



The Great Remembering

Before the shadow fell, there were beating drums,
Heartbeat pulsing from the earth, a harmonic hum
Of stories carried by the thick woodsmoke air,
Braided in the scent of sweetgrass, held in Native prayer.
There was the warmth of hands that knew their own,
A language of love rooted deep in blood and stories,
A world where every child had space to grow,
Watched by the elders, who would help them know
The rhythm of the river, the forest's grace,
Generations contained in one small face.

Then They Came for the Children.

They came and swooped up the children,
In false pretences of good were the villains,
Clad in black-robed silence and with paper claims,
To trade thousands of spirits for new spiritual chains.
They came for small hands that should never let go,
For tiny feet that kicked with heavy groans,
They came to break the circle and stop the dances of rain
And sow a seed of unfamiliar pain.
A mother's cry, swallowed by the gore,
Of a closing latch upon a heavy door.
Inside the walls, the Great Forgetting began,
A systematic, soul-crushing plan.

The scissors bit, and sacred braids fell,
Their once joyful spirits now desperate to avoid this new hell.
The names their grandmothers had sung at birth,
Was buried in plots of sterile earth,
Replaced by numbers, shouted, cold, and stark,
A lonely echo fading in the dark.
And the language that had held their world intact,
Was beaten from their tongues, a senseless act,
A whispered crime between trembling beds,
While foreign prayers were hammered in their heads.
The hunger was a ghost that never slept,
A hollow space where love should have been kept.
Fed watery gruel, and bread as hard as stone,
Left children aching to their very bones.
Boys forced to work like men before their time had come,
Their little bodies broken, their spirits numb,
And in the quiet dread of dormitory nights,
Extinguished were the children's fragile lights.
They speak now for the ones who were never found,
The tiny ghosts in unconsecrated ground,
And for babies born of violence and of shame,
Who never had a life, or bore a name.

Their silent screams are woven in the land,
A truth the world must learn to understand.

But even in that bitter winter of the soul,
A seed of fierce defiance would start to grow.

A whispered word, a stolen piece of bread,
A love of home remains inside their head.

The children who would run into the frost,
To reclaim the loving world that they had lost.

The parents who would fight with fists and tears,
To battle back against the atrocities of the stolen years;

The spirits, like the willow, learned to bend,
And promised that this horror was not their end.

For in their hearts, a quiet ember glowed,
And on that strength, a healing journey strode.

The survivors rose, their voices clear and strong,
To testify against a century of wrong.

Their bravery, a fire in the night,
Demanding that the darkness come to light.

And now they ask for more than just regret,
More than an apology for a nation's debt.

They ask for keys to unlock every door,
To every sealed report, and every floor
Of archives holding secrets, bound and deep,
While generations of their people weep.

Give them the names, the records, and the proof,
Give them the names on the rafters of the broken roofs,
So they can piece together, bone by bone,
The story of each child who died alone.
For justice is the twin of any peace,
And only with the whole truth can sorrow cease.
And healing is a path the people lead,
By planting now, a new and sacred seed.
It is in the drums that it finds its voice once more,
It is in the Indigenous language spoken on the shore,
It is in the children who learn their people's ways,
And live in the light of all their coming days.
So let the nation honor every stolen Indigenous soul,
For it is time to mourn, reflect, and make whole,
That their memory is not a faded scar,
It is a resilient, bright, and burning star.
For every child who was so cruelly taken,
A generation's spirit has awakened.
They will not let their story be erased,
Their love, their light, their spirit is embraced.
For the children, a nation will remember them;
they will be heard,
And the start of healing will finally be theirs,
Starting with their stories in their own words.

Sugarcane

The camera pans to the front,
Of a building that was once considered
Made for “education”.
Land that was silenced,
Children’s voices captured in moments
Erased by ignorance.

Survivors scream for acknowledgement
And silence broken.
Their stories are our knowledge,
Truth flowing
Discipline dissolving
Restoring what was stolen.

Sugarcane fields whisper in the wind,
Resilience, perseverance and strength
A reminder of the memories alive.
Foundations rebuilt,
Stronger, deeper,
Refusing to be hidden any longer.

We Were Children

Two stories told both different than the
last,
Hands small,
Taken from their past.
Unknown language demanded of them,
When their dreams are carried by another.

Inside their names stripped away,
Hair cut,
And tears silently swallowed in the dark.
The walls heavy with “prayers”
Once not belonging to them.

Outside their stories survive,
Grief, strength, anger and resilience.
We must listen
And in our listening must carry the weight
together.
No erasure, no forgetting.

Honouring the children
Who walked in and out
Of those solid, despicable doors.
And of those
That walked in... but never out.

For some, September is a time for new beginnings,
A season for reflection,
New classrooms, new learnings, new responsibilities.

For others, the cooling wind carries memories –
Days when strength was demanded
Against things no child should have faced.

Pages heavier than paper.
Testimonies spoken in breath,
Painful pauses.
Trees rustling in the fall,
While films in mostly English recount
Horrors done by mostly English hands.

I was not there.
I do not carry those long days,
Or long nights, in my body.

But I will carry their echoes,
Their stories,
And remember the weight –
And the strength,
And ensure that future generations know
What happened on these lands.

It is our duty to listen,
To learn,
To witness,
And to say 'never again'.



NOTES

In response to this weeks content, I find myself not knowing how to move forward. As a person with white settler descent, I don't know how to or what I should do to ^{work} reconciliation. I don't understand how others don't understand the generational impacts. It reminds me of the Noan Kahan lyric 'I'm still angry at my parents for what their parents did to them.' ~~when we~~ The impacts of assimilation efforts are impactful. As part of my privilege, I am able to ~~view~~ ^{view} educational institutions as a safe place, a nurturing place but this is untrue. Through the videos I've realized how important it is to have community and share our stories. Even though I can live my daily life without the direct effects of the residential school ~~system~~ ^{system}, this is part of my privilege. As an empathetic person, I do feel the impacts of "white guilt" for what my probable ancestors did (and continue to do). I know my role to continue to educate myself and hear other voices. I feel empowered seeing resilience and strength. Overall, I found the film "Sugarcane" to be well done. I appreciate how the filmmakers approached it. ~~They~~ I can't stop thinking about what was done to children and the lack of empathy many ~~children~~ ^{Canadians} lack.



the feather

Overall meaning

- I wanted to make a drawing to represent the lessons I learned from watching the films. I made a rough draft of this drawing while I watched the Sugarcane film. Both movies portrayed the Sadness, darkness and trauma of the harm Residential schools did, and the harm it continues to have through Intergenerational trauma. Hearing survivors stories it sparked the idea of Collective strength. You could see the strength of community, the shared connection of grief and understanding. I wanted to make a drawing that honoured those who passed during the Residential schools, and for those who survived, along with their families + Indigenous people as a collective.

Representation

The yellow spirits/Aura's : The yellow aura's represent the spirits of Indigenous people. After watching the films, it's evident that it's the spirit of someone who gets diminished from abuse and trauma. However, it is also the spirit that gets healed.

Medicine wheel : Represents Indigenous culture + tradition. It was and still is a way to heal individually + collectively through the four sacred medicines and ceremonies.

The ground / Roots : The line symbolizing the level of the ground, has a deeper meaning, symbolizing the heaviness just at the surface - the pain and trauma is acknowledged but not delved into. What's beneath the surface, the truth, the trauma, - what needs to be uncovered. It is a shared connection of grief, and understanding amongst Indigenous people. The roots symbolize the trauma, pain, secrets, grief that have stayed with the land. The land knows everything. The roots also symbolize the ones who died within the Residential School system, the ones who tried to run away, and the ones who lost their lives because of the continual pain.

Pine Tree : Represents the new growth of collective community healing, on a path forward.

The feather : What carries this story, it represents the healing power feathers hold, the connection to creator, and trying to walk the good path. Feathers represent cleansing and healing + strength.

Betrayal

Pain

Loss

Strength Hope

Every
Child
Matters

Resilience

Abuse

Death

Trauma

Fear

Neglect

Heading home

Indigenous communities

"73 days more until home time"

CAN'T BUY MY SILENCE

Indian land

Elders are not ornaments to be taken out and used occasionally.

Indigenous advocate

CHANGE

"It just keeps on damaging"

The status card is colonial.

systemic racism

CANADA'S PAST

Sixties Scoop

North ACT

Experimentation

out what you've learned

Not one size fits all
colonialism's impacts on Indigenous people

Abstract Concepts

Learning from the experience

South RELATE

Reflective Observation

Reflecting on the experience

Conc

Having expe

residential schools

"In the end, Indigenous peoples must retain the right to determine who is a member and the right to determine who is not a member."



"Even just to answer that would be hard"

Telling Indigenous stories through medicines of the land

UNREPRESENTED

*Today,
I sit with a heaviness in my chest,
a silence that feels sacred.*

*Sugarcane showed me a community digging,
hands in the earth,
hearts searching for truth.
Grief and courage side by side
a reminder that reconciliation
is not just a word
but a movement of bodies,
a chorus of voices that refuse to be quiet.*

*Then came We Were Children.
Lyna. Glen.
Their names stay with me,
their stories echo
in the corners of my mind.
I felt their fear,
their loneliness,
as if I were standing in that empty dormitory
with the sound of church bells
swallowing the air.*

*“I was told I was going to school, but I didn’t know I wouldn’t be coming home.” – Lyna
“They made me believe I was nothing. That my people were nothing.” – Glen
“We were always hungry. I’d eat scraps from the pig pail.” – Glen*

*These words root themselves in me,
their weight refusing to leave.*

*Why was I not taught this?
Why did my own education skip over these truths?
The films have pulled back the curtain,
and now I cannot look away.*

*Healing is not straight and neat.
It spirals*

*grief, anger, silence, strength
all living together,
all necessary.*

*“I tell this story because it’s not just my story — it’s our story.” – Glen
“Speaking the truth is how we heal.” – Lyna*

*I carry gratitude
for those who speak
when silence would be easier.
And I carry a promise
that one day, in my own classroom,
I will teach the truth,
even when it is heavy,
because only truth can heal.*

A bell rang that silenced homes.
Their braids cut,
their voices hushed,
their laughter broken by hymns
that were never theirs.

Names were stolen,
replaced by whispers.
Languages silenced.
Graves hidden.

Under the shadow of control,
bodies laid restless.
Hushed by the ground,
and left screaming with treachery.

Voices scream boundlessly from the earth.
The soil, which held the children.
The tree roots, which hugged the children.
The grass, which blanketed the children.

The earth,
protecting the young.

The silence echoed through homes,
and created a roar.
The noise, spread across communities.
Spread across the nation.
Spread across the world.
Spread across generations.
Falling on deaf ears.

Time could not heal these wounds.
Lies could not cover the maltreatments.
These children could not be silenced forever.

The world listens now.

I found the videos we watched this week to be incredibly powerful, and I want to sincerely thank you for curating such a thoughtful course. The materials have been both engaging and eye-opening, offering new perspectives and stories that continue to deepen my learning. I am finding this course not only extremely interesting but also highly relevant to my own practice, and I truly appreciate the effort you have put into compiling such meaningful resources. As I was reflecting on the films, I even felt inspired to write a short haiku poem.

**Stolen from their land
Orange the colour of hope
We shall do better**



Sugarcane (Haiku)

Whispers from the past,
Unmarked graves tell silent tales,
Healing winds now blow.

We Were Children (Acrostic)

Remembering those lost,
Every child's pain unseen,
Silent tears,
Innocence lost,
Lifting spirits from dark times,
Igniting new hope,
Ending the cycle,
Never forgetting the past,
Courage growing,
Every child matters,

Stories on my Screen

I sat in my room,
comfortable, safe,
a roof above me,
watching *Sugar Cane* and *We Were Children*.

On the screen,
the camera lingered on faces,
children forced into silence,
their laughter stolen,
their language taken.
I saw my grandfather there,
his bed screwed into the floor,
his childhood fastened down
in a building that now
teaches history without always
telling the truth of its own walls.

We Were Children made me ache
to think of him so small,
navigating days of fear and loss.
Sugar Cane showed me the courage
of survivors speaking back,
turning memory into testimony.
Through their voices,
I heard his story echo.

And I thought of me,
an Indigenous woman,
living safely at home,
because my family and ancestors fought for
that. I can teach Ojibwe,
be paid for what was once punished,
share words once silenced,
because he endured.

These films do not end
when the credits roll.
They live in my heart,
in my classroom,
in my promise
to carry his story forward,
to make sure
I will not forget.
I will not let others forget.