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## TRC report reaction: Many indigenous problems born of residential schools, survivor says

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## **The addictions and social problems that plague many indigenous Canadians today can be traced to emotional trauma suffered by generations of children who were raised in hostile residential schools, says one Saskatoon survivor.**

Grace Aisaican was eight years old when she and other children from the James Smith First Nation made the three-hour trip in the back of an open grain truck to Gordon's residential school in Punnichy. The children huddled under a tarp for warmth on their way to the imposing four-storey building, where Aisaican experienced emotional, mental, physical and sexual abuse.

She lost hearing in one ear after a teacher threw her against a desk. The injury became infected and she was taken to a hospital in another community for surgery without anyone notifying her parents.

"My parents didn't know anything about it until I went home in the spring. I never did tell them about the sexual abuse, even as an adult," she said. "We were victims, but we were made to feel it was our fault because we were bad."

The staff didn't help the children, who came from three different language groups, to overcome their differences and there was sometimes violence among the children, she said. She saw a girl stab another girl.

"It was not a good mix. We were on our own. There was nothing emotional, nothing nurturing. We were just there."



**Emotions ran high at TRC hearings in Saskatoon in 2012** GREG PENDER  
/ SASKATOON STAR PHOENIX

Children who attended day schools on some reserves got to go home at night, but they still dreaded the daily ordeal of the schools, she said. Those children were ignored in the agreement that settled the lawsuit that created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose seven-volume final report was released Tuesday in Ottawa.

“It’s like they didn’t count, but they were as mistreated as anyone else,” Aisaican said.

Her parents both attended residential schools. Her mother was strict and didn’t show affection for her children, she recalled.

The alcoholism that beset many survivors, who didn’t know how to cope with their painful memories, became normal in many families and children inherited self-destructive ways of thinking and living, she said.

Aisaican has been on a long path to recovery and healing through counselling, group therapy, spirituality and tradition, but she is sad to see that her children now live with some of the old, negative ways of being, she said.

“It was a natural way of life. I still see the impact of my own early parenting on my kids.”

She is pleased with the positive actions of the Liberal government but knows it won’t be easy for indigenous or non-indigenous Canadians to change their ingrained attitudes, she said.



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