

Residential Schools in Canada

In this activity, students will step into the shoes of a History teacher tasked with organizing and interpreting historical data about residential schools in Canada.

Length 📅 30 minutes - 1 hour and 30 minutes (Small Problem)

Prerequisite Tables

Concept Tables

Themes Indigenous, Injustice

Disciplines History, Religion



Scenario

After reading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report about residential schools in Canada,¹ you have begun revising the curriculum for your Canadian History class in order to cover the history and legacy of residential schools in Canada more extensively.

You decide that prior to embarking on this topic, you will advise students of the potentially triggering nature of the subject matter. You also decide that you will share the following background information from the TRC website with your students to begin introducing the topic:

For over 150 years, residential schools operated in Canada. Over 150,000 children attended these schools. Many never returned. Often underfunded and overcrowded, these schools were used as a tool of assimilation by the Canadian state and churches. Thousands of students suffered physical and sexual abuse. All suffered from loneliness and a longing to be home with their families. The damages inflicted by these schools continue to this day. In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada began a multi-year process to listen to Survivors, communities and others affected by the Residential School system. The resulting collection of statements, documents and other materials now forms the heart of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

-National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation²

After sharing this background information, you decide that you will assign several segments of the TRC report as readings for your students, and you want to prepare a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the interpretation and reflection upon the assigned segments of the TRC report.

What you need to produce

- One frequency distribution table presenting key data about the scope of the residential school system in Canada
- A brief written interpretation of the table (~75 words)



Evaluation grid

Understanding & Interpretation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency distribution table presents well-chosen elements that highlight important information about the scope of residential schools in Canada (2 points) Patterns in the table are explained clearly, and key data points and highlights are well-chosen and accurately interpreted (2 points) 	/4
Writing & Style	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing is formal in tone, and explains content of the table in clear language 	/2
Requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency distribution table is well-constructed (logical organization, clear labels, accurate computation) (2 points) Interpretive text meets required length (~75 words; 2 points) 	/4
Total	/10

Breakdown of the problem

After reading the TRC report you know that its findings are based on extensive research involving careful ethical processes, including the voluntary and confidential sharing of testimonies by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis former residential school students and their families and communities.³ And although you know that it was difficult for those researching the history of residential schools to make a definitive list of the exact number of schools that were in operation in Canada from the 19th century onward (as indicated by the TRC⁴), you also know that the TRC report includes an extensive list of residential schools and residences that you hope will help your students to gain a better understanding of the scope of this system.⁵ You want to be able to answer the following question: **what was the scope of the residential school system in Canada?** (Hint: consider things like location, time frame, and which organization(s) ran the schools.)



Using data from the TRC report (in the provided Excel file), you decide to **build one frequency distribution table using Microsoft Excel** that you will use to **present a snapshot of what you consider to be vital information about the scope of the residential school system across Canada** to your students. You realize you will also need to interpret the table you design for your students, so you decide to **draft a few sentences (~75 words) that you can use in class to interpret the information in the table and to highlight patterns and data points that you consider to be significant.**

References

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Retrieved from [http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/res-Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future July 23 2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/res-Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf)
2. About the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation: Our Background. (n.d.). National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Retrieved from <http://nctr.ca/about-new.php>
3. Our Mandate. (n.d.). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.trc.ca/about-us/our-mandate.html#three>
4. Residential School Locations. (n.d.). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.trc.ca/about-us/residential-school.html>
5. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Appendix 2.1 and 2.2. In *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. [http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/res-Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future July 23 2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/res-Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf)

Additional reference

Kirnishni, T. (2017, December 7). Mapping Canada's history of residential schools with Google Earth. *Canadian Geographic*. Retrieved from <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/mapping-canadas-history-residential-schools-google-earth>

