

K-12 EDUCATION



Native Women's
Association of Canada

L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

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The Ongoing Legacy of Residential Schools

- Before the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples had their own well-established systems of childcare and education that were rooted in the community, the natural environment, and spiritual teachings. After the Europeans arrived, colonization began and the introduction of the Indian Act paved the way for the reservation system and residential school system responsible for the “cultural genocide” imposed upon Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- The Canadian policy of assimilating Indigenous peoples came from the belief that their worldviews were inferior or primitive. Residential schools were established in 1880 and the school last was closed in 1996. These schools practiced abusive and inhumane discipline on students.
- The Canadian government issued a formal apology in Parliament for the destructive inter-generational effects residential schools continue to have in Indigenous communities.¹

Shannen's Dream²

- Shannen Koostachin was from Attawapiskat First Nation and her dream was to have proper schools in her community
- In 2000, the Canadian government closed the school in Attawapiskat due to complaints that people were getting sick
- Portable trailers were brought in as a temporary solution and ten years later, still no permanent fix for the school
- Shannen led a national campaign inviting Canadian children to write to the Canadian Government to ensure that Indigenous children could have safe, comfy, and culturally relevant education
- To attend high school, Shannen was forced to leave because funding shortages did not allow construction of a new school
- 2010 Shannen's life was lost in tragic car accident while she was attending a provincial high school in the south
- Shannen was never able to see the new school built in Attawapiskat
- On June 22, 2012—the day Shannen would have graduated—construction started for a new school in Attawapiskat
- The new school opened in August 2014

Works Cited

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6. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, “First Canadians, Canadians First: National Strategy on Inuit Education” (2011)
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K- 12 Education QUICK FACTS

- **Indigenous women under 20** are **3 times** more likely to be **young mothers**³
- **38% of Inuit** and **25% of First Nations** and **Metis young mothers** drop out of school due to pregnancy and **lack of available childcare**³
- **31% of First Nations students attend off-reserve provincial schools** and 5% attend private or federal schools⁴
- **Metis students are "forgotten" or "voiceless"** as the majority are filtered into the provincial school systems with **little to no culturally relevant supports**⁵
- **Inuit women** have the **highest dropout rates** of any Indigenous women⁶

Availability of Language Programs in First Nations K-12 Schools



Culturally Relevant K-12 Programs

- There are many examples of successful programs, with many having not enough spaces to meet demand
- 515 First Nations elementary/secondary schools serve 109,000 students⁴
- However, many students still attend provincial schools and are forced to pay "out of province" fees to access education⁴
- Programs that are available and culturally relevant incorporate language, culture, healthy living, social supports and community involvement¹
- These programs have shown positive impacts on children and their families including the Mi'kmaq Education Act 1998
- Membertou First Nation achieved 100% graduation rate for multiple years, while overall Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey schools have an average of 80% graduation rate⁷

TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:

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