

The past historical story of what society and government did to the First Peoples of Canada was kept quiet and not taught in Schools. Over the past 150 years laws and policies were passed that allowed society and government to legally round up aboriginal children. They were removed from homes, families and communities and brought to unfamiliar territory Residential Schools. They were separated from family for months and even years. The primary goal was to Christianize the so called savages in-order to assimilate into Canadian Society to solve the Indian problem. The Federal Government hired and contracted Catholic churches to run the residential schools in Quebec and it spread cross Canada. These Mission Schools eventually became government run schools in later seventies and eighties.

These children grew up to be adults and spoke to what happened to them. There was tremendous amount of physical abuse. There was great amount of sexual abuse done that was later realized when National conversation started. The families and communities were devastated when they learned of this. Some even said what was done to us we did to our own children.

Ignorance should not be an excuse but should allow an open door of opportunity for national conversation to deal with problem. We who live in the present are responsible for the future to build meaningful relationships between First Indigenous Peoples of Canada and the rest of Society.

The victims of harms, former students, children who had no power no voice to say anything about what was happening to them. For many years parents could not speak out because of the Indian Act restrictions. Parents were not allowed to take action or speak out or be threatened with jail. Laws of the land gradually changed where aboriginal people now had the right to vote in Canada and federal elections. The voice of individual and collective indigenous peoples became stronger where it could not be ignored by the Canadian courts. The Survivors said what happened to us was not right and we need to be heard and addressed. The Representatives for the Survivors agreed to a massive out of court settlement. They fought hard for the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They fought hard realizing with an out of court settlement they wouldn't have there day in court. There would never be public record of their side of the story of what happened to them. Settlement involving the Federal government for national churches the Catholic church the Anglican church the United church the Methodist church and the Presbyterian church.

The churches the federal government kept written records and documentation to their side of the story. Some documentation on the adult side of the story might have been available but the children side of the story did not exist. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission hopefully opens the door for those children who are now adults to tell and teach the truthful history from their own perspective of what really happened to them as little children. Historical truth of residential schools that impacted their families. The Survivors want to claim their life they say I am claiming my life and we need to learn from this experience. Shame and humiliation has been a huge part of this experience.

Some non indigenous people want to believe this had nothing to do with me. I was not a part of that. But the fact is we live in a country we are all bound by laws. Government policies affect us all directly or indirectly. So everything that happens to one or some has a bearing on all of us. Young people have not been taught the complete history of what happened in our own country. But young people want to know the truth. The mandate is about inspiring reconciliation. Its not just about addressing problem in aboriginal communities and getting aboriginal people to figure out how to solve their own problems although it has some of that. But this is so important and should have top priority. It is also about the broader question of how does Canadian society have to heal itself. How do we heal our own collective historical ignorance in our relationship with indigenous peoples. How do we make sure we don't slide back ever?

I think its important to say this is not just an aboriginal event or aboriginal history but Canadian history. Residential school experience is not necessarily limited to Survivor-ship. But again lets not minimize deep hurts that were done.

Sharing of truths contribute to the healing of spirits that open the door to the possibility of reconciliation. It is vital to keep the torch of reconciliation alive. Passing the torch. Passing that sacred trust to individuals or a number of organizations who have started working the field of reconciliation. Organizations like NAIM can keep the torch burning through open discussion open platform to share speak and not just keep in the back burner.