

Aboriginal Rights

May 21st, 2014

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge today that we are on the traditional, unceded lands of the Coast Salish people.



We Were Children

This is a documentary created by the National Film Board that covers the experiences of a young girl and a boy at two different residential schools. The film covers their experiences and transitions from their homes to the schools. We are only going to watch part of it today.

Land Claims

- The longer it took to fully settle British Columbia, the longer First Nations people held on to their lands.
- Federal government controlled Aboriginal affairs and Provincial gov't controlled reserve lands.
- The flood of immigrants during the Laurier era made land and title issues more urgent.
- 1900: 15 treaties made with 200 distinct Aboriginal groups. This was only a small part of BC.
- 1911: Aboriginal groups presented the provincial gov't with claims re: land title, treaties, self gov't.

Residential Schools

- Gov't believed that Aboriginal children were the key to assimilation. So they sent up residential schools.
- 1910: more than 60 gov't sanctioned/supported schools were set up. 150,000 Aboriginal and Metis children were forced to attend.
- Children were forcibly removed from homes by police/Indian Agents and taken far away to boarding schools.
- There was no contact with family.

What was it like?

- They were forbidden to speak their language or practice their culture.
- Overcrowding led to disease outbreaks (eg tuberculosis).
- Many students were physically/sexually abused.
- Some schools: More than 50% died thanks to these conditions (eg. Poor diet, terrible living conditions, inadequate medical care).
- Forced to learn English and French.

Solutions

- June 11, 2008: PM Stephen Harper offered an apology to all Aboriginal people for their treatment in residential schools.
- 2008: Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed. Offered the chance to those who wanted to, to share their experiences.
- It practiced restorative justice (a process that focusses on healing relations between the victims and the accused rather than finding fault).

Talk to your partner about...

One thing you learned today and one thing you already knew...