In the spring of 2008, eight courageous Residential School Survivors, two from each of the Inuit geographic regions – Nunavik, Nunavut, Nunatsiavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region – shared their stories with the Legacy of Hope Foundation. The exhibition, “We were so far away…”: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools, presents the individual recollections of these Survivors in their own words, illustrated with their personal photographs and objects, and contextualized by historical images gathered from archives across Canada.

“We weren’t home in Residential School. We were far away from home, very far away, emotionally, geographically and spiritually. We were so far away. Sometimes we thought we were never going home again”.
— Marius Tungilik

The Legacy of Hope Foundation is deeply grateful to Ms. Marjorie Flowers, Ms. Shirley Flowers, Ms. Lillian Elias, Mr. Peter Irniq, Ms. Carolyn Niviaxie, Mr. Abraham Ruben, Mr. Marius Tungilik, and Ms. Salamiva Weetaltuk, the eight Inuit Survivors who generously shared their stories with us.
If I hadn’t been in school I would have been following my family; hunting, camps, everything that they’re used to. I grew up in igloos, dog teams, hunger, coldness. That’s what I hold on to. It’s the most important thing in my life. After a while when I got older, yeah, it helped. Where I come from it was slowly coming, the changes [to the community]. It was like one of the last civilizations coming there. It was very
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## DISCLAIRMER

The information contained in this exhibition catalogue may be disturbing to some readers. If you require immediate assistance, please contact Health Canada’s Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program’s crisis line 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-866-925-4419.
If we hadn’t been at school, depending on our age, we would be given a lot of freedom at first and then we would be taken out on trips to learn by observing our parents or our Elders how to hunt, how to be patient, how to build igloos, everything from skinning wild game to preparing the skins for clothing or other uses. […] We would have been taught the oral tradition of history. Nothing would have needed to be
The Legacy of Hope Foundation is a national charitable organization whose purpose is to educate and raise awareness and understanding of the legacy of residential schools, including the effects and intergenerational impacts on First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, and to support the ongoing healing process of residential school Survivors.

In partnership with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and Library and Archives Canada, the Legacy of Hope Foundation developed its first exhibition in 2002. Entitled *Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools*, this highly praised exhibition uses archival photographs and original documents to portray the history and legacy of Canada’s Indian Residential School System.

Seeing a need to record the unique experiences of Inuit residential school Survivors and building on the success of *Where are the Children?*, the Legacy of Hope Foundation partnered with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and Library and Archives Canada to produce “We were so far away…”: *The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools*. This exhibition portrays the individual experiences of eight Inuit residential school Survivors — two from each of the four Inuit regions in Canada.
The Legacy of Hope Foundation is honoured
to be the guardian of their testimonies,
which will forever be a part of the archive
of residential school Survivor voices.

Read individually, each story recounts the experience of one
Inuit Survivor from a specific community. Read together, elements
of the residential school experience common to many Inuit
Survivors become evident, regardless of region. Photographs from
the personal collections of each Survivor and from nine Canadian
church and public archives poignantly illustrate these individual
and collective experiences.

The Legacy of Hope Foundation is deeply grateful to
Ms. Marjorie Flowers, Ms. Shirley Flowers, Ms. Lillian Elias,
Mr. Peter Irniq, Ms. Carolyn Niviaxie, Mr. Abraham Ruben,
Mr. Marius Tungilik, and Ms. Salamiva Weetaluktuk, the eight Inuit
Survivors who generously shared their stories with us. The Legacy
of Hope Foundation is honoured to be the guardian of their
testimonies, which will forever be a part of the archive of residential
school Survivor voices recorded and preserved by the Legacy of
Hope Foundation that will educate generations of Canadians.

The Foundation would like to thank each individual who
made “We were so far away…”: The Inuit Experience of Residential
Schools possible, especially the curator, Ms. Heather Igloliorte.
Ms. Igloolito’s vision and insight has produced a thoughtful and sensitive exhibition that pays respect to the experiences of these eight individuals, and indeed to all Inuit residential school Survivors.

I am pleased you have taken the time to hear these stories and learn about the Inuit residential school experience. I hope that you will tell your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours about this exhibition as well as the other valuable work of the Legacy of Hope Foundation. Learning about this significant era of our nation’s history is the first step towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Richard Kistabish
Chair and President
Legacy of Hope Foundation
It has been almost seven years since the Legacy of Hope Foundation, Library and Archives Canada, and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation partnered to create Where are the Children, an exhibition reflecting Canada’s policy of forced assimilation of Aboriginal peoples through the instrument of the Indian Residential School System. In the time which has since passed, many Survivors of trauma, abuse, and neglect have told their stories. Many have begun to heal. The wrongness of past policies and of the Church-State system of Indian residential schools in particular has been acknowledged by the Prime Minister of Canada on the floor of the House of Commons. Apologies have been offered, commitments to truth-telling and reconciliation made. And yet there remain many Canadians who know little of this history. Public education remains an enormous yet essential challenge — for a better future requires of us an understanding of past mistakes, and only an informed mind may yield a change of heart.

In the case of former Inuit students, misconceptions and ignorance of their unique experiences are of an even greater degree. Even the term “residential school” itself does not always apply. The policy of forced assimilation, when applied to Northern

An Eskimo [Inuit] family at Cambridge Bay, Victoria Island. The Mission is seen in the distance. [Peter Panaktaaluk, his wife and son.]

FLEMING / NWT ARCHIVES / N-1979-050: 0356
peoples, often has been of a distinct character. Thus, Inuit Survivors speak of community relocations, hostels, and tent camps. Their experiences of the Indian Residential School System are inseparable from the swift, co-ordinated, and overwhelming descent of foreign people and policies upon Arctic communities in the 1950s. Within a generation, the Inuit went from living on the land to living rooms. The traumatic pace of change, and the extraordinary dislocations which ensued, perhaps explain why the
Inuit today are confronted by the highest suicide rate by ethnic group in Canada.

Although the Inuit are in many details unique, the commonness of their experiences with other Aboriginal peoples who endured the Indian Residential School System should be acknowledged also. Like their First Nations and Métis counterparts, Inuit students were removed from their communities, cultures, families, and territories to be re-engineered into the likeness of a presumed superior race. The nurture of family was replaced by the imperatives of an institution, and defenseless children as young as four improvised survival skills in an alien environment built upon coercion and fear. This is not to deny that there were good and well-meaning individuals employed in the schools. Indeed there were; yet the system of forced assimilation itself could only be one of mass social engineering, carried out in the service of colonial domination.

The question posed by the 2002 Where are the Children exhibition remains as relevant as ever: Is assimilation a good policy? As one considers the experiences of the Inuit in Canada’s Indian residential schools, it is a question to consider not only in relation to the country’s distant past but its present and future also.

Georges Erasmus
President
Aboriginal Healing Foundation
The creation, preservation and management of the records of our experiences as a nation is one of the greatest responsibilities of memory institutions. Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is mandated to serve as the continuing memory of the Government of Canada, and in that to mirror the diversity of expression that entails. We are responsible for ensuring that the most important documents are selected and preserved for future generations, and that both digital and analog formats are valued. By preserving and making available the evidence of what has happened, we not only preserve the record, we support democracy and the state of law itself. Access to records, properly managed, is the hallmark of open, accountable government, and this includes records which explain government policies and decisions. In the present case, the preservation of these explanations through archival records supports the process of truth and reconciliation.

LAC has many kinds of records related to residential schools, some readily available to the public. Other records can be requested according to access to information and privacy legislation.

But in preserving and making this information available, these records contribute to the resolution of claims, to education and to the broader understanding of what happened.
In the traveling exhibition “We were so far away…”, eight oral histories describe the stories of the Inuit experience of residential schools in Canada. These stories are supported by archival records gathered from churches, schools, and public and private archives. They include letters and diaries, photographs and other original documents. Together, they represent a collaborative effort towards mutual understanding and a recognition of the diversity of perspectives which inform any issue.

In partnership with the Legacy of Hope Foundation and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, LAC is extremely pleased that this mandate has allowed us to provide many of the images and documents held in our fonds to support the traveling exhibition and to illustrate those stories which, however difficult, are part of our history. And let us not forget that the records we are creating and preserving of what is happening today will tell future generations a story of mutual understanding, respect and resolution.

Dr. Daniel J. Caron
Librarian and Archivist of Canada
Library and Archives Canada
I remember going home and I guess I was changed, or at least I thought I was. At home we call it a ‘big feeling’. I thought I was better than the community, better than my parents, so I guess I had a bit of an attitude, because I had been there and I had made it through. My parents were probably kind of used to that type of thing, I think, because I would have been the seventh one who had gone and done.

A Message from the Curator

Miss Velma MacDonald teaching English to Indian and Eskimo children, Inuvik, N.W.T., Dec. 1959 by Gar Lunney.

Library and Archives Canada / National Film Board of Canada.

Photothèque Collection / PA-111777.
**Sharing their Stories**

In 2008, a group of courageous Inuit residential school Survivors shared their experiences with the Legacy of Hope Foundation with the hope of contributing to the healing process for Survivors, their families and communities, as well as the rest of the nation. Their stories, recorded in this exhibition catalogue, are presented in their own words and illustrated with their personal objects and photographs, as well as with historical photographs from archives across Canada. The Survivors, two from each Inuit region – Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region – provide us with moving examples of what life was like for many Inuit before, during, and after their time in the Residential School System.

**The Introduction of the Residential School System in the Canadian Arctic and Subarctic**

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation defines residential schools as, “the Residential School System in Canada, attended by Aboriginal students. It may include industrial schools, boarding schools, homes for students, hostels, billets, residential schools, residential schools with a majority of day students, or a combination of any of the above.”¹ For Inuit peoples, residential schools also included tent camps. The purpose of residential schools was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into the dominant colonial culture by removing children from the care of their parents and community, placing them in institutions far from their homes, teaching them Christian and European ideologies, and prohibiting them from speaking their Indigenous languages or practicing their culture. As Prime Minister Stephen Harper said on June 11, 2008, during the historic federal apology to the Survivors of residential schools,

In the 1870’s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children,
began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools System were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child”. Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.
Inuit children were taken from their homes in large numbers and forced to learn the Qallunaat (non-Inuit) way of life at the expense of their own.

While these residential schools existed in Canada since 1831, it was not until the 1950s that a significant number of these church-run and federally, provincially, or ecclesiastically funded schools were operating in the Canadian North. This was because before 1939 Inuit were not considered “Indians” and therefore did not fall under federal jurisdiction. On April 5, 1939, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously ruled that Inuit were Indians according to the British North America Act of 1867, and therefore subject to the Indian Act. This made Inuit health, welfare, and education a responsibility of the federal government, although Canada was reluctant to take on this role. As David King has explained, “The federal government had intended to appeal the Supreme Court’s decision to the Privy Council; however, the beginning of WWII [World War II] caused federal attention to focus elsewhere. After the war, no federal government sought to contest the 1939 Supreme Court decision.” Following the end of World War II in 1945, concerns over Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic turned the nation’s attention northward; in 1951 Canada announced its education plan for both northerners and Inuit alike, and in 1954, under increased pressure from the public, the newly formed Sub/Committee on Eskimo Education of the
Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources made a recommendation that the Residential School System be introduced across the North. In a report dated December 1954, the Committee decided that the Residential School System “is perhaps the most effective way of giving children from primitive environments, experience in education along the lines of civilization leading to vocational training to fit them for occupations in the white man’s economy.”

In Labrador, the situation was different than in the rest of Canada. When Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation in 1949, the two governments decided against extending the Indian Act to the Aboriginal population of the new province. This decision was made despite recommendations that the Canadian government accept full responsibility for the provision of social services to Newfoundland and Labrador’s Aboriginal peoples, as it did for Inuit and other Aboriginal groups across the country. However, the province received federal grants to administer services, including education, to Labrador’s Aboriginal people. In Labrador, many young Inuit attended residential schools in communities far from their homes, and shared many of the devastating experiences common to students of the Indian Residential School System all across the Canadian Arctic.

In the Northwest Territories, prior to 1955, less than 15 per cent of school-aged Inuit children were enrolled in residential schools. Many children were still living on the land with their families, but even those who lived in the communities and settlements were engaged in seasonal activities and in learning the traditional skills and knowledge they would need to become active members of Inuit society. As Nunavummiut Survivor Marius Tungilik explains in his story, “If we hadn’t been at school, depending on our age, we would be given a lot of freedom at first and then we would be taken out on trips to learn by observing our parents or our Elders how to hunt, how to be patient, how to build igloos, everything from skinning wild game to preparing the skins for..."
The Survivors who participated in this project continue to be tireless advocates of healing, community health, and the revitalization of culture.

Unfortunately, in the few short decades preceding the introduction of the Indian Residential School System in the North, the traditional way of life as Tungilik described was under increased pressure everywhere in the Arctic due to the onslaught of Euro-Canadian culture throughout the North. Unlike in the South, where the changes to Aboriginal communities were spread out over a century of increased Western European colonization and evangelization, in the North, Inuit culture had remained relatively intact and unscathed until the mid 20th century, largely because the Inuit had been ignored by the Canadian government and isolated from prolonged contact with southerners. Beginning in the late 19th century (and much earlier in Labrador) Christian missionaries were dispatched to the Arctic and Subarctic, but it was not until the 1910s and 1920s that massive numbers of Inuit were rapidly and almost wholly converted to, primarily, Catholicism and Anglicanism. At the same time Hudson’s Bay Company trading...
posts had been established throughout the North, encouraging Inuit to abandon their semi-nomadic lifestyle and settle in the communities that were set up around the posts. As Kristen Norget explained in her essay “The Hunt for Inuit Souls: Religion, Colonization, and the Politics of Memory,” in the 1920s “Trade in furs caused Inuit to give up their traditional winter seal hunt for non-traditional trapping of Arctic fox. By this time, virtually all Inuit were living within traveling distance of a trading post: permanent campsites had sprung up around the trading posts, resulting in the spread of trade goods.” This new concentration of families put pressure on the surrounding wildlife resources, as well as made the campsites the site of “an assault of epidemic disease – measles, polio, smallpox, tuberculosis and influenza – brought by missionaries, whalers, and traders. The latter two groups had also introduced the scourge of syphilis and alcoholism to Inuit communities.”

Seemingly overnight the Inuit populations were becoming concentrated into settlements, threatened by disease, and made dependant on trade goods. These changes ushered in a new era of the impoverishment of Inuit culture that, in the span of a few decades, would have devastating long-term consequences. Survivor Salamiva Weetaltuk adds, “There were other changes. Dog killings. My mom cried big time when these red-suited guys were killing the dogs. I asked her why she was crying because I had never seen her cry in all my life. She said, “Our life is being killed.” … She meant our culture, the very existence of our culture was being killed by the way they were killing our dogs. After that the community turned – turned like a big cloud went over the community…. It seems like as soon as the dogs were killed the abuses and alcohol and drinking started.” Amidst this cultural turmoil and colonization, the Indian Residential School System was introduced across the North, and Inuit children were taken from their homes in large numbers and forced to learn the Qallunaat (non-Inuit) way of life at the expense of their own.
Life in the Residential Schools

By 1964, the number of school-aged Inuit children attending residential school had increased to over 75 per cent. Some children started school as young as four or five, others were teenagers; some attended for a short time while others spent their entire youth in residential schools. Many students only saw their parents once a year. Some were unable to return home for years at a time, because of the difficulty and expense of northern travel by plane or boat, and the great distances they had to travel just to go to school – sometimes in other provinces and territories. In fact, even today, 90 per cent of Canadian Inuit communities are only accessible by air. Compounding this isolation were the extremely poor lines of communication in the North. As Survivor Peter Irniq recounts, “We weren’t able to communicate with our parents for the entire nine months that we were in Chesterfield Inlet. We just didn’t have communication facilities; no telephones. I remember I got two letters from my mother that particular year in 1958 and 1959.”

While many Survivors have expressed gratitude for the education they received, this cannot compare to the suffering and loss they experienced as children, and the long-term hardships this system has inflicted on the Survivors of residential schools, their families, and communities. Inuit were forbidden to speak their own language or practice any aspect of their culture in the schools, dormitories, hostels and other residences. It was believed that this would facilitate their assimilation into the colonial Canadian culture, so the prohibition on traditional languages was often strictly enforced with harsh punishments and abuse. Furthermore, Inuit children were made to feel ashamed of their traditional way
of life, and many acquired disdain for their parents, their culture, their centuries-old practices and beliefs, and even for the food their parents provided. Labradorimiut Survivor Shirley Flowers explains, “I lost my taste for wild food. I couldn’t eat seal for years after that.” Several of the Survivors remembered feeling superior to their parents when they returned home after many years in the Residential School System, having been made to believe that their parents’ way of life was “primitive” and “filthy.”

Along with being educated in English, or French in Northern Quebec, Inuit children had to follow an entirely southern Canadian...
curriculum, which was completely foreign and often perplexing to children who had had little or no exposure to the southern world. Lillian Elias, an Elder from the Inuvialuit region, explained that she was extremely confused by the green grass and strange animals in the 'Dick and Jane' books. "When I looked at Dick and Jane I thought Dick and Jane were in heaven. [...] That's how much I knew about Dick and Jane." It is difficult to imagine what it must have been like to have to learn about a new world, in a foreign language, all at once, and from such a young age.

However, most significantly, a staggering number of residential school Survivors have made serious allegations of mental, physical, and sexual abuse by those responsible for their care and custodianship. As David King has reported;

In 1995, the Globe and Mail, a Canada-wide newspaper, reported two separate investigations involving “documented extensive sexual and physical abuse of Inuit students” at the Chesterfield Inlet Residential School run by the Roman Catholic Church. Out of 86 investigations of sexual assault allegations, 346 former students and nearly all staff were interviewed. Solid evidence was found in 14 cases. This led to 13 sexual abuse charges against three Catholic priests and 41 charges against one civilian staff member.11

In addition to sexual abuse, many students saw or experienced physical abuse and/or psychological abuse. In Grollier Hall, Yellowknife, and Fort Churchill there were reports of students being lured into the private rooms of staff members with sweets, alcohol, and pornographic material; in Chesterfield Inlet female students had their hair “cropped” as a form of punishment.12 While King’s research has been primarily in the schools of the northwest, investigations into other allegations of abuse are currently underway by the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
Inuit board the C.G.S. C.D. Howe, Eastern Arctic patrol vessel for medical examination and eye check.

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PHOTOTHÈQUE COLLECTION / PA-189646.
Life After Residential School

For the majority of students who attended residential schools, those wounds have left deep scars that continue to affect many aspects of their daily lives. Feelings of guilt and shame have compounded this tragedy, as most former students have suffered in silence for decades, afraid to speak out against those who exploited and abused them. Unfortunately, many of the negative impacts of residential school have been passed on to future generations. As the Aboriginal Healing Foundation has explained:

Intergenerational or multi-generational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next. What we learn to see as “normal” when we are children, we pass on to our own children. Children who learn that... sexual abuse is “normal”, and who have never dealt with the feelings that come from this, may inflict physical and sexual abuse on their own children. The unhealthy ways of behaving that people use to protect themselves can be passed on to children, without them even knowing they are doing so. This is the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools.”

Fortunately, Survivors and their families are beginning to seek help and to help each other in unprecedented numbers. Their brave efforts are supported by a number of recent programs and organizations working together to heal the legacy of residential schools in Canada. Evidence of this growing network of support can be seen in the public apology made by the Government of Canada in June of 2008, the newly formed Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the growing number of sharing circles (some of which have been organized by...
the Legacy of Hope Foundation), and similar community-based efforts to reach out to those affected by this tragedy. Furthermore, many Survivors have already embarked on their own path to healing. They are overcoming feelings of fear and shame, breaking the silence, restoring family networks, and addressing the loss of language and cultural practice that resulted from the residential schools.

It is towards these ends that these eight brave Survivors have come together to share their experiences with all Canadians. All of them already active members of their communities, the Survivors who participated in this project continue to be tireless advocates of healing, community health, and the revitalization of culture, each in their own way. Some, like Lillian Elias and Peter Irniq, have become major figures in the preservation of our Inuit languages. Others, like Abraham Ruben and Carolyn Niviaxie, have drawn on the healing power of art to work through the difficult issues. Likewise, Shirley Flowers and Marius Tungilik have turned to writing as a means to express themselves. Nunavik Survivor Salamiva Weetaltuk has expressed what many Survivors now feel, “I have hope for everybody to heal, to let it out.” In the words of Marjorie Flowers, “I’m going to speak because it empowers me as a person.” It has been a great and humbling honour to work with each of these brave Inuit; it is my hope that this exhibition and the stories in this catalogue bring awareness to those who did not know, and may be useful and inspiring to those who are on their own healing journey.

Heather Igloliorte  
Curator

Heather Igloliorte is a Labradoriniut artist and independent curator currently residing in Ottawa, ON, where she is completing a doctoral degree in Inuit arts and cultural history. Her father attended Yale School in North West River, Labrador.
NOTES


4 Sub/Committee on Eskimo Education of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (1954). Education in Canada’s Northland. Ottawa, ON [NAC RG-85, Vol. 1507, File # 600-1-1, pt. 7].


6 This and all other testimonies of Inuit residential school Survivors can be found by contacting the Legacy of Hope Foundation through its website: www.legacyofhope.ca


12 King (2006).


Inuit mother with one child in front of her and carrying one in her hood, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], Sept 12, 1958. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA / CREDIT: CHARLES GIMPEL / CHARLES GIMPEL FONDS / E004923423
A Timeline of Events

The British North America Act establishes Canada as a nation and makes “Indians” wards of the Crown. Inuit are excluded, leaving their status as Indigenous peoples unclear.

In an effort to keep the North from falling under American influence, England transfers all of its land and interests in the High Arctic to Canada. Sovereignty fears would dictate federal policy in the North for decades. Under an economically motivated policy coined by historians as “keeping the Native Native”, northern Indigenous peoples, including Inuit, are to be left as much as possible to their own devices.

The Indian Act is amended. Education is now compulsory for status Indians. Children are forbidden from practising their own language, culture, and spirituality and are forced to learn English, Western culture, and Christianity.

Under J. Lorne Turner, the federal government conducts research into Inuit education for the first time. Turner urges Canada to provide education to Inuit.

The British North America Act now includes “Eskimo [Inuit] inhabitants of Quebec ... within Dominion jurisdiction over Indians and lands reserved for Indians.” Inuit become a federal responsibility, including in the areas of education and health.
The American military reports deplorable living and health conditions among Inuit. The story is widely covered by American newspapers. Among the exposés: no education had been offered to Inuit; and Canada had done nothing about rampaging sicknesses amongst Inuit.

The Canadian Social Science Research Board secures the services of Drs. Andrew Moore and G.J. Wherrett. Moore conducts a study on Native education in the North while Wherrett investigates northern Native health. Both men urged that the government increase its program greatly and immediately. Three-quarters of all Native northerners were still without schooling, and the rates for infant deaths and epidemics were extremely high.

The family allowance program is introduced nationwide in Canada. The intent behind the family allowance program was to improve the health of children, particularly in poor families. For the Department of Health and Welfare Canada, it also meant persuading Inuit to buy southern products such as milk and pablum as dietary staples, and help stave off starvation and malnourishment. Years later, some Inuit would be threatened with loss of family allowance if they did not send their children to residential school.
Wrote R. Quinn Duffy: “When the federal government took over northern education in 1947, it made no attempt to assess the effects of the mission system on the native people’s social, political, and economic welfare. Nor did it try to assess where future educational policies would lead the Native peoples, or how the educational system fitted into the overall structure of development in the North. Instead the federal government adopted an incremental approach.”

S.J. Bailey is sent by the federal government to the Eastern Arctic to gather information on the necessity of, and/or desire for an education system for Inuit. His report was based predominantly on information supplied by non-Inuit informants whom Bailey felt empathized with the needs of Inuit. After consulting with Inuit in and around Chesterfield Inlet, Bailey recorded that Inuit wished to have their children educated; however, the parents preferred a day school with living quarters for a teacher. A residential school was not an option in the view of the vast majority of non-Inuit interviewed. “In discussing this problem, everyone agrees that the establishment of a residential school is NOT [sic] the answer as these children must remain with their parents during the winter months.” Bailey reported that Inuit often left their children for periods of time with relatives while they were out on the land. This custom would facilitate the acceptance of a day school.
Facing external and internal pressures, the policy of “keeping the Native Native” is now deemed by the federal government to be no longer acceptable. Inuit are now to be integrated into mainstream Canadian society.

Canada announces an education plan for both northerners and the Inuit. It was an extension of the late 1940s plan which saw Canada cautiously set up some federal schools, mostly in the Western Arctic.
The Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources is re-established and assumes responsibility for Inuit.

The Minister of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Jean Lesage, announces a new federal education system for the Northwest Territories and Northern Quebec. Although the Department of Indian Affairs had been administering a Residential School System in the south since 1879, there was little interest in providing formal education to Inuit. The Department’s jurisdiction over education encompassed all of the Northwest Territories, the Yukon Territory north of the Peel River, the Ungava area of Northern Quebec and the east coast of the Hudson Bay in Quebec.

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1952</td>
<td>The Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources is re-established and assumes responsibility for Inuit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>The Minister of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Jean Lesage, announces a new federal education system for the Northwest Territories and Northern Quebec.</td>
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<td>1950s-1960s</td>
<td>A number of residential schools and federal hostels open in the Western Arctic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early to mid-1960s</td>
<td>Small hostels are built in the Eastern Arctic and Northern Quebec.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late 1960s</td>
<td>Some small hostels in the Western Arctic begin to close.</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Responsibility for Inuit education is transferred to the territorial government of the Northwest Territories and the Province of Quebec.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>The Aboriginal Healing Foundation is established to encourage and support Aboriginal people in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes that address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in the Residential School System, including intergenerational impacts.</td>
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The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Board of Directors establishes the Aboriginal Healing Charitable Association, which becomes the Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) in 2001. The mandate of the LHF is to educate and raise awareness and understanding of the legacy of residential schools, including its effects and intergenerational impacts on First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, and to support the ongoing healing process of Residential School Survivors.

The Government of Canada signs the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement with legal representatives for Survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives, and church entities.

The Government of Canada issues a Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools.

The Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission is established. The Commission’s mandate is to document the truth of Survivors, their families, communities and anyone personally affected by the Indian residential schools legacy. Their mandate is also to inform all Canadians about what happened in these schools so that the Commission can guide and inspire Aboriginal peoples — and all of Canada — in a process of truth and healing on a path leading toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Based on research by David King and edited by Heather Igloliorte.
We were not allowed to speak our own language. When they caught me speaking in
the classroom, a Grey Nun teacher told me to open my hand and she took a yardstick
and really hit me so hard I can still feel the pain today, you know. She said, “Don’t
ever let me hear you speak that language again in this classroom. You’re here to learn
to speak and write English and arithmetic. Forget about your culture. Forget about

Inuit Experiences of Residential Schools

Photograph of Monsignor Camirand, three Grey Nuns and a group of
Inuit children. August 1937.
ARCHIVES OF THE SAINT-BONFACE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, DIOCESE OF KEEWATIN-THE PAS FONDS, N786
My parents brought me to school in the fall time. I think it was in August before they went back out on the land for the winter. They don’t come in until Christmas time when they do go out, just for groceries and that. So they left me there, crying. I remember that day very well because it was just like losing my parents, you know, losing my loved ones, just like they were gone forever. It’s like I would never see them again.

I live in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. I used to live in the Delta. I attended RC [Roman Catholic] Residential School. I was eight or nine years old. I don’t remember why they had to send me to school until later on in the years, after I had been there for three or four years, I found out that the reason they had to put me in there was because they were going to lose my Family Allowance, or all the children’s Family Allowance if one of the children didn’t go to school. So my parents thought I was the bravest one to go to school. They thought I could cope with the things that were going on. There were twelve of us. They didn’t go to the Residential School. They just sent me to school because my cousins were there. We didn’t live together out on the land. They were in different places, wherever the animals were we had to live. We followed them.
You didn’t dare speak your language, even if you didn’t know how to speak in English. You would get roughed up.

You didn’t dare speak your language, even if you didn’t know how to speak in English. You would get roughed up.

Uqaqayaanapiritchugut uqautchiqput aturlugu, taniktun uqaluatkualuaruvit.

Tiguqlitpiaqlutin uqauluaruvit uqautchirnik.

My parents brought me to school in the fall time. I think it was in August before they went back out on the land for the winter. They don’t come in until Christmas time when they do go out, just for groceries and that. So they left me there, crying. I remember that day very well because it was just like losing my parents, you know, losing my loved ones, just like they were gone forever. It’s like I would never see them again.

The first day that I walked in there I didn’t speak a word of English. I didn’t even know what was Dick and Jane, they taught us Dick and Jane in the classes, but I didn’t even know how to say “come” or “goodbye” or “hello” or anything. It was really hard. I did a lot of sign language. Today I’m pretty good at sign language! You didn’t dare speak your language, even if you didn’t know how to speak in English. You would get roughed up. One of my friends — we just came in — I can see her plainly today because I was so afraid of this Nun who came up to her and she looked like she was going to kill her. She grabbed her by the neck and just shook her. “Don’t ever let me hear you speak your language again!” Those were the sort of things we had to go through. It was really hard. We weren’t allowed to speak roughly or say nasty things to the other children or even

Qitchirvingniarmun aglaan, niqik’aqturianginaming. Qiayugaqtilunga unitchuukangangni, piigulaitkiga taamna uvlug angayuqaktuqaa tuqfuq, piqpagiratluitaa taimunga tammaqtuat. Taututtingniaruminaiktikka.


Pangma 65nguuq tunga taututkuuruaraatka huli uvlupakluqaa hullugatingit tavərani. Taustiarmukhuta uvaqut nutaraiyaaat qiriiqimtaqtauq yuqtauuruurtuagut, ingnrivikpngmun. Araqhuta qiriiqhuqpaufarik-
look at the Nuns with an ugly looking face. I don’t know what was ugly to them. “Don’t look at me like that!”

And we all would have to sew our own mukluks at that time. The bottom moosehide is like this (indicating) and that’s what you had to sew. The moosehide wasn’t soft. At eight or nine years old I would have to do that. I would have to make my own mukluks.

They cut my hair, my long beautiful hair.

We all slept in — I would say there must have been a hundred students there, maybe more if — I can’t really remember. But there were a lot of us, I remember, a lot of us and we had little beds side-by-side all the way back like this (indicating). It was scary trying to go to sleep by yourself whereas when you were at home you slept with your little sister or your little brother beside you and it was really hard.

The older students looked after us. They had what they called “charges”, taking charge over the little ones. You had to listen to them or else, because if we didn’t listen to them they would get into trouble. So in order for them not to be in trouble, not to get into trouble, they would make sure that we listened to them, even if they had to rough us up.

Today I’m sixty-five years old and I still remember clearly, just like a picture, a picture of the things that happened in there. We used to go downstairs and us little kids used to have to put logs in the fire, put some wood in that big furnace. We had to go all the way downstairs if they told you to go down and fill it up, you have to go down, you and another person. But still it was hard work. They were heavy.

When they roughed us girls up that’s when I really would get scared. I never got roughed up myself, but I got put in a post a couple of times because I said one word in my language.

I think that’s why I really fought to keep my language. Because they didn’t want me to speak it I thought to myself, “you’re not going to keep me from speaking my language”, and so I really picked it right back up when I got out of there. I picked up, malruulavluta atqaraqtugut. Havaaqpaauguruat, uqummailuting.

Hutlugatamatigik arnaiyaaqatitika iqhiliruuqangaa. Uvanga piyuaaqtingitkuluutanguq, aglaan malruulqhuualungaa kunikhamigaiglum mangaiyautaa uqaqlunga uqauchimnik.


Taalangnik atnuralgitudu faatat piralufati. Taigurnimik ilihiaktikanni agllangnimukluq. Taiguaaqqara Dick Janelu tautu-
it up with my grandparents. I lived with my grandparents all the
time. My grandparents being there, and my mom and dad and my
aunties and my uncles, we had like a little community.

In the summer time we got home. In June. But later on,
about three years after, I remember going home for Christmas for
a few days. My parents had to come to town and live in town, live
in the community. The community was Aklavik and they had to
come to town and stay there for a few weeks or a month or so just
to have me out there, just to keep me for a few days with them. It
was beautiful. I just didn’t want to go back but I had to.

I was in school for five years, really. That’s a long, long, long
five years. It was more or less like forty years because the year
moved so slow. How long is it going to be until June? You wait for
June so you could go home. My husband didn’t go home at all. He
died thirteen years ago. I lost my husband. And I know
it’s through Residential School. I know for a fact it’s through
Residential School because he didn’t know how to talk about the
problems that he went through. He was a quiet person. He was
there for eleven years. And sometimes he wouldn’t go home
because him, he was from further away. He was from the Tuk area.

I never heard anybody talking Inuktitut. It would have been
so nice.

My friend and I were talking about it not too long ago. We
always talk about the times we were at school. We were saying at
least if we saw one Native person coming to the whole school, you
know, just to come and visit, it would have been so nice to see that
person. Every time you saw a Native person you were so happy. It
didn’t matter who it was, even though you didn’t know them. There
was a hospital right beside so we got to know a few people from
the hospital. We were not allowed to hang out around there either.
They were all Nuns, Fathers or Brothers. They taught me how to read and write. When I looked at Dick and Jane I thought Dick and Jane were in heaven when I saw all the green grass. That’s how much I knew about Dick and Jane. Goodness, they must be in heaven! And there were animals. I didn’t know what they were. That’s why today I think I’m really working, finally working on the things that students know the things that they know about, to learn about something they don’t know and they have to find out about it, let them learn about something they see like caribou or whatever.

We ate rotten fish which was just yellow. You had to eat it. It was so yellow. I don’t know how yellow it is. But you had to eat it. If you didn’t eat it you will be in trouble. There was a friend of mine who didn’t want to have her porridge. I guess she got tired of eating porridge and she wasn’t going to eat it and she wasn’t feeling well either. Well, the Nun saw it. They called the other Nuns and they just worked her up again. You could see it. Everybody saw it. You get so scared when you see something like that. Right in front of the kids. It doesn’t matter. Just so long as I guess they tried to teach other kids how to — You better listen or else this is what is going to happen to you, too. It was so scary, just like being in jail, rather, I think.

I just loved the Christmas concerts, because these Native people would come and watch us. Just to see them, eh, you’re up there and you’re doing things and you see all these Native people. You’re so excited, it doesn’t matter if you know them or they’re not your relatives or anything. Just to see them. They were so beautiful. I just loved it when they would say we are getting ready for the concert. I looked forward to seeing all these Elders and people from the communities because they used to go to Aklavik for Christmas and Easter and different things like that. They used to go there for occasions so they used to come and watch us. It wasn’t my relatives. It was just the people who came from different places. Sometimes my father and my mother would come and it was hard for my parents, very, very hard. First of all, they didn’t want to put me in school.

It was hard for my parents, very, very hard. First of all, they didn’t want to put me in school.
was nice to see them watching me. My parents came by dog team. Probably took a whole day. They would have to get up really early in the morning if they want to make it right through. But sometimes they would have to camp. Of course they had children, too. They had to make sure the children don’t get cold. What I used to wear was really nice. I don’t remember getting cold when my grandmother from my father’s side was alive. She would make us every year caribou skin for the all inside, caribou skin on top, right from (indicating) all the way down, mitts and everything. I don’t remember getting cold. They were so beautiful. [At school we wore] canvas shoes, canvas parkas and duffle, I think it was. It wasn’t really duffle either because it was cold. It was a parka. You would have to wear it. You can’t wear your own. No, not what you went there in. That’s what you went to school with. They won’t allow you to wear those kinds of clothes. Everybody had to be the same, the same kind of mukluks, the same kind of parkas. I don’t know why. I never understood that part. Maybe they wanted us to dress like them!

It was hard for my parents, very, very hard. First of all, they didn’t want to put me in school. These people came around from the government telling them that if you didn’t send any of your kids to the Residential Schools you’re not going to get Family Allowance any more. They were going to have no Family Allowance and that’s the only thing that was the extra money, eh, that they had besides their fur.

Maybe I was hiding a lot of things to talk about. You know, I think that’s where they changed me there. Even though I don’t want to think that it’s like that, it is. That’s where they changed me, to hide things that I don’t want people to know. Or I don’t want to talk about. I understand every one of the persons who are out on the street because it’s a really hard thing to ever talk about. It’s really hard for us Native people, myself anyways, to talk about your feelings, your hurts. You were shunned if you did that. I find that a lot.

Where some of us are so fortunate to get out of it, very, very fortunate to get out of that feeling, even though today I still feel ilihiangihuapta nutaqqahi kavamat kilingniarait. Famililaungungurluting hutualuakitavit kinaufualualuat ingilraa aminik tuniriaqaaqtiging.


Una nakuupañqtañqum ikayuulaupiañqtañqum uqariñqum naluñqum kahukum naañqum iluhinañqum kahukum naañqum iluhinañqum. Qanuk nagliñqum, Inuggu uqarqum. Taitna matkua apqutini inuniañqum uqarliñqum uñiqhiñqum iluhinañqum, iluhinañqum iluhinañqum.

Qitunriñqum qhinañqum, uqarqum niñqum, niñqum, uqarqum niñqum, niñqum, uqarqum niñqum, niñqum, uqarqum niñqum, niñqum, uqarqum niñqum. Qanuk nagliñqum, Inuggu uqarqum. Taitna matkua apqutini inuniañqum uqarliñqum uñiqhiñqum iluhinañqum, iluhinañqum iluhinañqum.
it. If I have some things that are hard to talk about and I don’t get it out, but I do a lot of talking like this, to different ones. That’s why I say if these people that are out there would just — but they don’t know how — start talking about these things they would be set free also. My family is one of the fortunate people that are ....

Alcoholism. We drank a lot. We did drink a lot when my husband was alive and when I was a teenager I drank a lot because of that, not knowing who to turn to and not knowing who to talk to because a lot of people that I tried to talk to wouldn’t understand me. They wouldn’t ever understand the situation that I went through.

It’s very important to talk about whatever is in your life that you need to talk to even a person that you don’t know, I think that is the most effective way to go about it because sometimes when you know someone and you talk to them, you don’t seem to get across to them or they don’t know what you’re talking about. But if you talk to other people that you don’t know, when they start telling you that this is what is happening in your life then you know that they’re not digging into your life or trying to find out about your life.

Home is where your family is. That’s what you call home. Your home is where your relatives, your family, your mom and dad, your grandfather and your grandmother when they’re around, that’s what you call home. To me it’s very important to have relatives. Like for ourselves we keep going, even though I have lost my mother and my father. All those are gone now. We still keep going. We still gather together for occasions, birthdays or whatever, we still get together. We talk amongst each other. We talk about our problems and we help each other a lot. We uplift each other a lot.

The only thing that I heard in Residential School about my home was that it was not a fit place to live in. We were poor. We didn’t have good blankets. We didn’t have the foods they were giving us. I’ve heard people talking about that. These are the things that are really very, very hard for me to talk

I always say that your culture,
your language, tradition, if you have those three you feel good about yourself.

Ilanaruugit inuuniarniq uqautchiq aipaani inuuniarniq taapkua pimagupki ilingnun inuuhuqinat.
about when they put your home down. They say that your home is cold. It’s not warm like this. Would you rather be home where it’s cold and you don’t have much to eat, and that’s where your home is. You would rather be there but you couldn’t tell them these things. If you start crying about going home they would tell you all these things. They would tell you what a pitiful home you had just to try to stop you from crying. They make you cry harder because that’s where your home is.

Not only that, the other thing I can remember is they would bring a big barge. We used to burn wood at the Residential School. They would bring a big barge; it was a big barge, maybe as big as this room but longer, just full of logs. There were logs right to the top and all over. Guess who would take them out of there? — Us. Yeah. A little plank like this (indicating). You could barely stand on it. And you’re scared. If you turn around and try to go too fast you’re going to fall in. I’m pretty sure from talking to other students, too,


Qaffini ukiuni pingahuni ilihiariaqhiamaqhaaqlunga, aviktuarifugut, taataaptingnin utuuqanaanin taniktun uqaliqhuhting kangiqhilaqhtuting utuuqanaat inupiatun uqaqhuting ilihiariaqhtuat ahiin taniktun, kangiqhilaqhtugiptauq innait. Iñugiakihii-naqhting ukiutqituarman.

Nutaqqatka ihipayaangitchut aimangilaamin ilihiarvimgun aapangiha tavľuńgaqnapinirritkai. Tavľanaqpakpailuni. Unilugu
I’m sure that someone drowned and nobody said anything because our plank is so tiny. This is what you call a plank ....

It goes from the scow up to the bank and we would be as close as this (indicating) I guess, all the way down. There was a chain of us right up to the furnace room, right up to the furnace room. You had to go down the stairs. But there were some boys on the stairs, too. You would stand on a couple of stairs; go down a couple of stairs, all the way to where they piled the wood up. Every fall we had to do that. Every fall my arms used to get just red.

There were some students who tried not to hurt their arms but they must be bleeding or something, because those woods are not smooth. They’re rough. They were trees like this (indicating). We would have to do that. I can still clearly remember that, clear like a picture. I can remember it so well. I don’t remember anybody dying because they were so secretive. I used to be scared to die, too. I used to just think, “gee, I hope I don’t get sick”.

And this cod liver oil that we had to have. Today I think about it and all those .... How many hundred girls using the same spoon? They would give us cod liver oil every morning. Sometimes you just don’t want to take it but you have to. You wait for your cod liver oil.

I remember when I went home a few years down the road, about three years after I had been in the Residential School, I found that we were just like separating, the students and the Elders were separating because these ones were talking too much in English and they couldn’t understand them. And we couldn’t understand the Elders speaking in their language. That’s what I find that changed.

Every year there’s more.

My grandmother told me that herself.

When she put me in the school, she said, “Don’t forget your language.”

My grandmother told me that herself.

When she put me in the school, she said, “Don’t forget your language.”

Anaanangma uqalautikangani ingmi.

Iliharvingmungmanga uqalautigaanga “Uqautchin piigurniarnagu.”
So, all four of my children never as much as walked into the Residential School.

It was because of what he went through, eh. I kind of know what he went through, but the only time that he would talk about it is when he was drinking. He wouldn’t talk about it otherwise. But the only time he talked about it was when he drank. I had to have a few, too. It’s very hard to talk about it because he would have been still here if it wasn’t for that. I know they killed him.

I think a couple of years ago maybe there was my cousins and myself and quite a few of us were talking about when we were in school. “You did all that?” Our children were trying to understand what we went through. They couldn’t believe that we went through all that. But other than that we never talk about it. It’s something that is too hard to talk about. For me I had to go back to the same way that my parents brought me up. But my husband wouldn’t let my children cross anything. Never cross his ways, you know. There was no way his children were going to do anything like that. I noticed that. He was a very strict father. And I knew it was from when he went to Residential School. I knew. I could see that. I understood him and we supported each other with that.

There are lots of alcoholics, lots of people who do really good for a few years, maybe five or six years, and they just .... Something hits them and they just start drinking again. There’s lots of dope now back home. That’s what the students are going through, too. That’s why I told you that’s what affects the people today, not knowing how to talk to anybody else, not knowing how to make them understand what they’re going through.

Another thing that I see is how the young people start turning to booze and to drugs is because of the Residential School. The parents suffered enough so they start drinking and everything and that’s how come the young people start doing those kinds of things too. Because the parents don’t know how to talk to them, I guess. I’m not putting them down. That’s the way I am. That’s the way I am. I never knew how to make them think differently than what
they were going through because I felt guilty already because we drank so much, they were drinking and that. But today they are well-to-do, my children. I’m so proud of them. There’s nothing I could be so thankful for, you know, for how we brought them up and yet they turned around this way. They are just beautiful. They all don’t live at home, except for my daughter. She still lives in Inuvik. I have three boys; one in Kamloops, one in Calgary and one in Edmonton. That was the only way that they could get out of the rut they were in.

These kinds of things I think are some of the things that we have to think about. Help those people that are down there. You just want to help them so much but you’re only one person so to try to do that it’s going to be hard. You need a group.

Talk. Talking, and loving them I think is the most important. I find that you don’t go telling them that they’re wrong. You’re bad. I found out when I was teaching the teenagers at the high school. Today they are twenty or thirty years old but they won’t pass me by without giving me a hug because I loved them to where they are today. Yeah. I see them doing so well, a lot of them. They still want to look after me. It’s their turn to look after me.

Canadians should really try to find out and ask questions. Find out for themselves. Sit one-to-one with somebody who has been through .... Sometimes people think you’re just talking like this just because, but it’s not. It’s not. They have to find out the true facts of what we went through. And that’s when they’re going to finally realize that these people did go through all the things that they say they did.

Take a look at some people, some Native people. You know they say that the majority of Native people who live on the street, all those there in Vancouver or wherever, it’s because they can’t talk and they can’t deal with these things. That’s why they’ve got Taitnaqhuting ikayuqtiruquqtuq ikayuqlirniaqtaunik, Ikayuqtit ilihimutuq nangirutinginnik ilumaqtinginnik inugutiqihimavlugu tamna, iliharvingmiithimavlugu tukanayurniaruarnagi inuit, imingaiqinialiaqgaluguttul. Uvulpak Hulitaitnaattuq. Kiavraqtuarrinuqtuq kiavialuluuqtaunut. Ikayuqtvigiaqtaugut. Taitnaqhi-

maqini nalunaatchuq ilihimanaqtaq qaunq ikaytikrenik.

Itna iluqamaqita pitaqigatuq tamakununa ilulalahlilugtu inugaktununa ilaualuhiarlugtu uqarlulugtu.

Uqalautihukitka inuit hivunnuuqta. Hivunnuuqta nakin qaigaluaqhuqa, iluqata uqaqhimaaurjarnaqhagha hufarautivutuq. Uqaqatigilugtu ilihimakating inuit tutqagiiringilarnu tamana tutqimanagnu ilumarnun anitchimaaurjarnarlugu anti-
lutigihjinen ilungniit paiktikpuq atniarutipalungugiiqtaugutq.

Agitiniarlavut inuvut, utiqtilugtu inuuniarninganun ingilraan. Aulaautitlugu aularvingnun, tavaluqakulaqanaq hulavutut, taavani aulaaqhimaqxunu mamituarriiinaqtaq, ingmum ilihimanaqtaq tutitqingnaq. Uvanga taitnaruqulunga ihumatigirariigita nuaat uniu iluqamiguugitka aualaartararlugu.
lots of counselors for themselves, like the people that have never been to Residential Schools before they’re trying to help their people, or other people to quit drinking and different things like that. It’s the same thing today. It’s just like when you’re in a circle. We have centers. When you’re in those and when you’re in the circle, I would advise them to go to more circles and then they’ll really understand how to help those people with a lot of talking.

I just have to tell other Inuit to keep going. We just have to keep going where we come from, we have to keep talking about it, talking to whoever you’re comfortable with, and don’t keep it inside or it’s going to eat you up. Whatever is inside of you is going to turn into cancer or sickness.

We should try to bring our people back home, back to who we were before. Go out on the land. That’s where you can really feel the healing, the healing part of you, you can feel it when you’re out on the land. For myself, that’s what I’ve been looking for and that’s what my hopes are that they will bring even the younger people out on the land.

Me and my husband used to do that. I still do every summer. I’m retired but I still work hard! We go to my camp. We go walking on the hills. I have hills not far, right across my place. We go for berries. Just different things. We eat out with them and travel around with them with the boat. Just being on the land is a healing part for me, and even for them. They find out about different things, different plants and what you use them for, and sometimes I just purposely don’t bring anything for medicine; no aspirins or anything like that. I just take them without things like that and then they find out that there are other things out there. Plus I always say that your culture, your language, tradition, if you have those three you feel good about yourself. That’s what I told my students for ten years. If you know who you are, if I know who Lillian is, for the rest of my life I’m going to be feeling good about myself.

I got strong. I’m very powerful, I must say, I am today because of when I think back and I think that I couldn’t do this, I


couldn’t do that, that’s why I never lost my language because I wasn’t going to let them beat me. I wasn’t going to let them take everything away from me. They could take my pride and things like that but not my language. My grandmother told me that herself. When she put me in the school, she said, “Don’t forget your language.”

How I kept it is by doing it voluntarily. I used to bring my grandmother up to the government offices and I would interpret for her. I would bring her to the hospital and interpret for her. My mother, I would interpret for all of them, anybody that needed. It was voluntarily working. Today I feel so proud of what I did because any time they need someone to do translations and interpreting or anything they come to me.

Today I am the Vice President for ICC [Inuit Circumpolar Conference]. I travel a lot with them. I was over in Kuujjuaq in northern Quebec last summer to speak to NTI [Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated]. I was there and they were talking about young people and the Elders. That was real nice. I really enjoyed it. I had a chance to speak to them about how to help them with speaking of the ....

You know, what they’re doing is the right thing. They are walking in the right direction because youth and Elders never separate. If they want to know anything there was always an Elder there. And the youth ....

We have to understand this part, too, we have to understand the youth because the youth’s mind is not like mine. Mine is really the opposite. I want them to do it this way. You can’t go around telling them that because I taught for ten years and I had to remember, yeah, I was a teenager once. (Laughter) So this is what I do.

I would just like to encourage all the Residential School students not to forget. If they forget everything else they should try to get home again. Try to get home. Try to go out on the land or speak to people they think might be able to help them. Unless you know who you are and your background all these nice things are going to come back up.

Today I’m sixty-five years old and I still remember clearly, just like a picture, a picture of the things that happened in there.

Pangma 65nguq tunga tautuktuurarpitka huli uvulpakluqaa hulugaatingit tavāni.

Tavā taamna ikauyuualualuktutq ihagutiranga. Ilihimagiga īlanmun aulaŋrut ukuat ihumatigivlugi innaitlu nutaqqat taimanga qanga tautchiniitchuṛufuk. Nutaqqat humik ilitchurihukuming inarmun qiviaruurut innait ikauyuq'uuqait.


Lillian Elias

Lillian Elias currently resides in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, but she attended residential school in Aklavik, Northwest Territories from the time that she was 8 or 9 years old. Of twelve children, Lillian was the only one to go to school, which she did so that her parents could maintain their family allowance and support her other eleven siblings. Despite being taught exclusively in English in residential school, Lillian was able to maintain her Inuvialuktun language by speaking it during the summer months and by volunteering to translate for her grandmother and others at the local hospital and government offices when she was young. Prior to retiring from teaching, Lillian carried on her efforts to preserve the Inuit language by integrating it into her classrooms. Today, Lillian organizes and participates in Inuit language symposiums and is the Canadian member of the International Inuit Elders Council of the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY LILLIAN ELIAS.

These boys are from the same school as Lillian Elias. The boys and girls were kept separate from each other.

Lillian Elias

I went to school in North West River, Lake Melville High School. The first year I went was ’74, so I was there for three years, from ’74 to ’77, from grades nine to eleven. I’m from Makkovik, originally. That’s my home. We flew on a plane. Sometimes we would go on a Cessna, which is a little small two-seater. Other times it would be a Beaver, which is a bigger float plane or skis. And then the Otter would be the biggest one.

I had eight siblings. There were nine in our family. I’m the youngest so I was the last one to go to school and I went along with my brother, my youngest brother. There’s only one of my siblings who didn’t go to Residential School. Everyone else went.

I hated it. I really did because I felt like I was being torn away from my family. I think I was a bit rebellious. I didn’t want to go by the rules but yet I knew if I didn’t then I would be in trouble. So I would write these letters home to my parents and make little teardrops. I wanted them to see how sad I was and I thought if I did that, or if I didn’t do well in school then maybe they would let me come home. But they didn’t.
We were allowed to go home at Christmas and in the summertime. My parents were there. My siblings were there. Some of them were already gone off to university and some of them were married by that time because there’s a big age difference in our family.

I remember being very homesick. I didn’t want to be in school there. I wanted to be home. It was hard being away from home.

The first day was sad. It was sad because I was a little bit excited first because everyone was going away to school and everyone came back and it seemed like it was a lot of fun. There were things going on in my young life that I kind of wanted to leave, but I didn’t realize how hard it would be until I got on the plane.

Then I realized I was leaving my parents. So I cried the whole way. By the time I got to school at North West River my eyes were almost swollen shut. I was just sad. So I basically cried the whole way. By the time I got to school at North West River my eyes were almost swollen shut. I was just sad. So I basically cried the whole way.

We were so far away |
THE INUIT EXPERIENCE OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Katangutikkaniit Paigijaupvilimmut Ilinniaviliasimangituk. Tâpsuma asiagut ilonnata ilinniaviliasimavugut.


Sivullipâk ulluk kitsanattualolauttuk. kitsanattualolauttuk sivullimik Kittaingattojâllailaugama takununa Kattalaguamga alla-Kattatunik ilinniavimmut ilonnatik utiKattadlutillu takugannijâgi Kattadlugit alianattojâ Kattalauamm. Sunanik ilanginnik inosigani inosuttoludlunga Kimaigumattojâ Kattalaguamga, távutualli ippigilaungilanga Kanuk uKumaittiginimmangât, Kaujiniadlunga kisiuni tingijommait ikisisimalidlunga.


whole first week, for sure. I was really homesick. But I think the thing that really helped me was my brother was with me. It made it easier. I think it would have been much harder if he wasn’t there. So I did have part of my family there with me.

I hated it. I really did because I felt like I was being torn away from my family. I think I was a bit rebellious. I didn’t want to go by the rules but yet I knew if I didn’t then I would be in trouble.

So I would write these letters home to my parents and make little teardrops. I wanted them to see how sad I was and I thought if I did that, or if I didn’t do well in school then maybe they would let me come home. But they didn’t.

My father used to write me letters just as an encouragement to say that he was proud that I was there and I had to get an education. Things were changing in Labrador and it’s time for Labrador people to rise above everything that was happening and for me to be there. Once I had my education then no one could take it from me.

It was pretty hard for my parents. It was very, very hard. I can say that because I was the last one to leave out of all my brothers. I only had one sister. Every time they left home I would see. My mother would cry and my father would cry. He would never come down to the plane to see any of them off. It would be my mother. Instead I would see him — and I can plainly see him — running or walking real fast up the hallway in our house crying and just trying to get away so we wouldn’t see his tears.

My mother would cry and I would go along with her.

My father fought really hard to get schools on the North Coast because I think they were just tired of seeing children go away and the rest of Canada seemed to be able to have high school and stay in your home and be there as well as go to school. So I think he was one in our community, one of the leading forces of getting a high school, or a high school in Makkovik anyway.

My siblings didn’t give me advice. I think it’s a strange thing because we were a big family and I thought that we were a very close family. But I’m realizing now that there was some kind of
I lost a lot. I lost a lot of my culture and parenting and role models. I did. I lost a lot.

I gained my education but I lost a lot of me in the process.

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Asiujisimavunga angijualummik ilusittinik
Kitungaligisongugiamik amma
itjagatsausongugiamik. Pijagesimagalukungangayjualummi na ilangani iti linniavigilia Kattalunganga.

I enjoyed being around and meeting the other students. We argued and fought a lot but yet we were like one big family. So it made it much easier for when I went into the community, the other communities, because I knew someone from every community. Some of them I shared rooms with. So that part was good.

disconnection with us. So we never really talked a whole lot about school or going away. They were so much older than what I was so I guess I just couldn’t connect properly with them. But yet when we were all together, we were together, but still there was this disconnection of some sort.

If they were in Goose Bay then they would try and come down and see me, my younger siblings. My older siblings I never ever saw them because they were much older than I was and they were off doing their own thing. But some of my younger siblings would come to visit. But I think most of the time I used to just cry because it made me lonely.

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I think my parents gave me the most hope. They kept encouraging me to finish my education and to just try and stay there and do the best that I could do so that I could have my education and I would be able to get a good job and have a career when I finished. That’s really what gave me hope. Having my younger brother there was another thing. There’s lots of times when I was homesick I would go try and find him and talk to him, sometimes. A lot of times he didn’t want me around but I think it was our age. He might have been wanting to do things that I didn’t want to do.

There was a house parent there who I really became close to. She was very close with the other students as well. So she became almost like a mother to me. She kind of watched out for me, I think. She would just do little things that other house parents wouldn’t do for us. She would let us maybe get a little bit more food if we were hungry, or sometimes she would get me to come down into her apartment and she would give me ice cream or cake, or something like that. On my birthday she actually gave me a gift. Some students, when we had the phone system in, some of the older girls’ boyfriends used to call them from their hometown. And if they called late at night sometimes she would come up and actually let us use the phone and take the phone call, whereas that really wasn’t allowed at all. I think she bent the rules and she paid the price for it a lot of times. I lost touch with her for years. But she called me one day just right out of the blue. I’ve been in touch with her.

It’s a funny question to ask about how I reflect on my experience, because I think if you would have asked me that question even three or four years ago I would have had a different answer. One of the things now that I’m involved with I’m working a bit with the Residential School Project and talking about it, I actually realized how much of an impact it had on my life. It really had a big impact when I became a parent myself. I didn’t realize that until even just two years ago.


I cried the whole way. By the time I got to school at North West River my eyes were almost swollen shut.

Taimaidlunga KialilauKungatāvungatikidlutanut. Tikigama illinniavimmput North West Riverimi ijekka bullimput uitatsialaugunnaitollonet.

I was fine until my children became the age that I went away to school. And as they were getting almost to that age I found that I was getting really angry with them.

I feel so sorry because I think I treated them quite badly at times when they would complain about this and that. I would be angry and say, “At least you’re home, you’re home and going to school and you can be with your parents.” And I couldn’t do that so I sort of took my anger out on them. That had a big impact on their lives as well. It’s only this past year that I can actually talk to them about it because I didn’t realize before that that’s what was wrong.

So it’s a real healing journey for me to be able to acknowledge that and then to try and make amends with them. I can’t change the past. I can only go forward with them and try and have a better relationship with them. I always took care of them the best I could but there was just this anger that used to come out with them. Some of it is actually a little bit funny because one day I was ....

They were trying to talk to me. I think it was close to Christmas and they were getting excited about Santa Claus coming. I was angry but I didn’t realize I was angry. My son looked at me, and angiggamegattik, angiggamevutik illinniaviliasongudlutik katinga-KatiKasongudlutillu angajukKâtinik.” Taimâlli pigunnahulaunginama ningaumapvigidlugik KongautiKattalauttâkka. Tamanna angijuulummik attuisimmijuk inoseginnik amma. Tamatsumani kisian járimi Kângitainnatumi uKâlapvigitsiasogilitainnatâkkak tamakkununga namminillu ippigilaungilanga tamatsumunga taimailiuttitauKattalannignanik.


my daughter, and they said, “Mom, why are you so angry?” I said, “Angry, I’m not angry.” They said, “Yeah, you are, you’re angry.” And then I realized it. My anger is coming out. But they had to point it out to me. I didn’t realize what was going on. So it has made a huge difference in my life, once I acknowledged it.

I still have a long ways to go yet, but at least I’m talking about it. I did talk about being in the Dorm before, in school, and my daughter actually said one time, “I wish I would have went to Residential School, it seemed like you had so much fun.” I was just telling her some of the things that we did together. I became really angry with her because she only heard the good parts and not the parts that were hurtful to me.

Another thing that I noticed my first day going home, when I actually went home, was the smell was different. There was sealskin. We used to have sealskins on our porch. I was really ashamed of that once I came home from school. I thought that was a wrong thing for my parents to have done and their way of life, the way we used to live, I thought that was the wrong way. I thought that I was a little better than what they were. I didn’t realize all that until I started my journey here with the Residential Schools and thinking about ....

I lost a lot. I lost a lot of my culture and parenting and role models. I did. I lost a lot. I gained my education but I lost a lot of me in the process. I almost didn’t know who I was. I wanted to be someone else and it took a long time to come back and find my roots, although my parents always told me ....

They taught me a lot about my roots, but I lost it when I went to school. I didn’t get it back for years. It must have been almost thirty years maybe that I lost. I think just by doing things like going back on the land again and going out and doing things. Even my food that I ate ....

Kisiani piuninginnik unikkuskankanik tusalaummat amma tusalaunngimallu uvnunut ânnianattoKattatunik.


I wouldn’t eat seal meat for years and years; I wouldn’t. I used to always grumble about it when I smelled it cooking in my parent’s house, how stinking it was. And ducks, I wouldn’t eat ducks and things like that. I lost the taste for it.

It was only probably I think when I moved to Hopedale that I started. It’s a funny thing because I think in Hopedale was where I really started my healing journey. To me, Hopedale is more my home now because that’s where I did most of my healing. It’s like coming full circle and it’s like home. It’s more of home to me.

There’s an elderly woman there, Andrea. She’s helped me a lot. She’s actually from my home but she’s married there. I didn’t know her before because she moved away, married and moved away when I was younger. And my husband’s grandfather, I learned a lot from him. And there are other people in the community that

puigukasâlaukKunga. AsingaugumalilaukKunga asiângulilaugama amma akunialuk utitiisigasuaigakalauKunga nakit pisimanik-kanik, angajukKâkanut ajuKittutaunnginnalaugualungu ....


Marjorie Flowers scrubs the floor as part of her chores at Lake Melville High School in North West River, Labrador.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY MARJORIE FLOWERS.
I know and I go to. And my husband himself, I learned a lot from him. It’s almost like he .... He’s not an Elder but he taught me how to come back to our way of living again. It’s amazing. He brought me home, I guess I can say.

One of the things for me, and it’s about the government, that we’re not recognized as being a part of Residential Schools. The government doesn’t recognize, they don’t recognize Labradorimiut as Residential School Survivors but yet we get funding under the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to do projects in our communities. So I’m trying to come to terms with that yet. And the apology that the Prime Minister made, I think we need to acknowledge that. Labrador needs to be included in that. And I think if anything, it would really like to let people know that no matter what happens, or what has happened, we can’t change the past, we can only go forward. But you should never be ashamed of your roots and where you come from because really that makes you who you are today.

It may be a little bit hard to find the roots but I think every one of us has something inside of us, an instinct of where you came from, who you are. You just need to brush off the dust and rise above that and find it. We’re all equal. We’re all equal in value to the Creator. Not one of us is any ....

We’ve all got different lives, different cultures but we’re really all the same. And it hurts me when I see so much pain and suffering continuing into my children. It can be carried into my grandchildren if we don’t acknowledge it and move on. I think that’s the thing. We can’t change what has happened. It definitely should be acknowledged but we need to move on from there and get our feet back on the ground again. Because we’re a strong breed of people and we need to let the world know that. We can’t be shaken.

I think that is my hope for the future is to move on, acknowledge what has happened and move on, rise above it and become the strong people again that we were before all this happened. I think it might be done in a little bit different way.


IsumaKavunga tamatsuminga nigiugutitsaKanniganik sivunitsatini sivumuagutigillugu, ilitagiilillugu piniannieumajuk sivumua-
because times change so much. I don’t think we can really truly go back to how life used to be because the world has changed so much. But we can build on that, what has happened, and continue and not be ashamed of it, not be ashamed of who we are and use what we were taught. If anything, if we’ve lost it, go to people in our communities who know about how things were and to listen to them and acknowledge it and use some of it because it’s very useful. We can learn a lot. We learn a lot about who we are.

I think one of the things too that I wanted to say is I work a lot with the church. The church has done a lot of damage to us, a real lot. For me, as a younger Survivor, trying to get that spirituality back that was really damaged is hard. It’s hard to get people to acknowledge that the church is there, spirituality is there, whichever you want to choose. But I want to show people, too, that even

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though there’s been a lot of hurt it wasn’t the Creator who hurt, who caused that. It was humans. It was human people who didn’t do things in the right way and they caused the hurt. They destroyed a lot. But the Creator was always there just waiting for us to ask. There’s a lot of pain and suffering that’s been done by the church. But we must move on from that and take what you can and lean on the Creator.

I think we would be finished if we didn’t have hope. I think we should really always have hope. If we don’t have hope we have nothing. Without it we’d be finished so I would think that yes, there is hope. There is always hope. You just need to find that little light can guide you along and get to where you want to go.

My mom was a servant girl for the Grenfell Mission. She lost her mom when she was quite young but she went to North West River to work as a servant girl for someone who was working with the Grenfell Mission. She was there for a while until her dad wanted her to go back. So she left. But my father didn’t. There was a boarding school in Makkovik but he was from there so he just went to day school.

I took a lot of years. Probably when I hit my thirties, late thirties, probably around thirty-five, that’s when I really started to start my healing journey properly.

When I went to work with as it was then the Labrador Inuit Health Commission, that’s when I really did a lot of work and I moved to Hopedale then, so that was twelve years ago. When the Project came out I was already working with Labrador Inuit Health Commission so it became a part of our programming that we were doing. The more I read different articles about things the more I wanted to do some healing.
I would really like to let people know that no matter what happens, or what has happened, we can’t change the past, we can only go forward.

For the longest time when I left school I didn’t think there was anything wrong with me. Even now before this interview I was feeling very uncomfortable about speaking about the school because we weren’t allowed to say bad things. We shouldn’t. And some people may disagree that it wasn’t like that but that’s their opinion. I’m just telling you what my story is. I know what I went through. So it’s hard to talk about school and to be honest and not feel like you’re doing anything wrong. I feel a lot of times when I’m speaking out that people maybe are saying that I shouldn’t, I shouldn’t be saying what I’m saying, but I’m not going to be quiet any longer. I’m going to speak because it empowers me as a person. I think if I don’t do that then I won’t be able to do my work properly which I think I’ve been put in this world to help others. It’s a gift. It’s my gift that I have and I need to heal myself and work through my issues so that my life can be balanced. Otherwise I’ll just break. And I’m tired of being broken so I want to be fixed.
Everyone knows so many people especially from Hopedale who have been affected by Residential Schools. In the type of work that I’m doing and even working with the church there’s so much hurt and pain that people are carrying with them because of their experiences, it’s really hard to work with. Sometimes it can become very, very overwhelming. That’s why I want to heal myself, or at least try.

I think that’s a part of what I’m supposed to do. I really do. I think it’s a part of what I’m supposed to do as a person. Marjorie is put in this world to help. All the experiences that I’ve had I think are better enabling me to work with people.

The parenting part especially is hard to deal with. When we’re trying to run programs from a White society’s point of view, they just don’t work. The parenting, I can honestly say, the parenting part is because we’ve lost a lot. A lot of the kids have been away a lot longer than I was. Some left at ten years old. Some were even there right from young. Each year when I was there, there were other buildings coming up. There was an orphanage built there. So there were some children who went into the orphanage, from the orphanage they would go to the Junior Dorm, from the Junior Dorm they went to the Senior Dorm so their whole life ....

If you can imagine being right from a baby up to when you finish school being in that system what it has to do to you as a person and how you’re going to function when you get out and get on your own, it’s hard.

But it can be fixed, I think. It can be fixed. It’s just going to take a lot of work and we need our own people to be able to get the strength and get well enough to be able to help the others. Then I think that’s when we’re going to see our communities flourish and become healthy.

I think that Nunatsiavut is trying to make some changes and to me I’ve seen a lot happening with Residential Schools in the communities. Some communities are not ready yet I don’t think
to do the work. There will come a time when it will happen. A lot of times what I found was I didn’t realize — I think I mentioned before — that there was anything wrong. I thought everything was okay. Yet my whole life wasn’t happy. I mean, I was happy on the surface but inside I was like a little child and I acted like a little child in my adult life.

So it’s really strange how these kinds of things work. You think you’re doing so well but your actions are speaking much louder than what your words are. But I think we’re getting there and what needs to happen is I believe people need to do like what we’re doing today. We need to tell our story and acknowledge it and get support if that’s what you want and to move forward.

But it really needs to be acknowledged that it did take place, whether people want to or not, they need to start becoming vocal about it because there is so much trauma and there are so many things that happened because of the Residential School and they’re not all good. Some of them are good. It wasn’t all bad. There were lots of positives but sometimes I see the negative outweighs the positive. We need to fix that part and that’s where we are now.
I don’t think it’s going to happen overnight. We’re going to try to take small steps and do things to build up, build people up. That’s what we need to do, I think.

There’s a cycle and it’s inter-generational. It speaks volumes in the communities; volumes. Sometimes we’re just falling apart and we don’t know why. That is why, it’s because of our experiences and we buried them for years. I don’t think just because we talk about it one time it fixes everything. It doesn’t because some people have a lot trauma they are carrying and we need to be careful of that and go slow. Otherwise if we go too fast and do everything all at once that’s going to have a bad effect, too.

We’re doing some work with the children now, the youth in Hopedale. We have a Youth Support Group, so they’re doing different activities. One of the programs I wanted to start is called Empowering Youth Through Art and Drama. That sort of thing is what I’d like to do and for them to do videos and draw pictures of how everything is affecting them as youth.

Hopedale is one of the communities I think that really seems to want to open up and do some work so things are happening there. I’ve seen a big difference from twelve years ago. When I went there twelve years ago it seemed to me that people were really quite closed and didn’t really want to talk about things. Now they’re speaking out. There are lots of things happening with family violence and women are speaking out. They are not accepting things that were acceptable in the past so I think it’s a wonderful thing that they’re making changes. They’re slow and there are still a lot of things happening, but they are making changes and they are getting a voice.

Hopedale ilangauluni nunaliuKatigengitunut isumaKavunga sulijumik pigumakKoninganik sakKititsivallaliaKigiamik suligililigiti suligijaugialet taimak

Marjorie Flowers attended Lake Melville High School in North West River, Labrador, from 1974 until 1977, beginning in the 9th grade. She now works as a Team Leader with the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development in Hopedale, Labrador. Marjorie says that until she began working with the Nunatsiavut Government’s Residential Schools Healing Project and speaking about her own childhood experiences, she didn’t really understand the extent to which the residential school system was still negatively impacting her adult life, and how it was affecting the way she parented her own children. “My anger was coming out, but [my children] had to point it out to me. I didn’t realize what was going on. So it made a huge difference in my life, once I acknowledged it.” She now works closely with Survivors, youth, and families who have experienced intergenerational trauma as a result of residential schools.

Marjorie says, “I didn’t want to go by the rules but yet I knew if I didn’t then I would be in trouble. So I would write these letters home to my parents and make little teardrops. I wanted them to see how sad I was and I thought if I did that, or if I didn’t do well in school then maybe they would let me come home.”

LETTER AND ENVELOPE PROVIDED BY MARJORIE FLOWERS.
I left home when I was thirteen, so it was 1966. I went to the Dorm that year and stayed that year. Then I went with my sister to Newfoundland and I came back to the Dorm again, but I ran away the second time I went.

I don’t remember the first day of school. I do remember getting to the community though and going into the Dorm. It was pretty scary and lonely. I think I was the first girl to get there so I was the only girl in the Dorm. I remember going into the building and there’s like bunk beds in all the big rooms. There were about fourteen bunk beds in one room and fourteen in another and I was the only person there. So it was pretty echo-y and pretty spooky.

For the first few weeks I guess I was pretty lonely. I was really homesick. It made my physically sick, feeling nauseous and unsettled, I guess. I did ask someone if I could go home, someone in authority there, someone at the Mission and they didn’t even speak to me. They just drove away and left me there.

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GOING TO THE DORM

by Shirley M. Flowers

My mother sits by the window crying
   Her heart is breaking
It’s the same memory every fall
The plane has taken her children away
   They are gone for all winter
It’s time for them to go to school
   School is ninety miles away
We will not see them again for ten months

In the spring my brothers and sisters return
   The plane flies overhead
My mother is running and crying
She’s crippled but she can run today

I hide behind my mother’s dress
   I’m shy
My brothers and sisters
   are strangers

Soon it will be my turn to go
   When I turn twelve or thirteen
I have to leave too
I’m scared and excited at the same time
I’m venturing out into a new world

I’m living in a room full of strangers
   Some are kind, some are cruel
I’m constantly homesick and I cry all the time
My heart is breaking
   I want to be home

I see someone who might help me
   I walk up to his car and say
“Can you send me home please
   I’m lonesome and it’s making me sick”
That person doesn’t answer
He just looks at me and drives away
   leaving me crying, standing in a cloud of dust

Next thing I know I’m being told I’m a trouble maker
   The principal of our school
Has been advised that I want to go home
I’m told that what I’m saying and feeling
   is upsetting others
And causing problems for the people
   who run the place
And there’s no way I can go home
All hope is lost
I just have to make it through this year

My God, how can people do this?
How can they own my life?
I feel like I must be in a prison
I can’t get away
I can’t see my parents
My heart is breaking
I hate it here
Sometimes we have to fight for food
We have to work hard to look after the place
I can’t wait to get out of here

Spring comes, I can go home soon
I will never come back
I do though, one more time
This time I run away
   No one can make me stay here

Now when I look at my teenage daughter
   I realize some of what I lost
How do I be a mother to her
I wasn’t with my mother when I was her age
   My heart breaks
But this time all is not lost
   No one owns my life
I am free
And this freedom I will share with her.
AULLALITTUT PAIGIJAUPVIMUT
unikkausinga Shirley M. Flowers

Anânaga itsivajuk igañap saniani Kiajuk ommatinga siKumilittuk
tamanna taimatsainak ikKaumaKattataga ukiatsâk tamât.
tingjok aullaujilittuk sugusinginnik aullauammentialittilugit ukiuk nallugu.
AullatitaujigaKalimmimata illinniavimmut,
ilinniavinga 90 maililtut Kaningitigijuk.
Takuniagunnaimijavut senani takKini.

Upingasângulimmat, anikka angajukkalu angiggalikKut.
Tingjok tikilittuk Kulauadluni.
Anânaga appalilikKuk Kiajuk.
Sukkogaluadluni appalisongulikKuk ullauni.

IjisimatuinnalikKunga anânamma annuângâta tunuani.
kangusutuinnalikKunga, anikka angajukkalu Kaujimalungunnaigakkit.

Mânnakut uvanga aullagiaKalâlikKunga.
Jârittâguma suvailfanik, 13-nanillonet aullagiaKalâgivunga.
kappiassudlunga Kuviasuvunga atausikut.
Kaujimangitaganut aullalâlikKunga nutâmут silatsuamut.

IllogusimmelikKunga inununut tatattumik Kaujimangitakkanillonet
Illogit inutsisauat, illogit pinniagualuit
Angiggamut paingunginnalikKunga Kianginnalidlungalu
Ommatiga siKumilittuk
AngiggagumalikKunga

Inutsivunga ikajugajakKotumik uvannik.
Aiviviga motakânganettilugu uKautidlugu,
“AngiggautigajakKamâ, paingulikKunga
taimalunga KanimmalilikKunga.”
Taipsumâ inop kiungilângalonnet.
TakusagalâtuinnaKâdluni uvannik aullatuinnaKuk.
Kimainnatuinnalunga Kiattillunga
inutuinnnautilidlunga pujop luani.

Kaujitaunialimmidlunga, uKautjutauldunga piungitumik sakKititsituinnaillinniganik.
Illiniaviup angajukKânga uKautjuaussimappalaijuk angiggagumalinniganik.
uKautjuaunialimmidlunga uKausikka ippinnianikalul
maliliaKititsilinniinginnik asikkanik
uKumaitsutumetitsilinniganillu aulatsjinginnik illinniaviup paigijaupvingani,
Kanullonellu piggagasuagauaguma angiggagitaunialungitun.
Nigiugijatsaka ilononatik asiusvut. KinuitsâgasuagiaKavunng tamatunâmi jâri’mi.

Godîgâ Kanulle ukua inoKâtivut taimâgâluk piKattaton?
Kanulle ukua namminiKalitton uvak inosiganeng?
IppinialikKunga immaKâ pannainaisimâvimmelikKingâ?
Kimâgunnelungimain.
Takungununluuniga angajukKâkanik Ommatiga siKumilittuk.
Piugingitâluga manna.
Illogani pinniagutigiaKaKattaKugut nigigiaKaligatta
uKumaitsualunik suilitasKaKattadluta kamagitsiaiKadlugu
inigijavut.
UtakKingomajàlikKunga Kimâgiâmamik tamângat

Upingasâk tikimmat, angiggalâlikKunga mânnakut
UtilâgunnugmagikKunga
Utinginnadlungali, atausiagiallalunga
Tamatunani KimâlâlikKunga
kinamullonet nukKangattitaunialungilanga tamâni

Mânnaulittuli takunnâlîgakku paniga uiggasolittuk,
ippiqisongulikKunga sunani asiujiittitauinsimmangâmâma.
Kanulle anânauânimikKingâ paniganun?
Anânanagelaininama pinnimâ jârininngi jãriKadlunng taimâk ippinialigama ommatiga anânimâKattaton.
Tâvatualli tamatunani sunanik asiujiittitaunialungunaiKunga
kinamullonet inosiga namminiigisajâlunngitu
Sunamullonet apviataulungilanga
Tamanna apviataungingina ikajotiginiattavuk panigalu.
unsettled, I guess. I did ask someone if I could go home, someone in authority there, someone at the Mission and they didn’t even speak to me. They just drove away and left me there.

Later on, I don’t know if it was that day or the next day, I was called up in front of the principal at the time and was pretty well told to give it up. I was causing problems and I’m not going to go home anyway so I had to stay put. So I just gave up.

I remember when we first got there that somebody came in and gave us a big lecture on something. I guess it was what we


Siagugiangulimmat, Kaujimangilanga taipsumanitsainau-ulummangât ullumi ulvalnot Kauummat, KaikKujauniadlunga

Shirley says, “This suitcase was bought for me when I was going to the Dorm to put my stuff in for the winter. All my winter supplies came in that. [...] That’s what I took all my winter clothing in, whatever that I needed.”

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JEFF THOMAS.

Shirley uKajûk, “Una suitkâisik pisiausimajuk uvak pitsagidlugu auullagiaKaligama Paitsivimmunut annugKautitsagidlugu ukiumi. Ilonnatik ukiumi atugatsaka iluanettilagit. Ilonnatik ukiumi annugâtsaka tâpsumani pokKasiamatillugit iluanut, sunatuinnait kingomagilâkKotakka.”

ATILUUGSIMAJUK JEFF THOMAS.
I don’t remember the specifics of it but I remember that person saying they wouldn’t tolerate any nonsense.

I’m from Rigolet. My brother was there. My brother came with me. He had been there the year before. But when we got there we were separated into different rooms, so the only times I saw him was at meal times. And the rest of my family was at home or the older ones were married and living on their own lives elsewhere. I think Residential School was different for different ones. Some people hated it and some people enjoyed it, some of the ones.

We studied lots of History and Geography, Math, English and that type of stuff. I remember, too, feeling when I went there, I went there in Grade 9, and I started doing the work or whatever school-work, that I was the equivalent of maybe Grade 6. So I certainly wasn’t prepared for it and I failed. I failed the Grade, in History.

The second year I went to school I got the same mark in History two years; thirty-three. I wasn’t interested in History, I guess, not that History anyway. It was all about the wars over in Europe somewhere. It was not about Inuit culture when I was in the Dorm. But when I was billeted, when I went to school on the Island, in Newfoundland, I had a teacher who made a comment to me. He said, “You Eskimos are nomads.” I said, “Yeah, maybe we are.” And I said, “But I think you’re nomads, too.” He said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Well, to me a nomad is someone who travels around and moves their home around all over the place with the seasons, or whatever. I think Newfoundlanders keep coming to Labrador to catch all our fish and go back in the winter.”

I was punished for that. That was a bit rebellious, wasn’t it? I’m kind of mouthy sometimes, challenging. But I hear so much of things like that, you know. It’s trying to put [our] people down or something. Sometimes I take it on in not so good a way.

I don’t remember them teaching anything about Labrador. In the younger grades even in our own school at home, Dick and angajuKáp sånganut suangajauniadlunga taimailiukKujaunnanga. Piungitumik sakKittitsituinnaligama angiggatiaunialungina-magok KunulituniinnalukKunga. Saplituinnaniadlunga.

IkKaumavunga taikungagjituilluuna kinanikkiak itijuKalau-givuk sunanikkiak pitjutialuKadluni ajukittuisiattutumik. ImmaKá maligatsatinik pisottinik amma pigunnangitattinik, sunanik pigialittinik amma sunanik pigiaKangitattinik. IkKaumangilanga sunanilluasiak pitjutiKalaummanångat ikKaumavungali taimailiinkujiKalaunninganik takugumangimaginninimik tukiKangitunik.


IlinniagatsaluviniKalauKugut Kallunât Piusigsimalittan-ginnik amma Nunatsuamiulimànik, kititaliginnimik, Kallunât uKausinginnik taimaittugalanik. IkKaumagivunga, ippinialanunimik taikungagama, taikungalauKunga Grade 9 aulidlunga, ilinnianialidlunga ilinniagatsakanik, ilinniatitausimadlunga atji-nginnik Grade 6et. Taimaidlunga tamakkuninga ilinniagatskanik atuinnaulaungilang la ilinniagiamik taimaidlunga sivuppia-nngimagidlunga. Sivuppialaungilanga Grade 9amit, pigunnalau-nginama Kallunât Piusigsimalittaninik.

Jane, whoever that was, and the father with his blue suit and red tie and beautiful car. It was meaningless to us.

The good thing was I got to meet lots of people who were similar to me. There was a library there so I stuck my nose in a lot of books whenever I could because we had lots of routine, I guess. Every morning you had to get up and do all the chores and then the meals, clean up, and do whatever chores and then study. We did all the mopping and cleaning, the dishes and making the bread. I made my first bread when I went to the Dorm. Twenty-one loaves. It was a big pan.

I did go home in the summer. Late in June, I remember going home and I guess I was changed, or at least I thought I was changed. At home we call it a ‘big feeling’. I had a big feeling. I thought I was better than the community, better than my parents, so I guess I had a bit of an attitude, because I had been there and I had made it through. My parents were probably kind of used to uvannut. Imâk uKadluni, “Eskimongujuji nokatainnaKusi.” uKaniadlunga, “Ilâ, immaKâ taimaittovugut.” uKaniammidlunga, “IsumaKavungali ilitsi nokatainnagivusili.” uKaniadlunga, “Uvannuli inuk nokatainnatuk namutuinnak apvitakatainnasok inikaKattadluni naniuinnak silamik malidluni, Kanuttuinnak. IsumaKavunga Newfoundlandikait tikikatainnaninginnik Labradorimut uvagut ogattink tigulagiat-tutuinnadlutik utiniammidlutik ukiungulimmat.”


that type of thing, I think, because I would have been the seventh one who had gone and done that. My older brothers and sisters all went to the Dorm as well, and my mother before me.

I remember myself as a very young child as my brothers and sisters went away. I remember my mother getting ready for them to go. It was pretty intense. It was sad. She cried for days building up to that, knowing that they had to go and I would hear her say things, you know, “they shouldn’t have to be doing this.”

When they left I guess it was kind of an emptiness, this big emptiness and sadness. I would see her look out the window and cry a lot, probably for weeks. I was probably about four then and thinking there was something wrong with this picture. This shouldn’t be happening.

I guess all in all for some pieces I think that I got some good from it. I probably would not be where I am today for pieces of it. But I think I missed out on important things in my life, too.

One thing is parenting of a teenager. I remember with my daughter when she turned thirteen, I remember we were driving around in the car and I looked at her and I thought, “How do I do this? How do I be her parent? How do I be her mother? I haven’t got a clue.”

I think a big thing with me was recognizing that and always placing that somewhere in the forefront of my mind that I’ve got to learn how to be a parent, through trial and error, I guess.

I should only speak from my experience. I think it takes a long time, or it has taken a long time for me to realize the impacts and maybe some people aren’t to that point yet. It took a long time for me to realize how much I was affected even when I wasn’t there by seeing my mother and her sadness and her children gone away.

Shirley and her brother about to depart for Residential School. “My mother, because of her own experience [in Residential School], she was really careful sending her children away. I guess she knew what could happen or kind of knew what to expect. Well, she made sure we were clean and no lice or nothing like that so that people wouldn’t give us a hard time.”

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY SHIRLEY FLOWERS.

Shirley and her brother about to depart for Residential School. “My mother, because of her own experience [in Residential School], she was really careful sending her children away. I guess she knew what could happen or kind of knew what to expect. Well, she made sure we were clean and no lice or nothing like that so that people wouldn’t give us a hard time.”

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY SHIRLEY FLOWERS.
And then when they came back, say when I was four, maybe three or four of them came back, and I’m looking at them, thinking, “who are these people?” They are supposed to be my brothers and sisters but I don’t know them and I’m too shy to speak to them.

Certainly, I feel at home in my community. Even when I visit the community today if I walk out on the beach and look towards the northeast I always want to go home. I want to go home. That’s what it would be like. I want to go home. Home, I guess, is when I sense I feel like I can be a part of the land. Like in Marjorie Flowers’ community at Hopedale, I feel at home there. Even in our trip up to Pangnirtung I kind of felt kind of like home, you know. There’s some comfort. There’s just some connection. I think it’s that connection to the land and to the people, the similarities.

In me, I think maybe that connection is growing in me. I know when I was younger .... When I went away one thing when
I went to the Dorm I lost my taste for wild food. I couldn’t eat seal for years after that. But I got all that back again now. So I think some of it changed me but I’m able to work at getting a lot of it back. And I am working on getting it back and I want to be proud of it, and I am. I do the things that should come natural to me, whatever it is, whether it’s to go catch fish and smoke it or whether it’s to gather eggs and eat them, or do whatever is in the season to do or spend time out on the land, on the water, and smell it and look at it and see how beautiful it is and write about it and draw it.

I’ve been writing a lot for years now. Probably the “Going to the Dorm” thing may have been one of my first writings. I think I must have used it to express, or it helped me to express how I feel, probably better than speaking. And then I can go back and read and reflect on what I’m saying and build on it and maybe pictures might come out of it, little drawings. I think that has been very connecting and healing for me, as well. I’m getting in touch with my true self then. I don’t have the language and if I did I would be able to express myself much better. That’s what I believe.

I think, and this is me personally, I think that some of the language sort of determines if you’re proper, you know, if you’re a proper Aboriginal. And it’s been said, you know, that this is a direct result of the Residential School system. I’m here. But I don’t think I’m just surviving. I’m an active Survivor and I’m trying to do things to improve my life or to help others, or even to write and draw and let people see and appreciate and be proud of it.

I recently did a Presentation with the youth. It was on Colonization and Inuit history. It was in Rigolet, but it was a Regional Conference so there were youth from all the communities there. When I was going to do my Presentation there was one girl in particular from Rigolet, from my community. She said, “When you’re finished your talk I’m going to put you on the spot. I’m going to ask you a lot of hard questions.” And when I finished she didn’t say anything. So I asked her, “How come you didn’t ask a ually tamakkua ilonnatik pisogilimmijakka. Taimaidlunga isuma-Kavunga ilanginnut siangutitaiusimajunga ūtavatuali pilivailadlunga utilisivalialititununga ilonnainik. Pigunnausittutt utilivaiiligasuattaka pijuguitigigumagakkit, pijuguitigigikilu. PikataKattaKunga piusituKagigialikkani, sunatuinnani, iKalunnialungalonnet isigiti-siagillugillonet mannisugiiallungalonnet nigillugillonet, sunali-giaKagumalonnet silak malillugu aulassimagalâKattalungalonnet nunami, imânilonnet, naiKattalungulu takugannijâgîKattalungulu iniKunanninga ammalu allausigiKattalungulu allanguaKattalungulu.


Mânnakolauttuk Sulâkkâkanik uKalautiKalâggivungunâ inosuttunut. Pitjutigidlugulu Kallunânut AulataulâKisimanivut amma Inuit Piusigisimalittangit. Rigolettimedluta, Avittusimajuit katimatsuaKagitgetillugit taimaimmat inosuttuit ilonnainit
It took a long time for me to realize how much I was affected even when I wasn’t there by seeing my mother and her sadness and her children gone away.

Akunialimmat kisiani ippigiliaKililauKunga Kanuk angitigijumik attutausimaniganik taikunga suli ailautsimananga anânaga takunnatuinnadlugu kitsatillugu Kitungangit aullatitausimatillugit.

question? You told me you were going to ask questions.” “I couldn’t even speak”, she said, “How do you ask something about that?”

There was an Elder there, too. Later on she was talking how English was her second language and she said she found it difficult to understand a lot of the Presenters. But she said, “I understood every word you said.” So I told her I thought it was because I was speaking from my heart to her heart she could understand. I started off with a PowerPoint Presentation with one of my writings, a slide of drawings and pictures that I did for each line.

I want to say something about our community and Labrador in particular and our struggles. Although we’re funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and have a project or whatever, we are not recognized by the Federal Government as having Residential Schools. It’s a technicality, I guess, because they are saying no federal dollars went into it. But I would like to somehow challenge that. And I guess to me in some way there has to have been dollars flowing through, which is really a technicality nunaliuKatigengitunit tamânelaukKut. Suliakkanik uKâlautiKa-nialigama uiggasummmik Rigolettiumimik, uvak nunagijanganit. Tâna uiggasuk uKalauttuk, “UKâlagegeuvit tamàngat nottini- ngimagikKagit. Apitsukatiangiakkit unuttunik pijagiakKutujunik apitsuniagiakkit.” UKâlautikkanik pijagegama sunamillonet uKausitsaKaniagunnaidluni. Taimaimmat apiginiadlugu, “Summat apitsuKaungilammâ? UKautjulauganga apitsukataniannining.” “NilligunnalaugunngakKungalonnet”, uKaniadluni, “Kanulle apit-sotiKanialigamâ tamakkununga”


anyway. We are a part of the country now. It’s like I was saying if I adopt a child with FASD [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder] I don’t say “give me the child, don’t give me the FASD”. It’s like we are who we are with what we have and we have that experience. I think on June 11th, 2008 the Prime Minister [made] an apology without recognizing us and I think that’s an insult.

I had this suitcase that was bought for me when I was going to the Dorm to put my stuff in for the winter. All my winter supplies came in that. This is it. I kept it for I don’t know what. Forty-two years ago. That’s what I took all my winter clothing, whatever that I needed, to school in. Somebody asked me what I did for winter clothes. I don’t remember, you know, I don’t remember what I did for that. We didn’t have uniforms. We did bring our own clothes. And I probably just brought two outfits, or something.

I have this photograph by my mother .... My mother got me and my brother ready to go, and dressed us up in our finest! I want to say something else after, too, and it’s not about me. It’s about something that happened.

My mother, because of her own experience, she was really careful sending her children away. I guess she knew what could happen or kind of knew what to expect. Well, she made sure we were clean and no lice or nothing like that so that people wouldn’t give us a hard time.

Another thing I think in my mother’s experience, although it was not said, I think I said it to you I believe, my mother was a slave. My mother was taken when she was eleven and I don’t think she got back home until she was eighteen. She wasn’t allowed to go home in the summers; nothing. She had to go work for the Mission, the missionaries.

To me she lost her freedom, she wasn’t free to go she wasn’t free to do things. She had to stay and work for these people. I don’t know if she got paid, or if she did how much it was. I really believe she was a slave for years. She was some kind of a maid for the
If we don’t speak out and if we don’t say something our children and our grandchildren will never know our truth is what I was trying to say.

UvallanguKituqtiKuNingiut.

If we don’t speak out and if we don’t say something our children and our grandchildren will never know our truth is what I was trying to say.

UKâtallatsiKilla utqaqsiiKuKutinat KuniKuaKuNingiut.

UvallanguKituqtiKuNingiut.

UKâtallatsiKilla utqaqsiiKuKutinat KuniKuaKuNingiut.

UvallanguKituqtiKuNingiut.

UKâtallatsiKilla utqaqsiiKuKutinat KuniKuaKuNingiut.

UvallanguKituqtiKuNingiut.
but I don’t have to stay there. I don’t have to stay there. I can do things about it and it doesn’t have to take my life. The experience doesn’t have to be all of me.

I had become an alcoholic. I started drinking when I was in the Dorm. It took me a while to get over that. I had my first drink I was thirteen years old. But I haven’t had a drink now for twenty-three years, so I’m doing not bad. It’s a journey. It’s a good journey now. I’m making it a good journey.

I want to write some more, talk to people some more, learn some more, and do that type of stuff. As I write and learn I’m growing and becoming more confident. I still have a lot of moments, I guess, depending on the situation and who is around me where I still lose confidence or I’m afraid of authority figures. But I’m getting beyond that now. I can stand up and say things and do things and be proud of things that I do. I always think sometimes that someday I might write a book or try to get a book put together.

If we don’t speak out and if we don’t say something our children and our grandchildren will never know our truth is what I was trying to say.

There’s sometimes too I think perhaps a lot of Inuit people practice silence and sometimes I think if people are quiet and silent other people may assume that it doesn’t matter or we’re saying it’s okay. And really it’s not. So for me I think I need to learn to speak out and say things so that people will know the truth, or my truth.
Shirley Flowers
While Shirley Flowers is presently the coordinator of the Nunatsiavut Government’s Residential Schools Healing Project, she has also worked as a healing group facilitator within the Labrador Correctional Centre, a transition house counselor, and a director of addictions treatment programs. Because Shirley is also a Residential School Survivor, she is able to share her life’s struggles and experiences with others, and uses the strengths and skills she has developed through her own healing journey to support fellow Survivors. For Shirley, the path to healing includes celebrating her connection to the land and participating in traditional activities, making art, and seeking the guidance and support of Elders, traditional healers and role models. Shirley hopes that by sharing her experiences, she will help bring recognition for Survivors from Labrador. “I hope that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will hear our stories and include us in their gathering of stories and experiences.”

Shirley Flowers

Unidentified Inuit girl in a red head scarf sitting at her desk and writing with a yellow pencil, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], May 1965. PHOTOGRAPHER: KRINTACONIS / E0054665291
I remember my very happy times when I was a little boy prior to going to the Residential School in Chesterfield Inlet. I lived much like my parents as a very traditional Inuit, the Inuit lifestyle. I was always dressed in Caribou clothing in the winter time and switched to store-bought clothing in the spring and summer time. We already had Hudson’s Bay Company traders trading with the Inuit for furs and sealskins and carvings and things like that when I was just a little boy. I grew up as a seal hunter, as well as caribou hunter, and a trapper in Naujaat/Repulse Bay.

We noticed one summer day in August 1958, a boat was coming up to our outpost camp. As Inuit we lived in a tent at this particular outpost camp where we used to fish every spring when the fish were swimming downstream, Arctic Char. In August of that particular year we noticed a boat coming to our outpost camp.

We want to make sure that these kinds of things never happen to young people again, little children, in the future. We don’t hold grudges against those people, but we want to make sure that these things never happen to young people again, little children, never again. Never!

PHOTO BY JEFF THOMAS.
When the boat got there the Priest came off, the Oblate Priest came off the boat first and said to my father that he came to pick up Peter Irniq and that I was going to school in Chesterfield Inlet.

In Naujaat/Repulse Bay. So as usual my mother started to boil tea outside, with heather. She was making tea for the visitors that were coming into our outpost camp.

When the boat got there the Priest came off, the Oblate Priest came off the boat first and said to my father that he came to pick up Peter Irniq and that I was going to school in Chesterfield Inlet. Well, there was a bit of commotion at that point because my parents were not consulted about the fact that I was going to be going to school. So here I was going into a boat leaving my parents for the first time in my life in 1958 and I was going to school in Chesterfield Inlet.

In a few days I was going to fly for the first time on a Beaver, a one-engine Beaver airplane on my way from Naujaat to Chesterfield Inlet to go to school. There was no consultation prior to the departure, which was the way we were picked up by Roman Catholic Priests whether you were in Naujaat/Repulse Bay or whether you were in Igloolik or in Gjoa Haven or Pelly Bay. There was no prior consultation with my parents.
So when we got to Chesterfield Inlet we were met by Grey Nuns and a number of people. A year before I had learned a little bit of English words here and there from Roman Catholic Priests, two of them, who were In Naujaat/Repulse Bay. So I learned a few words like “seal” and “caribou” and “box” and “fish” and things like that, and we learned how to say “what is your name?”

So when we got off the plane I noticed this very small Oblate member of the Staff standing next to me and he said, “What is your name?” And I said, “Peter”, almost whispering because I was really, really shy to learn to speak English. So he said, “Peter?” Yeah, “Peter.” So he was one of the people who met us and he was part of the Roman Catholic Staff. He was a Brother within that group of the organization. They brought us to this big Turquetil Hall residence. There they took our clothes, our traditional clothing. I was wearing sealskin boots. They took all of our traditional clothing. I saw a pair of jeans. For the first time I saw a short-sleeved shirt and that’s what we were wearing.

We had overnight become White men and White women, little children. We were beginning to be taught to become like a European at this particular school. It was very strange to me when I first went to this school because I just wasn’t used to going to school. There was a blackboard. Actually, it was a green board and there was a map of the world, a map of the world, a few pictures of the world, a picture of the Pope on the side of the wall and a picture of the first Grey Nun, or a Nun some hundred or couple of hundred years before. So that was the first thing I noticed in that particular classroom when we were brought into this classroom.

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We had a very large dormitory where they had about forty beds, or maybe a little bit more. The beds were all lined up. We had a huge, huge dormitory for the young boys, and young ladies upstairs. I was used to a 14 x 12 tent, which housed six members of my family, seven members of my family. I was used to that, or...
a 20-foot in diameter snow house in the wintertime. So getting into this huge, huge place was a huge cultural shock for me, and I’m sure for many other young people, children, who went to Residential School that particular year or the years before, or the years after.

We had to wash the walls and we had to wash the floors. Along with the other boy from Igloolik I was a garbage boy, carrying the pail that the Grey Nuns had thrown away after they ate, you know, oranges and things like that. So we threw out orange peelings in a pail from the Nun’s meal into the ocean. That’s what we were told to do so those were part of our responsibilities. So I became a garbage boy when I got to Chesterfield Inlet.

The food was terrible. I have to say the food was terrible. Once a week or every two weeks we had muktuk, which is whale blubber, or whale skin. That’s something I’m used to at home. They fed us frozen cow beef, cow beef from southern Canada. That’s something that I wasn’t used to. And I think the reason why they fed us that was because we’re used to eating Caribou meat, raw, frozen, or fish frozen, or things like that but I wasn’t used to eating frozen cow beef. I never ever got used to eating that raw frozen. And the other one that was very horrible eating was they would boil the Arctic Char, which is something that I’m used to at home. But they left the guts in the Arctic Char so that food just

There they took our clothes, our traditional clothing....We had overnight become White men and White women, little children.
tasted horrible. And yet we had to eat it. We had no other choice but to eat the Arctic Char with guts, you know.

The one I used to look forward to during the week, especially at dinner, was eating corned beef. That was something that I got used to fairly quickly and I still like it to this day. The other one that I used to look forward to was Saturday mornings when we would eat corn flakes. They had a really big box of corn flakes. That was about the only time we had corn flakes, every Saturday morning. So the food was to begin with very horrible. But there were some nice little parts to it when we would have corned beef and corn flakes and things like that. We never had any sweets at that hostel. We had two cookies Saturday afternoon with milk and that was the other thing that I remember very well at that particular time.

In the spring time when we were going home, about two weeks or a month before we would be going home, when the days got long and we had no more dark nights, that was something else that I would look forward to, because at that particular school we were severely punished by our teachers when we couldn’t add arithmetic or we didn’t know anything about Social Studies or anything like that, or even science. After all, we were not used to learning about southern culture. We learned about our own culture at home, the Inuit language, Inuit culture, as a hunting society.

We were expected to know all about camels in Saudi Arabia. Those were the kind of things that we learned at that particular school. We were expected to know all about the fishery in eastern Canada and forestry in western Canada in British Columbia. We didn’t know anything about these very strange parts of our world.

Inuit learn by observing our fathers and our mothers sewing clothes and hunting and building an igloo or anything like that, so we learn by observing. We are very adaptable people. We
adapted overnight. I wasn’t used to reading Dick and Jane. I learned about Inuit legends, for example, so I wasn’t used to southern European culture. So, particularly that first year I don’t have many memories of happy times because we were always severely punished by the Staff at the Residential School as well as our teachers at Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School.

We were not allowed to speak our own language. When they caught me speaking with one of the people in that particular picture in the classroom, a Grey Nun teacher told me to open my hand and she took a yardstick and really hit me so hard I can still feel the pain today, you know. She said, “Don’t ever let me hear you speak that language again in this classroom. You’re here to learn to speak and write English and arithmetic. Forget about your culture. Forget about your language and forget about your Inuit spirituality.” Those were the things that the Grey Nuns, both the Staff at the school and the teachers, used to get us to do. The other thing, too, the Sisters both the supervisors and the teachers, used to get extremely nice to you just before we went home. I remember this particular Sister who used to come to me and say, “Peter, when you get home tell your parents that you had an extremely wonderful time this year at this hostel and at school, and make sure you tell your parents in the summer time that you’re coming back.” Those are the kinds of things I remember so well.

In previous years Naujaat only had five wooden buildings. Three belonged to the Hudson’s Bay Company and two belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. And as I said, the rest of us stayed in tents and igloos in the wintertime, or in an occasional sod house in the wintertime, which was warmer than a snow house.
So when I got back home that first year in May of 1959, I was already twelve years old because I left home at the age of eleven and my sister and my brother-in-law were waiting for me at the village of Naujaat. My parents were living ... we always lived away from the community. They were living about fifteen kilometers away from the settlement, a small settlement. As I said, the place only had about five buildings all together. So they came to pick me up by dog team and that was the only transportation system that we had in those days. I noticed out in the distance my mother and father were coming to meet us.

I was so happy to see my parents I ran over and kissed my parents and my little brother. He had learned to speak at that point because he was only two or three years old when I left. So I got on their komatik, their sleigh, and we went back to our camp, the spring camp that afternoon. I was really, really happy to be back home with my family and familiar surroundings where I was free to speak my own language again and learn a great deal about my culture and language. That was a very big excitement for me to get back to Naujaat and to my parents again. I had a happy return to my home and had a happy reunion with my family that particular spring, particularly that spring of 1959 when I returned home for the first time after a year.

And the reason why it was so hard was because we weren’t able to communicate with our parents for the entire nine months that we were in Chesterfield Inlet. We just didn’t have communication facilities, no telephones. I remember I got two letters from my mother that particular year in 1958 and 1959.

So the entire summer I spent at home was like being in heaven again, a place of happiness, where I was free to go out, to go out hunting, to go out fishing, to go out seal hunting with my parents, free to speak my own language, free to do whatever I wanted to do for the next few months. So I had a really wonderful time being back at home with my parents and my relatives free to go back to the community that I grew up in, free to do the kinds
of things that I have always done as a little boy in Naujaat/Repulse Bay with my friends in Naujaat.

We paid a very high price for going to Turguetil Hall Residential School. Because the whole idea of Residential School, as presented to us by the Canadian Government was to assimilate Inuit, assimilate Aboriginal people of Canada to become like White men and White women. So when we first got to school we were expected to speak English. As I said, we were not allowed to speak Inuktitut in the classrooms.

The year 1958, whether I knew anything about it at the time or not, was the beginning of the end of my own culture and my own language and of my own Inuit spirituality. We started to read Dick and Jane schoolbooks, which were extremely foreign to the way we were brought up. The way I was brought up was listening to my father or my mother telling me stories about Kiviuq, for example. Kiviuq is an Inuit legend that I learned about as a little boy. Those kinds of things were non-existent at that particular school, at the residence. So we lost our culture. We lost our own language and of my own Inuit spirituality. We started to read Dick and Jane schoolbooks, which were extremely foreign to the way we were brought up. The way I was brought up was listening to my father or my mother telling me stories about Kiviuq, for example. Kiviuq is an Inuit legend that I learned about as a little boy. Those kinds of things were non-existent at that particular school, at the residence. So we lost our culture. We lost our

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language. I still speak my language. I still know about my own culture but we lost a great deal about many different aspects of our culture and language, as well as our Inuit spirituality.

Also we lost parenting. A lot of people who went to a Residential School lost a great deal in terms of parenting skills because for nine months, ten months of the year we had these surrogate mothers and fathers. The Grey Nuns, the Christian Brothers, the Christian Fathers, Roman Catholic Priests who were supposed to be our parents didn’t know anything about parenting. After all, they weren’t married. They didn’t know anything about marriage so the only thing they knew, how to discipline us, was to give us severe punishments for little things that we wouldn’t have got punishment for when we were in our own community at home.

So in terms of relating to my adult life I missed out a great deal about parenting skills. I am not as good as my parents were. I am not as good as my parents were in terms of bringing up my own children, for example. So we lost a great deal in terms of the most important aspect of our life and that is parenting skills.

My parents had a difficult time. They lost their children. They lost their child that they were bringing up to believe that he was going to grow up like a true Inuk with abilities to hunt, abilities to speak, ability to know the land, the environment that I walk on. They were going to bring me up exactly the same way as we have got punishment for when we were in our own community at home.

As a matter fact, my life changed drastically after I had been to a Residential School and their life changed drastically also. I was going to be their helper growing up in Naujaat to become a good family provider, a good husband, a good Caribou hunter, a good seal hunter. They missed out on that after I was brought to Residential School. So they missed out on a lot as well in terms of...
we were so far away

As a matter of fact in 1963 and 1964, particularly 1964, when the government sent me to the Churchill Vocational Centre. You see, in the 1960s in particular the Government of Canada was sending Inuit to southern centers all over the place. They sent Inuit to take on mechanics and heavy equipment courses in the 1960s. So they got to know the Eskimo as a good mechanic. That’s the expression the Government used to have about the Inuit. “Oh, you Eskimos are so good with your hands”, they say. “You’re very good mechanics.”

So in 1964 they established the Churchill Vocational Centre for Inuit only from the Northwest Territories, well, Nunavut and Nunavik in northern Quebec. So they brought those of us who had gone to Residential Schools together so the Inuit could be together and they brought us to Churchill Vocational Centre.

So in 1964 I attended Churchill Vocational Centre and never got back to my home community. It’s something that I’m sorry about. It’s something I feel pretty bad about over the course of my past years. But this is the way I was now brought up by the Residential School system. So I never did come home to live again in Naujaat/Repulse Bay.

I returned home in later years but I never did go back to the community to live like many other young boys and young girls who had gone to Residential School. I was a very changed person. In 1965, the Government of Canada, Indian Affairs, brought me to Kitchener, Ontario. The District Education Superintendent at the time came to Churchill Vocational Centre in the fall of 1965, after I had been attending that particular Vocational Centre for a year. He came over and started looking around for what he called a smart young Eskimo and he found me. I guess I was a smart young Eskimo, so he found me!

He said that we’re going to send you to Kitchener, Ontario and we’re going to get you a job there working in a furniture
factory. Here I am wiping furniture coming straight out of the igloo. Now I’m wiping furniture in 1965 at the age of eighteen years old. That’s something that changed my life quite a lot as well. The whole idea of that particular period of time for me and the Government of Canada was we were samples, examples, for the Canadian Government. We were guinea pigs for the Canadian Government because they said that if you do a good job in Kitchener then the other Eskimos will have an easier time getting a job in southern Canada. So we were examples for the Canadian Government, guinea pigs in the 1960s.

So after living this life do you think I could go back to Naujaat and live in an igloo again, or live in a tent in the summer time? At the age of eighteen or nineteen I had now other opportunities that I have seen. One good thing about southern Canada to me was that I learned southern Canadians, no matter who they were, were free to speak. They had a freedom of speech. They were free to criticize their government. They were free to criticize the Prime Minister of Canada. They elected their people, they elected their leaders and things like that. At home in 1965-66, throughout the years following a few years anyway, we were still living under colonial government, the Canadian Government, the RCMP, and even the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Roman Catholic Church. If there’s one thing southern Canada taught me in the 1960s was that I learned that I was a Canadian. I have freedom of speech. I can speak any how I wanted to. That’s how much I was changed.

In the early 1970s, we saw the formation of The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, the Inuit Brotherhood of Canada, and...
regional associations that were established in various Inuit
homelands in the Arctic, so there were lots of changes. We started
to talk about the creation of Nunavut, which means “our land”
in my language. We started to see the development of political
structures for Inuit in the 1970s. Some of the changes that we saw
in the 1970s were the changes that I myself helped to make those
changes in regard to the creation of Nunavut, for example.

I am someone who was brought up by the Church, the
school system, Residential School system, to forget about my own

Peter Irniq (Peter is leaning on his hand on the right) and classmates
at Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School in 1958.
PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY PETER IRNIQ.
language and about my own culture. One of the things I’ve been doing was to introduce Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, which is Inuit traditional knowledge, to my fellow Inuit in the government organizations, whether they be Government of Canada or the Government of Nunavut or Inuit in general, southern Canadians, through various universities, such as Acadia University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Manitoba, you know, organizations like that.

I’ve been doing a lot of work helping to preserve and protect and promote Inuit culture. I do this through various lectures, various travels throughout the country. When I was a young man in Naujaat/Repulse Bay that I used to start was a freedom of speech in southern Canada that we didn’t enjoy the 1970s I started to want to take my culture back. As I said, there knowledge, organizations like that.

Government of Nunavut or Inuit in general, southern Canadians, organizations, whether they be Government of Canada or the Government of Nunavut or Inuit in general. There was a freedom of speech in southern Canada that we didn’t enjoy the 1970s I started to want to take my culture back. As I said, there knowledge, organizations like that.

For my part, for myself, I became extremely embarrassed to be an Eskimo throughout the years when I was going to southern schools like Yellowknife and Churchill and southern Canada, but in the 1970s I started to want to take my culture back. As I said, there was a freedom of speech in southern Canada that we didn’t enjoy when I was a young man in Naujaat/Repulse Bay that I used to start promoting to my fellow Inuit in the early 1970s. So I entered politics to do that. I entered politics and became a Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories and spoke about more Inuit involvement, Inuit cultural programs in the classrooms. I spoke about a need to have more Inuit cultural inclusion programs for Inuit, you know, young people as part of the education system so that young men for example can learn how to build an igloo.

I have always maintained that southern Canadians have a right to know what we went through at the Residential School.
Health care givers have a right to know what we went through at the Residential Schools. You see, with the Residential School my generation of Inuit went through quite a lot. We were sexually abused. We were physically abused. We were mentally abused.

Canadians should be asking more about what happened to us at various Residential Schools throughout Canada. That’s what they should be asking. They should be taking more interest about these Inuit who moved from an igloo to the microwaves in less than forty-five years, so that’s what they should be asking more about us, about the experiences of Residential Schools, the legacy of Indian and Inuit Residential Schools in Canada.

I have told my fellow Inuit in the last couple of years that they should speak out; they should speak out more about their experiences at the Residential School. This will form part of the history, Canadian history, particularly the Inuit. It’s something even though that we were abused by the members of the Church at that time, we don’t hold grudges against the people who did these things to us. It embarrassed us. It embarrassed me.

Over the course of many years I got into drinking to hide the kind of shame that I was put through by the church members, particularly a Grey Nun at the Residential School. When she was doing this, this is the person that had authority. She had a cross, a crucifix of Jesus Christ in one hand. She represented God. She represented the Roman Catholic Church. So she had a lot of authority. What can you do? Who can you go and tell? Even if you were to complain about things that were happening to somebody in Chesterfield Inlet, nobody would have believed us anyway.

I would like to see that Sister again and ask her why she did that to me for an entire year, and the year after. I would like to be able to ask her why she did that to me. It’s something that our parents would never do to us. It’s something that no one in Inuit society would have thought about doing. It’s not right. It is not fair when so many of our Survivors were so young, as young as six years old. They were really just barely out of their mother’s womb, the kind of shame that I was put through by the church members, these things to us. It embarrassed us. It embarrassed me.
back, from their amauti, the amauti that Inuit women carry their babies with.

One of the things that I would like to state clearly, and I would like to be understood clearly, is that my generation of Inuit who went to Turquetil Hall at Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School have never said anything negative about the education system that we got. If anything, we have said the school that we attended, the education system that we got in English was a top-notch education system. We all became leaders in the end. We endured a lot. We had a commitment. As much as that particular teacher used to call us bloody dodos and no good for nothing, a bunch of hounds of iniquity, he taught us pretty good in terms of English. But those were the pretty good things that happened to us in terms of getting our education system. The education system that we got was top notchi in Chesterfield Inlet.

But the abuses ....

We want to make sure that these kinds of things never happen to young people again, little children, in the future. We don’t hold grudges against those people, but we want to make sure that these things never happen to young people again, little children, never again. Never!

I go back to that very first year that we were at Turquetil Hall Residential School, Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School where we told not to speak our own language, Inuktitut language. But you know those of us that were told not to speak our own language in that classroom today, we have become big supporters of more Inuktitut courses in the classroom. We don’t want our language to disappear so we want the education system to supplement what we already know and teach Inuit language and Inuit culture from kindergarten to Grade 12. My generation of Inuit who were taught never to speak their language again in the classroom, we’re the ones who have put up a big argument, very big time, to include more Inuit language instruction in the Inuit language.
Peter Irniq

Born in 1947 in Naujaat/Repulse Bay, Nunavut, Peter Irniq began attending the Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School in Chesterfield Inlet in 1958. Peter also attended Sir John Franklin School in Yellowknife 1963–64 and was later sent to the Churchill Vocational Centre in Manitoba with many other Inuit to receive training in a southern trade. Today, Peter is an Inuit cultural teacher, a consultant, and an accomplished public speaker who has held several political offices, including serving as the Deputy Minister of the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth in 1998 and 1999 and Commissioner of Nunavut between 2000 and 2005. Having been brought up by the residential school system to learn the Qablunaat way of life, Peter has since campaigned successfully to have Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, or IQ (Inuit traditional knowledge), incorporated into the Nunavut and Canadian systems of government, as well as to have Inuit language and cultural programs integrated into Northern classrooms.

Peter Irniq, age 13, with some classmates at the Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School in Chesterfield Inlet, 1960. Back row: Peter Irniq, Francois Nanuraq, Nick Amautinnuaq, Mike Kusugak. Front row: Jose Kusugak, Jack Anawak, Andriasi Siutinnuaq

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY PETER IRNIQ
First of all, I'm from Sanikiluaq, Nunavut. I was born there, so I went to school there for about a year, and then right after that I went to Kuujjaraapik, to the hostel. I was seven years old. I went there until I was sixteen. So many, many years. Right after that I went to Churchill [in Manitoba] for two years. After that Ottawa. And after that Brandon, Manitoba. That's the schools I went to, and it was about fifteen years altogether from the beginning to the end.

I went home in the summer time. We never used to go home for Christmas, for funerals .... I lost a lot of relatives, a lot. When we did something fantastic our parents never came so they don't know what we went through, like graduating from a certain school. They didn't know. They bring relatives to see the ceremonies, but never in those times.

The first day of school was exciting, scary, all rolled into one. The teachers were very strict. There was no talking. No speaking in our language. It was very, very strict, like school used to be. We were punished when we spoke our own language by staying in the corner, staying after school, spankings, and pulling our hair.
The ones that lived there, they had their homes. But us, we were from other communities.

The first day of school was exciting, scary, all rolled into one. The teachers were very strict. There was no talking. No speaking in our language. It was very, very strict, like school used to be. We were punished when we spoke our own language by staying in the corner, staying after school, spankings, and pulling our hair.

They taught us all of White man’s ways. I think I knew more of Canada or the United States or other countries history, except my own. I thought I was going to have to live like a White man and follow it. If not I wouldn’t make it. That’s kind of how ....

If I hadn’t been in school I would have been following my family; hunting, camps, everything that they were used to. I grew up in igloos, dog teams, hunger, coldness. That’s what I hold on to. It’s the most important thing in my life. After a while when I got older, yeah, it helped.

Where I come from it was slowly coming, the changes [to the community]. It was like one of the last civilizations coming there. It was very isolated, the place, so the changes were very slow at that time. I think it was our generation that changed it a lot later on. But in other communities where I come from right now, Kuujjaraapik, they didn’t live in igloos any more. They had houses, man-made, not like an igloo.

I came back one time when we had no more dogs. They were all killed by the RCMP. So that was one of the biggest changes that I remember. And the people started building their own homes, wooden homes, not in tents or igloos any more. A lot of changes came to be.

In a way some things are good, and in a way some are bad. The good is people are able to make money, have jobs, not like it used to be, because everybody had to hunt for a living. But the changes were when people start having jobs. I can just see it in my mind.
We started living in one place. We used to be like a whole family with lots of tents or igloos. We start living in one place and there was school and nursing, stores, so people didn’t move around a lot any more at that time. At the end, I mean, around the middle.

My parents were in Sanikiluaq/Belcher Islands. It’s a small island but there are a lot of people there. Many times I felt happiness that I was going to be with my family, be with my own people. My [summers] there were carefree, helping, working a lot with my parents, my mom. But it was a very short summer. I would get water, wash clothes by hand and clean up, help with the others.

Our parents were very, very strong. I can tell you, look, some of them used to be wiped out of all their children and they ended up with no children. They were very strong. Why should it have happened to them? They told me that I had to go to school or else. I didn’t really understand why. I just had to go.

I used to write letters once in a while and my mom used to write me every few months. The letters used to take very long. The only time my mom ever sent me money, it was just five dollars in all that time. I was older so I bought cigarettes, lots of chips, pop and gum. That was the only time she ever sent me money because they didn’t make any money, eh, except for carvings.

School changed me, very much. But we had very good teachers, even if they were very strict, we learned everything. It changed how I believed life should be, but it could have happened differently. I know older people than me and they didn’t go through that, so they are more relaxed. Me, I panic at every little thing. That’s from school.

I remember ....

We used to line up like soldiers, walking in one line. We were not supposed to step outside the line.

We used to line up like soldiers, walking in one line. We were not supposed to step outside the line.
hours I had to stay in bed. I even used to go to the washroom
without trying to let her know. It was mostly that lady. The others
were okay.

She used to have a boyfriend, too, a white man. Her boy-
friend used to give me toys or something good for a little girl. I
used to have it only for a few minutes and then it was taken away,
given to her relatives or somebody else.

She used to have a son, too. He was a boy, a very bad boy.
He used to hit us a lot and then he used to tell on us — what we
did, what we said — and then we would be punished. We used to
give it only for a few minutes and then it was taken away,
given to her relatives or somebody else.

They used to give us clothes, too, eh, the government, the
federal government. But we didn’t see them sometimes. We didn’t
even get to wear them sometimes. At that time I was with her I
only had pajamas, like pants, and if you did anything in them and
they tore, that was it.

But over the years we had different hostel parents. At the
beginning I was the youngest and at the end I was the oldest so
over the years ....

We used to line up like soldiers, walking in one line. We were
not supposed to step outside the line. Every weekend we used to
go to different relatives to do housecleaning, get water, like they
used to have tanks for water, and getting water, carrying water until
it was full, all day. We had different chores; one just to cleanup the
house, one just to get water, for different relatives, in different
houses. Sometimes we used to be only one person for that house, or two, depending on how bossy they are.

But then, when I started going to school elsewhere, like Churchill, it was different. We still had to go to school to be the best we could, but we had supervisors instead of hostel mothers and we were living in dormitories with a lot of girls, with supervisors. We had to be in at a certain time in the evening. We had our chores, too, but it was not too bad. We used to be rewarded if we did good.

And then after that we moved to cities, like Ottawa and Winnipeg, and we lived with families, in a family. It was like freedom. We still had to do the best we could. That was the main thing. I don’t remember too much bad about being in Ottawa or Brandon. A lot of other students went to Winnipeg, too.

But being in the hostel was very difficult, one of the most difficult ....

And leaving our families was very difficult, too, going so far away. There were no telephones. I think I can talk more about day-by-day things but the main thing was the hostels were very, very bad.

Going to school was not too bad but living in the hostel was very hard. Only the teachers know what happened, maybe. The teachers, the first nurses, the government people. I don’t know if they really understood but it was so hard for us to adapt.

I can just imagine what it was like for my parents;

“Where is my daughter?”
“What is going to happen?”
“What is she going through?”
“What is happening with her?”
“Where is she?”
“I need her.”

“If she was here she would have done this, but there’s no one.”
And the fathers with all their sons taken away, they needed help a lot. They needed us.
I have three children and nine grandchildren. I have talked to them a lot about what I went through. I tell them I used to live in that (indicating) like this, you know, like igloo. They just say “unbelievable”. I don’t know if they believe me or not, my grandchildren! But my children, they believe me.

I tell them that they have to do good if they go to school, do the best as they can be, to be the best as they can be and not miss a day, unless they’re sick. That’s the sort of belief we have right now. It’s not like it used to be when we lived off the land. Nowadays people need jobs.

In school I had to be the best. If not I wouldn’t have been able to make it in this world. If I didn’t do good, I thought I would be nothing. So that helped me to be who I am, to become somebody. That I would be like a White man, the way they do and have a family.

I was taught planning ways so my children are .... What do you call that? Planned. Our parents, they were just dropping babies, eh, like every year. But the way we were taught was to go to school first, finish my school, get married and plan my children, how many I’m going to have after having so many years, you know.

But my children are not like that. They are different than the way they were brought up and the way I was brought up.

When one of them didn’t want to go to school I didn’t pressure, I didn’t pressure him. I didn’t say “you have to go”, I just let him stay home, or go somewhere with him, even though I knew he had to go to school in order to do good.

I was kind of strict with them. But I had no choice. Our society was very different. You cannot just go and do a bad thing just like that. But I didn’t do a bad thing just like that. That’s not what I mean.

Not only does Carolyn make beautiful grass basketry, but she has also found that practicing her culture in this manner is very therapeutic.
I’m proud of my home. I don’t want to change it, even though they tried to change me. I believe in my culture. It’s my home. My language, that’s where home is; it’s in the people, our people.

I think Inuit should believe in themselves, believe in their culture, and be proud of who they are. Give their knowledge to whoever can listen. Other Canadians should know that we were taken away from our families. It was hard being a child, just like it would be for them, too. They have their cultures, and we have ours, too; we still have ours and now we should keep it strong, and keep our culture just like they do, too. We’re just like any other people in the world.

I think I have a lot to give, a lot of stories. I can write a book but I never did yet, about everything. I still have a hard time thinking about what it must have been like, being a parent with
all your children taken away when they should be there to help you. I think our parents were very, very strong. They were strong.

My hope for the future would be that the world is changing, our communities are changing, that we have Inuit doctors, nurses, we have a lot of teachers now, in any field, with their own language, that’s my hope for the future.

I think we can build a school with our own language. It’s possible, from kindergarten to university, no problem. I saw that a long time ago already, when I was younger.

I think we’re on our way there. We just have to believe in our children and our grandchildren, pass on our knowledge to them and we’re on our way, slowly, but I just hope we don’t lose our language, our culture, or where we came from. Everything is a journey. I hope for the better.

I want the younger people, young people, to carry on with their lives and know that everything is not a dead end. There is a future.

Sometimes we believe it’s a dead end, eh. We shouldn’t. There’s always tomorrow. All those sayings, eh, there’s a silver lining in every cloud, things like that.

A lot of the things that are happening with young Inuit are a result of the Residential Schools, I think so. It’s their parents’ sickness. Like me, without realizing it. We passed on our hurt to them without realizing it ... not wanting to. That’s one of the hardest times I’m having right now. Our parents, they’re gone.

All I want is for our young people is for them to do the best they can, day by day. There’s always tomorrow, not just today. You can get better. Just do the best they can do in whatever they’re doing.

I think, to get better, it would have to be for us to change the way we are in order for them to believe in us, so we are not just suffering all the time. We need to work together, young and old. To let them understand we care.

But I think they would have to understand what we went through in order to understand, in order for their lives to go straighter instead of going down all the time.
Carolyn Niviaxie

Carolyn Niviaxie is originally from Sanikiluaq, Nunavut, but she lived at a hostel in Kuujjuaraapik from age 7 to age 16. Even though she endured terrible abuses at the hands of her guardians, she persevered and went on to attend post-secondary institutions in the cities of Churchill and Brandon in Manitoba, and Ottawa, Ontario. Today, Carolyn is an active advocate for healing in her community, and has shared her story in the hopes that it will inspire other Inuit to embark on their own healing journey. She also believes it is very important that all Canadians understand what happened to Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. “I think Inuit should believe in themselves, believe in their culture, and be proud of who they are. Give their knowledge to whoever can listen. Other Canadians should know that we were taken away from our families. It was hard being a child, just like it would have been for them, too.”

This photo of Carolyn Niviaxie’s mother and brother with two unidentified men was taken during the time that she attended residential school.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY CAROLYN NIVIAXIE.
I would like to start with the memories that I have of my childhood. Up until the age of eight, my childhood memories are very distinct. I have full clarity. I remember a lot of things from my childhood. But from the start of Residential School in 1959 through the seventies, through 1970, in that eleven-year period there are many consecutive years that I find over the last couple of years with my involvement with the lawsuit of the federal government and trying to recap the events that took place, I have great difficulty in trying to bring back memories where I can link from one month or one year to the other. I think it’s common to a lot of people who have gone through or who have had severe experiences within the Residential School system. A lot of the bad memories have been kind of tuned out.

If the Gestapo were still in operation she would be the head mistress for the organization. She wasn’t selected because she was good natured and friendly. They were looking for people who would do the job. The treatment that we received under the Priests and Nuns I think says it all.


Una hivuliquaqgaurfuq ilihiarqahaaqama tavra Inuuvinqmuqa apialakama ukiiami 1959mi. Tikinama 100 hipilugu nutaqqt tavrqaniaqhuat Grollier hallmun aglakiyalangniqhuat. Grollier
My experience with the Residential Schools starts with arriving into Inuvik in the fall of 1959. By the time I arrived there were several hundred students who had already registered at Grolier Hall. Grolier Hall was an institution financed by the federal government but managed and manned by Catholic Priests, Oblate Missionaries and Grey Nuns. And they also hired lay people for cooks and cleaning and other things.

So we were told to get into the line-up, take off our clothing, get into long line-ups, get towels wrapped around us and get into the line-ups. There would be a couple of Nuns with clippers, electric clippers and a bottle of coal oil. You get into the line-ups. They would get you in, cut the bulk of your hair off and slap on the coal oil and give you a razor thin hair cut, right down to the roots. After they put you through de-lousing or whatever they call it, you were sent into the showers, scrubbed down and then into another line-up for your clothes. Most of the kids couldn’t speak English and this was their first day run. I would say the bulk of us were just scared to death. No parents. No relatives. You weren’t allowed to talk amongst yourselves.

After the crew cut and the showers and getting new clothes and stuff, we would all get back into another set of lines and be given lockers and then told to get into the line because they wanted to register you. There was a Public Health Nurse along with the Nuns and stuff. I got into the line-up and I was asked my name and the names of my parents. I’m looking at this woman saying “Who is your mom and dad?” And I’m looking at them and by that time I’m just too shell-shocked.

I told them that I couldn’t remember. I turned around and my cousin was in the line-up and I asked him if his parents, who were my aunt and uncle, I asked him, “Are those my parents? Are your mom and dad my parents?” He says, “No. Your mom and dad are Bill and Bertha. And your last name is Ruben.” Through the dim I’m getting this. “Yeah, my name is Abraham Ruben.” I’m finally getting the connection to tell this woman who my parents were.
When we got through that, then we’re into the cafeteria. I think there must have been three hundred or four hundred kids at that point. The hostel was set up with the junior boys and girls on the top floors and senior boys and girls on the lower floors. We were introduced to this Nun who had been in Aklavik. She was the headhunter in Aklavik. I think if awards had to be given out ....

If the Gestapo were still in operation she would be the headmistress for the organization. She wasn’t selected because she was good natured and friendly. They were looking for people who would do the job. The treatment that we received under the Priests and Nuns I think says it all.

My first memory of her was being woken up ....

That first night at the Residential School I had nightmares. In the nightmares I saw the face of this Nun and I had nightmares all through the night. I woke up in the morning and I had wet my bed from just being disoriented, scared, and all the other elements. She came out and all the other kids had already gone out and gotten dressed. She came out and saw me still sleeping and realized I had wet my bed. She dragged me out and laid her first beating on me. At that point is when I ....

My parents had brought me up basically to not take [abuse] from anyone. I started fighting back. She first started with slapping me in the face and dragging me out of bed and calling me “espece de cochon” which means dirty pig. And she had never seen such a low life. So this was my first introduction to this woman. I fought back and the harder I fought the harder she hit. Then she started using her fists on me, so I just backed off and we called it even.

That was the first of many. I realized then that this would be stock and trade for the next few years. I could see well into the future what my relationship with her would be like. And it didn’t stop. I would get the [living daylights] kicked out of me and I would just fight back.

This is where a mix of traditional beliefs and the situation I was in come into play. When I was growing up my childhood

I would say the bulk of us were just scared to death. No parents. No relatives. You weren’t allowed to talk amongst yourselves.

memories are ... our basic belief was that you develop relationships based on what your parents teach you. You have an understanding of how people should treat each other. But they also believed that they are in the animal world and the spirit world, and the world of humans had different grades of people; some who are inherently evil. We also believe in the existence of evil spirits. Humans as well as beings in the spirit world have the ability to become malevolent in nature and malevolent in intent. Here I am, a seven-year-old boy and I realized that this thing that has come into my life, from my understanding of my Native background, is that I’ve stumbled across an evil spirit in the form of this woman, this Nun. And that she would be a part of my life for years to come.

My mother and father had often taught me to always resist being taken in by this type of spirit because it will devour you. So in the early years I’m living between our ancient past but also present. The past and present coexisted for us. Then the reality of stepping into a Residential School situation and having this Nun brought in because of her ability to break people. Within a few months or a few weeks she could take a kid who spoke Dene, G’wichin or Inuvialuit and they would stop and start learning a whole new method. I and a couple of cousins were holdouts for several years. We just fought tooth and nail. That first night .... That first day and the first night and the following morning was my initiation.

But my first initiations were dealing with spirits. From my parents I had an understanding how life should be lived when you’re growing up in stages to develop. When I started attending school in Inuvik at the Residential School it was initiations of a sordid type. All of the things that my parents had been trying to teach us kids to become good men and good women had been turned upside down. A whole new set of values had been set in place that guaranteed I would have a screwed up childhood, that I would become a screwed up adult with an unbalanced experience and unbalanced views of life.


Itna ihumahuuruŋqa unupiaqunina, qanuq una ilitquhikun tamna sistaq ilitchurigua arnaq. Tavra taitna inuuniqaqhaqtunga inuigiaqtuanu iukiuni.


Ihumaaqtuanik qimilruqiti tautugiaqtaritkiga. Ilihimagaluaqlutin iluangitqiaq qimilruqiti uqautchimiqutaq naqinruqta puqmatun irliruq. Iluqani alangautqutq inuuhira atlanik hiuniqhuta inuuniarnikraptingnik huinalinlnuni inuugurniaruliga, huinalilunilu yinarauma naluwarlunga inuuniarunmik.

Natqikitka ihumamni inuigiaqtaq naqinruhahitka ... ilihiınaunga qanuraaqtaq itanngi aglaan pangma qinraanulitkiga. Ilihimagaluaqlutin iluangitqiaq piman aglaan qinraamun tutilairiga, taitnaqlunga hinikaqinmatuurungluq tuqinmatutun inuuhira nularaurimnun. Taapkua ukuat hivihurut tamaanga haviklinikhuting inuuniqaqtaamik arnaiyanun angugaiyaanunlu
I had to undergo psychotherapy. I’m still going through it. For my own personal self I had to go in and try to dig into that past because there are periods of three years that are total blackouts and I’ve had to go in and try to dig up a lot of the stuff.

I’ve resolved a lot of long-standing issues. It’s not so much for the day-to-day but for specific ... I know that something happened at a specific time but I can’t put a picture to that. You feel inside that something took place but to try to put a picture to it, that’s where I’ve had to go into a self-induced trance and also

munaqřiři̱ḵanik .... Nukaatak ilatkalu taitnaptauq piyuaqiřung-naqtut.

Hivulirni ukiuni ilihiaraq̱i̱tchuuqangit aimavingmingnin, uumunga Sir Alexander Mackenzie, tamatakunina kihianik ilihiativi̱lugi̱ taigurnimik aq̱lanq̱nirmik kihitchinirmiglu̱, qutchiktuanik kihian ilihiativi̱lugi̱ iliitchuri̱tq̱uvlu̱ taitnahianik. Tallyimat malrungmin qulimun aqlaan taigualahiluṟaq̱tu̱ngu̱ kihitchilauṟlahivlungalu ukuak ihumagivlugi̱k inupiatun taniktun avilai̱q̱lugi̱ ilihiarniaqama. Qułitu̱n ukiunikamam piyuaq̱hunq̱uq̱ṟungnaq-
an induced trance to step back into myself as a child at that point. The impacts of those years have been long lasting because they had hired individuals both for the boys and the girls ... I think my sisters and other relatives had gone through similar experiences.

The early years at the federal day school, Sir Alexander Mackenzie was just basic stuff; reading, writing and arithmetic, all of the basics that they wanted you to become conversant with. From the age of seven to ten I could basically do basic reading and writing but I’m also thinking both in English and in Inuvialuktun. I could think and talk in both languages. By the age of ten I think I must have gotten tired of the beating because that’s about the time when I stopped. I couldn’t carry a full conversation with my cousins. Mainly by that point my cousins were telling me to shut up or they would get beaten up as well.

The rules in the Residential School were one thing but in the federal day school, because there were a lot of Native kids also from the town, they didn’t enforce that rule. The kids could speak in their own languages as long as the formal education was done in English. But in the Residential Schools both in the Anglican Residence and the Catholic Residence, you weren’t allowed to speak in your Native tongue whether it was Dene or Inuvialuktun on pain of beating.

They had an incredible amount of control on you as an individual and more so on the kids who were from several hundred miles away from the Town of Inuvik whose parents couldn’t fly in, or come by boat. They couldn’t come in by boat or travel by road or fly in because there was no regular service in the late fifties and early sixties.

There were kids who were brought in from as far as 800 miles away to attend school in Inuvik. The uses of the institutions, the Residential Schools, were not the first time it had been used in the Western Arctic. They had been ....

The Residential Schools were in operation during my parents’ time in the thirties and forties in Aklavik. I guess they were Church lunga tavřa tavřanga taimaaqtunga illiniangaiqtunga, uqura-laiqlungalu hapilimiaqlugi arniaqatiitkalu kangiqhitilaqhta. Arnaqatiima qanin umigungulaqfuarmanga ilingittaq piyuq - hiruuřut. 


Pitailirapiakangatigut hutilairaqultu uvagut piaqluktaa-luraatigut aglan ukuar pivaitchuug eat nutaqqat avangahaarřuk qaimeřuat angayuqangit qialaitchuat umiaqon Inuuvingmin ungahikluting tingmifualukunulu. Qailaitpiaqtaut apqutalitu umiaqpaite aulginiut at♫amik apqutainmivluta ukiumi 1950mi 60munulu.

Nutaqqat ilangt 800milestun; kiaq ungahițigihungnənaqtuq qaritchuutirat iliharviaqtaqtuat Inuuvingmun. Hivuliqpaagungitchuq ilihariviqhaarungitchuq, maani nunaptingni.


Nutaqqat malrungnik inuguliqaqtut; Atauhiq iliharviaqtaq-haming aimamin nutaqqatlul uqat inau̯ami, atlanin inau̯anin nutaqqat ainglikatlu kaalitiul. Atauhiq pitukhiminginmatun inuuhiq. Igla ahiin angalalaarnaavunli.

Una upkuaqirmamfami ituatuq ittuq igla ahiin angamam ittal qeq tuaq inuuhiq. Iliharviuq angalatangq inuuhiq ukuat
run institutions. The Catholic Church and the Anglican Church had started early Residential Schools. They may have had federal funding but they were primarily operated by the Churches. My mother had gone to the one in Akłavik when she was a young girl, to the age of fifteen, and [later] my brother. My sculpture “the Last Goodbye,” that was my brother and my older sister. My brother had attended school there. He started at the age of five. I didn’t see him until he turned eight when we were sent off to Inuvik for school.

The children in the Residential School basically lived two lives; one was the time that they would spend at the federal day school with other kids from the town, from other settlements and the children from the Anglican school as well as the Catholic residences. One life was out in the open, a more liberal life. The other was a cloistered life as if they were in a nunnery or ....

One was a cloistered life and one was an open public life. In the Residential School you lived your life under the dictates of the Priests and the Nuns and the Supervisors. Any semblance of a family life was frowned upon. You couldn’t speak with your relatives. Contact with older siblings was frowned on. Contact between boys and girls was frowned on. In the early years you could be reprimanded or beaten for holding a girl’s hand or talking or kissing or showing any kind of affection. So, all of the models that would be used in preparing a young man or a young woman for a life of celibacy were incorporated into the lives of the children. So they were developing a recipe for social and cultural disaster is what took place.

There are kids who are susceptible to alcohol and drug abuse, spousal abuse, physical abuse to others and I think there are a lot of illnesses that developed out of it. They become more susceptible to mental illness and psychological trauma. In Grolier Hall during the years of operation and a few years afterwards they found that there were upwards of up to sixty individuals who had died as a direct result of their attendance, either through murder, suicide or alcohol poisoning. That’s a pretty high percentage.

I could see well into the future what my relationship with her would be like. And it didn’t stop. I would get the [living daylights] kicked out of me and I would just fight back.

One of the dynamics I’ve got to mention because it has been long lasting ... one of the things that took place and I’ll be forthright about it. I’m not going to beat around the bush. The ancient relationship between the Inuit and the Dene over the thousands of years has had a lot of antagonism. There has been open warfare for thousands of years. I think that the only beneficial thing, or I would say maybe one or two that came out of Residential School, was that for the first time in that one generation where you put kids together from different races, different Native groups who were traditional enemies and you put the kids together in a common situation having to deal with common issues and the issues of survival, cultural survival as well as individual survival, you get these kids realizing that the only way to survive is through friendship. You’re dealing with a common enemy. You’re going through all the same stuff and the only way that you’re going to survive is to be able to get along with each other and help each other.

I’ll give you an example. I come from the settlement of Paulatuk. The biggest settlement just south of us is Fort Good Hope. Our group and their group have a thing called the Tuktut Nogait. It’s a National Park set up for preserving the breeding ground for caribou. We have a common caribou herd called the Bluenose herd. It’s a shared boundary. They have actually extended it to include the Good Hope area.

But the other element is that of all the various Inuit or the Dene or the various Indian Tribes in Canada, historically the Inuit of our area and the Hare Indians which would be Fort Good Hope ....

I’m from Paulatuk, our home settlement. Colville Lake is the next closest settlement. But the Dene of Fort Good Hope and our people in this area were traditional allies. We would trade. They would come up and we were hunting after the same caribou. They would trade with goods we would get from the coast. In the 1800s when the trade goods started coming up they used Fort Good Hope as a staging ground to set up trading posts along this part.
of the coast. So traditionally in historical times and in ancient times the Hare Indians and the coastal Inuvialuit were on friendly terms. They were trading. There was no warfare.

So when we get into the Residential School years, after, when there’s an opportunity for a group of people from our settlement to go to Fort Good Hope to commemorate the extension of the Park, it was like homecoming. Because a number of the students had all attended school together. It was like coming to visit distant relatives. It’s the same situation that plays out in a lot of other communities across the Arctic, whether you were going to the Anglican School or the Catholic School. The shared experiences bring those people together and it’s a whole generation of what I call lost children.

When we were allowed to head back to our home settlements in the summer there would be a charter flight to bring us kids back to our home settlements. In my case it was either at Cape Perry, which was seven miles to the north of Paulatuk, or Paulatuk itself. Paulatuk in the mid sixties when we had moved our settlement again ....

When we were brought back to our home settlements it was just enough time to get reacquainted. We knew. We had memories of being on the land, berry picking and hunting, caribou hunting, ptarmigan hunting and fishing and sealing and all those things we had spent the whole year just thinking about. Finally we would get out and it would be like sending off a bunch of kids on an adrenalin rush and they’ve only got two months to get back, to catch up, to find out who your parents were, you know, just to get back. As soon as you get home you know time is running out. You are wanting to soak in as much as you can because that’s all that you’re going to have for the rest of the year.

The first year my mother would tell us that we were having difficulty being able to speak our language. So she would speak...

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Paulatuuq 60tit akunarangni nuulginapta.

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This stack of antlers marks a traditional vantage point for hunting caribou. When Abraham was a student in Residential School, caribou hunting was one of many traditional activities “we had spent the whole year just thinking about.”

Photographed by Marius Tungilik.
we were so far away

The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools

us in Inuktitut. She could barely speak English so Inuktitut was her first language. We would get on the land hunting, fishing and helping our parents. When you’re out on the land day in and day out you have to be doing something, either getting water or they would send us off fetching firewood or helping to get the fish out of the nets or cleaning up. We would be like a bunch of prisoners set free. We would just be running and hollering and screaming and fighting and just laughing our guts out just for that brief period of freedom.

That first year I got back I told my mother what had been happening in the Residential School. She was just in a rage. My mother was a big woman. She was about five eleven, two hundred eighty pounds. People didn’t mess with her. She went and talked to the Priest about it and the Priest said that he hadn’t heard any kind of reports of abuses on the kids or beatings. He convinced my mom that the Church at the school, the Residential School, the Priests who were working there, the Supervisors had been in Paulatuk years earlier as a young priest so my parents knew him. The Priest told him that this man you grew up with him, this Priest, you know that he’s a good man so trust his judgment on how the kids would be taken care of. So they left it at that.

But my mother told me she knew who this Nun was because she was a fifteen year old girl when that Nun was in Aklavik and the Nun was doing her stuff with the younger boys, beating the heck out of a lot of kids to break the language. So she knew or had some idea of what was going on but she didn’t know the full extent of it.

So before we went back to Inuvik my mother told me to be proud of where you come from. Be proud of your culture, your traditions and what we taught you. Whatever it takes, just keep fighting.

I’m eight, going on nine years old, and from the first day back I was right onto the same treadmill. The first week I got my first beating and then regularly after that, then using other kids to get on my case to try and wear me down. [The Nun] is using


Aakangma uqalalautigaanga ilihimaniivilugu sistaq 15tun utuqqautiguqtaaq taamna sistaq tavraniinmiiruq Aklarvingmi sisaita hvarakangi angugaiyaat ilihimagai, kuqugurklugi uqaqtaiivlugi uqautchinianik. Ilihimaluarafuraluautqiuq huvarautitigninik tavrani naluqruq aglaan huvarapiqaqtaaqaitang.

Aakangma uqalalautigaanga Inuuvingmun aulaaqhigilganma inugurniarani piispaging nakin qaliilaan. Inuuuniarnin piugurnian nagu pihalatichiarnik pimmaung uumitchagutin.

Narvalik ukiut utuqqautilaara qilingurutialaq tikiyahigiga, utiqaama taitna huli ittuq inuuniarnikfara tavrani. Hivulirmi hanahuirun mipiyuuktuuringa, tavrpa patchihqaqthun. Itna ittut tamuktua tutqiptangi ingimuninu nuaqqaq nakuufutu kamakirik huat ilaunun naukarivlugi kamagilaiat ahin tuhaalaitlu piyumigiuqalqitugliti nuaqqaqinik inukayinkingun. Taitna havakrani iligaa, taitnaitchuingnauqtiq jnuiuhiqput tavrani iliharvingmi aikaming inauframingunin attaillow iligit ilamirngun nukaamingmun iliharinaaikanganun ilitchuripkarnialiqhuting.
alliances. Then she has set up her network of kids who will do anything to get in good standing with her so you become a target by other kids as well. So she got it worked out. I’m certain that my experience was much the same as other kids going back to their home settlements and reintroducing themselves to their families and their siblings and their culture.

When we would go back to the Residential School the other kids would tell stories of going back, going back to their summer camps and fishing and story telling and going back. They would say, “Going Native”, because being at the Residential School everything about being Native was discouraged; your language and your culture. They would even go down to where the Nuns would be talking about “look at the Native people in town”. Look at the people in town, the ones who were darker or brown skinned were the ones with the poor jobs, ditch diggers, drunks, all of the scum of life, they would call them the scum. They said that you don’t want to be like that and you don’t want to look like that. We’re going to try to do everything we can to help you not be like that.

So double standards. Racial slurs. Anything and everything to try and break that spirit. When we were sent off to our home communities they know that the parents have a different agenda. The parents want to rekindle that spirit because they know that once you’re sent back to Residential School you’ve got someone who has totally the opposite intentions. When I got to about Grade 10, no ten years old, my mother told me that I can’t speak the language any more. I told her the year before that every time we tried to speak they would beat the heck out of us.

My father had wanted me to become a hunter. My mother had different ideas because her grandparents were shamans from the Bering Sea Alaskan traditions and they came over to the Western Arctic in the 1800s; 1880s I think. So she grew up with those traditions but she was also being nurtured as a young child to carry on the traditions from her grandmother.


Tavra aahii pahivlunga huna pimman nutaqqatigun hulugarmatalu uvmannu pahigaalqlugi. Qaffiuruqgut hamma taitna atuqtauqauaguq sistaq uvatpungnutun pahigaihukuangki piyaqtarmata nutaqqat naagga luuniin uumitchangmata ingmi pahiraut-qungiluni.
By the age of sixteen – fifteen ..., I was a full-fledged alcoholic. Severe. It started when I was about fourteen making home brew. We would be collecting our allowances and stuff and go into town and get cheap bottles of Calona White. This is the BC version of Doublejack. Cheap hooch. At the age of sixteen I had a number of different levels going against me. From the age of seven to fourteen under the care of that Sister. I was scarred for life from that six-year run with her. And then she made it so that

Tavŋa aulaqtgiluni, nukaqlin in angugaigiyannin, anga-yulinin. Qaŋngatiga aqatuga munaqqi pilagatut tavŋa angungingul aqatutuq inuuniarnik ...
I became the scapegoat for all of the other kids’ problems. There were several of us who became scapegoats in her little circle, so all of the angst and anger that our kids were experiencing, she would have it directed towards us to deflect from her.

Then you go from there, from the junior boys, down into the senior boys levels. Those same things were carried on there. When you are assaulted by other kids, either physical beatings or sexual assaults by other children who have been assaulted themselves the Supervisors basically tell you to toughen up, you’re in the real world now.

So, in this system I think that I may be just repeating the same patterns and stories that other people have told with Residential School experiences, but it’s ....

Whether the story is told once or a thousand times, it still has to be told. When I recounted the story to the Adjudicator and to the Government Agents what took place, I told them that the memories of the things that happened I could tell them the textures of the building, the floors, the smells, the way people dressed, the way they carried themselves as if it happened just a few hours earlier and I could give them a minute day-by-day of what I remember to give them a picture of being in that place. How the Nun smelled, about her breath, the texture in her face, her clothing, the way she carried herself, all of those things are right in front of me.

When I started school in Fairbanks, Alaska in January of 1971 ... I went to Art School in Fairbanks ... my teacher was a fellow, an Elder, by the name of Ron Senungetuk. Ron is Inupiaq Alaskan from Prince of Wales Island. Ron had formal training up to Grade 12. He had a Russian Alaskan instructor who enabled him to get a Fulbright Scholarship and continued his studies at the Rhode Island School for American Craftsmen. Then from there he completed his studies with the Jorge Jensen Design Group in Scandinavia.

When he came back to North America he launched basically single-handedly ... he brought contemporary Native art to Alaska.

Before we went back to Inuvik my mother told me to be proud of where you come from. Be proud of your culture, your traditions and what we taught you. Whatever it takes, just keep fighting.

Aakangma uqalautigaanga Inuvicingmun aulaaqhilginama inugurniarni piqpaqng nakin qaliliaan. Inuuniarnin piigurniarnagu pihalatitichiarnik pimmaung uumitchagutin.

Inuugiaktuanu quliaqtuaralunagpan, quligakfau’ruq. Quliaqtuaqham ilinxuriniqtaqvanun Kavammanmi hu’arautinginik, uqalautikatka pigulaihakta hulugautinik igluqpak tautktuufariga mingulrutaa, natinga, tipaa, atnuraangit inuit, qanuqulq ingming-tigun qanuqhirarmata qaffitchaaluqqa ikaarnit qulralagahuni pangma uvlutuaq tavraqiirutigq qailigaq qiniraatun hunliqaa pigulaitikga inuuniarutiga tavri. Sistat tipaat, qaninqalq, kii-nanga nirumaaktlaanga atnuraangit, iluqating haanmiitchuufut.

He started the whole thing from scratch. Up until then it was pretty much all tourist art. It was pretty kitschy stuff. He introduced a series of workshops and programs and brought the students in to initiate the Alaska Native Arts Centre in Fairbanks. So when I started in ’71 I was one of eight students that he had with him, which was it think pretty exceptional because with the eight students you had full use of the studios. You could be there eight hours a day, unlike most art classes where you’re relegated to just a few hours a week. But we were in there from eight in the morning until sometimes six in the evening, or even later, for other studies.

I first went there for one semester in 1971. I went back home not because of the ability to learn but because I mentioned before qutchiktuamik nalunaingutimik akimaniqhuq ilihaffiaqlluni ahiin Rhode Islandmi Alaskami ilihaurialahivluni. Tavr’ a ahiin ilihaani naatgilugi Jorge Jensen Design Scandinaviami naatchilgilluni.


Students from Nunavik used to have to go to school in Fort Churchill. Here, Sheila Watt Cloutier is the princess of the pageant. From left: Brigitte Kleist, Monica Akkamalu, Nancy Saimaijuq, Sheila, Martha Flaherty, and Mary Palliser.

IDAI WATT COLLECTION / AVATAQ CULTURAL INSTITUTE / NUN-IWT-11
that I was an alcoholic at the age of sixteen, and when I started school in Alaska my problems had not disappeared. I was in there drinking like a fish with the best of them. Drugs and alcohol. But the interest had developed. I understood that this was something I had wanted to do and he gave me the opportunity to do it.

But I couldn’t take much more than one semester so I went back to the Territories and spent a few years just on the road going from place to place, looking for seasonal employment and doing some sculpture. It wasn’t until I returned back in the fall of 1974.

I took two semesters ... excuse me. I went there from the fall of ’74 to the summer of ’75.

From 1975 I had spent about twenty years out on the road travelling across the different parts of Canada, going back to Saltspring, Vancouver, out to Toronto, Yellowknife for a short stint, with the occasional visit back up to Paulatuk. What I had learned in Alaska I took with me and met with other artists, met with other people with studios and got public commissions, private commissions to do different projects around the country. Basically I spent twenty years on the road developing my craft.

When I finally got settled down it was a fully thirty years on the road to where I now feel that I’ve matured as an individual and matured as an artist to be able to take my work to the next stage, which I’m now working on. And it’s taking the work from a regional Inuqialuit sculpture work to trying to tell the circumpolar story with the migrations of people.
Abraham Anghik Ruben

Abraham Ruben is from Paulatuk, Northwest Territories, but he attended the Federal Day School in Inuvik, Northwest Territories while living in the dormitory at Grollier Hall for eleven years, between 1959 and 1970. After enduring years of abuse at the school, Abraham succumbed to alcoholism when he was still just a teenager, but in 1971 he enrolled in the art school in Fairbanks, Alaska, and found guidance and mentorship in the world-renowned Inupiaq artist, Ron Senungetuk. Now over thirty years later, Abraham is one of Canada’s best known Inuit artists, whose work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions, and is part of many public and private collections. He currently resides on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, where he has a studio.
I went to the Chesterfield Inlet Residential School. It was called the Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School when we were there. I was five years old. I have some very fond memories of my childhood. Before I went to school I was very carefree as far as I remember. People used to talk to me in terms of endearment all the time; cutie, or — I don’t think they ever called me by my real name: Marius. But then it was always “my wonderful son” or anikuluk. It was always something to do with something wonderful.

We spoke Inuktitut of course all the time and there were times when they let me roam around freely. There wasn’t anything to be afraid of so I would take a walk out on the tundra once in a while and I would be by myself. That is where I would let my mind wander. I have very clear memories of those days, but I don’t want to go back to it.
remember ever being told that we were going to school. I just knew that we were going to meet the plane. It was always a big event when an airplane came in. So the next thing I knew I was in this plane and I had no idea why.

The first plane ride was terrifying from Repulse Bay. I just remember crying and crying and holding onto my cousin. I really had no clue as to what was going on.

I guess there were no indications that I would not be able to see my parents for such a long time. I had been with my parents all this time and I was still bottle-feeding when they sent me off to school. I don’t know what they did with my baby bottle. They gave us a hair cut, bath and new clothes, well, uniforms actually, with moccasins. I remember they were asking each one of us who we were and I couldn’t remember my name. I had to think about it because I couldn’t understand at first what they were asking “what is your name”, and I had to check with the others to see what it is they were asking. The person right in front of me was named Andre so I almost said “Andre”. I knew my name wasn’t Andre. I have some memories of that.

They would wake us up. I don’t know how we slept the first few nights because we were crying all the time. We had chores to do. Well, my chores were to sweep the stairs and do the dishes. I don’t know whether we went to Church first and did our chores first or not. Breakfast was porridge almost every day except Sundays. We had lots of crackers in milk. Then we went to school. We would line up in the hallway and we would all sing “God Save The Queen” and “O Canada”.

The first year wasn’t too bad after a while. We settled into a routine. Sister Rocan was our kindergarten teacher. She was a nice woman. But it was difficult. I didn’t know how long we were going to stay there and it was difficult going back to our home town because things change over a period of nine months when you’re only five. You don’t know how to act towards your parents or your younger brothers and sisters.
In May, around the 19th or 20th of May we went home. Just once a year. I don’t know what that was like for my parents. I never really asked them. I know they were so happy to see us come back every time. They would shower us with love and all that. I’m sure it was hard for them. They told us to listen to our supervisors, whoever was taking care of us, because first of all they were non-Inuit. In that time we felt basically inferior to White society and secondly my parents were very religious so we took it for granted that we had to listen to the Clergy. There was no choice in the matter. So with those instructions we were sent off.

That was further reinforced by the shroud of secrecy in the Residential School. We were told not to say anything. We were threatened not to say anything. It was a Roman Catholic-run school. There were Oblate Priests there, Brothers, and Nuns. The Grey Nuns. They treated us very differently from back home. There were no signs of affection or love. It was very sterile in that environment. Everything was regimented. We had to follow the rules. We had to speak English. We had to learn, speak, write and read in English. We had to follow the clock. Time was the all-important thing it seemed, whereas back home it wasn’t a big factor at all.

There were mealtimes. Back home we would eat whenever we were hungry. In Chesterfield Inlet in school we had to eat only at a certain time and we would all eat together. And we had to report our behaviour every day. Basically they would get out this Report Card and they would call out our names and we would have to say “good” or “not so good” for the way we behaved that day. And if we were “extra good” they would give us a star for good deeds, they would say. If you earned enough stars you would be able to go to a movie that weekend. That was a big deal, going to a movie that weekend.
the movies. So they were strong motivators. Everybody knew the rules, basically.

In school we didn’t interact. We didn’t have any interaction with young babies or with the Elders for nine months of the year. So how did they expect us to become parents and learn parenting skills when you’re living in a complete bubble isolated from what is going on in the community? I guess my saving grace was that I knew by example what it was like to a cherished member of the family. Before I went to school that’s all I knew. I was given unconditional love. I tried to follow that.

If we hadn’t been at school, depending on our age, we would be given a lot of freedom at first and then we would be taken out on trips to learn by observing our parents or our Elders how to hunting, how to be patient, how to build igloos, everything from skinning wild game to preparing the skins for clothing or other uses. We would have learned how to make kayaks, harpoons, and kayakvaks for fishing. We would have been taught by example. This is how we make these things. These are the reasons why we make them the way we do. We would have been taught the oral tradition of history. Nothing would have needed to be written down or read. We would have learned the songs, the legends — we missed out on so much of that. Over the years I have regained it to a certain extent. I still don’t know how to do many of the things and that’s something that was taken away from me. The legends — I related to them more as fairy tales or like something completely distorted from the original concept of Inuit legends. I used to fall asleep every time they were being told because it was more like a bedtime story when we went to school, or that’s the way we learned.

So in that sense our spirituality was taken away from us. Our sense of identity with babies, Elders, we had no contact with people in Chesterfield Inlet. We were not allowed to have any contact outside of the school with the residents of Chesterfield Inlet. We missed out completely on a valuable resource of knowledge and expertise that was available right in Chesterfield Inlet.
because they were afraid that the residents would abuse us. That is sick logic. That is the sickness behind their — they wanted to control every aspect of our lives, the Church, the school system wants to.

We were told that we were Eskimos. We did not amount to anything. The only way we could succeed was to learn the English way of life. So in that sense it was psychologically degrading as well. We were made to hate our own people, basically, our own kind. We looked down on them because they did not know how to count in English, speak English or read or any of those things that we were now able to do. That’s sick.

It was very strange because all throughout the year we were told that our way of life back home represented something completely different than what was actually taking place in our home town. So when you’re told over and over again that Inuktitut is a dead language, it’s a forbidden language, that our way of life is primitive, you begin to think and see your own people in a different light. You see them eating with their hands. You think, okay, primitive. And that’s brainwashing.

Being made to feel inferior or superior with your own kind is psychological abuse in a very bad way. None of us spoke about it. We kept it all inside. No one dared to talk. It was something we just never talked about. So for many, many years, for years, it was probably the best-kept secret of what actually happened in school, what actually happened in the hostels, you know. None of that ever came out.

You could see the manifestations of dysfunction everywhere. There were people who tried to escape reality by drinking or doing drugs, through violence, misplaced anger, confusion, crime .... The signs were everywhere. But no one talked about it.

I knew there was something wrong with the way I was feeling inside and the way I saw things and the way my parents and everybody else was seeing things. They were seeing things through different eyes. We were told we’re not White and we’re

Δσρηχρησθηκα την αναλυτική της έκθεση για τον αλλαγμένο χαρακτήρα της σχολικής ζωής των διανεμητικών σχολών. Η σχολική εκπαίδευση ήταν ένας σημαντικός παράγοντας στην δημιουργία αυτής της αλλαγής, και το σύστημα εκπαίδευσης ήταν ένας άλλος. Παρατηρήστε την αντίληψή μας για τις αλλαγές στο προσωπικό μας τόπο, η σχολική εκπαίδευση ως εκ τούτου και τον αλλαγμένο χαρακτήρα της σχολικής ζωής των διανεμητικών σχολών. Μας δίδαξε πως να μεταφράσουμε στην ελληνική γλώσσα, αλλά και στην εκπαίδευση, η σχολική πολιτική που είχε παραμερίσει την οικογένεια.

β) Η ισθολογική προετοιμασία ξεκινήθηκε με την δημιουργία μαθηματικών και φυσικών εργασιών, η αλλαγή στην εκπαίδευση και η δημιουργία ειδών. Βρέθηκε πως οι εκπαιδευτικοί μάθησαν να μεταφέρουν την ευζωία στην κλαστική ζωή, αλλά και να εκπαιδεύουν τα μαθηματικά και τη φυσική, η σχολική εκπαίδευση ως εκ τούτου και τον αλλαγμένο χαρακτήρα της σχολικής ζωής των διανεμητικών σχολών.
no longer true Inuit. We don’t know the traditional ways so we were caught somewhere in the middle of nowhere.

We have a lot of good skills. We’re good interpreters. We are good accountants and bookkeepers. We’re good administrators. We were able to earn money in the wage economy. But that’s all on the outside. We were hurting inside and we didn’t know how to express our anger or our confusion.

I tried talking to psychologists as far back as the seventies about the problem, into the eighties. No one took it seriously. No one knew what I was talking about. They said, “Pray”. Pray. What does prayer have to do with anything? “Ask for forgiveness”, they said. Forgiveness for what? The way I am? For what was done to me?

It became clear to me that no one in the professional field knew what it was like to be in an institutionalized situation and to have dealt with physical, sexual, psychological and spiritual abuse of that magnitude. It became very clear that there was a great gap between knowledge and what was actually taking place; the trauma. No one had the language. Healing was not part of our vocabulary until all this came out.

In many ways many things have changed since then. I remember the first time I spoke about Residential Schools in a public forum. I was one of the first so it was very, very hard for me. I was really undecided as to whether I should openly speak about it because it was not done. I was tormented inside because I knew it was the right thing to do and I felt I did not have the courage or the strength. I felt I was going to die if I said anything publicly. But luckily I was able to spend some time out on the land, not by choice. I got lost out on the land for three days just by myself. I was okay. It was in the late fall, November. But those three days alone gave me enough time to make up my mind. Yes, I’m going to do this no matter what.

A week after I was found I made my submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in Rankin Inlet. We organized
the Reunion in Chesterfield in 1993. I had to field questions from everyone. No one actually believed that this could actually happen. I was getting calls from people all over the North who did understand and who knew exactly what I was talking about and they supported me. We worked together on many different issues.

Now when you go to conferences you can listen to people talking about their experiences more openly. They are talking about the need to heal, the need to move forward and the benefits of not keeping things bottled up inside. So many things have changed.

But at the same time it has been a rough adjustment. I’ve always known that healing consisted of many different components. One was an apology, a validation of what actually took place, and criminal justice. People have to be held accountable for their actions by spending time in jail, paying fines, and so on. There’s compensation for damages. There’s treatment and counseling. So there are many components to moving forward in the process of healing oneself. And it takes the whole community to do that. We can’t do it alone. You can but it would be much more difficult.

The hardest thing I believe is to acknowledge and to admit that, yes, it did happen to me. This is what happened to me. This is how it affected me. And when we started all this we couldn’t tell our story without crying, without bursting into tears at some point. It was that difficult. So that’s one of the hardest parts is just to get started and to acknowledge that there is something definitely very wrong in our lives that is making us the way we are. And we need to find a way to get past that and to move forward.

It can be very confusing because you get the sense that once you get it out everything is going to be okay now. But it doesn’t work that way. Everything is not okay. But you’ve taken the first

Marius believes it is important to regain the traditional skills and knowledge he missed out on while he was in Residential School. This photo of Marius at a seal hole was taken in the 1990s, probably in Rankin Inlet.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY MARIUS TUNGILIK.
step. And you have to be willing to work with others to get to where you want to be.

Reclaiming the past, what we have lost, is going to take a long time. The isolation from our community extended for many years so you can’t expect to resolve all of the complex issues, all of the complexities of being sent away to school in a time frame. We can’t say by 2010 “Thy shall be healed”, you know. It doesn’t work that way. It takes a lot longer than that. It takes a lot of energy. It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of resources. And some people are more ready than others so you have to make sure no one is left behind. If we leave some people out, the cycle is going to continue for as long as we allow it to.

I’m hoping we will all be able to stand up and say “I am worthy”. “I deserve the best of what life has to offer.” “Life doesn’t owe me a living.” I think we ought to be thinking that way but at the same time we will have better tools to cope with whatever comes our way and not be stuck in thinking that we’re inferior in any way, that we ought to be asking for permission in any way. Am I permitted to be happy, you know, that seems to be our mindset. Am I allowed to be happy? So if we can accomplish that and get people involved in determining their own futures I think we’ve done our job.

Equality is going to continue to be something that needs to be addressed; equality in terms of having access to resources, having access to services and programs that are available to the rest of Canada. We deserve that, too. We’re Canadians. We pay taxes. We went through the same experiences. We’ve been working on this for a long time, myself and so many others as well, my brothers and sisters, my cousins ....

I filed a Notice of Objection. When the Common Experience Payment was being proposed we had no chance to object or to submit an Objection, but I did, on the basis that once again we were up north. We would not be getting our buying power from the compensation process simply because something down here
that you can buy will cost twenty times more when you finally get it in the north. That was not taken into consideration.

Again, there were so many shortcomings all throughout the process. In the criminal justice system no one was charged. No one spent any time in jail. The criminal justice system thought that what happened to us was minor in nature, as the prosecutor argued. Every step along the way we have been knocked down. People still knock us down. People still think of us as second-class citizens. We’re still being treated in a way that makes us feel we deserve better. We don’t feel superior to them. We just want to feel equal and — we have so much to offer Canada if they would just let us in and let us be part of the family. We could make this into a much better country to live in.

We have a lot of challenges ahead of us. At least we’re not going backwards any more. We’re holding our ground, if anything, and in some cases we’re moving forward. Sometimes we go back a little bit, we transgress, but that’s human nature. I think we give a voice to the voiceless, people who cannot express themselves, you know, who have all these fears of what people will think of them if they say anything. I think it’s them we speak for when we talk, as well. It is not only our needs that we are fighting for, it’s the needs of others in our communities, in our families, in our circle of friends. We see what is going on. We know what is going on. We can see it every day, day after day.

Our people are so generous, so giving, so caring, so sharing and they are so trusting. They can’t help but try to help the situation. We can’t let them down: ever. Our children will have to carry on the work that we do in some way.

It’s very confusing at times, though. Many times you’re wondering, is this a result of what happened in Residential School or is this a result of something else? You can’t put everything into one basket and say everything that goes wrong is a result of our time in Residential School, or the system. There are so many other things that come into play and you have to be able to differentiate

I know we still have a lot of work to do.
The journey hasn’t ended.
It continues.
between what happened in Residential Schools and what was happening all around us, whether it was Inuit politics, our way of thinking about the spiritual world, our belief systems, our mind set about legends and the powers of nature, the supernatural, the taboos, the curses.

So we have to be able to separate the issues. What is it that we need to do to ensure that our children will be able to become good leaders, to lead the next generation into a healthier lifestyle, in all aspects of life; spiritually, physically and emotionally? They will have to take ownership of all that. We have a duty as parents to lay the groundwork, to do the best that we can to make sure that our children will be able to carry on the work.

Our hands were tied, basically, behind our backs for so long that we couldn’t do a very good job of laying down the groundwork with tied hands. A lot of us suffered from alcoholism, drug addiction, and addiction to gambling and a life of crime. That’s not really laying down a very good groundwork or blueprint for the future. Those are things we don’t want our children to go through. And yet that’s all we knew, basically.

I know we still have a lot of work to do. The journey hasn’t ended. It continues. I can’t see us abandoning the work in a year and a half or two years, after having done all of this without blueprints for the future. Like I said, we can’t say “Thy shall be healed in 2010”. It’s just not the way things work.

It’s not that we want people to continue to suffer. That’s not the point. What we’re saying is the need will continue to exist because some people will have just started their journey. They will need to go through for a long period of time and some people want to wait until they see how we turn out once we started the journey, and as leaders we play that role.

I’m back home now, after being away for so long I’m finally home, and I do not mean only geographically, I’m back to where I was born and raised after being away for about thirty years. I guess everywhere I went I felt at home in some way no matter
where I was because I could live with myself to a certain extent. But back home I feel completely whole. There's family; my brothers and sisters are there. My nieces and my friends are there, and people who understand me and people I understand are there.

We weren't home in Residential School. We were far away from home, very far away, emotionally, geographically and spiritually. We were so far away. Sometimes we thought we were never going home again.

Also the inter-generational impact issue is going to have to be addressed in a very meaningful way. There needs to be involvement of our children and their children to make sure, number one, this type of thing never happens again. And I'm not just talking about Residential Schools because it's something that's probably never going to happen again. But the concept, the situation where we allow others to take control of our lives and where others force their belief systems on us and made us feel inferior and made us feel what we were not and try to change us into something we were not, that is what we mean by not allowing this type of thing to happen again.

Secondly, we need to ensure that they understand the full impact of what happened to us, the consequences of disclosure, the consequences of having to deal with all of this and the consequences of dealing with life's difficulties in a very dysfunctional manner. They have to grasp all of those and move forward and be involved. Once that's done then they can take over. They can do the work. We can help them along. We can guide them along. But that work has to be done. That's all I can say.
MARIUS TUNGILIK

The title of this exhibition, “We were so far away…”, was a quote from our interview with Marius Tungilik, a Survivor of Chesterfield Inlet’s Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School, which he attended between 1963 and 1969. Today, Marius is a father, a grandfather, a public speaker, and an active participant in contemporary Inuit politics. He has also spent many years working tirelessly towards healing the legacy of residential schools for Inuit Survivors. While he notes in his story that this healing process must take place on a number of levels, he firmly believes that for Survivors, “one of the hardest parts is just to get started.” He shares his story in part to inspire others to embark upon their own path towards healing and reconciliation. In 1993, he was the principal organizer of the Chesterfield Inlet Residential School reunion called “In the Spirit of Healing: A Special Reunion.” He is currently organizing another reunion for the summer of 2009.

Two unidentified Inuit girls sitting at their desks, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut]. May 1965.

PHOTOGRAPHER: KRYNTACONES / E004665294
I went to school first in French in Kuujjaraapik Provincial School. When the provincial government decided there were not enough students I was shipped to Fort George, from an Inuit community to a totally different culture, a Cree community. There were five of us at first and then by Christmastime, I was the only Inuk in Fort George. The other four Inuit students went home for Christmas and I didn’t get to go home. I have no idea why. Maybe because my parents had no money to pay my ticket, so I stayed at that Catholic School.

As far as I was concerned, it was at the other end of the world because I was the only Inuk there and I was always pinched and hair-pulled and teased on because I was the only Inuk there in Fort George.

PHOTO BY JEFF THOMAS.
I was nine years old. I stayed there a couple of years. It was only a couple a years because I begged my mom to take me back. After I told her that I was all alone and everything, and she felt sorry for me and decided not to send me back. So I was transferred from the French school to a Federal Day School, totally different from the school environment I was used to. Here in this new school the teachers were beating up their students and hitting them with pointed sticks and strapping them. I had never seen that. So that was my first horrible day in Federal Day School, in Kuujjaraapik.

I remember that first day because the first thing the teacher did was point at the bad students and make them come to the front and show the rest of the class what was going to happen to us if we didn’t follow the teacher’s orders. I had never seen a teacher hit a student in my whole nine years of life until that day. Right after school I went home crying and can you believe it, I wanted to go...
back to Fort George because not only could I not speak in English, I was really good in Inuktitut and Federal Day School and students at Kuujjaraapik didn’t speak Inuktitut. Everybody who spoke Inuktitut, an eraser or chalk would be thrown at you.

We were allowed to wear our clothes but we were not allowed to speak our language. In my Provincial School we were taught to respect our culture and we had culture classes. But when I was transferred to Federal Day School there was no more culture, we were not allowed to speak Inuktitut. While I had been in the provincial school my mother had been promoting my culture and language all that time so I sort of got confused when I got to Federal Day School because we weren’t allowed to speak our language. So it’s like I went from a very peaceful school to a disastrous school. The teachers were good, yeah, and they taught us a lot. We learned a lot but they were strict and abusive. I never got abused, but I watched it. My cousin used to get hit every day by his teacher. That teacher [also] sexually assaulted a lot of boys. Boys are not supposed to be touched by men.

They were hit in front of the whole class. A friend of mine would pass by a desk and brush someone by accident. If the person he touched tells the teacher, the student will be brought in front of the class, pants down and strapped with those pointing sticks they used to have.

One time the teacher was hitting one student so hard the pointing stick snapped in half and the poor child had lines on his bum. He’s all lost, that boy, and I truly blame that teacher for that. I see him almost every day and I feel for him.

He is lost, like he cannot get a job. He has no self-confidence, no will, stripped of his dignity. Everything of him was stripped from him. It’s because our parents didn’t beat us up at home and this was the first time we were seeing all these assaults and beat-ups. It was not normal but we thought that was the White man’s way of life. We thought that was how they lived. They beat up their kids, strapped them, put them in the corner .... Well, I
assumed they did that to their own children because they were doing it to my friends and cousins in school. I would go home and tell my mother all about it. She would cry with me.

I had never seen anybody get hit until I went to Federal Day School in Kuujjaraapik. He’s still a lost boy. Not just him. There are a few people. In each community there are a few lost boys and girls. The child that was hurt in there is still lost. He’s a boy that was stripped of ever becoming a man. He’s still a lost boy. I feel for him. Even if he’s hungry, even if us people know that he’s hungry he doesn’t go ask for food. He’s still a lost boy.

Nobody is making the connection. Bad Indians. Bad Inuit. Drunken Inuit. Drunken Indians. That’s all they think. But we would not be drunken Inuit or drunken Indians had we not been abused when we were children, had we not been exposed to assaults and stuff like that. Lots of people that wouldn’t be drinkers are drinkers because they have wounds in there that need healing. Because there was nowhere else to go then, I’m sure some of these guys assume it’s too late. But it’s never too late. No. We can all heal. We all have a day to heal. Yeah. I feel for them.

In school they did not want us to speak our language. They were trying to strip us of our whole culture. When I was in Kuujjaraapik for all those years since I was a baby, I was in the choir. I was an Anglican in the choir, proud of myself. My mother promoted that. Then I got transferred to Fort George. My first night there I knelt down to pray and the Sister spanked me really hard and put me on the bed and I didn’t know what I did wrong. I was not allowed to pray on my knees like the Anglicans do because now I was in a Catholic School.

I used to sit at the supper table for long hours, long after everybody else had left, because there was still food on my plate. I didn’t know what it was and I wasn’t about to eat it. Many times, many times each night my friend Linda, a cousin of mine, she used to come and quickly eat my food so the Sister would think I finished my plate finally.
They can’t cook. I don’t believe any Sister in the world can cook. I don’t. I couldn’t eat anything they cooked. I hated their porridge, too. That’s what they served every morning, a big glob of porridge. And just because I shouldn’t be late for school I wasn’t made to stay until I finished it. That was the only good thing about breakfast! I had to be on time for school so I never had to eat my porridge. I would pass whatever food I had under the table because I was used to eating only country food, good country food, healthy food, and I’ve never seen cream style corn in my life. And those green beans. I’m almost fifty now and I’m only starting to take vegetables because back then when they made the potatoes they didn’t make them nice and soft. It was a big hard potato, you know. You could eat it like an apple even if it was cooked! That was the worst part of the school in Fort George: the food.

I have an uncle who used to go to school there. He learned a lot. He spoke six languages. So there are good things about these schools, too. My biological mother learned how to be a nurse and a stewardess. So there are good things about these schools, too. My biological mother learned how to be a nurse and a stewardess. They are both gone now but they were the best they could be because they were taught the best they could be in the school I’m talking about. It’s only me, the spoiled one who couldn’t eat the porridge that these two had been eating years before me.

I don’t really have any good memories, not really. It was just boarding school and Church. We never went anywhere to do anything. So I don’t really have any good memories. But I looked forward to going home to my mom in the summertime. Oh, oh, oh, that’s the sound I made when I got off the plane.

I told my mom that I wanted something frozen, frozen food. So I had Caribou meat, frozen, and smoked goose, but because I hadn’t eaten those country foods in almost a year, I had pain for a while. My body had to readjust back to my country food.

When I went home, I learned things I already knew from childhood. In my first five years of life I already learned all about my culture. I knew how to write Inuktitut and everything. I missed going egg picking and picking berries and that. I used to pick

I have hope for everybody to heal, to let it out. Don’t keep it bottled up any more because although you don’t think so, it is still affecting your life.
we were so far away

used to trust and love and who we had never seen drunk or over the community. It turned dark and all these people we had never seen before started drinking and fighting and all the abuses started. It's because they were stuck in the community. They had no means to go hunting, no means to survive, so all our confused older siblings or young parents, us younger generation from that are totally affected because our parents lost a big thing, and in their loss we lost a lot. It seems like our culture was being killed by the way they were killing our dogs.

She said, “Our life is being killed.” I didn’t understand that. “Our life is being killed.” She meant our culture, the very existence of our culture was being killed. My mom cried big tears. I missed her terribly when I was in Fort George. But I tried to call me “Frenchy”, “frog”, and things like that because they were so used to seeing me. I was a shy, timid, smart girl. In the Federal Day School of Kuujjaraapik I had to endure the abuse of other kids. They used to call me “Frenchy”, “frog”, and things like that because they were so used to seeing me. I was a shy, timid, smart girl. In the Federal Day School of Kuujjaraapik I had to endure the abuse of other kids. They used to call me “Frenchy”, “frog”, and things like that because they were so used to seeing me.

When I went to English school in Kuujjaraapik it changed me. I was a shy, timid, smart girl. In the Federal Day School of Kuujjaraapik I had to endure the abuse of other kids. They used to call me “Frenchy”, “frog”, and things like that because they were so used to seeing me. I was a shy, timid, smart girl. In the Federal Day School of Kuujjaraapik I had to endure the abuse of other kids. They used to call me “Frenchy”, “frog”, and things like that because they were so used to seeing me.

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Federal English students and I’m French. I was already in Grade 5 in French and when I was transferred to English I had all the Grade 6 knowledge of Math and everything in French, but I was kindergarden in English.

There were other changes. Dog killings. My mom cried big tears. I missed her terribly when I was in Fort George. But I tried to be a good student. I was trying to make her proud of me.

My grandparents raised me. They didn’t really want to see me go away but they had no choice because there was no more French school in Kuujjaraapik so they had to ship me away because to them my education was important. They wanted me to get ahead the way my Uncle and biological mom had. All my classmates were taken out and put into Federal Day School. My mom didn’t want me to go to the Federal Day School so they shipped me to the next place that had a French school.

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It’s because they were stuck in the community. They had no means to go hunting, no means to survive, so all our confused older siblings or young parents, us younger generation from that are totally affected because our parents lost a big thing, and in their loss we lost a lot. It seems like our culture was being killed by the way they were killing our dogs.
like as soon as the dogs were killed the abuses and alcohol and drinking started.

We weren’t going camping until ice break any more. We were stuck in the community. Losing the dogs means no more country food. No more country food means we were getting sick. We were getting sicker because we’re not eating our diet, our food. Our country food is the best food in the world and that was practically stripped away from us when they killed our parents’ means of survival; our dogs.

As a small child I remember a lot of people crying that day. Because I went next door and my friend’s mother and father were crying, too. So I went home and I said, “Mom, they’re crying too. Why is everybody crying?” “Because our life is stripped away”, she said it again. And because I was small I only understand it today what it truly meant.

It was hard for the parents who lost their kids, too. First they lost their children to the government, their sons taken away when they were trying to teach them how to survive. They were taken away. So, okay, my kids are gone. I’ll support my family by hunting. But then they killed the dogs, too. So it’s like the y took everything.

I think we were trying to be stripped off the earth but it didn’t work because most Inuit believe in God and we pray and we have a very high protector up there. No man can wipe us off the earth because we have a helper up there.

I don’t like it sometimes when some snob will say, “that damn drunk Indian.” It’s the government’s fault they’re drunk because of Federal Day School. They are victims. They have never been exposed to violence and stuff like that and it’s because of that they’re hurting. They were taken away from their mom’s love, from their mom, not to see them again until next summer. That’s
why some people are lost. We had no support, no Social Services, nowhere, no student counselors or nothing.

The Healings and stuff are finally coming up and most of the people that were mostly affected are six feet under now. The important Survivors, too, the ones that achieved something, they are six feet under now too. I’m sure my Uncle — he’s written a book called From the Tundra to the Battlefield: Memories of the First Known Canadian Inuit Soldier — he achieved a lot so I believe it would be him who should be sitting here telling you his achievements through his survival. Because Inuit are Survivors. Natives are Survivors, lots of Inuit Natives. It helps to let it out. We have a hard time letting it out because we never had the Social Workers and Student Counselors and people concerned about us, concerned about how we feel. There was never anybody there. It was like do, do, do, do. You’re going to be this, and that, and that’s it. No crying. Even if you’re hurt don’t cry. You can’t talk about it.

Inuit are raised to be forgiving people, not to hold a grudge against somebody, not to go to bed still mad at someone because you don’t know if you’re going to wake up tomorrow morning. That was stripped from us, too.

They took the best part of our life. It may have been poor but we were Survivors. Look, that’s how the Crees lived and us lived in igloos. We didn’t need houses.

I have nine kids, seven boys and two girls and fourteen grandchildren. But now they’re eight because two months ago my son froze.

You know what, in school we were taught to abuse our children by being abused by our teachers. Myself, I don’t abuse my kids because I wasn’t abused personally and I don’t want to do something that I don’t want anybody to do to me. But some parents, they’re going to slap their kids silly the way they discipline them. Me, I don’t discipline them in a beat up way, just mouth language. Yeah, I think that’s why they started beating up their children by being abused by our teachers. Myself, I don’t abuse my grandchildren. But now they’re eight because two months ago my son froze.
children because that’s what they were taught in school. We never saw violence until we had violent teachers, strict violent teachers.

I told my children about the good things, yeah, I don’t want to tell them about the bad things. I don’t want them to be scared to go to school. It was a totally different school. I wouldn’t have sent any of my kids to Fort George. No way! I would have rather taught them at home, their own culture and language.

I don’t know why they were trying to strip us of our culture and language because the only way you can achieve the best you can be is to be who you are; your culture, to know everything about your culture and then it will be easier to learn a second language. So by trying to take away our culture they made it harder for us to learn. Once you know everything .... If I know how to say it in Inuktitut, it’s no problem; I’ll know how to say it in English.

The schools are too lenient now. From a totally strict to a too lenient school I don’t think is good, either. I think the strictness would have been okay if they had not used violence because you can just raise your voice and, okay, I’ll do everything you ask. If you want me to comb my hair, if you raise your voice and yell “comb your hair”, I’ll comb my hair right away!

And I think they were trying to make us hate our food. Blah, you eat raw, blah, like that, because I was the only Inuk and all the other students were Cree and they never eat anything raw. So my nickname was “raw eater”. In Cree I don’t know how to say it, though! I’m glad I forgot it! I didn’t make any friends at all. I was always by myself.

Each person is important, your culture is important, no one can take your culture away from you no matter how much or how hard they try, and if you know your culture you can learn and achieve anything in the world. To know your culture is to know yourself and when you know yourself then you can achieve anything.

I don’t like [other people] pointing fingers at the Native people and putting them down because they can never walk in their shoes; never. But we have to let it out. Don’t keep it in there.
because it's still going to affect you all the way. The pain in there, the child inside you has to come out and heal. Therefore you can heal.

Now they have all kinds of help that they didn’t have before, toll free numbers even, confidential. Before, there was no confidentiality. If you tried to talk to a teacher they would just talk behind you and then you would be branded a little troublemaker, you know. No. There was no where to go and no one to turn to.

I find it is getting better. And I know it can get even better. Because they’re just lenient right now. They can get better and better. Start healing sessions in different communities and talk shows and stuff like that. Because most of us are raised to forgive and forget, but some things are not so easy to forgive and forget. You have to let them out because they are going to affect your life all the way, and if you’re affected then the people around you are affected too.

We don’t have healing sessions and stuff like that in our communities. There’s a group that travels and they’re helping a lot but there’s so much more people that need healing and lots of people, even if they hear that these healing sessions are available, they are too ashamed or it’s been too long or I’ve been okay so far so I can still survive. That’s how some people think. To be truly at peace with yourself and to learn how to love yourself and love your culture let it out. That’s what I would like to see.

I have hope for everybody to heal, to let it out. Don’t keep it bottled up any more because although you don’t think so, it is still affecting your life. Let it out because it is still affecting your life and those that are around you. I think it helped me because now I can talk without crying. Before I couldn’t even talk. I would just burst into tears.

I was going to pinch one person when I grew up. “I’m going to go and pinch that person!” Instead, I just shook her hand. I said, “You know what, you used to pinch me every day, every day, in the back, eh!” She remembered. Then she said, “I’m scared of you now because you’re bigger than me!” I said, “I don’t fight back.” Just don’t have your kids pinching my kids!

(Speaking Inuktitut)

I talked to the kids and also the teachers. In my language. I just told them to come and let it out. I can repeat it because I was talking because it’s still going to affect you all the way. The pain in there, the child inside you has to come out and heal. Therefore you can heal.
to the teachers and the students right now, not the former ones. I told them to keep going to school. They can achieve anything they want and be anything they want to be. I also told the teachers: don’t put your students down, don’t abuse them; give them confidence, encourage them. The child in there has to come out. The abused child.

Me, I had parents until they died when I was twelve. But for twelve years I was very well protected. But some of these kids I’m calling the lost boys, they didn’t have parents so they couldn’t even go home to their mom and say “I got spanked by mister ‘this’ today”.

And there have been a lot of suicides. Because, not only was physical assault introduced, but sexual assault too. There’s this teacher that used to ...

We used to take showers in school. He would just leave the girls alone and hang around with the boys, the teacher. Well, he was a teacher first. And when he was the principal he started going to their homes, going inside the house, go to their bedrooms and touch them, you know. There are a few homeless people in Montreal because of that teacher, that principal. I’m sure if he sees this he’ll know I’m talking about him. You, you ruined a lot of students. I hate you. I hate that man.

My cousin is homeless because of him. He’s too ashamed to go up north now, so he’s homeless in Montreal because of that teacher, that principal. I’m sure if he sees this he’ll know I’m talking about him. You, you ruined a lot of students. I hate you. I hate that man.

I still hurt over my cousin, and a few other people. These boys are ashamed because boys are not supposed to be touched by a man and they’re ashamed to come forward. I can see that it affects their lives, their way of life, their way of raising their children.

I do want them to come forward, or even if they don’t come forward, they can heal. There are lots of places now, Natives, Inuit and Cree, you have places to heal now, places to talk, people to call, confidentially. There are caring people out there now.
SALAMIVA WEEALTUK

Salamiva Weetaltuk was first enrolled in a French provincial school in Kuujjuaraapik, Nunavik, but was later transferred to the Federal Day School in Fort George, Quebec. For a time, she was the only Inuk at the school. It was very difficult for her, but she says she only told her children good things about residential school because she didn’t want them to be afraid to get an education, now that the system is very different. Today, she is the mother of nine children and fourteen grandchildren. Salamiva believes that it is important for Survivors to overcome any fear or shame they might feel in asking for help, so that they can benefit from healing initiatives such as community gatherings, healing circles, and other social services. “To be truly at peace with yourself and to learn how to love yourself and love your culture, [you have to] let it out. That’s what I would like to see.”

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE PEGGY ROSS is injecting an Inuit child with a needle at a vaccination clinic in Fort Chimo, Que. [Kuujjuaq (formerly Fort Chimo), Quebec]: December 1958
I hated it. I really did because I felt like I was being torn away from my family. I think I was a bit rebellious. I didn’t want to go by the rules but yet I knew if I didn’t then I would be in trouble. So I would write these letters home to my parents and make little teardrops. I wanted them to see how sad I was and I thought if I did that, or if I didn’t do well in school then maybe they would let me come home. But they...
This photo of Carolyn Niviaxie’s mother and brother with two unidentified men was taken during the time that she attended residential school.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY CAROLYN NIVIAXIE.

Portrait of Inuit boy with the Oblate Mission hospital in the background, Chesterfield Inlet, 1958.

PHOTOGRAPHER: CHARLES GIMPEL. HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY ARCHIVES, ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA. HBCA 1987/363-G-102/21

Children brushing their teeth at an Aklavik school, October 1939.

PHOTOGRAPHER: RICHARD FINNIE. HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY ARCHIVES, ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA. HBCA 1987/363-E-110/31

Lucy, Agnes and Mary, daughters of the local Anglican catechist at Holman [NWT].

Carolyn in her last year as a student in the Kuujjuaraapik Federal Hostel. Her mother, who was also the last hostel mother, is standing behind her.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY CAROLYN NIVIAKIE.

Ikaluit school children, Frobisher Bay [Iqaluit], 1958.

PHOTOGRAPHER: LEN PETERSON. HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY ARCHIVES, ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA. HBCA 2067/363-E-210/68

School boys. These children live too far away to go home in the summer. [Students at the Anglican mission’s residential school]. Aklavik. 1940-42.

SAICH / NWT ARCHIVES / N-1990-003: 0223

Day school in newly built Anglican Mission (main room) during Easter week when children were in from camps. Students kneel or sit on floor and use benches as desks. The same room is used for church services. [In the foreground:] Unknown, Ludy Pudluk (or his brother), Noah (Idlouk’s son).

Pond Inlet settlement. 17-4-54.

WILKINSON / NWT ARCHIVES / N-1979-051: 0802

An Eskimo [Inuit] family at Cambridge Bay, Victoria Island. The Mission is seen in the distance. [Peter Panaktaaluk, his wife and son.]

FLEMING / NWT ARCHIVES / N-1979-050: 0356
First year, school girls at All Saints School in Aklavik.
FLEMING / NWT ARCHIVES / N-1979-050: 0010

Shingle Point school. [Group of students with some adults — group picture].
FLEMING / NWT ARCHIVES / N-1979-050: 0412

R.C. [Roman Catholic] Hospital and residential school, Aklavik.

FLEMING / NWT ARCHIVES / N-1979-050: 0093

Eskimo Point, NWT — Children in school.
PHOTOGRAPHER: DONALD B. MARSH.
THE GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES / ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA / P75-103-S1-179
Ben and Sam brought out by A.L.F. [Bp. Fleming] to Lakefield School for one year as a tryout. The experiment was not repeated.

Shingle Point IRS. Bessie Quirt with group of girls from the school, Fall 1929. (Lucy, Toki, Dlorac, Agnes, Ruth, Millie, Madeline, Emily, Mary and Mabel). Shingle Point, NWT.

All Saints Indian Residential School. New arrivals, Aklavik, NWT.

Arctic children.

Photograph of Monsignor Camirand, three Grey Nuns and a group of Inuit children. August 1937.
Photograph of Monsignor Émile Yelle and a young Inuit named Siméon. The latter is wearing a traditional anorak in front of the Sacred Heart monument in Chesterfield Inlet.


Photograph of Monsignor Martin Lajeunesse o.m.i. and of Honoré, a young Inuit, son of Sammetak and first to be baptised by Father Honoré Pigeon. August 1937.


Photography of Father Isaïe Desautels o.m.i. helping Jean Ayarwark (junior), a young Inuit, on a swing. We can also see Father Lionel Ducharme o.m.i., Jean Ayarwark (senior), Inuit, and Alphonse Koilijerk, Inuit, at the Saint-Boniface Juniorate. July 1938.

ARCHIVES OF THE SAINT-BONIFACE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE OF THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA FONDS SHSB 26944.

Father Brown playing guitar for a picnic at the girl’s shack near Aklavik Boarding School [1959].

MISSIONARY OBLATES, GRANDIN COLLECTION AT THE PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA, OB.9350.

Miss Velma MacDonald teaching English to Indian and Eskimo children, Inuvik, N.W.T., Dec. 1959 by Gar Lunney.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA / NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA. PHOTOTHÈQUE COLLECTION / PA-111777.
Eskimo and Indian pupils exercise in huge gymnasium at local Federal School, Inuvik, N.W.T., [December 1959].


Peter Irniq (Peter is on the far left) and schoolmate Robert Qattuurainnuk with nets they made at Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School, 1959.

Peter Irniq, age 13, with some classmates at the Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School in Chesterfield Inlet, 1960. Back row: Peter Irniq, Francois Nanuraq, Nick Amautinnuaq, Mike Kusugaq; Front row: Jose Kusugak, Jack Anawak, Andriasi Siutinnuaq

Peter Irniq and some other little boys in Naujaat at the Roman Catholic Mission, several years before he attended residential school. Peter is in the center of the front row. Repulse Bay, NU, 1952.
Marius Tungilik fishing in the North Pole River. Marius is standing in the background near the boat.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY MARIUS TUNGILIK.

Peter Irniq (Peter is leaning on his hand on the right) and classmates at Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School in 1958.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY PETER IRNIQ.

Marjorie Flowers traveled from Makkovik to North West River in this small airplane to attend residential school.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY MARJORIE FLOWERS.

Marjorie Flowers scrubs the floor as part of her chores at Lake Melville High School in North West River, Labrador.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY MARJORIE FLOWERS.

[Class of girls with nuns] – Lillian Elias owns this photo but isn’t even sure if she is in it, as she does not recognize herself in any of the faces.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY LILLIAN ELIAS.
[Class of boys] – These boys are from the same school as Lillian Elias. The boys and girls were kept separate from each other.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY LILLIAN ELIAS.

The Lockwood dormitory in Cartwright, Labrador.

THEM DAYS ARCHIVES.

Inuit woman with baby, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut].

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA / HEALTH CANADA FONDS / E002394428.

Inuit boy with two dogs, Cape Dorset, N.W.T., [Cape Dorset (Kinngait), Nunavut], 1962.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA / CREDIT: CHARLES GIMPEL / CHARLES GIMPEL FONDS / E002394511.

Unidentified Inuit girl in a purple head scarf sitting at her desk and working with a ruler and pencil, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], May 1965.

PHOTOGRAPHER: KRYN TACONIS / E004665290.
Unidentified Inuit girl in a red head scarf sitting at her desk and writing with a yellow pencil, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], May 1965.
PHOTOGRAPHER: KRYN TACONIS / E004665291.

Unidentified Inuit girl in a red head scarf sitting at her desk and writing with a red pencil, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], May 1965.
PHOTOGRAPHER: KRYN TACONIS / E004665292.

Unidentified Inuit girl receiving instructions from her teacher, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], May 1965.
PHOTOGRAPHER: KRYN TACONIS / E004665293.

Two unidentified Inuit girls sitting at their desks, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], May 1965.
PHOTOGRAPHER: KRYN TACONIS / E004665294.

Inuit unloading in front of Hudson’s Bay Company store, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], 13 Sept. 1958.
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA / CREDIT: CHARLES GIMPEL / CHARLES GIMPEL FONDS / E004923431.
Inuit girl and child looking at a Family Allowances poster, 1948, Baker Lake, N.W.T., [Baker Lake (Qamanittuaq), Nunavut].

Library and Archives Canada / Credit: S.J. Bailey / Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs Collection / E006581131.

Sam Crow and his immediate family and some relatives outside the warehouse of the Hudson's Bay Company Outpost at Richmond Gulf, 1949, Richmond Gulf, Quebec, [Tasiujaq (formerly Richmond Gulf), Quebec].

Library and Archives Canada / Credit: S.J. Bailey / Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs Collection / PA-110861.

Cst. Van Blarcom talking to Sam Crow, the Post Manager of the Hudson's Bay Company Outpost at Richmond Gulf, 1949, Richmond Gulf, Quebec, [Tasiujaq (formerly Richmond Gulf), Quebec].

Library and Archives Canada / Credit: S.J. Bailey / Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs / PA-110862.

Mr. and Mrs. Ledyard, Missionaries at Eskimo Point for the Northern Evangelical Society teach Inuit children syllabics, as well as writing, reading and arithmetic in English.

Library and Archives Canada / Credit: Alexander Stevenson, Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada / E008128804.

Government day school, residence and nursing station, Cape Dorset, 1950.

Library and Archives Canada / Credit: Alexander Stevenson, Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada / E008128820.
Inuit mother with one child in front of her and carrying one in her hood, Igloolik, NU, [Igloolik (Iglulik), Nunavut], Sept. 12, 1958.

Library and Archives Canada / Credit: Charles Gimpel / Charles Gimpel Fonds / E004923423.

Groupe of students at Aklavik.

Missionary Oblates of the R.C. Diocese of Mackenzie Fort Smith. Photo #360.

Sr. Dusseault, Aklavik.

Missionary Oblates of the R.C. Diocese of Mackenzie Fort Smith. Photo #471.

Sisters & children unloading the barges.

Missionary Oblates of the R.C. Diocese of Mackenzie Fort Smith. Photo #476.

Sisters Thibert and McQuillan, Aklavik, 1930.

Missionary Oblates of the R.C. Diocese of Mackenzie Fort Smith. Photo #571.
Sr. Dusseault and her classroom in Aklavik.
MISSIONARY OBLATES OF THE R.C. DIOCESE OF MACKENZIE-FORT SMITH.
ARCHIVES IN YELLOWKNIFE, NWT, PHOTO# 576.

Public Health Nurse Peggy Ross is injecting an Inuit child with a needle at a vaccination clinic in Fort Chimo, Que. [Kuujjuaq (formerly Fort Chimo), Quebec]: December 1958.
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA / DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE FONDS / E002504588.

Shirley Flowers and her brother about to depart for residential school. "My mother, because of her own experience [in residential school], she was really careful sending her children away. I guess she knew what could happen or kind of knew what to expect. Well, she made sure we were clean and no lice or nothing like that so that people wouldn’t give us a hard time.”
PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY SHIRLEY FLOWERS.

The Lockwood dormitory and school in Cartwright, Labrador.
THEM DAYS ARCHIVES.

Marius as a young man at the Tusarvik School in Naujaat-Repulse Bay, in a photograph taken by one of his teachers, between 1970 and 1974.
PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY MARIUS TUNGILIK.
Constable Van Blarcom discussing the possibility of developing a muskrat conservation area in Great Whale River District, Great Whale River, Quebec, 1948.


Inuit boys and others watch cargo being landed Resolute Bay, N.W.T., [Resolute Bay (Qausuittuq), Nunavut]: Sept. 1959.

Inuit board the C.G.S. C.D. Howe, Eastern Arctic patrol vessel for medical examination and eye check.

The Orphanage, St. Anthony [1912], International Grenfell Association photograph collection.
Students from Nunavik used to have to go to school in Fort Churchill. Here, Sheila Watt Cloutier is the princess of the pageant. From left: Brigette Kleist, Monica Akkamalu, Nancy Saimajiuq, Sheila, Martha Flaherty, and Mary Palliser.

Inuit students at the Fort Churchill school did not return home for Christmas. In the picture, students play the traditional games that they are learned [sic] in all communities.

Some Inuit from Nunavik went to school in the NWT. The nearest building is the school in Yellowknife. In the background is the hostel where Inuit and Indians stayed.

Carolyn and her aunt in North Camp (Sanikiluaq) Belcher Islands, NU, taken while Carolyn was still a student.

Not only does Carolyn make beautiful grass basketry, but she has also found that practicing her culture in this manner is very therapeutic.
Peter, 17 years old, at the Sir John Franklin High School, which he attended in 1963 and 1964.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY PETER IRNIQ.

Marjorie says, “I didn’t want to go by the rules but yet I knew if I didn’t then I would be in trouble. So I would write these letters home to my parents and make little teardrops. I wanted them to see how sad I was and I thought if I did that, or if I didn’t do well in school then maybe they would let me come home.”

LETTER AND ENVELOPE PROVIDED BY MARJORIE FLOWERS.

Shirley says, “This suitcase was bought for me when I was going to the Dorm to put my stuff in for the winter. All my winter supplies came in that. […] That’s what I took all my winter clothing in, whatever that I needed.”

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JEFF THOMAS.

Marius now hunts regularly in the North. If he hadn’t been in school he would have learned, “by observing our parents or our Elders how to hunt, how to be patient, how to build igloos, everything from skinning wild game to preparing the skins for clothing or other uses.”

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY MARIUS TUNGILIK.
Marius believes it is important to regain the traditional skills and knowledge he missed out on while he was in Residential School. This photo of Marius at a seal hole was taken in the 1990s, probably in Rankin Inlet.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY MARIUS TUNGILIK.

This stack of antlers marks a traditional vantage point for hunting caribou. When Abraham was a student in Residential School, caribou hunting was one of many traditional activities “we had spent the whole year just thinking about.”

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARIUS TUNGILIK.

Abraham’s grandfather and family.

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY ABRAHAM RUBEN.

Abraham taatanga ilangitlu.

ABRAHAM RUBEN TARRALIANGA.

Abraham’s parents were a source of support for him during his time in Residential School. “Before we went back to Inuvik my mother told me to be proud of where you come from. Be proud of your culture, your traditions and what we taught you. Whatever it takes, just keep fighting.”

PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY ABRAHAM RUBEN.


ABRAHAM RUBEN TARRALIANGA.
As far as I was concerned, it was at the other end of the world.

Salamiva Weetaluktuk

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The following archives generously contributed images to the exhibition:

Anglican General Synod Archives
Archives of the St. Boniface Historical Society
Avataq Cultural Institute
Hudson’s Bay Company Archives
Library and Archives Canada
Missionary Oblates, Grandin Archives at the Provincial Archives of Alberta
NWT Archives
Roman Catholic Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith
The Rooms Provincial Archives
Them Days

The “We were so far away…” exhibition was produced by the Legacy of Hope Foundation in partnership with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and Library and Archives Canada.

This exhibition catalogue was made possible with generous funding from the Government of Canada and RBC.