



## Circles for Reconciliation Gathering Theme

---

### Day Schools and Day Scholars

Author: Tricia Logan

The ‘Indian’ day schools in Canada are considered part of the entire system of residential school systems. The term ‘residential school’ often encompasses a number of different kinds of schools including: boarding, industrial, mission and day school, hostels, residences, TB sanatoriums and hospitals. While the legal definitions are often limiting, the full experience of the ‘residential school system’ includes a number of different kinds of schools operated by the federal government, provincial government(s) and various religious denominations. Day scholars also attended residential schools and had similar experiences but since they did not stay overnight they were also not eligible for compensation.

While majority of day schools were not ‘officially’ recognized in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), the day school system was very much part of the whole system of residential schools. Most importantly, many former students and Survivors who attended day schools had very similar or identical kinds of day-to-day and long-term experiences as Survivors who attended boarding-style residential schools.

Smaller ‘mission’ or day schools were operated across Canada and typically co-administered by either Protestant or Catholic churches, the provincial/territorial governments or in some cases, the federal government. Student attendance at day schools would often rely on the location of the school, denomination of the school and often the identity of the home community or of the children and parents.

Often, Métis children attended the day schools in large numbers since many considered that Métis were the ‘responsibility’ of provincial governments. Métis often slipped into a jurisdictional gap between government administrations and their school attendance was often defined by these gaps.

Students did not stay overnight at the day schools, many were able to go home at the end of the school day, but often the conditions at the school and treatment of the children, by clergy and teachers was similar or identical to that at the residential schools. In other day schools, many children were billeted into homes or stayed at a hostel or residence while

they attended the day school. In many large boarding-style residential schools ‘day scholars’ would go home at the end of the day as well but still faced the same treatment, day-to-day as the rest of the students.

These experiences vary but they are often recognized in the broad experience of the ‘residential school experience’ in Canada. Of note though, is the legal battle many day school students and day scholars still carry on with, today. The 2005 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) does not ‘officially’ recognize the experience of a majority of day school attendees. So, while many students faced the same treatment as students who attended boarding-residential schools, the Settlement Agreement did not recognize their experiences and many carry on with legal battles, today. Schedule ‘E’ of the IRSSA lists the ‘officially’ recognized schools and in order for any former attendees of residential or day schools to apply for the Common Experience Payment (CEP) or the Independent Assessment Process (IAP), their school had to be listed on the ‘official’ list. If their school did not appear, they could apply for an appeal and potentially their school could be added to the list or they would be denied compensation under the IRSSA.

Currently, Survivors and former day school attendees are still fighting legal battles for abuses they endured at the day schools and for recognition of their experiences. In individual and class action suits, day school Survivors carry on with important work for recognition and to attain the same or similar support as all Survivors of the entire residential school system.

## References

Chartrand, Larry, Tricia Logan and Judy Daniels. 2006. *Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada*. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

For more information on legal action and class action suits for day scholars, please see:

<http://justicefordayscholars.com/>