

MIKE DUROCHER: BULLYING AND ABUSE

Focus Questions

What is bullying? What is abuse?
What are the different types of abuse?
What effects did bullying and abuse at boarding/residential schools have on Métis students like Mike? How was this kind of bullying and abuse allowed to happen at Mike's school? What different roles did people play in this system of abuse? What can we do to prevent bullying or abuse in our own schools and communities? What can we do, in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, to ensure this never happens to Métis, First Nations, and Inuit children in Canada again?

Time

90 minutes

Grade Level

10-12

Learning Goals

- Define different types of bullying and abuse that happened at residential schools.
- Identify the effects of bullying behaviour on the individuals and communities involved.
- Identify the different roles people played in bullying and abuse and why the school failed to protect Mike.
- Develop strategies that respond to the needs and gaps identified by students in their own school to move towards a safer, healthier and happier school and community.
- Develop and present an anti-bullying campaign (educational or justice) in their own lives and communities.
- from the map view.

Introduction

Note this lesson plan is for advanced learners and may be emotionally triggering. It is intended for students that have already learned about residential schools. Ensure that there is good student support throughout the learning process. Talking about bullying and abuse is an important part of making a positive change. However, talking about bullying can also raise issues teachers, schools and parents may not have been aware of previously and that can result in more bullying or other issues. Ensure staff are aware of how to respond to reports of bullying or abuse.

In the residential school system, many First Nations, Métis and Inuit children experienced bullying, abuse and the violation of their rights. It is shocking to find out about the abuses that went on. There are many reasons why this was allowed to continue for so long unchecked. These reasons merit being explored more closely if we are to understand how this happened.

Lesson Implementation

Minds on

Ask students: What words, phrases or pictures come to mind when you hear the word "bully"? List their responses on the board.

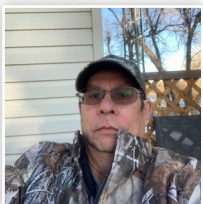
Tell students that you will return to this list later after they have listened to (or read) Mike Durocher's story about his experiences at residential school in le-à-la-Crosse in the 1960s. Tell students that the story may leave them questioning their ideas about who bullies are, and it may lead them to refine and expand on the definition of a bully.

Write the definition of bullying on the board. Bullying is when someone hurts someone else's body, feelings, or reputation on purpose. Bullying behaviour is characterized by the intent to threaten, intimidate, or harm others, particularly people who may be different from the bully in some way. Bullying is about more than disagreements, differences of opinion, or conflicts that occur between friends and classmates.

Bullying definitions typically include the following:

- A person is being hurt, harmed or humiliated with words or behaviour.
- The behaviour is repeated or there is a concern that it will be repeated.
- The behaviour is being done intentionally.
- The person being hurt has a hard time stopping or preventing the behaviour.
- The hurtful behaviour is carried out by those who have more power, such as being older, being physically bigger or stronger, having more social status, or when an individual or group is targeted and singled out.

Go on to explain that bullying is one kind of abuse. Abuse can range in severity



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Materials Needed

- Mike's Story card
- Mike's story on the [Paths to Reconciliation](#) website*, available in the following formats:
 - Photos of Mike Durocher
 - Mike Durocher artworks
 - Photos of le-à-la-Crosse school
 - Audio interviews with Mike

*Note: to access survivor stories, click on "Legend," then "Survivor Stories," and choose a survivor from the map view.

Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework

Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Spatial significance
- Interrelationships
- Geographic perspective

Inquiry Process

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

Geospatial Skills

- Spatial representations

and affect not only individuals but also groups of people.

Different types of abuse include:

- Verbal abuse (such as teasing or tormenting someone with name-calling, threats, intimidation, demeaning jokes, rumours, gossip, and slander—whether in person or online).
- Physical abuse (such as pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, biting, hair-pulling, as well as taking or damaging another person's possessions).
- Sexual abuse (such as inappropriate touching, unwanted sexual contact (in person or online), use of demeaning words about someone's gender or sexuality or body parts, spreading rumours of a sexual nature about someone to harm their reputation, unwanted or inappropriate touching or physical contact, sharing personal information about relationships, posting photos online that are inappropriate or of a sexual nature).
- Emotional abuse (such as damaging or traumatizing someone with words or actions that cause them to question their self-worth or that results in a lack of self-esteem (sometimes done through subtle and manipulative ways), excluding someone from a group, threatening to hurt someone or telling lies to hurt someone, damaging their reputation or humiliating them publicly).

On paper or in a student journal, have students think and write about or illustrate a time when they were deliberately bullied by someone or saw another student being deliberately bullied. They should include how the incident made them feel and how they reacted to the situation.

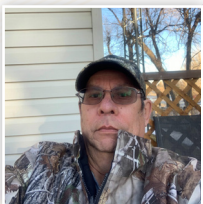
Action

Introduce Mike's story to students with the introductory paragraph from his short story on the [Paths to Reconciliation](#) website. Take a look at the photographs from his life. Caution students to put on their emotional armour since this story can trigger strong emotional responses, and let students know what they can do and where they can get support if they need it.

Tell students that they will listen to the audio interviews with Mike Durocher. Ask students to take notes along the way about who was involved, what happened, why it happened and continued to happen, and how it affected Mike's life. Along the way, stop and check for understanding and discussion when appropriate.

After Mike's story, review with students what they brainstormed about a bully earlier and ask: Is Mike's story a typical example of what you know about bullying? This kind of bullying and abuse was common for Métis, First Nations, and Inuit children who attended residential schools and boarding schools like the one Mike attended.

As a class, create a table that lists the key players in Mike's story (e.g., Mike, older boys, younger boys, school administrator, school staff, Mike's family) and the situations in



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which they and Mike interacted. Discuss with students the persons' actions in that situation. Then, discuss the results of the actions of all of these people.

Answers may include:

- Mike: Older boys and staff bullied and sexually abused Mike. When he got older he became an abuser himself. He expressed himself by protesting ongoing abuse at the school.
- Older boys: Older boys abused and bullied each other and younger boys after being abused by school staff for years.
- School administrator: This person bullied and sexually abused boys who stayed in the residence. They punished those who defied them or protested the abuse.
- Other school staff: These people did not say or do anything and often turned a blind eye to the abuse for fear of losing their job or because they were abusing students themselves.
- Younger boys: They were the subject of abuse and bullying from older boys and staff. They were afraid and couldn't defend themselves.
- Mike's parents: They did not see Mike except for weekends, and they wouldn't have believed him. They didn't know what was going on at the school and trusted the staff.

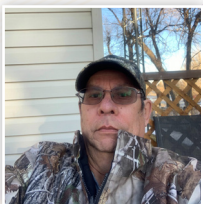
Have a discussion with students about who in this table was a victim, a perpetrator, a bystander and a defender. Ask students: Can a victim become a perpetrator? Can a bystander become a defender? Explain.

Situations of bullying and abuse are often more complex than they appear on the surface and there are usually other underlying issues that lead to these situations, whether the bullying and abuse are being perpetrated by one individual or by a group.

Ask students: What other underlying issues were present in Mike's story? What influences and attitudes were at play in the emotional, verbal and sexual abuse of students at le-à-la-Crosse boarding school? (Examples might include: the underlying issue of racism and discrimination towards Indigenous people by white people that settled North America; the colonial attitude of Europeans that Indigenous people were less than human; the Christian colonial notion that Indigenous people were heathens and that they needed to be "civilized" through conversion to Christianity). Was this treatment of Indigenous students okay? Why not? Would it be okay to treat anyone like the way that Mike and other students that attended residential schools were treated?

Ask students what they think a person ought to do if they are being bullied or abused. Accept all suggestions and then list the three basic things someone being bullied can do to protect and defend themselves:

Tell someone you trust (and who will believe you)—sometimes that is an adult, but



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sometimes it can be helpful to tell a friend or sibling first if it is especially difficult to talk about. Bullying and abuse thrive on silencing those being bullied so that the bully can keep doing it without any consequences.

Develop your own action plan: write down what is happening to you (in a journal or diary) and who is involved; list your role in this action plan and who else should be involved and what options you have to take action; share this information with a parent or another adult you trust at school.

The final, important point to keep in mind is that you need to know and assert your rights. If you know your rights, then if you ever get bullied or someone tries to abuse you, you will be able to recognize more quickly that what is happening to you violates your rights. One of the tactics used by bullies and abusers is to confuse you about what is happening to you (implying that it is “normal”) by making you feel small and powerless. But you are not powerless. You have power in knowing your rights and claiming them.

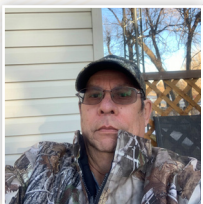
Human rights are rights that every single human being has by virtue of being human. You have a right to feel safe and to be treated fairly and respectfully. Bullying and abuse are violations of these rights and can cause serious mental, emotional and physical harm over the course of a person’s life. Bullying can affect anyone, whether that’s at school, in the workplace, within your family or among your friends. That is why it is so important for everyone, individuals and even governments, to work together to ensure that human rights are respected.

Human rights are protected by international laws, which the Canadian government has agreed to uphold, as well as laws here in Canada, intended to protect us from specific forms of bullying and harassment. Your school has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment free from violence, harassment and bullying. This protects your right to education. If you work, or when you enter the workforce, your employer has the responsibility to provide a safe work environment where there is no violence, harassment or bullying. This protects your right to work.

Review the list of rights below that students have. (Or read the [child-friendly version](#) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.) Ask students: Which of Mike’s rights were violated?

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

- You have a right to **education** (to feel safe, welcome and that you belong in your school environment).
- You have a right to be **free from mental, emotional and physical violence**



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(a right to personal safety).

- You have a right to **life** (to be able to develop and thrive).
- You have a right to the highest attainable standard in **health** (to have access to things like healthcare, food and safe drinking water, and a clean environment).
- You have a right to **play** (to have fun and relax).
- You have a right to **privacy** (to keep your life private).
- You have a right to **freedom of expression** (to have your opinions heard and your feelings respected, especially on issues that affect you)

Bullying and abuse is also a cyclical problem. As we observed in Mike's story, those who get bullied or abused can themselves sometimes turn into bullies and abusers because of it. However, this cycle of violence can be broken.

Ask students: What did Mike do to try to break that cycle of violence at the school? What happened to him when he spoke out? What options did he have available to him at the time considering the rampant violation of his rights and the rights of others there, as well as other factors, such as his age when he was expelled from school, and the church and school's response to student protest or accusations of child abuse? What risk was involved for Mike in taking this approach and how did it affect his life? How did Mike's strategy turn out for him?

Conclusion and Consolidation

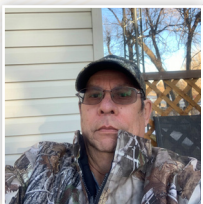
Ask students: What was Mike's message to others who may be experiencing the kinds of things he experienced?

As a class, decide on what you can do to spread Mike's message, such as:

- Educating ourselves and others about the effects of bullying and abuse
- Advocating for former students of residential schools who have not yet received justice for what happened to them (like Mike and many others)
- Building respectful relationships or campaigning for bullying prevention

Extensions

- Students can write a reflection paragraph following the lesson to check in with how it made them feel.



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- Students can create anti-bullying campaigns to run throughout the school.
- Students can look into the histories and lives of different survivors and consider how bullying might look in different scenarios.

Modifications

- Students can be assigned questions to answer in writing rather than sharing with the class.
- Most of these topics are sensitive, so be sure to take into consideration students' histories and personal experiences before implementing the lesson.
- If students have a past trauma, consider adapting the material to make it more suitable.
- Students can answer questions anonymously prior to the lesson to create discussion without having a face to the stories.

Assessment Opportunities

- Anecdotal notes can be taken throughout the various discussions.
- Discussion points can be written down for formal assessment.

Sources and Additional resources

- [Shattering the Silence: The Hidden Story of Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan](#)