



## HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: EXPLORING NON-IRSSA RECOGNIZED RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS IN CANADA

### Introduction

In the wake of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, many more residential schools have been identified and recognized. Thousands of children experienced trauma, loneliness, abuse, and harm caused by the separation from their families and the imposition of colonial “education” that has gone undocumented in the IRSSA, TRC, or any other official record or institution at this time.

These unrecognized schools operated alongside the 130 residential schools originally recognized under the IRSSA. In fact, some operated even earlier than the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ont., which is often acknowledged as the earliest operating residential school. In fact, this school is noted as the earliest operating residential school under the IRSSA only because it is the earliest school that could have had living survivors at the time the IRSSA was finalized in 2007: meaning the oldest school that might have survivors who could claim compensation.

The [Paths to Reconciliation website](#) has plotted the locations of 61 non-IRSSA recognized residential schools on an interactive map. Twenty-five of these residential schools existed within an Indian hospital and as such were seen as medical facilities rather than schools; however, the children in these institutions were subject to both forced assimilation and colonial oppression.

There are seven pre-Confederation schools (such as mission schools and industrial schools) that would not have had living survivors in 2007, as well as 14 post-Confederation schools that were not recognized under the IRSSA.

Newfoundland schools had five schools that were not recognized because Newfoundland and Labrador did not join Confederation until 1949, and closed in the decades after which Newfoundland entered Confederation. This technicality permitted the federal government to avoid taking responsibility within the IRSSA at the time that it was finalized.

Additionally, two Métis schools, four provincial and territorial schools, three denominational schools, and one private school were excluded from the IRSSA for various reasons, including the inability to prove that they were federally funded.



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## Focus Questions

How complex was the residential school system? What was its impact on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals, families, and communities (and how does this impact extend beyond the 150,000 children who have been acknowledged as having attended the 139 schools recognized through the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA))? What is Article 12 of the IRSSA and why did the government of Canada exclude certain schools? How could the survivors of these schools be acknowledged and honored going forward?

## Time

60-90 minutes

## Grade Level

9-12

## Learning Goals

- Students will compare maps of Canada's residential schools and identify differences.
- Students will have discussions about the decisions made to include or exclude residential schools in the IRSSA.
- Students will conduct research and create impact statements about residential schools.
- Students will take action to raise awareness about what they have learned.

## Materials Needed

- 2012 Residential Schools of Canada map card
- Residential School Worksheet (copies of handout)

## Lesson Implementation

### Minds on

Begin the lesson by showing the TRC Residential Schools of Canada map on the board (or by distributing handout copies) and remind your students that the map was created in 2012. Have your students view the map on the [Paths to Reconciliation website](#) and compare it to the map from 2012. Students should be able to identify a few differences (e.g., the amount of residential schools, the areas where residential schools are located, types of residential schools).

When considering the motivation for recognizing certain residential schools while excluding others it is helpful for students to understand details of the Indian Residential School Settlement (IRSSA). Invite students to review the following resources in small groups:

- [Canadian Encyclopedia: Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#)
- [An Overview of the Indian Residential School System](#)

Have students consider the following questions:

- Who made the decisions to recognize certain schools while excluding others?
- What do you think were the motivating factors to include certain schools while excluding others?
- Does it make sense to you that the 61 schools on the Paths to Reconciliation map were excluded from the IRSSA? Why or why not?
- How do these decisions affect survivors, families, and communities that were excluded?

Once students have had some time to do some reading, bring everyone together and have students share their thoughts in a class discussion.

### Action

To gain a deeper understanding of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, invite students to review Article 12 (located on page 62) of the IRSSA. Facilitate a class discussion and generate a list of ideas as to what the government and church organizations might have been concerned with when they drafted [Article 12](#). Why did they choose the wording and criteria that is described in Article 12? Why do you think the government chose to exclude so many schools from being recognized? Ask students to consider what the survivors who were party to the IRSSA might have argued regarding the exclusion of certain residential schools. Why might the survivors have agreed to the list to finalize the agreement in 2007?



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- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Electronic device with internet access

## Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework

### Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Patterns and trends
- Spatial significance
- Interrelationships
- Geographical perspective

### Inquiry Process

- Acquire geographic resources
- Interpret and analyze
- Evaluate and draw conclusions
- Reflect and respond

### Geospatial Skills

- Spatial representations

Next, have students break into small groups or work individually to select a school from the Paths to Reconciliation interactive map and ask them to complete the Residential School Worksheet handout. Students can use the following websites for reference but are encouraged to go further in their research:

- [Requests made pursuant to Article 12 to add Institutions to the Settlement Agreement](#)
- [List of IRSSA recognized residential schools](#)

Have students use the worksheet to guide their research to create an impact statement advocating for the recognition of the residential school they have chosen. Encourage students to seek out witness statements from survivors, photographs, and other historical and/or firsthand accounts to gain a deeper understanding of how residential schools affected Indigenous children and communities and how the decision to exclude these schools from the IRSSA affects them today.

Once students have had enough time to complete their research, have them present their impact statements to the class. Facilitate a class discussion about common themes and issues that came up in the survivor stories and accounts from the residential schools.

### Conclusion and Consolidation

To wrap up the lesson, ask students how many Canadians who haven't had this education could benefit from understanding the vastness and nuances of the residential school system and its impacts today. Challenge students to choose one or more of the following activities to engage more people in this learning.

- Write a news article about non-IRSSA recognized residential schools that could be published online or in print.
- Create a series of social media posts to educate people and engage them in the conversation.
- Create a piece of art to reflect the new learning and write an artist impact statement that could accompany the artwork in a public art display.
- Create a podcast to educate people.

## Extensions

- Ask your students to review other parts of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and consider how it may reflect on the government of Canada's decision for recognizing residential schools.
- Bring students' attention to the following statement on the official IRSSA website: "Further to an Order of the Supreme Court of British Columbia dated



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July 27, 2015, no further requests to add an institution to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement are permitted.” Facilitate a class discussion using the following questions: Clara’s Biography Card

- Photos of Clara Clare
- Audio interviews
- Photos of All Hallows school
- Have your students research other colonial policies that would have impeded Indigenous parents’ ability to visit their children, provide for them, and stay connected with them during their time in residential school and beyond. Ask student to also consider the effect residential schools and other colonial policies had on communities in disrupting the transmission of Indigenous languages and cultures.

## Modifications

- For younger grades, explain to the class what Article 12 is stating in simple terms. As a class, students can select a category of residential schools on the Paths to Reconciliation website. Begin a class discussion about why the government of Canada has not chosen to include the category to be recognized under Article 12 of the IRSSA
- When working with younger students it may be helpful to start the lesson by discussing the idea that often priorities are set based on who is making the decisions. This could be explored in terms of students’ experiences in their own surroundings, such as at school or in their home. For example, initiate a discussion with students that is focused on how an acceptable dress for school is decided. How might it be different if you had a) grandparents make the decision, b) administration make the decision, c) Grade 1 students make the decision, or d) Grade 9 students make the decision? Next, shift the focus to residential schools and how the negative and harmful experiences of some children were acknowledged while others were not. Pose questions to students like:
  - Do they think this is fair and justified? Why or why not?
  - Should the government be allowed to decide whose experiences are legitimate and whose are not?
  - What would that do to your self-esteem if you were told that a horrible experience you lived through wasn’t real or important just because of where it happened?
- Students can share their research for the impact statement in a gallery walk around the classroom.
- Students can write down their answers instead of having class discussions.



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## Assessment Opportunities

- Teachers can assess students' participation in the class discussions.
- Teachers can assess students' Residential School Worksheet handouts and the final impact statements.
- Teachers can assess students' outreach awareness projects (e.g., a social media campaign, an online article).

## Sources and Additional resources

- [Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#)
- [An Overview of the Indian Residential School System](#)
- [Call to Action # 29: Actions and Commitments: Settlements for Parties Excluded from the IRSSA](#)
- [Canadian Encyclopedia: Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#)
- [Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada: IRSSA](#)
- [Research Guide: Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)
- [Canadian Encyclopedia: Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#)
- [Requests made pursuant to Article 12 to add Institutions to the Settlement Agreement](#)
- [List of IRSSA recognized residential schools](#)