



Residential School Project

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Leaving Home

Today is the day I set off to the residential school, I don't really know how to feel about all of this. In a way I feel sadness. I do not look forward to this, these people are demanding we go to these schools and if we don't our parents go to jail. The worst part yet is that they don't understand us, they want so much from us and why? My mother has braided my long hair that reaches below my waist, she wants me to look nice for my first day of school. My father is wise just like the elders here, but he doesn't seem himself today. There are kids who have not come back yet and is he thinking that will be me? I would rather live in peace with my family, my cousins are also being taken away as well. Many of the kids from my reserve, Kahkewistahaw, are also leaving. We all are going to Portage La Prairie residential school in Manitoba which is quite a ways from my home.



My First Day of School



When I arrived at the residential school, I felt afraid of what was to come. I was spooked by the nuns at first. They guided me to the room where I stayed where they demanded me to take off my clothes, they gave me these denim clothes which were a weird feeling to me. They cut my precious hair off which my mom braided, my emotions were short tempered but I was too scared to respond. They cut my hair so short it felt weird. They then made me take a shower and sprayed me with insecticide because they thought I was dirty and had bugs on me. It felt like I was in a prison, my freedom stripped away from me. Every time I spoke my language to try to respond they would slap my little arms which would hurt. I saw many of the kids from my reserve hurt as well, I couldn't stand to see this happen so the only thing i could do was close my eyes and cover my ears.

Learning English

Learning what they spoke was brutal and hard, they would ask me something and I would try to speak but they slapped me. They made my arms blue and black for the next coming weeks, everytime I spoke I would feel pain. I would start crying all the time. 2 months it took to learn their language, you could only imagine the pain they caused me, it traumatized me to my bones. The nuns were not friendly as it sounded. I had a friend and He was just a bit older than me, he would cry his soul out everytime he couldn't understand and spoke our language. Everytime he cried, I would cry for him. The nuns noticed this and smacked me, they told me they smacked me so i could have a reason to cry about. Learning their language was hard, painful but quick.





Baptism

I didn't really like getting baptized, they made it sound that we had evil spirits in us from our culture and we had to get rid of those. Our culture was the last thing stripped from us just like our freedom, On that day they changed us. They wanted to remove the “evil surroundings” of family from us, they wouldn't want us to see my family either. Once we were baptized that was the last of our true selves as later we would forget most of our language, when we got baptized our culture was gone from us.

Graduation



At the end of the year we would be able to come see our family again. It was one of the only things that made me feel happy throughout the years. I would be able to see my Family but it was a little hard to speak now since most of my natural language faded away. We would still see our smiles and it was nice to be home, graduation of the residential school was the best part of it all in my opinion. I knew some kids that didn't come back home unfortunately and my heart would drop every time I heard these sad news. I would be thankful that I came home and made it.

Stephen Harper's Apology

On June 11, 2008 the Prime Minister of Canada apologized what happened to us who attend the schools and experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse. He talked about how he apologized for the suffering of Aboriginal children. I didn't know how to feel, some reassurance came but there was a little bit of anger deep down inside me. They paid me for the years I attended as well. My people and culture are the essence of this country and the many attempts to erase our identities hurt me deeply. Even though the past cannot be changed and the anger and the PTSD still stand with me, I forgave them because it was the right thing to do.



My Response to the work of the TRC

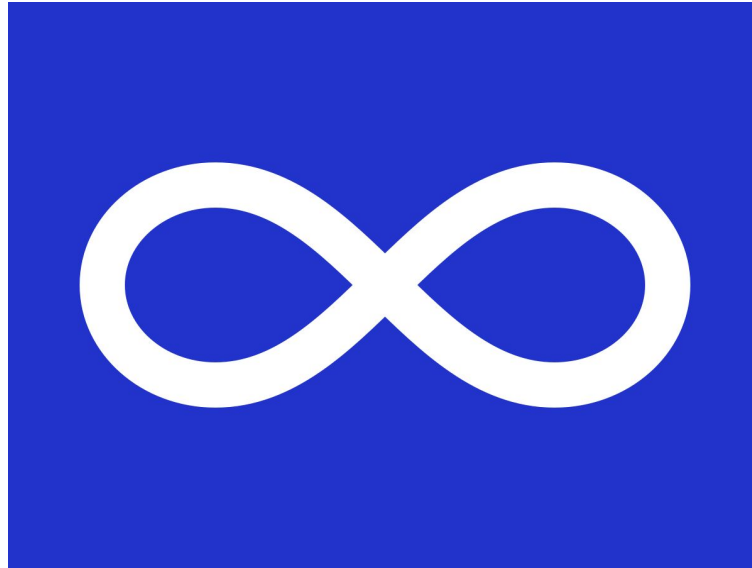
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was a great idea. I was happy to hear that the legacy of the schools were being told. It's nice that the world will know this happened and that the next generations can learn about this. Not only does residential schools affect me, but my kids and my grandkids lives are affected with this history. To speak about all of these stories don't hurt me as much but the pain still stings, as everyone else that went through this just like me. It can be painful but in the end telling someone helps the pain.



My Quality of Life Today



Even though I'm not in the schools anymore and it's been awhile since it ended. I still have these cuts of trauma that sting. It's hard to speak in my language without thinking there's a nun behind me right about to smack me. I don't always think of it a lot but when I do all my flashbacks put me in a daydream. I'm happy they are gone but I'm sad I didn't have that peaceful childhood I thought I would have. I'm thankful my family made it out as well. We don't speak about it but I tell stories to my grandkids and kids about it. It's important they know because it's part of their identities. Since the residential schools I have been trying to maintain my culture and by doing that I go to many ceremonies, sweats and powwows. I do feel more at peace and like I said the cut still stings but I don't feel it sometimes. It comes and goes.



Just to clarify, I did not look at any sources really. Just to get the images. This story revolves around my grandmother's experience at the residential school and everything I said is about her experiences about the residential schools.