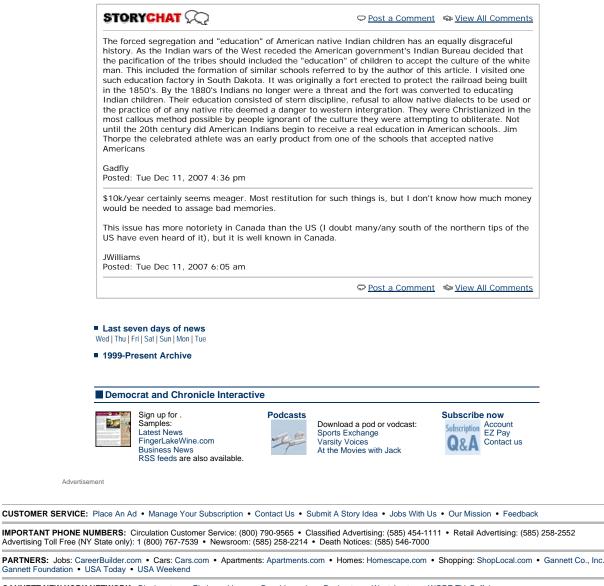
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Thumbs: up / down	(December 11, 2007) — Count yourself lucky if you are a Native American who never had to experience the trauma of being placed, against your will, in one of Canada's residential schools.	
Health	······································	A state of the
Entertainment	I saw the beatings, listened to the students weeping and saw many incidents of sexual abuse. While initially	free text alerts!
Living	shocking to a 11-year-old, I learned to suppress my outrage at adults who had unrestrained power.	Enter your phone number below to have local alerts
Business Columnists	Canada has begun to issue checks to cover its shame — but no formal apology for the lives its policies destroyed	sent to your phone.
Databases	or the legacy of self-hate that has become the most powerful, negative force in aboriginal life.	()
Multimedia / Photos	In January 1967, my brother Dean and I were shipped off to the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario, more than	Continue
Video	350 miles from our Akwesasne (St. Regis) home. We were told by the Indian Affairs social workers that the school	Contained
Weather	would provide us schooling, a warm, safe place to live and good food. We should have realized the magnitude of the lie when we waited at the train station for many hours, far past midnight, for one of the "house fathers" to pick	Modify existing alerts
Obituaries	us up.	4INFO Get this tool
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Mobile Site	The Mohawk Institute consisted of five large buildings: a four-story residence with attached dining hall, a fairly new school and two barns that housed livestock and hay and a shed for farm equipment. 1967 was the last year the	Automotion
LIFE TODAY	institute had an operating farm but it would continue to plant crops and maintain an orchard until its closing 21/2	
Brighton	years later.	
Chili	I am pleased to state that our arrival led to a series of events that forced the federal government to investigate the	
Fairport / Perinton	institute and force its closure; I am angry that the investigation stemmed, in part, from the death of our great friend,	
Gates	a 12-year-old Algonquin from Golden Lake named Joey Commanda.	
Greece	On the first day of our 18-month stay, the housefather found narrow, metal bunk beds for us to sleep in but we did	
Henrietta Irondequoit	not rest. Our fear was raw and made worse when a harsh bell sounded to awaken us, followed by the turning on	
Penfield	of brilliant fluorescent lights.	
Pittsford	Dozens of thin Cree boys stared at us, the newcomers. The Crees, the largest group at the institute, had been	
Rochester	bused from hundreds of miles away, most from the James Bay region in Quebec. Their names were Happyjack, Otter, Gull, Ottereyes. A small contingent of Akwesasne Mohawks also was there, as were a few Iroquois from	
Victor	Oshweken, one Anishnabe boy from Christian Island, another Mohawk from Tyendinaga and our Golden Lake	
Webster AROUND TOWN	pals: Joey, Rocky and their brother Guy.	
ROCMoms	Across a closely guarded hallway was the girls dorm with housemothers as overseers. Many very bad things	
ROCMen	happened there, abuses beyond our imagination initially but all too common as the months dragged by.	
ROCPets	The housefathers controlled the boys in our section by organizing us into platoons with the biggest boys in charge	
Rochester Magazine	of the smallest. We learned from the first day to stand at attention, march at the sound of a whistle and take our	
Events Calendar Wine Country	assigned place in a basement which contained the kitchen and our dining room.	
Wine Country Insider	We were fed burnt toast, powdered milk and mush, a watery porridge that slid through the stomach and bowels,	
ConXion	hence the institute's nickname, "mushhole." Other meals were as bad. Forty years later, I still feel the shadow	
Her Rochester	pains of hunger whenever I think about the institute.	
ALSO ONLINE	The military structure carried over into other areas and activities. We marched as squads the few times we left the	
Help Center	school as a group. We responded to bells and whistles. We were beaten with the same straps used for corporal	
Dining / Nightlife NIE Program	punishment in the Royal Navy.	
Personals	That we — the notorious, thieving, fighting, runaway "St. Regis boys" — were the only collective group ever to be	
Shopping	expelled still is a source of pride. However, Joey Commanda was struck by a train near Toronto as he fled the hell hole from which his friends had been thrown out.	
Weddings		
Crossword	But Joey's family made a lot of noise and compelled others to look at the entire residential school system. So	
Sudoku	while Joey died, he saved many others from the horrors of the mushhole and the clutches of child rapists.	
TV Listings	The amounts that Canada is paying out — \$10,000 for the first year of confinement and \$3,000 for the rest — are	
Horoscopes RSS Feeds	trivial, especially compared with the lawyers' fees of \$45 million. That triviality compounds the anger and rips open	
Podcasts	wounds that no amount of money can heal.	
Forums	But I wonder: How much will Canada pay for Joey Commanda, walking in fear along an isolated stretch of train	
Archives	tracks, shuffling his way homeward over hundreds of miles, wishing his Akwesasne pals were there to show him	
	the way?	

Maybe the lawyers can chip in and buy him a decent memorial. Or perhaps they can stop the train rumbling in my mind before it hits Joey and drives his nearby brother Rocky insane.

George-Kanentiio, an Akwesasne Mohawk, lives in Oneida territory.



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