

Righting Canada’s wrongs: Residential schools ^[1]

The devastating impact on Canada's Indigenous peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation commission's findings and calls for action
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This updated edition includes the findings of unmarked graves at residential schools and examines the work still to be done to implement the Calls to Action of the TRC Report

Canada's residential school system for Indigenous children is now recognized as a grievous historic wrong committed against First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Through historical photographs, documents and first-person narratives from people who survived residential schools, this book offers an account of the injustice of this period in Canadian history. It documents how official racism was confronted and finally acknowledged.

In 1857, the Gradual Civilization Act was passed in Canada with the aim of assimilating Indigenous people. In 1879, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald commissioned a report that led to residential schools across Canada. First Nations and Inuit children were taken from their families and sent to residential schools where they were dressed in uniforms, their hair was cut, they were forbidden to speak their native language and they were often subjected to physical and psychological abuse. The schools were run by churches and funded by the federal government.

The last federally funded residential school closed in 1996. The horrors that many children endured at residential schools did not go away. It took decades for people to speak out, but with the support of the Assembly of First Nations and Inuit organizations, former residential school students took the federal government and the churches to court.

Their cases led to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. In 2008, Prime Minister Harper formally apologized to former native residential school students for the atrocities they suffered and the role the government played in setting up the school system. The agreement included the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has worked to document the experience. More than five years after the TRC Report was released, there have been reports of unmarked graves of children being discovered at the site of former residential schools. This updated edition includes some of those findings and examines what has and what still has to be done in regards to the TRC Report's Calls to Action.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MELANIE FLORENCE is a writer of Cree and Scottish heritage based in Toronto. She is also the author of *The Missing and Jordyn Tootoo: The highs and lows of the first Inuk to play in the NHL*, named an Honor Book by the American Indian Library Association. She lives in Toronto, Ontario.

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