

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS SOCIETY

SPRING ISSUE
April 2011



BOARD OF DIRECTORS & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

Board of Directors;
Executive Director
Truth and Reconciliation,
Commemoration
Inter-generational Survivors
Journey Home (Nisga'a)
Indian Day Schools

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, COMMEMORATION:

Truth & Reconciliation Commission March 1, 2 & 3
National Research Centre Forum—Bobby Joseph

Approximately 160 Indian Residential School Survivors, among 500 registered delegates attended the TRC of Canada's National Research Center Forum. Experts and delegates came from around the globe, from wherever human rights abuses and genocide has taken place and been followed by truth commissions. These countries included: South Africa, Australia, Rwanda, Serbia, Guatemala, Chile, Peru, Bangladesh, Senegal, Sudan, East Timor, Spain and Germany. Presenters told their stories of human right violations and genocide which resonated with survivors of the IRS.

The gathering was truly informative providing many insights into how Canada might create it's own center for IRS Survivors. It also provided some measure of healing to survivors who realized that they are not alone in being the victim of racism and cruelty. Delegates were told of how research centers allow for the protection and storage of vital information. Survivors heard about the creation of healing centers and museums that will stand against the repetition of such atrocities. Technologies and inter-active educational initiatives were discussed as well as best practices and codes of ethics. Canada' TRC now has a wealth of knowledge and ideas about how it will create a center (museum) for IRS Survivors.

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INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS SOCIETY

INTERGENERATION By Devi Goberdhan

Hidden Legacy Conference -Winnipeg, February 2011

In February I had the opportunity to attend the Hidden Legacy Conference in Winnipeg. The conference was about the legacy of the residential schooling system on the children of survivors. Being an intergenerational survivor, I was excited and curious about the gathering.

On the day of the event I had a lot of questions and thoughts running through my mind. When I arrived, the event centre was full of energy and movement. I made my way to the main room, took a seat and watched as the room filled with survivors and their families. I knew that a time for healing had begun on personal, family and community levels.

As the speakers began to share their knowledge, I could feel the emotion build. The speakers discussed the impacts of colonialism and the institutionalization of our people. They also spoke of trauma and the impact it has on brain development and spirit. As Dr. Gabor Mate spoke, everyone in that packed conference hall listened intently. He spoke with great passion about the larger effects of genocide on the multiple generations on our peoples. I felt as if light had been brought to a very dark and painful place. I asked myself if we were ready to look at the current state of our peoples, especially the conditions placed upon our children.

I began my healing journey a couple of years ago when my mother passed. I have been truly blessed to work with the Indian Residential School Survivors Society in BC as a support worker. I can credit the Society with much of my healing. I began at a place that was closed off and shut down. They have provided me with a sense of family and support that has allowed me to open up and discover deep rooted soul wounds. Wounds that are also evident amongst the people of this nation.



As the conference progressed, I drank in the wisdom that was being shared. There was almost a sense of urgency, propelled by the need for action and change. I could see that I was not the only one who came with a lot of unanswered questions. I heard the frustrations with government and mainstream society. I heard about fractured families and relationships. I heard concerns about the future of our younger generations. I heard them ask how they could heal using traditional ways and medicines. Most of all I heard my own voice in theirs.

Twenty-five hundred people attended the first day of the conference. The numbers stayed strong until the very end. A spring of joy and hope grew

from my heart. It continued to grow throughout the entire gathering. There was a real sense of community, collectiveness and empowerment. The issues that were addressed were heavy; however there was a real sense of action and hope.

One thing I know for sure is that colonialism has impacted all Canadians. We live in a country that has committed human injustices. In fact, we see those same institutions imposing great challenges to our peoples today.

I want to share a message that was implanted my heart during the gathering: The shame isn't ours, but the responsibility for change is (Dr. Gabor Mate). I will carry this with me until my journey on this planet is over... and I still have a ways to go. I hope I see change, and I hope that I can be a part of it.

**WHAT LIES AHEAD
OF US AND WHAT
LIES BEHIND US
ARE TINY MATTERS
COMPARED TO
WHAT LIES WITHIN
US..... R. EMERSON**



How do I begin telling my perspective from an intergenerational view? It isn't easy. I felt it necessary to ask my mom's permission because I don't want to cause her emotional pain.

Until I started working at IRSSS, it did not occur to me that my life had been affected in any way by the Indian Residential School era. My dad spent approximately 7 years of his life there. My mom attended for 2 to 3 years. My 5 brothers, 1 sister and I grew up in a fairly normal family-oriented lifestyle in the Yukon. My father was very strict and made us go to Sunday school every week.

We did this for years with no questions asked. My mom was a homebody and enjoyed taking care of her family. I was reasonably happy with no major complaints. When you're a little child, it's uncommon to ask questions other than 'what's for dinner'.

Thinking back now, I see little things, events that happened and can relate them to my father's experience at IRS. He was a very intellectual person and filled his mind with information. He watched TV shows about the rise of Hitler, W5, and anything to do with learning. He was

also a man of very few words. Now, readers may say, "well, there are a lot of people who are quiet and they didn't go to IRS". This may be true, but my dad always seemed to carry quiet anger. As I grew older, I noticed this more and more. He was quite strict, didn't talk much and drank a lot of alcohol. My dad passed away when I was 15 and he was 39. By writing my experience, I'm hoping to share some positive stuff that my parents passed onto me. Unfortunately, as in everyone's life, there are negative experiences too. Sharing a part of my history is very personal and I truly hope I can honour my parents while doing this.

We were never physically affectionate with each other. We did not hug or, God forbid, say the words "I love you". Christmas, and Easter always brought a turkey dinner and chocolate eggs. We were traditional in that sense. I learned a lot about loyalty. My siblings and I always protected each other – no matter what.

I think my parents' experiences with IRS impacted my life in many obvious and subtle ways. I grew up believing that my opinion did not matter, that I did not have a voice that was worth hearing. I thought the way to discipline a child was to spank him/her. Since my dad and I never had the opportunity to discuss IRS, I cannot speak for him. My mother is alive and well and does not share much about her IRS experience. She asserts that nothing bad ever happened to her there.

As a Tlingit and Vuntaat Gwitchen First Nations from the Wolf clan, I can proudly say that my heritage means a lot to me. What I do know about my family history has been well-founded. I've had to search on the internet and ask numerous questions of my mom.

My older sister passed on what she had gleaned from who knows where. Her knowledge was like a precious gem to me. In the last year of her life, my Grandmother did her best to pass on some family stories, which I share with others, especially my 2 children.

Being an Intergenerational IRS survivor is a new title, but not an old experience. The Residential school experience has impacted my life in many ways. The government of Canada tried very hard to assimilate the First People of Canada, but were unsuccessful. They did not count on our strength and tenacity.



THE JOURNEY HOME IS AN INITIATIVE OF NISGA'A TS'AMIKS!

AUTUMN 2011

Who: Residential School Survivors & Families of the Nisga'a Ts'amiks Community

What: A Journey of Healing, Reconnection & Reconciliation

Where: From Ts'amiks to Nisga'a Territory with stops at Residential Schools/communities along the way.

When: September 28, 2011 to October 11, 2011

The Journey Home is for the former students who as children were forced to leave their territory (home). Purpose is for the IRS survivors feel welcomed back to their Nisga'a Territory. A feast will follow to celebrate the home coming one night in each of the following communities: Kincolith, Greenville, Canyon City and New Aiyansh. This is an opportunity for our people to make history. Second purpose is to acknowledge the pain and sufferings the IRS survivors experienced while at the IRS and to help one another to begin the healing. One goal is to create a new foundation for our youth and future generations and to put our Nisga'a people in right order.

IRS Survivors

Please contact the office for application forms for the 'Journey Home'.



Another goal is for the Nisga'a people to learn the values of tradition, cultural functions, and to begin the process of bringing families and friends together. The journey home is to open the door to reconciliation and to commemorate our loved ones, ancestors who lived in IRS, who passed on their hurts, pains and sufferings unbeknownst to themselves. As IRS survivors we carried our legacies and passed that on to our intergeneration's. The end goal is to stop passing on the legacies of the Indian Residential Schools.

Nisga'a Ts'amiks

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www.tsamiks.com

Kristy Tait— Email address: kristy@tsamiks.com



HOBIIYEE 2011

people were already nurtured mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically. There were those from the communities had stated previously that 'they were looking forward to watching the Hobiye celebration'.

With all the performances being a huge success, the most outstanding was from the Prince Rupert Nisga'a group regarding the 'witnessing of the priest (dressed in black garment), coming to the shores of the Nass Valley and taking the 'former students' when they were little children, away from their parents; and to witness the mother crying out for her children as they were being taken away to IRS.

As a survivor of IRS it did throw me off guard even though the director warned us ahead of time. Yes—like a good little IRS survivor I did try to hold in my cry and emotions; I finally let the tears flow and sobbed into my hands remembering

the feelings of being taken away for several years. I am so appreciative of how it affected me and allowing the healing to begin its magic - especially as I am Nisga'a and my 'journey' to the IRS began from my village (Old Aiyansh). So for me (Returning Home) will be a good experience.

I would like to acknowledge Devi as RHSW and other helpers for supporting and giving comfort to IRS survivors that were affected by that performance.

Thanks again to the Ts'amiks Society for an outstanding 2011 HOBIIYEE Celebration.



Hello everybody I have the good honour and great pleasure to provide a summary of the Hobiye 2011 Celebration, Nisga'a New Year was held on Squamish territory, Capilano Reserve, North Vancouver in the Joe Mathias Centre. People of all nations attended and packed the centre and the majority of the people stayed right to the end. All the performers were phenomenal. The organizers stayed to their tasks and the whole two days went smoothly. Food was plentiful; helpers stepped up to the plate. Friday evening was a dinner to acknowledge the Squamish people for allowing the Nisga'as to celebrate their Hobiye on their territory. People were waiting for the centre to open and share a good morning meal. Saturday was full day of events. In fact

Health Tips by Daniel Joe

Hello everyone, I would first of all like to introduce myself as a member of the Splotsin First Nation which is one of the 17 Shuswap Interior of BC bands. I also have ancestry in the Okanagan Nation. I have worked with the Indian Residential School Survivors Society since the summer of 2007. I have attended an Indian Residential School that was located in Alberta, St. Mary's (Blood, Immaculate Conception), and also an Intergenerational Survivor of residential school through my mother and grandmother's experience.



I will approach this part of the newsletter as an interactive relationship, where you and I have the opportunity to share Health tips and Health related tips with the people who read this article. I am open to such things as recipes, personal growth experiences, communication techniques, ceremony. I will share with you what is most important to me to date in an important health issue I practice every day. It is something I have done since I put alcohol and drugs down, and was mentored to me by people of Alcoholics Anonymous, which is to “Love myself, Love ourselves”. How many times before that I disrespected myself, and anyone around me, and many times the ones that loved me the most! My self-talk eventually came to this...I love myself, I am a good person, and I am worth loving...very simple, yet powerful words we can say to our self. At first it didn't mean much, it was over a period of time I started to believe these words and in myself.

Let us have a solid foundation of “Love” for ourselves because we gain great gifts such as, self-respect, self-confidence, and self-worth.

Kukstamc (thank you) 

What does “impact” mean? By Maxine Windsor, Elders Coordinator

How does “impact” affect me?

When I hear the word impact I think of a sudden crash or collision. I think about the force of the impact, and the bang the collision made. I also think of “impacts” from the residential school and how it is affecting my brothers and sisters of this land today. In this series I will discuss the different forms of “impact” which may have stemmed from the residential school. What was the initial “impact” of the Indian residential school?

Some of us were taken away from our parents and communities at such a young age; it is difficult to identify what the first impact was. Some of us were removed by strangers, the police, the Indian agent, and some of us were brought to the school by our parents. I will use my experience as the examples. When I was sent to residential school, I was escorted by someone whom I cannot remember, but there was about seven of us who were put on a ship, then onto a train, then onto a bus. I was curious, but I was mostly afraid. I had all these thoughts and feelings going on all at once, but the loudest emotion was loneliness. I was extremely lonely for my mom, my dad and my baby sister, brother and all my friends and cousins. To date I still think about the beginning of that part of my journey.

In the next issue of our newsletter I will follow up with other forms of “impact”. If you wish to contribute to the continuation of this article please contact our office or email us at reception@irsss.ca.

SOME INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW REGARDING IAP:

Legal costs If you decide to hire a lawyer to represent you throughout the entire process, and you are successful in being awarded compensation by the decision-maker, the government will assist you with your legal bill by adding 15% to your award to help you pay your lawyer. This is on top of the compensation you are entitled to for wrongs you suffered. **You will be responsible for paying any additional amount if you have agreed to pay your lawyer more than 15%.** (Taken from IAP Guide v1.0, 2007)

***SECTION 7 – HEARING PREFERENCES** Every effort will be made to accommodate your stated preferences. What does this mean? Survivors who have been called for a hearing can choose where they would like to have their hearing. i.e. The survivor can have it in their home, in a town closest to them, with in reason.

COMMON EXPERIENCE PAYMENT (CEP)

1) **DEADLINE : September 19, 2011**

2) **Alive on May 30, 2005** Common Experience Application Form If you are a former student who lived at an eligible Indian Residential School and were alive on May 30, 2005, you may apply for a Common Experience Payment using this form.

INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT PROCESS (IAP)

DEADLINE: September 19, 2012

For application form and guide go to www.iap-pei.ca

Independent Assessment Process (IAP) — Community Information Sessions

The Client Services Outreach Unit, which is part of the Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat (IRSAS), is sending teams out to visit communities, organizations, and in-care facilities across Canada, to provide information sessions on the Independent Assessment Process (IAP).

If you are interested in having one of our outreach teams visit your community/organization to provide an information session on the IAP, please contact us by calling our toll free info line at 1-877-635-2648, and ask to speak with one of the persons listed below:

Gaspere Bossio
Community Relations Officer
604-666-6460 or 604-666-6530
Gaspere.Bossio@irsad-sapi.gc.ca

Michael Simpson
Manager, Outreach
604-666-6530
Michael.Simpson@irsad-sapi.gc.ca

www.iap-pei.ca

OTHER INFORMATION:

DAY SCHOOL CLASS ACTION

An application has been provided to this office and there are fax numbers and emails they can be sent to.

Joan Jack -

Counsel for the class action suite:

Day School may contact:

Joan Jack law office -

By Fax Only: 250-651-7694 or

Jack.jjlo@mts.net

www.joanjack.ca

You will need to provide:

- Full name
- Address
- Contact phone numbers
- Birth date
- Indian Day school attended and number of years attended.

Definitions:

Day Scholars: former students who attended the IRS during the day and went home at the end of the day.

Day School: former students who attended schools on the reserve and went home after school.

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS SOCIETY

CULTURE

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL FRIENDSHIP CENTRE, 1607 E. HASTINGS, VAN

Every Tuesday night, 6-10pm: Pow Wow Night

This is an opportunity for First Nations from the prairies and the East coast to share the richness of their cultures.

Every Wednesdays– 6-10 pm: West Coast Family Night

Drumming and Dance Group from various parts of BC come together to share their culture with the urban aboriginal people. This is an opportunity to break away from isolation, loneliness, and any negative experiences and be able to connect with other Aboriginal members.

35TH ANNUAL ELDERS GATHERING: Jul 12-14, 2011, Stolo & Coast Salish Communities

Please mail cheque to Wendy Ritchie, to register \$50 before May 11/11: \$75 after May 11/11; Box 2370, Sardis Main Station, Chilliwack, BC v2r 1sa7

Email kat_pennier@stolotribalcouncil.ca for further information & registration form.

Sept. 28—Oct 11, 2011 - “ A JOURNEY HOME’

(Truth & Reconciliation Commemoration) Nisga’a IRS survivors will make their journey home, Nass Valley, from their perspective IRS they attended. Journey home will start from Lower Mainland of BC. Refer to www.tsamiks.com for more information; contact kristy@tsamiks.com at 604-646-9455

UBC Practicum Student (First Nations Studies Program): Maija Tailfeathers

Maija worked with IRSSS from January, 2011 to March, 2011. Her focus of was: “Researching Funding and Global Reconciliation Process for the Indian Residential School Survivors Society”. Maija researched the Indigenous reconciliation processes of International reconciliation processes of Australia, New Zealand, and Scandinavia. Her final papers and research outcome is in our IRSSS resource library. The IRSSS would like to wish Maija the best for her future works and to continue furthering education to continue her work **Shirley David, MASW/BISW, RHSW & Therapist**

IRSSS Workshops

My name is Angela White, I am from Snunymuxw First Nation. I am the new Workshop Coordinator for Indian Residential School Survivors Society; I am grateful and honoured for the opportunity. Our workshops for this past year have focused on three components:

1. **Intergenerational Impacts**
2. **Indian Residential School History and Legacies**
3. **Settlement Agreement Deadlines and Truth & Reconciliation Commission**

There will be exciting changes for this up and coming year; check for updates on our website.

There are five things you cannot recover in life:

- 1) The Stone.....after it's thrown
- 2) The word.....after it's said
- 3) The Occasion.....after it's missed
- 4) the Time.....after it's gone, and
- 5) the person.....after they die

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS SOCIETY

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“WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES
ANOTHER DOOR OPENS”

ADMINISTRATION

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Workshop Coordinator.....Angela White

RHSW TEAM

Supervisor.....Alvin Dixon
Scheduler.....Melanie Vivier
RHSW/Therapist.....Shirley David
RHSW.....Adeline Brown
RHSW.....Bonnie Henry
RHSW.....Charles Chapman
RHSW.....Daniel Joe
RHSW.....Devi Goberdhan
RHSW.....Naomi Williams
RHSW.....Terry Windsor
RHSW.....Vera Jones

ELDERS PROGRAM

Coordinator Maxine Windsor

ELDERS TEAM

Abbotsford Geraldine Wardman

Cranbrook.....David Williams

Fort St James.....Betsy Dennis

Hazelton.....Mark Louis

South Hazelton...Sadie Howard

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RHSW.....Thais Sewell

“You can’t change the past -- but you can ruin the present by worrying too much about the future
You don’t stop playing because you grow old --- you grow old because you stop playing”