http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Survivors_Speak_2015_05_30_web_o.pdf

Language and culture

"How am I going to express myself?"

Many of the students came to the school fluent in an Aboriginal language, with little or no understanding of French or English. At school, they encountered English- or French-speaking teachers and supervisors, who typically had no understanding of the children's languages, and were actively, and often aggressively, involved in trying to deny their use. For children who could neither understand these new authorities nor speak English or French, the first few months in the school were disorienting and frightening. Arthur Ron McKay arrived at the Sandy Bay, Manitoba, school in the early 1940s with no knowledge of English.

> I didn't know where to go, not even to the washroom sometimes. I just wet myself because I didn't know where to go and I couldn't speak to the teacher, and I know that the nuns was the teacher and I couldn't speak English. They told me not to speak my language and everything, so I always pretended to be asleep at my desk so they wouldn't ask me anything. The nun, first time she was nice but later on as she began to know me when I done that to lay my head on the desk pretending that I was sleeping not to be asked anything. She come and grab my hair, my ears and told me to listen and to sit up straight.[122]

When she first went to the Amos, Québec, school, Margo Wylde could not speak any French. "I said to myself, 'How am I going to express myself? How will I make people understand what I'm saying?' And I wanted to find my sisters to ask them to come and get me. You know it's sad to say, but I felt I was a captive."[123]

William Antoine grew up speaking Ojibway on the Sheshewaning Reserve in Ontario. When he was seven, he was taken to the Spanish, Ontario, boys' school.

> I was in Grade One, the work that was given to me I didn't know anything about and, and the teacher was speaking English to me and I didn't understand what he was saying. That's why it was so hard; I didn't understand English very much. I understand a little bit, at that time, but I did not understand what he told me. And he would get mad at me and angry at me because I couldn't do my work.

William Antoine.

> I could not, I couldn't do it because I didn't understand what he was telling me, what to do. So it was hard.[124]

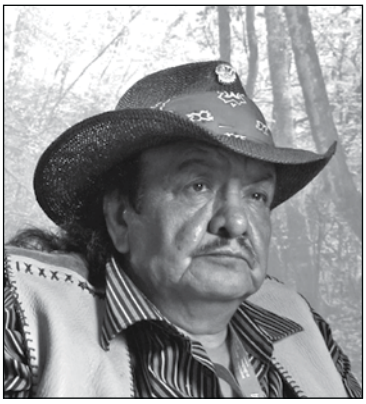
When he first went to the Fort Albany, Ontario, school, Peter Nakogee could speak no English.

> That's where I had the most difficulty in school because I didn't understand English. My hand was hit because I wrote on my scribblers, the scribblers that were given on starting school, pencils, erasers, rulers and that, scribblers, and textbooks that were given. "Write your names," she said, so they don't get lost. But I wrote on my scribblers in Cree syllabics. And so I got the nun really mad that I was writing in Cree. And then I only knew my name was Ministik from the first time I heard my name, my name was Ministik. So I was whipped again because I didn't know my name was Peter Nakogee.[125]


Peter Nakogee.

For Marcel Guiboche at the Pine Creek school, the experience was frightening.

> A sister, a nun started talking to me in English and French, and yelling at me. I did not speak English, and didn't understand what she, what she was asking. She got very upset, and started hitting me all over my body, hands, legs and back. I began to cry, yell, and became very scared, and this infuriated her more. She got a black strap and hit me some more. My brother, Eddie, Edward, heard me screaming, and came to get me.[126]


Marcel Guiboche.

Calvin Myerion recalled not being allowed to speak his language at the Brandon school.

> And the time went on, and I was told not to speak my Native language, and I didn't know any other language other than my Native language. I didn't know a word of English, and my brother, who had been there before me, taught me in, said in my language not to talk the language. But the only way that I could communicate was through my language.[127]

The shock of her first night at the Alberni school left Lily Bruce in tears. Eventually, her auntie, who was a student at the school, was brought in to speak to her.

> I was just getting dressed into pyjamas, and I never, I never spoke English. [crying] My auntie was told to tell me that I wasn't allowed to speak Kwak'wala anymore. I

> told her, "But Auntie, I don't know how to speak English." And she says, "Well you're gonna have to learn pretty quick." [crying] She said, "From now on, you have to speak English." I don't know how long it took me. I kept my mouth shut most of the time. I'd rather keep quiet than get in trouble.[128]

Andrew Bull Calf recalled that at the residential school in Cardston, Alberta, "I got strapped a lot of time because I didn't know English, you know, and the only language we spoke was Blackfoot in our community and so I got strapped a lot for that."[129] Percy Thompson recalled being slapped in the face for speaking Cree shortly after his arrival at the Hobbema school in Alberta. "How was I to learn English within three or four days the first week I was there? Was I supposed to learn the English words, so the nun would be happy about it? It's impossible."[130]

When two sisters attended the Anglican school at Aklavik, they could not speak English. But, according to one sister, the staff would "spank us when we tried to talk our language. So, we just keep away from one another."[131] Alfred Nolie attended the Alert Bay school, where, he said, "they strapped me right away, as soon as they heard me talking our language. I didn't know what they were saying to me."[132]


Alfred Nolie.

Martin Nicholas said that at the school he attended in Manitoba, the prohibition on speaking one's own language left him isolated. "I would be punished if I spoke my language, yet, that's the only language I knew. So, what am I supposed to do? So, I kept quiet." Because he did not speak English, he became alarmed if anyone spoke to him.[133]

Meeka Alivaktuk came to the Pangnirtung school in what is now Nunavut with no knowledge of English.

> For example, I knew how to knit. I learned before we came to school how to knit mittens but when we got to school and the teacher was speaking to us in English and he was saying "knit, purl, knit, purl," I had no idea what that meant so I put down my knitting and just sat there. The teacher came up to me and slapped my hands because they didn't know what to do and I couldn't understand what he was telling me. That's how my education began.[134]

After growing up speaking only Cree in northern Manitoba, Emily Kematch found that "learning how to speak English was a struggle." She said that "the only way I got by was my friend Sally taught me words, 'this is how you say, say words.' She taught me what to do so I wouldn't get into trouble and we weren't allowed to cry. If we cried, we got spanked."[135]

At the Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, school in the mid-1960s, Greg Rainville said, he was punished for speaking his own language and for failing to carry out instructions given him in a language he did not understand. "The nuns would get frustrated with you when they

talked to you in French or English, and you're not knowing what they're talking about, and you're pulled around by the ear."[136]

When Robert Malcolm came to the Sandy Bay school, he did not speak a word of English.

> I had to learn the hard way to communicate in school what the, the nuns or the teachers wanted. And if you didn't, if you didn't understand that, it was you were being punished, sometimes physically, and then sometimes emotionally. Like you were made fun of sometimes by other people in your class, like if I said, or did something wrong everybody would laugh at you.[137]

Rules against the use of Aboriginal languages were intended to force students to learn English (or French) as quickly as possible. These rules and the anxiety they caused remain among the most commonly cited elements of residential school experiences. Jacqueline Barney said that one of her report cards from the Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, school complained that "Jackie still insists on speaking Cree."[138] Dianne Bossum recalled being told not to speak her own language at the La Tuque, Québec, school she attended in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[139] Geraldine Shingoose recalled being punished for not speaking English at the Lestock, Saskatchewan, school. "I just remember, recalling the very first memories was just the beatings we'd get and the lickings, and just for speaking our language, and just for doing things that were against the rules."[140]


Geraldine Shingoose.

Dorothy Nolie recalled that at the Alert Bay school, she was caught speaking in her own language at the dinner table. "They put me in the middle of the floor, in front of everybody, and that was my punishment for speaking our language. I was hungry. I never ate nothing. Looked around, looked around, everybody eating. That's how mean they were to me, to all of us kids in there."[141]

At the Roman Catholic residence in Fort Smith in the 1960s, Leon Wyallon recalled, he was punished for speaking his own language.

> We can't even talk in our own language. The minute you talked your own language then you would get sent to the corner. The minute those Grey Nuns find out that you're talking in your own language, whispering, you'd, if you don't tell us now then you get strapped on the hand until you say, what did you say. They let you stand in the corner 'til suppertime.[142]

David Nevin recalled seeing a young girl "savagely" beaten by staff at the Shubenacadie school for refusing to stop speaking Mi'kmaq.

> This went on for—seemed like an eternity, and no matter what they did to her she spoke Mi'kmaq. You know, and to this day I, you know, that has been indelible in my

> mind and I think that's one of the reasons why when I went to school there I always spoke English, that fear of being hit with that strap, that leather strap.[143]

Alan Knockwood recalled being strapped for speaking his own language at Shubenacadie.

> Just for saying thank you to someone who gave me something in the school. I was caught by a brother or one of the workers, and I was strapped so severely that when we went to supper my cousin Ivan had to feed me because my hands were so swollen from the straps. And I remember sitting at the corner of the table and the guys got up and hid me, stood up and hid, so Ivan could feed me a few mouthfuls of food.[144]

Allen Kagak recalled being disciplined for speaking Inuktitut at the Coppermine tent hostel in the Northwest Territories (now Nunavut). "I couldn't speak English, they tell me to speak English, but I couldn't help it, I had to speak my Inuktitut language. When I speak my Inuktitut language, they, teachers, strapped, strapped, strapped me, pulled my ears, let me stand in a corner all morning."[145]

Richard Kaiyogan also attended the Coppermine tent hostel.

> But over the years, if you talk in your own language you get strapped, and later on, I had to learn the hard way but myself, I think over the years I earned that, we earn it, take this education. One time I got strapped and I didn't want to get strapped anymore so I said to myself, I said, "What am I here for?" You know, education, I guess. Anyway, my culture is going to be—my language will be lost in the way. Okay, why not think like a white man? Talk like a white man? Eat like a white man, that's what, so I don't have to get strapped anymore. You know, I followed their own rules.[146]

On his first day of school in Pangnirtung, the teacher overheard Sam Kautainuk speaking to a friend in Inuktitut. "He took a ruler and grabbed my head like this and then smacked me in the mouth with the ruler four times. That was very painful, it hurts! It hurt so much. That happened just for speaking to my friend in my own language."[147]

There are also reports of students being forced to eat soap if they were caught speaking an Aboriginal language. Pierrette Benjamin said this happened at the school at La Tuque.

> They put a big chunk, and they put it in my mouth, and the principal, she put it in my mouth, and she said, "Eat it, eat it," and she just showed me what to do. She told me to swallow it. And she put her hand in front of my mouth, so I was chewing and chewing, and I had to swallow it, so I swallowed it, and then I had to open my mouth to show that I had swallowed it. And at the end, I understood, and she told me, "That's a dirty language, that's the devil that speaks in your mouth, so we had to wash it because it's dirty." So, every day I spent at the residential school, I was treated badly. I was almost slaughtered.[148]

Alphonsine McNeely attended the Roman Catholic school at Aklavik in the 1940s. On one occasion, she and a friend were overheard by a nun teaching each other their respective languages.

> She took me, I don't know why they always target me. So anyway, she took me to the sink, and she took this, they had this Sunlight soap, it's kind of a big bar, she took a brush, a floor brush, and she, she, I thought she was gonna tell me to scrub the floor or something. Instead of that she, she grabbed my hair, and she started rubbing my mouth with that.[149]

Ken A. Littledeer recalled seeing a fellow student at the Sioux Lookout school having his mouth washed out with soap for speaking an Aboriginal language. "I watched that incident, and, and I didn't like what I seen, bubbles coming out. It sounded like as if they were gonna kill him, or is he breathing, I would say, 'cause I see bubbles coming out of his nose and his mouth, and gagging."[150]

At the Shubenacadie school, a staff member once caught William Herney speaking Mi'kmaq with his brother.

> And she says, "What are you two boys doing?" "Nothing, Sister." "Oh, yes, I heard you. You were talking that language, weren't you?" "Yes, Sister." "Come here," she said. I went over. She took a stick. She leaned me over to the bathtub, the bathtub, grabbed me by the neck, and I don't know how many whacks she gave me over my bum, and I was crying like I don't know what. Then, she took a piece of soap, and she washed my mouth in it. I can still even taste that lye soap. All my life I tasted that taste. And she said, "You don't talk that language here. That's a no, no, no, you don't, you understand?" Looks at me straight in the eye. She said, "Do you understand that?" And I said, "Yes, Sister, I understand."[151]


William Herney.

In Roman Catholic schools in the West and North, it was most common for many of the staff members to have come originally from Québec or Europe. The fact that these staff members were allowed to speak to one another in French (their first language) bothered many students. Mary Courchene once asked one of the staff of the Fort Alexander, Manitoba, school,

> "How come you get to talk your own language and we don't?" It was just, you know wanting to know why they could speak French and we couldn't speak Ojibway inside the, inside the school. We spoke it outside, but we couldn't speak it inside, inside the house; inside the school. And she looked at me and she was very angry but she didn't say anything.


Mary Courchene.

Later that evening, she was told to apologize to the nun in the dining room. At first she objected, only to be told that

> "No one's going to eat until you say you're sorry." Of course I had to say I was sorry; I didn't want all the rest of the students to have to go without supper, and just because I wouldn't say I was sorry.
>
> So I said I was sorry and but it was, I was made to feel humiliated. And there were, there was always humiliations like that, that made you feel small. And of course it was meant for the other, all the other students to laugh at this person that was made to feel ashamed. So it was always you know, that kind of, that kind of thing. So we weren't, we weren't encouraged to be ourselves. We weren't encouraged to, to do what was best for us. It was always what those … anyway.[152]

Students also objected to the fact that if they were taught an additional language, it was French. Lydia Ross attended the Cross Lake, Manitoba, school. "And in my Grade Eleven essay, I wrote out a French essay of 500 words, with all the verbs and adjectives, I had 90% in there. That's how, that's how much French that they taught me, and not my language. I couldn't speak our language."[153]

Despite the usual instruction to conduct school life in English (or in French in some of the Québec schools), many students continued to speak their own language when they could. Monique Papatie said that at the Amos, Québec, school, students "went to a corner to speak our language, even if we weren't allowed to do that. We kept our language, the Anishinabemowin language, and I speak it very well today, and this is what I want to teach the children, my mother's grandchildren and great-grandchildren."[154] Arthur Ron McKay said he was able to hang on to his language at the Sandy Bay school.

> Or else you'd get your ears pulled, your hair or get hit with a ruler. Well anyway, I just kept going and I couldn't speak my language but then I was speaking to boys in the, 'cause they came from the reserve and they speak my language. We use to speak lots, like behind, behind our supervisors or whatever you call it. That's why I didn't lose my language; we always sneak away when I was smaller.[155]

Ronalee Lavallee said that at the Grayson, Saskatchewan, school in the 1970s, there were a number of students from northern Saskatchewan who spoke fluent Cree. At night, they would teach the language to the other students. "We wanted to learn this language, and how we used to take turns watching for the nuns so that we wouldn't get into trouble. And I think, just think, that was 1970 or '71, that's not so long ago, and they were still doing that to us?"[156]

From the student perspective, the overall message was to speak English (or French). There were some exceptions. Mary Stoney said that at the school she attended in Alberta, at least one priest made an effort to preserve Aboriginal languages. "We were lucky to have Father Mullen, who helped preserve our Cree language by translating the Bible and hymns. If not, the language would be in worse shape. In school we often spoke Cree to

each other, but some Sisters were strict with the rules and some were not."[157] Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries had a long history of learning and encouraging the use of Aboriginal languages in religious settings. At the Beauval, Saskatchewan, school, Albert Fiddler recalled, Aboriginal languages were restricted to use in religious classes.

> But that's the only thing they allow is learning how to pray in Cree. They won't allow us to talk to each other, and they make sure that we don't, we don't talk to each other in Cree either. We only, they only teach us how to pray in Cree in catechisms in the classroom, but not to talk to each other because it's un-polite for somebody that doesn't understand Cree.[158]

Alex Alikashuak said that at the school at Churchill, Manitoba, which operated in the 1960s, there were no restrictions on the use of Aboriginal languages.

> We, we almost never spoke English. The only time we spoke English was when we ran across, like, see the thing is in our school, some of our dormitory staff were Inuit people too, so we, we couldn't speak to them in English, anyway. The only time, real time we spoke English was when we were in the classroom, or we're talking to one of the administration staff, and or somebody from town that's not Inuit, but otherwise we, everybody spoke our language.[159]

The rule in the Aklavik residence, according to Ellen Smith, was "English please, English please." But, she said, "when we went on the playground in Aklavik we spoke our language; run around. There they even took us out on the land; in the springtime. We went muskrat trapping."[160]

Despite the encouragement that was offered in some schools, and the students' efforts to keep their language alive, the overall impact was language loss. Russell Bone felt he lost the ability to speak his language at the Pine Creek school.

> I realized that nobody was, never used to talk their language. Some would, some would speak their language as long as the nuns weren't around, eh. And then, I started losing it. Forgetting how, what to say, about the words; what they meant; and when somebody, let's say, there'd be two people talking, eh, two young guys talking their language, and I wouldn't understand. I'd lost it.[161]

Of her experiences at the Baptist school in Whitehorse and the Anglican school in Carcross, Rose Dorothy Charlie said,

> They took my language. They took it right out of my mouth. I never spoke it again. My mother asked me why, why you could hear me, she's, like, "I could teach you." I said, "No." And she said, "Why?" I said, "I'm tired of getting hit in the mouth, tired of it. I'm just tired of it, that's all." Then I tried it, I went to Yukon College, I tried it, and then my own auntie laugh at me because I didn't say the, the words right, she laughed at me, so I quit. "No more," I said. Then people bothered me, and say, "How come you don't speak your language?" And I said, "You wouldn't want to know why." So, I never speak, speak it again.[162]

Robert Joseph went to residential school at the age of six as a fluent speaker of Kwak'wala. "By the time I left that school, eleven years later, of course nobody in the school spoke that language. There are only 100 of us now in the entire Kwakiutl Nation who speak the language."[163]

Prior to the expansion of the residential school system in Québec in the 1960s, some Aboriginal students from that province were sent to schools in Ontario. Paul Dixon was one of these students. His younger brother, however, was educated at a residential school in Québec. "So, I couldn't talk to my brother in French 'cause I didn't know French, and he couldn't talk to me in English." His mother had insisted that they learn their Aboriginal language, which meant that they did have a language in common.[164]

When John Kistabish left the Amos school, he could no longer speak Algonquin, while his parents could not speak French, the language that he had been taught in the school. As a result, he found it almost impossible to communicate with them about the abuse he experienced at the school. "I had tried to talk with my parents, and, no, it didn't work. It's that we lived with them like if it was… We were well anyway because I knew that they were my parents, when I left the residential school, but the communication wasn't there."[165]

In some cases, the residential school experience led parents to decide not to teach their children anything but English. Both of Joline Huskey's parents attended residential school in the Northwest Territories. As a result of their experience in the schools, they raised their daughter to speak English.[166] When Bruce R. Dumont was sent to residential school in Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, his mother warned him not to speak Cree. She told him that "you got to learn the English language and, you know, so we, you know, we were instructed at home, and spoke freely, spoke Cree at home, but at school we, we weren't allowed to speak, speak our language."[167]


Bruce R. Dumont.

Andrew Bull Calf recalled that at the residential school in Cardston, students were not only punished for speaking their own languages, but they also were discouraged from participating in traditional cultural activities.[168]

Evelyn Kelman attended the Brocket, Alberta, school. She recalled that the principal warned the students that if they attended a Sun Dance that was to be held during the summer, they would be strapped on their return to school. "Today I still know one or two people who didn't go because they were afraid of that."[169]

Marilyn Buffalo recalled being told by Hobbema school staff that the Sun Dance was devil worship. "We were told by untrained, unprofessional teachers who took great joy in beating the heck out of the boys and the girls, that we were never going to amount to anything. And called savage."[170]

Sarah McLeod attended the Kamloops school. When she went home for the summer, her grandmother would teach her about traditional ways of healing.

> My grandmother would saddle a horse for me, telling me, "Go get this medicine for me up on the hill." She'd name the medicine, and I was, like, eight years old, I'd get on a horse, and I'd go all by myself, and I'd get the medicines. I know which medicines she's talking about. I'd get off my horse, and I'd put some in the sack, and I'd have to go look around for a big rock, so I can get back on my horse again.

One year, she returned to school with a miniature totem pole that a family member had given her for her birthday. When she proudly showed it to one of the nuns, it was taken from her and thrown out.

> I looked at her. I said, "But that's my birthday present." "No, that's no good. That's all devil you see in that totem pole. It's all devil, can't you see all the devil in there? You throw it away right now." And she made me throw it in the garbage, and it was, I didn't know, I said to myself, "Oh, my gosh. All this time I was, I was hugging this devil?" You know I didn't know that.[171]

At Akaitcho Hall, the residence in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Mary Olibuk Tatty roomed with students from a variety of backgrounds.

> Three years of my life, I lost my Inuit values, even though I, I'm very strong. My mom was very strong at throat singing, and drum dancing, or whatever. But being a female Inuk, very proud Inuk I am, doesn't matter if my grandpa's a Newfie, what hit me was I couldn't say the Lord's Prayer in my room unless I whispered it, because I grew up so Anglican, because my roommate was Dogrib [Dene], or *Kabluunak* [a white person], 'cause they would ask me why are you, why are you saying this?

The common language of the residence and school was English. "The thing is I notice I spoke a lot of English to them, because back in my head, we had no choice but to speak English, 'cause our supervisors were all *Kabluunak*, nothing against *Kabluunak*, my grandpa's white, but I wish we had more support at residential schools with our Inuit values."[172]

Even when it did not directly disparage Aboriginal culture, the curriculum undermined Aboriginal identity. Thaddee Andre, who attended the Sept-Îles, Québec, school in the 1950s, recalled how as a student he wanted "to resemble the white man, then in the meantime, they are trying by all means to strip you of who you are as an Innu. When you are young, you are not aware of what you are losing as a human being."[173]

One former student said that her time at the Catholic school in The Pas, Manitoba, left her feeling ashamed to be Aboriginal.

> Even our own language was considered ugly; we weren't allowed to speak Cree language. I wasn't allowed to be myself as a Cree woman. Everything was filthy, even our monthlies and that's how I learned it at home and what I learned from the residential school, everything was ugly. And that's where I learned a lot of ugliness also, I became a compulsive liar, learned to live in the world of denial. When I was younger, I

> learned how to hate, I hated my own mother, I blamed her for allowing us to be taken away even though at that time I didn't realize she didn't have a choice. It wasn't until 1990 that she told us that "I didn't have a choice. It was either that, or me going to jail. I had to let you kids go to school," 'cause that's when I disclosed to them both my mom and dad what I went through in residential school in 1990, August of 1990.[174]

Gordon James Pemmican recalled how at the Sioux Lookout school, the students used to watch western movies. "The ones they made us watch, Indians never won. I don't recall any show where Indians ever won. When we went out to play cowboys and Indians, none of us wanted to be the Indian."[175]


Gordon James Pemmican.

On occasion, some of the staff at the Blue Quills school had the students put on what one former student called "little powwows."

> "Okay, everyone, want to see you guys dance like Indians," like, you know, like you pagans, or you people, you know, to go in the circle, and then she says, "Here's your drum, and here is your stick," and of course he sang though. I remember he's still a good singer, but they would laugh when he would bang that dust, that tin, steel dustpan, eh.
>
> But they had laughed at some of this, you know, make us do some of the things that was culturally done, eh, but to turn it around and make it look like it was more of a joke than anything else. It was pretty quiet when we would do those little dances. There was no pride. It's just like we were all ashamed, and we were to dance like little puppets.[176]

It was during a confirmation class at the Sept-Îles, Québec, school that Jeanette Basile Laloche rebelled against the suppression of Aboriginal language and culture.

> They gave us a lesson on the Pentecost, and then the principal Father came with the inspector. You had to be good in you person, and you had to have good posture. Then, they explained to us the Pentecost. Then he said: "The Apostles had tongues of fire on the top of the head, then they started speaking all languages." Then there I said: "No, no, they didn't speak my language." Then there, he insisted, he said: "Yes, Jeanette, they spoke your language." I said: "No, it is impossible that they could have spoken my language." Because, I began to be a rebel then: the God that my grandmother taught me about, my grandparents taught me, he was nothing like theirs. Then there, I said: "No, they didn't speak my language." I shouldn't have, we didn't have a word to say, and I remember what he said: "Put your hand on the desk." You couldn't contradict them, I placed my hand on the desk, and with the ruler, I had to repeat, repeat that the apostles spoke my language. Me, it took time before I said it, but you know that's it, I was marked: I was hit with the ruler, with … there was a

blade on the end of the ruler. I wrote a poem about it, my writing, and it was: "I was a little flower that was uprooted and transplanted into another world." My values were disrespected, my beliefs humiliated, I suffered infanticide. After all those horrors, my body, my mind had to adhere.[177]

Bedwetting

"Shame on you."

The trauma of being taken from their parents and placed in an alien, highly disciplined, and at times violent institution contributed to the development of involuntary bedwetting among many students. For the most part, in response, the schools employed punitive, shaming strategies. These measures were largely self-defeating, since they only intensified the feelings of anxiety and insecurity that underlay the problem.[178]

On his first night at the Beauval, Saskatchewan, school, Albert Fiddler, who had never lived in a building with indoor plumbing before, wet his bed. As he recalled, in the morning, a priest

> threw me in over my knees in front of the kids there, screamed, "you wet your bed" or something. I understand a little bit here and there what they were saying, anyway, because I had heard a little English before here and there. He grabbed my little underwear open, which I had to wear I guess. Slapped my buttocks like crazy there so that I'd never do that again. No explanation, not even asking who I am, and who I, what the hell, and then he gave me in front of the whole, the kids to see me there being bare ass, and I don't forget that.[179]

Russell Bone had a similar experience at the Pine Creek school. He too began wetting his bed once he came to residential school. He told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada that in the morning, a staff member "grabbed me from behind of the head, behind the hair, like the hair and she pushed my face into it. And she rubbed my face in it. 'Don't you ever do that again!'"[180]

The Commission also heard about cases where bedwetting began after specific acts of abuse. Shortly after he was sexually abused by a staff member at the Blue Quills school, one student began wetting his bed at night.[181]

Helen Kakekayash recalled being sent to the basement of the school in McIntosh, Ontario, for wetting her bed. "I don't know how long I would stay there, and they would bring my food there, and they would tell me to wash my blanket."[182]

Alfred Nolie wet his bed on his first night at the Alert Bay school.

> And then next morning, went for breakfast, went for a shower, and then they came and grabbed us after supper, and made us wash our sheets and blanket by hand. After that, they made us scrub the stairs on the school. This is all the way from the bottom to the top, this large stairs, and there's steel plates on there, and I didn't know that. One of the staff saved me, and my pants were soaked with blood, both sides, 'cause I was kneeling down. I didn't know what to say, but he seen my pants was just

> covered with blood, both sides, because of the two days I was scrubbing the stairs and no school.[183]

The humiliation was often deliberate. At the Blue Quills school, all the students were lined up each morning. Then, according to Louise Large, those students who had wet their beds were taken out of line. "And I remember the nuns making fun of them, and, you know, they were made to be laughed at."[184]

Patrick James Hall recalled the treatment that children who wet their beds received at the Brandon school.

> A lot of children are wetting their beds, and then, you'd get up in the morning and you'll, the ones who wet their beds won't get up right away. They'll just lay there. And then we went to the shower, so everyone will go. And there'll be, like, eight, nine kids in there that are, don't wanna get up, eh. So he'll go there and whip the sheet off, and get up and yell, just whip them on the ass real hard, and they'll go stand in the corner. And then the next one "pshhh." Then, he'll make them stand there. He'll do that to them, and then make them stand there for a while. Then, all in all, the other boys will, will be done showering. He'll bring them back, then he'll make those boys tease them, eh, about their, about pissing their pants. And then, he'll make them take all their dirty laundry, then they'll just take it down and drop it somewhere there by down the stairs, then, where the shower is. But he'll make you have a cold shower first, so you don't have, just to make you remember.[185]

At the girls' school in Spanish, Ontario, Josephine Eshkibok had trouble with bedwetting. "First time I wet the bed I had to stand in front of 125 girls; they'd be all going like this to me, 'Shame on you.'"[186]

At the Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, school, Wesley Keewatin recalled, the staff would tip over a bed with the child still in it if they thought the child had wet the bed during the night. "If they were still sleeping they'd just grab their, their beds and flip them right over. You know they'd go flying."[187] Wendy Lafond said that at the Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, school, "if we wet our beds, we were made to stand in the corner in our pissy clothes, not allowed to change."[188]


Wendy Lafond.

Don Willie recalled that students who wet their beds were publicly humiliated at the Alert Bay school. "And they used to, they used to line up the wet bed, bedwetters, and line them up in the morning, and parade them through, parade them through breakfast, the breakfast area, pretty much to shame them."[189]

Frank Tomkins said that at the school at Grouard, Alberta, the staff once made a boy who could not control his bowels eat some of his own excrement. When he complained about this incident to his father, word

got back to the staff member, who beat Frank. At this point, his father withdrew him from the school.[190]

William Francis Paul said that at Shubenacadie, students who had been designated as bedwetters were compelled to wear a type of hospital gown that they referred to as "Johnny shirts." "Nobody tied your Johnny shirt. You were, your butt was exposed. Every time I opened my eyes, I'd see everybody's butt."[191] Joseph Ward spent one year in what was referred to as the "wet dorm" at the Shubenacadie school.

> Everybody wet the bed in that dorm you know and, and I heard horror stories about that dorm, but I don't know, I can't remember. Other than, taking our pyjamas and whatever we had and our sheets, to one pile, in the morning; and going for a shower. You know, just was like that for a whole year. I wet the bed, every day, like clockwork.[192]

Mary Rose Julian said she used to feel very sorry for the boys at Shubenacadie who wet their beds.

> I used to feel bad for the boys, you know, that wet their beds. You know they would have to carry their sheets on top of their heads, and parade through the refectory to the laundry room. And I had my head down, I didn't want to look at them, I was so, I know they were embarrassed. But I was afraid for my brother. But luckily, I never saw him go through, you know, the lineup.[193]

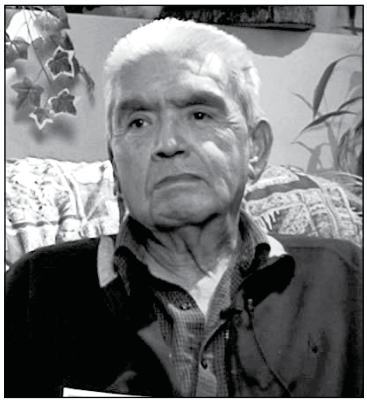
Benjamin Joseph Lafford recalled being humiliated at the Shubenacadie school for wetting his bed.

> I wet the bed and this Brother Sampson came in the morning, came to wake us up, "Everybody get up and wash up" and everything and he'd look at the beds and he said, "Oh somebody pissed the bed. Oh we've got a pitty potter here," a pissy potter or whatever they called it and you know and I was one of them that pissed the bed because I wanted to piss so bad at nighttime and then we got punished for that. I got punished for that. Every time I wet the bed I had to carry my blanket over my head, take it downstairs, go through the cafeteria where all the girls are and the boys are and everybody was looking at me carrying my pissy blankets over my head to go take it to where they would clean, do the laundry or something and I had to go sit down.[194]

In an effort to prevent bedwetting, some schools used to limit access to water at night. Aside from being punitive, the method is both counterproductive—since students do not learn how to control a full bladder—and unhealthy.[195] Benjamin Joseph Lafford recalled that at the Shubenacadie school, the washrooms were locked up at night.[196] Another Shubenacadie student, Joanne Morrison Methot, also recalled being denied water at night. "But we were so thirsty at times, so we used to go in the bathroom, open that tank, and drink the water from there. And I said, 'Well if I die, well, it can't be anybody's fault but mine, because I'm thirsty and I want some water.'"[197]

Ron Windsor said that at the Alert Bay school, students who were recovering from an illness were also denied access to water at night.

> We had no place to drink water, and we had a little … bathroom there. And I was one of them that drank water from the toilet bowl, because I was caught by the matron, and after that they just locked it. We had no place to go when we got better, then we have to go downstairs to use the washroom. But there was still a lot of other guys there that couldn't move yet, and I still could see them crying, and I was crying with them.[198]


Ron Windsor.

Nora Abou-Tibbett said that students at the Lower Post, British Columbia, school were not allowed to drink water at night.

> And you know many of us, we were energetic, and you come in from outside and everything, and then you have to go and all wash up, and wash your feet, whatever, and then you go right to bed, no water. And so, I used to get to the sink, and I have this facecloth, and I just pretend I'm wash, well, I'm washing my face, and then I just run cold water on, you know, just fill it with cold water, and pretend I'm wring, wringing it out, but I just put it to my face, and I drink the water out of there, you know. So that's how we drank water.[199]