



# *A Very Polite Genocide or the Girl Who Fell to Earth*

## Education Guide

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Note: In Canada, we now refer to Aboriginal people either as Aboriginal, Native, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Anishnawbe, or Ojibway, Cree, or Algonquin, etc. depending on what nation a person belongs to. In this study guide, there are quotations from American publications and older Canadian publications that use the term “Indian” to describe Aboriginal people. Although the term is archaic and offensive, in those cases it is kept to maintain the integrity of the source.

A black and white photograph of three young boys standing in a field. They are wearing white short-sleeved shirts, dark trousers, and striped neckties. The boy on the left is looking down, the middle boy is looking towards the camera with a slight smile, and the boy on the right is looking down. The background shows a grassy field and a fence line under a bright sky.

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# Production Credits

***A Very Polite Genocide or the Girl Who Fell to Earth***

Playwright: Melanie J Murray

Director: Yvette Nolan

Produced by Native Earth Performing Arts  
Buddies in Bad Times Theatre Dec 6-21 2008

Actors:

Paul Chaput (Elder Martin)

Simon Moccasin (Young Martin)

Falen Johnson (Josie Pichette)

Waawaate Fobister (Alley)

Paula Jean Prudat (Mary)

Catherine McNally (Dr. Baker)

Gordon White (Robbie)

Assistant Director: Tara Beagan

Stage Manager: Stephanie Nakamura

Set Designer: Laird MacDonald

Costume Designer: Anna Treusch

Lighting Designer: Michelle Ramsay

# A Playwright Dives into a Wreck

**“...I came to explore the wreck.**

**The words are purposes.**

**The words are maps.**

**I came to see the damage that was done  
and the treasures that prevail...”**

**--Excerpt from Adrienne Rich’s *Diving into the Wreck***

**The Scoop: a tragic movement that saw Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their homes to attend residential schools.**

In her teens, Melanie J. Murray’s mother confessed that she was Aboriginal. “Up until that time, I was told I was French,” recalls Melanie. A survivor of the “Scoop”\*, Melanie’s mother grew to be ashamed of her heritage and kept it secret from her daughter.

Slowly coming to terms with her roots, Melanie found solace performing in Prairie Theatre Exchange’s production of Tomson Highway’s *The Rez Sisters* alongside other Aboriginal actors. When she shared her story with fellow actor and Artistic Director of Centre for Indigenous Theatre, Rose Stella, she was immediately encouraged to put pen to paper.

“I was so sick of hearing people say ‘The Residential School System happened a long time ago. Why can’t you let it go?’” says Melanie. “But it affects my own experience now. It affects how I see the world.”

Rather than run away from the truths behind her and her mother’s past, Melanie dove head-first into several years of development, in search of the wreckage left behind by systematic genocide.

“I found that there were a lot of sorrows in this history,” adds Melanie, “but also moments of joy and hope.”

After interviewing numerous elders about their experiences, she understood that the story behind her play was not the history of the Residential School System. It was that the fact that the “past is not past.” The facts could be looked up anywhere, anytime by audience members but it was the emotional truths behind the genocide that was going to move them.

“I made peace with the fact that I was showing the audience what could not be shown in text books. These were the stories of the emotional world of these characters.”

# Genocide? In Canada? Really?

*Josie: Canadians... We Canadians hear about genocide, and think of it as something that happens somewhere else. What I intend to prove is that genocide happens here. On these streets. In a way so subtle, it's easy to deny. Maybe... maybe it's planted inside us?*

When you hear the word “genocide”, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Most people associate that term with the Holocaust of World War II, where millions of Jewish people were killed in an attempt to eradicate their race and culture. Even within that chapter of history, there are unspoken truths about who was targeted. In addition to Jewish people, Polish, homosexual, and disabled people were killed with genocidal intent.

Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer and linguist, coined the term “genocide” in 1943 by combining the ancient Greek word **genos** (race, tribe) and the Latin **cide** (killing)<sup>[1]</sup>. He took care to distinguish it from being strictly associated with descriptors of literal murder. Genocide is something different from one person simply killing another. Its meaning takes on a greater scope considering the intent of those perpetrating genocide.

Genocide is the **deliberate** extermination of a people or nation. The objectives of genocide are the “disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.”<sup>[2]</sup>

As Ward Churchill outlines in his book **Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools**, “a culture’s destruction is not a trifling matter. A healthy culture is all-encompassing of human lives... If a people suddenly lose their basis of culture, their lives lose meaning. They become disoriented, with no hope... The loss and human suffering for those whose culture has been healthy and is suddenly attacked and disintegrated are incalculable”.<sup>[3]</sup>

Taking Lemkin’s definition as a model, in 1948 the United Nations Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines the crime as being “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>[4]</sup>

Currently, according to Canadian law, only items (a) and (c) constitute the crime of genocide. In 1985, the Canadian government removed **measures intended to prevent births within a target group** from the list of genocidal policies/activities. It has been well-documented that the U.S. conducted a program during the early-to-mid-1970’s in which upwards of 40 percent of all Native women of child-bearing age were involuntarily—and in many ways unwittingly—sterilized. The likelihood that Canada resorted to the same practice is evident in its 1985 revision of the statute.<sup>[5]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Q: What traditions have you learned from your family?

Q: How would your life be different if you couldn't speak your language, celebrate your holidays, or take part in family traditions?

Q: Given the UN's definition, do you consider what happened to the Aboriginal people in Canada genocide?

# The Scoop

In Melanie J. Murray's interview, she mentions that her mother is a survivor of the "Scoop". Those Aboriginal children were taken from their families to attend residential schools, which were open from the early 1800's to 1996. Consider item (e) under the UN's criteria for genocide (See P. 5) . The Scoop happened in different communities with varying degrees of subtlety. At the Fort Peck Reservation, police not only rounded up children, but locked several of the more "intractable" fathers in jail, leaving those mothers robbed of both their children and husbands in the same day. In 1886, an Indian agent describes a typical scene at an American reservation:

Everything in the way of persuasion and argument having failed, it became necessary to visit the (Indian's) camps with a detachment of police, and seize such children as were proper... This proceeding created quite an outcry. The men were sullen and muttering, the women were loud in their lamentations, and the children were almost out of their wits with fright.<sup>[6]</sup>

As time went on, the Scoop took on different forms. When it became unacceptable to forcibly remove children in broad daylight, children would be taken by "authorities" like the Children's Aid Society under the premise that their parents weren't taking proper care of them. The CAS refused to recognize an Aboriginal family's ability to support children by traditional ways of hunting and fishing, and would take those children whose parents didn't shop at grocery stores because they assumed those children weren't eating. Often, this brought a sense of shame to Aboriginal communities, who in their sadness internalized the colonial thinking that deemed them unfit parents.

The following is an excerpt by Dakota writer Angela Cavender Wilson from **Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians**.

The intimate hours I spent with my grandmother listening to her stories are reflections of more than a simple educational process. The stories handed down from grandmother to granddaughter are rooted in a deep sense of kinship responsibility, a responsibility that relays a culture, an identity, and a sense of belonging essential to my life. It is through the stories of my grandmother, my grandmother's grandmother, and my grandmother's grandmother's grandmother and their lives that I learned what it means to be a Dakota woman, and the responsibility, pain, and pride associated with such a role.<sup>[7]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Q: How would the residential school system disrupt this type of cultural education?

Q: How could someone be adopted into one culture and still learn about their own?

# The Genocidal Fallout of the Residential School System

In its *Annual Report* of 1904, the Department of Indian Affairs published these photographs of Thomas Moore of the Regina Industrial School “before and after tuition”.



Thomas Moore before and after his entrance into the Regina Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan in 1874.

Library and Archives Canada / NL-022474

## DISCUSSION

Q: Do you think there is improvement in the “after” photo? Why?

**Here is an example of the regimented schedule typical of residential schools:**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 5:30        | Rise  |
| 6:00        | Chapel  |
| 6:30-7:15   | Bed making, milking, and pumping              |
| 7:15-7:30   | Inspection to see children are clean and well |
| 7:30        | Breakfast                                     |
| 7:30-8:00   | Fatigue (chores) for small boys               |
| 8:00        | Trade boys at work                            |
| 9:00-12:00  | School, with a 15 minute morning recess       |
| 12:00-12:40 | Dinner  |
| 12:40- 2:00 | Recreation                                    |
| 2:00- 4:00  | School and trades for older pupils            |
| 4:45-6:00   | Fatigues, sweeping, pumping and so forth      |
| 6:00-6:10   | Preparing for supper                          |
| 6:10- 6:40  | Supper  |
| 6:40-8:00   | Recreation                                    |
| 8:00        | Prayer and retire <sup>[8]</sup>              |

In 1965, a guidance counsellor and later a leader in Aboriginal education argued that the size of the schools, which necessitated rigid, authoritarian management, led to “the most detrimental aspect of a residential school program”. Springing from that single source were a range of problems. “Responsibility for self-discipline and decision making was not exercised by students... Everything is done in mass, therefore it is difficult for any student to exercise individualism.”<sup>[9]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

- Consider these stage directions in **A Very Polite Genocide or The Girl Who Fell to Earth**:

*Mary is scrubbing the floor of the apartment, flanked on either side by Young Martin in Korea and Robbie in his prison cell, both men asleep in cots. A buzzer sounds. The men rise in synchronicity, make their cots, face the audience and stand at attention.*

Q: How do these stage directions illustrate the loss of individualism as part of the fallout of the residential school system?

Q: How does playwright Melanie J. Murray play with the representation of time and space to bring about the meaning of the generational effects of the residential school system?



- Read the following scene where Mary and Martin meet. What kind of dynamic was encouraged amongst students?

*Young Martin: Mary, eh? So why aren't you in there with the other girls?*

*Mary: Cause I don't like them and they don't like me.*

*Young Martin: Yeah? Really? Why wouldn't they like you?*

*Mary: 'Cause I'm a half-breed. Cause Sister Pierrette always favours me because I'm a half-breed and my skins not so dark so somehow she thinks maybe then I'm just a little more likely to be "saved." She's always giving me these stupid little duties, just like this one. The other girls, they see me, and they see her being 'nice' to me, and it makes them suspicious or angry or both.*

*Young Martin: There's lots of half-breeds at my school. They treat you bad no matter who you are at St. Michael's. It's all chores and lining up and saying prayers.*

- Having mixed blood is an issue for people of many cultures today. The problem, as it pertains to Aboriginal culture, is outlined by Devon A. Mihesuah:

Usually, but not always, mixed-bloods had more money and material goods than full-bloods and were able to manoeuvre themselves into tribal leadership positions... Women situated in the upper level of one "class" did not necessarily belong to the higher echelon of the other. Those who valued tradition and resisted acculturation believed themselves to be "more Indian" than the "sellouts".<sup>[10]</sup>

Q: Have you ever experienced racism in your own communities with regard to the shade of one's skin? Do you see examples of this manifestation of racism in the media? Can you think of examples of people being called "sellouts" for not measuring up to a cultural standard?

- Read the following excerpts and identify what genocidal effects each passage illustrates.
  - Mary Carpenter, writing in 1974, in *Inukituk* magazine of her time in both Anglican and Catholic schools, told her sorrowful story:  
After a lifetime of beating, going hungry, standing in a corner on one leg, and walking in the snow with no shoes for speaking Inuvialuktun, and having a stinging paste rubbed on my face, which they did to stop us from expressing our Eskimo custom of raising our eyebrows for "yes" and wrinkling our noses for "no", I soon lost the ability to speak my mother tongue. When a language dies, the world dies, the world it was generated from breaks down too.<sup>[11]</sup>
  - One former student at the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario reported on the usual beatings and added: "I have seen Indian children having their faces rubbed in human excrement... The normal punishment for bedwetters...was to have his face rubbed in his own urine." He had "seen boys crying in the most abject misery and pain with not a soul to care—the dignity of man!"<sup>[12]</sup>

(continued...)

- Runaways and tragic misadventures were a part of the larger abuse pattern notable throughout the history of the system. In one of many similar cases, three young boys ran away from the Round Lake School in Saskatchewan. Two made it home, the third lost his way in a blizzard and froze to death when the temperature dropped to -30°C. His body was found four days later: His foot tracks could be followed into the bush where had had laid down, he then had crawled on his hands and knees for about 15 yards into some willows. Here the snow had been partly scraped out and he lay in the hollow, face down. His hands were held up under his face with his mitts off under his hands. He was frozen solid. He was dressed in a pair of blue bib overalls, black and red sweater, fleece lined underwear, one pair of grey socks, gum rubber boots size six, and no overcoat. The rubbers appeared to be too large for him and the snow had packed in around the tops of them, making his feet wet. [\[13\]](#)
- Other children tried to escape from the abuse of the schools in death by committing suicide. The number of children who died in the residential school system is unknown, because records were either not kept or destroyed.
- The survivors of the Indian residential school system have, in many cases, continued to have their lives shaped by the experiences in these schools. Persons who attended these schools continue to struggle with their identity after years of being taught to hate themselves and their culture. The residential school system led to a disruption in the transference of parenting skills from one generation to the next. Without these skills, many survivors had had difficulties in raising their own children. In residential schools they learned that adults often exert power and control through abuse. The lessons learned in childhood are often repeated in adulthood with the result that many survivors of the residential school system often inflict abuse on their own children. These children in turn use the same tools on their own children. [\[14\]](#)

## Sorry, eh?

Compare the statements of our very first Prime Minister and our present Prime Minister, statement made 120 years apart: Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, oversaw the implementation of the first residential schools. In 1887, he informed Parliament that a national goal was "to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit to change." [\[15\]](#)

The last residential school closed in 1996 in Gordon, Saskatchewan. Eleven years later, Prime Minister Harper offered an apology to the Aboriginal people hurt by the residential school system. Here are some excerpts from the apology:

*Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to offer an apology to former students of Indian residential schools. The treatment of children in Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history...*

\*

*Two primary objectives of the residential schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.*

*These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal.*

\*

*Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.*

\*

*The government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities.*

*Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed.*

*All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.*

*First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools.*

*Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.*

\*

*While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.*

*The legacy of Indian residential schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today. It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered.*

*It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures.*

\*

*We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this.*

*We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this.*

*We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you.*

\*

*The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.*

*We are sorry.*

## **DISCUSSION**

Q: How has the government made amends for the residential school system?

Q: What problems does an apology solve?

Q: What problems are left unsolved?

Q: How does Melanie J. Murray deal with those problems in the play?

# High-Risk Lifestyle + HIV/AIDS

These facts were taken from the 1998 University of Manitoba publication, **Research on HIV/AIDS in Aboriginal People: a background paper: final report.**<sup>[16]</sup>

- Aboriginal populations are at increased risk for HIV infection for several reasons. High rates of sexually transmitted diseases (5-10 times the national average) and substance abuse, including injection drug use, as well as other health and social issues, may also increase vulnerability to HIV within this group.
- Poverty, discrimination, and **marginalization** impact particularly on Aboriginal youth (i.e., self-esteem and social identity) and may contribute directly to participation in high-risk activities such as the sex trade and intravenous drug use.
- Marginalize: To make or treat as insignificant. To relegate or confine to a lower or outer limit or edge, as of social standing.
- Health promotion and illness prevention activities are likely to be more successful if they incorporate traditional understandings of health and healing.
- Clearly, research to date in this area is inadequate to the task of preventing further spread of the epidemic or to providing effective and culturally appropriate treatment to Aboriginal people with HIV/AIDS.
- Of particular concern are studies that address issues of self-esteem and development of identity among Aboriginal youth who are over-represented in high risk groups.

With those facts in mind, read the following short scenes from **A Very Polite Genocide or The Girl Who Fell to Earth**. The first is a scene in which Robbie, who is an Aboriginal sex trade worker and intravenous drug user, discovers he may have HIV. The other is a monologue that gives voice to Robbie's perspective as a member of the first generation born to residential school survivors.

## Scene 1

*Dr. Baker: May I talk seriously to you Robert?*

*Robbie: Yeah.*

*Dr. Baker: Alright. The results of the biopsy we took of the lesions we were looking at have come back. I need to prepare you and I need you to listen carefully. The results aren't good. When it comes to the lesions, what we're looking at is Kaposi's Sarcoma – which most people shorten to KS. Now KS is pretty rare. It usually appears on men much, much older than you, or those with weak immune systems. Which is why I turn to your blood work. Given your history and the symptoms you present, I want to test you for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, which is something we're just starting to see in here. AIDS for short. Have you heard of AIDS?*

*Robbie: Yeah, but I heard it hadn't spread here yet.*

*Dr. Baker: Well apparently it has.*

*Robbie: Bullshit!*

*Dr. Baker: Robert...*

*Robbie: (rising to exit) Bullshit!*

*Dr. Baker: Okay. Okay. Robert, (blocking the exit) I need you to calm down. Calm down. Take a minute. Breath. Please. This is something we need to talk about. There are steps we can take... (continued)*

Robbie: Get the fuck out of my way.

Dr. Baker: No. I. No. Listen. I'm not going to let you go. I want to help. Do you have someone I can call? (no response) Please. (He charges at her, throws her out of his path and exits, she shout after him) Hey! Come back! Please! Come back - when you're ready! Don't... Damn it!

## Scene 2

Robert, in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, we can hear other voices along with him reciting the serenity prayer.

Robbie: ... the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. (beat) So, I started step four, and I was talking to my sponsor about making my list of resentments. And I'm looking at this list, and it's long, you know? It took me days and days, and I kept adding things. And I don't know how I'm going to let it go. How do I accept these things that happened to me? And the things that happen out there in the world? I'm mad at my mom for letting me go and my dad for fucking off, and I'm mad at the people who fostered me for fucking me up, and I'm pissed at the government, the city, the country, - whatever - for fucking it up for me and all the rest of us. And you want me to let it go? I walk down the street and I see all the Indians are drunk or high and they're dying. And the girls and the boys that walk the streets and the white guys who pay for it, and the people in their cars who drive by and look away and the ones who stare like it's the drive through zoo. How can it be we're not all rioting in the streets? How can anyone sleep at night? Don't you tell me it's okay - that this is the way it is. Don't tell me to accept it. "The things I cannot change." Well fuck you. Fuck you. I'm not accepting it, I never agreed to this bullshit. Fuck that. All my life people tell me "that's the way it is, this is the way it is, you have to accept it." No. I won't. It's wrong. And it's not okay with me.

## **DISCUSSION**

Q: How does Robbie fit the profile of risk as outlined in the University of Manitoba's research paper?

Q: How do the facts of the research paper and the excerpts from the script tell different sides of the same story?

Q: What are the problems that would arise from looking at only one side or the other?

Q: Is the tragedy of Robbie's illness a part of the fallout of the residential school system?

- Consider the following excerpt from **A Very Polite Genocide or The Girl Who Fell to Earth**.

*Josie: Weeks later, I see a poster taped to a light post, flapping in the wind. "Missing: Robbie Drunken Chief." Then at a coffee shop, I pick up a newspaper and there's a short story buried in the City section. Known sex trade worker. Last seen outside a North End motel. Previous arrests. History of drug abuse. "Soup kitchen workers noticed Drunken Chief's absence about a month ago..." The article is brief, and the sort of thing I would usually not even bother to read. That most people will just skim over. Just another dead Indian, "and isn't it terrible. Oh, yes, it's so sad. I wish I could do something about it. But what can you do? People make their own choices in life."*

Q: What factors affected the choices Robbie made?

Q: Does the fact that he was "at-risk" make his disappearance less scary—because it wouldn't happen to just anyone?

# Historiography, or “Says Who-iography?”

**Historiography** studies the processes by which historical knowledge is obtained and transmitted. It is the study of studying history, looking at who writes the history and how those biases show up in the history books. With that definition in mind, read the following three quotations:

- “Many of us who have received formal training in how to follow the often subtle rules for determining what sort of evidence may be deemed reliable, and thus admissible, in this alien, European art form called history have come to love it as a discipline. We have also learned to distrust it.. .A people's stories about themselves, their world, and their past may leave many things unsaid, but on the whole, the things that do get said, and the way they are said, give a clearer picture of that people than any work of history can give.”<sup>[17]</sup>
- If writers want to find out about what Indian women think, they should ask Indian women. Unfortunately, many scholars, historians in particular, have been loath to use Indian oral accounts as source material. Even fewer writers use literature and poetry as resources. Because many Indian women writers possess empirical data that cannot find acceptance in historical or anthropological works, literature is one effective outlet for their stories.<sup>[18]</sup>
- From **A Very Polite Genocide or The Girl Who Fell to Earth**:

*Elder Martin: I'll tell you a story. It's a story told to me by no one, and it's one no one tells. It's something I don't understand, but maybe in the telling, it'll make sense.*

## DISCUSSION

Q: How does playwright Melanie J. Murray use the fictitious voice of Elder Martin to tell a story that has been missing in history books?

Q: How does the play express the emotional truths of the residential school system?

Q: What are the responsibilities of a playwright who chooses to tackle this subject?

# Moving Forward: Decolonization

**Colonialism** is the extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler or exploitation colonies in which indigenous populations are directly ruled, displaced, or exterminated.

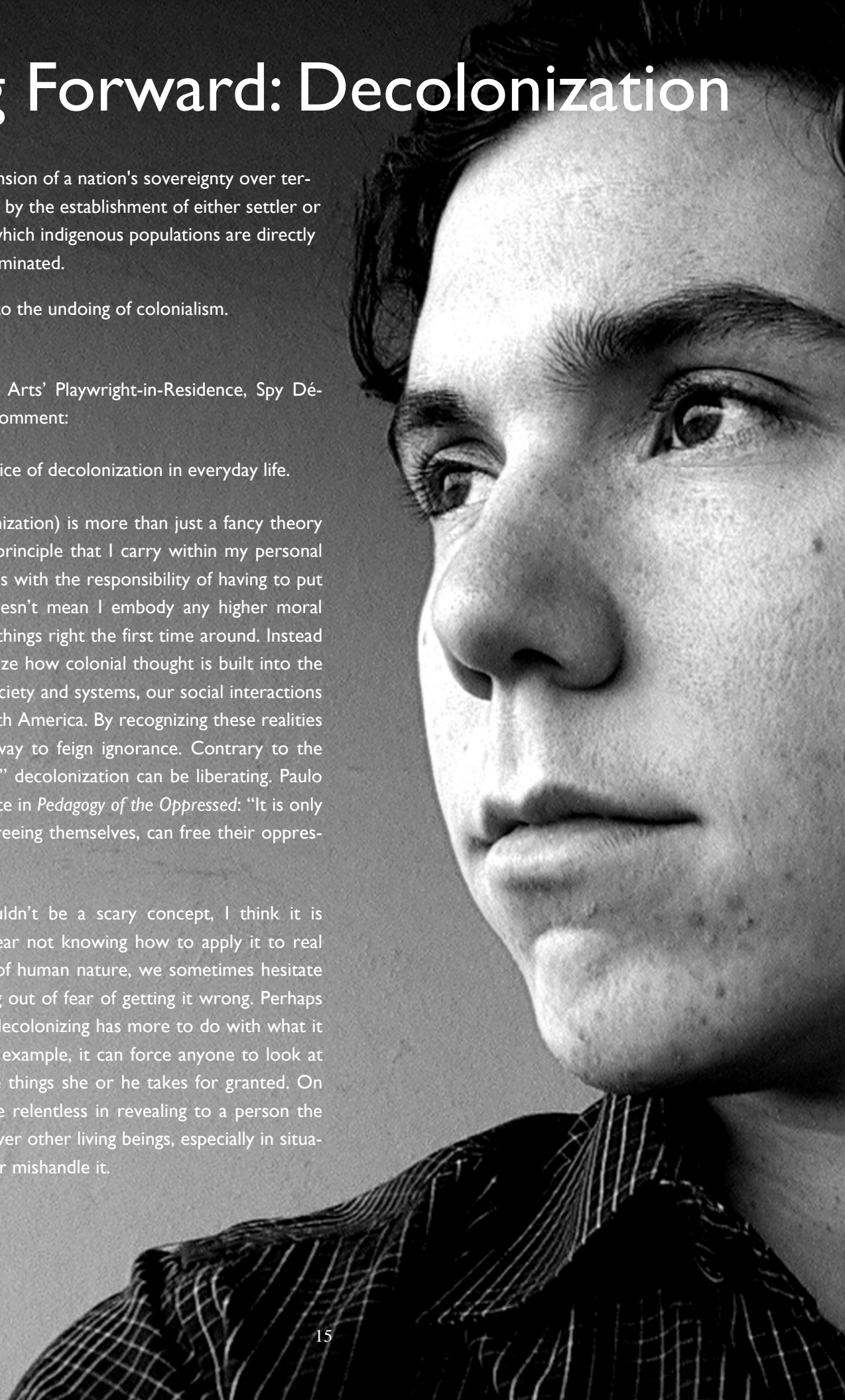
**Decolonization** refers to the undoing of colonialism.

Native Earth Performing Arts' Playwright-in-Residence, Spy Dénommé-Welch had this comment:

A statement on the practice of decolonization in everyday life.

Decolonizing (or decolonization) is more than just a fancy theory to me. It is a value and principle that I carry within my personal constitution, which comes with the responsibility of having to put it into practice. That doesn't mean I embody any higher moral ground or that I will get things right the first time around. Instead it compels me to recognize how colonial thought is built into the fabric of our everyday society and systems, our social interactions and ways of living in North America. By recognizing these realities then there really is no way to feign ignorance. Contrary to the cliché "ignorance is bliss," decolonization can be liberating. Paulo Freire so eloquently wrote in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: "It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors" (1981, 42).

While decolonizing shouldn't be a scary concept, I think it is daunting to many who fear not knowing how to apply it to real life. And what I've seen of human nature, we sometimes hesitate to try to change anything out of fear of getting it wrong. Perhaps the hardest thing about decolonizing has more to do with what it can reveal about us. For example, it can force anyone to look at their privilege and all the things she or he takes for granted. On the other hand, it can be relentless in revealing to a person the power they might hold over other living beings, especially in situations where they abuse or mishandle it.



Sure decolonizing isn't a simple task. And as an Aboriginal artist I don't feel I'm off the hook. Decolonizing is complex and it takes a lot of work and thoughtfulness. While it can be argued that it isn't healthy to be preoccupied with this all the time, my counterpoint would be that with practice and time it becomes less of a preoccupation and **more of a way of being**. So the more decolonizing becomes a way of being, the more it has meaning in my life minus all the jargon.

Aboriginal author, Marijo Moore adds:

To reclaim their identity, American Indian urban youth need to learn the stories of the People. They need to learn, remember, and tell the ancient origin and migration stories, the stories that focus on Native values, attitudes, and beliefs. And they need to tell new stories about growing up and living urban lives. These new stories need to incorporate the wisdom of the People about the land and relatedness to all of creation. To tell new urban stories requires learning about the People who first inhabited the land in the urban area where they now live. Once these stories are learned, it is important to tell stories about those People. They need to tell stories of their accomplishments and tragedies. What they believed and experienced. Link those stories with those of the People from whom urban Native youth are descended. It is in the stories, old and new, where urban Native youth will be able to reclaim their Native identity. They will be able to know their harmonious plan in the order of all creation.<sup>[19]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Q: How connected are you to your culture?

Q: Are there cultural practices in your own traditions that have been lost?

Q: Do you feel the need to reclaim those traditions?

Q: If so, where can you go to learn more about your culture?





# Teacher's Guide to Activities

## WHAT MAKES A PERSON FUNCTION?

What makes a person whole? What makes them healthy? What helps to make them responsible for their choices? What do people need to be successful? Split up into groups and make a list of your answers. Now come together and share your lists, making one big list of answers. Now in each of your groups give three examples of how someone would lose those rights in a residential school.

Without writing the word “genocide” write the criteria that define genocide on a blackboard (see page 5). Each group must now take their turn and explain why they think their examples fit the criteria or not.

Now find one word to describe each of your three examples (ie: lack of parental contact: alone, afraid). You should have three words. As a group decide on three physical gestures that will illustrate each word. You should have nine gestures all together. Now choreograph those nine gestures together to create a flowing piece of movement.

## TRIVIA TIME

Trivia time. Split into up to three groups: “The Knott Family”, “The Peltier Family”, and “The Cardinal Family”.

### How many aboriginal children died in residential school?

- A) 7,000      b) 10,000      c) 25,000      d) unknown

Answer: d) Unknown. Many deaths went unreported.

### Which term is deemed appropriate when speaking of the first peoples of North America?

- a) Anishnawbe
- b) Aboriginal
- c) Indian
- d) Cree
- e) Mohawk
- f) none of the above
- g) all the above

Answer: b) Aboriginal is all encompassing pertaining to those who are the indigenous people of a particular area. Though Cree, Anishnawbe, & Mohawk are terms used to describe distinct groups of Aboriginal people they do not define Aboriginal people as a whole. To use the term “Indian” when referring to Aboriginal people is considered derogatory.

**“The scoop” refers to which historical event?**

- a) Aboriginal children being taken from their parents by the Government without their consent.
- b) The migration of the Huron people west when colonization began.
- c) The bill passed in July of 1998 that allowed fishing rights to the Metis in Manitoba
- d) A type of boat used on the St Lawrence River to catch people for the slave trade.

Answer: a)

**How many times did Stephen Harper say “we’re sorry” in his apology?**

- a) 1      b) 2      c) 5      d) 6      e) 0

Answer: a) 1. (How many times did he say “we apologize”? is there a difference?)

**To marginalize people is to what?**

- a) To make or treat as insignificant.
- b) To relegate or confine to a lower or outer limit or edge, as of social standing.
- c) Act together towards others in an apathetic way.
- d) To allow passage without passport of documentation
- e) a & b& c
- f) none of the above

Answer: e) a & b & c

For the Family who came in first place, congratulations! You’re one of the “lucky” families who signed contracts with the government stating that you are not Aboriginal to spare your children from the Scoop. Unfortunately, your children will never know their ancestry.

For the Family who came in second place, good work. Your children have been taken away to the same residential school, and there is a hope that you will find them again.

For the Family who came in last place, your children have been separated and taken far away to school. You will probably never see them again.

No matter how skilled you are, the effects of the residential school system have a tragic impact on your Family.



Native Earth Performing Arts is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the creating, developing and producing of professional artistic expression of the Aboriginal experience in Canada.

Through stage productions (theatre, dance and multi-disciplinary), new script development, apprenticeships and internships, Native Earth seeks to fulfill a community of artistic visions. It is a vision that is inclusive and reflective of the artistic directions of members of the Aboriginal community who actively participate in the arts.

#### Artistic Mandate

Native Earth Performing Arts Inc. (NEPA Inc.) is dedicated to the expression of the Native experience through theatre arts. Its mandate is:

to provide a base for professional Native performers, writers, technicians and other artists

to encourage the use of theatre as a form of communication within the Native community, including the use of Native languages

to communicate to our audiences the experiences that are unique to Native people in contemporary society

to contribute to the further development of theatre in Canada.

Native Earth is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and engages with the Canadian Actors Equity Association under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement.

#### 7 VALUES

In service to our mandate and mission, the company operates according to 7 traditional principles which inform decisions in all undertakings. It is our belief that these tenets not only honour Aboriginal values, but are universal to all cultures in various manifestations.

Courage  
Generosity  
Tolerance  
Strength of Character

Patience  
Humility  
Wisdom

# Further Reading

## **WEBSITES**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Aboriginal Aids Network:                | <a href="http://www.caan.ca">www.caan.ca</a>   |
| Aboriginal Aids Network Resource Site:  | <a href="http://www.linkup-connexion.ca">www.linkup-connexion.ca</a>   |
| Aboriginal Canada Portal:               | <a href="http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca">www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca</a>   |
| Aboriginal Healing Network:             | <a href="http://www.ahf.ca">www.ahf.ca</a>   |
| Where Are The Children:                 | <a href="http://www.wherethechildren.ca/en/ahf.html">www.wherethechildren.ca/en/ahf.html</a>                                       |
| Hidden From History:                    | <a href="http://www.hiddenfromhistory.org">www.hiddenfromhistory.org</a>   |
| Spirit of the People:                   | <a href="http://www.miziwebiik.com/mbic/Section3/html/spiritpeople.htm">www.miziwebiik.com/mbic/Section3/html/spiritpeople.htm</a> |
| 2 Spirited People of the First Nations: | <a href="http://www.cfis.ca/2sp.html">www.cfis.ca/2sp.html</a>   |

## **TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada Help Desk:                    | <b>1-800-816-7293</b> |
| Indian Residential School Survivors Society (24-HOUR NATIONAL CRISIS LINE) | <b>1-866-925-4419</b> |
| Anishnawbe Health Toronto  | <b>416-360-0486</b>   |
| Council Fire Native Cultural Centre Toronto                                | <b>416-360-4350</b>   |
| Spirit of the People (Reintegration of Aboriginal Offenders)               | <b>416-335-5077</b>   |
| Two Spirited People of the First Nations                                   | <b>416-944-9300</b>   |

## **BOOKS**

Resistance And Renewal

Author : Celia Haig-Brown

Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools

Author : J. R. Miller

Stolen From our Embrace

Author : Ernie Crey , Suzanne Fournier

National Crime: Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986

Author : John, S. Milloy

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Deiter, Constance, From Our Mother's Arms: The Intergenerational Impact of Residential School in Saskatchewan. Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1999.

Genocide of the Mind: New Native American Writing. Ed: Moore, Marijo. New York: Nation Books, 2003.

Glavin, Terry, Amongst God's Own: The Enduring Legacy of St. Mary's Mission. Longhouse Publishing, 2002.

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Natives and academics: researching and writing about American Indians. Ed. Mihesuah, Devon A. University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

Research on HIV/AIDS in aboriginal people : a background paper : final report  
University of Manitoba. Northern Health Research Unit. Pub: Health Canada, Medical Services Branch, 1998.

Suicide of the Mind: New Native American Writing. Ed. Moore, Marijo. New York: Nation Books, 2003.

# End Notes

[1] Churchill, Ward, Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools. (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004) p.3.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid. p.7.

[4] Ibid. p.6.

[5] Ibid. p.11

[6] Ibid. p.17.

[7] Ed. Mihesuah, Devon A., Natives and academics: researching and writing about American Indians. (University of Nebraska Press, 1998) p.27.

[8] Milloy, John S., A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System-1879-1986. (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1999) p.137.

[9] Ibid. p.291.

[10] Ed. Mihesuah, Devon A., Natives and academics: researching and writing about American Indians. (University of Nebraska Press, 1998) p. 39.

[11] Milloy, John S., A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System-1879-1986. (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1999) p. 281.

[12] Ibid. p.284

[13] Ibid. p.284.

[14] Ibid. p.299.

[15] Milloy, John S., A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System-1879-1986. (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1999) p. 6.

[16] Research on HIV/AIDS in aboriginal people : a background paper : final report. University of Manitoba. Northern Health Research Unit. Pub: Health Canada, Medical Services Branch, 1998. p. 9-27.

[17] Birchfield, D. L. "The Case Against History," in The Oklahoma Baric Intelligence Test. (Greenfield Center, N.Y.: Greenfield Review Press, 1998), p. 105.

[18] Ed. Mihesuah, Devon A., Natives and academics: researching and writing about American Indians. (University of Nebraska Press, 1998) p. 47.

[19] Ed: Marijo Moore. Genocide of the Mind: New Native American Writing. (New York: Nation Books, 2003) p.79.