

We Were Children: Film & Discussion Guide

Film	We Were Children
Website	http://aptn.ca/pages/wewerechildren/
Download/Rent	http://www.nfb.ca/film/we_were_children
Trailer	http://www.aptn.ca/wewerechildren

Synopsis

As young children, Lyna and Glen were taken from their homes and placed in church-run boarding schools. The trauma of this experience was made worse by years of untold physical, sexual and emotional abuse, the effects of which persist in their adult lives. In this emotional film, the profound impact of the Canadian government's residential school system is conveyed unflinchingly through the eyes of two children who were forced to face hardships beyond their years. We Were Children gives voice to a national tragedy and demonstrates the incredible resilience of the human spirit.²

Why Watch the Film

This Statement by Murray Sinclair, Chair of Truth and Reconciliation Commission best answers this question:

More than anything else, this film will make people believe what they have only heard second hand. It grabs you by the hair and makes you turn your head and look at this country's history and see that the pain and anger and despair that Aboriginal people live with everyday, has a reason, and the blame does not rest with the victims.

The theft of the spirit marks the loss of something important. Shed your tears for those who have suffered. Feel your anger at the injustice of what was done. Forgive those who have affected your lives in a sad way because of their trauma. But never forget that we have to do something about the damage this has caused. You and I. You may not have the magic wand that will fix this, but you have a voice. Use it. You have a responsibility, accept it. You have children in your lives, think of them. Do not let them inherit all of this mess. Help them understand. Ensure they are better educated. Denounce the ignorance of today that stems from the racism of the past. Make things better.³

Film Reflections: Questions For Group Discussion

1. Initial thoughts? What do you think?
2. What was the most surprising thing that stood out to you about the film?
3. What did you find most difficult to watch/hear?
4. After seeing this film, do you think that most Canadians really know about what went on in Residential Schools? Why or why not?
5. Do you see any connection to the issues that First Nations people are facing now (suicide, alcoholism, drugs, etc.) to the history of 100 years of time that children were forced to spend in Residential Schools?
6. How did what was being taught in the Residential Schools affect the student's sense of self-worth?
7. The 100 years of Residential schools have been called "Canada's Holocaust". If this is true, then why are most people ignorant to what really went on? Why do you think people hold so easily to their negative stereotypes (or racist views)?
8. Just from watching this film, how do you think a First Nations person's perception of God could have been shaped and affected through their time in a Residential school?
9. How do you think this could affect a person's choices after they got out of the Residential School?
10. How can the church become a catalyst for positive change after all the harm that it's done in the past?
11. How do you think we can promote reconciliation after all of the harm that has been done?
12. What are you going to do with what you've seen? How can you continue this journey and help to educate others? Is there hope?