



Joyce Purdon

I first heard the term, “Residential Schools”, when I was very young. I was seven or eight years old when I was a member of the Mission Band at Wanstead United Church in Scarborough, Ontario.

Our leader told us about the children who attended those schools and how it was necessary for them to be separated from their parents in order to receive an education.

I recall that I was very upset at the idea of having to leave my Mommy and Daddy if I were to have the opportunity to go to school! It made me very sad to think about the children who had left their Mommies and Daddies and were living in those residential schools.

Our leader encouraged us to create an afghan which would be a gift for a child at one of the schools. In order to participate in this project, I learned to knit and with considerable concentration I finally made several squares to be included in this project. I recognized that this warm afghan would be appreciated by a child who was about my own age. At the same time I was sad as I thought about them living a long distance from their Mommy and Daddy!

It is unfortunate that in our history the adult decision makers had not understood the importance of family connections....and the damage that could/would occur affecting children, parents, families, and communities....when children were denied life in their home territories, their traditional way of life and their language!!

My reaction to the experiences of the students at residential schools was that of a child, but it demonstrated an innocent understanding!! Adults of that day could have benefited from paying attention to the reactions of the children!!