HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Mohawk Institute becomes Canada’s first residential school in Brantford, Ontario. At first, the school only admits boys. In 1834, girls are admitted.

1831

The Bagot Commission proposes that separating Indigenous children from their parents is the best way to achieve assimilation. It also recommends that the Mohawk Institute be considered a model for other industrial schools.

The Gradual Civilization Act requires male ‘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 “sufficiently advanced” Indigenous male, and in return removes any tribal affiliation or treaty rights.

1857

The Gradual Civilization Act requires male ‘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 “sufficiently advanced” Indigenous male, and in return removes any tribal affiliation or treaty rights.

The Canadian Encyclopedia: nctr.ca/map.php

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports: nctr.ca/reports.php


Residential Schools: thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools

Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement: thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-residential-schools-settlement-agreement

The Legacy of Indian Residential Schools

The legacy of Indian residential schools remains a controversial subject in Canadian history. You will do some research to better understand the intentions and motivations for the schools. Working in groups, research one of the following questions. Use the resources listed below to begin your research.

A. What were the goals of the residential schools? How did the residential schools seek to meet these goals? Was attendance at residential schools mandatory? How was it enforced?

B. Describe life at residential schools. Look at circumstances and policies. How were students at the residential schools affected by the neglect, abuse, and lack of affection?

C. Were officials aware of problems such as hunger and overcrowding at residential schools during the time they were in operation? How did teachers and operators react to these issues?

D. How did Survivors’ relationships with their families and communities change as a result of attending residential schools? How have the policies that traumatized students affected later generations?

Share your findings as a class, and discuss what you have learned from your research.

Further educational activities and resources are available on The Canadian Encyclopedia. We hope this Guide will assist you in teaching this important subject in Canadian history.
The Sixties Scoop
12 residential schools are still operating in Canada, with 1,200 children attending. The Department of Indian Affairs evaluates the schools and creates a series of initiatives. Among them is a plan to make the school administration more culturally aware of the needs of Indigenous students.

1979
The Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommends a public inquiry into the effects residential schools have had on subsequent generations. The 4,000-page document makes 440 recommendations calling for changes in the relationship between Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous peoples, and governments in Canada.

1996
The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement provides compensation to Survivors of residential schools. All Survivors receive the Common Experience payment, based on the number of years they attended residential school. Claims of sexual and physical abuse are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

2007–2012
The TRC issues its final report, Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, documenting the tragic experiences of approximately 150,000 residential school students. The report also includes 94 Calls to Action.