures. In June 2015, the TRC designated the residential school system a "policy of cultural genocide" (*Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, 133).

In 2019, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* characterized Canada's staggering rates of violence, death, and suicide among Indigenous populations as "genocide," empowered by colonial structures like the *Indian Act*, the Sixties Scoop, and residential schools (*Reclaiming Power and Place*, 50). The 1948 UN Convention on Genocide defines the term as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, including killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and/or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

RESISTANCE AND RESURGENCE: LILLIAN'S STORY

Lillian Elias is a language advocate and former teacher. She grew up in a family of 12 children who depended on the money they received from the federal government's Family Allowance program to survive. The only way to ensure the continued delivery of that allowance was to have at least one child institutionalized at a residential school.

In 1950, when Lillian was about eight years old, her parents took her to Immaculate Conception Residential School in Aklavik, Northwest Territories. While there, she was forbidden to speak her own language — she witnessed her friends being beaten for uttering even one word in Inuvialuktun. When she returned home a few years later, she realized that communication had broken down: Elders and children no longer understood each other.

Lillian became determined to prevent Inuvialuktun from being lost in her community. She became a translator in the summers to maintain the ability to speak her language fluently and to help those in her community who didn't understand English. After leaving residential school, she began teaching Inuvialuktun to young people. Because of her, many Inuvialuit grew up with a better understanding of their Indigenous language, who they are, and where they come from.

1. As a class, watch the [Lillian Elias](#) video and take notes on how Lillian talks about language.
2. After viewing, have a classroom discussion and answer the following questions:
 - How does Lillian see language preservation as an act of resistance?
 - How does this video use symbolic imagery to represent Lillian's experience?
 - How does Lillian's experience show the importance of language preservation for residential school survivors?
3. Using Lillian's story as your inspiration, create a poster that embodies the theme of language preservation as an act of resistance and a display of resilience. Conduct research on Indigenous language preservation campaigns and initiatives to further inform your creation. Alternatively, you may wish to write a song or poem. Your creation should be accompanied by a short written description that shows your understanding of the imperative of language preservation for Indigenous peoples, and explains how your work embodies their strength and resilience through generations of colonial oppression.



INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

KEY TERMS

Trauma: Trauma is a lasting emotional response that often results from living through a highly distressing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. It's important to note that not everyone experiences or processes trauma in the same way. While an event may be distressing to one person, it might not have the same effect on another.

Intergenerational Trauma: Intergenerational trauma is the transmission of historical oppression and its effects through generations — when healing from trauma goes unresolved and is passed on to the generations that follow. A person's coping mechanisms are introduced to their children and then their children's children, resulting in normalized self-destructive behaviour that carries through generations. The long-term effects of the residential school experience on Indigenous peoples can be passed down through generations, severely impacting the health and well-being of Survivors, their families, and their communities.

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

The following activity deals with sensitive topics and may be a trigger for students who have experienced trauma.

1. As a class, watch the [Intergenerational Trauma](#) video.
2. Have a class discussion about the definition and effects of intergenerational trauma. Take notes during the discussion for reference.

- What is trauma?
- What are the differences and similarities between trauma and intergenerational trauma?
- How might experiences at residential school be traumatic for students who attended?
- How might people who haven't attended residential school be affected by the experiences of Survivors?
- What does it mean to be an intergenerational Survivor?
- How does intergenerational trauma affect individuals and families?
- How does it affect communities?
- What are some resources that might help certain people work through their trauma? Think about what communities might be doing to help with the process of healing.

3. Using what you learned in the class discussion, think about ways to educate people about intergenerational trauma. What could be done to help educate the general public about the impacts of intergenerational trauma on individuals and communities? Write a reflection about how education can help with the process of healing.



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THE JOURNEY TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

"From the outset, this Commission has emphasized that reconciliation is not a one-time event; it is a multi-generational journey that involves all Canadians."

— *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 209

In the 1980s and 1990s, Survivors began to speak out about the abuses they had experienced in the residential schools. They took the Government of Canada and the churches involved to court for damages and compensation. By 2002, more than 12,000 legal claims had been filed. Many Survivors worked together in class action lawsuits.

Faced with a deluge of lengthy court battles, the Government of Canada and the churches entered into a negotiated settlement with residential school Survivors. The result was the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), reached in 2005. It was ratified in provincial courts in 2006 and implemented in 2007.

One of the legacies of the IRSSA was the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) in 2008. The TRC delivered its final report in December 2015. More than 6,750 people gave statements to the commission.

The TRC identified 94 recommendations, or Calls to Action, which are specific ways that Canadian society can help make amends for the injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples, particularly the legacies of the residential school system. Many of the Calls to Action focus on the Government of Canada, while others include provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. Many appeal to the Canadian people to honour the legacy of the residential schools and to help right injustices through concrete actions. Five years after the TRC's final report, only a handful of these recommendations have been acted upon.

Part 1:

1. In pairs or small groups, read the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** article and the **Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement** article on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. You can also read the full TRC reports at nctr.ca/reports.php.
2. Together, answer the following questions:
 - What were the main outcomes of the Agreement? Summarize the five components that were agreed on.
 - What were the main outcomes of the TRC?

Part 2:

1. Have a class circle discussion or write a personal reflection about reconciliation and our responsibilities as Canadians. You may choose to address all of the following, or you can select one larger topic to focus on.
 - There are many definitions of reconciliation. What does the word mean to you?
 - How are you involved in the reconciliation journey? Have you participated in any activities that have commemorated residential school students and their families? Have you engaged in projects or events that have honoured Indigenous cultures? What are some ways that individuals can personally contribute to the reconciliation process?
 - Why are things like apologies and compensation payments only a small part of reconciliation? What do you think Canada would look like if all 94 Calls to Action were fully implemented? What would change?
 - How can your community, including your school and local community organizations, contribute meaningfully to the reconciliation process? What can you do to help make reconciliation a reality? Who is responsible for reconciliation?



▲ Above: Justice Murray Sinclair greets the audience at the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report in Ottawa, Ontario, on December 15, 2015 (courtesy of The Canadian Press/Adrian Wylid).

Below: Participants in the Reconciliation Walk march towards Queen's Park in Toronto, Ontario, May 31, 2015 (courtesy of Newzulu/Lars Paronen).

Teacher Tip: You may want to have a circle discussion or ask your students to write a personal reflection, or do both. You can adjust the assignment based on the needs of the classroom and individual students.