

Indian residential schools operations were paid for by the Federal Government and run by the nuns and the priests. The residential school that my dad went to opened in 1894 and was shut down in 1996. The objectives of these residential schools were to Christianize, civilize and assimilate the native people. In other words take the Indian out of the child. This was done by not allowing the children to speak their language, they were not taught anything positive about native people and religion was forced upon them.

My dad started school when he was six years old. He was the smallest boy out of approximately four hundred students. This however did not stop the supervisors from hitting him with a logging chain, two by four, belt, strap and other weapons they carried with them. My dad feels he got his independence when he was six years old because every time he got hit he couldn't go running to his mom. My dad had to defend himself from bigger boys that would pick on him and if he was hit by a nun, priest, supervisor or any other staff member he couldn't do anything. If my dad cried when he got strapped or hit, they keep strapping him or hitting him until he stopped crying. If he didn't cry then they'd hit him or strap him until he cried, because if he didn't cry they felt he was challenging them. Other abuses that occurred were when one of the students wet his bed the nuns would rub the boys face in his pee to try and deter him from further wetting his bed. When my dad was in the bigger boys dorm one of the supervisors got so mad at all the boys in the dorm that he walked out and was gone for about twenty minutes, while he was gone the boys were fooling around but they heard him opening the door so everybody jumped into bed, when he walked into the dorm he had a rifle which he cocked when he came into the dorm. Needless to say everyone was quite and went to sleep. In the classroom they were never allowed to give their opinion, if the nun said one and one was three it was three you did not argue.

My dad also had to attend church every morning at 7:00am for mass and twice on Sunday's for low mass and high mass. Sunday's they also had to attend benediction in late afternoon and The Way of the Cross after supper. They were taught catechism every morning because they were considered pagans and they needed to learn more about Jesus.

In the ten years my dad spent in that school he spent eighteen months with his mother, my grandmother. This lack of parental involvement with his mother took away any chances of my dad creating a bond with his mother. This lack of parental bonding

actually started with my great grandmother who was also in residential school. And with my grandmother being in there, this had a generational effect from both generations.

When my dad left residential school at age sixteen he was already an alcoholic and a school drop out, although there were attempts to go back to school, he was kicked out each time for drinking too much. My dad had a very hard time creating or having relationships because he learned to suppress his feeling right from a young age of six. He was also incarcerated on numerous occasions always related to his alcoholism. Each and every time my dad went to jail he never received any letters or visitors but this didn't seem to bother him because he was use to it from residential school. As a matter of fact my dad said he had more freedom in jail than he did at residential school because in jail he was able to talk Cree and he could also express his feelings about how he felt about the guards and other superiors in the jail system. My dad was also able to adapt to any place or environment, like when he got out of school he ended up in Washington picking apples than worked his way back through BC, Alberta and back to Saskatchewan. My dad never really missed anyone when he was gone so this allowed him to stay away from family longer. My dad was very abusive to women, verbally, physically, emotionally and sexually, because in school he'd been through a lot of abuse and was never taught how to love.

As an alcoholic my dad's first four day binge was when he was thirteen years old. He was drinking on an other reserve with some school mates while the police were looking for him. The police found him after four days and returned him to his mom, it just so happened that, that was the day that he was to return to St. Michael's school. He went back to school with a hangover and when he got back he volunteered to go to bed early, because he was sick. That same year after Christmas my dad ended up in the town jail because he got stuck in town with a school friend that he had went home with. There was a blizzard that night and they had a choice of going back to the school or sleeping in the jail with five other drunk people in one cell. They choose to sleep in the jail because at least the next day they would be free; this kind of gives you an example of what the school was like.

Throughout the years of his alcoholism and after he sobered up, my dad lost a lot of friends that he went to school with. All his friends that died, died as a result of

alcoholism, suicide, murdered, car accidents and some friends who died in East Hastings. Many of these residential school survivors were in abusive relationships and were either maimed or killed by their spouses. Many of them lived alone all their lives without partners and died alcoholics. Many of these students never furthered their education.

As a result of all of this it took my dad till he was thirty one years old to quit drinking and start his road to recovery. He always tells me that it was us his kids that showed him how to love and what love was all about. He also told us we taught him how to be a parent. At the age of thirty two my dad went back to school received his grade twelve and continued to university where he achieved his Bachelor of Education degree.

Today my dad has been alcohol free for twenty eight years and he is teaching a course out of SIIT (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies) called Year One Addictions program. My dad wanted to work in a rehab center but he needed a diploma in addictions, so he went back to school for two years and graduated at age fifty seven with his Diploma in Addictions. My dad has seen and went through many tragic events in his life with the biggest one being the death of my two brothers and one sister.

What my dad took out of residential school was not to treat his own children the way he was treated in residential school. To this day my dad always tells me, like he did with my brothers and sister, that he loves me. I have learned a lot from my dad's story and his life. I have and will continue to maintain that close family bond my dad has shown me and I know I will carry these traits with my own family. I thank my dad for allowing me to write this essay and share with others.

Bibliography

Badger, Frank ... Residential School Survivor, 1955 to 1965, St. Michael's Indian
Student Residence