

To the members of the NCRA Awards Committee,

I am writing to nominate the CJSW podcast series 'Survivors' for The Neskie Manuel Award for Aboriginal Affairs and Culture Programming. It was May of 2021 when the bodies of hundreds of children who had attended the Kamloops Indian Residential school in BC were discovered. It was just before this that the podcast 'Survivors' had begun to develop. This discovery cemented the importance and necessity of the project that had just begun.

The residential school system was an official policy enacted against the Indigenous peoples living on these lands. The effects of this system have never fully been realized. There continue to be more and more graves discovered containing the bodies of children who died attending these schools. Culture, language, and beliefs were outlawed as the government attempted to erase the existence of Indigeneity from Canada under the Indian Act. Throughout the life of the residential school system there were countless tales of abuse; physical, spiritual, sexual, and mental. No one who entered those schools exited the same. The impacts of these schools affected and framed Indigenous existence in this country exist inside every individual in Canada.

The podcast 'Survivors' is an eight episode series which dives into the residential school system. It addresses aspects of the past, present, and future. It provides this unique look into the system through a combination of narration of historical facts and stories with the first hand accounts of survivors of the system, their families, as well as experts including the Honourable Murray Sinclair, who served as the chairman of the Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission from 2009 to 2015. The interviews were all performed by Grace Heavyrunner. As a journalism student at Mount Royal University as well as a survivor of the last running residential school herself, Grace provides us with interviews crafted by someone with firsthand experience and true understanding. The historic narration was researched and recorded by Cameron Siferd, a Métis student majoring in Sociology and International Indigenous Studies at the University of Calgary. Each episode is further enhanced with original music performed by Matthew Cardinal, a Treaty 6 based musician best known for his work in the Polaris Shortlisted band Nêhiyawak. Each episode is also tied together by a drum song performed by Clarence 'Skip' Wolfleg Jr. He also provides the context for the song to allow for reflection and allow the listener to help center themselves positively at the end of such an impactful topic.

The information presented in this podcast is unapologetic in addressing the truths of the residential school system. It stands as a testament of the lived experience Indigenous individuals faced during their forced attendance. It provides a connection that words on paper can't encompass. The emotional strength and bravery embodied by each survivor who provides their story is astounding. The impacts of the residential school system were and continue to be felt by every Indigenous person in Canada. 'Survivors' displays this, while allowing individuals to come closer to truly understanding what this means.

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