

An Environment That Is Safe For People



Diana Elliott – Aboriginal Infant Development Programs – March 9th, 2018

Weaving Our Baskets of Cultural Safety

With your basket of
knowledge
and my basket of
knowledge
the people will prosper



Thought...

“Unless a child learns about forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being”



(1972 Policy Paper – National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations)

BEFORE 150 YEARS AGO:

- **We had our own medicines and healers**
- **Our own governance of hereditary chiefs and leaders**
- **We had Elders and knowledge keepers who were our teachers**
- **No one needed child care or schools**
- **No one was unemployed, no one was ever homeless or hungry**
- **We were, and still are spiritual beings**
- **We are of “One Heart, One Mind”**

WHERE ARE WE?

“If you no longer speak your Language and no longer practice your culture, then you have no right to demand aboriginal rights from us, because you are assimilated with the ruling power.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau
First Ministers Conference, 1983

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your items to: editor@cowichanvalleycitizen.com

The story of one Cowichan man

One of our Elders commented “truth and reconciliation” are very big words.

I was five years old when I was taken away from my parents to attend Kuper Island Indian Residential School. I was scared and cried lots for my Mom and Dad.

My parents would end up in jail if they did not allow me to go. I was very petrified of what was happening to me — the thing is I didn’t know what was going on — it did not feel right.

I was hungry many a day at this school, porridge very watery, the milk was sour and very lumpy. I was slapped by the supervisor of the dorm many a night for crying for my home many a time I was called a “stupid little Indian”; my ears discharged and I went deaf for quite some time.

The spirit of this little boy was deeply dismantled — I was silent for too long. I was sexually abused in this school, I was totally lost, scared and petrified. I cried some more — that’s all I knew how to do.

To those who govern this country, are they willing to look at that big word “TRUTH”, to act and implement?

The journey of this country was to kill the Indian in the child. The heart and soul of our Ancestors and Elders the Hul’ q’uminum mother tongue was torn away — the life of our culture and traditions were burnt with words and law of this country.

Too long I have been compressed and suppressed. For as long I am governed by the Indian Act, I will always be a second class citizen of this country. I don’t own my own house or land. I will not be a subject to what is referred to as royalty. I am learning and healing and making every effort for the truth to be heard. I hope these next celebrations of this country will be a better journey for you and I.

At least our young deserve all of the best and strength of who they truly are — let us all reconcile for this moment for what is true.

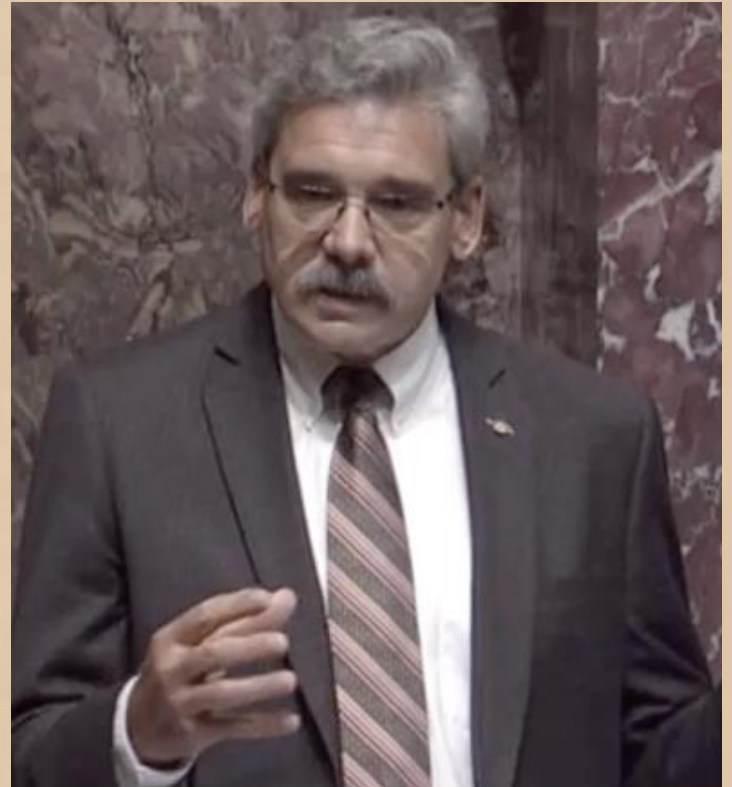
**Tousilum
Duncan**

CDH good experience for family

Re: “Woman speaks out after alleged poor CDH treatment”, (*Citizen*, Jan. 5)

Mike Morris – Prince George/Mackenzie MLA

(Regarding funding to preserve Indigenous languages should be used to crack down on crime in 'First Nations communities' instead)



Mike Morris – Prince George, Mackenzie MLA

*They're spending **50 million dollars** on indigenous language preservation, which I think is important, but at the same time the 50 million dollars would have paid for a couple of hundred extra police officers in rural B.C. and in our First Nations communities to help address the sexual violence and domestic abuse we have in those communities..”*

Mike Morris – Prince George, Mackenzie MLA

“Here we have people suffering every day from alcohol abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and preserving languages is a higher priority than putting that money into extra policing resources? From a risk management perspective, I think that this really needs to be re-examined.”



Cultural Safety

There are a wide variety of terms and definitions we use in defining our work with families.

In the past few years, the topic or term “cultural safety” has been explored.

Cultural Safety...

“Is an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening”

Terms commonly used:

- **Cultural Awareness:** the acknowledgement of difference
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** the recognition of the importance of respecting difference
- **Cultural Relevance:** the acknowledgment of significance or importance.



- **Cultural Differences:** are the variations in the way of life, beliefs, traditions and laws between *different* people and their religions, values, beliefs and governance.
- **Cultural Knowledge:** The ability to understand and comprehend and use your skill and experience.
- **Cultural Competence:** The ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures and/or belief systems other than your own



Imagine...



Inter-Generational Trauma



Indigenous knowledge that was true since the beginning guided the care of children... and then...

Colonization:

There was no freedom, there was no peace, we were removed from our homes, banned from practicing our culture and speaking our languages... our children were taken away to live in residential schools where shameful and uncivilized things happened... still we survived... and now we rebuild based on the strengths of our Elders and Ancestors, culture and traditions.



Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to:

- 1) remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures,
- 2) and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

These objectives were based on the assumption aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal.

"to kill the Indian in the child."

Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

Most schools were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United churches and the Canadian Government.

1857 - Gradual Civilization Act passed to assimilate Indians.

1870-1910 - Period of assimilation where the clear objective of both missionaries and government was to assimilate Aboriginal children into the lower fringes of mainstream society

1920 - Compulsory attendance for all children ages 7-15 years. Children were forcibly taken from their families by priests, Indian agents and police officers.

1931 - There were 80 residential schools operating in Canada.

1948 – There were 72 residential schools with 9,368 students.

1979 – There were 12 residential schools with 1,899 students.

1980's - Residential School students began disclosing sexual and other forms of abuse at residential schools.

1996 - The last federally run residential school, the Gordon Residential School, closes in Saskatchewan.

1998 - The AFN establishes the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Unit.

Parents of Indian children had to camp outside the gates of the residential school

Qu'Appelle - Saskatchewan





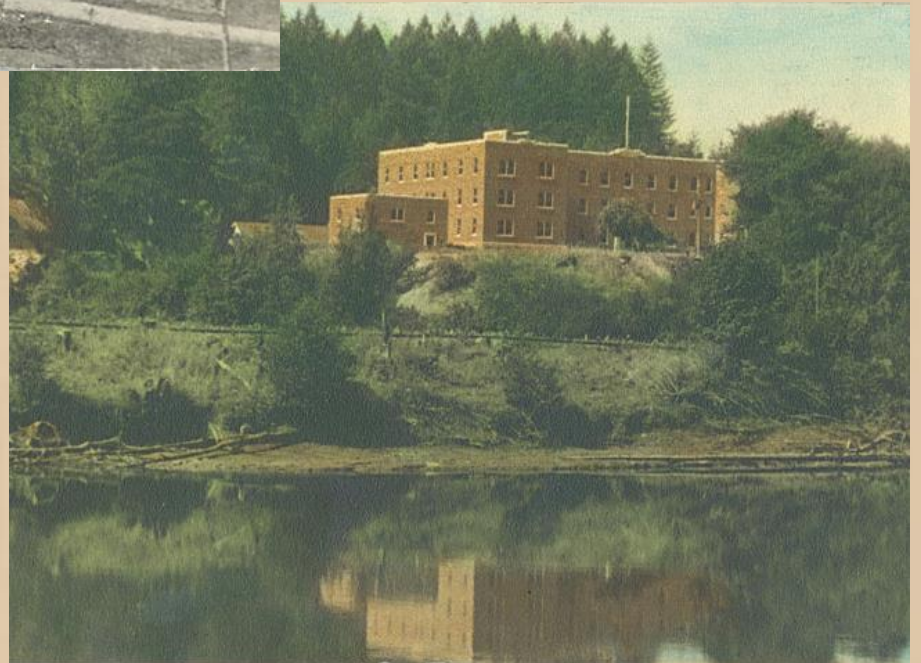
Thomas Moore before and after his entrance into the Regina Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan in 1874.

Library and Archives Canada / NL-022474



Alberni Indian Residential School.

This building burned down in 1937
and was replaced in 1939.



Indian Residential School Students from 3 generations ago...

Front row middle –
Mary Underwood
(nee Elliott)

Front row – right –
Nessie Watts
(nee Lauder)

My great-aunt
My grandmother



*Alberni Residential School
CGIT*



Male students in the assembly hall
of the Alberni Indian Residential
School, 1960s.

United Church Archives

Female students in the assembly hall
of the Alberni Indian Residential
School, 1960s.

United Church Archives



Crutch or Reality...

“How long are you going to use Residential Schools as a crutch?”

(Mental Health Worker)



A message...

“To understand where First Nations people are coming from, you must educate yourselves about one thing: residential schools. It isn’t nice, but it’s crucial to realizing how we got from a balanced, holistic, spiritual, respect-everything, wind-in-our-hair type of people to the people we are today. I always say, ‘we didn’t wake up one morning and decide to be drunks and drug addicts’...I strongly recommend that you understand this point of view before knocking on the door of a First Nations client.”

Rachel Andrew-Nelson
(Mount Currie)

Any parent or Elder you come across in your family or work... was once an innocent child, youth, adult... who deserves to be treated with respect. You do not know their life journey.



Indicators of Cultural Un-safety...

- Low utilization of available services
- Denial of suggestions that there is a problem
- Non-compliance' with referrals or prescribed support
- Reticence in interactions with practitioners



Indicators of Cultural Un-safety...

- Anger
- Low self-worth/confidence
- Complaints about lack of 'cultural appropriateness' of programs, services and interventions received from dominant culture to minority culture



My parents... today...



JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE



Jordan's Principle is a "child first Principle" named in memory of Jordan River Anderson. Jordan was a First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba. Born with complex medical needs, Jordan spent more than two years in hospital while the Province of Manitoba and the federal government argued over who should pay for his *at home care*. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of five years old, never having spent a day in his family home.

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE...

Examples of health services that may be considered under Jordan's Principle include:

Home support and personal care; in-home nursing care; in-home respite; client assessment; case management; physiotherapy; occupational therapy; speech language therapy; in-home palliative care services for children; and certain nutritional supplements.

Social services that may also be considered under Jordan's Principle includes:

Meal programs, meal planning and preparation for children with special dietary needs, day programs for children, attendant care services, group care and non-medical transportation; and minor home maintenance related to accessibility (levered door handles instead of knobs; support rails in bathrooms).

**First Nations Health Authority:
Jordan's Principle Implementation**

1-866-913-0033

Jordans.Principle@fnha.ca

For our Children...

**Let us put
Our minds together,
and
see what life
we will make
for our children**

***Chief Sitting Bull
(1831 to 1890)***



**“We cannot
change yesterday.**

**We can only make
the most of today,**

**And look forward
with hope toward
tomorrow”**



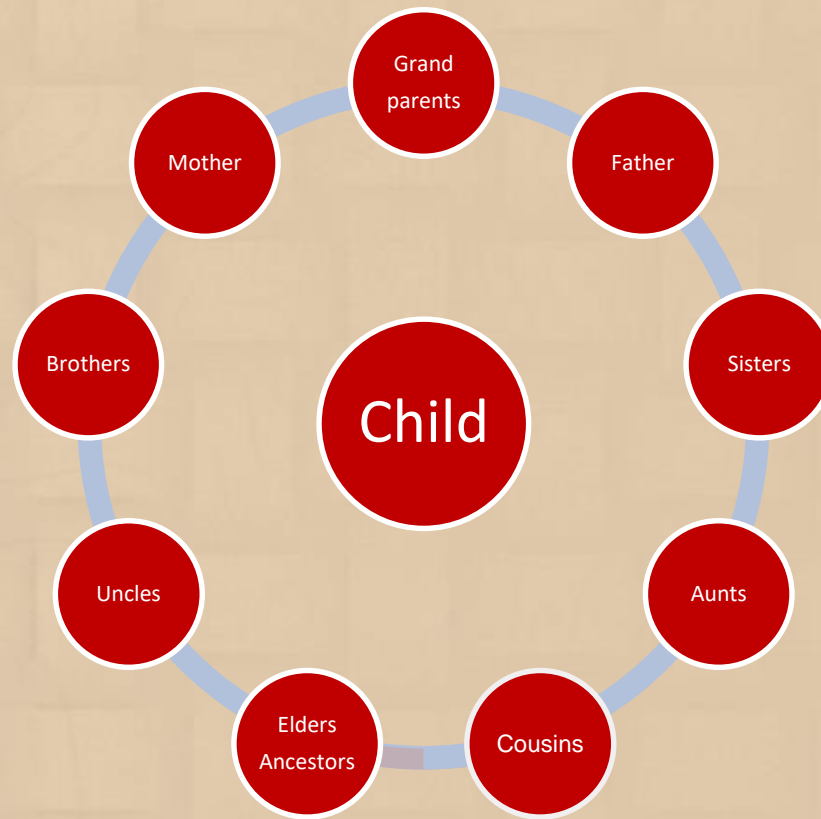


“The best time to influence the character of a child is 100 years before they are born”

(W.R. Inge)

Because our people had that strong belief whatever happened, to keep our family circle strong. With a circle, there is no beginning, no ending. Within the family circle, we have the grandparents, who were the teachers, the young moms, the young dads, big brothers, big sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins. They're all in the outside circle. And every one of them had an obligation to the little ones in the centre. Children were never growing up without somebody there all the time."

(Teaching from Shuswap Elder – 2004)



Aboriginal Children in Care...

*“What does it say
about a culture or
society to pay to
ensure children are
protected from
their parents?”*

(Dr. Bruce Perry)

Letting go...



Aboriginal Children in Care...



**'We have never had more
First Nations children in child
welfare care than we do at
this moment.'**

*Cindy Blackstock,
youth advocate*

The reasons why First Nations children go into child welfare care are poverty, poor housing and caregiver substance misuse. The good news is that these are problems we can do something about.

THOUGHT...

This is not the world
we want for our children...



But, if the next generation is to know
nurturing families, self confidence,
happiness, freedom, opportunity,
equality and peace we must all work
together. We cannot wait for others to
do this for us...



MANDATE FOR THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

There is an emerging and compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us so that we can work towards a stronger and healthier future. The truth telling and reconciliation process as part of an overall holistic and comprehensive response to the Indian Residential School legacy is a sincere indication and acknowledgement of the injustices and harms experienced by Aboriginal people and the need for continued healing. This is a profound commitment to establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will forge a brighter future. The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation.

TRC...

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has challenged Canada to alter the relationship with Aboriginal peoples across the country. One area the TRC specifically identified is child protection. A call to action that requires a significant consideration around how agencies charged with this responsibility interact with Aboriginal people both on and off reserves.

The legacy of Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop and other detrimental factors of assimilation and cultural genocide are found in a number of existing social policy and practices, including child protection. The TRC calls to action for change that is needed in child protection policies by challenging the current assessment practice which determines, from a non-Aboriginal child-rearing perspective and philosophy, if parents are 'good enough' to raise their own children.

Inter-Generational Healing





Dedication:

To the children taken
To the parents left behind
To the stolen generations



We've got this!



References...

Assembly of First Nations

<http://www.afn.ca>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

<http://www.trc.ca>

First Nations Child and Family Caring
Society

<http://www.fncaringsociety.com>

ABORIGINAL INFANT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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