

Every day, North Yorkers uses this space in the daily update to provide important information related to COVID-19 and new developments in the pandemic. Today, we would like to use this space to recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Before we go any further, I would like to offer a content warning – this post will discuss violence, trauma, abuse, and the ongoing effects of residential schools.

24 Hour Residential School Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419



When learning about residential schools, it is best to hear stories from the survivors themselves and to remember the children lost to this violence. The Legacy of Hope Foundation has recorded interviews with survivors, giving them a platform to share their stories. In this daily update, I would like to share pieces from Roy Dick's interview. Roy was born in Ross River and attended Lower Post Residential School when he was six years old. The entire recording can be found here: <https://legacyofhope.ca/wherearethekids/stories/dick-2/>

This is Roy Dick's story:

The first day there was a bus going around at the village...They gathered all the young people, all the kids were on it from Upper Liard...They took us down to the school, down to Lower Post.

When we came into the school I remember us all lining up. It was boys on one side and girls on the other side. I was scared. I didn't know why I was going there. I didn't know I was going to school. I remembered seeing my sisters on the other side in the line. I tried to go over to them but they told me I had to stay on one side and not to approach my sisters. I couldn't figure out why that was happening. I remember them putting us into the dorms and taking all of our things away, like our clothes and stuff that we went to school with, and giving us some other clothes to wear. Each of us was given a number. My number was 198. I still remember that. After they gave us a number they took us to the showers and we had to take a shower. They started cutting our hair and putting some powder in our hair. I guess it was delousing.

They had a chapel in there. We had to pray. At that time I knew about the Creator, but in their ways it was different. Everybody was talking about hell and I didn't even know what was hell, and the devil and all this, and that we were heathens and all this.

I still had all my culture and I talked my language fluently. I remember talking to my older brother. I was talking to him in my language and he got mad at me. I was thinking, what's all

this anger about talking my own language. He said, "If they ever hear you talking like that, those people there, you are really going to get punished." I remember speaking it a few times. And yeah, I did get punished. I got physically abused for that.

First I was physically abused. The second year when I was down there at the school, I started getting sexually abused from this guy named George Mazinsky (a supervisor at the school). I was about 8 years old at that time.

I started using alcohol somewhere around sixteen or seventeen because I thought I was no good, just to hide everything, all that pain and shame. I didn't know how to talk my language. I lost that.

They really brainwash us in that school. I thought my parents were beneath me because they didn't know how to speak English and it was all wrong. From there I turned to alcohol and started drinking. I drank. Oh man, I hid everything for about thirty years. I never told anybody about getting abused in school, sexually abused. I kept my pain to myself. I was suicidal. I don't know how many times I tried to take my life.

In 1999, after thirty years of drinking...I put everything away behind me and I started on my healing journey.

The worst part of it is making us feel dirty about who we are, and that really hurts, and the way I felt towards my parents when I came back.

But once you start taking somebody's else identity, it's bad. It's genocide.

The only thing I want to share now is in the years ahead, my future generation, all I have to say is be proud of who you are. Don't let anybody take away that pride and that strength that you have in you.

Other Resources:

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports: <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>
2. The story of Orange Shirt Day: <https://www.orangeshirtday.org/about-us.html>
3. National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>