



# The Healing Has Begun

*An Operational Update  
from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation*

May 2002



# Message from the President, Georges Erasmus

Danet'e:

Welcome to *The Healing Has Begun*, a publication of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Perhaps this is, for you, an introduction to Canada's Indian residential school system and the work of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. If so, a brief overview of this publication's purpose may be of use.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established on March 31, 1998 to fund projects which address the legacy, including intergenerational impacts, of sexual and physical abuse suffered by Aboriginal people in Canada's Indian residential school system. By the time you read this, the Foundation will have only about 15 months to commit the remainder of its \$350 million healing fund (plus the interest generated).

Now that we are considering multi-year funding and Healing Centre Programs applications, we expect the remainder of the fund to be committed quickly. Time is running out for those interested in program support.

We believe that the Canadian public has an interest in the current issues surrounding the residential school system and its legacy. We have therefore attempted to present an overview of our work, as well as the present state of matters relating to the Indian residential school system.



These, in short, are the reasons we have produced *The Healing Has Begun*.

In the following pages you will find brief articles concerning residential school misconceptions and history, the current efforts to address the residential school system's impacts, the work of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and the challenges ahead.

In closing, I would like to emphasize several points addressed in this document:

- The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has only about 15 months left to commit funding
- We are trying to engage the Government of Canada in discussing an effective exit strategy
- We want to raise awareness of the other challenges that lie ahead.

Residential school issues are a prominent concern for many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and they will likely remain so for years to come. On behalf of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, I express the hope that this document will contribute positively to the necessary and important work of healing and reconciliation which is already underway across Canada.

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# Indian Residential Schools

## Misconceptions

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*No one knew at the time about the conditions of residential schools.*

There is ample evidence that the church and government worked together to keep known abuses from public view. Their efforts however failed. As early as 1920, Canadians could read published reports of the conditions in the residential school. These conditions included inadequate nutrition, inadequate health standards, and inadequate staff training. P.H. Bryce, a government inspector of the schools, concluded that the system was a "national crime." Even by the standards of the day, the system was appalling. Bryce's findings were published in *The Montreal Star* and *Saturday Night Magazine*. Nothing however changed.

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*Aboriginal people asked for residential schools.*

Government funding of Aboriginal education is a legal obligation negotiated, in Treaty, between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal peoples. In exchange for sharing their territories, Aboriginal people wanted schools to provide skills to Indian children just as the schools provided them to non-Aboriginal children. They wanted a system based upon consent, not coercion. Aboriginal people did not request cultural assimilation, nor did they request for their children physical and sexual abuse, deprivation, and humiliation.

*continued...*

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*The schools were well-intentioned. Everyone believed at the time that assimilation was a good policy. Many good people worked in the schools. The schools produced good as well as bad.*

The students' experiences of residential schools were not all bad. Different people had differing experiences. Many dedicated, good people worked in the system. The system itself however was designed "to educate & colonize a people against their will," as the missionary Hugh McKay admitted in 1903. The policy of forced assimilation had many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal critics, but in each case the critics were silenced. A good example is the missionary E.F. Wilson, who came into conflict with the church over his criticism of forced assimilation and his promotion of Aboriginal culture, language and political autonomy. In short, not everyone believed the schools were promoting good policy.



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• For a history of the residential school system in Canada, see page 3



*Hardly any Indian children actually attended the schools.*

Over the period 1800-1990, over 130 residential (boarding, industrial) schools had existed at one time or another. The number of active schools peaked at 80 in 1931. In the early 1900s about 1/6 of children between 6 and 15 attended these schools. Geoffrey York reports that by the 1940s, about 8,000 Indian children – half the Indian student population – were enrolled in 76 residential schools across the country.

However, these are national averages. In some regions – the North, British Columbia, and the Prairies for examples – the percentages were higher. There are communities which had all their children forcibly removed. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba – which characterized the Indian residential school system "a conscious, deliberate and often brutal attempt to force Aboriginal people to assimilate" – noted that "for the first time in over 100 years, many families are experiencing a generation of children who live with their parents until their teens."

In any case, the consequences of the system are not adequately captured by statistics. Nor did the school system operate in isolation. Residential schools constituted one piece of a larger policy puzzle. Where the residential school system left off – in the effort to solve the "Indian Problem" – the Indian Act and the Child Welfare, Reservation, and Justice systems took over. It is these larger relationships, and the forced assimilationist policy that informs them, which account for much of the varied conditions of Aboriginal life.

## 5

*Residential Schools happened a long time ago. It's history now. Aboriginal people would be better off if they stopped dwelling on the past and got on with their lives.*

There are approximately 93,000 former students alive today. Residential schools were in operation well into the last quarter of the 20th Century. Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife, NT did not close until the 1990s. The abuses did not happen only a long time ago. Furthermore, the residential school introduced features to Aboriginal communities which have been passed on from generation to generation — these are spoken of collectively as the intergenerational legacy of the residential school system. The consequences of the policy of forced assimilation are very much alive in Aboriginal communities. §

# Indian Residential Schools

## An Overview

Canada's Indian Residential School system began officially in 1892 with an Order-in-Council, yet many features of the system are older than Canada itself. Indeed, the residential school's origins reach as far back as the 1600s – to the early days of Christian missionary infiltrations into North America.

For over 300 years, Europeans and Aboriginal peoples regarded one another as distinct nations. In war, colonists and Indians formed alliances, and in trade each enjoyed the economic benefits of co-operation. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, European hunger for land had expanded dramatically, and the economic base of the colonies shifted from fur to agriculture. Alliances of the early colonial era gave way, during the period of settlement expansion and nation-building, to direct competition for land and resources. Settlers began to view Aboriginal people as a "problem."

The so-called "Indian problem" was the mere fact that Indians existed. They were seen as an obstacle to the spread of "civilization" – that is to say, the spread of European, and later

Canadian, economic, social, and political interests. Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, summed up the Government's position when he said, in 1920, "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. [...] Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian Question and no Indian Department."

In 1842, the Bagot Commission produced one of the earliest official documents to recommend education as a means of ridding the Dominion of Indians. In this instance, the proposal concerned farm-based boarding schools placed far from parental influence. The document was followed, in immediate successive decades, by others of similar substance: the Gradual Civilization Act (1857), an Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of the Indian (1869), and the Nicholas Flood Davin Report of 1879, which noted that "the industrial school is the principal feature of the policy known as that of 'aggressive civilization.'" This policy dictated that:

the Indians should, as far as practicable, be consolidated on few reservations, and provided with "permanent individual homes" ; that the tribal relation should be abolished ; that lands should be allotted in severalty and not in common ; that the Indian should speedily become a citizen [...] enjoy the protection of the law, and be made amenable thereto ; that, finally, it was the duty of the Government to afford the Indians all reasonable aid in their preparation for citizenship by educating them in the industry and in the arts of civilization.

A product of the times, Davin disclosed in this report the assumptions of his era – that "Indian culture" was a contradiction in terms, Indians were uncivilized, and the aim of education must be to destroy the Indian. In 1879 he returned from his study of the United States' handling of the Indian



Photo: National Archives of Canada





British, and later, Canadian institutions and laws.

The federal government and the churches – Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian – therefore applied to their “Indian Problem” the instrument of education, also known as the policy of aggressive civilization. The initial education

Problem with a recommendation to Canada’s Minister of the Interior – John A. Macdonald – of industrial boarding schools.

Government officials as early as 1897. In 1907 Indian Affairs’ chief medical officer, P.H. Bryce, reported a death toll among the schools’ children ranging from 15-24% – and rising to 42% in Aboriginal homes, where sick children were sometimes sent to die. In some individual institutions, for example Old Sun’s school on the Blackfoot reserve, Bryce found death rates which were even higher.

F.H. Paget, an Indian Affairs accountant, reported that the school buildings themselves were often in disrepair, having been constructed and maintained (as Davin himself had recommended) in the cheapest fashion possible. Indian Affairs Superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott told Arthur Meighen in 1918 that the buildings were “undoubtedly chargeable with a very high death rate among the pupils.” But nothing was done, for reasons Scott himself had made clear eight years earlier, in a letter to BC Indian Agent General-Major D. MacKay:

It is readily acknowledged that Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habituating so closely in the residential schools, and that they die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this

*“Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada ...”*

The assumptions, and their complementary policies, were convenient. Policy writers such as Davin believed that the Indian must soon vanish, for the Government had Industrial Age plans they could not advantageously resolve with Aboriginal cultures. The economic communism of Indians – that is to say, the Indians’ ignorance (from a European perspective) of individual property rights – was met with hostility by settlers eager for ownership of the land. Colonization required the conversion of Indians into individualistic economic agents who would submit themselves to

model was the industrial school, which focused on the labour skills of an agriculture-based household economy.

From the beginning, the schools exhibited systemic problems. Per-capita Government grants to Indian residential schools – an arrangement which prevailed from 1892 to 1957 and which represented only a fraction of the expenditures dedicated to non-Aboriginal education – were inadequate to the needs of the children. Broad occurrences of disease, hunger, and overcrowding were noted by



alone does not justify a change in the policy of this Department, which is geared towards a final solution of our Indian Problem.

As a consequence of under-funding, residential schools were typically places of physical, emotional and intellectual deprivation. The quality of education was quite low, when compared to non-Aboriginal schools. In 1930, for instance, only 3 of 100 Aboriginal students managed to

even of contemporary standards, a fact recorded by successive inspectors. A letter to the Medical Director of Indian Affairs noted in 1953 that "children ... are not being fed properly to the extent that they are garbaging around in the barns for food that should only be fed to the Barn occupants." S.H. Blake, QC, argued in 1907 that the Department's neglect of the schools' problems brought it "within



Photo: National Archives of Canada

*"Indian children can learn and absorb nothing from their ignorant parents but barbarism."*

advance past grade 6, and few found themselves prepared for life after school – either on the reservation or off. The effect of the schools for many students was to prevent the transmission of Aboriginal skills and cultures without putting in their place, as educators had proposed to do, a socially useful, Canadian alternative.

No matter how one regarded it – as a place for child-rearing or as an educational institution – the Indian residential school system fell well short

unpleasant nearness to the charge of manslaughter." P.H. Bryce, whose efforts earned him the enmity of the Department (and an eventual dismissal), was so appalled – not only by the abuses themselves but by subsequent Government indifference as well – that he published his 1907 findings in a 1922 pamphlet entitled "A National Crime." In the pamphlet, Bryce noted that:

Recommendations made in this report followed the examinations of hundreds of children; but

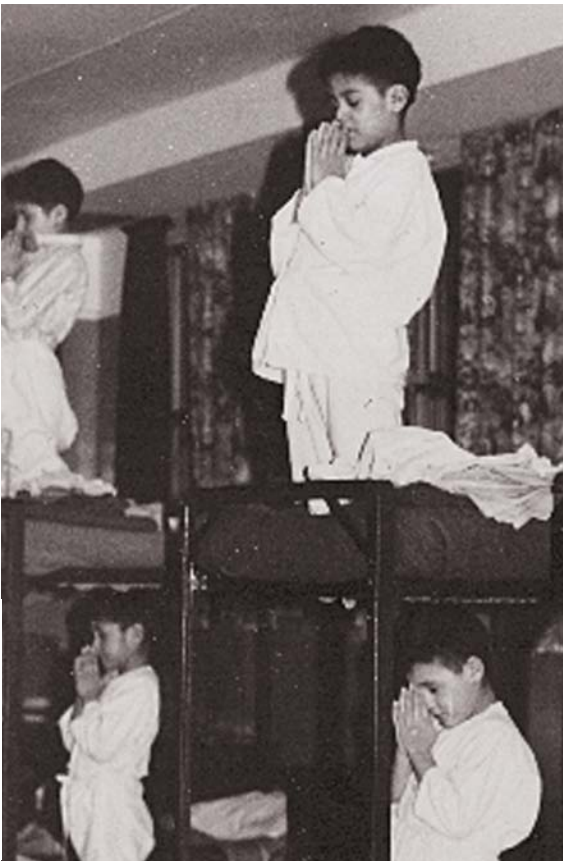
owing to the active opposition of Mr. D.C. Scott, and his advice to the then Deputy Minister, no action was taken by the Department to give effect to the recommendations made.

Bryce's 1907 report received the attention of *The Montreal Star* and *Saturday Night Magazine*, the latter of which characterized residential schools "a situation disgraceful to the country." These publications, and others like them, make it clear that the conditions of the schools were generally knowable and known, by officials of the church and government, and by the public-at-large.

Because contempt for Aboriginal language and culture, and for the children themselves, shaped Canada's policies toward Indians, matters continued as before despite internal reports and published accounts of abuse. In 1883, General Milroy was quoted in a British







determine the character of the individual schools. Nor were the conditions identical in each institution: students today recall diverse memories of both good and bad experiences, as well as good and bad teachers. Nonetheless, the widespread occurrence of certain residential school features suggests that structural elements were in effect. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded

children's work, play and personal care. Their hours were long, the remuneration below that of other educational institutions, and the working conditions irksome.

In short, the schools constituted a closed institutional culture that made scrutiny difficult, if not impossible. For staff the result was, in the words of RCAP, a "struggle against children and their culture [...] conducted in an atmosphere of considerable stress, fatigue and anxiety." In such conditions, abuses were not unlikely – a fact to which the experts of the day attested.

*... the experiences of the residential school were "really detrimental to the development of the human being."*

Columbia petition for industrial boarding schools as saying that "Indian children can learn and absorb nothing from their ignorant parents but barbarism." The residential school system, designed to produce in the Aboriginal child "a horror of Savages and their filth" (in the words of Jesuit missionary Fr. Paul LeJeune), was rationalized by this contemptuous belief.

Individual beliefs about Indians, which in any case varied, did not

in 1996 that the schools themselves were, for readily identifiable and known reasons, "opportunistic sites of abuse":

Isolated in distant establishments, divorced from opportunities for social intercourse, and placed in closed communities of co-workers with the potential for strained interpersonal relations heightened by inadequate privacy, the staff not only taught but supervised the

Then there are the testimonies of hundreds of former students, whose list of abuses suffered includes kidnapping, sexual abuse, beatings, needles pushed through tongues as punishment for speaking Aboriginal languages, forced wearing of soiled underwear on the head or wet bed-sheets on the body, faces rubbed in human excrement, forced eating of rotten and/or maggot infested food, being stripped naked and ridiculed in front of other students, forced to stand upright for several hours – on two feet and sometimes one – until collapsing, immersion in ice water,





hair ripped from heads, use of students in eugenics and medical experiments, bondage and confinement in closets without food or water, application of electric shocks, forced to sleep outside – or to walk barefoot – in winter, forced labour, and on and on. Former students concluded in a 1965 Government consultation that the experiences of the residential school were "really detrimental to the development of the human being."

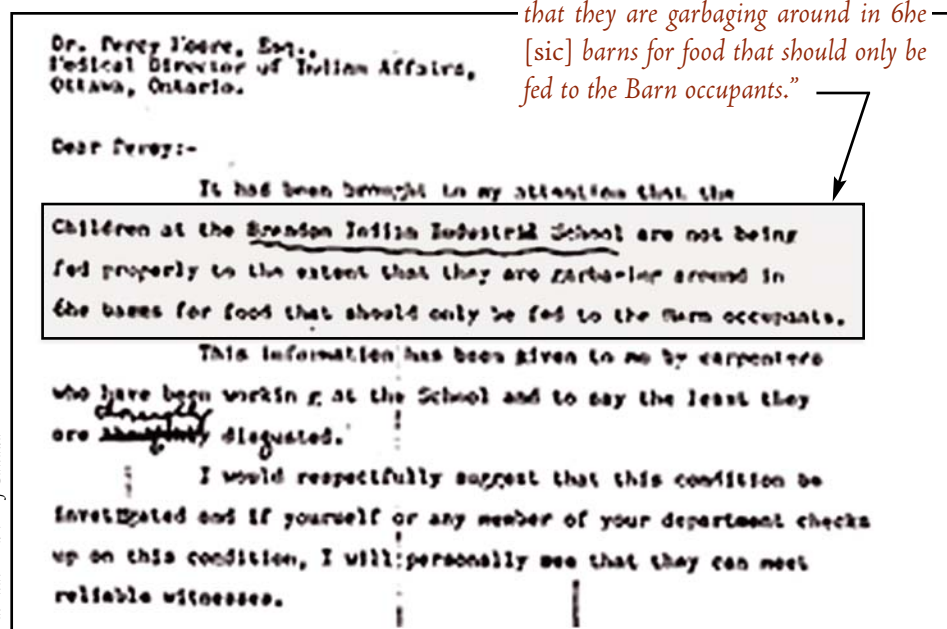
This system of forced assimilation has had consequences which are with Aboriginal people today. Many of those who went through the schools were denied an opportunity to devel-

op parenting skills. They struggled with the destruction of their identities as Aboriginal people, and with the destruction of their cultures and languages. Generations of Aboriginal people today recall memories of trauma, neglect, shame, and poverty. Thousands of former students have come forward to reveal that physical, emotional and sexual abuse were rampant in the system and that little was done to stop it, to punish the abusers, or to improve conditions.

The residential school system is not alone responsible for the current conditions of Aboriginal lives, but it did play a role. Following the demise of the Indian residential school, the systemic policy known as "aggressive civilization" has continued in other forms.

Many of the abuses of the residential school system were, we should keep in mind, exercised in deliberate promotion of a "final solution of the Indian Problem," in the words of Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott. If development of the healthy Aboriginal human being meant respect of Aboriginal cultures, then indeed the regimented culture of the schools was designed precisely to be detrimental. As noted in the 1991 Manitoba Justice Inquiry, the residential school "is where the alienation began" – alienation of Aboriginal children from family, community, and from themselves. Or to put the matter another way, the purpose of the schools was, like all forced assimilationist schemes, to kill the Indian in the Indian – an effort many survivors today describe as cultural genocide. §

*Below: letter written Sept. 16, 1953 by J.W. Breaky to P.E. Moore, Medical Director of Indian Affairs: "Children at the Brandon Indian Industrial School are not being fed properly to the extent that they are garbaging around in 6he [sic] barns for food that should only be fed to the Barn occupants."*



# Breaking the Silence

The slow but relentless efforts to break the wall of silence around the residential school system finally began to succeed in the 1980s.

In the wake of the Oka crisis, the Federal Government of Brian Mulroney appointed the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in August of 1991. One of the two Co-chairs of the Commission was Georges Erasmus, the former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. The Commission had a very broad mandate, drafted by Brian Dickson, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. The Commission held hearings across the country and oversaw an extensive analysis of Aboriginal issues.

Throughout the 1990s, as reports of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools escalated and more Aboriginal victims from one end of the country to the other came forward with complaints, the police began to investigate.

In 1993, as a result of a BC Study into residential school abuses, the RCMP created the Native Residential School Task Force to examine all residential schools in operation from 1890 to 1984.

On December 1, 1994, Judge Stuart Stratton, QC, former Chief Justice of New Brunswick, was appointed to direct an investigation into abuse at the five Nova Scotia residential schools. Following the judicial investigation by Judge Stratton, the RCMP in "H" Division, Nova Scotia, formed "Operation Hope."



In November 1996, the Commission issued its final 5-volume report featuring over 100 pages worth of detailed recommendations. Chapter 10, which addresses the issue of residential schools, broke a taboo and revealed the full extent of the abuse suffered by Aboriginal children. §



Aboriginal Digital Collections

"Breaking the Silence, as a book and as a step on the healing journey, marks a beginning. Here, in this small effort, the Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations let the words and the lives of the victims and survivors of "residential schools" speak for themselves. In their words you will feel a world of pain and despair. You will feel the oppression [...] by institutions of church and state. This is a necessary part of "breaking the silence" and I ask for your courage, no matter your station in life, to feel the pain, to see the trauma and to advocate for the healing and the solutions."

- Ovide Mercredi.

# Words of Promise

"The origins of the residential school system predate Confederation, and the intergenerational impacts of abuse in the schools are profound ... Our challenge will be to respond to the different needs of individual victims, families and communities."

- Georges Erasmus, Co-chair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

"Whatever the words of your final report and recommendations may be, they will mean little if they are not met with the political will, the knowledge and the ability to achieve their intent."

- Chief Robert Pasco, Nlaka'pamux Tribal Council, Merritt, British Columbia.

On January 7<sup>th</sup> 1998, the Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs, announced *Gathering Strength – Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* at a public ceremony. As part of this commitment to a renewed partnership with Aboriginal People, the Minister presented a Statement of Reconciliation to all Aboriginal peoples for the abuses in residential schools:

"Sadly our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal people is not something in which we can take pride ... One aspect of our relationship with Aboriginal people over that period that requires particular attention is the residential school system. This system separated many children from their families and communities and prevented them from speaking their languages and from learning about their heritage and cultures. In the worst cases, it left legacies of personal pain and distress that continue to reverberate in Aboriginal communities. To those of you

who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry."

- The Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs.

On January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1998, in response to RCAP's findings, the Government of Canada committed itself to a \$350 million fund to address the healing needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals, families and communities who suffer the legacy of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools, including intergenerational impacts. On March 30, 1998, after consultations with survivors and Aboriginal Organisations, a funding agency called the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established as an Aboriginal-run, not-for-profit corporation, independent of the government and the representative Aboriginal Organisations. §



# The Foundation of Healing

"Survivors who have spoken out say if you file a residential school claim expect your life to get worse before it gets better. Even if you think you put those abuse issues behind you 20 or 40 years ago and you are all right now. You'd better be well along on your healing journey or have a lot of family support, they say, because there's no telling how many times you are going to have to relive the horror and shame once the church and government lawyers get to you. The official apologies mean nothing, they assert, when you get a church lawyer in your face calling you a liar."

- *Windspeaker, April, 2001 – Special Report: Residential Schools.*

The central concept of healing in Aboriginal cultures represents, still, one of the major gaps in understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. As the first organisation of its kind, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation occupies a unique position – first, in helping Métis, Inuit and First Nations communities heal them-

selves, and second, in bridging the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

To help address the intergenerational impact of the last hundred years of residential schooling, the Foundation was established with a 10-year mandate, as follows :

- April 1, 1998-March 31, 1999: One year to set-up operations
- April 1, 1999-March 31, 2003: Four years to commit project funds
- April 1, 2003-March 31, 2008: Five years to monitor and evaluate funded projects and write a report.

Compensatory redress, in the forms of litigation and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), has become a large part of the process of addressing residential school system abuses – but these approaches do not deal with the long-term healing needed for the renewal of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

For the majority of survivors, the process of compensatory redress hinders or significantly delays much needed healing.

The present process of redress is tagged with ever-escalating costs. The

delays in getting compensation means that tens of thousands of Aboriginal people live under intolerable stress, which sooner or later may be translated into a healing crisis.

With its fixed funding capacity, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation supports grassroot projects which are attempting to respond to the healing needs of many thousands of survivors, their families, and descendants.

Residential schools operated for over 100 years. Healing for survivors and their descendants is a long-term enterprise. The long-term objective of a renewed relationship, stated by the Government of Canada in their *Gathering Strength* documentation, rests entirely on long-term healing, and not on litigation. *continued...*

"Healing and reconciliation begins with understanding that we, as non-Aboriginal Canadians, must first be healed before we are able to reconcile with First Nations neighbours."

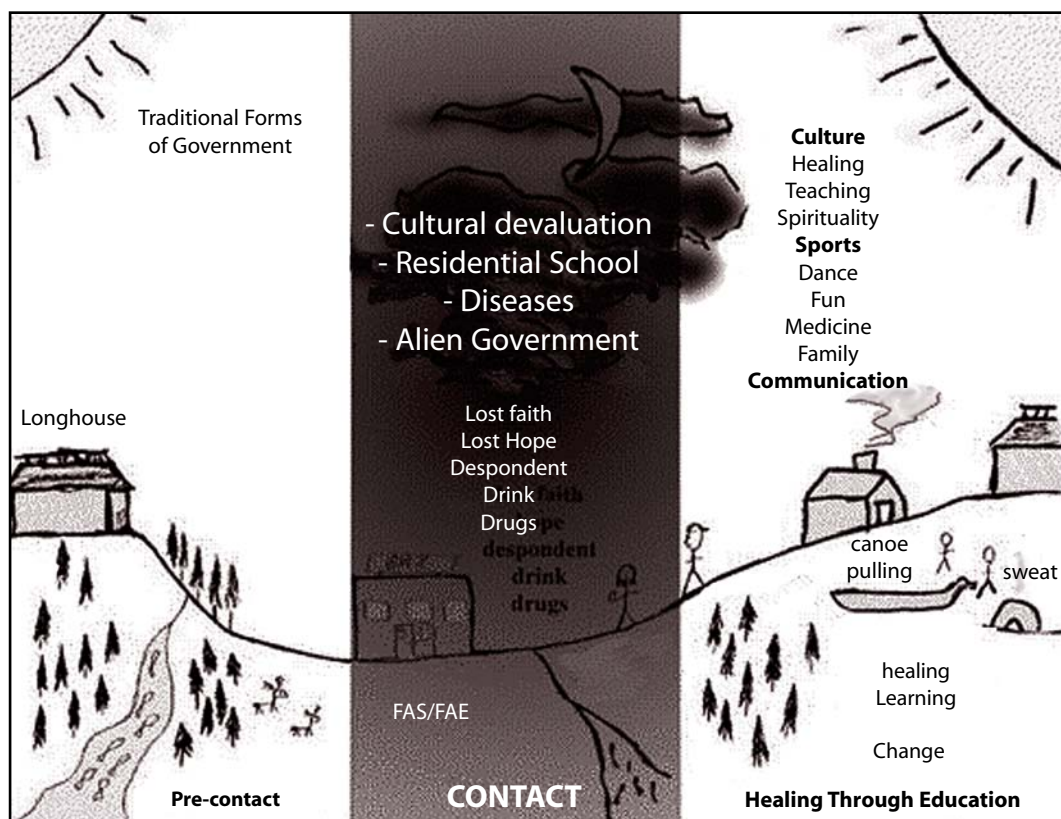
- *Justice and Reconciliation – United Church of Canada.*

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has therefore been entrusted with the most important component of that objective within a financial and operational framework designed by the Government. This framework will dictate the ultimate success or failure on the part of the Government to renew, through genuine and long term healing, its partnership with Aboriginal people. The relationship between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people is also at a critical moment, in which the present commitment to genuine reconciliation and a renewed relationship – or the lack of such a commitment – may establish the social conditions faced by future generations.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation, in partnership with the Aboriginal Healing Charitable Association, and the National Archives of Canada, with contributions from the four major churches in Canada and the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution of Canada, is producing a photo exhibition, entitled

**“The government’s response is merely the first step of a long journey. In fact, the Royal Commission report specifically called for a 20-year commitment from Canada to renew its relationship with Aboriginal Peoples.”**

*- National Chief Phil Fontaine, in a speech made on the occasion of the Government response to the RCAP Final Report, January 7, 1998.*



*An illustration of the cycle of healing many first nations communities face  
<http://aboriginalcollections.ic.gc.ca/suneymuxw/lifetd4.htm>*

*Where are the children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential School.* This exhibit relates the residential school system’s history through historical photographs and selected documents from the collections of the National Archives of Canada and

various religious groups. The project, one example of our work in healing and reconciliation, aims to promote awareness of the residential school system, as well as understanding and tolerance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. §

# Aboriginal Healing Foundation Projects

\* For a full listing and description of funded projects, please visit the Aboriginal Healing Foundation website: [www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)

At time of writing, the AHF has received 2,516 proposals since January 1999. All of these proposals underwent our review and evaluation process. 1,229 proposals were deemed to be complete and were considered for funding.

\$208,154,883.39 has been committed to 922 projects. The AHF's overall approval rate is about 77%.

The types of projects funded include:

- Healing Services (healing circles, day treatment centres, sex offender programs)
- Community services and life skills (support networks, leadership training for healers)
- Prevention and awareness (education and training materials, sexual abuse workshops)
- Traditional activities (on the land retreats, support networks for Elders and Healers)
- Training and education (parenting skills, curriculum development).

"As a country, we must be direct about the magnitude of the challenge and ambitious in our commitment to tackle the most pressing problems facing aboriginal people. Reaching our objectives will take time, but we must not be deterred by the length of the journey or the obstacles that we may encounter along the way."

- Speech from the Throne (January 2001).



Photo: Fred Cattroll

"... like most aboriginal people of my generation across Canada, the residential school experience has an impact on life today. This and many other memories of the residential school experience are being heard across Canada, where all of us who attended, rightly termed as "survivors," are beginning to admit and share what happened."

- Angus Cockney, Globe & Mail.



# The Healing Has Begun



## Findings of the Interim Evaluation\*

### *Participants and Project Teams*

• According to survey data, a possible maximum of 59,224 participants engaged in AHF-funded activity.

• 48,286 participants engaged in individual healing activity – i.e. healing with a focus on individual progress.

Addictions, victimization and abuse are clearly the most severe participant challenges affecting the majority of projects (69%, 58%, and 58%, respectively).

Other common challenges which are reported as severe by a sizable group (>40%) include denial or grief, poverty, and lack of parenting skills.

Healing projects identified 7,589 individuals with special needs (e.g. suffered severe trauma, inability to engage in a group, history of suicide attempt or life threatening addiction).

### *Training and Employment*

Trainees were most often women (64%) and those inter-generationally impacted (47%) by the legacy of residential school physical and sexual abuse.

• AHF projects reported a total of 1,916 paid employees – 1,126 full time

Teams were most likely to be composed of administrators, cultural personnel (i.e. Elders, coordinators,

teachers), healers and outreach staff.

• 88% of all positions are occupied by Aboriginal people

• Survivors occupy 50% of all positions

In a typical month, over 13,000 volunteer service hours are contributed to AHF projects.

Each project enjoys an average of 65 volunteer hours per month.

If we assume that the value of this contribution could be remunerated at \$10/hour, then volunteer efforts represent an injection of \$130,000 dollars per month, or \$1,560,000 per year. \$

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## \*About the Interim Evaluation of the Foundation's work

The Interim Evaluation had the express purpose of examining the implementation of service delivery objectives to date (2000), as well as the attainment of short-term outcomes, as a way of being accountable to several primary stakeholders, namely:

- those impacted by the legacy of residential schools
- Governments, and
- external supporters of the Foundation.

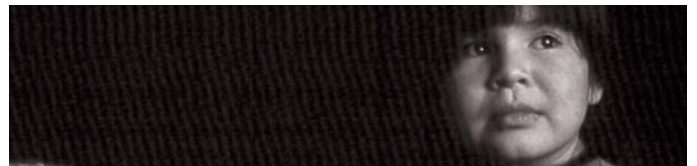


Photo: Fred Cattroll

A sample of 36 project files were reviewed and the mail out survey was sent to all 344 projects that were operational at the time (January, 2001) with a 74% response rate. Whenever possible, relevant numerical information from AHF's internal databases was also used. The following presents highlights from each of the major chapters of the report.

# The Healing Has Begun

A total of 1,686 communities were being served by Aboriginal Healing Foundation at the time of the Report, the bulk of which were rural (55%) or urban (29%). Ten percent were in semi-isolated areas and six percent were active in remote areas.

## Project Performance

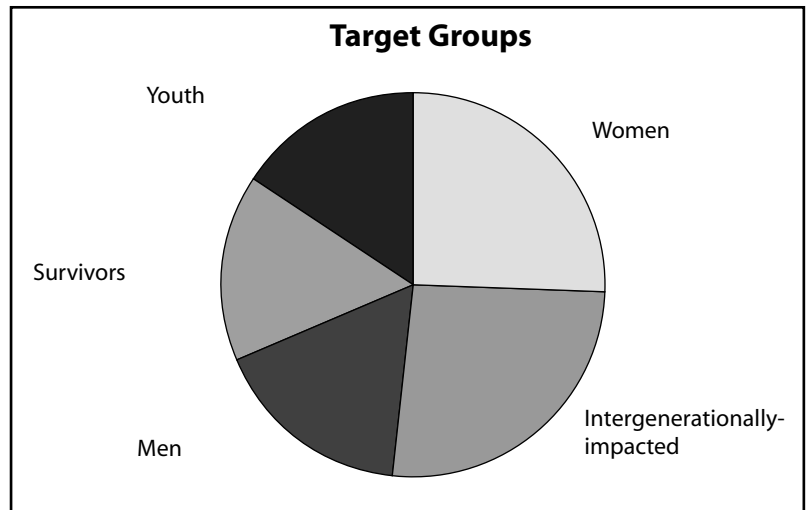
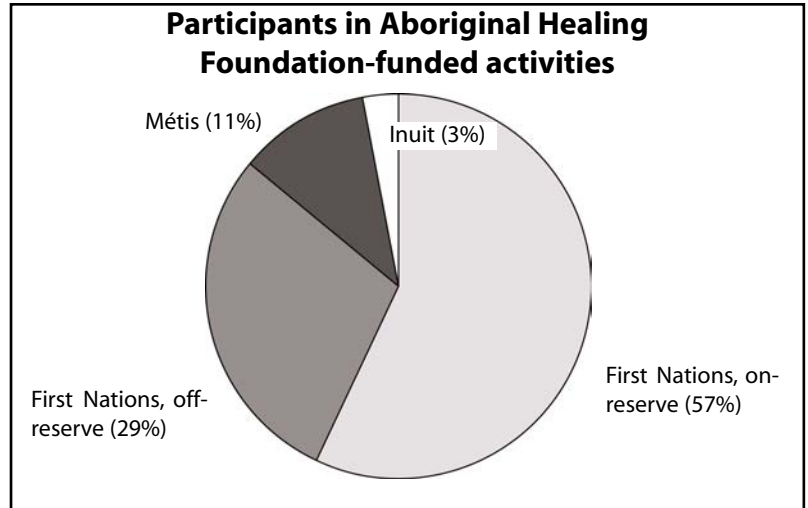
Information was gathered to determine what impact, if any, AHF-funded activity has had upon:

- influencing individuals and communities
- establishing partnerships and ensuring sustainability
- meaningfully engaging survivors (including the intergenerationally impacted)
- managing program enhancement
- ensuring accountability, and
- reaching those in greatest need

Data from the mail-out survey showed that projects were clearly observing immediate, short-term and intermediate outcomes.

An overwhelming feeling of progress was expressed by many (64%), although some (36%) felt it was too early to tell.

When questioned how many more people could be served if the project had adequate time and resources, a total of 56,857 resulted.



*When I was growing up, when I was in the residential schools, I was lost for a very long time.  
... I didn't hear the drum beat, I heard the organ.  
It took me 36 years to find out who I am.*

- AHF Regional Gathering Participant: November 9, 2000, Odawa Native Friendship Centre, Ottawa.

# The Healing Has Begun

Although national respondents felt that the Foundation was reaching those who need the service the most, they acknowledged that things could be better.

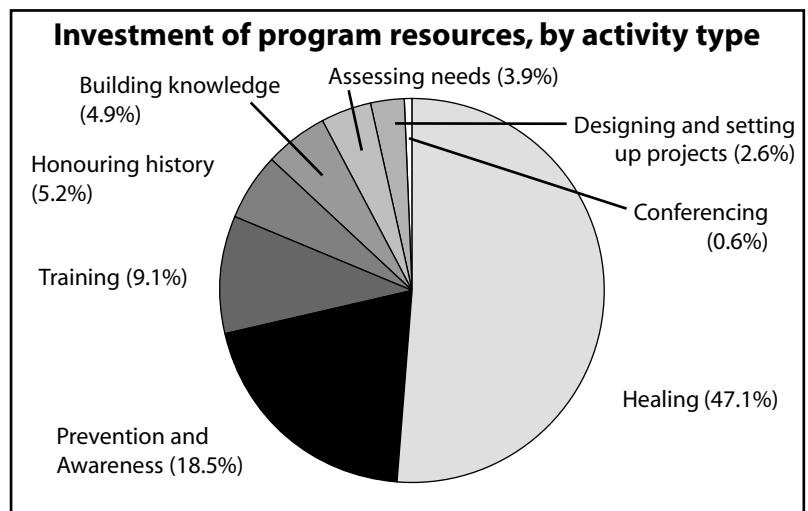
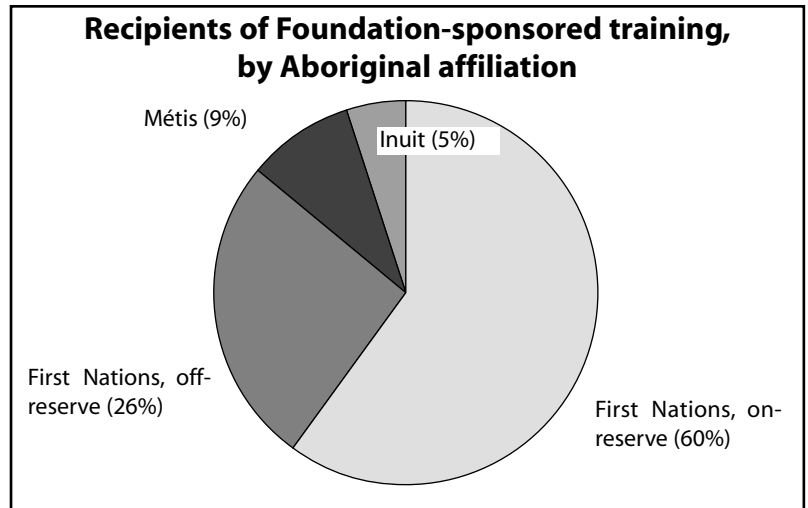
They cited community capacity (i.e. ability to prepare proposals and meet AHF reporting requirements) as a major barrier to reaching those in greatest need.

They expressed surprise at how little information and understanding there is about the legacy of residential schools, especially for youth and non-Aboriginal human service providers.

From a national perspective, it is clear that:

- no single strategy will work for what is an extremely diverse group,
- survivor involvement and strong human resources are essential to success, and
- identifying and addressing inequity, as well as being responsive to community needs works well.

The preliminary data collected in this evaluation clearly show that the process of healing and rebuilding has begun. §



*... it's very difficult to come out and deal with these things to address your healing journey. We need more time, 10 years will not be enough.  
It takes generations for corrections to be made.*

- AHF Regional Gathering Participant: January 26, 2001, Royal Canadian Legion, Yellowknife.



# The Healing Has Begun



*John Bland Collection of Canadian Architecture*

Seeking justice for residential school abuse has been a long, costly and painful process for Aboriginal victims of abuse. By February 2002, of 4,500 claims representing over 9,000 claimants, only 450 – or 10% – have been settled.

In the case of sexual and physical abuse, the litigation process causes an enormous amount of retraumatisation for victims, who already suffer chronic distress, as a result of their abuse at residential schools.

Survivors, national Aboriginal organisations, governments and the churches have called for alternative processes which include components that are not a part of litigation. Examples are individual and community healing.

The Law Commission of Canada has done an extensive survey of a range of current approaches that could be used to provide some form of redress for those who have been harmed. It also considers models of redress that have not, to date, been generally applied to cases of institutional child abuse.

In January 1998, The Assembly of First Nations, the federal Department of Indian Affairs, and the federal Department of Justice met to discuss setting up a process in which residential school litigation could be redirected into an alternative dispute resolution process which would facilitate healing and resolution. In July 2001, the Government of Canada, Churches, and survivors began to hold discussions across Canada and

designed a framework document for an Alternative Dispute Resolution process, to be used in pilot projects. ADR is an alternative to litigation for victims of abuse at residential school who are part of a group interested in filing a single claim. Alternative Dispute Resolution processes can include other elements that are not part of litigation, such as healing components.

The debate regarding choices for redress is not restricted to resolution processes, but more and more concerns the nature of claims arising from the residential school system. Increasingly, there are calls for the courts to address the issues of culture and language loss which resulted from the century-long residential school system.

# The Healing Has Begun

"In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended a public inquiry, under Part 1 of the Public Inquiries Act, stating that this was necessary "to bring to light and begin to heal the grievous harm suffered by countless Aboriginal children, families and communities as a result of the residential school system."

The RCAP recommendation of a public investigation has been strongly echoed by the call for a "truth and reconciliation" commission to investigate the residential school system.

It is now five years since the release of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' Final Report. The Churches would perhaps welcome a truth and reconciliation commission, but the government has not acted – apart from the \$350 million healing fund that has been allocated for community projects of a limited nature.

The Churches have been discussing the possibility of initiating a truth and reconciliation process similar to that of South Africa. The

Law Commission of Canada has also asked for an approach to the matter of redress that is broader than the limited proposals of the Federal government. These agencies are pressing for a response to the residential school system that is based on restorative justice for communities and individuals."

*- Presbyterian Church of Canada.*

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"Before there can be reconciliation, there must be truth, and this is a threshold that we in Canada have yet to cross."

*- Matthew Coon Come.*

"While it is true that the just settlement of claims related to sexual and physical abuse is important, this also needs to be accompanied by a broad comprehensive response on the part of both church and government to the realities which affect all survivors of the schools and not just those who were the victims of criminal acts. Five years ago the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples called for a public inquiry into the residential schools system. Not only has the government not acted on this recommendation it has not explained to the Canadian people why it has failed to act."

*- United Church of Canada.*

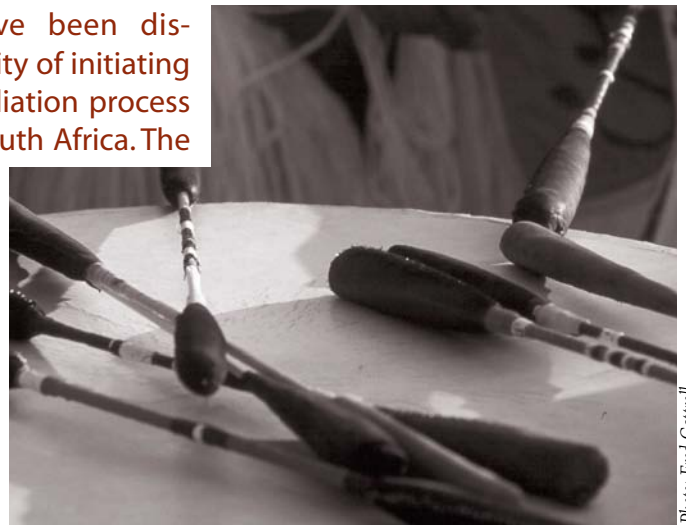


Photo: Fred Cattrell

"In many ways, [Aboriginal people] have the same feelings we had [in South Africa under apartheid] ... Canada still has to come to terms with [its] native people ... I thought it was worth considering the model of the TRC, so that people understand the extent of the hurt, but it could also help those that were hurt to move away from litigation to the possibility of forgiving."

*- Archbishop Desmond Tutu – The Globe and Mail.*

# The Healing Must Continue

In the Spring of 2000, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation initiated discussion with the Government of Canada concerning potential improvement of its performance, through an extension of its mandate and a revision of its investment restrictions.

Since that time, decisions have been made concerning our proposals and we've heard that the Government of Canada is entertaining the notion of granting us an additional three years, within the current 10-year mandate, and without loosening investment restrictions.

The additional three years of commitment time allows the AHF increased flexibility, especially with respect to serving groups who have been slow to respond to us.

We believe the Aboriginal Healing Foundation can serve as a positive model for Aboriginal program management. In the future, however, consideration should be given to ensuring foundations have the ability to pursue balanced investments so that they can operate in the longer term.

The AHF was given one year to get organized, four years to spend or commit the funds, and five years to moni-

tor projects and write a final report – a total of ten years. Also, the AHF's investment strategy was limited to AAA bonds, which at the time of our proposal yielded approximately 4.75% (about 2.5% after inflation). We believe these restrictions have unnecessarily limited the Foundation's ability to achieve its vision and mission.

## *Revising the Mandate*

The Government of Canada committed over 80 years and \$800 m to assimilation in the residential schools, and only 10 years and \$350 million to healing.<sup>†</sup> Our experience suggests that the endowment we received will be insufficient to address effectively the intergenerational effects of physical and sexual abuse suffered in residential schools, for several reasons:

- Only people who are ready to begin, or who have started their healing journey, can benefit from the fund
- Healing from the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in Indian Residential Schools requires more than 10-years
- More time is required to develop expertise and capacity among Aboriginal people, and

- We are only beginning to reach remote areas (such as the North) and certain groups (such as the Métis).

A more progressive view of our structure and mandate could have allowed us to act more proactively. Our current mandate forces us to spend the endowment quickly rather than focus on helping Aboriginal people meet their healing needs in a manner that promotes the attainment of a measure of closure.

A mandate that reflected a longer-term strategy could have provided greater protection to the Healing Fund, could have maximized the return on investment and could have provided us the opportunity to have a greater impact at the community level by:

- Allowing people and communities adequate time to address the Legacy
- Continuing to meet emerging needs
- Using greater discretion in selecting projects by benefitting from established and emerging best practices.

There is a growing movement on the part of Aboriginal people involved in litigation to seek compensation for



# The Healing Must Continue

loss of language and culture as a result of the residential school system.

Nonetheless, we are prevented from addressing issues of language and culture. Our mandate limits us to funding programs that address physical and sexual abuse only.

A proactive approach in this area was well within the capability of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and may have resulted in significant savings for the Government of Canada.

By creating foundations that have longer mandates and better investment guidelines, the Government of Canada and other stake-holders could benefit from sound programmatic responses.

## *Revising Investment Restrictions*

KPMG and ScotiaMcLeod Inc. performed an analysis of our current, Government-directed investment policy. They also studied several alternative investment policies under a variety of scenarios. The results of their analysis have indicated that an extended mandate and a balanced investment portfolio (a mix of cash, Canadian and foreign bonds, and Canadian and foreign equities) could have provided:

- the same returns as our existing policy with less risk – or,
- a greater return on investment with the same risk, resulting in a greater ability to invest in the healing of residential school survivors and their descendants.

The proposed modifications of our mandate and investment restrictions would also have brought the Aboriginal Healing Foundation into line with typical Foundation practices.

## *The Healing Must Continue*

In summary, foundations are about perpetuity. Income earned on capital, if inflation is accounted for, can provide benefit to the community forever. Imposing fewer restrictions could have allowed the Foundation to maximize the potential of its initial capitalisation and to have real impact over the longer-term.

## *Future Challenges*

With about 15 months left for us to commit funding to projects, now is the time to begin discussions with the Government of Canada concerning an effective exit strategy for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. We estimate that we will have several hun-

dred active projects by the time we close our doors. These projects will turn to the Federal Government when we are gone. We believe Government departments will then be faced with addressing the long-term healing needs of the Aboriginal people who are currently served by the AHF's mandate.

The AHF is acutely aware of the complexity of the challenges facing Canada and Aboriginal people in relation to the legacy of the residential school system. We have worked hard to develop a collaborative trust relationship with Aboriginal people. As a result of our proven track record, we are well positioned to carry on the long-term work of healing.

## *Looking Ahead*

Canada faces several pressing issues, including the effects of the Child Welfare system, language and cultural genocide lawsuits, the consequences of interrupting the healing process and the on-going lawsuits over physical and sexual abuse in residential schools.

Today, survivors of residential school abuse can suffer in silence, or they can pursue litigation or ADR. Litigation is expensive and confrontational and

# The Healing Must Continue

does not promote positive relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, ADR, though less adversarial than litigation, is essentially a legal process which does not address the trauma of abuse.

Healing requires the broad, cooperative participation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The types of projects funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation can provide the vital services not present in legal procedures.

Although an opportunity has been missed, we believe there is still much important healing work to be done. We will therefore continue to be committed to the work of healing and reconciliation. §

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† Residential school funding data gathered by Jody Kechego and David Napier. The period covered is 1877 to 1965. Because there is no annual breakdown of the funding of residential schools for the period 1877 to 1906, data was extrapolated from 1906 data. All dollar amounts are in 2001 dollars.



Photo: Gif Lake Métis

## Cover photo credits:

- Métis girl photo, compliment of the Metis National Council.
- Bishop Breynat and students at Fort Resolution Boarding School (Roman Catholic), National Archives of Canada.

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