

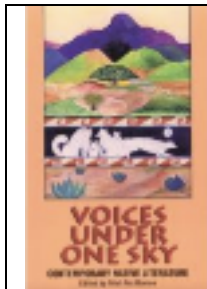
PS Methodology of Teaching Literature and  
Culture 511.440

Reading Project

Native Culture in Canada and the US

Jasmin Perner (Group B)

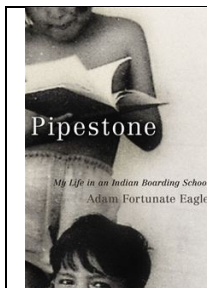
Cornelia Murer (Group A)



*Voices Under One Sky – Contemporary  
Native Literature*, Ed. by Trish Fox  
Roman



*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-  
Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie



*Additional Reading*

*Pipestone. My Life in an Indian  
Boarding School* by Adam Fortunate Eagle

Topic: Native Culture in Canada and the US

Age group: 6th grade AHS

*Including Teacher Instructions and Teacher Material*

## Who am I – Identity Collage?

Create a collage to represent your personal identities. Notice: a collage involves selecting, cutting and pasting photographs, printed texts, handwritten texts or drawings, and/or digital images and text onto paper. The collage should represent your personal identity. It should include information you feel represents who you are, your interests, your views etc. Your teacher will bring samples into class.

Browse through the magazines provided in class and start collecting some personal bits and glue them onto your poster. Complete your collage at home.

Samples of Identity Collages:



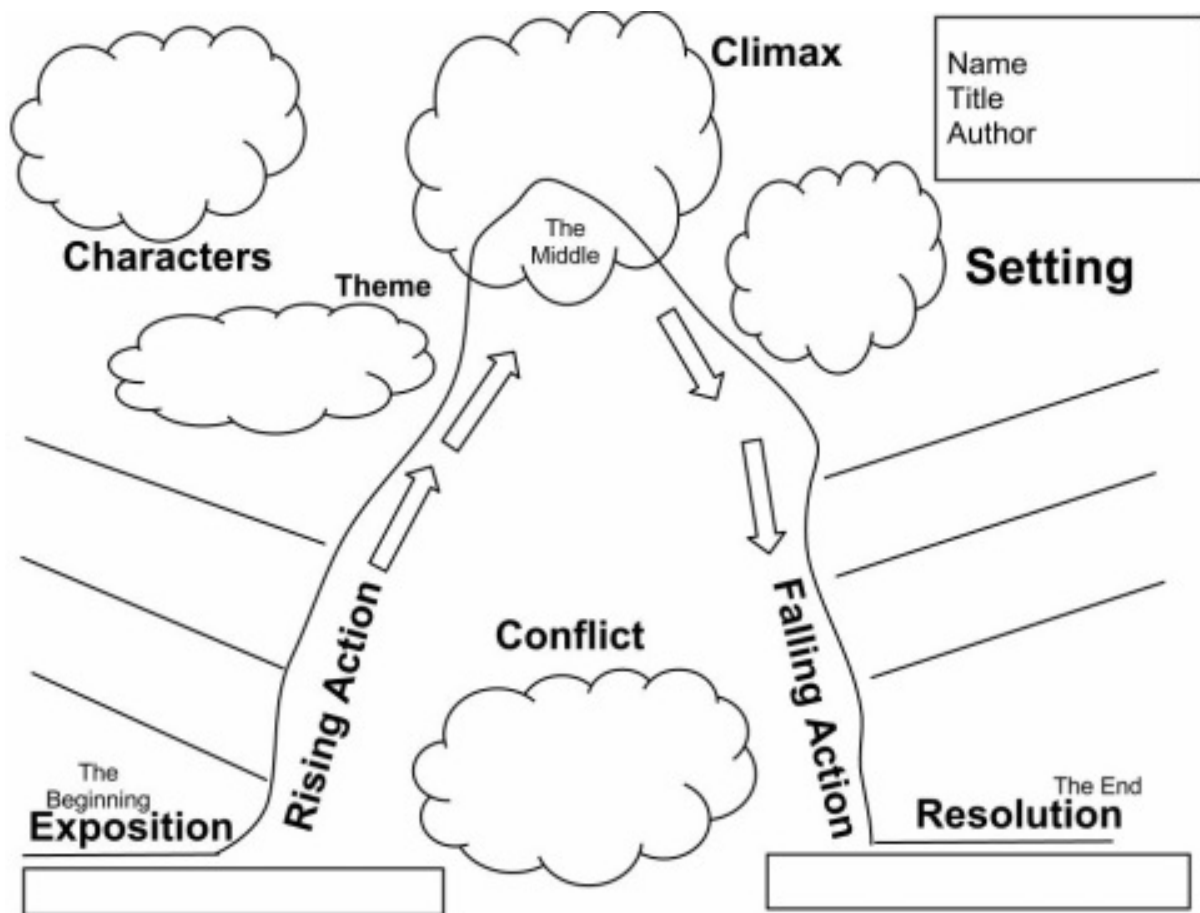
## Brainstorming

Fill out the first and the second column of the chart below. Complete the third column after having read the texts used for our book project (plus additional texts you might read)!

<b>Know</b>  <i>Write down what you already know about Native American/Native Canadian Culture!</i>	<b>Want</b>  <i>Write down what you want to know about Native American/Native Canadian Culture, form 5 – 8 questions!</i>	<b>Learned</b>  <i>Write down what you have learned about Native American/Native Canadian Culture!</i>

## Sara's Gift

Read the short story *Sara's Gift* by Barbara Smith. Fill in the Plot Diagram below according to what you have already learned about Plot Definitions and Plot Diagrams in class.

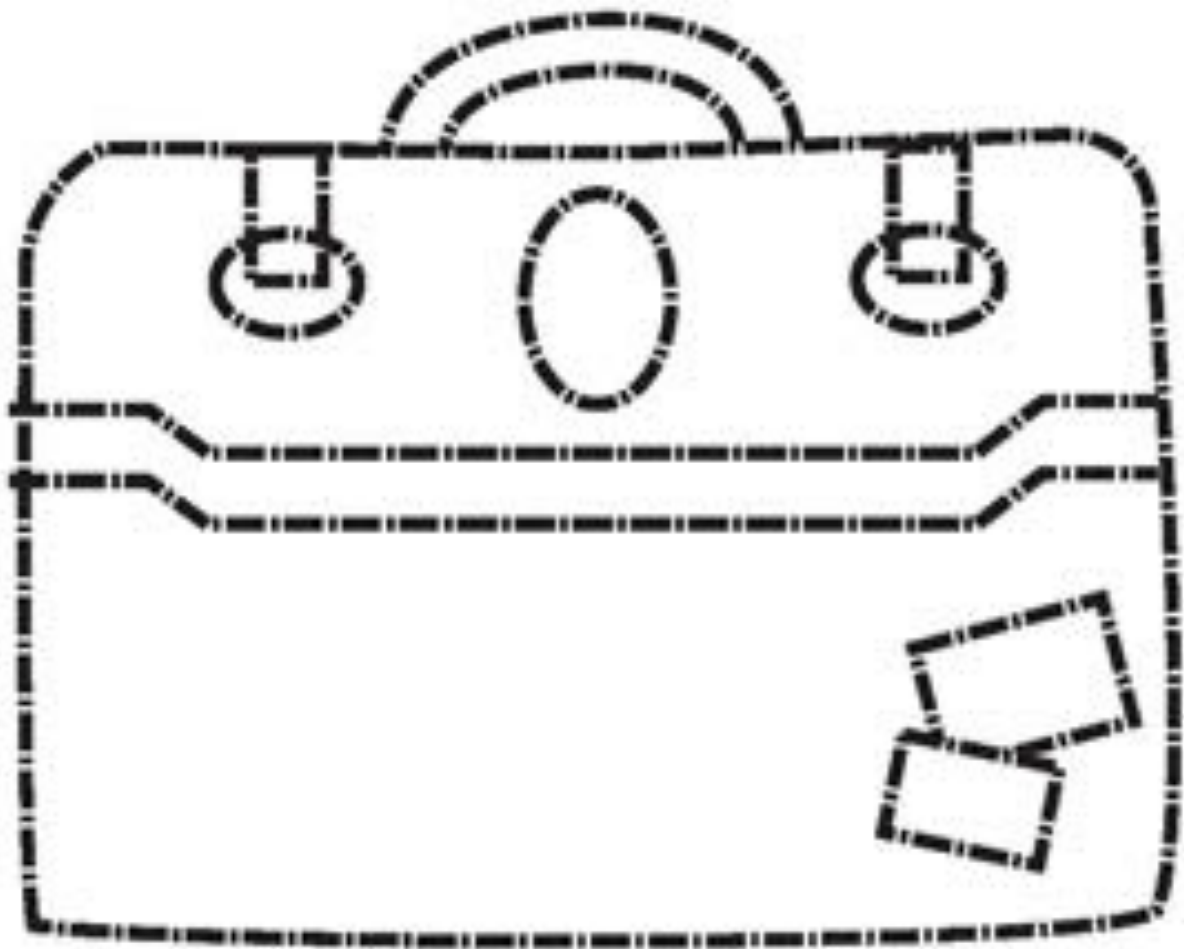


*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*  
by Sherman Alexie

### Character Suitcase

You have read the book *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. In your groups pack a suitcase for your assigned character including ten items that your character might take on a trip. Then present the chosen items in class. Every other group might add another item to each character if anything missing.

Characters: Junior, Mary, Rowdy, Penelope



## Writing Task

Pick one of the three tasks below and write a 300 word text at home.

- Write a series of postcards from Mary to Junior as she makes her way to Montana and sets up her new life.
- The Reardan Indians versus Wellpenit Redskins basketball game is big news, especially in Wellpenit. Write a front page news report based on one game. Include a headline, photo and report.
- Towards the end of the novel Junior tries to convince Rowdy to come to Reardan High with him. What would happen if he agreed? Write an additional chapter for the novel that includes Rowdy's first day at Reardan.

## How's Life in the Rez?

Arnold „Junior“ presents a realistic view of reservation life, giving the reader an opportunity to see the ugliness and the beauty. Fill in the chart with specific examples of the beautiful and ugly sides of the life he witnesses.

### Reservation Life

The beautiful side	The ugly side

## A bottle full of...

Fill this bottle with specific instances of alcohol abuse that directly affect Arnold (Junior).



## Facts, Experiences and Consequences

Around the classroom you find some information on residential schools in Canada. Walk around and group them into the following categories:

FACTS (4x)	EXPERIENCES (6x)	CONSEQUENCES (5x)

## What's European-Canadian Standards, please?

One of the main goals of the residential schools (boarding schools) was the cultural assimilation of the Native people to European-Canadian standards. Discuss with a partner what could have been meant by European-Canadian standards.

Notes:

## Changing clothes...

Look at the two pictures below! Notice, you can see the same boy twice: Before he attended the residential school and after having attended it.

What changes do you see?

Do you think he has only changed on the exterior?

*Write your notes below.*



Notes:

## Who's Charlie?

Read the text *Charlie* by Lee Maracle

While reading the text *Charlie* by Lee Maracle highlight the following terms in the text and find out their meaning.

*pagan ancestors*

*heathen savage*

*sterile monotony of school*

*committing the crime of daydreaming*

*a flock of numbskulls*

*incarceration*

*paralysis*

**Now read the text a second time and highlight in three different colors parts of the text in which Native Canadian culture and life are described..**

... as seen by (white) European Canadians. (E.g. Yellow)

... as seen by the Native people themselves. (E.g. Green)

... after coming back from the boarding schools and “assimilation” to European-Canadian standards. (E.g. Orange)

**Now try to answer the questions below:**

What effect would the text have on you if it didn't include various perspectives?

Why do you think the author gives the readers insight into how the European Canadian view schooling / the role of schools?

*Write your notes below!*

Notes:

## I wanna run away...

After having read the text *Charlie* try to imagine how Charlie felt during his time at the boarding school. Imagine him sitting in his room, looking up to the stars high above the sky and daydreaming about his family and his far-away home. Maybe you want to find some more information about his tribe the so-called “West Coast Salish” people who lived in parts of British Columbia, Washington State and Oregon. You can check online if you are interested in their culture.

(<http://www.canadahistory.com/sections/eras/prehistory/coastsalish.htm> or [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coast\\_Salish\\_peoples](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coast_Salish_peoples))

Now, imagine Charlie writing a letter from his boarding school dormitory to his family back home. In his letter Charlie describes daily routines at the boarding school as well as his feelings and cultural confusion. He also describes what makes him want to run away.

***Write a letter of approximately 350 words.***

## **Appendix**

### **Teacher's notes, instructions and material**

#### **Identity Collage**

The aim of the activities is to make the Ss think critically about their cultural background and about the meaning of the term "identity". Maybe this is hard for some Ss doing it the first time and sharing personal things with their classmates. T can tell Ss that they should only share information that they want to be known by the class and that their collages will be hung up in class afterwards.

By approaching the topic of Native Americans/Canadians the Ss are confronted with the fact that a culture such as the Native American culture always deals with individuals and that also the community of Austrian students consists of many different individuals who identify themselves in various ways.

Moreover, this task appeals to Ss who like doing creative work and handicraft.

#### **Brainstorming – K-W-L (Knowledge-Want-Learned) Chart**

Ss are asked to draw on their existing knowledge about Native American and Native Canadian people. They are asked to give short answers or even single words that pop up in their minds when hearing the term "Native American/Canadian". Some of the answers are collected by the teacher and shared with the whole class.

In the second column the Ss can ask questions they would like to have answered at the end of the entire reading project.

The third column will be filled in at the end of the entire reading project. Ss should find their own answers to their questions. If they could not come up with a satisfying answer some questions are discussed in class. A follow up activity would be: Forming written questions and answers (full sentences not only single words).

#### **Plot Diagram**

The text *Sara's Gift* provides a great example of a teenage girl who has Native American background and who feels torn between two cultural worlds. It seems hard for Sara to find herself both in the European American world and in her original cultural community. Coming back from the city to her family she realizes that she has lost her ability to fluently speak the language of her family and her relatives even laugh at her because she sounds funny when speaking.

Over the story Sara passes many important stages in finding an answer to her cultural identity: First, she feels lost and confused by two contradicting worldviews. Second, she experiences the position of an outsider and starts being depressed, which finally leads to some heavy fever and in her dreams an old spirit speaks to her. In the end, she finally decides to stay with her family longer than expected *and realizes that someone can feel at home no matter where as long as s/he stays him/herself.*

*"Sara knew that this summer she had been given a very special gift. Through the love and understanding of Granny and the rest of the family, and through the power*

*of the Old One, the Earth Keeper, she had been given the gift of herself. In times to come she knew she would use that gift wisely, giving of herself lovingly to The People.”*

The short story shows very typical features of this text-type, which makes it easy for students to draw a plot diagram.

The text can be read in school or at home. After having read the text the Ss are asked to draw the plot diagram which is subsequently discussed in class.

### **Possible answers:**

Characters: Sara, Jonas, Mom, Granny, Frank, Uncle Joe, Jimmy, Marie.

Theme(s): Being torn between two different cultures, feeling lost, cultural identities, the importance of family life.

The beginning: Sara is coming back from the city to her Native American family living on the countryside.

Rising action: She is confused by the language and cultural rites. She is laughed at by her family. She is turning into an outsider. Her grandmother is giving her some advice about “walking her own path in her own way”.

Climax: Sara’s fever dreams and her meeting a spirit called the Old One, the Earth Keeper.

Falling action: Sara realizing what her grandmother and the Earth Keeper tried to explain to her.

Resolution: Sara understands that she had been given a very special gift, which is “the gift of herself”. She realizes that she has to grow her own roots and find her own way, but always bear in mind her background.

Setting: Summer on the countryside, but according to the cold weather it must be somewhere in the North and next to a lake.

Conflict: The conflict between two contradicting cultures.

### **Character Suitcase:**

Form four groups. Each group gets one of the characters. 10 minute in group discussion, then presentation in class.

### **A Bottle Full Of:**

Possible Answers:

Junior’s father is an alcoholic, as most Indians in the reservation are.

Numerous deaths occur as a direct result of alcohol.

Alcohol-related accidents: Junior's grandmother is hit by a drunk driver, his father's best friend Eugene is shot in the face, and Junior's sister Mary dies in a trailer fire.

Domestic violence/Violence as a consequence of alcohol abuse.

Alcoholism as one of the biggest threats to Junior's community.

Junior only knows five Indians who have never drunk alcohol.

## **Indian Residential Schools/Boarding Schools**

### **Facts, Experiences and Consequences:**

First, the teacher gives a short general introduction to the topic by, for example, telling the first (general) paragraph of the article below.

In order to make the gathering of background information more student-based and less teacher-centered some of the **facts**, **experiences** and **consequences** (see strips below) are put on the walls of the classroom. The students are asked to walk around the classroom (individual student work or in pairs) and group the little texts in the following grid. (Like a museum walk). Each student gets one grid. Afterwards the teacher discusses the right answers with the whole class.

### **General topics:**

First Nations in Canada, Native American and First Nations history, Indian residential schools, minority culture living in a dominant culture, forced cultural assimilation, cultural confusion, "othering" of the Native people.

As an introductory text students are supposed to read the short story *Charlie* by Lee Maracle.

In-class discussion of residential schools in Canada. The following article provides a good source for some background information. The teacher can use as much as s/he wants from the facts below however if s/he wants to do the follow-up s/he should not give too much away.

## **Indian Residential Schools**

In hopes that the Aboriginal population would be assimilated into Canadian society, heavily influenced by European culture and traditions, the government of Canada established residential schools. They were government funded boarding schools where Aboriginal children were sent to learn about European-Canadian culture. Attendance was mandatory and removing the children from their communities was seen as essential to the assimilation process. The Government of Canada operated nearly every school as a "joint venture" with various religious organizations including the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, United and Presbyterian churches ([CBC](#)).

### **Facts**

- There were approximately 130 residential schools in territories and provinces across Canada with the exception(s) of Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island ([CBC](#)).
- Canada's Indian residential school system began officially in 1892. Most residential schools ceased operation by the mid-1970s, although the government was no longer officially involved after 1969.

- Not all residential schools closed in the 1970s. Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife, the last residential school in Canada, closed in 1996.
- Approximately 150,000 Aboriginal students attended the 80 Residential schools that were established throughout the country ([CBC](#)).
- It is estimated that there are 80,000 people alive today who attended residential school; they are known as the residential school survivors.
- These government-run institutions were established to “civilize” the savage Indians. In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, had a mission to fix the “Indian problem” through assimilation. According to Scott and government policy, it was their mission to “kill the Indian in the child” and turn them into respectable Canadian citizens ([Residential Schools](#)).
- In 2008, the Prime Minister apologized to former students for the abuse they suffered. This was one of many steps taken by the government in addressing the abuse which took place in Indian Residential Schools.

### Experiences

- Some residential school survivors have spoken about the positive experiences in these schools, while many others describe their time in the schools as an abusive experience.
- Many children were physically, sexually, mentally, spiritually and emotionally abuse. Some died of the harsh beating while others took their own lives. This abuse took place at the hands of those who were entrusted to educate, care for and protect the children.
- Many survivors have said that they were sent to school against their parents’ wishes. Upon arrival, their traditional clothing was taken away from them and their hair was cut off. This, along with the fact that their names were changed, was intended to take away their culture and traditions. Survivors have described this as a humiliating and degrading experience.
- Those that were abused and that tried to escape or report the abuse did not get help. The people in authority either did not believe them or were abusers themselves. Runaways got in trouble with the police or with the school when they returned.
- Most students did not have contact with their families during the time they were at a residential school because the schools were located far away from their communities. The schools were deliberately located far away so that parents could not have easy access to their children.
- The residential school system stripped away the identity, language and culture of Aboriginal people; these are the main things that make people who they are.
- Many Aboriginal children completely lost their ability to speak their Native language after attending residential schools where they were forced to speak English or French. Upon their return home, many found that they were no longer able to communicate with their parents in their mother tongue and did not have the skills to help them.

### Consequences

- Court cases began in the 1990s. The cases were filed against the Federal government, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Church. In 1998, the government made a Statement of Reconciliation and established the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The foundation’s purpose was to fund community-based healing programs that focus on addressing the legacy of Indian residential schools.
- In 2006, a settlement package was reached: the Canadian government and the complainants settled on a \$1.9 billion compensation package to benefit tens of

thousands of survivors of abuse at residential schools. The amount of compensation is based on the number of years attended by a particular former student of residential schools: \$10,000 for the first year attended plus \$3,000 for every year attended thereafter.

- The legacy of residential schools continues to affect the children and grandchildren of the residential school survivors. The effects that Aboriginal children and youth experience today are referred to as “intergenerational impacts” of the residential school experience.
- The physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as substance abuse, that exists in Aboriginal communities today is a direct result of the abuse suffered in the Aboriginal residential school system.
- Survivors were not taught skills which they would have learned in a family setting. Many have turned out to be abusers, having been disciplined in a harsh way as children. This disintegration of family relationships has resulted in Aboriginal communities having high crime and mortality rates.
- The abuse was ignored and denied for so long by the government that the relationship between the government and Aboriginal people is very strained. However, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has been created to raise awareness of historical abuses and to confront many of the consequences which exist to this day. (source: <http://deal.org/the-knowzone/violence/indian-residential-schools/>)

### Right Answers:

Facts: A, E, G, M

Experiences: I, N, C, J, D, H

Consequences: B, F, L, O, K

A

There were approximately 130 residential schools in territories and provinces across Canada with the exception(s) of Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

✂-----

E

Canada’s Indian residential school system began officially in 1892. Most residential schools ceased operation by the mid-1970s, although the government was no longer officially involved after 1969.

✂-----

## G

Not all residential schools closed in the 1970s. Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife, the last residential school in Canada, closed in 1996.

✂-----

## M

Approximately 150,000 Aboriginal students attended the 80 Residential schools that were established throughout the country.

✂-----

## I

Many children were physically, sexually, mentally, spiritually and emotionally abused. Some died of the harsh beating while others took their own lives. This abuse took place at the hands of those who were entrusted to educate, care for and protect the children.

✂-----

## N

Many survivors have said that they were sent to school against their parents' wishes. Upon arrival, their traditional clothing was taken away from them and their hair was cut off. This, along with the fact that their names were changed, was intended to take away their culture and traditions. Survivors have described this as a humiliating and degrading experience.

✂-----

C

Those that were abused and that tried to escape or report the abuse did not get help. The people in authority either did not believe them or were abusers themselves. Runaways got in trouble with the police or with the school when they returned.

✂-----

J

Most students did not have contact with their families during the time they were at a residential school because the schools were located far away from their communities. The schools were deliberately located far away so that parents could not have easy access to their children.

D

The residential school system stripped away the identity, language and culture of Aboriginal people; these are the main things that make people who they are. Thus the children of these schools experienced a loss of their own culture and a cultural confusion.

✂-----

H

Many Aboriginal children completely lost their ability to speak their Native language after attending residential schools where they were forced to speak English or French. Upon their return home, many found that they were no longer able to communicate with their parents in their mother tongue and did not have the skills to help them.

✂-----

## B

Court cases began in the 1990s. The cases were filed against the Federal government, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Church. In 1998, the government made a Statement of Reconciliation and established the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The foundation's purpose was to fund community-based healing programs that focus on addressing the legacy of Indian residential schools.

✂-----

## O

In 2006, a settlement package was reached: the Canadian government and the complainants settled on a \$1.9 billion compensation package to benefit tens of thousands of survivors of abuse at residential schools. The amount of compensation is based on the number of years attended by a particular former student of residential schools: \$10,000 for the first year attended plus \$3,000 for every year attended thereafter.

✂-----

## L

The physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as substance abuse, that exists in Aboriginal communities today is a direct result of the abuse suffered in the Aboriginal residential school system.

✂-----

F

Survivors were not taught skills which they would have learned in a family setting. Many have turned out to be abusers, having been disciplined in a harsh way as children. This disintegration of family relationships has resulted in Aboriginal communities having high crime and mortality rates.

✂-----

K

The abuse was ignored and denied for so long by the government that the relationship between the government and Aboriginal people is very strained. However, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has been created to raise awareness of historical abuses and to confront many of the consequences which exist to this day.

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Sources:

Identity Collage

<http://highschoolart.blogspot.co.at/2008/03/personal-identity-collage-high-school.html>

Plot Diagram

<http://mrsgoodman.weebly.com/story-elements.html>

Facts, experiences and consequences

<http://deal.org/the-knowzone/violence/indian-residential-schools/>

Further sources:

<http://www.randomhouse.com.au/content/teachers/tsk%20absolutely%20true%20diary.pdf>

<http://www.canadahistory.com/sections/eras/prehistory/coastsalish.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coast\\_Salish\\_peoples](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coast_Salish_peoples)