

Why The Healing Fund?



The United Church of Canada Response to the
Indian Residential School Experience



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Indian Residential Schools Experience



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Design: Carina Cruz Domingues, Graphics and Print

Printed in Canada

 100125

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The Healing Fund logo was created by Native artist, David Beyers. The figure within the figure represents the memories of childhood suffering carried by the victims of the Indian Residential Schools system. The pain of those victims is emotional and psychological, concealed under a seemingly healthy surface. The figures are enveloped in sun, wind, and water—symbols that are holy to both Christian and Native spiritual traditions.

As an institution the church was part of the process of pain. It is now called to be part of the process of healing.

What Is The Healing Fund?

The Healing Fund forms one part of The United Church of Canada's response to the new directions being taken in partnership with First Nations communities in Canada.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, after many years of facing despair and seemingly impossible challenges, signs of new life and hope began to emerge in many First Nations communities. For many First Nations communities the Indian Residential School experience had caused deep hurt, and, in part, the new energy came from facing and acknowledging these past hurts and injustices. As a vital part of the recovery from these hurts, the First Nations communities had asked the church to be part of the healing process.

One reason for the church's involvement grows from the church's role as servant of a healing, life-transforming God. As such, the church nurtures initiatives of healing.

A second reason for the church's involvement is that the church, as an agent of the federal government, was deeply involved in framing and perpetuating the residential school experience. As an institution, the

church was part of the process of pain. It is now called to be part of the process of healing.

In acknowledging these reasons, the August 1994 meeting of the General Council of The United Church of Canada established a fund to help First Nations communities respond to some of the painful dimensions of the residential school experience. The fund's three-year goal of raising \$1 million by voluntary contributions from church members and others was extended by two years. At the April 1999 meeting of the General Council Executive it was agreed to add two years to The Healing Fund, extending it to 2001. The Healing Fund was remanded in 2004.

Money is distributed to First Nations communities according to criteria developed by The Healing Fund Council. The Council is composed of representatives from the All Native Circle Conference (ANCC), British Columbia Native Ministries, and the Ontario/Quebec Native Congregations not in ANCC.

Projects receiving support are Native community initiated, based, and supported. Examples of these projects are illustrated throughout this booklet.



Let's Be Strong Together project assists women of the Biminaawzogin Regional Aboriginal Women's Circle in Orillia, Ontario, to become liberated through building relationships and connections while participating in a series of culture-based workshops, such as drum-making and the Drum Awakening Ceremony.



What Were the Residential Schools?

"Residential schools" has become a catch phrase referring to the system of removing Native children from their homes and sending them away to school, often under fierce protest from their parents and villages. In all areas of their lives—eating, sleeping, playing, working, and speaking—the Native children were isolated from the traditions and cultures of their home reserves. Separation time varied, but it was not uncommon for children to be away from their parents and village for years.

Personally, I feel cheated, neglected, and deprived of my early childhood years. The comfort I needed from my parents and siblings was not available to me... Children apprehended and placed in an environment they were not accustomed to created fear, loneliness, and hatred, breaking family unity. Parenting skills were lost, also communication with children. Parents couldn't continue to pass on their skills of survival and traditions to the children because they were being acculturated in a new society. The Healing Fund is a stepping stone in Breaking the Silence and releasing it to encourage healing.

Lillian Youngchief, Goodfish Saddle Lake Reserve, Alberta

The term “residential schools” came into formal use during the 1920s; prior to that year such institutions were called “industrial” or “boarding” schools.

Industrial schools were generally located farther away from First Nations communities and were intended for older children between the ages of 14 and 17, although younger children also attended these schools. Boarding schools on the other hand were generally smaller and intended for younger children and were located in or near First Nations communities.¹

The practice of sending children away to these schools began in the 1840s, often with the support of Native leaders. By 1860, resistance mounted when the practice became more widespread and, from the perspective of Native communities, more coercive and paternalistic.



Women of the Dawn is a Healing Our Daughters project in Regina, Saskatchewan. The workshops and activities are for young women whose mothers attended residential schools.

1 Assembly of First Nations, *Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the stories of first Nations Individuals* (Ottawa: First Nations Health Commission) 1994, p.3.

“The problem was that the church required Native people to repent of being Native people if they wished to follow the Christian way.”²

Why Is The United Church of Canada Involved in Issues Surrounding Residential Schools?

The United Church of Canada was one of the churches that, on behalf of the federal government, administered the residential school system. Because of the damaging role that residential schools played and because that damage continues to affect the lives of many Native individuals and communities, the church has a moral obligation and a spiritual and theological imperative to be part of the healing of those wounds

Repentance and reconciliation involve action as well as words of apology. With humility and a new understanding of mission as partnership, the church continues to seek new ways of being with First Nations people that enrich the lives of both the church and First Nations communities.

The 1986 Apology of The United Church of Canada to its First Nations congregations was a sign of repentance. We need to demonstrate as a church that we want to contribute to the healing in tangible ways. While the goal of The Healing Fund is to raise

2 *Moderator’s Task Group on Residential Schools* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1991). Used with permission.

\$1 million to enable First Nations peoples to carry out the healing, the education of United Church people about the history and present-day realities of Aboriginal people will be a significant part of the process.

I believe The Healing Fund will result in increased understanding and commitment by United Church people to address the many injustices that have been perpetrated against First Nations people over the centuries.

Marion Best, Moderator 1994–1997



Kispiox Rediscovery Culture Camp project provided a cultural camp for survivors of residential schools on the traditional territory of the Gitksan in British Columbia. The participants rafted the Kispiox River to reach their ancestral lands where bonding and the sharing of stories—all so essential to the healing process—were complemented with traditional activities. On the last day the survivors paddled down the Kispiox, drumming and singing the Gitksan song (see photo on page 17).



Why Was the United Church Involved at All?

The United Church's involvement in Indian Residential Schools did not develop in a vacuum. In part "the Indian work," as it was known, arose out of a desire to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and a deep sense of compassion and commitment to justice.

The church had long demonstrated its belief that education should be available to all children regardless of class, gender, ethnic origin, or religion. For the predecessors of the United Church, access to education for children of low-income families was an important strategy in the struggle to secure greater justice and to subvert the privileges of established elites. As a result, the churches ran schools for girls and for the children of immigrants until the public education system replaced schools for the privileged.

As the traditional economies of Native nations came under heavy pressure with the killing of the buffalo and the creation of reserves, many in the church felt the best way to assist the First Nations peoples was to provide means to educate the young in new economic systems and trade, hence the formation of industrial schools. The *Moderator's Task Group on Residential Schools* (1991) report noted that the residential schools were seen by the churches not only as a vehicle for converting Native people to the Christian

faith, but also as a way of equipping the younger generation of Native people to survive in a world where the old ways had either been destroyed or were considered unworkable, or unworthy, or both. “The problem was that the church required Native people to repent of being Native people if they wished to follow the Christian way.”³



Let's Be Strong Together project assists women of the Biminaawzogin Regional Aboriginal Women's Circle in Orillia, Ontario, to become liberated through building relationships and connections while participating in a series of culture-based workshops, such as drum-making and the Drum Awakening Ceremony.

³ *Moderator's Task Group on Residential Schools* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1991). Used with permission.



A Brief History of United Church Involvement in Residential Schools

The United Church of Canada, through its predecessors, the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, has a relationship with First Nations peoples that extends back to the early 17th century, almost to the time of first contact.

The Early Days

In 1620, in New France, the Recollets began some instruction for young Native children, but soon abandoned the project. Ten years later the Jesuits also tried, but again the project failed because Native people generally showed little interest in European schooling.

Methodist contact with Aboriginal peoples in Upper and Lower Canada led to congregations being established in First Nations communities around Montreal and sporadically scattered throughout what is now Ontario. The Methodist mission relationship in the northwest began when British Methodists arrived in 1840 to serve as chaplains to the Hudson's Bay Company and as missionaries to “the Indians,” but spent the majority of their time with the latter. This was 35 years before white settlers began to flood the prairies.

Missionaries in this early period tended to adapt to their hosts' way of life rather than impose their own. Some missionaries and their families virtually lost their ability to speak English as they made their homes within Native communities. This interaction was of mutual benefit.

Expanding West

About 1860, when the British Methodist missionaries began returning to England, the Methodist Church of Upper Canada started its expansion westward. Leadership within the church to the First Nations peoples started to be displaced, and a more coercive approach replaced the dialogue between Native and non-Native. The advance of European settlement in the west provoked massive disruption of traditional Native ways worsened not only by the transmission of smallpox, measles, and other diseases to which the Native populations were particularly vulnerable, but also by the creation of reserves. These factors, in addition to the dwindling buffalo herds, contributed to the profoundly damaging displacement of First Nations peoples.

Methodist churches became a key institution in many emerging settler villages and towns. Mission activity on the west coast led to Methodist churches being established in a number of Native villages both on the coast and in the interior of British Columbia, and schools attached to the missions were opening rapidly.

The 19th-century Presbyterian interaction with Aboriginal peoples was less extensive, focusing on people working in the near and far north, such as Hudson's Bay Factors (administrators), who were generally Presbyterians. In the period just prior to the church union of 1925 (that resulted in The United Church of Canada), the Presbyterians also saw their role as serving the newly established non-Native communities in the west and, to some extent, in the near north.

Partnership with the Federal Government

Schooling formed a key element in the church's mission to the Native peoples. Most early missions had a day school and, in some cases, a small residential school as part of their outreach.

The federal government did not become involved in these schools until the turn of the century when treaties and statutes required the government to fund and set the general policy framework for residential schools. The British North America Act of 1867 saw "Her majesty agree to maintain a

school in each reserve hereby made whenever the Indians of the reserve shall desire it." The churches—primarily the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and eventually United Churches—became agents of the government in running the schools.

Initially, the federal government entered the residential school project with enthusiasm, seeing the schools as a way of aiding its assimilation policy toward Aboriginal peoples, which was explicit government policy into the 1950s. Quotes such as the following from Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent-General for Indian Affairs (1913-1932), were not atypical:

"Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic."⁴

The government accepted responsibility for capital expenditures (facilities and equipment) and paid most of the staff salaries through per capita operating grants. However, as time went on and Native people proved remarkably resistant to assimilation, the government sought ways to fulfill legal obligations at a minimal cost.

Early in the century controversy began. Continual complaints of underfunding by principals of the schools record their dissatisfaction with the federal government's lack of realistic financial support. Lack of funding undermined the time and education resources required to provide an adequate education. Students were required to work in gardens, farming operations, laundry, and cooking to maintain operations.

While the federal government generally set policy, the church administration created the day-to-day atmosphere and activity in the schools. The churches recruited personnel and nominated the principals/administrators, who had to be approved by the federal government. Recruitment was difficult. Staff turnover rates were high, and many staff members were insufficiently qualified both in terms of their professional background as well as their understanding of Aboriginal history and culture.

4 Statement by Duncan Campbell Scott, *Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs*, as evidence before the Committee of the House (of Commons) © Indian and Northern Affairs. Reproduced with the permission of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Source: Library and Archives Canada/Indian Affairs/RG10, Vol. 6810, Reel C-8533 File : 470-2-3, Part 7, Memorandum of the Six Nations and other Iroquois, 30 March 1920.

The much-criticized practices of allowing students to return home only once a year (and sometimes not even then) and enforced English–language speaking were based on government policy. Not much early *official* evidence exists that the United Church disagreed with or lobbied against these policies, although the archival records indicate unsuccessful individual staff attempts to secure permission from the federal government to carry out instruction in Native languages. Recollections by former staff and written records also indicate that Native languages were taught with or without permission in some United Church-operated residential schools.

The removal of children (to residential schools) from the family hastened the impact of cultural genocide. For many people, connections with home/family/community were fractured as language and culture were suppressed. The impact was a part of an oppressive system and is continuing as a factor in the loss of self-esteem, social skills, parenting skills, and basic survival techniques.

I experienced five years in an Indian Residential School. It was a period of incarceration which affected my self-confidence and my self-worth in negative ways. I am marked by the experience of the suffering of young children without adequate care and the physical abuse of older children who could not conform.⁵

Stan McKay, Beausejour, Manitoba

The Role of the Board of Home Mission and the Woman's Missionary Society

In the United Church, supervision of the school operations was carried out by either the Board of Home Missions (or an earlier equivalent) or the Woman's Missionary Society, and the archival records indicate that the national bodies responsible for the United Church residential schools knew something was wrong.

Beginning in the late 1940s, church officials supported the movement toward the provision of day schools, at least at the elementary level, which would be accessible to all First Nations communities, and cooperated energetically in the simultaneous move to close residential schools.

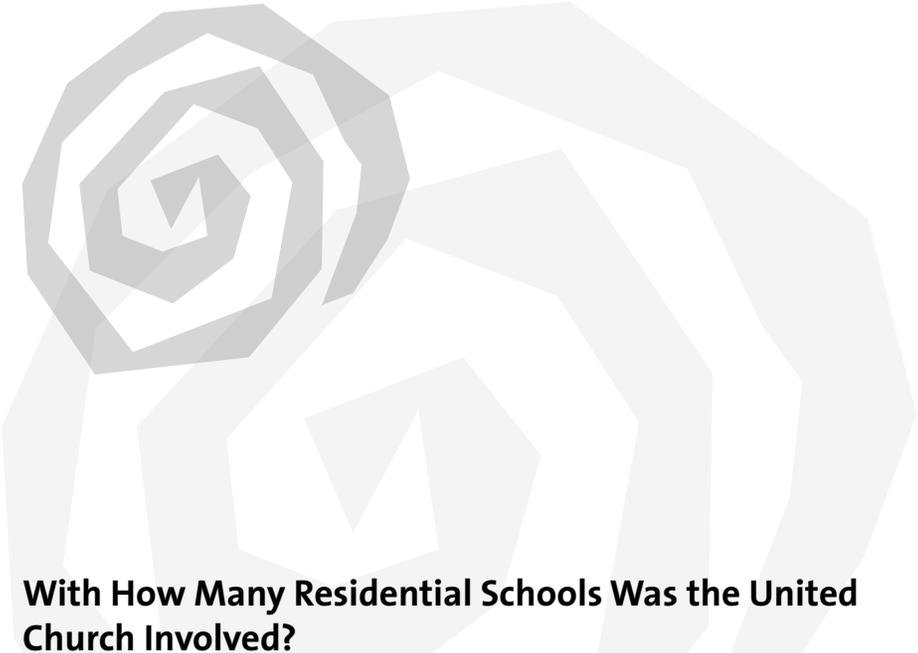
⁵ Deiter, Constance, *From Our Mothers' Arms: The Intergenerational Impact of Residential Schools in Saskatchewan* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House) 1999. Used with permission.

In 1947, the Board of Home Missions presented a brief to a Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons recommending that residential schools be reviewed and possibly replaced with day schools.

However, even those church officials who knew the system to be flawed and who worked hard to make changes had no awareness of the devastating effects of the residential schools experience as they would be later exposed, named, and better understood.



Kispiox Rediscovery project involved participants rafting the Kispiox River to reach their ancestral lands (see also photo on page 10).



With How Many Residential Schools Was the United Church Involved?

The provision of one sum proves difficult. Schools opened and closed, and available church records are not comprehensive. Some schools were categorized as industrial schools by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (and its predecessors) and may not have been included in its data as residential schools. There was also no distinction made at the turn of the century between day schools and residential schools. Given all these qualifications, one might estimate that United Church schools ranged in number from a maximum of 13 down to six schools in the 1950s.

The maximum number of separate facilities operated by all denominations was 80, and one million Native youth are estimated to have attended a residential school of some kind.

The schools were predominantly in western Canada, with only one school in Ontario existing into the 1930s. As might be expected, the schools tended to be in regions where mission activity and churches had been started; yet there was no immediate correlation between a particular denominational school and given Aboriginal communities. Children from one community, or even one family, may have attended several different schools run by different denominations. By 1969 all The United Church of Canada operated residential schools had been shut down.



What Was the First Nations Experience of Residential Schools?

Many Native people have spoken in United Church sharing circles about their experiences in residential schools. For some the memories seem positive. They cite, with gratitude, benefits such as learning to read and write, worship, and Bible knowledge. Others endorse the experience of George Erasmus, Co-Chairman of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs:

Most of the stories we are hearing are negative, 99 per cent of them. Inevitably, we are told about the loss of culture, the loss of language, the loss of parenting skills, the agony of being separated from family, from community—even in the same residential school...they were separated from their family members—the many, many years of being away from home, the return home, the alienation, the need to reintegrate into the community, the pain that people have experienced themselves, the way it was passed down...It's a very painful experience that we have been hearing. ⁶

⁶ Assembly of First Nations, *Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals* (Ottawa: First Nations Health Commission) 1994, p.3. Used with permission.

Stories are raw with hurtful memories: the forced separation from parents at a young age (one woman described how at 11 years of age she tried to comfort the five- and six-year-old girls in her dormitory who would cry themselves to sleep night after night); punishment for speaking their own language or engaging in Native customs at the school; constant hunger (one student described how she learned to be a thief at residential schools through stealing food from the kitchen to try to quell the hunger pangs); and derogatory remarks about Native people, their customs, and beliefs (one person described the experience as “learning to be ashamed that I was an Indian”). The abuse was cultural, physical, spiritual, and emotional.

The unrelenting resistance of First Nations people to the schools—parent boycotts, chronic absenteeism, runaways, drop-outs, and the number of schools which burned down—reveals a telling tale of both the underlying strength of First Nations identities and the failure of the residential schools system to meet the needs of its students. The trades that the schools taught soon became obsolete through advancing technology, and even if students had wanted to enter white society, barriers of prejudice and insufficient education proved formidable and mostly impassable.

The residential schools were built on a racist understanding of the superiority of European civilizations and the inferiority of Aboriginal societies. Native peoples were considered “savages” and, as Israel Wood Powell, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia (1872-1889), noted: “Barbarism can only be cured by education.” This racist premise was reinforced by the churches in their theology and their attitudes toward Native spirituality. Contact between these two ways of living in the world led to a rapid and often brutal disintegration of the Aboriginal way of life. Combined with the relentless economic and social pressures of expansionist European society, the effects of the residential schools dealt a crippling blow to Aboriginal societies.



Why Were Residential Schools Crippling for First Nations Cultures?

Peoples in all parts of the world have different ways of transmitting their cultures. Institutions such as schools and churches played a major role in transmitting the nature and tenets of European-based cultures during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The traditional Native way was heavily dependent upon oral traditions. Removal from their home Nations and denial of their languages, which are prime carriers of culture, meant many Native people deprived of these essential contacts had no sense of history or home—they did not know who they were. While residential schools removed the basis for a Native identity, they were not able to construct a new White identity. The result was that many left residential school unsure of who they were and where they belonged. Not only did this prompt psychological disorientation, but also spiritual crises.

One major impact of residential schools upon the community revolves around the health of families. Removal of children to the institution meant that the transmission of parenting skills, learned in a family setting, was short-circuited. Many people left residential school knowing little about the roles and responsibilities of being a mother or father. Socially, they felt ill-equipped to be carriers of culture or family. Social problems, which might

have been dealt with through traditional parenting methods, had a chance to worsen.

As well as these impacts upon the health of family and community, individual experiences of physical, mental, and spiritual abuse left severe scars. We are just beginning to understand how profoundly abuse shapes and misshapes people's lives.



Mohawk Bible Translation project is taking place at Kahnstake and Kahnawake, Quebec. Apart from translating the Bible into the Mohawk language the project has involved creating an audio CD for those who speak the language but do not read it.



And the Church People Believed They Were Doing Something Good

The gulf seems unbridgeable between the accounts of those church-related individuals who administered the schools with the best of intentions and the students who share such painful stories of abuse while they attended residential schools. In spite of stories of individual members of staff who cared and who were kind, and in spite of the fact that many church people believed that the schools would provide the education that would be the key to an improved future for Native people, the residential schools system was a fundamentally flawed structure undergirded by government policy.

The nature of sin remains that sometimes best intentions sow destruction. Reconciliation demands honesty, and honesty now requires that the memories of Native people who attended the schools be heard in all their pain.

The abuse of Native children in church-run residential schools was a serious issue for the United Church and must be faced with honesty and openness.⁷

⁷ Assembly of First Nations, *Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals* (Ottawa: First Nations Health Commission) 1994, p.3. Used with permission.



How Is the Church Responding?

It has not been a simple or quick process for a church as large and diverse as The United Church of Canada to respond to the legacy of residential schools. Leaving aside for a moment the natural defensiveness of any institution to preserve its reputation, it is hard to acknowledge that well-intentioned and sacrificial work resulted in the opposite of what was intended.

However, one thing remains clear: The United Church of Canada shares responsibility with the rest of Canadian society for the hurts caused by the residential schools system. We are struggling to find the right path. The process leading to the United Church Apology to Native Congregations in 1986 began the journey.

Apology to Native Congregations

31st General Council, August 15, 1986

Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your elders an understanding of creation and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich, and to be treasured.

We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the Good News of Jesus Christ we were blind to the value of your spirituality.

We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ.

We imposed our civilization as a condition for accepting the gospel. We tried to make you like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you and we are poorer, and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we were meant by the Creator to be.

We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the spirit of Christ so that our people may be blessed and God's creation healed.

The Apology in many ways summarizes the spirit and approach in which The United Church of Canada, as institution, has tried to find a new way of walking with Native peoples. The Apology was not *accepted* in the non-Native sense, but *acknowledged* at the subsequent General Council in 1988 in Victoria. As the first Speaker of the All Native Circle Conference, Alf Dumont, said, "In the Native way, apologies are not 'accepted,' they are 'acknowledged.' [This is because] an apology must be lived out if it's to be a real apology. The church is being asked to live out its apology."



What the Church Learned from the Apology

The Apology was an act of deep, theological significance, flowing as it does from the biblical concept of repentance. In its recognition of error and subsequent move toward a new partnership, the church seeks simultaneously a renewal of its relationship to God.

An apology signals the intention to make fundamental changes in the relationship between the parties which will be acknowledged and then lived. If this is not the case, then the delivery of empty words can do more harm than good. This is also true for the church's response to the legacy of residential schools. The church seeks to work in partnership with First Nations communities to assist in healing and forming a new relationship of mutuality and hope.

The church has learned from the weaknesses of past mission efforts. The founding of the All Native Circle Conference (ANCC), on-going support for First Nations leadership in the church, development of Native liturgical resources, social justice work with Aboriginal peoples, and the process leading to the Apology have marked the first steps in a new partnership with First Nations communities. The next steps required a more direct response to the legacy of residential schools.

Moderator's Task Group

In the fall of 1990, the Moderator of the United Church, the Right Rev. Walter Farquharson, gave instructions for the creation of a task group on residential schools. The task group included Native and non-Native representatives and reported in November 1991 with the following major recommendations:

- a) that a fund of \$30,000 per year for five years be established to support initiatives from Native communities for healing programs and related research projects
- b) that United Church Conferences establish plans for hearing and responding to residential school experiences of Native people
- c) that the United Church work with other churches in educating the church constituencies on residential schools

Disbursement of the initial funds—\$30,000 per year for five years—began in the fall of 1993. At the fourth Grand Council of the All Native Circle Conference in Moraviantown in June of 1992, the Council of Healing and Respect stated emphatically that they wanted to further the work of healing the communities devastated by the effects of residential schools.

The Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference set up an on-going committee of Native and non-Native representatives to respond regionally to the legacy of residential schools. This included training for listening to the stories of people who attended residential schools, production of resources to educate the non-Native church, and cooperation with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The Saskatchewan and Alberta and Northwest Conferences of the United Church also took steps to form residential school committees.

General Council Office United Church staff and First Nations representatives have worked with other church representatives through the facilitation of the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC) Task Group on Residential Schools to coordinate approaches to the federal government, to share print and media resources, and to share other relevant information on residential schools.

The Healing Fund was established as another means to further the healing work. Money is distributed to First Nation communities according to

criteria developed by The Healing Fund Council. The Council is composed of representatives from the All Native Circle Conference and the British Columbia Division of Native Ministries. Projects receiving support are those that are Native community initiated, based, and supported.

The beginnings were promising: in 1993 the Native constituency began to disburse the fund created by General Council Executive of \$30,000 a year, for a five-year period, to projects that were grassroots initiated healing efforts related to the impact of residential schools. At a 1994 meeting of Native representatives to disburse the \$30,000 for the year, over \$350,000 worth of project proposals had been received. Even after the carefully developed criteria had been applied and eliminated some proposals, there were still unmet needs.

Inadequate as they were, these funds helped make the following initiatives happen—initiatives very similar to those that are now being funded by The Healing Fund:

1. First Generation: Those Who Attended the Schools

- In 1994 a group of former students living in Saskatchewan returned to the site of the Brandon Residential School to remember and share those memories of pain and loss, some speaking their stories aloud for the first time. The participants were able to counsel each other and help themselves along a new path, a healing path.
- A workshop on cultural recovery in Alberta, run by a traditional Elder and two local Native leaders in the United Church, provided an opportunity for former residential school students to learn about what was lost. Parenting and self-esteem discussions helped make the connection between what in their Native traditions would provide direction for healed families.

2. Second Generation: Those whose Parents Attended the Schools

- In Fisher River Reserve a grant helped to expand the social service programs for women who were the victims in violent and abusive relationships. Abusers repeat what they have experienced from their parents. In the case of many people whose parents attended residential schools, the parents had learned harsh patterns of discipline at the schools, or they had learned to survive in the dorms by physically defending themselves. The cycle needs to be broken for both women and men.
- Funding was given to help bring facilitators to the west coast villages of Masset and Skidegate for traditional healing circles. By creating a safe place where individuals could share the painful stories of their parents, the whole community could come to grips with the damage and hurts that had been handed down to subsequent generations. Opening the wounds, however, also requires support to those who need further counselling.

3. Third Generation and Beyond: All Those Living with the Legacy

- The tragic situation of youth suicides in the northern Ontario reserve called Pikangikum prompted the All Native Circle Conference to send two Native youth workers to the community for four months. The complex story of the community, including a loss of traditional problem-solving methods, contains some painful indications that the Christian churches played a part in the tragedy. The First Nations workers could respond more effectively with the language and other skills they naturally share with their brothers and sisters in Pikangikum.
- A grant was made available for Native and non-Native youth (14–17 years) to visit back and forth on a weekend between Manitoba and Saskatchewan. They learned about Native traditions together and gained a new respect for each other's cultures and what they had in common.

These projects indicate only a few of the more than two dozen projects funded from the modest amount of money earlier made available from the United Church. Money does not heal, but money is sometimes needed to help healing happen. The Healing Fund presents an opportunity for the church to be more broadly involved in this healing.

4. Broader Regional Responses

- In the early days of seeking new ways to further the healing of the painful fallout of the residential school experience, a unique discussion took place in Manitoba between the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and representatives of the federal government and three of the four churches that ran residential schools in that province. For two years they negotiated how a regional response to the residential schools could be fashioned from the strengths of each of the participants. This has proved to be a model for later initiatives in creating broader regional responses.
- The results of the extensive research project on residential schools, which the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) undertook (their report appeared in 1996), played an important role in bringing the stories of survivors to public light. Yet, the story of the impact of residential schools is still not well-known in Canadian society and, regrettably, in our church constituency. Continuing education and communication is still needed to ensure that this sad chapter in Canadian history is properly acknowledged and the racist thinking behind residential schools wiped out. The federal government on behalf of Canadian society and we as churches must continue to work with First Nations as they attend to the massive requirements for healing of those who suffered as children in residential schools. Educational work forms a major part of The Healing Fund project.
- One task that the churches must responsibly handle locally is to relate pastorally to those still alive who worked in residential schools. They carried out this work in the name of the gospel, often at great personal sacrifice. They participated in a system that, with the benefit of hindsight, the church now looks at with very different eyes. Then, as now, church leaders can only walk according to the light received and see as through a glass darkly.



Where Is the Church and The Healing Fund Now?

Since the inception of The Healing Fund, a total of \$4,805,634.75 has been granted in support of 445 healing initiatives in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the Yukon. Descriptions of these initiatives are available from the General Council Office.

To Tread Gently

As those involved in the various projects of The Healing Fund have learned, there are some key steps to follow in the continuing healing process:

- Story-telling is an important first step in “breaking the silence.” Self-disclosure of abuse should take place in a safe setting with appropriate supports.
- Respectful communication with the non-Native church is required to help provide the context in which to tell and hear the stories of those who attended or were subsequently affected by residential schools.

- Programs to support healing must be considered with the full participation of Native peoples in the planning, implementation, and follow-up, and include those generations of people who did not have first-hand experience of residential schools, but who were severely affected through the experience of their parents and grandparents.
- The closer the response to the source where the pain is being felt—individuals and families in their immediate community contexts—the more effective the healing will be.
- A variety of responses involving traditional, modern therapeutic, and religious methodologies are required, and each needs to be respected in its appropriate place and setting.

For more information:

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