

Stories of Anishinaabe Resilience

*A report summarizing the existing documentation of St. Joseph's Indian
Boarding School in Thunder Bay, Ontario.*

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INTRODUCTION

“Indigenous peoples are vastly overrepresented in all negative social indicators in Canada, the US, and other settler states, and grossly underrepresented in the positive ones. But acknowledging these problems and their impact is not the same thing as insisting that they are a result of who we are. We can't acknowledge these problems without also directly acknowledging the colonial violence in which they're embedded.”

- Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (1)

In 1870, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie travelled to Thunder Bay and opened the “Orphan Asylum of Fort William” (2). Much debate remains around the reality of experiences of those who attended the school, as with many residential schools in Canada: this article aims to define the school's considerably uncertain reputation through a presentation of both institutional records and personal accounts. While the aim of this text is to provide contextual information regarding the history of St. Joseph's residential school in Thunder Bay as well as personal accounts to explore the previously undocumented realities of the place, I cannot do so without first opening a discussion of colonial violence present in Canada. Colonial violence can be summarized as any violence (lateral, emotional, cultural, etc.) experienced as a result of colonialism: and colonialism, for the sake of clarity, is defined as “control by one power over a dependent area or people” (3). These definitions must be distinct if we are to proceed together, author and reader, into the histories and traumas that continue to grip this city (and country) as a result of colonialism. Thomas Berger summarizes these experiences, both past and present, in a series of questions that introduce his book *Long and Terrible Shadow*.

"By what right did we take [the] land [of Indigenous peoples] and subjugate them? Having done so, by what right do we now claim that they should assimilate? Is the argument that, since we took their country - in fact, two whole continents - and reduced them to a condition of lamentable poverty, nothing remains except for them to merge their identity with ours? [...] What reasons did we offer to justify taking possession of the New World? Does justice have any claims on us today?" (4)

If we agree that Indigenous peoples occupied these lands prior to settler arrival in North America, and that their cultures and languages differed greatly from that of the original settlers, it stands to reason that some form of oppression must have happened for Indigenous peoples to be so "vastly overrepresented in all negative social indicators [...] and grossly underrepresented in the positive ones", as Justice describes. Here, I present the issue of historical and ongoing colonial violence: more specifically, violence in the form of traumatizing experiences both as a direct and indirect result of colonialism. The personal accounts presented here support that St. Joseph's was not simply an orphanage, as many have, will, and do argue. While I cannot speak to the intentions of the Sisters of St. Joseph themselves, the personal accounts presented in the latter half of this article suggests that regardless of their intent, real trauma was enacted upon many individuals, and even further trauma has been passed down generationally as a result. I present this issue of colonial violence as context for readers who may approach this text with the intent of refuting it; I make no issue to discuss other realities faced by Indigenous peoples, as my own intent in this article is not to argue any which way in this discussion. My role is to present the information and realities recorded as a part of the Stories of Anishinaabe

Resilience project for further interpretation on behalf of educators, researchers, and community members.

For the sake of comprehension, I have divided my research into distinct sections as defined by the school's existence. The first of these sections is titled *The Establishment*, in which I explore the creation, intent, demolition, and relocations related to St. Joseph Residential School. The following section, titled *Institutional Ongoings*, presents institutionally recorded experiences of the school, of which there are few. These sections create a base comprehension of knowledge already available through *Indian Residential Schools in Ontario*, a collection by Donald J. Auger, the Shingwauk Archives of Algoma University, and the records of the Department of Indian Affairs, as well as in reference to records accessed through the City of Thunder Bay, the Thunder Bay Museum, and the Lakehead University Archives. Regardless, the research accessed provides ample clarification regarding government records and concerns presented by the Sisters of St. Joseph to the Department of Indian Affairs during the period that the school was active. As such, the information presented here offers a strong framework for my third and final section of this article, titled *Personal Accounts*. I ask that readers of this article take caution when addressing this last section: some experiences recorded here may be triggering for some, and unnerving for others, including (but not limited to) those who have had the courage to share their stories.

THE ESTABLISHMENT

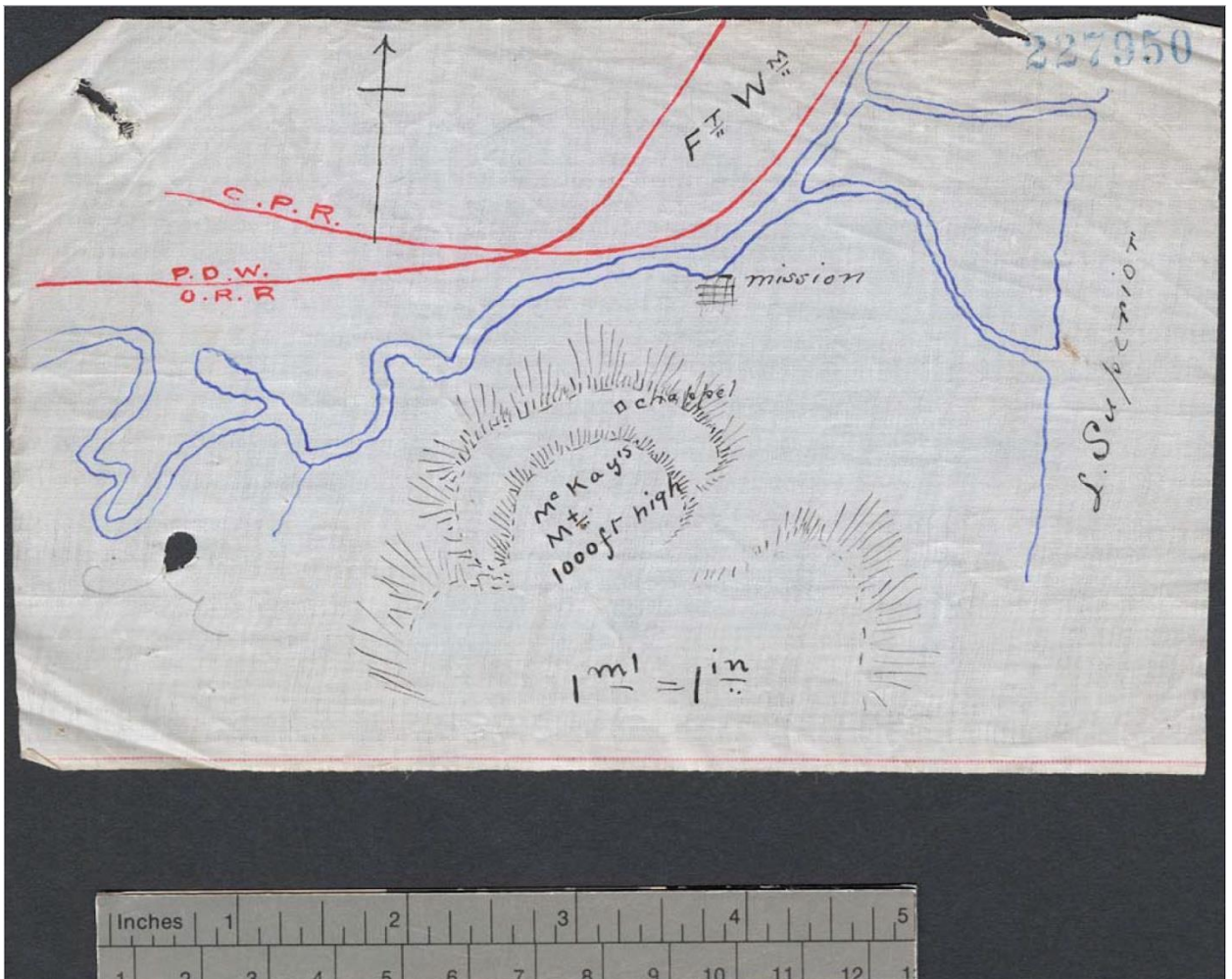


Image sourced from NCTR database (6)

Originally located on the shores of the Kaministiquia River, St. Joseph's Indian Boarding School carries a long history with the people of Thunder Bay and the surrounding areas along the northern shore of Lake Superior. Its original intent is stated to be "educating young Indian girls on the Fort William Reserve and neighbouring places" (5). Between the institution's establishment and its relocation in 1906, the original orphanage rested across the Kaministiquia River from the city of Fort William (2). This building had a two-story frame, with a full basement and a stone foundation (2).

One undated newspaper article suggests that the Mission was founded by a Father Frances Xavier Pierz (8-1); however, several others credit Father Pierre Chone of [-] (8-4,9). The original institution, named "St. Joseph's Home" (8-4), was run by the Daughters of Immaculate Heart of Mary until they returned home to France in 1885 (8-, 16). At this point, the Sisters of St. Joseph's of Toronto arrived from the Diocese in Sault St. Marie to run the convent as a boarding school along the Kaministiquia River (8-4, 16). In 1895, the Sisters built a boarding house, and shortly thereafter, the original church, priest's house, and convent were destroyed in a fire. Two years later in 1897 the Sisters built a new church, which was relocated to Squaw Bay in 1906; it was moved again in the 1980's, this time only a hundred feet west of its prior location in order to create more room for parking and housing nearby (8-2). The boarding house that was built in 1895 burned in 1973 (8-4), leaving Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church in Squaw Bay as the last remaining building of the original Mission, though it is no longer in use.

In 1907, the original location was demolished due to a claiming and expropriation of the land by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The following year, the Mission moved to

Squaw Bay, located on the opposite side of Fort William Reserve. This location operated until, due to lack of funds, the Sisters operated the Indian Boarding School in conjunction with their orphanage (7), built in 1908 on 3.5 acres of land located on the corner of Arthur and Franklin Streets in the Fort William sector of what is now known as Thunder Bay (16). This location remained in operation until 1968 and is the property most widely recognized by local residents as the location of St. Joseph's Residential School. The property is now home to Pope John Paul II Catholic School.

While many resources were vague concerning the dates and intended uses of the buildings established, the determinations provided here are a result of culminating details and their overall agreements.

INSTITUTIONAL ONGOINGS

St. Joseph's Indian Boarding School

In its first year in operation in 1870, the school only took in Indigenous girls; however, it later included white children and evolved into a boarding school. The students were majorly those of ill, destitute, or deceased parents. Once accepted, boys would only be permitted to stay until they were thirteen or fourteen; one Missionary requested that these boys be sent to Wikemikong Boys Industrial School at that age (2). However, the school had a policy of not turning away any children, resulting in consistent overcrowding (6).

Donald Auger's text *Indian Residential Schools in Ontario*, formed in conjunction with Nishnawbe Aski Nation, outlines some complaints made towards the school. One complaint specifically addresses the care provided for sick children at the school:

In July 1924 the Department [of Indian Affairs] received a complaint from a woman in Pays Plat, whose 12 year old son had caught German

measles at the school and died shortly after she brought him home. She complained about the boy's death and about having to work while he was ill: *And boy told me when he live, he had a measeles at the School for one week. And when he was geting better and Mother [Superior] told him to go to work in the School, to wash the floor. That looks nice how they treat a sick children in a School. He didnt had no Doctor no treatment in the school* (10).

While this was the only recorded complaint of its kind in Auger's report, discussions with other survivors have brought forth more concerns of the treatment of sick children in the school, and a look at the school's notable relationship with the Fort William Sanitorium illuminates several other instances of concern.

The following passage was provided by [North Bay Contact], and provides valuable context to the discourse around St. Joseph's:

Because Indigenous children as well as non-Indigenous children were cared for at St. Joseph's Boarding School, nomenclature was sometimes bandied around in the public and in the media about "St. Joseph's Indian School" or "The Fort William Residential School". But a Memorandum to the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, dated November 5, 1959 from H.M. Jones, Director filed in the Residential Schools Records Office in response to an increased funding request from the Sisters for their Indigenous students states clearly: "It is the opinion of the Branch that this institution is not in fact an Indian Residential School, but rather a private boarding school which admits Indian pupils. It is therefore, felt that all business between the institution and the

department be conducted on that basis.” There were several other similar responses over the years by the Department of Indian Affairs to similar funding requests from the Sisters.

Defining the purpose of St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School is difficult, and thus the confusion displayed by local residents is fair; in this statement, we can see how the institution was recognized at the time to be defined outside of the parameters of a residential school. However, times change, and as we understand more now about the intentions and experiences within all institutions from that time, St. Joseph’s certainly suits the definition of a residential school and is included in the Shingwauk Archives as well as many texts focused on residential schools in Canada as such. Regardless of these definitions, testaments of those who attended the school (as well as those who survive them) prove that trauma was certainly enacted upon the children who attended St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School; a fact that, despite the contestable nature of the school’s definitions, should be upheld as more than enough reason to consider the school more than a simple boarding school and orphanage.

The Fort William Sanitorium



Image sourced from CBC.ca (12)

In speaking with survivors for this project, we found that there are significant ties between the goings-on of St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School and the Fort William Sanatorium. Located on Lillie Street in Thunder Bay, the Fort William Sanatorium was a hospital originally dedicated to the treatment of tuberculosis in the area. Many survivors recall connections between the Fort William Sanatorium and the Sioux Lookout Indian Hospital. For those who may not already be familiar, Indian hospitals were segregated hospitals that operated from the late 19th century through to the end of the 20th century. They were primarily used to separate Indigenous tuberculosis patients from the general public, out of fear of “Indian TB” threatening settler populations (9). While some were specifically named Indian hospitals, many weren’t: despite their names, Fort William Sanatorium and Sioux Lookout Indian Hospital both fall into the definition of an Indian hospital, despite legal and interpreted determinations.

The Fort William Sanatorium was established in 1935 as a tuberculosis treatment centre and closed in 1974 (11,12). The sanatorium also housed various types of schooling throughout its existence, including public schooling from 1944 to 1971 and an Indian Day School from 1950 to 1953 (13). The building was renamed in 1974 as the “Walter P. Hogarth Memorial Hospital”, and was later combined with Westmount Hospital in 1980 to form the Hogarth-Westmount Hospital. In 1999, the original building, known as the Hogarth Building, was demolished, and in 2000, the hospital and property became part of St. Joseph’s Care Group. The property now exists as Hogarth Riverview Manor, as a long-term care home.

As previously discussed, the treatment of sick children residing at St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School, as well as at the Fort William Sanatorium, has been found to be insufficient at best. One Saul Day reported to CBC news in 2012 about his experiences at the Sanatorium:

“As children we were sent there [...] We didn't know what was going on and nobody tells you you're going to be here for a long time [or that] you're going to get treatment ... I hear rumours now that there was experimentation with us while we were in the sanatorium.” (14)

“I lost my mother at the sanatorium and to this day I don't even know where she is buried. I never had that finality in the grief cycle. That makes you sick. I'm not alone. There are so many of us out there who have lost family members in the sanatorium and they don't know where they're buried. You can't go home” (14)

Day attended Fort William Sanatorium for 14 months, arriving in 1955 (14, 15). He has also claimed occurrences of sexual abuse during his stay: “Sexual abuse coming from the orderlies, and the younger ones like ourselves were abused by the older boys that were there. We didn’t say anything, because we were already conditioned not to say anything if something happened to us, just like in school” (15). While few have gone on record to discuss their experiences at the Sanatorium, those who have echo the experiences of Day.



PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

I'd like to open this section by expressing immense gratitude towards those who have shared their experiences for this project. Discussing such matters takes immense courage, and the reliving of traumatic events is not an act taken lightly. The organizers and facilitators of this project, as well as all of those who read this report and learn about the history of St. Joseph's Indian Boarding School, are indebted to those who have spoken with us, providing invaluable information to this project.

Dolores Wawia

Survivor of St. Joseph's Indian Boarding School – Gull Bay First Nation

Wawia attended St. Joseph's Indian Boarding School from 1949 to the 1960's. This recording was taken by Michael Charlebois at TBT News during the ceremonial unveiling of the memorial monument located at the site of St. Joseph's Indian Boarding School. Wawia has since passed away.

"When I first arrived, it was about 1949, I guess I was 5 years old. The first time I went and I was strapped for crawling into bed with another girl, but that's what we did at home.

Then, a couple of years later I went to the Sanitorium, five years there, then in 1955 I left the Sanitorium, went to the residential school and stayed there for about 6 years.”

“I think it’s good that this spot is recognized because I used to stand when the railroad truck went by every night [...] they’d all get off and stare at us, and we would stare at them too—us wanting to get away.”

“I’ve moved forward, and I think that we can all move forward. We just need to help those who are down there.”

“I’m the oldest of 12 children, and my parents used to say to me ‘go and entertain your little brothers and sisters’, so I gathered them up into a little circle and I would tell them stories about my 5 years of life experience. That’s where I started, and they all became good storytellers [...] that’s how Native children learn—storytelling and watching. [...] Teachers didn’t know that. They said ‘Native kids don’t talk to you, Native kids never look at you, how do they learn?’ So I had to teach teachers how to teach children in the seventies. I had to go back and restructure the whole curriculum. And I’ve been doing that all these years.

“Six of us [...] have our Master’s now.”

Summer Reilly

Descendant of survivors of St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School – Gull Bay First Nation

Summer Wawia is the granddaughter of Dolores Wawia. She spoke with Robyn Medicine at the Thunder Bay Public Library for this project, about her family’s experiences at the school and how those experiences have rippled through her own life as well.

“[Dolores] often spoke about [the years she attended], but she would omit a lot. She spoke about the loss of language... she didn’t share her trauma experiences with us so much, she kept those to herself.”

“She was by herself in a hospital [...] suffering from TB. [...] I know it was so far away that no one could visit.”

“My grandmother is the woman who would give you the shoes off her feet.”

“She gave up raising her kids so she could finish her education and take them away from all the trauma [...] She gave up being a mother so that I could have a better life. That’s the type of woman she was: always giving, always caring.”

“It’s a very smart family. My uncle [...] couldn’t overcome the trauma and ended up on the streets for [...] all of his life, really. My grandma never beat him in a game of Scrabble [...] he was such a smart guy. Even my mother, [...] she couldn’t overcome her trauma either and she hasn’t been able to work her whole life because of it. But she is so smart... [...] she went to hairdressing school, she used to do really good at it, but just the anxiety overcame her, and she couldn’t finish it.”

“It’s just how trauma goes: if you can’t look after it, it goes to your children. And it definitely went down through the children for sure; I myself have had a lot of trauma. But without [Dolores’] resilience, without her caring, without her understanding, none of us would have been able to overcome it. Because of the decisions she made, I was able to break free from my trauma. But she had to [...] give stuff up in order for us to do that.”

“Six years I was on the streets... and it’s all kind of come full circle. [...] I was going to rob somebody, that was the lowest point in my life. [...] I called my grandmother crying [...] ‘Nannie, I need to come home, I’m ready to go back to school’. [...] Because my grandmother had patience and understanding, I came to the conclusion... ‘Don’t burn your bridges, Summer’.”

“I have the passion to want to help people, and I know where I got that passion from.”

Laura Shannon

Survivor of St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School – Métis

Shannon currently lives in Thunder Bay and attended St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School from 1951 to 1956. Shannon is her married name – at the time of her attendance, her last name was LaPlante.

“I went in in 1951 [...] I was there 5 years. I went in at 12 and came out at 17.”

“It was a sad time, a real sad time in my life. I didn’t have my mom, and you were all by yourself in a dormitory which I had never experienced before.”

“There was myself, I was the oldest, and my brother Jack [...] and Pat [...] and Eugene. [...] I guess I was the one who was there the longest because I was the oldest.”

“I don’t think it was ever a residential... my dad paid for us to be there. [...] It was always called a boarding school while I was there.”

"We were always there. [...] 24 hours a day."

"You were allowed to talk, but you weren't able to go and touch [your siblings]."

"[The dorm room] was dark [...] you weren't allowed to talk, you couldn't do this or do that"

"It just wasn't a life for a young girl."

"You always had chores for every spare minute you had."

"I had a hard time sleeping, because nobody was there, no family [...] not able to give your siblings a hug or anything, you know, and they're just on the other side of the fence. I found that very hard."

"[Shannon and siblings] probably have [spoken about our experiences], probably the better parts. It's hard when you came from a big family and all of a sudden you have a few here and a few on the other side and you never get to see them."

"I think it made us closer, knowing what we had to do without."

"Usually there was a group of ladies [...] and they would come and take the older ones [...] they would come and take us berry-picking [...] That was always a treat, because my dad never spent time with us."

"They didn't know [I was Métis]."

"When a young Native family came in, [the school] didn't seem to have any respect for them [...] we would have to give them a bath, then give them clothes they had to have for the

boarding school, and then they would just throw their in a garbage bag, and sometimes they would cut their hair, you know, if their hair was longer, and that I always remembered.

I just always thought it was awful. They'd be crying."

"The nuns that we got [on the girl's side], a lot of them were just young, maybe twenties [...] they were more like a buddy. My brother would tell a different story, you know, they would get the strap at them and make them do this, and make them do that... Of all the experiences, I think loneliness was the worst."

"It made me a much stronger person, having to fend for yourself and do what you know is right... and yeah, some nuns were, even on our side, not very nice... I'd say they weren't, as far as I'm concerned, very Christian, to do that to kids that didn't have anybody on their side."

"I didn't know [I was Metis], and since I've gotten to the age I am now [...] I appreciate anything I learn about it [...] For years I knew [...] my mom was Native, but when you're young you don't think anything of it."

"You know, you'll think it's gone, but it never leaves you."

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Doloris Skinner-Wanakamik

Survivor of St. Joseph's Indian Boarding School – Armstrong, ON/Wagaming, ON

Doloris Barbara Wanakamik attended St. Joseph's Indian Boarding School after attending McIntosh Residential school from 1963 until it burned down in 1965. Her experiences

"I never wanted to go. Especially leaving my little brothers [...] and sisters. I'm glad they didn't make it to McIntosh."

"[My brother] Richard [...] got sent to [...] a male boarding school [...], there he got a really good beating, I remember him talking about it all the time, he's got a big scar on his leg, that's from the goddamn – I think it was the priest. He doesn't talk much [...] about what he went through, but [...] all eight of us turned out to be alcoholics. We all drank, my mom and dad drank – they were from McIntosh too. I seen their names in the old boarding school thing, all my aunt's names, my mom and dad... I think that's how they met."

"Nobody knows my mom's background, her family. [...] It's just the two of them, my auntie [...] and her. The four sisters died in the sanitorium because they didn't know where to put them. I never met the aunties... nobody knows their backgrounds, that's what really hurts the most too. Not knowing their background."

"I know my mom took off once... my dad was very abusive with her, my mom [...] We lived with that. Yeah, both of them [attended residential school]. All my aunts too—that's my dad's side."

“My husband used to really help me a lot... [...] I used to tell him what they went through, especially when things come up and something happens and something always triggers it, and I always see this big goddamn black hole. I think it’s that goddamn nun’s bedroom I went in. I remember being carried [...] it had that awful smell, I don’t know what it was, it was so stinky... I don’t know if I was sick, or if maybe I froze... it’s hard to say.”

“Another time, they put us in the goddamn shower, all of us were in there, and they kept looking in, just standing there. It was a really weird feeling, I had this weird feeling, I kept looking at that nun there just looking at us all naked.”

“I remember going down with that man in the cellar, I remember seeing all these baskets [...] that man saying ‘Don’t move’... He kept saying ‘don’t move’, putting his hands in my... you know, right here. He kept doing that to me, it was hurting me. I thought I seen my cousin Mary Jane there, but I don’t know if that was just in my mind... I’m pretty sure I was just there by myself. [...] He told me not to look, I don’t even know to this day if I know him. Maybe I did. [...] He always did things to me, I just know that.”

“Those nuns, they were really mean to me. I had nice, long hair, and... oh, that was the saddest day of my life... I said I was being a good girl and they said ‘let’s go for a ride’, I thought they were going to treat me. I was so happy, I was telling the kids there ‘I’m going out!’ And then we went to this house and they told me to sit in the kitchen table, there was a pie. You know what they did? They cut my hair bald! Leave me bald... and here I thought they were treating me good, taking me out... [...] All the other students would play with my hair.”

"I always found those nuns jealous of people, and I don't know, for some reason they picked on me..."

"Another time, they sat me at the table in the dining room... all night they made me sit there, because I wouldn't eat my veggies."

"When [the 215 children found at Kamloops] came up... that awful smell again. I thought maybe it was my garbage, then I looked around and there's nothing. That awful smell..."

"I don't know who it was that made us go to the bathroom... they made us touch that girl's privates, because she was white."

"I can't remember names. I was 72 in McIntosh. [...] they didn't use names"

"He was crazy when he died, my cousin... and it had something to do with that old boarding school."

"I'm not saying everything was bad... We did have some good times, like when we played in the yards. It's the bedtime thing that I think nobody really wants to talk about. That's what nobody ever wants to tell you either, eh, that they seen something."

"I'm really good at hiding things, you know..."

"We used to go to shows every Saturday. We used to get cake and orange pop... I think that's the only place I remember going."

"[My sister] went through more than I did, I think [...] We talk about it."

“Another thing they gave you was shaving cream, you know, on a toothbrush [as punishment]. I think I was a liar all the time...They would watch me go to the bathroom, too, I don’t know why.”

“I remember sitting in that dark room and even when I throw up on the plate they made me eat that... it was turnip, I think.”

“We were there for two weeks just the five of us, because they couldn’t find our parents... they did nothing for us.”

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Morris Shapwaykeesic

Survivor of St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School – Armstrong, ON

Morris attended St. Joseph’s Indian Boarding School from 1969 to 1970. He was six years old when he first arrived. Both of his parents attended McIntosh Residential School.

“It was forbidden for me to talk to my sister”

“There was a night watchman who walked around, he would check the fire escapes and all that. [...] I don’t know what time he came or what time he left, but he was always around.”

“[We ate] a lot of porridge. A lot of porridge”

“They were more cruel in those days before me, but they were still cruel while I was there but I think they might have known that the residential school was going to close.”

“We were set up with boarding parents [...] after the residential school”

“When I was 3, 4 and 5, I was really sick with tuberculosis. So before I went to residential school, I was in the Indian Hospital. [...] Fort William Sanitorium, in Fort William here. [...]

The following year I was sent to residential school.”

“I’m a survivor of Indian Hospitals, and I’m a survivor of residential school, and I was a Sixties’ Scoop survivor.”

“I remember a small blond girl in there, playing with my sisters. And maybe thirty years later, I met that small blond girl. She was Roman, or Italian. How she ended up in residential school is a big mystery.”

“There was a family, a French family [...] I guess their mother and dad had a bad car accident, and they passed away so they didn’t have nowhere to put those kids, so they put them in there.”

“I never talk too much about the physical stuff... being hit with a bell, being thrown in a hot boiling water tub, and being scrubbed with a steel brush... I don’t talk about that.”

“One time I had my hair cut off in there, until I was bald. All 26 boys had their hair cut off. We used to line up from biggest to smallest, and I was always the smallest, so I always went to the back of the line; I already knew. All their hair was being cut off, and they were crying. So I said to myself, ‘I’m not going to cry!’, and I didn’t cry until I looked at 25 boys in the corner, all crying. Then I cried.”

“Little things like that that happen in there, you remember those things for a lifetime. Not being able to make your bed and getting hit with a belt, behind the legs and all that. You don’t make your bed again, and the same thing happens to you. After I don’t know how many days of this happening to me, all the boys tried to show me how to make a bed so I wouldn’t get whipped with the belt. [...] I was six years old.”

“Being the youngest and the smallest in there... they kind of left me alone.”

“One year we never really went to school. We just had this dread feeling that someone was gonna come look for us. One day we could hear a plane circling around and the plane landed on the lake, and we knew, my brothers and sisters knew that someone was going to get us. So the plane landed at the dock, and the door opened up and there was two OPP officers with shotguns. And the Indian affairs agent, and the airplane pilot, so when the police came there, they said ‘Your grandkids gotta go to school’.”

“Non-native people always ask me, ‘How come your parents, your grandparents never fought for you to stay out of there?’ And the answer I always give them is that they were threatened with incarceration.”

“When I was in there, I could speak my language a bit, as much as I could at a 6-year-old boy level. Here’s the thing, it was really discouraged to speak Indian in residential school. You were hit with a belt or hit with a yardstick if you were heard speaking Indian, that’s what happened. It wasn’t a nice thing, and if somebody spoke Indian, they always turned their head to make sure they were out of earshot.”

“When I was 3, 4 and 5 inside those Indian hospitals, I would sit by the old people. The only reason I sat by the old people is because they spoke the same language as my grandmother and grandfather. The nurses can’t speak Ojibwe, the doctors can’t speak it [...] I would just sit beside them in a chair and listen. That’s how I maintained my verbal understanding.”

“I guess the residential school, they tried to do their best to take my identity away from me, and they did for a few years there. They took my true identity away from me.”

“It doesn’t bring me peace when I talk about it. [...] But for me, I have to be at peace. Being immersed in my culture, that’s what brings me peace.”

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