



Douglas College

Douglas College Learning Centre

Sample Detailed Essay Outline: Residential Schools

Introduction:

- late 1800s to 1980s more than 100,000 First Nations children in Canada attended residential schools (Llewellyn, 2008, p. 258)
- At the schools, the children suffered from emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual abuse (Steckley & Cummins, 2001, p. 191)
- worst abuses punishment for speaking their indigenous languages (Petten, 2007, p. 22).

Thesis: The imposition of residential schools on First Nations children has led to significant loss of indigenous languages, and this language loss has led to further cultural losses for traditional First Nations cultures in Canada.

Topic Sentence 1: One far-reaching result of the residential school system is the loss of indigenous languages in Canada.

1. Children lost their mother tongues at the schools
 - a. Children lost mother tongues at early age (Petten, 2007)
 - b. Children were abused for speaking their indigenous languages
 - i. priests and nuns punched, slapped, verbally abused little children (Knockwood, 1992, p. 99)
 - ii. priests stuck pins in their tongues (Steckley & Cummins, 2001, p. 193)
2. Effects of children's language loss on loss of indigenous languages
 - i. 2001 Canada Census, only 24% of people who identified themselves as aboriginal said they could communicate in an aboriginal language (as cited in Norris, 2007, p. 20)
 - ii. over the past 100 years, at least ten indigenous languages have become extinct (Norris, 2007, p. 20).

Topic Sentence 2: This loss of indigenous languages caused by residential schools affected traditional family and community relationships.

1. At the schools
 - a. it "drove a wedge between family members," even between siblings at the same school (Knockwood, 1992, p. 100)
 - b. Freda Simon, tells of arriving at a residential school to find that her sister, who had been taken to the school two years earlier, could no longer speak their language (Knockwood, 1992, p. 100)
2. In their communities
 - a. early survivors of residential schools were unable to develop bonds with older members of their communities and were unable to learn the traditional ways of their people through "songs, games, stories and ceremonies" (Blair, Rice, Wood & Janvier, 2002, p. 89).
 - b. A strong traditional value was respect for elders (Couture, 1996)

Topic Sentence 3: Besides damaging family and community relationships, the loss of indigenous languages also distanced many First Nations people from their traditional belief systems.

1. Connection to nature important in First Nations spirituality
 - a. “all of life is spiritual: everything that exists, animals, plants, people, rocks, the sun and stars have elements of sacredness” (Rajotte, 1998, p. 21).
2. Elders passed on spiritual teachings through myths and rituals
3. Without knowledge of traditional languages, young people could not learn about the spiritual beliefs of their people.
 - a. spirituality was all encompassing, affecting not only their thoughts about the spirit world but also their knowledge of places, plants and animals and traditional skills such as fishing, trapping, and tanning (Blair et al, 2002, p. 96).
4. Not learning from elders meant not learning about spirituality, places and traditional skills
 - a. without access to the elders’ knowledge of nature, young people lost access to the beliefs and practices their people had developed over thousands of years (Steckley and Cummins, 2001, p. 17).

Conclusion

Restated Thesis: In short, interpersonal relationships and traditional belief systems were both sacrificed when residential schools contributed to the decline of First Nations children’s indigenous language abilities.

Comment:

- June 11, 2008, Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper offered an official apology on behalf of the Canadian government to survivors of residential schools (Fitzpatrick & Nguyen, 2008, p. 1).
- aboriginal people need more than an apology; they need a government commitment to dealing with the negative impacts of the schools in areas such as “language, culture, ... tradition, and spirituality” Beverly Jacobs, President of the Native Women’s Association of Canada, (Native women’s leader, 2008, p. 2).
- The effects of the residential schools on First Nations’ language and culture will never be undone; all Canadians can do now is support efforts by aboriginal people to preserve and revitalize those linguistic and cultural traditions that have not been completely lost.

Note: You may want to look at the following handouts related to this essay:

Handout WR2.52: Sample Basic Essay Outline

Handout WR4.35: Sample Essay APA Style