

# Residential Schools

## Grade 5

By Sahara Lafferty & Matilda Michel



# Residential Schools



## What was the Residential School System?

- Residential schools were a partnership between the Government of Canada and the mainstream churches.
- The two main objectives of the Residential schools were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their home, families, traditions and cultures and to assimilate the children into the dominant culture.
- Indigenous Children were forced to attend these schools for extended periods of time.
- At the Residential schools, the innocent children as young as five years old were stripped of their Indigenous identity, clothing and their long-braided hair that often had spiritual significance.
- The schools provided substandard education, living space, food and healthcare. The children were deprived, starved, overworked and abused for decades

# Teaching about Residential Schools Today

## Why is it Important to Our teaching Practices?

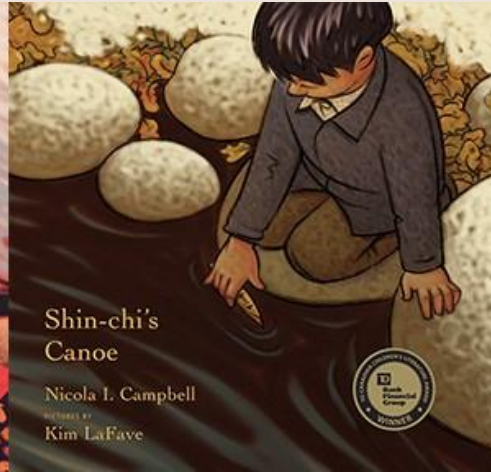
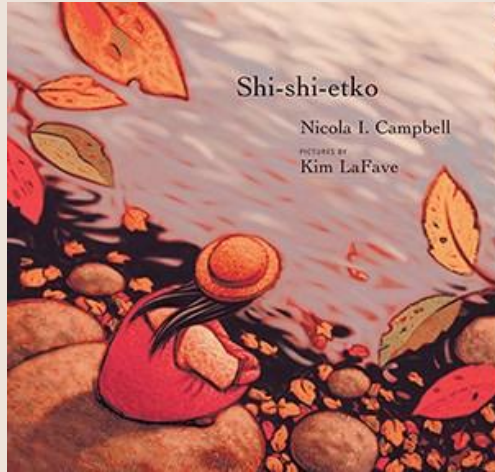
- Canadians were never told the full truth of the context of Indigenous societies and the history of the relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
- Canada's true history with residential schools is a topic mandated in the B.C curriculum for K-12.
- As educators, we are giving the students the knowledge they need to build upon in further grades.
- To note that the residential schools are also stories of survival, resiliency and cultural revitalization.
- To help educate Canadians and move further towards reconciliation for the Indigenous people in our country
- Indigenous students in the classroom today still deal with the intergenerational trauma caused by the residential schools.
- Indigenous families may have different views of the school system and may approach things differently.
- Indigenous students learn differently and may react differently then "normal" because of the trauma they still face.

# Difficult Topic

The discussion of residential school is difficult for everyone but especially difficult for youth. A great way to have these difficult discussions within the classroom and for the youth to connect to the subject is through traditional stories and books.

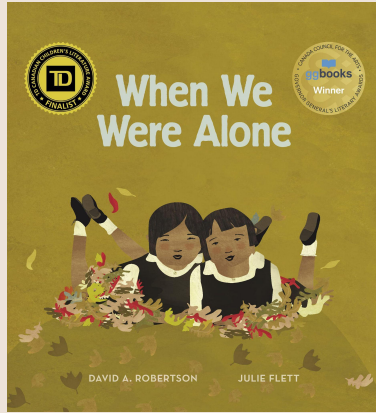
\*\*\*It is important that educator also take care of themselves after teaching the lessons as it is a difficult subject matter. They can do this by taking a walk, talking to a friend, meditating, journaling etc.\*\*\*

# Age Appropriate Learning Resources – Books

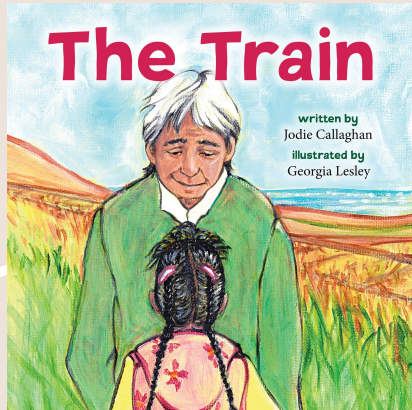


- **Shi-shi-etko by Nicola Campbell**
  - *Shi-shi-etko* is a book about the final days before a young girl named Shi-shi-etko will be forced to attend residential school. In these final days, she finds all of the beautiful things she will be leaving behind. Her parents and grandmother teach her valuable lessons that she can take with her and remember forever. As she takes in all of these beautiful things and lessons she is taught on these last few days she gathers them all in a special place for safekeeping.
- **Shin-Chi's Canoe by Nicola Campbell**
  - *Shin-Chi's Canoe* is about Shi-shi-etko's little brother who is sent off to residential school with his sister. His dad gives him a toy canoe, which he holds onto throughout his time at the school as a reminder of his family.

# Age Appropriate Learning Resources – Books



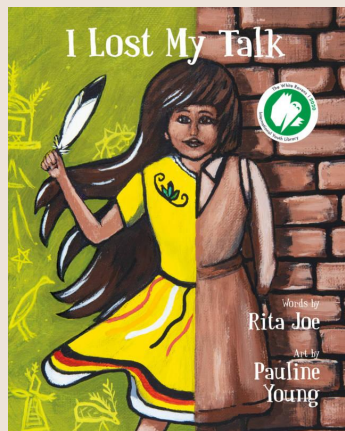
- **When We Were Alone by David A. Robertson**
  - *When We Were Alone* is about a young girl that is helping her grandmother in the garden. She begins to question things her grandmother does and her grandmother explains her life at residential school when she was a young girl. She explains that everything was taken away from her and how she dealt with it. Her grandmother explains that although she was forced to attend the schools she still found beauty in this harsh history.



- **The Train by Jodie Callaghan**
  - *The train* is a special reflection for those who attended residential school, as a survivor visits a place with important by sad memories of relatives and friends that never came back.



# Age Appropriate Learning Resources – Books



- I Lost My Talk by Rita Joe
  - I lost my talk is a poem that expresses the pain and suffering the author suffered at residential schools. It also shows the hope she has that her words will guide and inspire other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada to a place of healing and reconciliation.
- I'm Finding My Talk by Rebecca Thomas
  - This book is response to *I Lost My Talk*.
  - *I'm Finding My Talk* is about a young girl that is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation residential school survivor working to reconcile with her culture and language. As she connects to the land, her language, the drumbeat, smudging, and family she finds way to connect to the culture that was taking away from her dad at residential school.

# How we would Teach This Subject to Grade 5

- We would teach the students about residential school through stories and art. (Students have learned about residential schools in other grades)
- Ask students what they know about residential school
  - It is a good hook and gets the students thinking about their past learning and experiences.
  - Lets the teacher know where the students are at and what their misconceptions about the subject might be.
- Read the book "*I Lost My Talk*" by Rita Joe
  - Get the class to guess what the book/poem is about based on the title and cover page first.
    - Do a think, pair, share about what the students learned about the residential schools from this story.
    - Have a class discussion about how this poem made the class feel
- Doing an art project after these discussions gives the teacher a chance to circulate and check-in on each student.
  - Get the students to decorate a heart garden
  - Get each student to make a heart with something they would give to a residential school survivor to help them connect to the material
  - Display all of the hearts



# How we would Teach This Subject to Grade 5

- Although, that is 1 lesson on it's own, we believe that the residential schools can't be taught in just one stand alone lesson but it should be taught in multiple lessons.
- It can either be taught throughout the year in multiple lessons taught in different subjects (where it connects to different subjects)
- Or it can be taught as a unit plan around an event like Orange Shirt Day
- We would teach this subject after we get a chance to meet and get to know our students. (Get to know which students are in foster care, Indigenous, trauma or anything else that could be triggering throughout teaching this subject)
- If needed we could send a letter home to inform the family that we would be talking about this difficult subject

# Unit Plan Ideas

## Part 1: Learning and the Relationship with the Land

- Students reflect on the importance of traditional relationships Indigenous people have with the land
- Read Shi-shi-etko which is about a girl that spends her last few days before going to residential school with different members of her family who teach her the significance of the land and to hold on to the land while she is away.
- Class discussion questions:

1) In what ways can people show respect to the land?

2) How was Shi-shi-etko learning before she went away for school?

- Traditionally, Indigenous culture, education was a family matter
- Respect for the land is the center of Indigenous culture

3) What do we know about Shi-shi-etko school from the reading

- Have students work in pairs to come up with 2 questions about the school Shi-shi-etko is going to.
- Write all of the class questions on chart paper to return to at the end of the unit.

# Unit Plan Ideas

## Part 2: What Were Indian Residential Schools?

- Read *Shin-Chi's Canoe* by Nicola Campbell aloud to the class
- Show the cover of the book and get the students to predict what they think the book is about.

Journal Discussion Questions after reading together:

- 1) Why did Shin-Chi's parents allow him to go to this school?
- 2) What is different about the residential schools compared to our school?
- 3) How did the way children were treated in residential schools make you feel?
  - Discuss the meaning of the title and the importance of the canoe to the connection of family
  - See if as a class you can answer any of the questions from last class

# Unit Plan Ideas

## Part 3: The Residential School Experience

- Word wall
- Physical aspects of the residential schools with an emphasis of isolation from family
- How are residential schools different from schools today
- Compare school buildings
- Get the students to make a list of physical descriptions of their school and what they think residential schools were like based on the books we read
- As a class examine photo of residential schools
- Have students develop a comparison chart of the two schools individually

# Unit Plan Ideas

## Part 4: Returning Home

- Students consider what happened to the students if they were fortunate enough to return home. Were they able to fit in? Class discussion
- Read *A stranger at home* aloud as a class
- Discussion questions:
  - What were the main characters expectation when returning home? Did they happen?
  - What problems did the residential school children face when they returned home?
  - How did she try to adapt living with her family again?

Journal Entry: Compare Shi-shi-etko return home to Olemaun's return home.

# Unit Plan Ideas

- Students could create a memory bag in part 1 just like Shi-shi-etko and every part of the unit they can add different things to their bag based on what they learned. This way, at the end of the unit the students would have a bag full of memories of their own for this unit on residential schools
- Teacher could plan a field trip to the local residential school or have a local elder come in to talk to the class about residential schools
- Students can make art for residential school survivors and as a class they can plan a field trip to display their art in front of the local residential school for all of the survivors and community members to see
- To extend this Unit plan you could mention the healing journey and the actions towards reconciliation

\*\* There are so many ideas and ways to teach this subject these are only a few Unit plan ideas to teach but at the end of the day it is all based on your class and their experiences\*\*

# BC Curriculum

## Grade 5 - English Language Arts

### Big Ideas

- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.
- Texts can be understood from different perspectives.
- Questioning what we hear, read and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens

### Curricular Competency

- Comprehend and connect (reading, listening, viewing)
  - Apply a variety of thinking skills to gain meaning from texts
  - Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and develop understanding of self, community, and world
  - Demonstrate awareness of the oral tradition in First Peoples cultures and the purposes of First Peoples texts
  - Identify how story in First Peoples cultures connects people to land
- Create and Communicate (Writing, Speaking, Representing)
  - Exchange ideas and perspectives to build a shared understanding

### Content

- Strategies and processes
  - reading strategies
  - oral language strategies
- Language features, structures, and conventions
  - features of oral language



# BC Curriculum

## Grade 5 - Social Studies

### Big ideas

- Canada's policies and treatment of minority peoples have negative and positive legacies.
- Canadian institutions and government reflect the challenge of our regional diversity.

### Curricular Competency

- Make ethical judgments about events, decisions, or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond
- Sample topics:  
Indian Act  
residential school system

### Content

- Past discriminatory government policies and actions, such as residential school.
- Sample topics:
  - Indian Act
  - numbered treaties with First Peoples reduction or relocation of First Nations reserves
- Key questions:
  - What effects did residential schools have on First Nations families and communities

# BC Curriculum

## Grade 5 - Art Education

### Big ideas

- Engaging in creative expression and experiences expands people's sense of identity and belonging.
- Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities and perspectives.
- Dance, drama, music and visual arts are each unique languages for creating and communicating.
- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us

### Curricular Competency

- Exploring and creating
  - Explore connections to identity, place, culture, and belonging through creative expression
  - Explore a range of cultures, and the relationships among cultures, societies, and the arts
- Reasoning and reflecting
  - Connect knowledge and skills from other areas of learning in planning, creating, interpreting, and analyzing works for art
- Communicating and documenting
  - Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts

### Content

- symbolism and metaphor to explore ideas and perspective
- personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing, or presenting in a safe learning environment

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