

ADDRESSING HISTORICALLY TRAUMATIC SITES:

Exploring the contemporary use of former Indian Residential Schools and Sites in Canada

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This research explores the historically traumatic nature of the Indian Residential School system and considers how trauma, place, and people interact and evolve trauma narratives. Three unconventional reuses of residential schools and sites are presented and used to inform greater consideration for trauma-informed planning.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are former residential schools and sites being used today?
2. What can be said about the process to reuse and preserve these sites?
3. What should we (Indigenous people/survivors/relatives) do with former residential schools and sites? How can we reduce re-traumatization with the reuse of schools and sites?

2.0 METHODS



3.0 KEY RESULTS/FINDINGS

The former Blue Quills residential school and site is now being used and managed by the Blue Quills Native Education Council. Blue Quills transitioned from a residential school to an Indigenous education centre and became the first Indigenous-controlled school in Canada.

The former Cranbrook residential school and site is now the St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino. St. Eugene's is 130 hectares of reserve land comprised of 125 hotel rooms, 114 RV and camp lots, an 18-hole golf course, over 200 slot machine casino, and interpretive cultural centre. The five bands of the Ktunaxa Nation gained ownership of St. Eugene resort in 2017.

The main Edmonton residential school was destroyed in 2000. It previously housed the Poundmaker's Lodge Treatment Facility from 1974-1984 and temporarily housed the Nechi Institute. The newly developed Poundmaker's Lodge Treatment Facility has taken over the former residential school property and continues to transform the space. The remaining Edmonton residential school building sits vacant and un-used on the property.



4.0 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that Indigenous and Federal governments develop nation-to-nation programming designed to address the inquiry of residential school searches, site/building preservation projects, land management, and land transfers.

I recommend that National Historical Designations should be automatically granted to all former residential schools and sites in Canada, regardless of how the school and site are being used today. As part of this recommendation, I also recommend that all gravesites and unmarked graves be commemorated and protected.

Images taken from: Blue Quills University, St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino, Musee Heritage