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Provocation Post #1

Provocation: Residential school classrooms, in a 'systematic and rigid fashion', broke the family ties of Indigenous peoples and eliminating their culture and language. They were an instrument of shame and discounted the life experiences of the Indigenous children. Ultimately, these classrooms were places of genocide.

Residential schools violated indigenous children, their families, and entire communities. In this week's reading, "From Home to School", out of Celia Haig-Brown's *Resistance and Renewal – Surviving the Indian Residential School* (2002), one clearly sees that residential schools were a tool of the colonial government and the Church, set up to eradicate Indigenous culture by removing and alienating its most important gift: its children. For indigenous children, residential school classrooms were not intended to be safe places to learn and grow. Rather, they were intended to systematically strip Indigenous children of their language, values, and beliefs; their ways of being, learning, and knowing.

The many relationships and responsibilities that indigenous children had, within their homes and communities, were not valued or respected in these schools as they did not align with Eurocentric norms, values, and beliefs. Indigenous children were shown zero respect and there was absolutely no space in the educational framework for reciprocity, relevance, reverence, or reflexivity, only blind obedience to European ways and harsh discipline for those who did not obey and/or strayed. Indigenous children had brought with them many important capabilities and capacities (life/survival skills, independence, relationality to family and the land, patience, giving, spirituality), but these were not valued at school or in the classroom because they were not the same values of the European, colonial society.

What a different history there could have been had residential schools not been founded on the principles of European superiority and Indigenous inferiority, but rather on the Nine R's offered to us by today's Indigenous scholars: respect, relationships, responsibilities, reciprocity, relevance, reverence, reclamation, reconciliation, or reflexivity. In deep contrast to residential school classrooms, these classrooms include ALL children and treat them equitably. Diversity is embraced and ALL children, regardless of race or ethnicity, share a culturally safe space and are given a voice, feel valued, and are respected. Relationships are essential among students, teachers, caregivers, and the wider community; all are valued stakeholders in building capacity and contributing to learning. Students are responsible for their learning and are given the space to learn and make mistakes, knowing they have the support and guidance of teachers and fellow learners.

These classrooms are reciprocal, there is always a two-way street of teaching and learning and what happens within their walls is relevant—historically, culturally and spatially. Reverence is given to the land and, individually and collectively, the classroom works towards reclamation and reconciliation—recognizing the truth, acknowledging that what was done in the past was wrong, why it was wrong, and then focusing on what needs to be done to heal and mend those wrongs. In these classrooms, reflexivity is taught and practiced. Students are aware of difference, but rather than condemn it, they celebrate and respect it. Students, teachers, and all stakeholders learn from, and teach, one another. This is what we, as future teachers, must embrace in order to transform our classrooms into places of Truth and Reconciliation; into places that assist the healing of generational trauma, which continues to weave through the fabric of indigenous children as a direct result of residential schools.