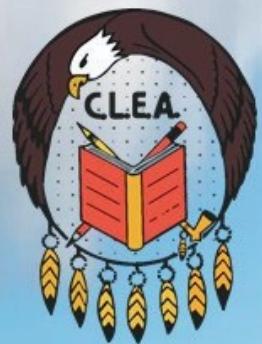




Mikisew High School

Cross Lake, MB

2025-2030



OUR
STRATEGIC
BLUEPRINT
FOR
EDUCATION IN
CROSS LAKE



Notes & Reflections



Mikisew High School

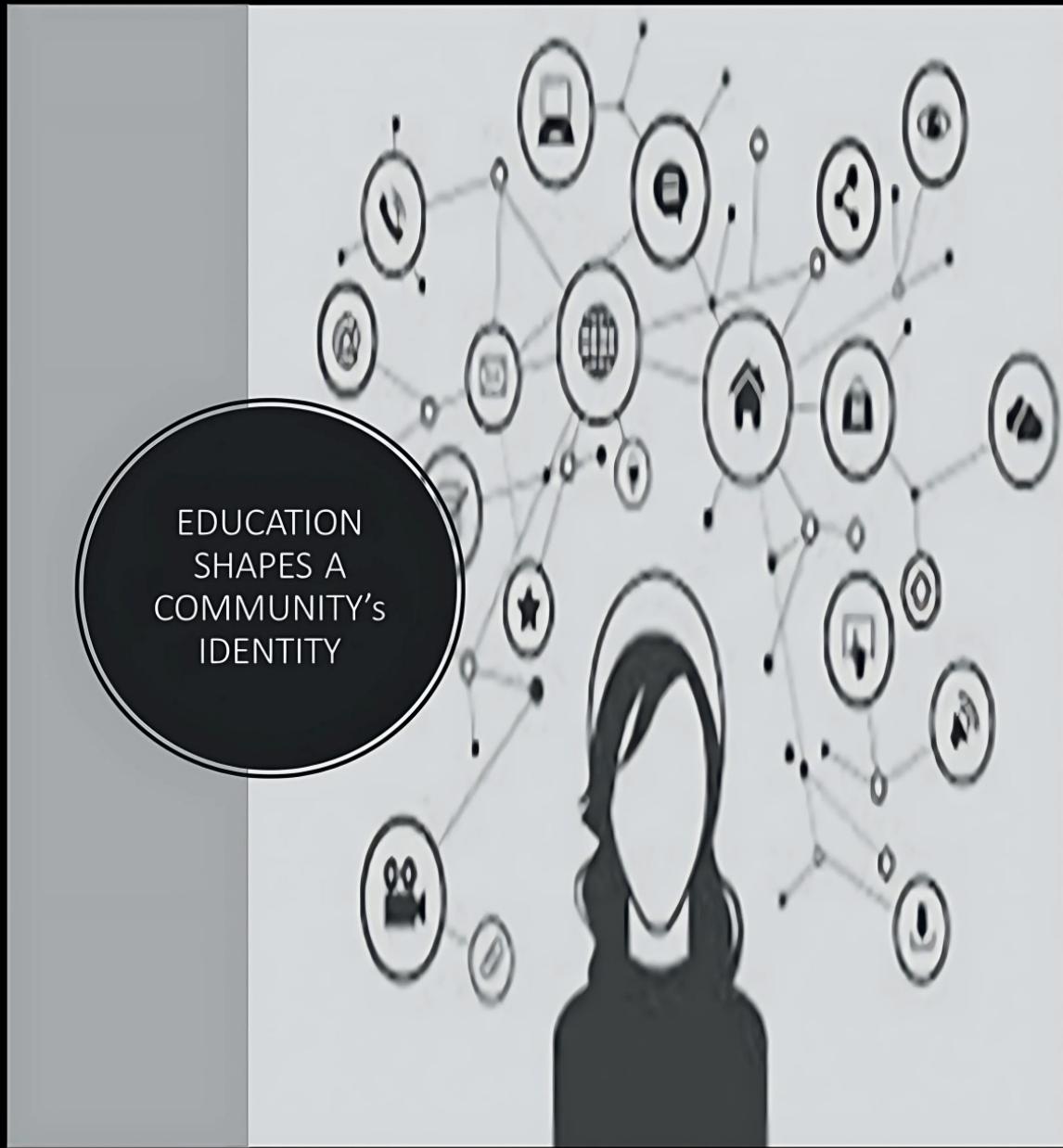
Cross Lake, MB



2025-2030

OUR
STRATEGIC
BLUEPRINT
FOR
EDUCATION IN
CROSS LAKE

We are proud citizens of the Pimichikimak people. We stand here not just to speak, but to honour the voices of our elders and the dreams of our youth. Our strategic plan isn't about history. It's about memory, resilience, and the future we're shaping together for the youth and for our community.



Education is more than just learning. It is how a community remembers who it is and creates goals as to who it can become. Before I talk about our educational story, you need an understanding and background as to how learning is rooted in our own teachings, values, stories, and laws.

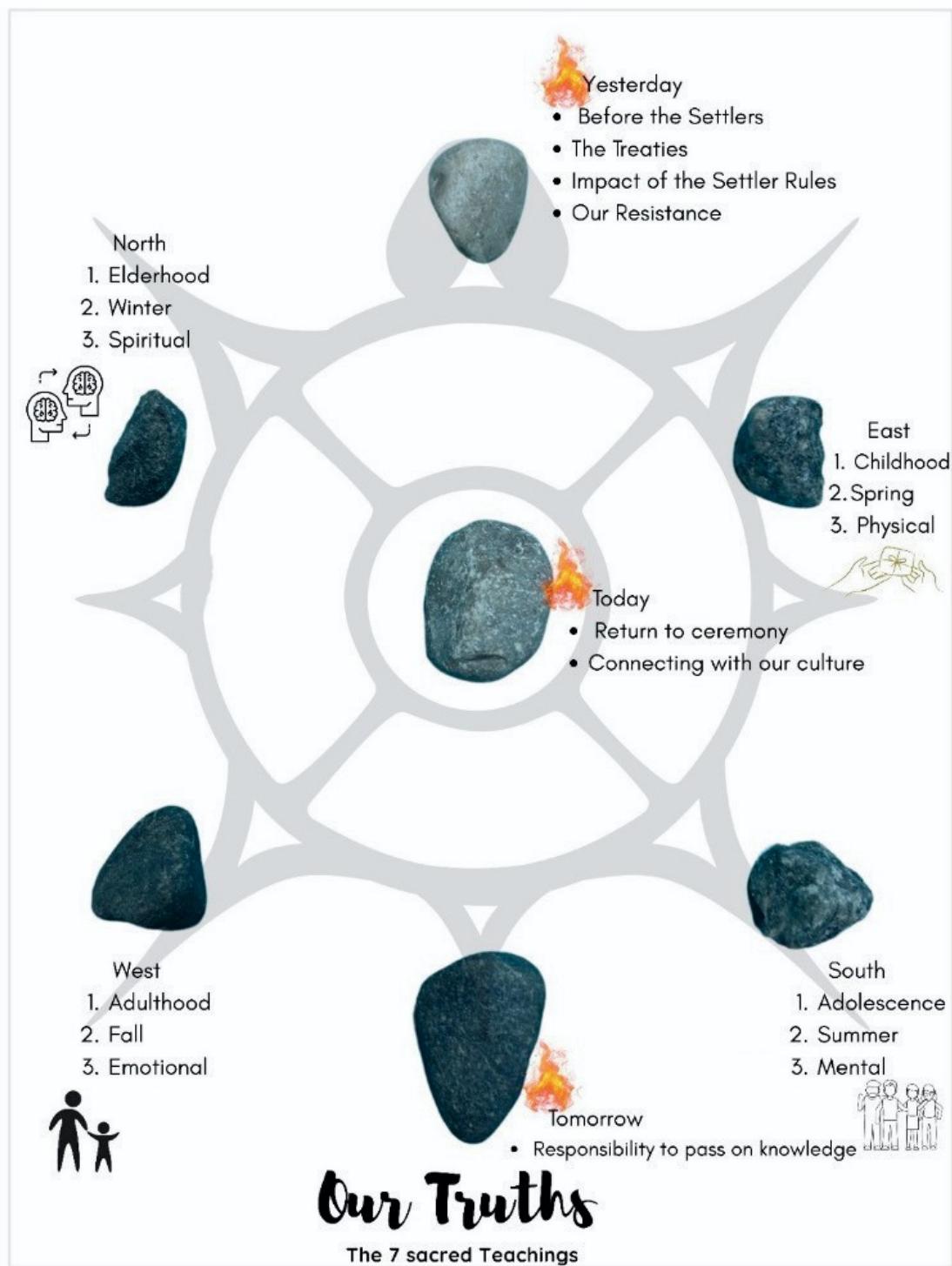
The Framework For Discussion



This is where we begin, with the framework that guides our discussions. These teachings help us make sense of where we've been and where we're going.

**There are truths and teachings that
we as a community hold
which provide a lens for our
discussions.**

**There are truths we carry as a community. Truths
that aren't written in books, but live in the stories
of our Elders, in the land, in ceremony. These are
the truths that guide our conversations about
education. These truths are based on our history,
our connection to culture and our responsibility to
pass on our truths to future generations.**

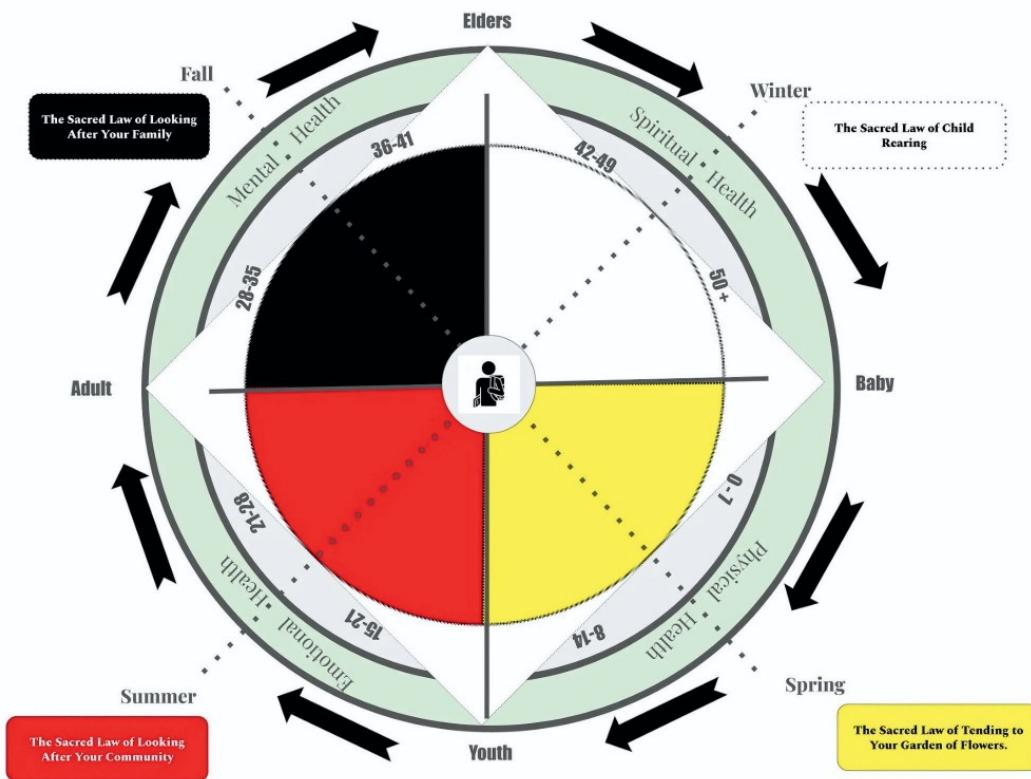


Community values which are explained through sacred laws emphasis personal development, health, family and community have always been the framework for educating community members as to our ways.

Our sacred laws tell us that real learning starts with the whole person. We've always believed in nurturing health, spirit, family, and community. That's our foundation. That's what education should build on.

Ô Nõ sã wê wîn

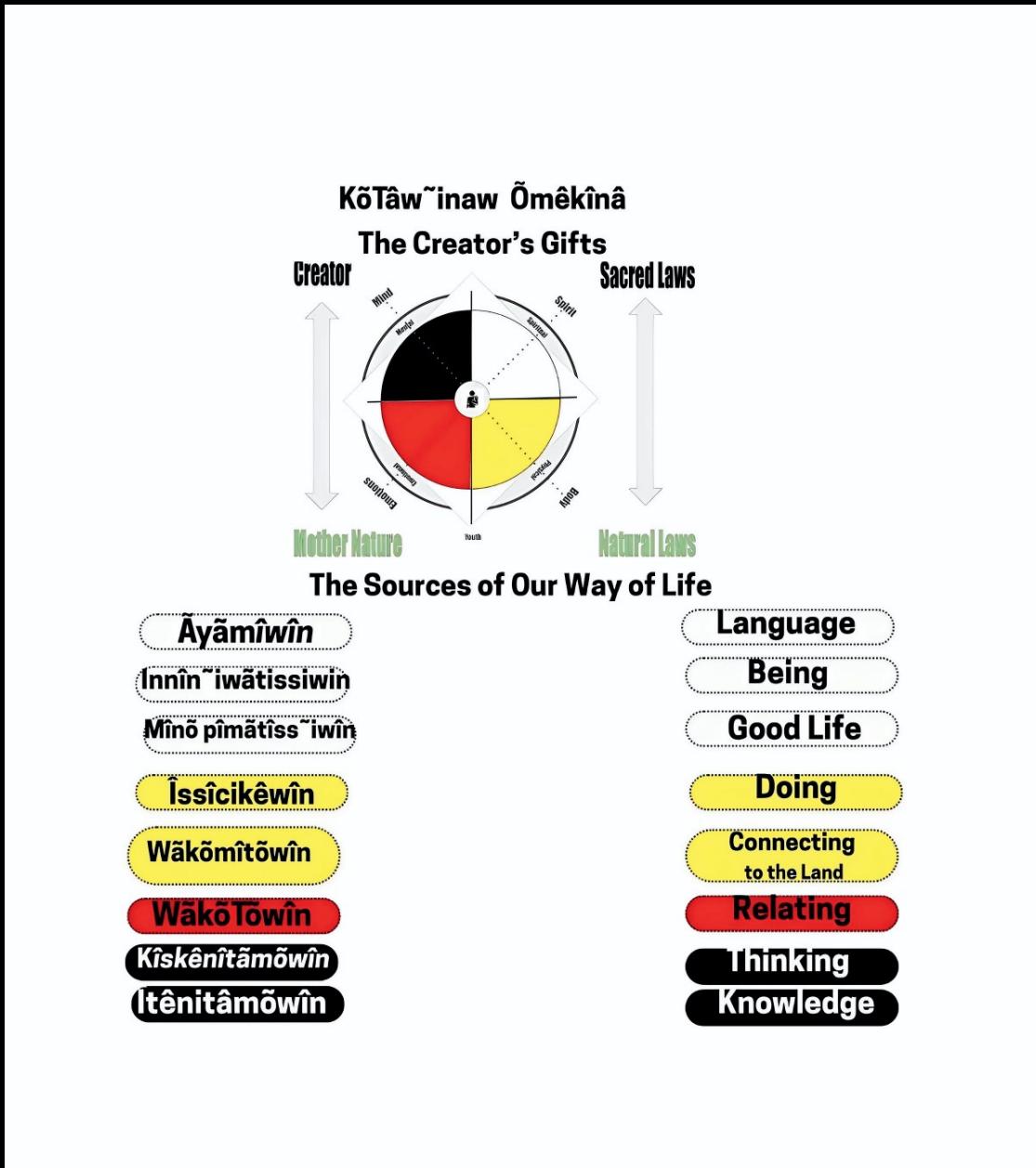
The Sacred Laws



- **The Adults (parents) have a sacred duty & responsibility to take care of the Gift (Baby)**
- **The Elders have the sacred duty & responsibility to teach and give guidance to the youth**

**These too are ways of
knowing, learning and
discovering personal gifts.
These gifts and our way of
knowing create a holistic
approach to learning and
being.**

**Every child carries a gift. Our role isn't to mold
them into something else; it's to help them
discover what the child already carries. Our
teachings are about drawing out those gifts
and showing young people how to use them in
a good way.**



We know that our way of life is built on eight sources. It begins with language and knowing we are meant to live a good life by being who we are. We connect with the land, relate to each other, carry knowledge and have our own way of thinking and doing.

Our Yesterday



Now we turn to our past. Not to dwell, but to remember and to remind ourselves that we've always had our own systems of teaching and learning. They weren't broken. They were interrupted.



Our Truths

The 7 sacred Teachings

Before the Settlers

Before the settlers came, our education system was complete. It was holistic. It raised good people, not just good workers. We taught our children to survive, to lead, and to respect.

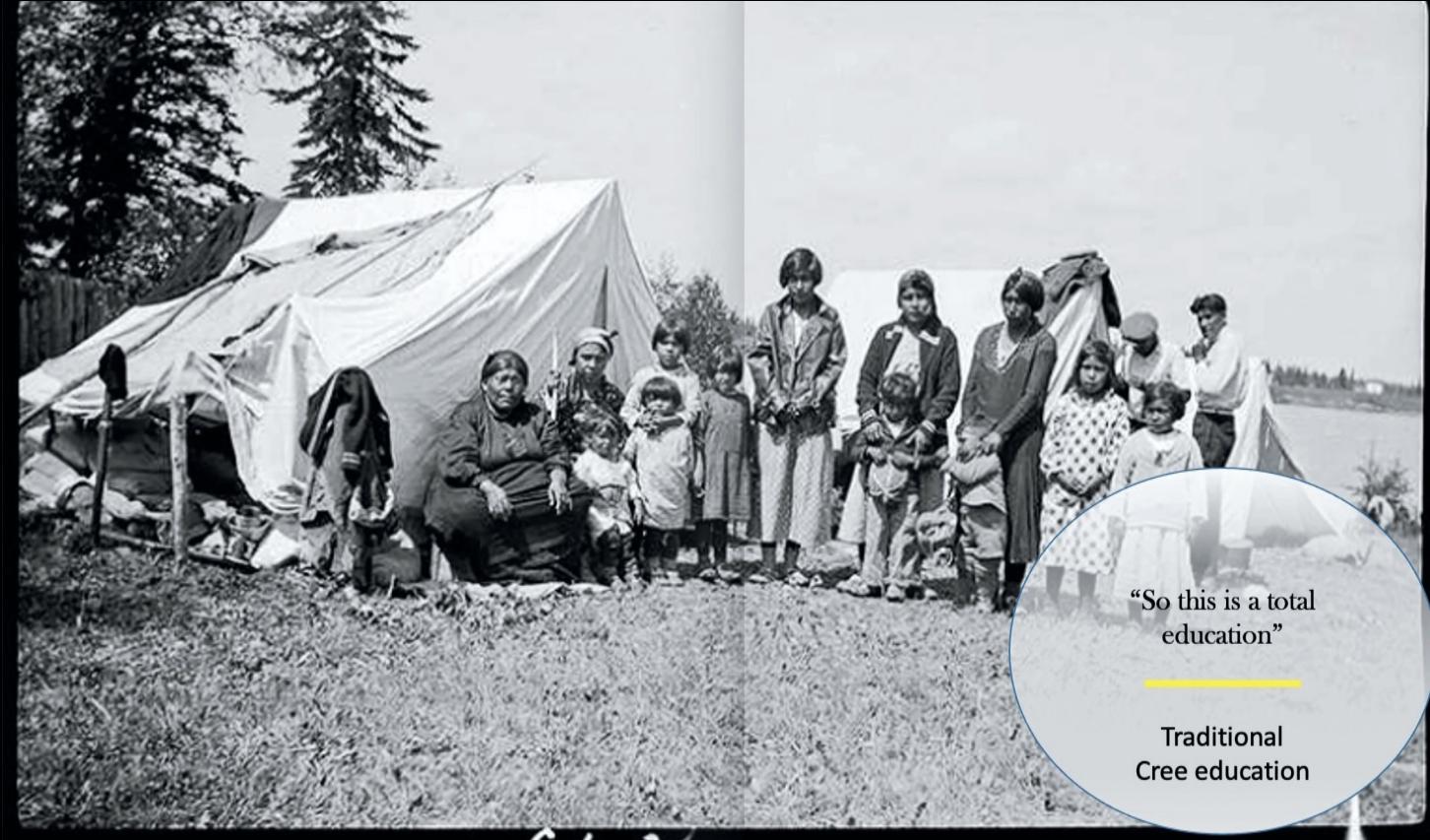


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-C.L. 295.

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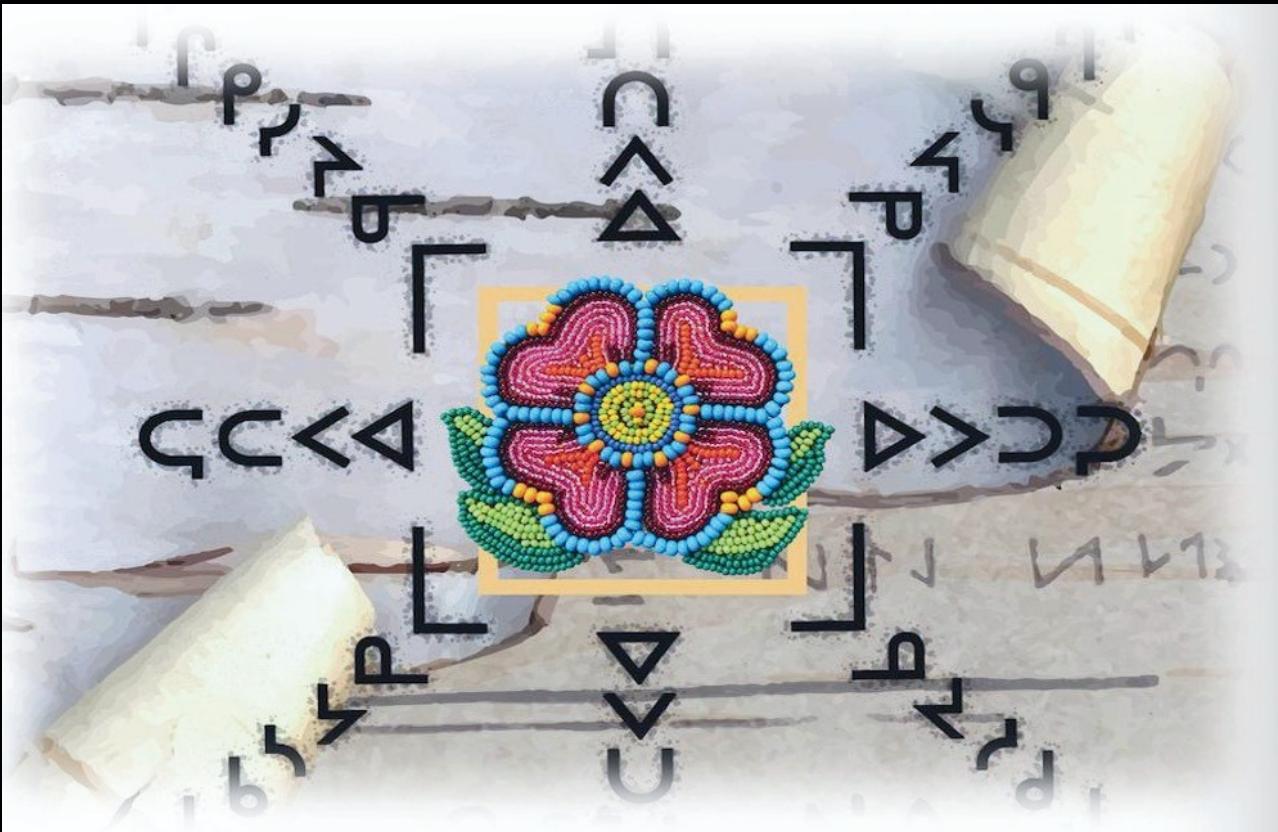
We had a total Education system with a holistic approach to community well-being.



“So this is a total education”

Traditional
Cree education

Traditional Cree education was a total education. It wasn't about testing. It was about living. Learning came from the land, from stories, and from watching those who walked ahead of us.



Language has always formed the basis of all learning in Ininiuak life

Language has always been critical for understanding everything that family, community, and Elders have to teach a child

Our language isn't just how we speak. It's how we think, how we relate, how we understand the world.



- The role of Elders was especially important as children grew with a combination of physical and spiritual training, and a program of storytelling

Without language, our teachings lose their spirit and we lose our connection to the stories our Elders taught us when we were children. That's why it was targeted. And that's why we must reclaim it.

Elder Louis Bird describes
traditional education as a total
education

**Elder Louis Bird said learning had no schedule,
no classroom walls. It was everywhere and
that made it powerful. Our young ones learned
what they needed when they were ready,
through guidance, not punishment.**

- Education had no set space or schedule. Learning and knowledge was all around us. It was constant, and consistent.
- Integration of community, family, the needs of the child laid the foundation for learning.
- Knowledge was presented at the right time and context. This meant teachings were developmentally based and age appropriate
- Children grew into adults through education that taught them respect through example, through legends and other stories, and through the respectful response of older members of their world to their needs

The Treaties

Now we talk about the treaties. When we agreed to share the land, we asked for education. But what we meant, and what was delivered, were two different things.



Yesterday

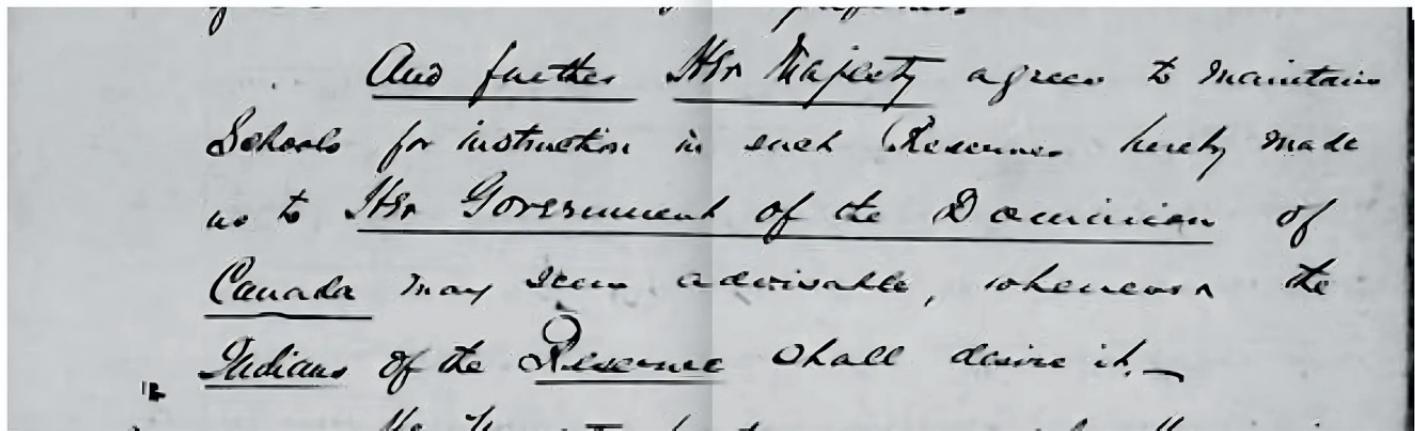
- Before the Settlers
- The Treaties
- Impact of the Settler Rules
- Our Resistance



Our Truths

The 7 sacred Teachings

The 1875 Treaty



And further His Majesty agrees to maintain Schools for instruction in such Reserves hereby made as to His Government of the Dominion of Canada may seem advisable, whenever the Indians of the Reserve shall desire it.

This next section tells the story of what was promised, what was withheld, and how our people continued to push for a meaningful place of learning.

In 1875, Treaty 5 included a promise that schools would be provided on reserves when requested by the community. While this offered access to education, it didn't define the type or quality. Over time, the government interpreted it through a colonial lens shifting away from indigenous values and ways of learning.



In 1876, the Cross Lake Band of Indians asked the government for a teacher as per the governmental mandate of the time. George Garrioch was hired by a local Methodist missionary to open a Methodist school.

- In 1876, The Band asked for the government to provide a teacher.

- George Garrioch was asked to open a school by the local Methodist missionary.

- The school's focus was to concentrate on the basics of education (reading, writing, arithmetic)

- Families chose to send their children to school and school attendance was not mandatory nor did it make up for community teaching and learning.

We as a people have always wanted a meaningful place of learning for our community.

Reports from the time show the government knew what our community needed, but dragged their feet. Scarcity of provisions, poor construction, and broken promises became a common theme.

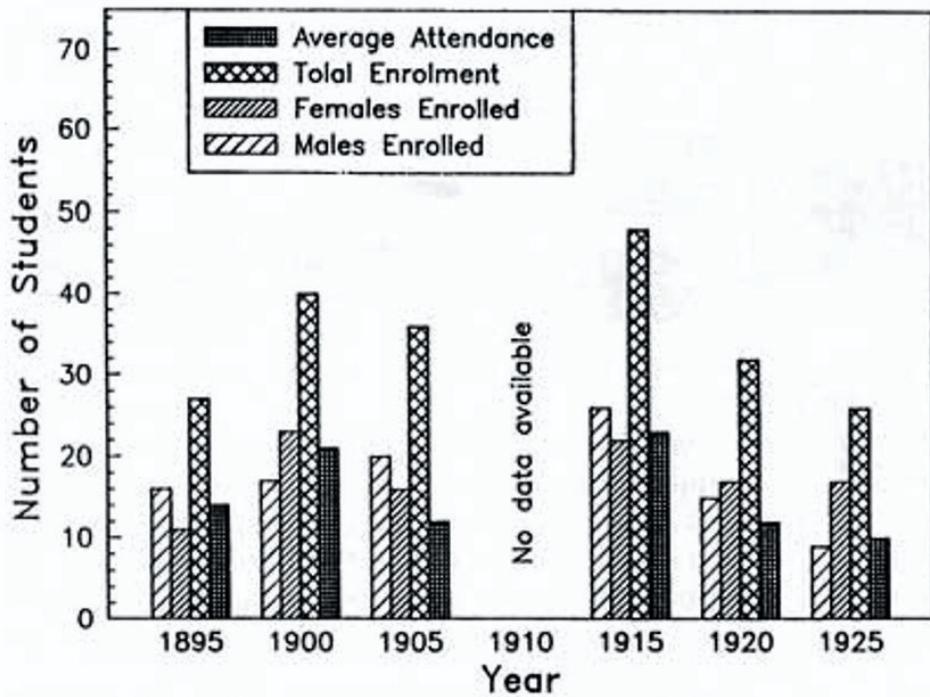
The Indian Agent in a report provided to the government in 1882- 1883 stated the following:

- As of 1882, “The Indians ask for a school teacher. They have not put up the school house as they had promised to do, on account of scarcity of provisions.”
- As of 1883, “Only the frame of the school house was erected last summer, but the logs for the walls were lying cut in the woods.”
- “The agent hired George Garrioch, the councillor, to teach in a private building”.

1903, Indian Agent John Semmens reported:

- “Attendance at the day schools is also very unsatisfactory, owing, principally, to the migratory character of the parents who live largely by the chase and must needs be here and there.”

CROSS LAKE ENROLMENTS AND ATTENDANCE



Attendance was always tied to our way of life, seasonal, connected to the land. Officials didn't understand. They called it irregular, but it was a life lived in balance with the earth. Education needs to reflect that, not fight it.

In 1904,
Indian Agent T.J. Fleetham
noted that the Catholic
mission had recently opened
a day school on the reserve.

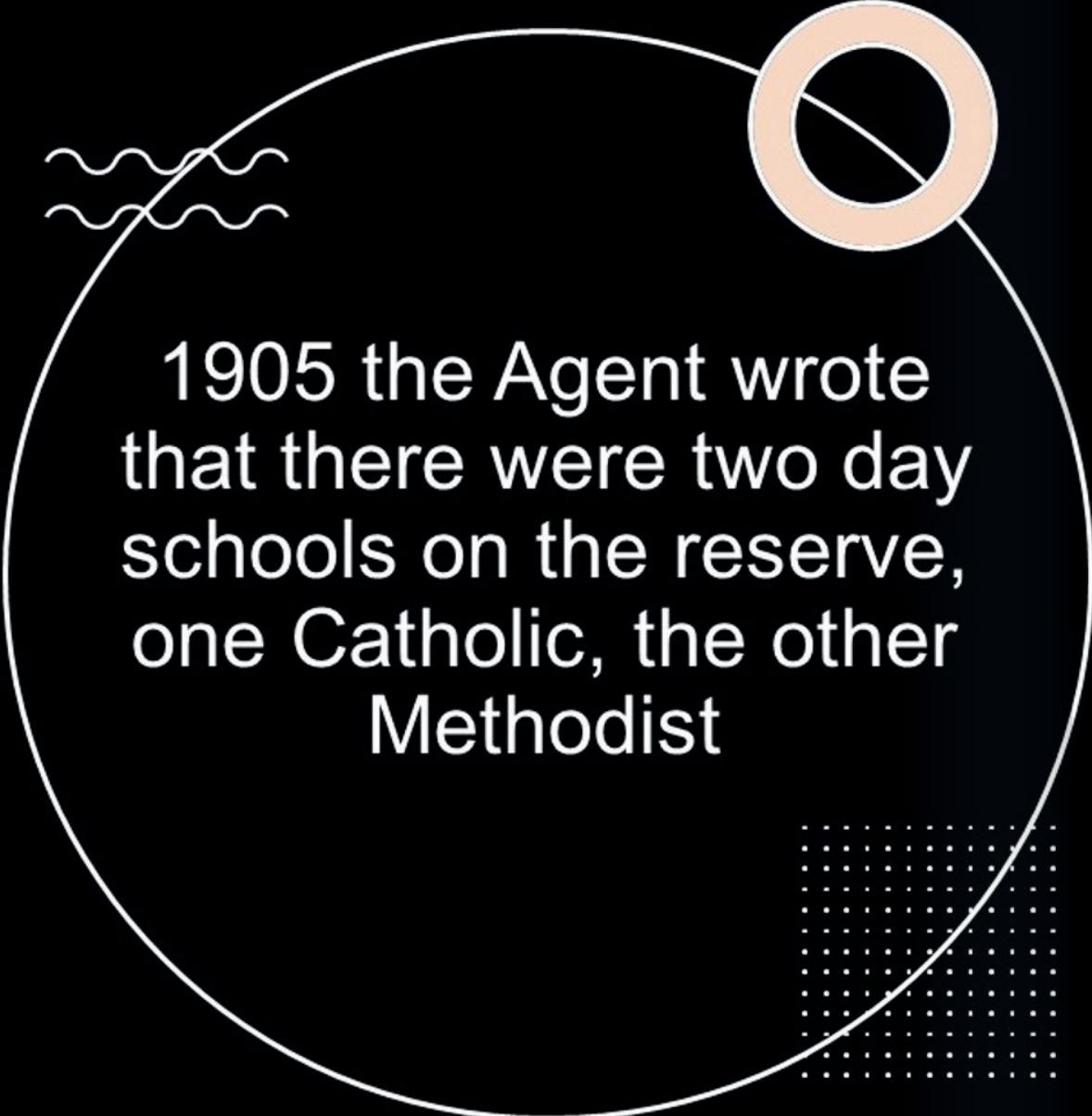
- The school room was about 20 by 21 feet
- An inspection report that year noted that the building was too small
- About twenty children, under the supervision of the missionary, who ensured they attended regularly were enrolled.

- Reading Levels of Students Collected During that time

Table 2.
Levels of achievement of Cross Lake students

Year	Standard							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1895	24	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
1900	24	6	6	4	0	0	0	0
1905	25	4	7	0	0	0	0	0
1910	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1915	33	7	4	0	0	4	0	0
1919	20	8	7	3	0	0	0	0
1925	16	7	3	0	0	0	0	0

Even as the Catholic Church built a day school in 1904, they didn't build trust. The rooms were too small. Supervision was strict. Learning felt like control. But, our people still tried to make the best of what was offered.



1905 the Agent wrote
that there were two day
schools on the reserve,
one Catholic, the other
Methodist

We were never passive. Education was important to us.

- Both were well attended
- Throughout this period various agents also remarked that the community did well fishing, hunting and trapping
- In 1904, the Agent also stated that there was no problem with alcohol in the community

In 1905, there were both the Methodist and Catholic schools, both well attended, and there were no issues with alcohol abuse within the community.

Community members followed community teachings and the need to provide for their families.

1908 to 1912, attendance continues to be based on seasonal activities.

- 1908 the Indian Agent wrote that parents took a strong interest in school matters, but also noted the “irregular attendance of pupils.”
- 1913-1914 the Indian Agent described the community as living in tents much of the year, moving into log buildings only for the winter and spring



From 1908 to 1912, school attendance continued to be based on the seasonal way our community lived. It is noted in reports that parents took strong interest in school matters even though there was irregular attendance from the children. The Indian Agent, in a report from 1913-1914, described families living in tents for the summer and fall and moving into log buildings for the winter and spring which coincides with the seasonal activities that members would have participated in at the time.

In 1912, the Indian Agent complained that there were about 125 children in the Cross Lake Band, but the two day schools on the reserve each had an average attendance of only about 8 pupils, or 16 students in total

In 1912, the community had 125 school age children who could attend one of two schools: the Methodist, or the Catholic school. Only 16 chose to attend.

Year	Cross Lake Methodist School	Catholic Day School
1912	Good Teacher	Poor Teachers
	Poor Building	Good Building
Average Regular Attendance		
1912	8	8
1914	15	4
1916	23	5 (changed to semi boarding school)
1917	15	70 (Boarding school with students from other communities)

The Methodist School had a reputation for having a good teacher even though the building was poor and attendance improved over the next four years. The Catholic School had poor teaching staff and saw a drastic reduction in attendance even though the building was in good repair. This led to the school transitioning from a day school to boarding school where students from other communities came to learn in 1917.

The Impact

The history of education in Cross Lake has had a significant impact on the community and its members. That impact still influences our educational choices and how we perceive education today.



Yesterday

- Before the Settlers
- The Treaties
- Impact of the Settler Rules
- Our Resistance



Our Truths

The 7 sacred Teachings

The Shift to Boarding Schools

1895-1969



make copy

127762

Cross Lake No 5 Reserve
January 2nd 1895.

We the undersigned chief and councillors
of this Cross Lake Reserve in response
to the proposition of the Department
of Indian Affairs, re sending of children
to the Brandon Industrial school, made
through the Rev. John Summers beg to
state:

We are unwilling to permit our children
to go so far away from home to a
place which we can never hope to
visit in case of their sickness or death;
If it were at Rosway House we should be glad,
we should be glad of the opportunity
but cannot consent to send them to
a place unknown to any of us.

We have agreed also with Thomas
Balfour chief of Rosway House Band
that his children and ours would
be better all together in a school
situated at Rosway House or some
adjacent place on Lake Winnipeg
and Ross Chief ^{Henry John & Mackay (T. & A.)}
and ^{Mark} Ross Chief Councilor Happy Jack

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6255, File 576-1, part 1)

In 1895, there was a governmental shift from providing a local day school for children to attend to having students leaving the community in order to learn at a boarding school away from their families.

Even before the residential school at Cross Lake was built, other children from the community were being sent away to residential schools far from home

- In 1895, Brandon Residential School principal John Semmens travelled to the north to recruit students for his new school in Brandon. In response, the Chief and Council of the Cross Lake Band wrote a letter expressing their discomfort with the idea of sending their children so far away. If they must send their children to a boarding school to attend school all year, the government could at least build one at Norway House, closer to their families, they said.
- When George Frog died at the Brandon school in 1903, he had already been a pupil there for over 5 years
- Annuity pay lists show children being sent to Brandon before 1900



**Before Cross Lake had a residential school, our children
were sent far from home. Some never came back.
George Frog died in Brandon after five years away.
That wasn't education, that was colonialism and a goal
of assimilation over acceptance.**

In a 1917 report, the local Indian Agent described the poor day school conditions on the reserve

In 1917, the local government agent described the poor school conditions, a dedicated teacher, and students willing to learn.

School

in winning the confidence and loyalty of her pupils. The Day school at Cross Lake was in charge of Miss M. Foster as teacher, the work here is handicapped on account of the accommodation utilised for the school, the classes are assembled in a rather small room, that is cold and which affords very little, if any, comfort for the teacher or pupils. Miss Foster was very conscientious in the discharge of her duty, and under difficulties mentioned, performed good work. For a new school building at Cross Lake, ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ sufficient logs are on hand to build the walls, and I intimated to the people, that if they put up the log block, that I was of the opinion that the Department would seriously consider giving assistance to complete the work, and that I would mention this fact to the Department in my report. If this suggestion can be taken into consideration, I am sure it would assist

In his report, he suggested that if the community were to recover the building materials and lay the foundation, he was sure that the government would give assistance in the completion of the school.

Between 1916 and 1923, there were
an average of about 86
pupils at the Cross Lake
Residential school

**By 1923, Cross Lake had a residential school with
an average of 86 students in attendance.**



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À l'arrière-plan est une vue de l'École de Cross Lake et quelques bâtiments. Au premier plan on voit deux hommes dans un canot sur un lac, un quai est au centre de la photographie. V1307. St Boniface Historical Society.

Indian Residential School:
1912-1969

[official dates as agreed to in the

Indian Residential Schools
Settlement Agreement

where

The Canadian Government

controlled the school through funding]



Youth from our community attended Indian Residential School between 1912 and 1969. These dates were agreed upon in the settlement agreement whereby it was acknowledged the harm the Canadian Government inflicted due to their control using government funding.

In 1920, amendments to
the Indian Act
required that all
children in treaty attend some sort of
school until the
age of 15

In 1920, schooling became mandatory under the Indian Act. What began as a request became a requirement.



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The system became more rigid, more forceful.



Summer school activities for Indian children at Cross Lake United are programmed by summer student supply in Manitoba. Cross Lake Reserve is nearby.

Over time, officials enforced the mandatory education provision of the Indian Act more and more.

Over time officials enforced
the mandatory education
provision of the Indian Act
more and more

Day school wasn't always an option. If children couldn't travel back and forth, they had to board. It was that or no education. Families tried to avoid it where they could.

- Some children who lived on reserve near a school could have attended a day school.
- Some families, living on the land, avoided sending their children to school, or sent their children only when they were in the area of the day school
- For children who lived too far away to come and go every day, this meant boarding school, separated from their family and community.

1930 Fire

- In 1930, the Cross Lake Residential School was destroyed in a catastrophic fire that took the lives of twelve children and closed the school until it could be rebuilt
- During this time some children were taken to a make-shift facility at Norway House where they lived in a converted outbuilding and attended a day school at Norway House.
- In 1930, after the fire, there were about 12 students boarding with the Sisters at Cross Lake, and 12 at Norway House in what was now called the Jack River Annex
- In 1932 to 1933 there were about 6 students at Cross Lake and 5 at Jack River Annex
- Bottom left shows the building used after the fire until the school building was rebuilt a decade later



In 1930, the Cross Lake Residential School was destroyed in a catastrophic fire that claimed the lives of twelve children. Children were then boarded at Norway House and attended Day School.

Return to Norway House (Jack River Annex)

Even after the school was rebuilt ten years later, students from Cross Lake were still sent to the Jack River Annex in Norway House due to overcrowding and limited infrastructure. 85 - 95 students attended Cross Lake Residential School at that time.

- After the Cross Lake Boarding School was rebuilt, from 1940 to 1943, all boarding students lived at the rebuilt Cross Lake Residential School.
- In 1943, some children returned to the Norway House facility because of overcrowding at Cross Lake
- In 1960, the Jack River Annex was separated from the Cross Lake operations, and declared a “hostel,” where children lived while attending local day school.
- During this time, the number of students at Cross Lake Residential School ranged from about 85 to about 95

we hope that the Indian act, in the law should be changed, this coming year.
next year of the Catholics run the day school again. I will put my children in a protestant day school. I would not care if he put me out the church as long my children will not have to pray. I want them to have some thing that will help them future. At last.
Yours truly
Belle Ross

Take principle is putting the protestant children in day school and he does not want us to let our children in a protestant day school. He said he will put us out of church we Catholic. The government that put the day school on the Reserve and was run by a protestant. I put my children in it. The Father that made like a talking about it fighting me. I put my children in a protestant day school. I was nine years in a Residential school all I have to pray the children that went in that school they have no orderly education. These children I put them in school when the government will run the schools himself and if he will take all the

schools away from the church. we could see the children that did not come in a Catholic school they have English to talk and good education and here in Cross Lake Boarding school they make the children have to pray and make them learn my Creek language to write. and hope that the government will here the school that he has give the Indian children we don't blame the government for it is the ones that run the school in the priests and the doctors. please talk for us and try succeed to take all the schools away from the church. I hope you will come and answer me very

W. Berger, Jr. P
as we have heard and
I have to talk about this meeting that
they are go to have in Ottawa
and we heard that you are going to talk
to us the Committee
I have some thing to tell you to bring
up for the meeting
we are Indians we are mixed up
in the Indian Act.
and the schools
let say Indian act. that Catholic
child should go in a Catholic school
and protestant in school.
this Indian act is not just
at all.
We wish the government should
take all the schools away from the
church there in Cross Lake.

1946 Bello Ross addresses issues in education

In 1946, Bello Ross wrote a powerful letter to the House of Commons speaking out against the injustices in the education system imposed on his community. He condemned the substandard conditions of the Cross Lake Residential School then operated by the Catholic Church arguing that it focused solely on prayer rather than providing a real education. Ross cited the separate schools clause of the Indian Act calling it an unjust document but one that even so recognized the right of parents to choose which school their children attended. He emphasized that this right was being denied as the Catholic school running the residential school prevented students from enrolling in the community's day school. Ross' advocacy was a bold assertion of community rights, parental authority and educational dignity. His letter is an early powerful example of First Nations leadership pushing back against government and church control over Indigenous children's lives and learning.

**In 1945, Canada introduced
Family Allowances
For families to receive Family
Allowance benefits, children
had to attend school regularly**

**Increased school attendance
was not supported by
increased infrastructure,
leading to significant issues**



In 1945, Family allowances were introduced but with strings attached. To get the support, kids had to be in school. Attendance became a condition, not a choice, yet infrastructure didn't improve.

“School attendance greatly increased during the year. This was largely due to the regulations in connection with Family Allowances”

- In 1947, the Indian Agent in charge of the Norway House Agency reported that:
- “All schools are filled to capacity, and additional accommodation will be supplied as materials become available....”

The system kept growing even as the buildings failed.

North Indians Dispatch 'Envoy' For New Films

Bello Ross, president of the community club at Cross Lake, about 50 miles north of Norway House, visited Winnipeg last week to arrange for supplies of films to be sent to the remote northern settlement. Twenty Indians run their own theatre at Cross Lake reserve settlement. They built their own hall with their own power saws. Films are shown weekly and profits go to the development of the community. Each member gives 15 muskrat pelts to the fund each year to cover depreciation of equipment. Club members are anxious to prove to the Dominion government they are "anxious to help themselves to help provide better living conditions and education" for all occupants of the settlement.

Bishop Dumouchel
The Pas, Manitoba.

UNDERSTAND SHOW HALL AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOL AT SAGITAWACK STOP ARE YOU
WILLING TO RENT TEACHER LIVING QUARTERS AT CHURCH STOP MISS DUHE BEING
APPOINTED

C. H. Marcoux
Regional Inspector of School (Indian) for
Manitoba

Education.—All schools are filled to capacity, and additional accommodation will be supplied as materials become available. Six new schools were opened in the Norway House Agency. In the Portage Agency, a new day school was opened at Dauphin River on a share basis between the Provincial Government and the Department. This was operated under a board of three Indians and one half-breed with excellent results. School attendance greatly increased during the year. This was largely due to the regulations in connection with Family Allowances. Family Allowances have been most helpful to the Indian

Understand Show Hall Available for School: Classroom space crisis worsens and community struggles as enrollments increase and makeshift classrooms are scattered across the community

Classrooms were patched together. Children learned in churches, overcrowded spaces, and dangerous conditions.

“The integration of Indian children into provincial schools, once so hopefully regarded, has not settled the issue.”

- Beginning in the late 1950s, the federal government began to shift its emphasis away from residential schools to having younger students attend day schools on reserve.
- Older students in the higher grades still had to leave the reserve, but now they were increasingly either boarded at a student residence or with a private family and attended provincial public schools
- But as the Hawthorne Report noted in 1967, these moves did not meet the needs of children, families, or communities, noting that
- While it offers an identical education to the Indian child, some of his needs are different from those of most non-Indian children and are not met by the existing programs

At the start of the 1950's, the government began integrating First Nations students into the provincial school system. Younger children stayed on reserve in day school, while older students would be sent to urban public schools often boarded in residences or private homes.

Though the education was equal on paper, the experience wasn't.

By 1967, the Hawthorne report confirmed what communities already knew. It didn't meet the needs of Indigenous students.

1957 to 1960

**Overcrowding and the use of
improvised classrooms continue**

In 1957, the newly constructed Roman Catholic Saggitawuk Day School building, which had only been completed about 1950, was destroyed by fire. Fortunately, the 38 pupils in the school at the time were all safely evacuated.

- In 1957, the newly constructed Roman Catholic Saggitawuk Day School building, which had only been completed about 1950, was destroyed by fire. Fortunately, the 38 pupils in the school at the time were all safely evacuated.

- The teacher and her husband relocated to the nearby church building and resumed teaching almost immediately

- By 1960 there were, once again, a Catholic and a United Church day school on the reserve, although some Catholic students were attending the United Church School as the Catholic school was full.

“I gave you a piece of land... I am taking this land back.” : Bello Ross pushes back

- Dear Sir: The following is a submission sent me by Chief Bello Ross of Cross Lake, Man.
- Last year a band meeting was held and those present were Mr. White and Superintendent Mr. Stanton to discuss the school site in my reserve, a site was chosen and a foundation was dug, and now Father [Chamberlain?] of the RC Mission removed the school site and we strictly object to the movement made by the Roman Catholic Priest
- we made the agreement with the Dept. of Indian Affairs and not the missionary, therefore
- we a [urging?] our request that the school be built where the chief council and Band have chosen for its site.

In the early 1960's, Chief Bello Ross stood firm against interference from the Catholic Church. He reminded officials that the agreement to build a new school was between the Band and the Department of Education.

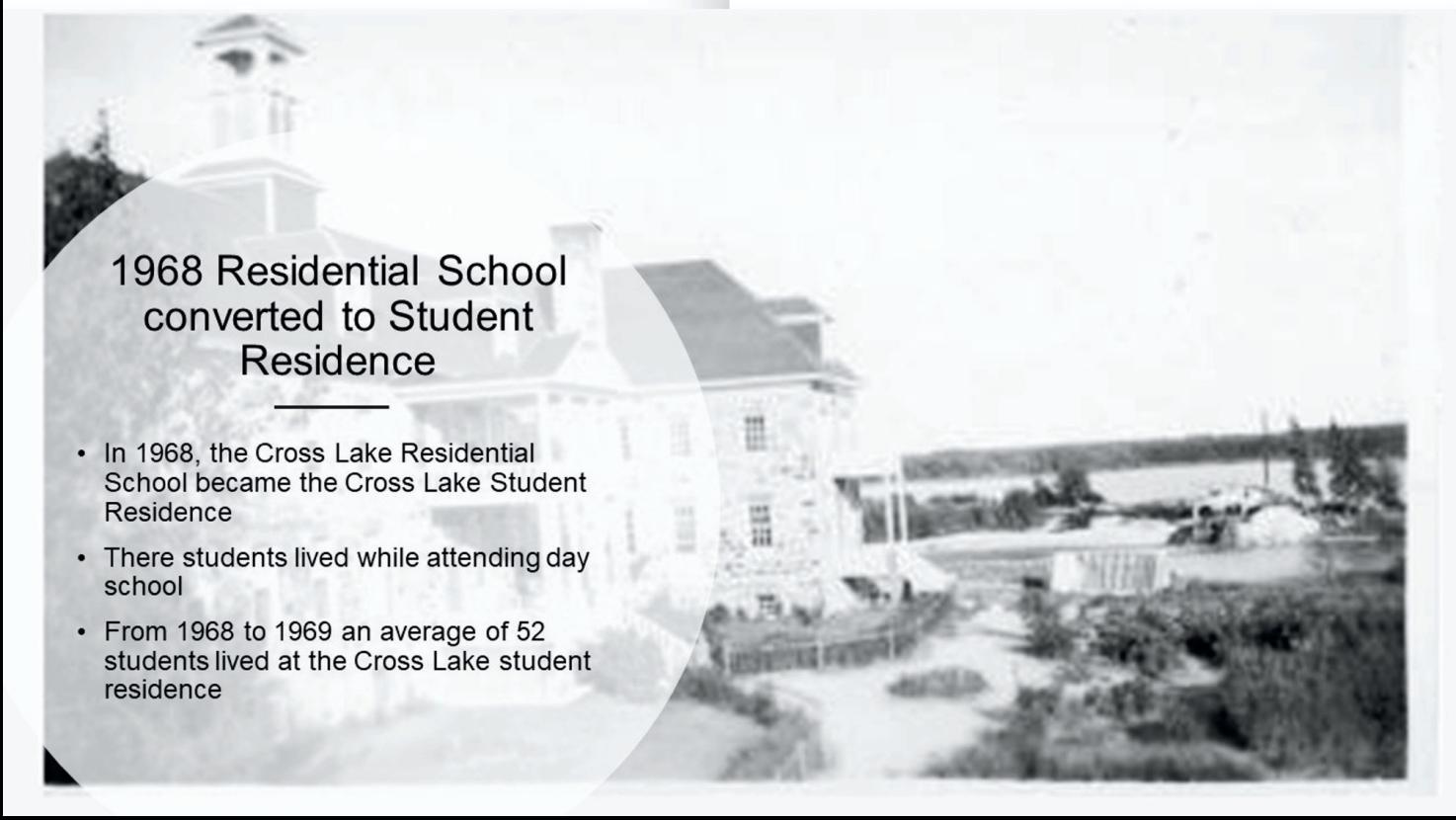
Re: BUILDING SITE - R.C. INDIAN
DAY SCHOOL - CROSS LAKE.

I would refer you to our recent interview at Cross Lake Reserve with Father Chamberland and Chief Bello Ross concerning the site for a proposed new R.C. two-room Indian Day School. You will remember that the Chief and Father Chamberland did not see eye to eye on the location of the site and it was left in your hands to refer to the Department. Apparently, since we left the Reserve, Father Chamberland has again been talking to the Chief and I gather the Chief is not very pleased about it. Attached you find copy of a letter from Chief Bello Ross addressed which is self explanatory.

Some time ago Father Chamberland requested, from the Band, the use of a piece of land for the purpose of a Church on the reserve. This request was sent at Ottawa, through the regular channels, to the Band Council.

The following is a submission from Chief Bello Ross of Cross Lake, March 1958. In our band meeting our band and the Agent were Mr. Waite and Superintendent Mr. Hanson to discuss the school site in my Reserve, a site was chosen and a foundation was dug, and now Father Chamberlain of the R.C. Mission removed the school site and we strictly object to the movement made by the Roman Catholic Priest, we made the agreement with the Dept. of Indian Affairs and not the Missionary, therefore we are urging our request that the school be built where the Chief, Council and Band have chosen for its site. Request is also made that the Doctor and nurses of the Reserve

A site was chosen, and the foundation dug but the local priest removed it. Chief Ross made it clear, it is the role of Chief and Council to decide what is best for the community including where a school should stand.

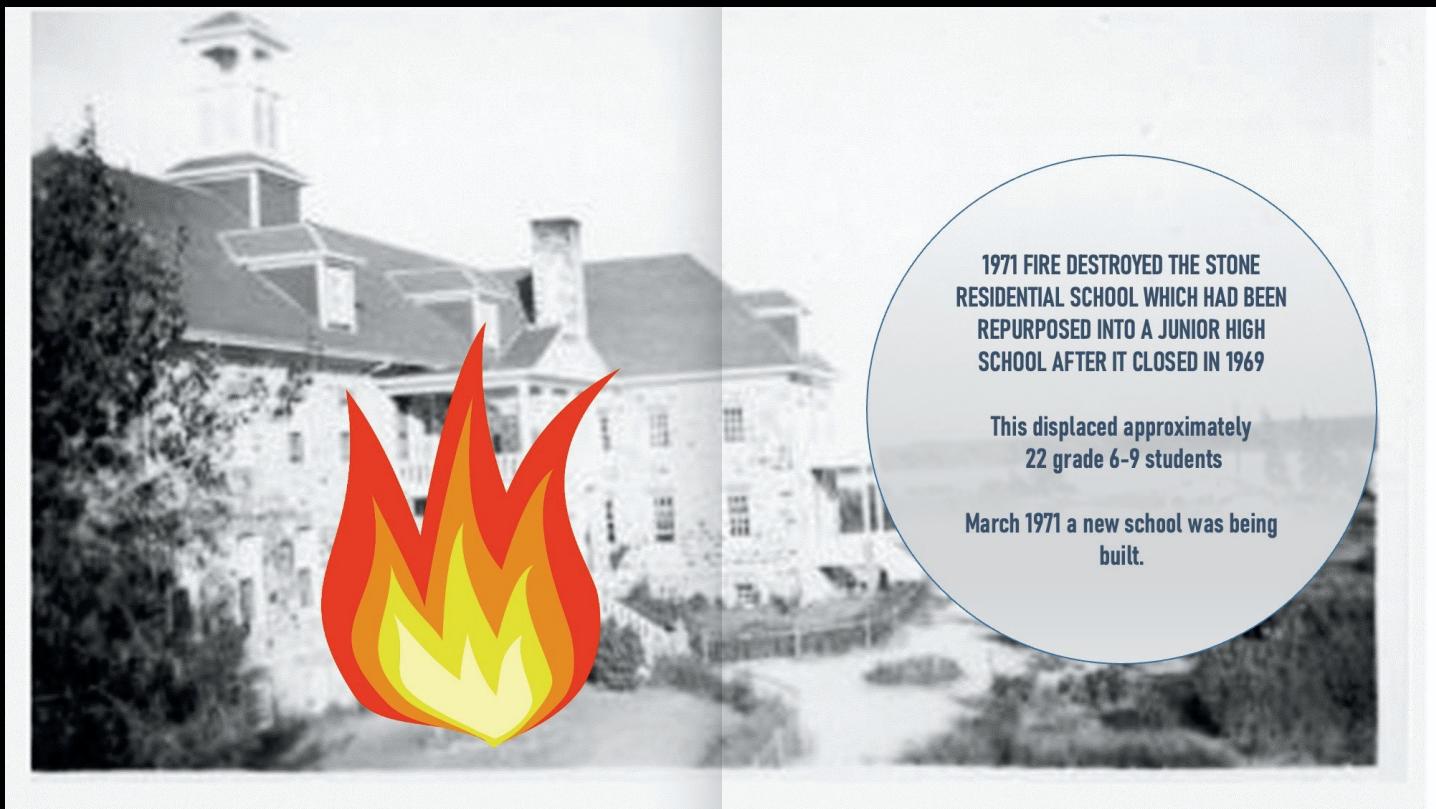


1968 Residential School
converted to Student
Residence

- In 1968, the Cross Lake Residential School became the Cross Lake Student Residence
- There students lived while attending day school
- From 1968 to 1969 an average of 52 students lived at the Cross Lake student residence

In 1968, the Cross Lake Residential School was renamed the Cross Lake Student Residence. While the building no longer operated as a formal residential school, the system remained.

Around 52 students lived there on average attending day school during the day but still separated from their families and culture at night.



1971 FIRE DESTROYED THE STONE
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL WHICH HAD BEEN
REPURPOSED INTO A JUNIOR HIGH
SCHOOL AFTER IT CLOSED IN 1969

This displaced approximately
22 grade 6-9 students

March 1971 a new school was being
built.

In 1969, the Cross Lake Student Residence closed and the building was repurposed as a junior high school. But in January of 1971, a fire destroyed the school displacing about 22 students in grade 6 - 9.

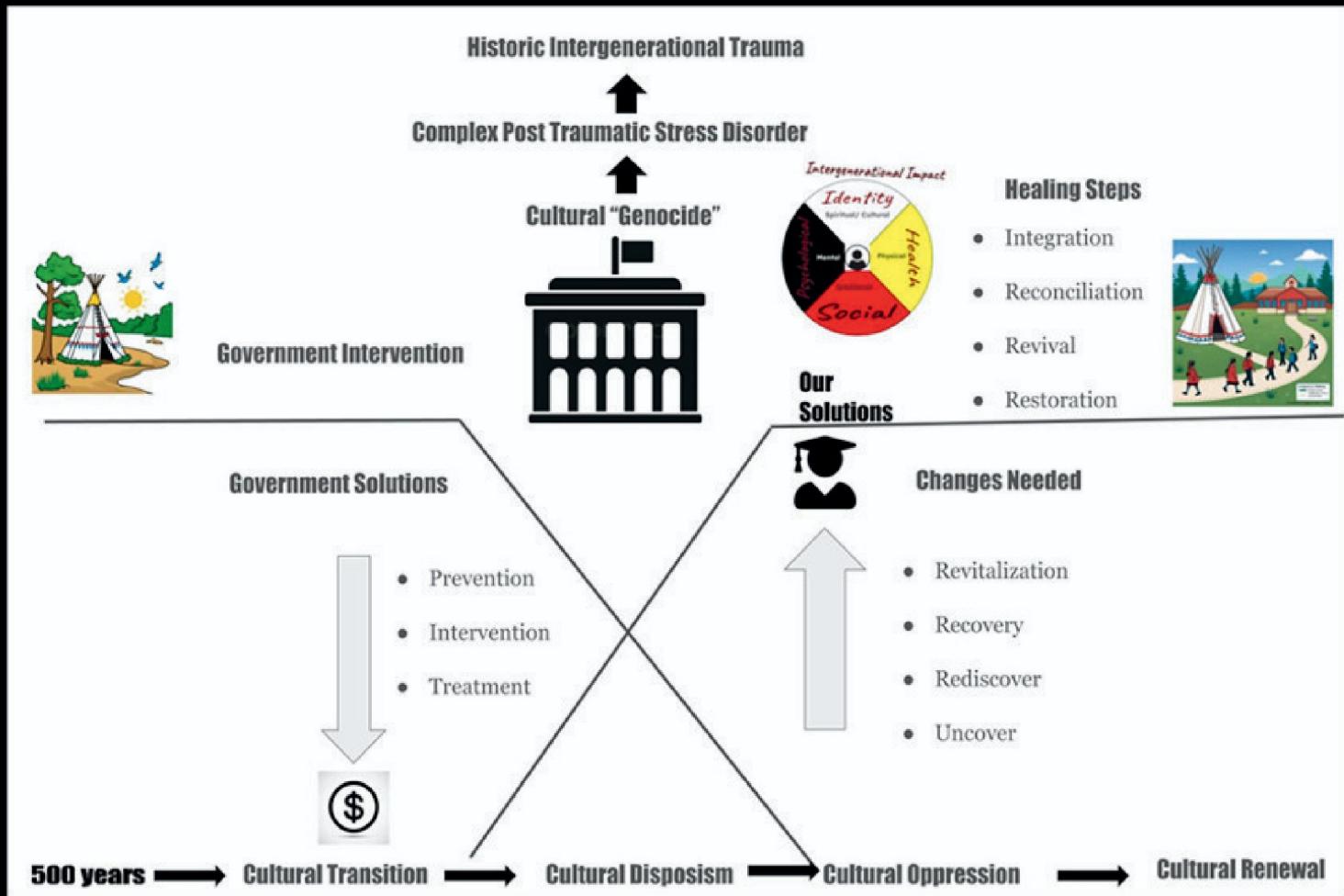
Just two months later, in March, construction began on a new school for the community.

In 1975, fire once again destroyed the new school in Cross Lake.

This left about 400 of the community's 790 students studying in make-shift classrooms

Attendance dropped to about 70% from a pre-fire rate of 75% to 80%

Our Resistance



We as a community have resisted and continued to resist the cultural genocide carried out through the education system. Government interventions have left many of our people carrying deep intergenerational trauma with complex mental health challenges as a result. Their response has been to throw money at symptoms, Prevention, intervention, treatment, without addressing the root causes. Our youth face growing struggles with mental health, physical wellness, cultural identity, and social anxiety. We know the solution doesn't lie in more outside programs. It lies in reclaiming our education. We need to uncover, rediscover, recover and revitalize through healing steps of restoration, revival, reconciliation, and integration on our terms as who we truly are.

- “Our people are just completely fed up with endless red tape, broken promises, and runaround...”
- “In 1967 our...school building burned to the ground. It was a temporary building and we've been waiting ever since for a replacement” Walter Monias

After all, [Indian Affairs] turned back \$1,422,688 unused education dollars to the Treasury Board from the 1982-83 budget that year.

The community had been waiting for a new school since 1967 when their school had burned to the ground. They had been using temporary buildings and were faced with broken promises, red tape, and the government wishing to save money rather than provide an education system the community deserved.

In fact, Indian Affairs returned over a 1,000,000 dollars during the 1982-1983 school year.

In 1983, the community began to fight for an adequate school and vehicle bridge.

The community decided to keep their children home until a meaningful solution could be found.

The move was a concrete statement of the depth of their concern and frustrations that they had endured for decades.

In 1983, the community said no more. We kept our children home not out of defiance but out of love. Students were scattered in thirty buildings. These buildings were unsafe and the students learned in deplorable conditions.

- students were scattered into 30 buildings around the reserve into makeshift spaces that acted like classrooms.

- Classrooms that were poorly maintained, hot in summer, cold in winter, with breaches in structure that allowed snow to blow in, and where children had to wear their parkas in class in the cold months

- Community members were concerned for the safety and wellbeing of the students due to the conditions of the classrooms.

When Monias took Premier Howard Pawley on a tour of some of the reserves classrooms, Pawley told reporters that these were the “poorest” educational accommodation he had seen

Roofs leaked, there were cracks around doors big enough for snow to blow in, and a hole in floor of at least one classroom big enough for child to catch their foot and break a leg, the Premier observed.



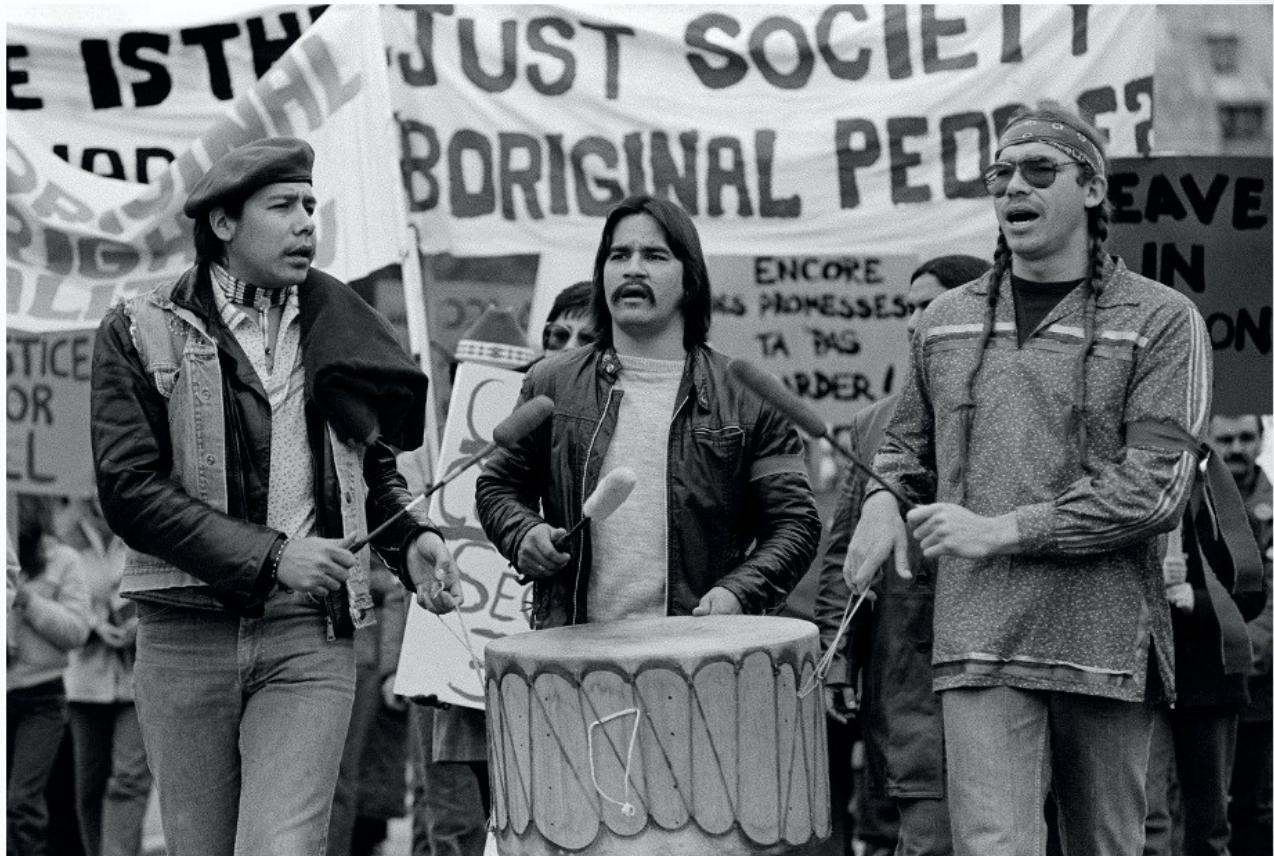
Walter Monias showed the Premier the truth. The system was unsafe, under funded, unfit, but still promises dragged.

- In October of 1983, as Monias negotiated support with Manitoba's Southern Chiefs, Canada announced that a new school for Cross Lake would be placed on the Treasury Board's Agenda.
- Cross Lakers, perhaps recalling that this school had been on the table for well over a decade, were skeptical.
- And as it turned out, their caution was well founded; by the middle of October, the new school was still not on the Treasury Board's agenda.
- By November 1983, work was finally scheduled to start on a new school, and Monias warned that if the government could not keep to its timetable, he would "talk to Indian Affairs capital management branch and arrange a different contractor" (the department had been awarded the contract by Public Works)
- While Treasury Board had approved a budget of \$18 million, by modifying the plans, cutting the cafeteria, and accepting the lowest bid Canada would only have to spend about \$11 million on the project.
- "What makes us so damned mad is that Treasury Board gave that money for our school and not to public works to catch up on their mistakes of the past.... They tell us if we don't go along with these low bids we won't get our school," stated Monias

“They've got a hell of a poor track record, and they've got unfinished work all over the place”

Walter Monias

In October of 1983, Walter Monias continued to push for a new school by negotiating with the Manitoba Southern Chiefs which resulted in the new school being put on the treasury board agenda. However, it wasn't until November of that same year when the process began. Problems arose with the timetable and the government lowballing the bid process. What once was budgeted as an 18 million dollar school ended up being only 11 million. Monias was angered but told that if he didn't go with the lowest bid, they would not get the school for his community.



The 1970's set the stage for First Nations communities across the country to advocate for themselves when it came to education.

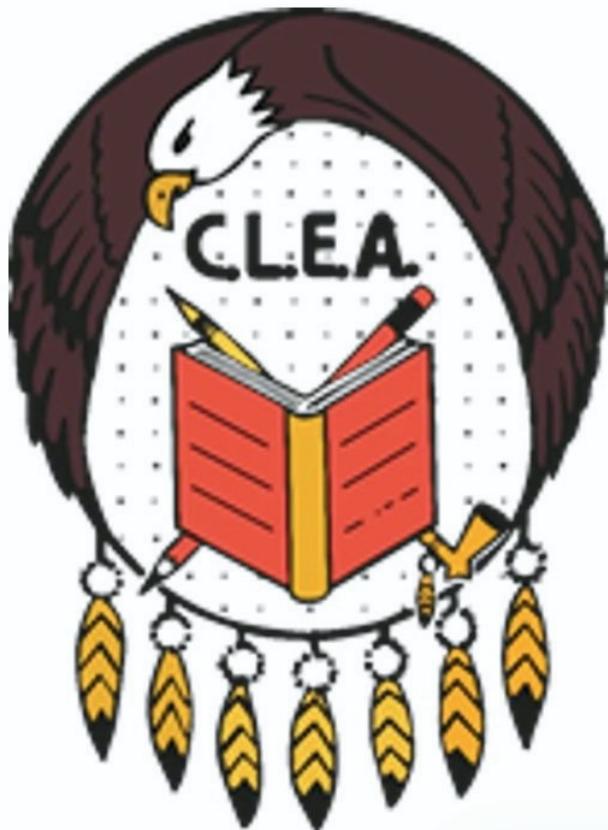
By the 1980's, First Nations Bands began to take control of how their students were educated with Indigenous lead education services and programs including private home placements for students to further their education.

During the late 1970s, many communities began taking back more and more control of the education of their children.

By the early 1980s, education control was shifted to bands, and Indigenous-led education services over saw programs like private home placement.

By 1987, Pimicikamak had established the Cross Lake Education Authority to administer education in its community.

By 1988, the Cross Lake Education Authority was advertising for teachers in local newspapers.



is inviting applications for the following positions to commence September 1, 1988:

**Principal
Vice-principal
Elementary/Secondary Positions
Kindergarten
Business Education**

Interested applicants should possess a Manitoba Teacher Certificate and provide complete documentation including the names of 3 references.
Applications should be mailed to:

Cross Lake Education Authority
P.O. Box 370
Cross Lake, Manitoba
R0B 0J0

Winnipeg Free Press June 18, 1988, 39

In 1987, we created the Cross Lake Education Authority. We reclaimed what was ours: local control, our teachers, our leadership, our voice.

— t a crossroads

Issues still remain, including colonial interventions, chronic under resourcing, and their consequences.

Pimicikamak Cree

cross Lake made national

headlines when

150 people

had killed themselves in

the community and 140

more were

saying they had

no place to go

and to their lives or

suicide. Cross

Lake declared a

state of emergency.

Cross Lake: This Is Where I Live, a documentary airing

on April 7, 9 p.m. on The

Fifth Estate

explores the community to

see what's left of the ground.

Cross Lake's young people

are trying to figure out

what they could

do with their own experiences.

They are getting. Their

lives are getting.

But they have not become attached

to the place they meet sweet, soft-

spoken women who is navigating

the waters of motherhood, she's in

the middle of an 18-month-old son,

and she's trying to care for her child, she tried

to get help from the hospital, but

she was just nine. We meet

Maxine, a young pro-hockey star who

is trying to make his way out of Cross

Lake. And gregarious

Vince, who is trying to pass

the time while beat-

ing the blues that plague his

community. Those in the commu-

nity are trying to help. They are

dealing with their anger and frustra-

tion. For too long, Cross

Lake has been a woefully underserved;

that a community grappling with a suicide emergency had no full-time therapist is outrageous.

The documentary addresses the significant systemic factors that compound this crisis, including the inter-generational trauma of residential schools and colonialism, the construction of a dam in the 1960s that destroyed the land off which the Pimicikamak Cree Nation lived. Now, the unemployment rate hovers at around 80 per cent and the community is overwhelmed by a housing crisis. There are more than 1,000 families on the waiting list for a new house; last year, the federal government gave the First Nation enough money for 12 houses. One family has 11 people living under one roof.

While not explored explicitly in *Cross Lake: This Is Where I Live*, access to birth control appears to be yet another glaring crisis in the community. The arrival of a new baby is bittersweet in Cross Lake. Babies quite literally save the lives of teenage girls who were contemplating suicide, giving them a renewed sense of purpose. But babies also defer dreams. Babies might provide direction, but that direction doesn't lead anywhere but Cross Lake. Two of the girls interviewed had hoped to become mothers some day, but they repeat a common refrain: "I didn't think it would happen so soon." The community is served by only a nursing station, so girls and women must leave their community for two weeks and give birth in Thompson, which is two hours away. Prenatal care also requires travel.

Though parenthood seems like an inevitability for a lot of teenagers in Cross Lake, one particular pregnancy announcement was built up for such dramatic effect by the narration that revealing too much here would practically feel like a spoiler. It's an effective bit of storytelling, to be sure, but it also felt icky — as though they are characters on a soapy CW show, as opposed to real teenagers whose lives are about to be rocked. There's a scene in which the boy is talking about how he can't wait to be a daddy. The expression on the girl's face, meanwhile, is heartbreakingly.

The documentary acknowledges promises of help have been "partially kept" since the state of emergency was declared just more than a year ago, but doesn't get into specifics — such as the fact that Cross Lake received \$40 million from the government in July to build a long-overdue hospital and birth centre.

It'll be five years before the hospital opens its doors and there's so much more to be done. Pimicikamak Chief Cathy Merrick is worried about what will happen when her community loses the nation's attention. "I feel like a beggar in my homeland," she says.

Canada cannot afford to lose sight of Cross Lake and its young, vulnerable residents. Yes, Maxine, Christian and Vince are alive today. But surviving is not the same thing as living.

jen.zoratti@freepress.mb.ca
Twitter: @JenZoratti



Cross Lake: This Is Where I Live

- The Fifth Estate
- CBC
- Friday, April 7, 9 p.m.

TV PREVIEW

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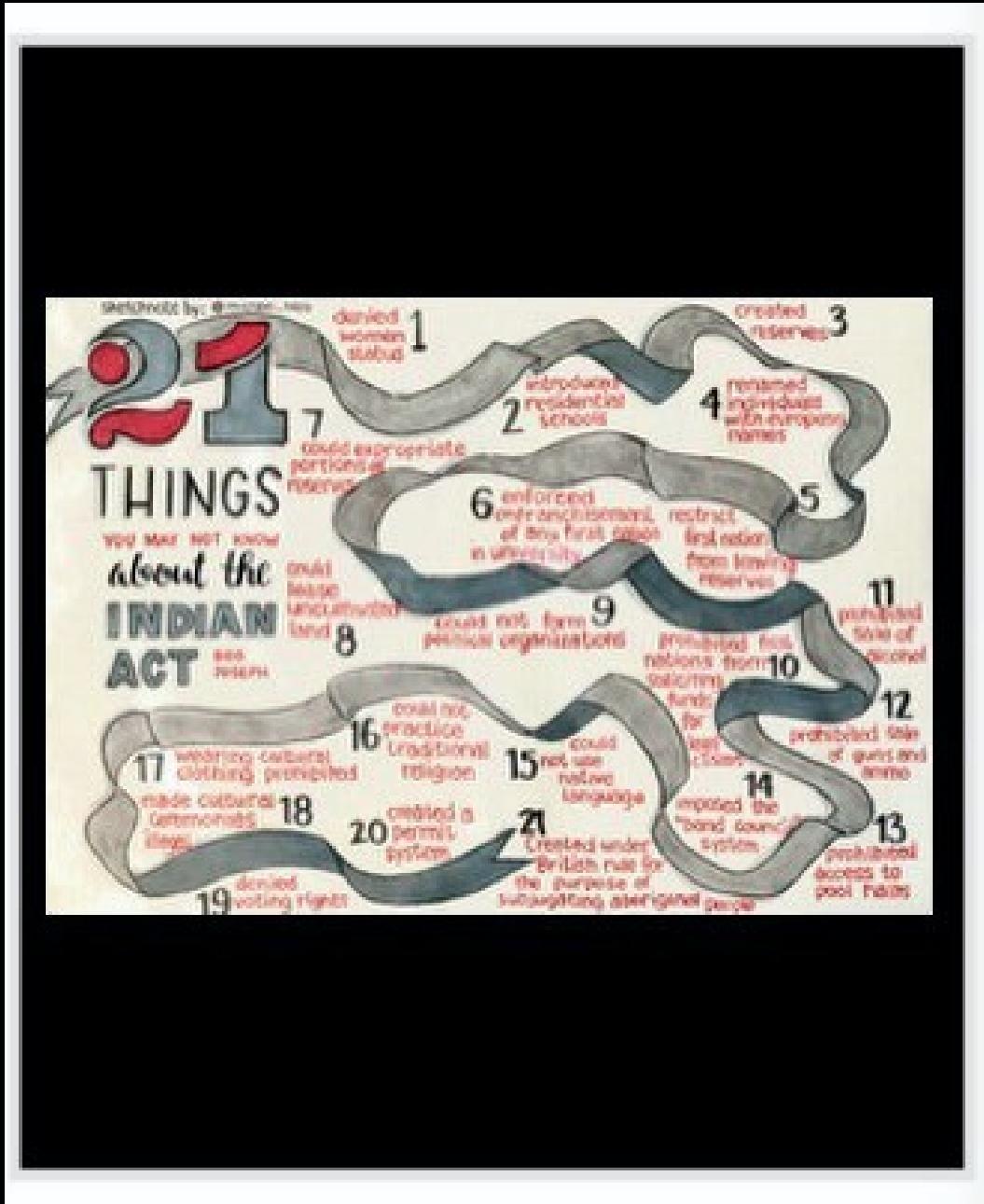
RECORD STORE

RECORD STORE DAY IS
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OPEN EARLY AT 9:30AM

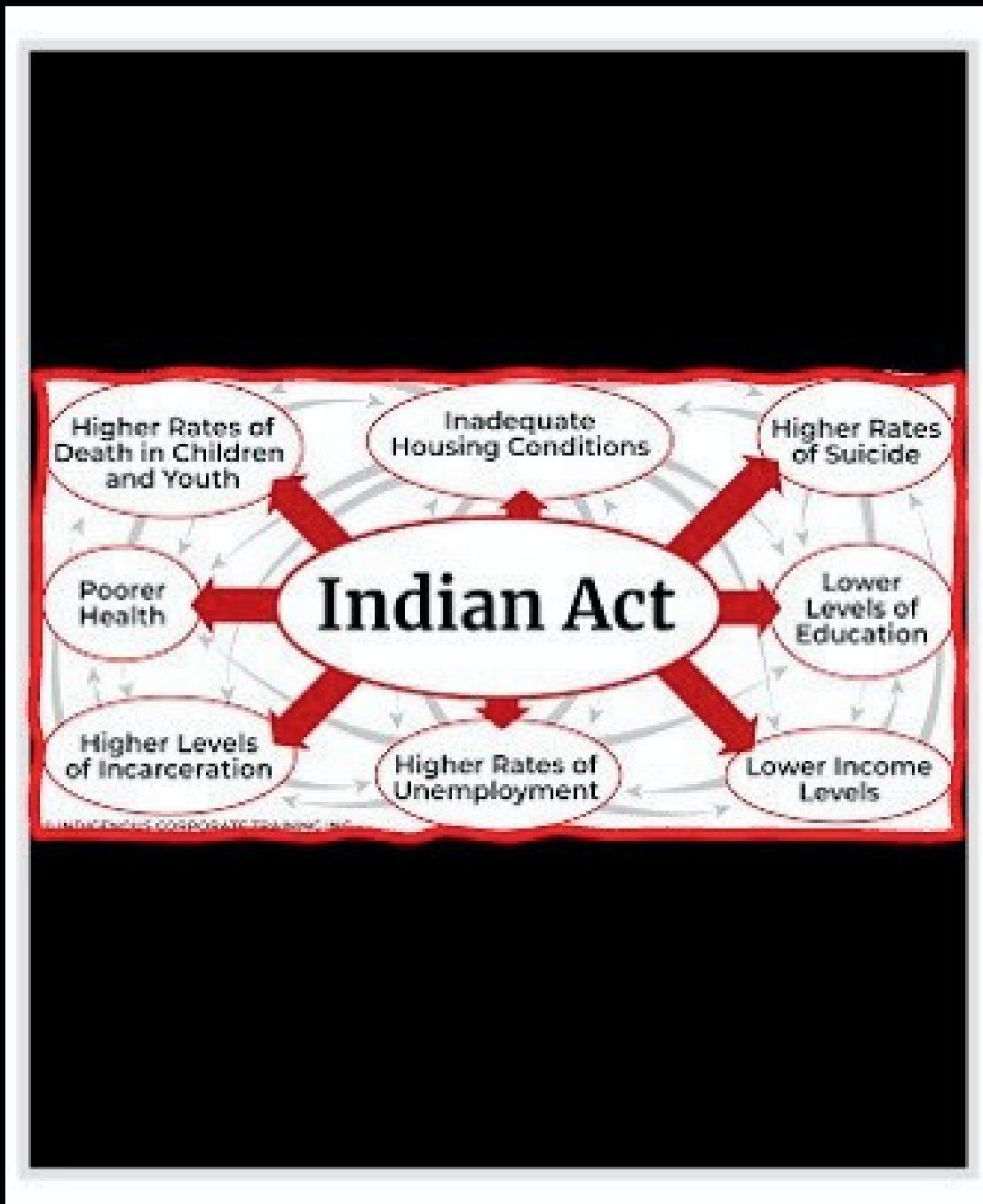
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Today's R

But the damage remained. The system put money before children. It ignored the trauma it created and expected us to carry the cost.



The Indian Act and its history continues to impact our youth today. The Indian Act imposed a colonial system that focused on erasing identity and language as well as providing many First Nations a distrust for education based on their experiences in Residential Schools.



Today, students on reserve face poorer health, higher suicide rates, inadequate housing, gaps in literacy and learning which has deepening barriers to learning and well being.

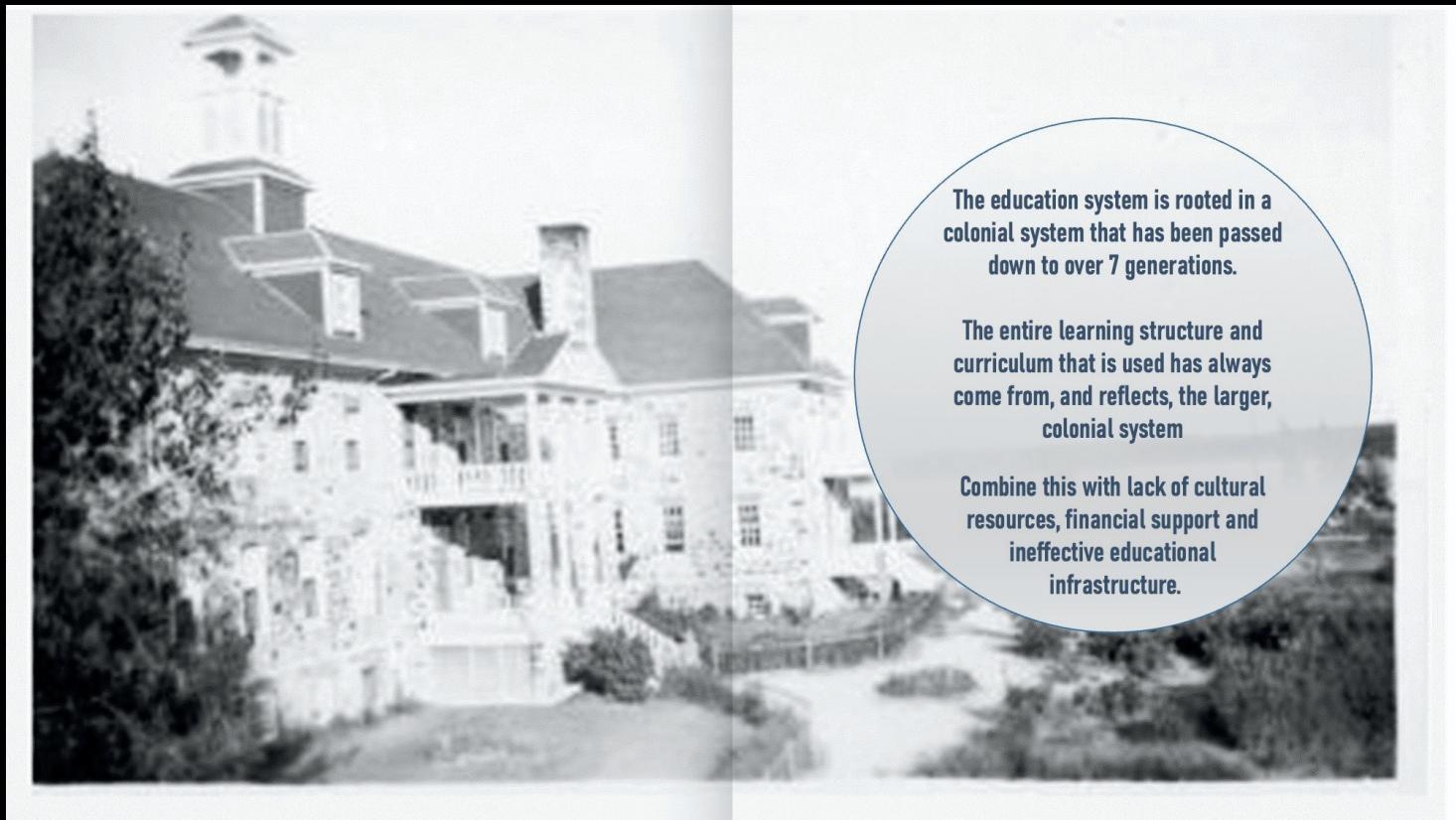
According to Citation 39 & 40 of the Human Rights Tribunal “Canada focused on financial consideration rather than on the best interest of First Nations children and respecting human rights”

Many communities still lack basic resources and support when it comes to health and wellness

- Lack of adequate housing and other infrastructure outside of the school environment affect students' ability to learn and thrive.

- Communities lack adequate resources and support for social, mental, emotional and physical health.

**The Human Rights Tribunal stated that
“Canada focused on financial consideration
rather than on the best interest of First Nations
children and respecting human rights”**



The education system is rooted in a colonial system that has been passed down to over 7 generations.

The entire learning structure and curriculum that is used has always come from, and reflects, the larger, colonial system

Combine this with lack of cultural resources, financial support and ineffective educational infrastructure.

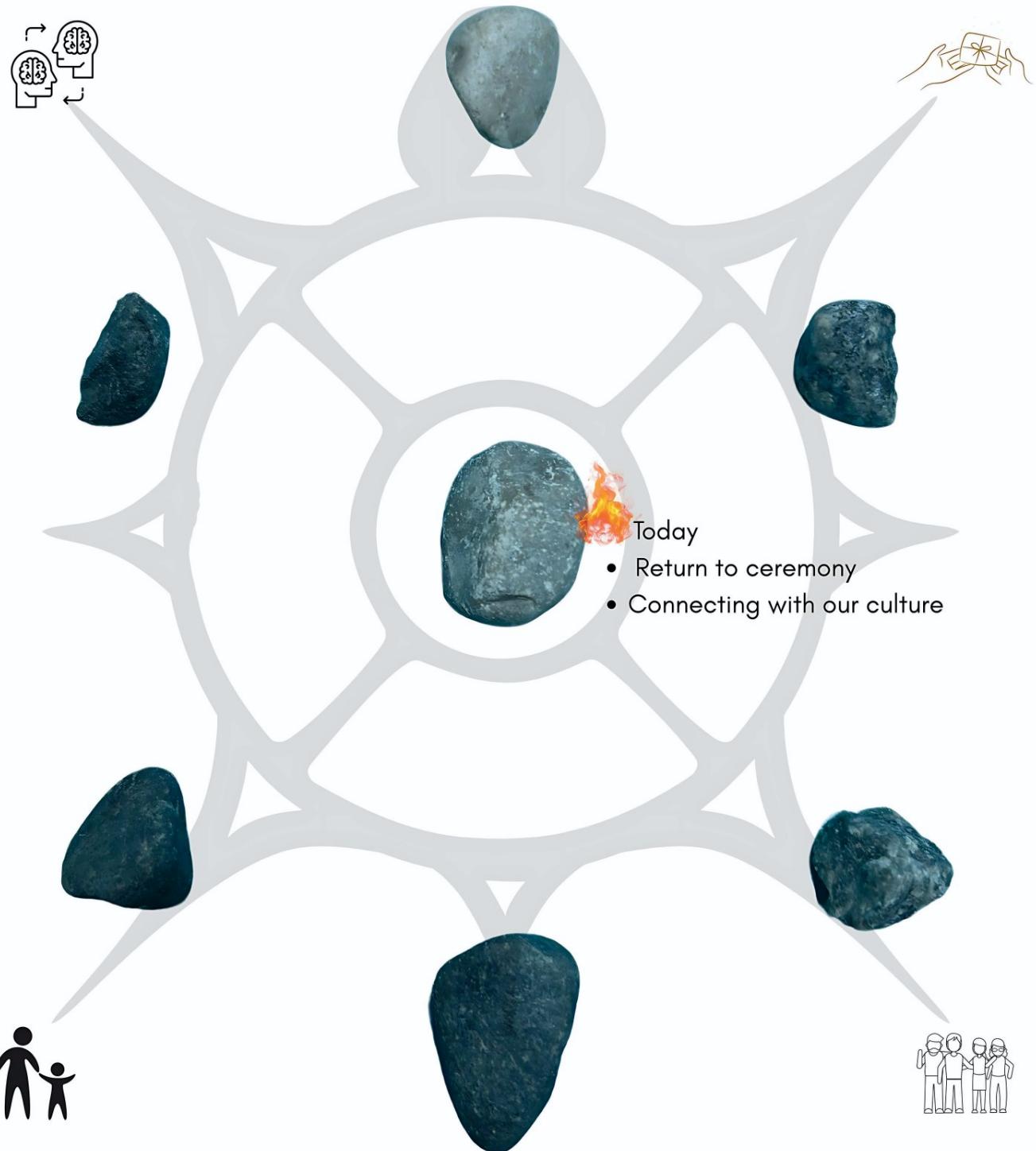
The education system with its learning structure and curriculum is rooted in a colonial system that has been passed down to over seven generations.

Combine this with a lack of cultural resources, financial support, and ineffective educational infrastructure. We know that the system is not working for all youth.

Our Today



**We are returning to ceremony, to relevance, to a way
of learning that reflects who we are**

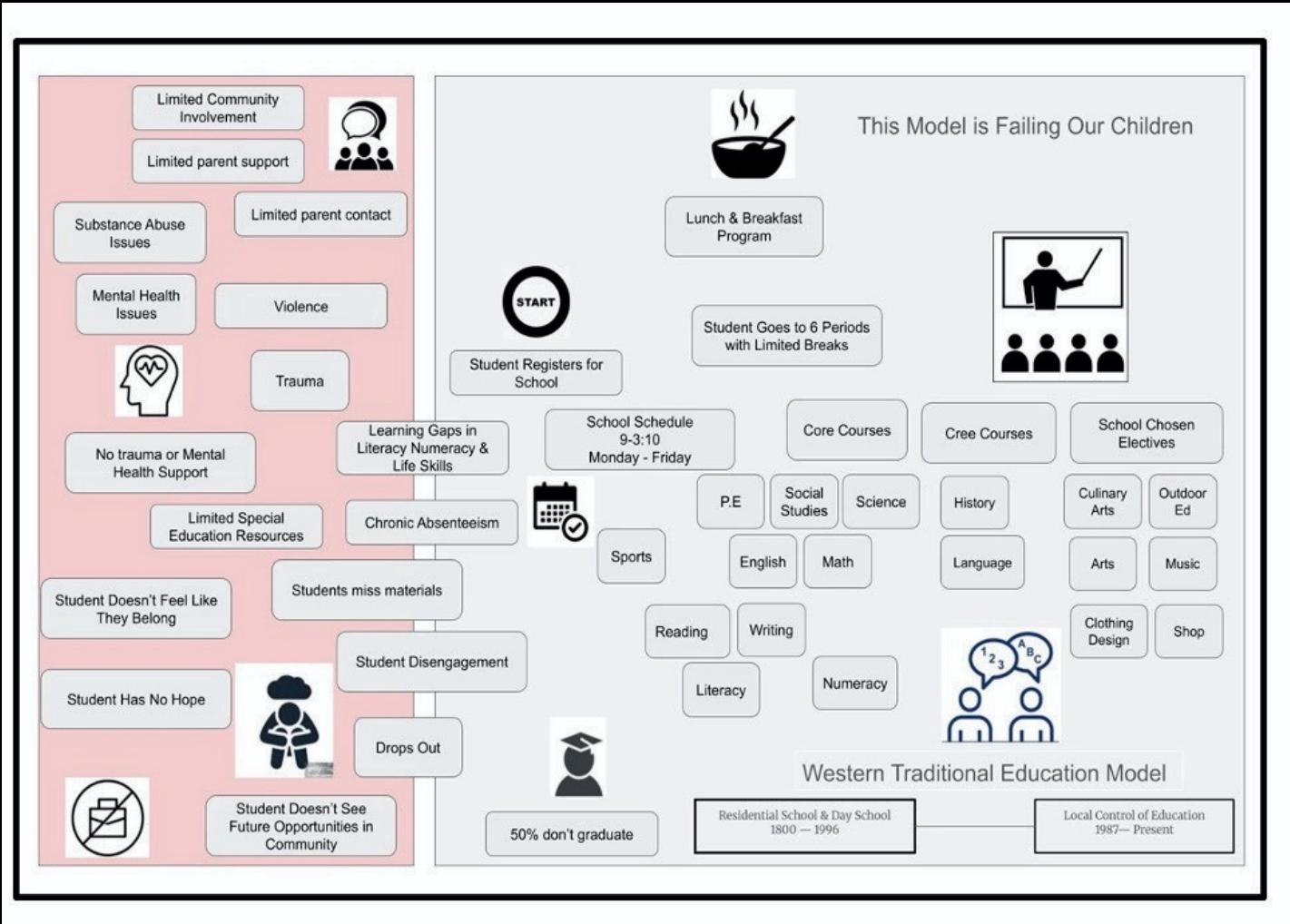


Our Truths

The 7 sacred Teachings

Our communities' past influence our students' learning journey of today.

- Students are disconnected from their community, their language, and their identity.
- The emphasis is on attendance and in-school learning.
- The educational model is rigid using a one size fits all approach.
- There is no integration of subject content, assessment and or evaluation.



As we reflect on our school system today, we know students are disconnected. Drop out rates are high. Graduation rates are low. We focus more on attendance and rigid structures of compartmentalized learning emphasizing testing and schedules over integrated learning focused on purposeful and meaningful knowledge acquisition.

We needed to ask ourselves tough questions like:

What is the purpose of education in our community?

Once we know that, we can begin to consider the more concrete questions around how we can create an educational system that honours and reflects that purpose

Once we had answers to this question, we were able to start the journey towards change.



This change comes with significant challenges that we have had to face since we asked for education. We are underfunded based on our student needs. Our building infrastructure is older with limited space for students. We lack technological resources and real time data assistance.

We have an older facility with limited space and technology.

This means that:

- We are underfunded for a 21st century school with limited resources and technology.
- We are limited to course offerings we can provide within our space.
- Lack of real-time progress communication tools between staff and parents, staff and staff and student and staff hamper our ability to talk to each other.
- There are challenges to learning with rigid scheduling and timetabling



Historical lack of funding has impacted our students. We face lower literacy and numeracy rates. There is a lack of resources and support for students who have learning needs beyond traditional teaching. Staffing is limited in the areas of career guidance, mental health support, and addictions education.

Inadequate funding affects our student's future potential.

- We have limited staffing and structure for career planning, mental health support, addictions education, or academic guidance.
- There is a lack of staff for student support and learning needs. Along with a lack of resources.
- Learning gaps in literacy and numeracy that need to be addressed for our bilingual program (Cree and English) hamper our student's personal growth.



We acknowledge the problems
and positives of the past in
order to build on our present.



**We needed to identify the barriers in order for us
to come up with solutions.**

Our Return To Ceremony

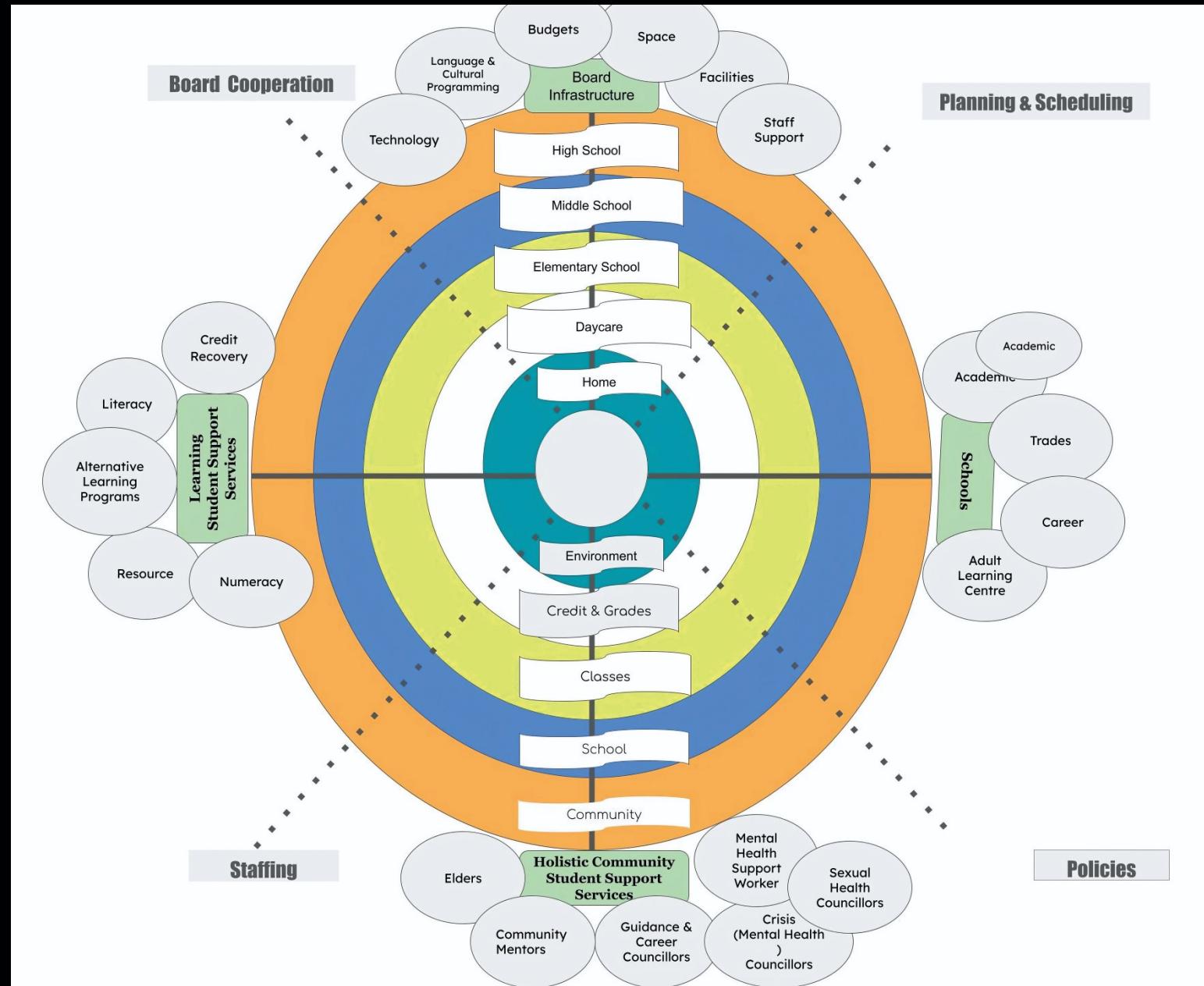
Culture isn't an add on. It is the heart of our work. Our language, our land, our stories, they belong in every lesson.

Holistic, Innovation Approach to Student Centred Culturally Responsive Teaching
"Coming Out of the Box" - An upgraded School System.



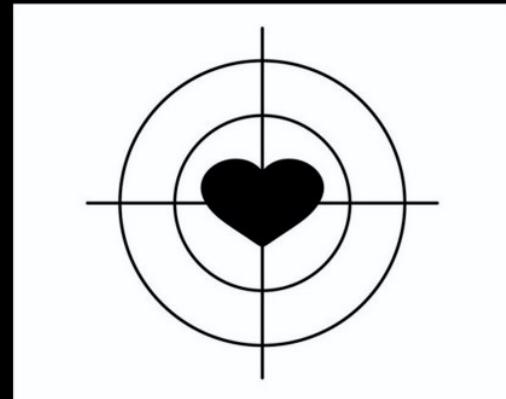
Our schools is part of an educational ecosystem that we must connect with and utilize in order to serve our students to the best of our ability.

Secondary school is part of a larger educational infrastructure that was reflected upon so we could look at the whole child and their experience of learning from the beginning of their educational journey. This allowed us to look at how we could work more as a team from the time of learning within the home to career development and community learning.



We know our schools serve our community and its members regardless of their age, or educational path.

Our schools service
our community.



We are investing in communication, programs and support systems that centre students first. ALWAYS.

We need to meet students where they are at in order to help them develop skills for the future.



Our mission is to support our students and their unique gift.

This means meeting a student where they are at and not where we think that they should be.



**STUDENT NEEDS ARE
OUR
FIRST PRIORITY**

In order to provide for our students, we are building channels of communication, expanding staffing infrastructure, and areas of resource and student success. Implementing new programming and building our technological upgrades.

- TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES & IMPLEMENTATIONS

- BUILDING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION



- PROVIDE NEW STUDENT PROGRAMMING

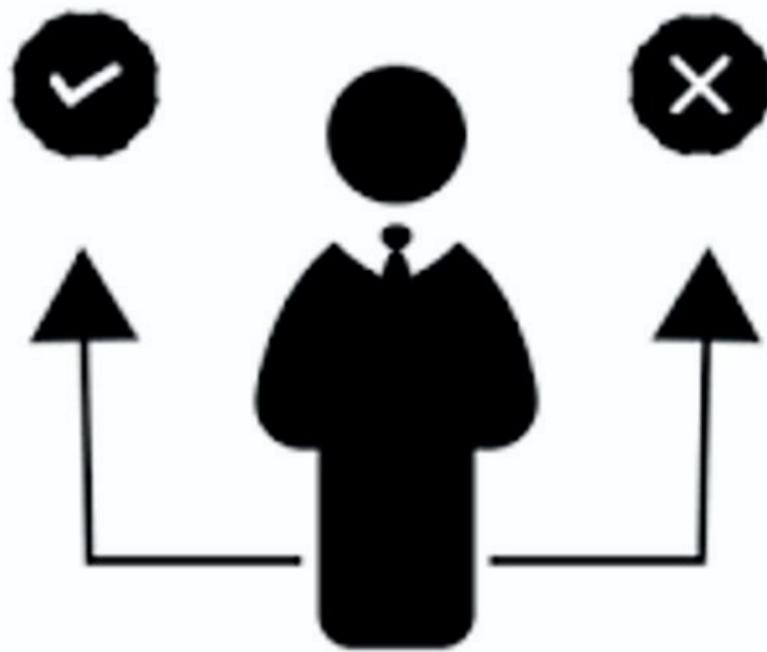
- EXPAND STAFF AREAS IN RESOURCES & STUDENT SUCCESS.

**Idea Framework &
Foundation of Decisions are
based on:**

We build with the voices of our teachers, our parents, and most importantly our youth. This vision isn't built in board rooms. It's shaped by our daily work and walking throughout the hallways of the school.

- COOPERATIVE INPUT FROM STAFF, TEACHERS,
& ADMINISTRATORS

INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITY & IT'S LEADERSHIP



THE CROSS LAKE EDUCATION AUTHORITY FRAMEWORK OF
POLICIES & PROCEDURES.

- DATA FROM STUDENTS, & TEACHERS

BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY

We have begun to reconnect and build relationships with key players at the school, educational authority, the community, within families, and the Manitoba Education department to create a solid foundation for our student's learned pathways.

We all have gifts to share that can enhance the knowledge within our community.

- The Community of Cross Lake

- Teachers, Staff, Administration & Students at ONR & MIKISEW

- Students

- Staff at CLEA

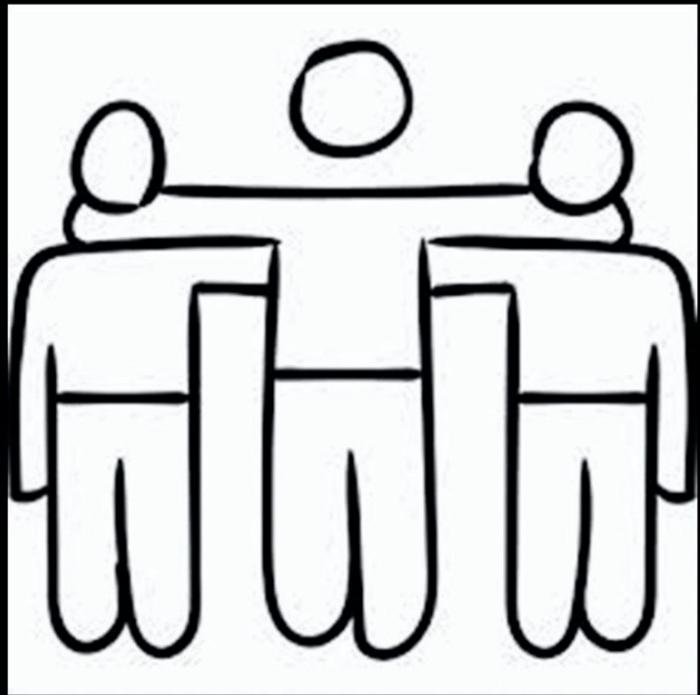
- The Manitoba Education Department

- Families of Students



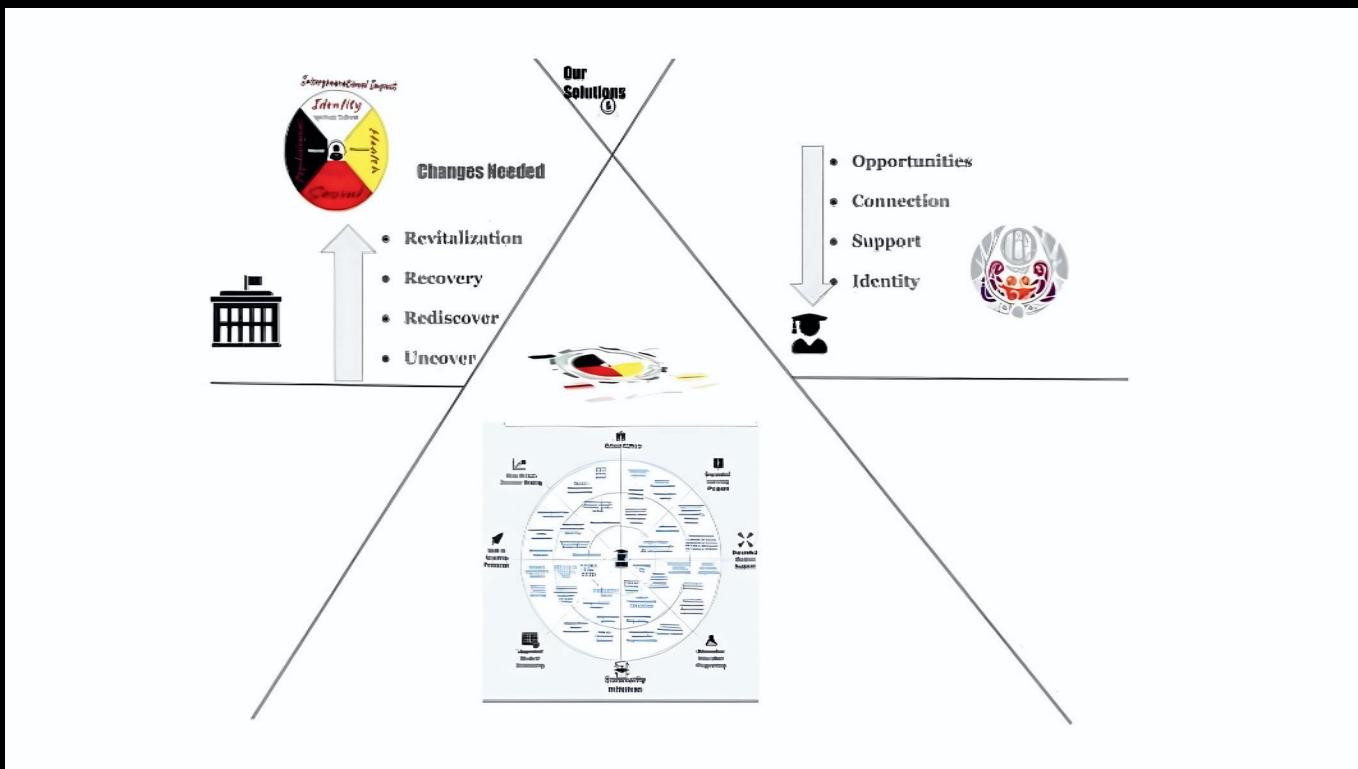


THE CHANGE HAS
ALREADY STARTED





**Connecting to Our
Culture**



Education rooted in culture, language, and lived experiences is essential for reclaiming power and restoring identity for youth struggling because they don't understand their past and need affirmation of their place in the present and need tools to help them with their future successes.

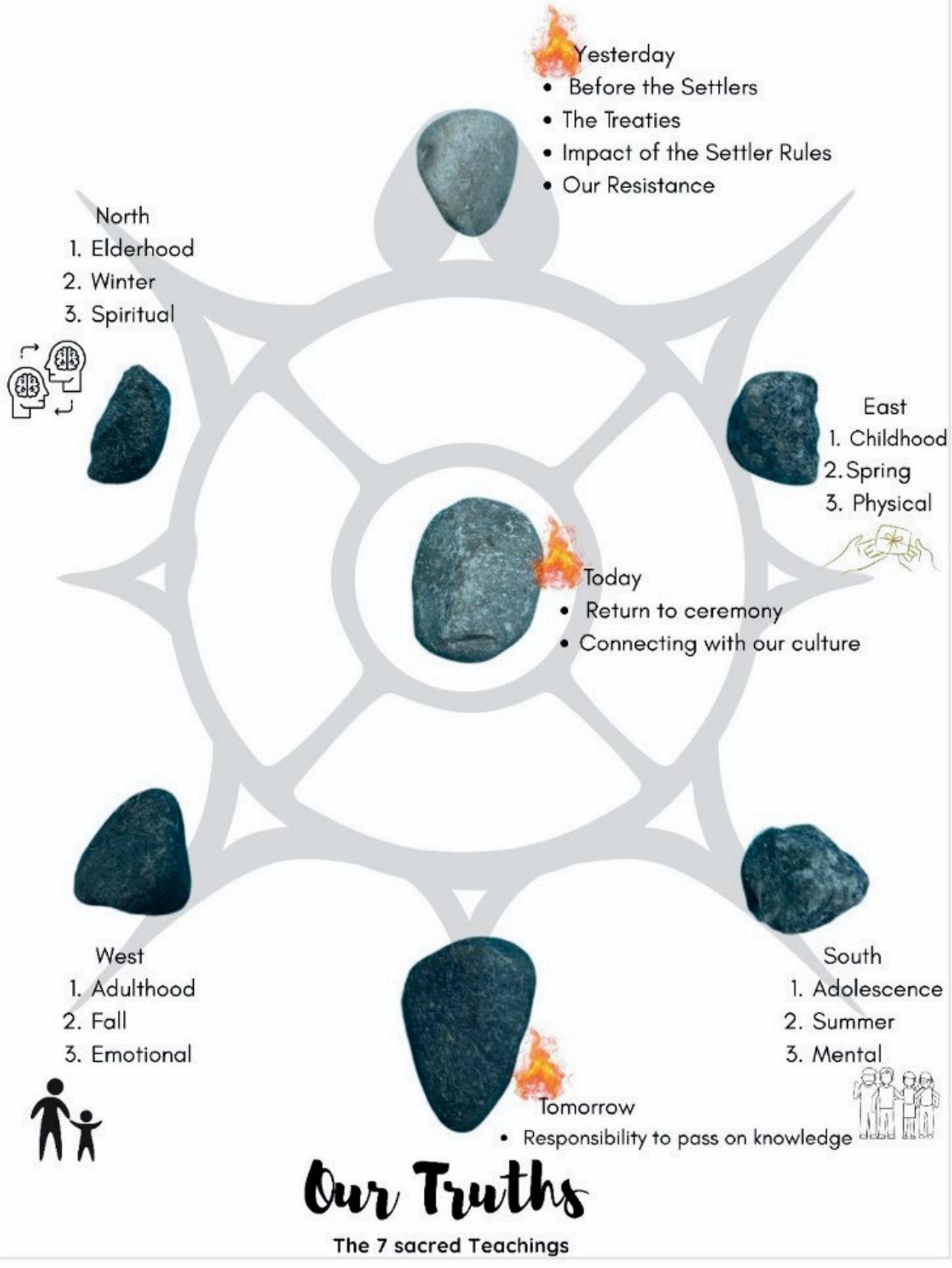
When we teach our children in a way of knowing who they are, where they come from, and where they are going, we don't just build knowledge; we build nationhood.

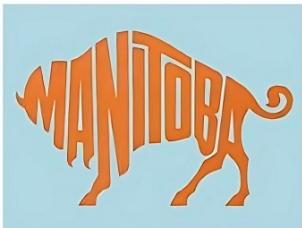
Our Tomorrow



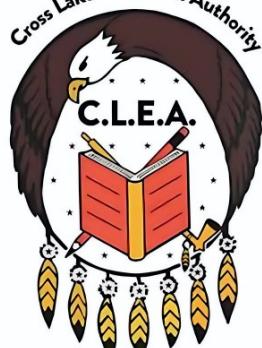
We have a duty to continue strengthening education in Cross Lake. In the years ahead, we will keep advocating for a new school that truly meets the needs of our students.

We'll work with key educational partners and build capacity so every student can succeed with the gift that Creator has given them.





Truth and
Reconciliation
Commission of Canada

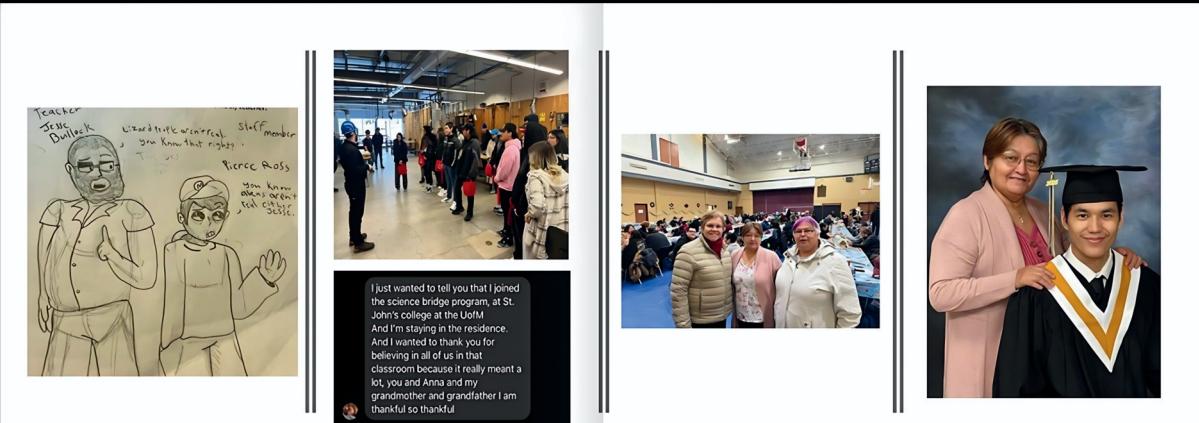


We are building connections to serve our students

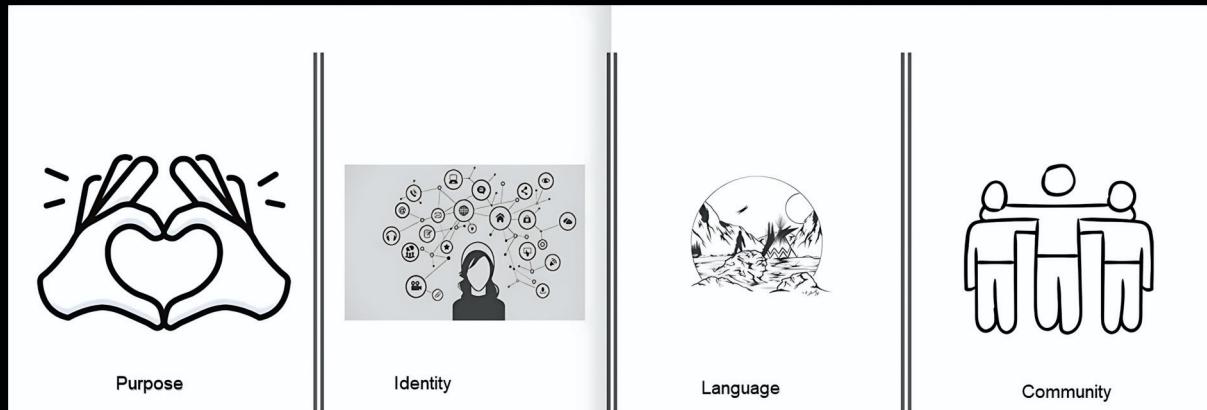
We will continue to strengthen our relationships with key stakeholders to expand our programming with mental health, community career guidance, as well as truth and reconciliation.

Our goal is to build on the current education system.

We know that if we implement much needed changes, we will have happier and healthier students who then in turn will become happy and healthy members of the community of Cross Lake.



Long-term impact: happier, & healthier students



CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH

Curriculum and school programming will be purposeful, aimed at helping students build confidence in who they are as part of our community. This starts with language learning and the reminder that we all have gifts to share with each other.



CONNECTION IS OUR
STARTING POINT



This is not a plan. It is a promise. The future belongs to our youth and we will meet them with strength, love, pride and most importantly connection.

Acknowledgements

**We would like to take the time
to acknowledge the
community of people who
have helped us to bring this
vision of education to life for
the Cross Lake Educational
Authority**

**We honour and acknowledge those who made this vision
possible: leadership, administration staff, researchers and
most of all our children.**

Cross Lake Band Council Representatives – Vivian Scott and Florence Blacksmith for their respective leadership, advocacy, cooperation, and support.

Greg Halcrow & Donna Carriere, our Director and Assistant Director of Education to whom we rely on for vision and direction.

William Osborne & Anna Lindsey for their research on the impact of the residential school system on the community of Cross Lake.

Kym Caldwell for her work in creating the graphics for the vision.

Anna McKay, Myrna Blacksmith and William Osborne for their daily leadership as school administrators

The educators and staff of Mikisew High School and Cross Lake Education Authority for their dedication to the students of Cross Lake.

The community of Cross Lake for their valuable feedback

Mr. Ryan Castel, Cross Lake Band Of Indians Director of Band Operations, Programs and Services for his unwavering support.

Our students who come to school with an open heart, curiosity and the willingness to learn.

**We now open the floor to
Questions and Feedback**



REFERENCES

See the report “Total Education at Cross Lake” for references to information in this Power Point Presentation

