



Overview

In this LE, learners grapple with a primary driver of the residential school system: a fear of difference. They will also brainstorm strategies to increase understanding and compassion in their own schools. Using two quotes from architects of the residential school system, one from John A. MacDonald, and one from Duncan Campbell Scott, learners will work with the concepts of assimilation and culture ("modes of thought") as well as the importance of communities to shape their strategies.

Learners will...

- Understand that a fear of difference was the driving force behind Indian Residential Schools.
- Encounter the nature and extent of damage that can come from assimilationist pressures.
- Understand that children are the future of societies and that losing them ruptured indigenous families and communities in traumatic and sometimes irrevocable ways.
- See themselves as part of a community that can foster tolerance and acceptance of difference.

Focus

Learners will likely benefit from a vocabulary review of terms including: assimilation, difference, fear, resilience, habit, savage, custom and tradition. Reading the provided quotes together as a class or in smaller groups, learners will comprehend that the policy for residential schools was born in part out of a fear of difference. Learners may need an introduction to John A. MacDonald and Duncan Campbell Scott, particularly one that considers their roles in creating and intensifying the residential school system in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Links to biographies for both men are found in the additional resources.

Working in small groups learners are asked to come up with strategies for increasing compassion in their own school community. What helps people embrace, rather than fear, difference? How can they help to create a culture of understanding and acceptance in their peer group, classroom or school?

PE!

It is important that learners have a clear understanding of the following content:

- *The Mi'kmaq as the indigenous people of Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region.*
- *Mi'kma'kik as the ancestral homeland of the Mi'kmaq.*
- *Understand the basic history of Indian Residential Schools in Canada. (See LE T9, RR6)*
- *An understanding of the concept of equity will be helpful here. (See LE T13)*

Additional Resources

- For additional resources, see the digital version of this LE at **Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre website:**
<http://mikmaweydebert.ca/rr8>