A Handbook for
Educators of Aboriginal Students
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Cover image: The pithouse has been chosen as a representation of Aboriginal cosmology, and by extension, of holistic learning. The pithouse is known as a kekuli in Chinook jargon trade language or c7istikten in the Secwepemc language. The ancient semi-subterranean winter house of the Secwepemc people was divided by four main posts which held up the roof and created four rooms. There were cosmological aspects to the house, regarded as the world, with each compartment associated with one of the cardinal directions. Pithouses varied in size, accommodating 15 to 30 people. (For a description of the Secwepemc pithouse, see Teit, 1909).

Previous page: The pithouse sketch is from “Native American Architecture” by Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton (1989) and is used by permission of Oxford University Press www.oup.com

Cover photo: Pithouse by Ken Favrholdt

Select pictograph images were taken from two books by James Alexander Teit: “The Thompson Indians of British Columbia” (1900, reprint 1997), which is used by permission of (and copies are available from) the Nicola Valley Museum Archives Association, Merritt, British Columbia; and “The Shuswap” (1909, reprint 1975).

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Thompson Rivers University has chosen to use the term Aboriginal, which is inclusive of First Nations, Inuit and Métis, for its programs and services in keeping with the Canadian government definition of the term and while respecting individual preference in language.
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Weyt-kp! Welcome Everyone!
Welcome to Secwepemcúlcw
– Secwepemc Territory –

We acknowledge and give honour to the Secwepemc—the ancestral peoples who have lived here for thousands of years—upon whose traditional and unceded land Thompson Rivers University is located. The Secwepemc maintain a spiritual and practical relationship to the land, water, air, animals, plants and all things needed for life on Mother Earth. It is with that in mind that we owe this debt of gratitude.

ALBAA Research Team

To hear a welcome song in Secwepemctsín visit:
http://www.landoftheshuswap.com/msite/Welcome.mp3
The bands that comprise the Secwepemc Nation

Sexqeltqín – Adams Lake
St’uxwtéws – Bonaparte
Tsq’escen – Canim Lake
Stswécem’c/Xgét’tem’ – Canoe/Dog Creek
Esk’ét – Alkali Lake
Llenllenéy’ten – High Bar
Tk’emlúps – Kamloops
Qw7ewt – Little Shuswap
Sk’atsin – Neskonlith
Simpcw – North Thompson
Tsök’w'éylecw – Pavilion
Kenpésq’t – Shuswap
Skítsesten – Skeetchestn
Xats’úll – Soda Creek
Splatsín – Spallumcheen
T’exel’c – Williams Lake
Stil’qw/Pelltíq’t – Whispering Pines/Clinton

Source: Shuswap Nation Tribal Council, 2010
Message from

Dr. Nathan Matthew
Executive Director of Aboriginal Education
Thompson Rivers University

In becoming the University of Choice for Aboriginal people, it is important that Thompson Rivers University (TRU) provides programs relevant and supportive of Aboriginal aspirations of self-governing, healthy communities. In order to attract and retain Aboriginal students, it is essential that TRU provides an inviting learning environment for Aboriginal learners. A key aspect to such an environment is establishing a respectful, positive relationship between the faculty at TRU and Aboriginal students. This handbook is intended to foster such a relationship. Information provided here should assist faculty in gaining a better understanding of the unique social, political and cultural context from which Aboriginal students come. I encourage faculty at TRU to use this handbook to contribute to the University’s goal of increasing educational success for Aboriginal students.

Dr. Nathan Matthew
Source: Aboriginal Education Centre, TRU
Message from
Mike Arnouse
Secwepemc Elder
Sexqeltqín

I come to the university as an Elder in the hopes that I can help bring people together, to help people understand, and to show how everyone contributes to future generations and to the whole.

We need to know more about each other through a process of mutual respect and sharing. Not knowing each other breeds racism and judgement. Students come to tell me that many educators do not know about the Residential School and the history from the native point of view. Since I’ve been here, people have been asking questions about our ways of life and history and we are sharing that. The mistakes that were made in the colonial period, forcing religion and forcing new European ways of doing things, weren’t compatible to our spiritual way of teaching. Holistic ways of teaching look at the whole student. We don’t put them in boxes; instead, we use the circle where everything is included.

We’ve got to walk together and learn not only our history and our ways, but each others’, so that we get to know each other and the mistakes will slowly heal without harm, without repeat. Some of our stories about instructions to the human being were the same, how to treat each other and other living things respectfully on our Mother Earth. My vision is to go back to that beautiful time where we can make that true and I don’t think that’s very hard to understand. Now that we’re living side-by-side, it almost has to take place. The things that happen on our Mother Earth will help or harm everyone the same.

Mike Arnouse
Source: Aboriginal Education Centre, TRU
Special thanks to:

Dr. Marianne Ignace and Dr. Ron Ignace
of Simon Fraser University
for their translation assistance
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This handbook is the result of the collective efforts of many people who have contributed their time and skills to its development. We have made every effort to acknowledge individuals who have contributed to this project. Apologies to anyone we may have missed.

Kukwstép-kucw! Thank you!

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A Learning Bridge for Aboriginal Adults (ALBAA) is in Phase II of its research at Thompson Rivers University. The goal of the ALBAA project is to identify and develop strategies and support systems that will result in increased student success and retention among Aboriginal adults transitioning into post-secondary education institutions from community-based Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. One of the initiatives of the ALBAA Project is to provide hands-on tools for faculty to increase their understanding of the needs of Aboriginal learners. After consulting with numerous individuals with Aboriginal education backgrounds, the product of these combined efforts is this handbook.

ALBAA Community Partners

Neskonlith Indian Band  www.neskonlith.org
Nuxalk Nation  www.nuxalknation.org
Secwepemc Cultural Education Society (SCES)  www.secwepemc.org
Skeetchestn Indian Band  www.skeetchestn.ca
INTRODUCTION

As Thompson Rivers University embarks on its goal to become the University of Choice for Aboriginal students, it may be helpful for educators to have a tool-kit to assist with engaging and interacting with Aboriginal students. This handbook is intended to be a start in that direction.

The handbook uses a holistic approach to provide tools to address these four aspects of education:

- History and Traditions
- Supports
- Effective and Innovative Educational Practices
- Student Profile
Le q’7es te tswwét.s ell re sw7ecs re qelmúcw

‘long-ago customs and activities of Aboriginal people’

– History and Traditions –
Kweseltnews

Étsxem

Mellelc

Knucwentsut

Kweseltnews – the value of relationship (we are all family)
Knucwentsut – the value of individual strength and responsibility (take care of yourself)
Étsxem – the value of knowing your gifts
Mellelc – the value of renewal

Note: these Secwepemc words have been spelled according to their Western Dialect.
Source: Journey Through Secwepemcúléw – Secwepemc Values  www.spiritmap.ca
An understanding of the history of the education of Aboriginal peoples explains the present and provides direction for the future. Aboriginal prehistory dates back thousands of years—“since time immemorial.” The maintenance of oral traditions is critical to Aboriginal peoples. Colonization has tried to systemically destroy Aboriginal cultures, languages, and traditions. Colonization is often found embedded in texts and pedagogy in the mainstream educational system, sometimes referred to as the “hidden curriculum”, creating a legacy of colonial constructs that includes stereotypes and racist attitudes. The legacy of the Residential School experience is multi-generational and survivors still suffer traumatic effects. There are several films documenting the Residential School experience. Students should not be required to view these films. The “Sixties Scoop” has compounded the effects of separation of children from families with consequences still felt today. Although decolonization is challenging deep-rooted Eurocentric attitudes and practices, the process is not complete.

**What Educators Need to Know:**

- An understanding of the history of the education of Aboriginal peoples explains the present and provides direction for the future.
- Aboriginal prehistory dates back thousands of years—“since time immemorial.”
- The maintenance of oral traditions is critical to Aboriginal peoples.
- Colonization has tried to systemically destroy Aboriginal cultures, languages, and traditions.
- Colonization is often found embedded in texts and pedagogy in the mainstream educational system, sometimes referred to as the “hidden curriculum”, creating a legacy of colonial constructs that includes stereotypes and racist attitudes.
- The legacy of the Residential School experience is multi-generational and survivors still suffer traumatic effects. There are several films documenting the Residential School experience. Students should not be required to view these films.
- The “Sixties Scoop” has compounded the effects of separation of children from families with consequences still felt today.
- Although decolonization is challenging deep-rooted Eurocentric attitudes and practices, the process is not complete.
The Educational Context

An understanding and appreciation of the history of the education of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is fundamental to the success of Aboriginal students attending post-secondary today. The diversity of Aboriginal peoples requires an awareness of the connection between the past and the present.

The history of the education of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia, as elsewhere in Canada, can be viewed in stages within the background of the larger history of colonization and decolonization, from the time of first contact with Europeans in the 18th century to the present day. Four phases can be identified to explain the history of Aboriginal education in Canada and BC: traditional Aboriginal education; missionary influence; federal and provincial government influence; and Aboriginal control of education policy (Friesen et al., 1992). The history of this transformation for Aboriginal peoples has been painful and difficult, but ultimately there is movement towards acknowledgement and respect for their knowledge, culture and traditions.

The History and Traditions of First Nations in British Columbia

Before Contact

The history of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia (BC)—including that of the Secwepemc people in BC’s Interior—is two-fold. The history of Aboriginal people in BC before European contact spans 10,000 years but the history after contact spans less than 250 years since the first Europeans came to what is now BC. Estimates of the pre-contact Aboriginal population in BC range as high as 250,000, but within a century, this number had declined to about 25,000 (Muckle, 2007).

Before the introduction of European languages, oral histories and traditions connected the Secwepemc people to their past; however, their stories have survived to the present with an added layer of language—a Secwepemctsin orthography (the spelling of a language, representing the sounds of a language by written symbols) which allows the language to be written and taught.

Note: Bold words can be found in the glossary (see page 67)
All First Nations including the Secwepemc have a cultural and social organization, including governance, spirituality, and cross-cultural protocol in their relations with others. Stewardship of the land—the care and management of resources—is a central belief among all First Nations. This is reflected in their strong connection to place and relationship to the natural world, including an intimate awareness of the annual cycle which formed their seasonal round in the past (Matthew, 1986).

The Secwepemc traditional territory covers a large region from west of the Fraser River to east of the Rocky Mountains crest, and from its northern limit above the upper Fraser River to south of the Arrow Lakes. Borders between territories were not hard, definite lines in the way that national boundaries are today. Areas were often shared by neighbouring nations and trade extended across long distances. The customs and dialects in villages in the heart of a nation’s territory and those at its border were sometimes quite different because people at the borders usually showed the influence of their neighbours. Aboriginal names for places are being restored to the map of BC such as Tk’emlúps Indian Reserve instead of Kamloops Indian Reserve.

The vast area of Secwepemcúlcw provided a great variety of resources. Traditional activities included gathering plants, fishing, hunting, preserving food, tanning hides for clothing and footwear, and using tree roots and fibre for making textiles, baskets, and shelters. The traditional winter home or pithouse of Interior Salish peoples like the Secwepemc—the cover symbol for this handbook—was made of logs and earth, dug partly underground, and ideally suited to the cold winters. In the summer, they lived in portable mat lodges, sometimes made of hides that were traded from nations east of the Rockies.
For many generations the Aboriginal peoples of Canada have taught Europeans how to survive our geography. Examples of this abound including the huge amount of agricultural products and medicines that have been given to the world: snowshoes, canoes, and even the first oil wells—oil was used for covering canoes to make them waterproof! There are also examples of models of governance and relationships between peoples including the equality of men and women that are said to have influenced European thought (P. Tamburro, personal communication, April 6, 2010). Aboriginal peoples have made a great contribution to science including traditional knowledge of indigenous plants and wildlife that have provided sustenance and materials for day-to-day needs. Advanced scientific research on nutritional and medicinal uses of native plants is included in the collaborative ethnobotanical work of Dr. Nancy Turner (Turner, 1997, 1998), her colleagues and Secwepemc Elders (Ignace, 1996).

Gathering plants and other resources involved a seasonal round by which the Secwepemc people travelled from one place to another over the course of a year. Their traditional transportation included walking and travelling by canoes made of bark or dugouts cut from a single tree. When the horse was introduced to the Secwepemc, this facilitated their travel over greater distances to trade (Teit, 1909).

Trade was a way to obtain goods and resources not available in one’s own territory and to create alliances. People travelled to central locations to trade for resources, socialization, and intermarriage. Gatherings often included games and competitions; gambling was a popular pastime. The stick or bone game also known as *lahal* is still played today (Campbell et al., 2003).
Powwows are a common event at many First Nations reserves in British Columbia including Kamloops. The traditional powwow had its origins among the Plains people in the 19th century. Gradually, the styles of dances and regalia diffused to other First Nations. Today, many modern elements have been incorporated in the regalia and dances, revealing that culture is not static and yet is still based on strong traditions. The Kamloops Pow Wow held every August incorporates both local and traditional aspects as well as contemporary elements. Another annual event that includes the powwow ceremony in its celebration is National Aboriginal Day in June.

After Contact

The lives of Aboriginal peoples across North America were irreversibly changed with the arrival of Europeans. By the 18th century in British North America, the advance of colonization and the relationship between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples was formalized by the creation of treaties. The Royal Proclamation of 1763, made by Great Britain, was based on the premise of a nation-to-nation relationship between First Nations and newcomers who were instructed not to settle on Indian lands until an agreement had been made in the form of treaties (Dickason, 2009). The early treaty process, however, did not extend to BC (except for Treaty 8 in 1899).

The beginning of sustained exploration of BC first proceeded along the coast in the late 18th century and then across the Interior. The first Europeans to come into contact with the Secwepemc were Alexander Mackenzie’s party in 1793, followed by David Thompson’s, on the eastern flanks of the territory in 1807, and then Simon Fraser’s in 1808. A period commonly referred to as the fur
trade followed these explorations. When forts were established at Tk'emlúps in 1812, called Kamloops by the fur traders, Aboriginal trails that had crossed the BC Interior brought dramatic changes to Secwepemc culture in the form of European goods (Crop Eared Wolf, 1996).

The relationship between the Interior peoples of BC and the Hudson’s Bay Company was relatively peaceful but led to the gradual deterritorialization of their culture. The fur trade was the beginning of intercultural relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans, often through intermarriage. The Métis represent the union of Europeans and First Nations, resulting in a new Aboriginal group within BC since the late 1700s when many accompanied the early explorers and fur traders. It was during the fur trade period in the early 1800s that Métis came to Kamloops and other parts of the Interior. Jean-Baptiste Lolo, a Métis employee of the Hudson’s Bay Company, was an interpreter for the Company who through marriage acted as a go-between with the Secwepemc (Balf, 1976). Chief Louis, a Tk'emlúps hereditary chief, witnessed and experienced the dramatic changes among his people and First Nations in BC, including the formation of Indian reserves and loss of traditional lands, the creation of Canada and the Indian Act, the banning of the traditional potlatch in 1884, and rise of activism and resistance by many First Nations (Thomson, 2000.)

**Colonization**

Colonization is the way in which European cultures used a variety of methods to control Indigenous peoples and dismantle their cultures through war, missionization, disease, treaties, the Indian Act, forced schooling, suppression of Aboriginal cultures and languages, and the creation of Indian Agent positions (for a comprehensive history see: Coffey et al., 1990).

**Contact** refers to the period of time when Europeans came in touch with Aboriginal peoples and when the process of colonization began. That period varied across Canada and, in British Columbia, first contact did not occur until the late 18th century. Aboriginal peoples had flourishing cultures until their disintegration through European contact. Colonization, as a process of pacifying and assimilating Aboriginal peoples, has continued to the present, both overtly and covertly, through means such as institutional racism (Satzewich,
1998). The federal government’s **White Paper** of 1969 was a further attempt to assimilate First Nations by dismantling the Indian Act, which resulted in widespread opposition. Colonization is a historical process that is still being felt in Canada and being addressed by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and institutions.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established in 2008 by the federal government, is part of the Residential School Settlement. It provides an “overall holistic and comprehensive response” to the legacy of the colonial policy of aggressive assimilation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, n.d.). Based on the principles of restorative justice, the process acknowledges the trauma and harm experienced by Aboriginal people in those schools. Scheduled to complete its work in five years, the Commission has begun collecting statements from former residential school students across the country at national and community events. TRC representatives have already attended a gathering of former students formed by the Indian Residential School Survivors Society in Kamloops.

**After the Fur Trade**

The Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858, followed by the Cariboo Gold Rush and the devastating smallpox epidemic of 1862, dramatically altered the symbiotic relationship between First Nations and fur traders. One-third of BC’s Aboriginal population perished from the smallpox epidemic (Coffey et al., 1990). After the gold rushes, First Nations in BC were contained on small reserves. A litany of petitions and complaints resulted in delegations of First Nations protesting their lack of land and the intrusions of newcomers on their traditional hunting and fishing grounds. The famous **Memorial to Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier** in 1910 is an eloquent description of the altered relationship between the Interior First Nations and Euro-Canadians. Gradually, a period of activism followed although it was made illegal for First Nations to petition the government between 1927 and 1951. Since the 1960s, there has been a growing era of self-determination and ground-breaking legal changes that have given Aboriginal peoples greater independence and pride (Campbell et al., 2003).
The Indian Act

When Canada became a country in 1867, the Department of Indian Affairs was created to administer policy regarding Aboriginal peoples. The Indian Act was an act of Parliament implemented in 1876 which gave legal authority to the government to control the everyday lives of First Nations, including the reserve system, band councils, band membership, and education. The Indian Act defined who was a Status Indian and treated them as wards of the state. Reserves, much smaller than their original communities, segregated individuals into groups which were defined by the government. The Act set up authority within these reserves and created hierarchy and decision-making authorities through churches and agents that did not reflect traditional Aboriginal values and practices (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Vol. 3, Ch. 5, 1996).

Status Indians were denied the rights of Canadian citizens to vote and own property; they could become “enfranchised” by voluntarily relinquishing their Indian status. Until 1949, provincially and 1960, federally, First Nations people did not have the right to vote (Moss & Gardner-O’Toole, 1991).
The Indian Residential School Experience

One of the main tools of colonialism in Canada was the educational system imposed on Aboriginal peoples. In Canada, the education system involved a partnership between the Department of Indian Affairs and the Christian churches.

Between 1879 and 1996, over 100,000 school age Aboriginal children were forcibly removed and placed into Indian industrial residential schools across Canada (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, n.d.). Much has been written about the history of these schools and the legacy of mistreatment, including mental, physical, and sexual abuse that resulted. Students were forcibly taken away from their families, sometimes hundreds of kilometres, forced to speak only English, and forced to forgo cultural practices. By 1931, there were 80 such schools operating in Canada (Dickason, 2009). Survivors of the system, including the children and grandchildren of survivors, have suffered intergenerational impacts of the experience.

The Kamloops Indian Residential School, constructed in 1923, replaced an earlier school built in 1890.
Source: Secwepemc Museum
The Government of Canada finally acknowledged the role it played in the development of these schools and apologized to survivors in 2008. *Fallen Feather*, filmed in Kamloops, provides a comprehensive overview of the residential school experience (Bezeau, 2007).

At the beginning of the school year, children were transported to the residential school from various reserves. Source: Secwepemc Museum

### Decolonization

Decolonization is the opposite process from colonization and refers to the shedding of the colonial legacy by Aboriginal peoples. In the late twentieth century, Aboriginal peoples finally regained rights and the ability to resurrect and preserve their cultures and languages. By no means is the process complete and there are many underlying colonial structures, especially in the realm of law (Indian Act), and education (curricula) that are difficult to change.

The decolonization of existing Eurocentric thought is already underway in the works of many scholars. States professor Marie Battiste, “Eurocentric thought asserts that only Europeans can progress and that Indigenous peoples are frozen in time, guided by knowledge systems that reinforce the past and do not look into the future” (Battiste, 2002, p. 4).

Gradually, universities are becoming sites of decolonization, although the process is slow and challenging. Battiste further says, “Education as a humanistic endeavour must then recognize and reconcile the dehumanizing history that Indigenous peoples have lived” (Battiste, 2004, p. 11).
The BC Treaty Process

Another legacy of the colonial period is the slow but gradual resolution of land claims. The work of treaty-making across Canada was never completed in British Columbia, with the exception of 14 small treaties on Vancouver Island in the 1850s and Treaty 8 in northeastern BC (in 1899). The BC Treaty Process, created in 1990, is currently underway in British Columbia, although only about 2/3 of First Nations are presently involved in these negotiations (Muckle, 2007).

Some First Nations have not joined the BC Treaty Process for various reasons. Bands of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council are not part of the treaty process. The Nuxalk Nation, on BC’s central coast, is another tribal group that has resisted outside pressures:

We, the Nuxalk, maintain our rights and title to our entire traditional territory and continue to strive to maintain our traditional systems of governance and powers, citing a long and rich cultural history as evidence of our continued use and occupation. Despite the devastation of the small pox epidemic and the relocation of the survivors from certain villages to Bella Coola, the Nuxalk Nation has long asserted our rights and obligations to our ancestral territory and has never ceded, sold, surrendered, nor lost our traditional lands through act of war or treaty. The Nuxalk remain strongly against entering any treaty process as we know that our ancestral lands have never been surrendered and remain legally ours, in both our tradition and under Canadian law (Nuxalk Nation, n.d.).
Leaders and Teachers

All Aboriginal nations have leaders and teachers who are role models. Two notable members of the Secwepemc Nation who have left their mark on the rejuvenation of their people’s culture include George Manuel and Mary Thomas.

George Manuel (1921–1989) was a dynamic leader born in the village of Neskonlith who went to the Kamloops Indian Residential School, later became chief of his band, and grew to believe First Nations of British Columbia needed a provincial organization to present a united front. In 1970, he was elected President of the National Indian Brotherhood, the forerunner of today’s Assembly of First Nations. In his role, he travelled outside of Canada and met with Indigenous peoples around the world. Manuel helped to form the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and in 1974 coined the term ‘Fourth World’ to refer to nations forcibly incorporated into states which maintain a distinct political culture but are internationally unrecognized. In the late 1970s, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and received the Order of Canada in 1986 (Campbell et al., 2003).

In the words of George Manuel,

At this point in our struggle for survival, the Indian peoples of North America are entitled to declare victory. We have survived. If others have also prospered on our land, let it stand as a sign between us that the Mother earth can be good to all her children without confusing one another. It is a myth of European warfare that one man’s victory requires another’s defeat (Manuel and Posluns, 1974, p. 4).
Dr. Mary Thomas (1918–2007), a Secwepemc Elder, worked tirelessly to preserve Secwepemc culture and language for most of her life; she acquired numerous accolades and awards for her efforts. In 1970, she helped create the Central Okanagan Interior Friendship Society, as a result of her interest in First Nations cultural preservation. Thomas received the Governor General’s Award in 1992. In 1997, Thomas was the first Aboriginal American to receive the Indigenous Conservationist of the year award from the Seacology Foundation and, in 2001, Thomas received the Canadian National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Environment. Over the years, she also received three honorary degrees from Thompson Rivers University, BC, University of Victoria, BC and University of North Carolina, NC (Buffalo Spirit, 2000).

Mary Thomas described the life of her people in many interviews:

...there came a time when our whole life system changed...Our family units were like a big circle, just the way we were treated as children—the mothers and fathers, the aunts and uncles, the grandparents, the cousins. We were all on the outside of that circle. In the middle was the little ones, and each one of them had the responsibility to help those little ones become a part of the outer circle. And that builds the families really strong...I guess that whole issue broke when they took us away from our families and put us into the residential schools...

So when we went to the school, we didn’t know what was happening. Nobody told us what was going to happen...

Then right away, we were told we were not allowed to speak our language. We had to forget about our language. And we were told, never to practice, not to
believe, the spirituality of our people. It was taboo. ‘Never believe it. It’s the work of the devil.’ And every morning we would get up at five o’clock in the morning—perfect silence. We couldn’t speak a word. If you were caught, you were strapped…We were in the chapel. And every morning was mass. And the priest there would pound the altar rail about our people [being] savages…we began to get confused. We loved our mother and father. We loved our grandparents… and what we were told is that they are the ones that were carrying the work of the devil. It gets you so mixed up (Buffalo Spirit online, 2000).

The Sixties Scoop

The term "Sixties Scoop" was coined by Patrick Johnston (1983) to identify the thousands of First Nations children in Canada who were removed from their families and communities between the 1960s to 1980s by provincial child welfare authorities and transracially adopted into non-Aboriginal families in Canada, the USA and overseas. Children were separated from their families and cultural roots, breaking the support networks of the extended families found in First Nations communities. From the 1960s to the 1980s, they were taken away in busloads by the Child Welfare Society of BC. This was a continuation of the Government’s stated assimilation policy of the Residential School project and provided an avenue to assist the government to further reduce their fiscal responsibility for First Nations children (S. Johnson, personal communication, April 15, 2010).

As told in the book, Stolen From Our Embrace (Fournier and Crey, 1997), on one weekend in the 1960s, a social worker chartered a bus to scoop up 38 children from the Splatsin (Spallumcheen) reserve. Each of them was placed in a foster home, many outside of the province. The Spallumcheen band eventually turned the situation around by calling for the right to retain custody of their children within the community and eventually gained control over their own child welfare program (Campbell et al., 2003).
In 1985, Justice Kimmelman of Manitoba reviewed the situation and commented that the protection and adoption practices were substandard and appalling. Many children have come forward as adults to recount horrific abuses in poorly screened adoptive homes. The removal of Aboriginal children from their families by the child welfare system continues to today and is now known as the ‘Millennium Scoop’. In BC, currently 54.4% of all children in the child welfare system are of Aboriginal descent. Many of our Indigenous students may be affected by intergenerational trauma, grief and loss of identity as a result of the massive and deliberate assault weapons of assimilation and genocide practiced against generations of their families.

Shelly Johnson, School of Social Work, TRU
## Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,000 B.C.</td>
<td>“Since time immemorial”—the longevity of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1000 A.D.</td>
<td>First contact between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples in Canada, on the east coast</td>
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<tr>
<td>1763</td>
<td>Royal Proclamation which established British policy that treaties needed to be settled before settlement could proceed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1700s</td>
<td>First contact between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans in British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>Fur trade started at Kamloops, with the establishment of small forts</td>
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<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Hudson’s Bay Company establishes itself in Secwepemc territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>Fraser River gold rush results in a wave of thousands of newcomers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1862–1863</td>
<td>A smallpox epidemic devastates Interior First Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Formation of Federal Indian Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>The first Indian Industrial School in Kamloops was established in 1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier passes through Kamloops—Chiefs of the Interior gave him a petition outlining their grievances. Laurier promised help but was defeated in the 1911 election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912–1916</td>
<td>McKenna-McBride Commission established to consult with First Nations about the amount of land they required; many reserves were reduced in size, known as cut-offs</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Duncan Campbell Scott becomes head of the Department of Indian Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia formed in response to McKenna-McBride Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Federal legislation prohibits formation of Indian organizations that pursue land claims; Allied Indian Tribes disbanded</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Native Brotherhood of British Columbia formed which later lobbied to change the BC School Act to permit First Nations children to attend public schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>White Paper outlined government policy promoting assimilation followed by the Red Paper in response; Union of BC Indian Chiefs formed in Kamloops</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>The Kamloops Indian Residential School closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>BC Treaty Commission begins negotiations with First Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Supreme Court of Canada tables decision in the Delgamuukw case that Aboriginal title has never been extinguished, and accepts oral evidence as valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$350 million Healing Fund established to address legacy of Residential Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Prime Minister Harper offers full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential School system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Nations Peoples of BC

“There is a great deal of diversity here in British Columbia; in fact, there is more linguistic diversity here than in all of Europe. And if one compares maps, one will find that the Secwepemc Nation’s territory is the size of many countries in Europe.”

Paul Tamburro, School of Social Work, TRU

Source: BC Ministry of Education  www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/map
**What Educators Can Do:**

- Acknowledge Aboriginal history and culture in the classroom.
- Focus on experiential learning rather than exclusive reliance on teacher-led discussions focusing on texts.
- Take guided fieldtrips by members of the Aboriginal community to important local cultural sites:
  - The Secwepemc Museum and Heritage Park on the *Tk’emlúps* Indian Reserve offers opportunities to combine traditional aspects of ecological knowledge and culture
  - The hoodoos at Tranquille
  - The balancing rock near Savona
- Acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to various university disciplines.
- Indigenize the curriculum and infuse course content with traditional knowledge.
- Become familiar with commonly-used terms (see Glossary).
- Encourage students to share with you what they would like to learn about their history.
- Identify resource people and guest speakers, such as Elders, to share their wisdom.
- Include storytelling and traditional practices in your teaching plan.
- Arrange to visit local Aboriginal dance or ceremonial performances including powwows.
- Include works in the humanities curriculum by Aboriginal authors and artists.
- Become familiar with the Henry Grube Centre library (School District 73)—it has many resources (for loan to teachers) related to Aboriginal peoples.
- Become familiar with TRU’s Aboriginal website