



1000 CONVERSATIONS ACROSS CANADA ON RECONCILIATION

Q. What is 1000 Conversations Across Canada on Reconciliation?

A. 1000 Conversations is a national campaign intended to engage all Canadians in a dialogue about the history of residential schools, their resulting impacts and the need for healing and reconciliation.

Q. What is the goal of 1000 Conversations Across Canada on Reconciliation?

A. The goal is to register 1000 conversations on healing and reconciliation from Canada's history and legacy of residential schools over a 1 year period, starting May 26, 2009.

Q. Where can I host a conversation?

A. Anywhere. At work, a dinner party at your home, over coffee, at your church, in your school, in your community club, or in any space where you talk with your friends, family and colleagues.

Q. Do I need specific knowledge of residential schools to host a conversation?

A. No, anyone can host a conversation.

Q. What if I don't have much knowledge about residential schools?

A. Anyone who wants to host a conversation can request an information package that has been specifically prepared to help them get started. This package contains: background information on the history and legacy of residential schools; milestones in Canada's healing and reconciliation movement; conversation starters; a 7-minute DVD containing the stories of 2 Residential School Survivors.

Q. Do I need to stick to or only use the conversation starters?

A. No, your conversation can be focused on reconciliation and residential schools in any way that you want. The conversation starters are provided for those seeking assistance in hosting and guiding their conversation.

Q. How many people need to participate for my conversation to be included as part of 1000 Conversations?

A. The minimum is 2 people and there is no maximum.

Q. How do I get an information package to host a conversation?

A. You can print the background document and conversation starters from 1000conversations.ca, or you can e-mail us your address and we'll send you an information package.

Q. How do I register/share my conversation once it is complete?

A. Go to 1000conversations.ca and fill in the form on the left-hand side. We will post the date and location of your conversation, as well as the names of those who participated. You can also submit pictures, videos or notes that you take of your conversation.

Q. What happens once I have shared my conversation on the website?

A. We will send you and the participants in your conversation a gift that acknowledges your involvement in *1000 Conversations*.

Q. Will any of my contact information be posted on the site?

A. No. We only require your e-mail, phone number, and address to send you information packages for your conversation, or to respond to any questions you may have.

Q. Who are the organizers of 1000 Conversations?

A. The Legacy of Hope Foundation and Native Counselling Services of Alberta have partnered to create this campaign. The Legacy of Hope Foundation is a national charitable organization whose purpose is to educate and create 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. The mission of the Native Counselling Services of Alberta is to contribute to the holistic development and wellness of the Aboriginal individual, family and community. The Native Counselling Services of Alberta also organizes the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation held on May 26 each year, which is a movement of people committed to moving forward collectively within our families, communities, and across Canada for the purposes of healing and reconciliation.

Need help starting your conversation?

- After reading the background document and viewing the 7-minute DVD, share your thoughts on residential schools. Talk about what you would have missed if you were taken from your home as a child and placed in institutions like a residential school. What would be some of the effects? How would you heal?
- Offer your perspectives on reconciliation.
 - What does reconciliation mean to you?
 - How do we reconcile with our past? With each other? With other communities?
 - Are there other examples of reconciliation that would be helpful when thinking about the Canadian situation?
- Is an apology an important part of healing and reconciliation?
- What can be done to increase public understanding of and sensitivity to the effects of residential schools for Aboriginal peoples, their families and their communities?
- What elements are essential to renewing or building a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada?
- How will we know when reconciliation has taken place in Canada?
- What can we do to educate others about this history and engage them in the reconciliation process?
- The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has been working for 11 years to address the healing needs of Survivors and their families from the abuses that occurred in residential schools. How can Canadians participate in the healing movement across the county?
- Engage a Survivor in your conversation. Ask them to share their residential school experience with you and talk together about what reconciliation means.
- If you live in a community still healing from the effects of residential schools, what can your community do to help itself heal? What does your community need for reconciliation?
- Read the commemoration section of the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement* (www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca). Discuss how Survivors in your community can be commemorated. Engage Survivors and ask them what would be appropriate.
- There are a number of resources about residential schools available to schools across the country, yet many Canadians are still unaware of this part of their history. What can be done to assist communities, school boards, and provincial and territorial governments to include residential schools information as part of their curriculum?

Send your conversation ideas to
admin@1000conversations.ca

- In the 1870's, the Government of Canada partnered with Anglican, Catholic, United, and Presbyterians churches to establish and operate boarding and residential schools for Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) children.
- The intent of the Residential School System was to educate, assimilate, and integrate Aboriginal people into European-Canadian society. In the words of one government official, it was a system designed "to kill the Indian in the child."
- Attendance at residential schools was mandatory for Aboriginal children across Canada, and failure to send children to residential school often resulted in the punishment of parents, including imprisonment.
- The federal government and churches operated over 130 residential schools across Canada. At their peak, there were 80 active schools in 1931. The last federally-administered residential school closed in 1996.
- The federal government currently recognizes that 132 federally-supported residential schools existed across Canada. This number does not recognize those residential schools that were administered by provincial/territorial governments and churches.
- Over 150,000 children (some as young as 4 years old) attended federally-administered residential schools.
- It is estimated that there are 80,000 Residential School Survivors alive today.

Residential School Experience

- Many Aboriginal children were taken from their homes, often forcibly removed, and separated from their families by long distances. Others who attended residential schools near their communities were often prohibited from seeing their families outside of occasional permitted visits.
- Students were forbidden to speak their language or practice their culture, and were often punished for doing so.

- Many students were forced to do manual labour, and were fed poor-quality food. There are many accounts of students being provided moldy, maggot-infested and rotten foods.
- Other experiences reported from Survivors of residential schools include sexual and mental abuse, beatings and severe punishments, overcrowding, illness, children forced to sleep outside in the winter, the forced wearing of soiled underwear on the head or wet bed sheets on the body, use of students in medical experiments, disease, and in some cases death.
- Many students received a sub-standard education. As late as 1950, according to a study by the Department of Indian Affairs, over 40 per cent of the teaching staff had no professional training.
- Some students have spoken of the positive experiences of residential schools and of receiving an adequate education. However, overall it was a negative experience as recorded in Survivor testimonies and as indicated by the various statements of apology issued by the churches and federal government.

Residential School Impacts

- In many cases, the abuses and even the common experiences of having attended residential school, have caused impacts such as post traumatic stress syndrome and have made it difficult for Survivors to engage in family, social, and professional circumstances.
- Survivors were often away from their parents for long periods of time and this prevented the discovering and learning of valuable parenting skills.
- The removal of children from their homes also prevented the transmission of language and culture, resulting in many Aboriginal people no longer speaking their language or being aware of their traditional cultural practices.

- Adaptation of abusive behaviors learned from residential school has also occurred and caused intergenerational trauma – the cycle of abuse and trauma from one generation to the next.
- Aboriginal communities are in need of healing due to high rates of substance abuse, violence, crime, child apprehension, disease, and suicide.

Healing and Reconciliation

- In the early 1990's, as a result of escalating social problems in Aboriginal communities throughout Canada, the federal government created the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). RCAP confirmed a link between social crisis in Aboriginal communities, residential schools and the legacy of intergenerational trauma. In response to RCAP, the federal government initiated the Gathering Strength initiative which then led to the creation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) in 1998. The AHF funds community-based healing initiatives that address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in the Residential School System, including intergenerational impacts.
- Hundreds of healing initiatives and projects have been funded through the AHF, and many other independent programs and initiatives have been created throughout Canada to heed the healing objective.
- In 2007, the Government of Canada implemented the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement*. The settlement agreement included: Common Experience Payment to all surviving former students of federally-administered residential schools; the Independent Assessment Process to address compensation for physical and sexual abuse;

establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; healing initiatives; and a fund for commemoration projects.

- The churches and government have offered various statements of regret, condolence, sorrow and/or apology for their roles in administering residential schools including:
 - United Church of Canada (1986)
 - Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (Roman Catholic) (1991)
 - Anglican Church (1993)
 - Presbyterian Church (1994)
 - Government of Canada (2008)
 - Roman Catholic Church (2009)
- The Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008, with a mandate to inform all Canadians about what happened in residential schools. The TRC will document the truth of Survivors, their families, communities and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience. The TRC hopes to guide and inspire First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and all Canadians in a process of truth and healing leading toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.
- In response to the loss of language, there is a growing movement to revive and preserve unique Aboriginal cultural beliefs, social structures, and spiritual values.
- Through initiatives of the Legacy of Hope Foundation and National Day of Healing and Reconciliation, Canadians are learning this history and understanding the impact that it has had and continues to have on their communities.



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