

DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE UNIT: LESSON 3: HANDOUT 4**STOLEN CHILDREN: RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS SPEAK OUT**

The United States wasn't the only country that used Indian boarding schools. Stolen Children is a 2008 documentary that explores the impact of Canadian residential schools on former students. In the primary source excerpts below, three survivors share their experiences of hardship.¹

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Alice Littledeer

My name is Alice Littledeer, I am 78 years old. I spent about 8 years in residential school. I see him come around, the Indian Agent, in a boat, with the principal, and they collect some children from the reserve. Then he would come back again and take some more.

I got frightened when I was a little girl, when the principal used to beat up the other children, like boys. The boys got the most beating. They used to call it "bench party", because it was usually done after supper. And that's where I got frightened, because I saw blood.

My strongest memory there is when the little girl died beside me. She must have been about six. I was scared about why the parents were not there. That's what I was scared about. And I knew they wouldn't feel comfortable, not being there while their daughter is dying.

Interviewer: Were you angry at your parents that they made you go to the school?

Sometimes I would think about them and I'd get mad. For leaving me here, sending me over there where all the bad treatment is.

Raymond Mason

My name is Raymond Mason. I am 62 years old, and I attended residential school for 12 years.

I remember them taking me away from my mother and stepfather. And I could hear them telling my mom that it was the best thing for me, and not to worry, I would be looked after.

So the next day I woke up with hundreds of total strangers, my size and my age. And not knowing what are they doing with all of us here. There's so many of us here, you know? That's where a lot of my whole life really started to change, because I got strapped, I got

¹ Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdR9HcmiXLA>

beaten up for speaking my own native tongue. I even had my tongue pulled out and pinched.

I remember when we had to shower. You know you only have to shower and wash myself, wash my private parts of my body. You only have to show a kid once or twice at the most, but not every day. And have the supervisor come in there and basically take advantage of you, you know?

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At that time, they never told us that our sisters were across the hallway. And I didn't know that for the longest time. Then I spotted my sister, Nora, and I was so glad, and so hysterical. And I went running to her, and I reached out to her and hugged her, and I was just shaking, you know, terrified. And I was wondering why she was pushing me away. I didn't realize that we weren't supposed to know that we lived in the same place. And we weren't allowed to speak to each other. And I can remember the principal grabbing a hold of me by the hand, and I was jumping off the floor like that, and he stripped me, and he started whacking me with a long webbed strap. He was setting an example, that, if you do this then this is going to happen to you. And all the other boys were watching, and the girls were still going through, you know?

And you learn pretty quickly after you get those kind of beatings. And ever since that day, I tried to run away. And I made friends with a guy by the name of Donald Atkinson, from Roseau River first nation. We planned to take off. And when we got caught, we paid for it dearly. Not only did the [military police] give us a licking, the bigger boys that were helping them chase us down [did too].

Madeleine Dion-Stout

I am Madeleine Dion-Stout, I am 62 years old. I am from the Kiowan first nation in Alberta, and I attended residential school for 36 consecutive months.

I just remember arriving there and throwing on new clothes and of course getting a haircut. And sitting in a classroom, and being with other girls. And witnessing my brother get punched by the supervisor.

Our parents didn't want to worry us unduly and tell us and warn us that we were going to be separated for a long long time, with barely a visit.

The visits from my parents were very rare, but I do recall one visit when my mother and father came. And I remember specifically my mother's red [clothes], that splash of color. I remember her getting out of the wagon, and I was crying already, watching them, because I was missing them already. They hadn't even walked through the door yet of the residential school, but I was missing them already. But when they were actually leaving, I cried until my nose bled.