UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC

The School: a Study Brief

The Mohawk Institute, the record, and what is owed.

Learning outcomes

By the end, a student will be able to	Level (Bloom)
Recount the Mohawk Institute's history from 1828 to 1970	Remember
Explain the purpose and effects of the residential school system	Understand
Analyse survivors' testimony and archival records as evidence	Analyze
Compare the school as promise, as institution and as site of conscience	Analyze
Evaluate responses to the Calls to Action 71 to 76	Evaluate

Overview

The Mohawk Institute opened in 1828 and took boarders from 1831 to 1970, the longest of any residential school. Fifty-four deaths are recorded, and the records are incomplete. The building became the Woodland Cultural Centre in 1972; it has been restored as a site of conscience, and a ground search began in 2021. The Nation reads it as the second of three promises, a school, broken; it opened its own investigation in 2011.

Primary sources

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Calls to Action 71–76, 2015

"missing children and burial information"

The Calls concerning records, burials and the missing.

Survivors' accounts

"the Mush Hole"

What the children called the school.

The Secretariat's mandate, 12 April 2011

"the office's investigation, under its own seal"

The Nation's record.

Three readings

	Survivors and their families	Canada	The Mohawk Nation of Grand River
What it was	A place of harm and survival	A residential school, apologized for in 2008	A promise broken
The record	Their own testimony	Archives, settlement records	Its own investigation, under its seal
What is owed	Truth, recognition, healing	The Calls to Action	Truth, and the promise kept: schools in the people's languages

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Historiography

The Mohawk Institute has been studied through survivors' testimony (Elizabeth Graham's The Mush Hole), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and now the ground search. The Nation adds a reading from the promise: Brant's school, meant to teach English without losing Mohawk, and what it became.

Discussion questions

1. What did Brant want from a school, and how far did the institution depart from it?
2. How should historians weigh survivors' testimony against institutional records?
3. Why are the records incomplete, and what follows from that?
4. What does a site of conscience owe to visitors, and to survivors?
5. How do the Calls to Action 71 to 76 apply here?
6. **Apply.** Design a respectful public program for the site, and say whose voices lead it.

Further reading

In Chicago style (17th ed.), bibliography form.

Graham, Elizabeth. *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools*. Waterloo: Heffle Publishing, 1997.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*. 2015.

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Assignment brief

Choose one prompt

A	In 1,500 words, assess how the Mohawk Institute should be remembered, using survivors' testimony and the record. Use at least three sources.
B	Why are the records incomplete, and what follows from that? Answer in an argued essay.
C	Apply. Design a respectful public program for the site, and say whose voices lead it. Write it as an argued essay that applies the readings.

Requirements

- An argument: a thesis stated in the first paragraph and defended throughout.
- At least three primary sources from the list below, quoted precisely and read in their context.
- At least two secondary sources, one of them from outside the Nation's own books.
- The strongest objection to your thesis, stated fairly, and your answer to it.
- Footnotes and a bibliography in Chicago style (17th ed.).
- 1,500 words, 10 per cent either way, not counting notes and bibliography.

Sources you must use

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Calls to Action 71–76, 2015
- Survivors' accounts
- The Secretariat's mandate, 12 April 2011

A suggested structure

- Introduction: the question, why it matters, and your thesis.
- Context: the instruments and events, briefly, in order.
- Analysis: the sources, read closely, one claim at a time.
- The objection: the best case against you, and your reply.
- Conclusion: what follows, and what remains open.

Timeline

- Week 1: choose a prompt; read the primary sources; write a one-paragraph proposal.
- Week 2: research the secondary sources; draft an outline with your thesis and the objection.
- Week 3: write the full draft; exchange with a peer for written comments.
- Week 4: revise and submit.

Format and submission

Twelve-point type, double-spaced, page numbers, your name and the prompt on the first page. Submit as your instructor directs; this sheet can also be filled in online for the discussion questions.

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Integrity

Your work must be your own. Quote and cite every source. If you use an AI tool for any part of the work, say which and how, in a note at the end.

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For the instructor: standards met

Universal competencies	Identify key facts and claims; Understand perspective and point of view; Analyse and evaluate evidence; Apply: what does this mean for us?. The same everywhere, whatever the curriculum.
Learning outcomes	Five outcomes with Bloom’s verbs, each matched to an activity.
Reconciliation	TRC Calls to Action 62 and 63.
Rights in education	UNDRIP arts. 14 and 15.
Primary-source practice	Each source quoted and attributed; readings tested against them.
Citation	Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition.
Balance	Three readings side by side; the brief names its own position.
Time	One seminar of about two hours; the assignment over four weeks.
Care	A trauma-informed approach; If this topic is hard for you or someone you know: the Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line, day and night, 1-866-925-4419.

Assessment: the assignment

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Needs work
Use of sources	Three or more primary sources, quoted precisely and read in context	Three, quoted accurately	Fewer, or quoted loosely	Missing or misread
Analysis	Weighs the readings against the documents and shows what turns on the difference	Compares the readings clearly	Describes them	Restates one
Argument	A clear judgment that answers the strongest objection	A clear, supported judgment	Thinly supported	No clear judgment
Writing and citation	Precise; Chicago style throughout	Clear; minor slips	Some unclear passages	Hard to follow

This brief states the Mohawk Nation of Grand River’s position alongside others. It is for study, not legal advice.

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