

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES



11255 Okanagan Centre Rd. W.
Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

1. Students will learn about the Indian Act and the implementation of Residential Schools, including how the Act impacted Indigenous children in the Okanagan
2. Students will analyze 'Hazel's Story' to learn more about what children experienced in Residential Schools
3. Students will create a timeline of significant events that demonstrate actions against Indigenous people and culture



BIG IDEA: Historical & contemporary injustices challenge the narrative/identity of Canada as an inclusive, multicultural society; Disparities in power alter the balance of relationships between individuals & between societies; Impact of contact & colonialism continues to affect the political, social, and economic lives of B.C. First Peoples.

COMPETENCY:

Historical perspectives, inquiry, evidence, significance, cause & consequence, ethical judgement

CONTENT:

Discriminatory policies & injustices in Canada; imperialism & colonialism on Indigenous peoples in Canada; advocacy for human rights, including findings & recommendations of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission; religious, ethnic, and/or cultural conflicts, including genocide; government policies/practices that have affected & continue to affect the responses of B.C. First Peoples to colonialism

WHAT WILL WE KNOW:

- History of the Indian Act and Residential Schools
- History of oppressive policies/actions against Indigenous peoples

FURTHER INQUIRY:

Field Trip Suggestions

1. Lake Country Museum and Archives



We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the Lake Country Museum is situated, where this lesson was developed, is on the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.

Copyright © 2026

Lake Country Heritage and Cultural Society

11255 Okanagan Centre Road West

Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be produced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Residential Schools

DISCLAIMER

This activity includes content about residential schools, which may be upsetting or emotional for some students. The topic involves the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples, including trauma and loss. Please be respectful during discussions and take care of yourself and others as you move through this part in history. We recommend you consult your school's Indigenous advocate if you have any concerns.

Learning Objective(s)	Students will learn about the Canadian government's discrimination against Indigenous peoples through residential schools, and the effects it has had on Indigenous communities overtime.
Suggested Grades	Secondary
ACTIVITY	
Introduction	Students will work through two activities to deepen their understanding Residential Schools, as well as other forms of discrimination and oppression against Indigenous peoples.
Hazel's Story Analysis	<p>Print out the worksheet that includes Hazel's story for students and have them read through it. There is also the option of playing the video (linked under Hazel's Story tab).</p> <p>Once they have read Hazel's Story, have them analyse the excerpts highlighted in the worksheet. When students have finished writing in their responses, have a few students share out what they interpreted from each line.</p> <p>To finish off the activity, have students connect Hazel's Story as evidence of Residential Schools being a place for the intentional destruction of Indigenous culture.</p> <p>To debrief, prompt students to discuss with a partner/as a class the long-term effects Residential Schools have had on Indigenous people and culture.</p>
Timeline	<p>Students will use a graphic organizer to document important dates in Lake Country and to the Syilx Okanagan People, as found in the timeline published by the Okanagan Nation Alliance. Students are required to pick out 4-6 significant dates.</p> <p>You can print out the timeline for each student, or, if possible, print one larger timeline out and place on the wall.</p>

	<p>After students have filled in their key dates, have them share with the class which events/dates they have chosen and why they believe them to be significant. Further, have them explain the long term effects of these events.</p>
<p>Historical Context</p>	<p>In the 1920s, the Canadian government amended the Indian Act. These amendments made it more challenging for Indigenous peoples to claim their land, as well as made residential school attendance mandatory for Indigenous children between the ages of 7 to 15. Residential schools began in the 1800s, but was not compulsory across the country until this amendment. Survivors describe residential schools as not being schools at all, but a way for the government to separate Indigenous children from their families and culture. At most residential schools, the education was mainly focused on religion and labour to keep the schools running; including cooking, laundry, farm work, and building repairs. There are also accounts of abuse occurring in many of the schools.</p> <p>In the Okanagan Valley, the Indigenous children were sent to either Kamloops Indian Residential School or the Indian Residential School in Cranbrook. Both schools were overseen by the government but run by the local Catholic churches. Many of the survivors’ stories discuss poor treatment, sexual abuse, and oppression that they faced on a daily basis.</p>
<p>Hazel’s Story</p>	<p>The story of Hazel Squakin, a student at Kamloops Residential School:</p> <p>“My treatment while I was at the residential school was very severe. They tried to knock the language out of my head. Told me I was a sinner. A bad person. Dirty and a heathen. I can almost feel the strap, and the ruler and the mouth washing because I spoke my language. They sexually abused us. The nuns and priests and brothers were supposed to take care of us; instead they whipped us, The food and clothes were not adequate to meet our needs. The only time they would feed us properly was when some inspector was coming to see how they were treating the children. Our winter clothes had holes in them. I went there for six or seven years and yet they never changed their method of feeding us or anything. They continued whipping us. All the time I went to school there they didn’t encourage me in any way as a student ... These stories about residential school were secret at one time. Those priests and nuns tried many things to degrade us and shame us into silence. But now our stories are being told. We were taken against our will and the will of our parents”</p> <p><i>Hazel Squakin in “Take the Indian out of the Child” by The Okanagan Nation Alliance, 2018. Also available as a video here.</i></p>
<p>Further Inquiry</p>	<p><u><i>Additional Resources:</i></u></p>

“Take the Indian Out of the Child – Syilx Okanagan Experiences in the Violent and Forced Assimilation of Indian Residential Schools” by the Okanagan Nation Alliance

Field Trip Suggestions:

Lake Country Museum & Archives:

The Lake Country Museum & Archives has many different displays that help to shape the narrative of the stories and history of the Okanagan. The museum’s website also has many great resources and more stories that can help lend to many lessons.

<https://www.lakecountrymuseum.com/>

Hazel's Story Assignment

Name:

Date:

Block:

“My treatment while I was at the residential school was very serve. They tried to knock the language out of my head. Told me I was a sinner. A bad person. Dirty and a heathen. I can almost feel the strap, and the ruler and the mouth washing because I spoke my language. They sexually abused us. The nuns and priests and brothers were supposed to take care of us; instead they whipped us. The food and clothes were not adequate to meet our needs. The only time they would feed us properly was when some inspector was coming to see how they were treating the children. Our winter clothes had holes in them. I went there for six or seven years and yet they never changed their method of feeding us or anything. They continued whipping us. All the time I went to school there they didn't encourage me in any way as a student.

[...]

These stories about residential school were secret at one time. Those priests and nuns tried many things to degrade us and shame us into silence. But now our stories are being told. We were taken against our will – and against the will of our parents.

We were taken to a place where there was no one to protect us. We were mistreated and sexually abused at their hands and yet no one stopped them. The church and the government knew and yet they protected those priests that were guilty. Why would they do that? For me, all these things come to mind when someone says: Tell me your life story.”

- As shared by Hazel Squakin, Former student at the Indian Residential School in Kamloops in “Take the Indian Out of the Child: Syilx Okanagan experiences in the volent and forced assimilation of Indian Residential Schools” by the Okanagan Nation Alliance.

Read the following three quotes from Hazel's story. Identify any words that have negative or positive connotations (also known as implications) and explain what those connotations are.

“They tried to knock the language out of my head”

“Told me I was a sinner. A bad person. Dirty and a heathen.”

“Those priests and nuns tried many things to degrade us and shame us into silence.”

Hazel’s description of her time in residential school focuses heavily on the idea that residential school tried to teach her that her culture was wrong, and she was punished for simply being Indigenous. How does this relate to the big idea that destruction of peoples and their culture was intentional?

Name:

Block:

Date:

Lake Country Timeline

Instructions: Choose 4-6 the dates from the Syilx timeline that you think are examples of intentional destruction of culture. On the timeline, include the date, event, and a brief explanation as to why/how this event relates to the destruction of Indigenous culture.

Syilx timeline – Read through the timeline and choose four to six events that you think show the intentional destruction of Indigenous culture.

Record the dates here:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Other important dates to include:

- 1877 the Joint Indian Reserve Commission created the Okanagan Commonage Reserve.
- 1893, the Canadian government began to auction off the land and the Indian reserve Commission began working to establish a new reserve on the northwest side of Okanagan Lake.
- 1899, the Indian Reserve Commission established a new reserve on the Northwest side of Okanagan Lake.
- 2000, Land claim over the Commonage is accepted by the Canadian government for negotiation.
- 2008 Land claim dispute over the commonage is denied with the decision that the Canadian government has “no lawful obligation found.”

Explain two of your choices for the timeline. How do these events demonstrate the intentional destruction of culture?

TIMELINE

Time Immemorial: Our people have never shied away from protest and resistance. Sixty People, guided by our Elders, have maintained our collective convictions to protect and manage our lands and peoples, and to lead change for the betterment of all. *For all of time.*

1452–1493

In a series of papal bulls that become known as the **Doctrine of Discovery**, successive popes give European kings the authority to seize the lands of any non-Christian peoples.

This archaic doctrine becomes the basis for

Canadian sovereignty, the Indian Act, and the Indian residential school system.

1763

Royal Proclamation

officially signed by King George III is the first legal document created

by colonists

specifically about Indians. It attempts to legitimize England's claim to first rights to land and resources.

1876

The Indian Act

is introduced, giving the federal government control over most aspects of Indian life and focusing on assimilation.

1847

Government report

recommends a separate system of religious-based, industrial schools for Indians.





1879
The Davin Report recommends the use of industrial residential schools as a tool for "aggressive assimilation."

1880-1894
Reserves are assigned to Okanagan People without consent.

1885
The Anti-Potlatch Law makes it illegal to hold ceremonies and dances.

1890
The Indian residential school at Kamloops opens. In 1893 it is taken over by the Roman Catholic Church.

1892
The federal government and churches agree to partner in the operation of Indian residential schools.

1898
St. Eugene's Mission School opens outside Cranbrook. It is run by the Roman Catholic Church and is also known as the Kootenay Indian Residential School.

1900s
Less than 20% of Indian children in B.C. are attending residential schools. Most of those attending are doing so because they have lost their

parents and lack extended family to care for them.

1909
Interior Salish nations form the political body Interior Tribes of B.C.

1910
Chiefs of the Interior Tribes present a declaration to Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier rejecting B.C. land policies and demanding a fair settlement. He is sympathetic but shortly after he loses the election.

1916
Interior Tribes unite with Indian Rights Association to form the Allied Tribes. A delegation travels to Ottawa to assert territory and reject the McKenna-McBride Commission as "stealing of our lands by the B.C. government."

1920
Attendance at Indian residential school is made compulsory. Children with Indian status must attend school from ages 7 to 15 either at day schools on reserve (when available) or at an Indian residential school. Parents who fail to send their children to school are put in jail.

1927
Canada makes it illegal to raise money or obtain legal counsel to advance Indian land title; Indian people are forbidden to organize politically and resistance goes underground.

PHOTO OPPOSITE: COURTESY FAMILY OF BETTY TERBASKET

A working group including government and the NIB engage communities about how to combat alcoholism, resulting in the **National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program** (NNADAP). Eventually, NNADAP supports most Okanagan Nation communities to hire their first drug and alcohol counsellors.

1974
Okanagan people take over the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) office in Vernon to reject the control of DIA and assert the right to self-govern resulting

in the closure of the office and transfer of service delivery to bands.

1975
UBCIC passes a resolution refusing all government funds signifying the rejection of Canadian law and government control over band programs.

1976
Elders meet in Naramata after the DIA office closes and identify the need for an education centre with a Sylix cultural view. The **Okanagan Indian Education Resource Society** is established

and becomes the **En'owkin Centre**.
...
Sylix Okanagan people meet at Nk maplqs (Head of the Lake) to discuss forming a new federation of Okanagan bands.

1979
Round Lake Treatment Centre opens in Armstrong, one of the first Indigenous-owned and operated treatment facilities in B.C.

1984
Okanagan Tribal Council is formed.

1987
Okanagan Nation Declaration declaring sovereignty is signed at Komasket Park.

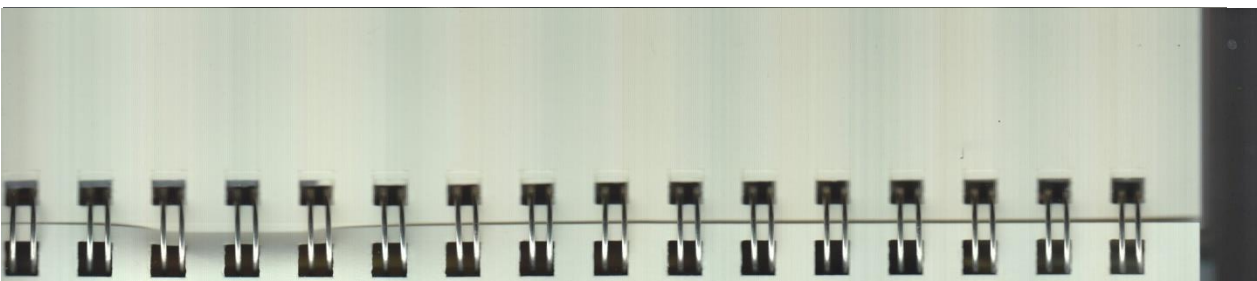
1990
Then Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Phil Fontaine, goes public about the sexual assaults he and other students suffered while at the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School in Manitoba.

Oka Crisis fuels an awakening and ignites the passion of Indigenous people across Canada. Okanagan Nation members participate in the

Oka Run for Peace, running from Sylix territory to Kanehsatà:ke in solidarity with Mohawk resistance to development on their sacred burial grounds.

1991
The Oblates of Mary Immaculate apologize for their role in Indian residential schools.

1994
The **Indian Residential School Survivor Society** begins as a working group of the First Nations Summit, formalizing as a society in 2002.



2012
 ONA develops a TRC Council of Elders to guide and assist in residential school projects including monuments, community workshops, research on Survivor stories, and the development of this book.

2014
 Despite strong protest, Canada ends funding to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and it closes after only 16 years.
 ...
 ONA CEC directs that Sylix Indian Residential School Strategy be developed
 The Sylix Indian

Residential School Committee
 is established with two representatives from each community.

2015
 The final report of the TRC is released with 94 Calls to Action.

2017
 The Sylix Okanagan Nation Indian Residential School monument is unveiled in Penitencin.
 ...

Upper Nicola hosted *kʷ c̓x̓l̓f̓m̓* Calling Our Spirits Back Healing Walk from KIRS to the community of Quilchena and Spaxomin.

2018
 Sylix Resiliency: A Day of Discussion on Healing is held with TRC Chair Senator Murray Sinclair to develop the Sylix Indian Residential School Healing Strategy.

