



Children age 7 rounded up in a cattle truck to attend Kamloops Indian Residential School.

STORIES

The following are stories of Indigenous people who experienced the horror of the Indian Residential schools in the US or Canada

In her own words:

Growing up I watched my people at the side of the road, passed out drunk, drinking mouthwash and hairspray. 😞 The question was always there. Why? If you visit any of the poorest communities/resource centre's (homeless shelters, detox centre's, etc) in Winnipeg you will see that they are occupied by 95% Indigenous Peoples. An estimated 85 - 90% of people incarcerated are Indigenous. 95% of the children in

care are Indigenous. I remember finding a needle when I lived in the projects as a kid, poking my baby brother in the arm with it while we were playing doctor. All throughout my life I watched 'those' native people, never understanding. The educational institution only taught me the colonizers perspective - they came here and brought cars, buildings, jobs, doctors. They brought us so many amazing things. So why are native people so broken?

I internalized that pain and became one of 'them'. Deep down I felt like I guess that was my destiny, I was the only native kid in my class, (I lived in the city of Winnipeg but spent much of my time on my rez as a kid) the only one who had a life full of trauma, sexual abuse, suicidal ideation by the age of 10. 💔 & It wasn't just me that hated my skin. Grown ass wh*te men would circle the block calling me a "dirty f%*%in indian" and yelling at me to "go back to the rez YOU DONT BELONG HERE" when I was walking to the park as a kid - numerous attempts at kidnapping, once in broad daylight on a busy street, and not a single person stopped to help as these wh*te men grabbed my arms and tried to drag me into their vehicle in Winnipeg. 😞



The self hatred escalated and by 12 I was drinking vanilla extract to get drunk, kissing people's shoes for money, dealing drugs, robbing people, passing out outside, doing everything I had to do to numb the pain away. It was easier than facing it - after all, having guns pointed at your face and being sexually assaulted wasn't a big deal on the rez. Actually, it was just a big fun game to the boys. They used their hands as weapons to invade the most sacred parts of my body and many, many others. Abusers and victims by the age of 7 - 10. And everywhere I looked; my family members, friends I met, all of us with brown skin seemed to have it so much worse. My story was not unusual or uncommon, in fact that and much worse has happened to many girls. The first time I heard of a girl being sexually exploited it was told to me as a 'funny' joke when I was 11 - even though it was really happening - by one of the boys. She was only 13. So why would I complain? Because I was sexually assaulted, raped numerous times for 'fun' and had guns pointed in my face? But there were so many other girls going through so much worse. So I shut my mouth and drowned my sorrow in the safety of the booze bottle, pill bottle, and literally anything else I could get my hands on. I wanted to be as far away from reality as I could, and I was, for a very long time.

My child and teenage life was filled with living and dying and living again, psychosis and desperation and shameful deeds that would haunt me for many, many years. Taken into the arms of the Grandmothers and Creator; then back to this Hell that people called Life again. Taking 31 pills in a day to try to kill myself, only to survive another day. My Kookum (paternal grandmother), who I lived with, and my family held me and rocked me with tears in their eyes, getting up every 30 minutes to check my breathing and make sure I didn't die in my sleep. I cried when I lived... and yet she cried with gratitude that I had survived.

Why?

I saw no goodness, nothing worthy of love or happiness when i looked in the mirror. All I saw was a junkie, destined to a life of chaos and torture the moment I was birthed. People like me did not come from 'Heaven'; we were sins, we were the product of disgrace, weak and worthless. We were the scum of the Earth. Unwanted, touched, invaded, beaten and traumatized. But my Kookum never, ever gave up on me.

I went back to school for my mature student status at 17, to the Aboriginal community campus. It was a strictly Indigenous led school with programming, all my teachers (but 1) were native. One day we were instructed to do a project on residential school. I had no idea what that was (I was 18 at the time); and I had no idea that all of my questions were soon to be answered.

My teacher told us to ask our families and request stories from our grandparents if they were willing; and to seek others stories.

For the first time, my maternal grandmother sat with me and shared her story of horrors worse than any scary movie I had ever seen. Watching a child possibly beaten to death at age 7 for saying a word in her language; being experimented on by doctors, electrocuted, unable to leave her bed at 10 years old. Stories that chilled me right to the bone. I couldn't understand how this could have happened, why were we not taught these things in school? If I hadn't attended a strictly Indigenous school program I would have learned what the other schools were teaching - that residential school was a SAFE place for our kids to go and learn, that we went voluntarily, that they helped us to SUCCEED. 🙄🙄🙄

NOT the Stories of horror. Screaming children being beaten to death by "men and women of God" 🚫

That every school had a place where they put the bodies of babies born from rape by the priests. That babies were burned to death, and some native children were responsible for handling the bones and bodies of those babies. 😞

That the sexual abuse rate was as high as 99% in some schools. 😞

That the children were given numbers instead of names; branded like cattle; starved - and that THAT is how Canada got its 'FOOD GUIDE'. By starving native BABIES to death. WHAT. THE. F&*K!?!? 😞😞😞

The moment I began seeking the Truth; reading stories from others survivors and the true history - was the moment everything in life FINALLY made sense. My grandmother was able to speak, through all the horrific things she endured. But there were tens of thousands who couldn't. The ones who were lucky enough to survive to go back home - many of them could NOT speak. They had needles stuck in their tongues when they spoke. 🗣️ They were children who had never received a hug, a touch, or heard "I love you" after the age of 3 when they were forced to leave their homes, sometimes at gun point. 😞 Many of them didn't pass on the language, for fear that when their children were taken, they would be beaten or murdered for speaking it.

I educated myself and learned, and I finally understood. Abusers at the age of 7-10, they learned this behaviour from the ones who's darkness followed them back home and spread like wildfire through our communities, stealing the purity from children, turning sex into a game before they could even read; when in any other part of Canada, those children would be watching barney on TV. ☹️

My grandma was never one of those people, nor was my Kookum.

But other kids in my community - their parents/grandparents had gone to residential school and many of them could not heal. 💔 They did not know how to love. Sexual abuse was a game and all the young boys would join in; from as young as 6 or 7. The word 'rape' was thrown around as if they were talking about football. But nothing ever happened to those rapists. They continued to harm and injure and kill our own children by stealing their purity - and ultimately leading those kids to suicide, overdose and murder.

"The colonizers no longer had to carry the blood of our children on their hands; because the children the schools had killed the Indian in, did it for them."

- "Kill the Indian in the child", author Elise Fontenaille

When I FINALLY learned the truth.. when I passed my relatives on the streets, it was no longer "them". It was US. MY people. OUR people. 💔 That was me, that could have been my mother, my children. That could have been any one of my native brothers and sisters.

The Indigenous people you pass, drinking mouthwash on the street are the products of these systems. The ones who lived through the schools, but could not heal from what happened to them. The kids you see huffing, prostituting, etc. Those are the children who suffered tremendous pain and horrific abuse by family, community members, and random racists in the city.. I've heard countless stories of girls who escaped abduction, or were sexually exploited for a long time before they could escape. Those children turned to the only thing they could do to survive.

I realized that my people are NOT weak. The fact that we are even ALIVE is a testimony to our strength. You wouldn't believe the horrific atrocities that occurred at these schools; if they choose to drink those memories away, who tf are me or you to judge? Smelling burning flesh of babies at the age of 8 does something to a person that you and I can't even PRETEND we could EVER understand !!

The last school closed in 1998. It could have been me. It could have been my siblings. There are people in their 30s alive today who attended these institutions of genocide. The first time I learned a word in my language I was 20.

The first time I participated in Traditional ceremony, I had to look long and hard for it, and I was an adult already.

I gave up alcohol and drugs forever at 22, and the strength of Creator & love from my Kookum and family has allowed me to walk this beautiful Red Road, reclaiming our culture, smudging my babies every night, drumming ceremonial songs. Feasting the spirits of our loved ones, sitting in the sweat lodge to deal with my grief when I lose another friend or family member to suicide or overdose. Warrior dance, where I can fast and pray and offer myself to Creator; giving my pain to her, and releasing my

anger and sadness in a healthy way. 🙏 All my children know is protection, safety, love and patience. They do not know screaming and yelling, domestic violence, they do not know fear. They will never experience what I, and hundreds of thousands of others, had to.

I don't use my fists in anger anymore. I don't use my voice in anger. My children grow up knowing only of love, sobriety, and culture. ❤️ I lost my dear sister along the way in a car accident, my best friend to suicide, and the most honourable woman I knew - the one who truly saved my life.. my beautiful kookum to cancer. I continue on in their honour, carrying their teachings and all the beauty they brought to me in their lives. They are a part of my essence; my heart beats in their memory and I will cherish them until the moment my breath stops, and my Journey to the other side begins.

Now I can sing my pain out with the drum; meditate while picking my medicines. I can do all of the things that were outlawed, and reclaim my culture in any way I can, in honour of the hundreds of thousands of children who couldn't. 🚫

The aim of the schools was to kill the Indian in the child. And for many of our people, they succeeded. I practice my culture in honour of all those children who had every part of their life stripped, forced to adopt another culture for fear of death, abuse, and more. I honour my ancestors by bringing back what the schools tried to kill.

Inter-generational trauma is real. It affects our children today. You can see the results of this genocide driving down main street; the adults who lived; but for many, the Indian within them did not survive. 😞

I am 6 years sober now and I am still learning. I have a long, long, long way to go. I have sat in 100s of lodges, had 100s of feasts, fasted several times, offered my body at the Warrior dance twice. But my healing journey has only begun. ❤️

I am no longer ashamed of the scars my body carries. I am proud of my peoples resiliency and I am proud to be Indigenous. I am proud of my relatives, yes, my

houseless relatives too. We are ALL deserving of love and respect and kindness. ❤️ 🙏

I hope if there's anything you take from my story (which is just one of thousands exactly like mine or much worse); I hope you carry kindness in your heart when you see our relatives on the street and understand why things are the way they are. I hope you carry compassion in your spirit, and a better understanding of how deep this trauma has ran; through our blood for over a hundred years. I hope instead of seeing 'drug addicts' and 'alcoholics', you see 'SURVIVORS'.

I hope you do your part to help us create real and lasting change. An apology means nothing unless it is followed by ACTION !! CHANGE THE HISTORY BOOKS TO ACCURATELY REPRESENT THE TRUTH OF WHAT CANADA - AND THE CHURCH - HAVE DONE TO OUR CHILDREN!

Do not pity us. Do not look down on us. See us for the resilient peoples we are, and always have been. A proud, strong people, who are healing from atrocities far beyond what MOST of Canada has EVER had to face.

WE are the children of inter-generational trauma; the children of the children who survived GENOCIDE. WE ARE SURVIVORS 💪 FIGHTERS 🙏 WARRIORS 🙏 &

PROTECTORS. & WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO EDUCATE AND PROTECT ALL OF OUR CHILDREN ACROSS TURTLE ISLAND !!!

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Lest We forget: The Starving of Indigenous Children in Canada as a Government Experiment during the 1940s...

As a 10-year-old boy, Alvin Dixon remembers having to milk cows during his stay at a residential school in Port Alberni, B.C. Yet, he was always fed only powdered milk. Dixon, who is now 76 years old, was forcibly taken from his family in Bella Bella, on British Columbia's northwest coast, when he was a child and relocated to Port Alberni, B.C., where he said he and many of his classmates were starved.

"We would be so hungry and we would steal these potatoes [from farmers' fields] and eat it raw," he told CBC News.

Recently published research suggests Dixon's experiences were part of a long-standing, government-run experiment designed by researchers to test the effects of malnutrition. The research by food historian Ian Mosby has revealed the experiments involved at least 1,300 aboriginal people, most of them children. In 1947, plans were developed for research on about 1,000 hungry aboriginal children in six residential schools in Port Alberni, B.C., Kenora, Ont., Schubenacadie, N.S., and Lethbridge, Alta.

One school deliberately held milk rations for two years to less than half the recommended amount in order to get a "baseline" reading for when the allowance was increased.

At another, children were divided into one group that received vitamin, iron and iodine supplements and one group that didn't, according to Mosby's research. One school depressed levels of vitamin B1 to create another baseline before levels were boosted. A special enriched flour that couldn't legally be sold elsewhere in Canada under food adulteration laws was used on children at another school. And, so that all the results could be properly measured, one school was allowed none of those supplements. "The term 'guinea pig' comes to mind quite quickly and readily, because that's what we were, I guess," said Dixon, who recalls having to fill out forms about his food consumption.

By the time he reached high school, Dixon said he remembers being smaller compared to his non-aboriginal classmates.

Malnutrition experiments began in Manitoba

According to Mosby's research, the experiments began with a 1942 visit by government researchers to a number of remote reserve communities in northern Manitoba, including places such as The Pas and Norway House.

They found people who were hungry, beggared by a combination of the collapsing fur trade and declining government support. They also found a demoralized population marked by, in the words of the researchers, "shiftlessness, indolence, improvidence and inertia."

The researchers suggested those problems — "so long regarded as inherent or hereditary traits in the Indian race" — were in fact the results of malnutrition. Instead of recommending an increase in support, the researchers decided that isolated, dependent, hungry people would be ideal subjects for tests on the effects of different diets.

First Nation councillor demands apology

Today, the chief councillor of the Tseshaht First Nation in Port Alberni demanded an apology from the federal government.

"Canada has been sitting on this and hiding this information from the aboriginal people now since it first happened in the '40s and '50s," said Hugh Braker, who added that the band is horrified by the revelations.

"There needs to be an apology done to the victims of the experimentation," he added.

Cliff Atleo, president of the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, said he wants all information about the tests to be made available to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is studying the legacy of Canada's residential schools.

"It's hard not to get sick to the stomach, given that we are dealing with children at these schools," he said.

"This story ... is really going to open up some old wounds, and scars that really run deep in our communities."

Source: Warrior Publications

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