

# Escaping School Life: The Physical Education program in Residential Schools

(Late 1800's to Mid 1900's)

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# Thesis:

The Residential school physical education system were used as an example of the exploitative actions taken to acculturate Aboriginal students to become Canadian citizens. However, Aboriginal students used physical education to escape Residential school life.

# Residential Schooling in Canada

- Indian Act (1876)
  - “Education for Citizenship” (Paora Te Hiwi 101)
    - Residential schools were to create Canadian Citizens of Aboriginal Youth in Canada
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015)
  - Students in Residential Schools Experienced
    - Cultural Loss
    - Physical, Psychological, and Sexual abuse
    - Death and Disease

# Physical Education in Residential Schools

“[sport] made their lives more bearable and gave them a sense of identity, accomplishment, and pride” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada)

- Physical Education as Disciplinary Nature
  - Late 1800's - 1990's
  - Calisthenics, Military Workouts, Gymnastics
  - Implemented by Egerton Ryerson
    - To develop “good character”
- Physical Education as Sport and Activity
  - 1930's-1990's
  - Games, Sports, and activities
    - Competitiveness between students to make teams
      - Sports teams gave students the opportunities to get away from school

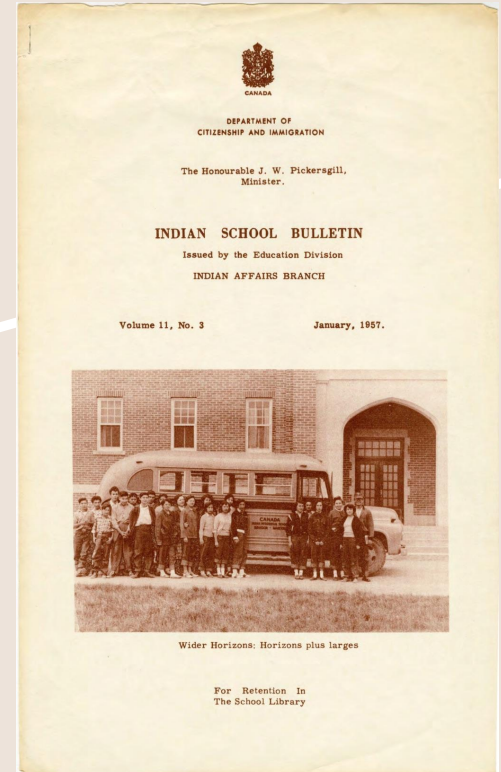


Gymnastic Team

# Primary Sources

"Physical Education Programme for Indian Schools." Indian School Bulletin, 3rd ser., 11 (January 1957): 8-9. Department of Citizen and Immigration.

- Physical Education Curriculum for Residential Schools
- Explains the importance of physical education in relation to other programs
- Social Concern
  - Improve Physical Health
  - Motor Coordination
  - Teamwork
  - Good Mental Health
- Social Control



## B. Games and Sports

Games are excellent to develop muscles, motor co-ordination, team work and to give enjoyment. They should probably be considered in two categories. The first as a league activity and the other as a source of active play and fun. In league activity we think of such games as volleyball, basketball, and softball, etc., for the girls, and softball, soccer and hockey, etc., for the boys. In this area of the programme the first requisite is the teaching of the basic rules, movements and plays. The second is the perfection of these, while the third and most important is to try and induce every physically fit child in the school to participate and become reasonably proficient in one or two games. House or school leagues should be considered much more important than entering outside leagues from the standpoint of the over-all value to all pupils in the school. However, this does not mean that Indian boys and girls should not compete against non-Indian schools, nor play with non-Indian teams. On the contrary, this is a highly desirable means of acculturation at present, and should be encouraged at every opportunity. Games for active play and fun should also be considered and taught for the sheer enjoyment of playing them and the development of a team spirit. These games might include indoor hockey, broom ball, shinney, pin football, etc.

# Secondary Sources

Habkirk, Evan J. 2017. "From Indian Boys to Canadian Men? The Use of Cadet Drill in the Canadian Indian Residential School System." *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 30 (2): 227–47. doi:10.3828/bjcs.2017.13.

- 1890's-1990's
- Follow a strict Military Physical Training
  - Calisthenics, Military Workouts, Gymnastics
  - Used Military drill to survive abuse
    - Public performance and competitive events

Braden Te Hiwi, and Janice Forsyth. 2017. "'A Rink at This School Is Almost as Essential as a Classroom': Hockey and Discipline at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School, 1945–1951," no. 1: 80.

- Discusses Hockey as means to create "well-behaved, moral, and disciplined boys off the ice" (Te Hiwi & Forsyth 82)
- Exploitation of student-athletes for a political purpose
  - Blackhawks' tour of southern Ontario



# Conclusion:

Sport and physical education was used for the purpose of acculturation of Aboriginal students in Residential schools. However, sport and physical activity became the only way for Aboriginal students to escape Residential school life.



# Sources

Braden Te Hiwi, and Janice Forsyth. 2017. "A Rink at This School Is Almost as Essential as a Classroom': Hockey and Discipline at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School, 1945–1951," no. 1: 80.

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Haig-Brown, Celia. 1988. *Resistance and Renewal : Surviving the Indian Residential School*. Vancouver, B.C. : Arsenal Pulp Press, c1988.

Paora Te Hiwi, Braden. 2017. "Unlike Their Playmates of Civilization, the Indian Children's Recreation Must Be Cultivated and Developed': The Administration of Physical Education at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School, 1926-1944." *Historical Studies in Education* 29 (1): 99–100

"Physical Education Programme for Indian Schools." *Indian School Bulletin*, 3rd ser., 11 (January 1957): 8-9. Department of Citizen and Immigration.