Elementary English Language Arts Cycle Two
Residential Schools

Purpose for reading:
To construct her/his own view of the world through reading and listening to literary, popular and information-based texts

Sample Questions to Guide Discussion:
What is a residential school? Revise and refine your definition as you read.
Discuss how the experiences of the characters are similar to and different from your own.
What creates harmony and unity within a family or community?
What can we do to show that we stand together with people in our families and communities, respecting diversity?

Sample Activities to Complement Discussion:
Think of a time when you saw people being treated unfairly. Write a report of what happened, or create your own narrative based on the events.
Think of what your ideal community looks and feels like. How can you help promote inclusion and equality in your school or community? Create a poster to illustrate your ideals.

Suggested Keywords: Residential schools, cultural identity, families, Canadian history, First Nations history, prejudice, abuse, determination, perseverance, courage, social justice

Québec Reading Connection, May 2019, Working document

Stolen Words
Melanie Florence
A little girl asks her grandfather how to say something in his language, Cree. He tells her how he lost his language when he was sent to a residential school, and she finds a way to help him get it back.

When We Were Alone
David A. Robertson
A grandmother tells about life in a residential school a long time ago, where her language, clothing and traditions were taken away from her.

When I Was Eight
Christy Jordan-Fenton & Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
Based on a true story, a young Inuit girl with an unbreakable spirit learns to read while enduring the cruelties of life in an Arctic residential school.

Shin-Chi’s Canoe
Nicola I. Campbell
Shin-chi and his sister go off to residential school in a cattle truck. The days are long, he is very lonely and he is always hungry, but he finds solace down at the river with a gift from his father: a tiny cedar canoe.

Not My Girl
Christy Jordan-Fenton & Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
Margaret can’t wait to see her family after returning from residential school but she learns she must overcome fear and rejection, and forge a new type of acceptance.

Shi-Shi-Etko
Nicola I. Campbell
Shi-shi-etko spends the last four days before she goes to residential school learning valuable lessons from her mother, father and grandmother, and creating precious memories of home.

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