

Muffins for Granny – A Documentary Screening

Residential schools also known as industrial or boarding schools refer to a variety of institutions which have existed in Canada. The schools were established to assimilate Aboriginal children into white society. Aboriginal children were discouraged from speaking their own language and practicing their native traditions or else suffer punishment. Beyond the emotional abuse of being taken from their families, many children experienced physical and/or sexual abuse. Estimates show that 24 to 42 per cent of children in some schools died of tuberculosis infection. By learning English and adopting Christianity and Canadian customs, the government hoped that the children would pass their adopted lifestyle on to the next generation and native traditions would be



abolished in a few generations. The schools were federally run under the Department of Indian Affairs. Agents were employed by the government to ensure all native children attended. Approximately 150,000

Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis children were removed from their communities and forced to attend the schools.

Approximately 75,000 former residential school students are alive today. During 1800 to 1990 there were approximately 130 schools in existence at one time or another throughout Canada. At the peak of the residential school system, there were approximately 80 residential schools. These schools were located in every province and territory, except New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The last federally run institution, Gordon residential school in Saskatchewan, did not close until 1996. The residential school system introduced features to Aboriginal communities which have been passed on from generation to generation - the intergenerational legacy of the residential school system. Intergenerational Impacts refer to the effects of physical and sexual abuse that were passed on to the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Aboriginal people who

attended the residential school system (Where are the Children, 2006). The consequences of the school system and forced assimilation are very much a part of Aboriginal communities today.

The award-winning documentary Muffins for Granny eloquently reveals the intergenerational legacy on individuals and communities. The documentary signifies a personal journey of



discovery for filmmaker Nadia McLaren as she tells the story of her own grandmother who was forced into a residential school. In the documentary McLaren interviews seven First Nations elders about their experiences in residential schools and the effects this had on their lives. Home movie footage interspersed with human faces and dark animations complete a powerful, often poignant, documentary that narrates a shameful chapter in Canadian history.

Muffins for Granny was awarded the Best Documentary Film at the 2006 Winnipeg Aboriginal Film Festival and earned an Honourable Mention at the 7th ImagineNATIVE Film+Media Arts Festival.

To raise awareness of the traumatic effects of the Residential Schools, the Harmony Song program of Tamara's House, will hold a screening of Muffins for Granny at the Roxy Theatre in Saskatoon on January 29th, 2010, at 7:00 p.m. This documentary is being sponsored to raise awareness and to bring to public attention the ending of Aboriginal Healing Foundation funding on March 31, 2010. Unless funding is extended, thousands of survivors across Canada will lose access to counselling. In Saskatoon, two projects – the Harmony Song Program at Tamara's House, and Building a Nation – provide specialized services to survivors struggling with the residential school legacy.

For more information, contact Tamara's House (306) 683-8667 or email tamara@tamarashouse.sk.ca