

Native: Some graduates found great success in life

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Instead, *Where are the Children?* is just sad, sometimes creepy and amazingly calm.

The purpose of the exhibition is to help heal wounds, rather than pick away at old scabs. As a result, the official opening of the exhibition Monday is scheduled to include representatives of aboriginal communities, the churches and the government, including Gov. Gen. Adrienne Clarkson. A duplicate exhibition is to open a week later in Vancouver and then tour the country.

"The objective of this exhibition is directed at self-empowerment: It aims to give aboriginal people the opportunity to begin to understand the residential school experience through viewing the photographs of the places to which aboriginal children were taken," says Thomas. "In a sense, the photographs offer an opportunity to come full circle and move on. Perhaps these historical photographs can contribute to the healing process for those who attended these schools and their families and communities."

The exhibition includes about 100 photos, plus some archival documents and contemporary videos of people discussing their experiences at residential schools.

Many of the photographs include only the vaguest details as to time, place and names. Most of the photographers were Europeans who did not bother to take note of the names of the people in the photos. They were apparently meant to be perceived as just anonymous, generic Indians.

One of the most politically incorrect photos, according to current sensibilities, is that of Hayter Reed, the non-aboriginal deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs in the late 1800s.

Reed is dressed as the 16th century Iroquois Chief Donnacona, who had met Jacques Cartier as he descended the St. Lawrence. Reed's young stepson, Jack Lowry, wears an Indian costume made of paper. The boy's face is darkened with makeup to make him look aboriginal. This fake Indian chief and son are dressed for a "Canadian History" ball in the Senate chamber on Feb. 17, 1896.

Reed was one of the great "civilizers." He took delight in suppressing native ceremonies, including the sun dance. He advocated keeping Indian boys in residential schools until they could learn a white-man's trade and not be forced to return to "the uncivilized mode of life." Thomas sees the Reed photo as indicative of the belief of the bureaucrat and government in general that Indian clothing, and Indian life, only belong in a museum case.

The exhibition contains haunting photos of children who died while in residential schools, but also contains uplifting contemporary portraits of graduates who found great success in life. Among them is Douglas Cardinal, who attended St. Joseph's Convent Residential School near Red Deer, Alta., and later became an architect famous for such creations as the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau.

Ian Wilson, head of the National Archives, says the archives has a responsibility to tell the residential school story, but to tell it from all sides. The archives did not put parameters on the exhibition organizers to prevent them from creating a darker or more disturbing view of residential schools. Instead, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was essentially given *carte blanche* to present an exhibition and the foundation chose to build,



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British Columbia scholars attending the Alert Bay Mission School, 1885. The photo exhibit opens Monday at the National Archives.

rather than destroy, bridges to all parties involved in the schools' stories.

"Most of those who taught in the schools believed they were doing something very progressive and very advanced and socially responsible," Wilson said in an interview. "They were tremendous people who gave their lives to teach. As a result, people lost culture, they lost their sense of community. But there are two aspects of this. And the process is very much one of understanding, dialoguing, hopefully leading towards healing in society."

Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools opens the public Tuesday at the National Archives and continues until Feb. 3, 2003. The archives is at 395 Wellington St. and is open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Admission is free. For information call 995-5138.

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