

ASSINIBOIA HIGHLIGHTS

June 2026 | VOL. 2



Photo by Elder Mabel Horton



ASSINIBOIA RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
◀ LEGACY GROUP ▶

Message from the Board

An illustration of a quill pen with a feather, resting on a small, round inkwell. The quill is positioned diagonally, with the feather pointing towards the top right. The inkwell is a simple, cylindrical container with a slightly flared rim. The entire illustration is rendered in a black and white, sketch-like style.

Toni Kipling is now the full-time Executive Director of the Assiniboia Residential School Legacy Group. Toni started as a part-time ED with the Group in March 2025, and this increased role reflects the strength of her leadership and the growing number of initiatives and new projects that the Group is undertaking moving forward.

Toni is a member of the Peguis First Nation and was born and raised in Winnipeg. Toni's first job at the age of fifteen was a Youth Care Worker for the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre. She started to learn more about residential schools and her family's history when enrolled in an Information Administration Business program for indigenous women through Red River College. After completing that two-year program, Toni went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Manitoba with a double major in native studies and politics. Her job experience includes case management and regional



development work for the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and work with the Interlake Reserves Tribal Council Jordan's Principle program.

Toni's volunteer board work began eighteen years ago, and ever since, she has been fighting for her community. Working as a university research



assistant, Toni first met Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine over ten years ago. He was leading the Embodying Empathy project that involved work related to the Fort Alexander Residential School. Toni has been a board member of the Legacy Group since 2019. Toni's aunt, Elsie Kipling, was part of the first class of students to attend Assiniboia in 1958 (and she was also Theodore's high school sweetheart!). Aunt Elsie is currently living in Winnipeg, and Toni takes every opportunity to visit and to learn more about her family's history.

Please join us in supporting Toni in this elevated role with the Legacy Group. She can be emailed directly at

executive.director@assiniboiaresidentialschool.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 21st, 2026

National Indigenous Peoples Day

Assiniboia Residential School
Commemorative Monument &
Gathering Place

621 Academy Road, Winnipeg,
Manitoba

September 30th, 2026

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Assiniboia Residential School
Commemorative Monument &
Gathering Place

ARSLG BOARD MEMBER PROFILES



DARIAN MCKINNEY

Darian is Anishinaabe and a member of the Swan Lake First Nation. Two of his grandparents attended the Sandy Bay Residential School and his great-grandmother attended the Portage la Prairie Indian Residential School.

Darian has earned a Bachelor of Environmental Design and Master of Architecture degrees from the University of Manitoba and is currently an Architect and Indigenous Design Co-Lead with Number TEN Architectural Group.

Darian is Co-Chair on the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Task Force. The purpose of this task force is to identify meaningful action for the RAIC to engage in, and to support the organization in their journey towards reconciliation. Darian has led research work into the St. Boniface Industrial School including work to identify student deaths associated with the school, student and community names, and the general history of the school and its students. Over a five-year period, working together with the ARSLG, the Assiniboia Residential School Commemorative Monument and Gathering Place was designed by Herbert Enns as Collaborating Architect with assistance from Darian McKinney.



ZACHARY LEE

Zachary is an Indigenous person raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba but with his family coming from Peguis First Nation. While Zach's Grandma was able to avoid attending a residential school, all her siblings were sent, and they passed on their memories and knowledge to Zach's Grandma. Zach's Grandma's status was taken away at an early age and was never returned. Zach and his family were granted status in 2021 as part of Bill C-31.

Zach works for CIBC Global Asset Management working with high-net-worth individuals, as well as working with First Nation Trusts, Settlements and Sovereign Wealth Funds to manage their investments, to create financial sovereignty, and to support many generations in the future through various income sources and economic development. Zach has a Bachelor of Commerce degree and is a Chartered Financial Analyst, which is the highest credential for investment and financial professionals and is internationally recognized.

Zach has been on the Board of ARSLG since early 2024 as Treasurer to help improve and provide understanding of the day-to-day finances for the board members and staff. Zach is also an active mentor of the Wiitahnookiinitaw Tahshkayzing Entrepreneurship Centre (WTEX), which is a branch of Treaty 1 and designed to support Indigenous entrepreneurs in building strong, sustainable ventures.

ORANGE SHIRT DAY 2025

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation 2025

Historic Sites and Monuments Plaque Unveiling





On September 30th, 2025, the Assiniboia Residential School Legacy Group hosted an Orange Shirt Day event at our Commemorative Monument and Gathering Place (621 Academy Road in Winnipeg) and also in the adjoining Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine Park. Many former students were able to attend, including some who travelled from out-of-province. The day included an open-mic for sharing stories, plenty of time for visiting, performances from Buffalo Red Thunder Singers, a delicious lunch from Shelly's Bistro, and the Group distributed t-shirts, newsletters, and brochures all printed by Imprints & More.

On this day, Assiniboia Residential School was also recognized as one of more than 2,200 places in Canada designated through Parks Canada's National Program of Historical Commemorations. Elder Mabel Horton, ARSLG Co-President, helped to unveil three plaques about the school written in Anishinaabemowin, Anishininimowin, Cree, Dakota, Dene, English and French. Thank you to those who read the plaques aloud for the audience in their respective language. The plaques have now been added to the Commemorative Monument and Gathering Place and we encourage everyone to visit.

Toni Kipling, ARSLG Executive Director, remarked:

“Our relatives and ancestors have a fire spirit within them. This fire provided the strength, resilience and love to endure the pain and injustices while they were uprooted and forced to attend residential schools. It is because of their bravery and strength, we are still here.”

Darian McKinney, ARSLG Board Member, remarked:

“Growing up, (those languages) were something that was non-existent. My grandparents, specifically, did not teach my father the language because of the threat of being taken away by residential schools. Just knowing that’s why I don’t know the language is heart-breaking. Going to (Sandy Bay Residential School), it was forbidden, and they didn’t speak it after that, although they’ve definitely reclaimed it and speak it more now.”

The three historical commemorations plaques read as follows:

Assiniboia Residential School (1958 – 1973)

More than 1,025 children from roughly 85 First Nations were forced to attend and live at this federal institution run primarily by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Grey Nuns. They endured isolation at Assiniboia, which was first a residential high school and then a hostel after 1967. It was part of a failed national attempt to assimilate children and destroy their identity and cultures, impacting generations. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission described this policy as cultural genocide. Together, the children found the strength to resist. Survivors and their families are reclaiming their identities, cultures, languages, communities, and relationships with the land, while seeking justice and fostering awareness and remembrance.

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada



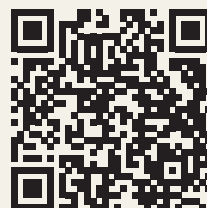


PROJECT UPDATE



The Legacy Group has worked with Electric Monk Media to produce a twenty-three-minute short documentary film called *Monumental: A Space for Healing*. This production is described as an uplifting short film about a group of residential school survivors who reclaimed part of their former high school grounds for a Monument and Commemorative Gathering Place. Together they built a unique place to learn, to get together, and to remember the over one thousand young people who were sent to Assiniboia Residential School in Winnipeg.

Monumental: A Space for Healing is free to watch on the home page of the Legacy Group's website, and you can also view the film here:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UP-PBltQkE0c>

Please subscribe to the ARS Legacy Group YouTube channel. Here you will also find coverage of recent events, and videos of photos and



artifacts from the ARSLG archive.

In the fall of 2025, the Legacy Group and Electric Monk Media started production on a four-part documentary series titled *Photographic Memories - Student Life at Assiniboia Residential School*. This series features interviews with former students and intergenerational survivors who reflect on their shared history of trauma and triumph including being removed from their homes and sent to Winnipeg for high school in the 1960's. Funding has been provided by BellMTS through their Fibe TV1 program, and this documentary series will be made available to all Bell subscribers throughout Canada. Stay tuned for more updates!



OUTREACH WORK

ARLSG Executive Director, Toni Kipling, attended the Indigenous History and Heritage Gathering at the RBC Convention Centre in Winnipeg on March 2nd through March 4th.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) and the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres (FNCCEC) hosted the Indigenous History and Heritage Gathering (IHHG). This gathering was one of the many important events held during Indigenous History Month. It brought together diverse groups who are working to amplify the distinct stories of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island.

Toni attended the many presentations and networked with groups of residential school survivors from across Canada to discuss funding strategies, accessing historical records, and other project work.

Handouts from the Legacy Group proved to be popular. We shared one postcard that promoted the book *Did You See Us?* with review quotes and a QR code for purchasing the book from McNally Robinson. And we shared a second postcard with our outreach message to former students and their families that linked to the Legacy Group's website.



**INDIGENOUS
HISTORY & HERITAGE
GATHERING**

RESOURCE ASSISTANCE FOR YOUTH

ARLSG Executive Director, Toni Kipling, and ARSLG Co-President, Elder Betty Ross, met with staff and volunteers from RaY (Resource Assistance for Youth) on May 1st, 2026.

Pictured is Elder Betty Ross with RaY volunteers Gabriel Levine and Fox Laliberty.



Through RaY's Growing Opportunities program, youth have helped to maintain the Assiniboia Residential School Commemorative Monument and Gathering Place. Up to seven youth at a time, regularly visit the site to clear snow in winter and clean garbage year-round.

This meeting started with discussions with Elder Betty at the Monument, followed by a pizza lunch at RaY's office on Sherbrook Street. Elder Betty thanked the volunteers for their dedicated work and presented them with honorariums to show appreciation for their help



in maintaining the beauty of the Monument.

For over 25 years, RaY has empowered disconnect youth through supports, training, and compassion to encourage them to make the best

possible choices for their lives. RaY is a nationally recognized and award-winning nonprofit organization located in Winnipeg, MB. RaY supports youth ages 0-29 with integrated programs and services in a nonjudgmental and inclusive space.



5TH ANNUAL SUNRISE CEREMONY

ARLSG Executive Director, Toni Kipling, attended the 5th Annual Sunrise Ceremony in honour of the ARSLG founder Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine on May 10th, 2026.

The gathering of Theodore's friends and family was held at Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine Park, adjacent

to the Assiniboia Residential School Commemorative Monument and Gathering Place, and was hosted by Morgan Fontaine, with assistance from Mitch Bourbonniere and Fire Keeper Charles Yuzicappi.

The morning's activities included a sacred fire and sharing circle. Theodore was the driving force

behind the Legacy Group, the construction of the Monument, and many other community initiatives. He has been greatly missed and often remembered.

Pictured is Mitch Bourbonniere, Toni Kipling, Morgan Fontaine, and Andrew Woolford.



IN CONVERSATION WITH TONI KIPLING

On March 24th, Toni Kipling sat for a video interview in support of the upcoming documentary series titled *Photographic Memories - Student Life at Assiniboia Residential School*. Please find below excerpts from that interview:



Comments on the late Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine, the founder of the Assiniboia Residential School Legacy Group:

“What I love about being part of working with Ted was his integrity and his peacefulness and his truth. I enjoyed learning from him because I didn’t feel stupid when he taught. I didn’t feel like having a question was going to get laughed at. He also

had a way of him that made it almost childlike, in the sense of being able to be who you are truly. And I think that’s beautiful because when I look back a lot of our elders didn’t get that time to have that full childhood. And I think it’s beautiful that he was able to maintain that in his soul, and in the way he was, and in the way he carried himself.”

“He can see things in you that you never would have thought of. He took that chance on youth and that’s great because I see a lot of people when working with youth, they’re not considering their expertise, even at their young age, and their ability to do things differently. He knew the youth are important and it’s important for us today to continue to encourage our youth to stand in pride.”





“The one thing that I want to carry on is this legacy of him, knowing that no matter what, in whatever shape or form the Assiniboia Residential School Legacy Group is going, it is going to be led with love and pride, and our heritage is going to be celebrated, and I know his main mission was to ensure that this never ever happened again to children.”

“Putting sage in my mouth, that’s one trick that Theodore taught me. He said that if you want to speak your truth, put some sage in your gumline because it will give you that strength to speak your truth with medicine, and to honour it.”

Comment on the Assiniboia Residential School Monument & Gathering Place:

“The student names and community names, it’s been an ongoing work because we are still learning and new names pop up. And we are still looking for more students who possibly attended because we don’t know which ones were left out or who were there for only a year or half a year. There’s maybe more that we don’t know of.”

Comment on plans for the Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine Park:

“One of our goals was always to have this space to be a play area where kids could enjoy themselves. What we’re trying to do is work towards an arboretum, a walkway, and gathering place. Here, with Theodore’s park, the main thing is children at play. We want to bring this space from a place where there wasn’t too much play, to a place where everyone is welcome to play.”





Comment on plans for the former ARS classroom building:

“One of our goals is to get this building back and be able to possibly have a museum along with educational curriculum that we have been working on developing.

Ted had provided a lot of teaching sessions throughout his lifetime and recorded everything, which is great because we want to be able to offer those teachings the way he taught it with that kind of love where he even made the harder things easier to get through.”

Goals and concerns for the future:

“My fear is they are going to get disrespected, our elders, and their truth is going to be distorted, and going forward is how do we protect them and the truth. And to also remember this is for reconciliation...we have to acknowledge it, it happened, and

it made a mess of things.”

“We want to open up the space to be able to have students visit and learn about reconciliation and also residential schools.”

“It’s the vision of this happening not just on one day of the year and not just with one school, it would great to have all communities come to this space and actually have proper curriculum and a walk-through tour for teachers who do want to visit and teach their students about reconciliation. I would love for those teachers



and students to also have the opportunity to work with elders, to connect with the elders, to see a ceremony, to hear first-hand from a survivor who is still living today, who went to that school they are visiting.”

“I would love the parkway from Theodore’s park to also come up to this building and connect to the Monument, so that it can be a whole pathway of stories from residential school to reconciliation.”

“I want to partner with The Forks and the Manitoba Human Rights Museum and to offer an extended teaching or space of learning. It would be great to work with The Forks to have their boat tours make a stop at our site.”

And in closing:

“You have to laugh at yourself, or you will cry if others do.”



FROM THE ARCHIVES



Photos by Elder Mabel Horton



Photos by Elder Mabel Horton



Photos by Elder Mabel Horton

FAREWELL PARTY '65'



VALENTINE'S PARTY



HIGHLIGHT'S STAFF



SEATED: (L. TO R.) TERRY QUEWEZANCE, LORETTA IRONSTAND, ROBERT HOULE, BETSY ROSS, JAMES NICHOLAS, AGNES NANOWIN.
 SECOND ROW: BERNICE HENRY, SHIRLEY BEAULIEU, CECILIA YORK, CAROL SCRIBE, HELEN SCATCH, JOHN FLETT.
 BACK ROW: KENNETH COURCHENE, MOSES CKIMAW, RONALD FONTAINE, CAMERON WOOD, SALIO MAMAGEESIC, THOMAS NEPINAK.

TEAM LEADERS



SEATED: (L. TO R.) AGNES NANOWIN, DOLORES TUESDAY, BERNICE HENRY, JOSEPHINE ROBINSON, RITA NANOWIN.
 STANDING: LEONARD MCKAY, CHARLES NELSON, SAUL DAY, ROBERT FRANCOIS, JAMES NICHOLAS, CLARENCE NEPINAK,
 RAYMOND MASON, JOE L. WOOD.



Football



Senior



Junior



Cheerleaders





VISIT THE ASSINIBOIA RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL COMMEMORATIVE MONUMENT & GATHERING PLACE

621 Academy Road Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada



The Monument & Gathering Place is open to the public and hosts community events including an annual event on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - September 30th.

The Monument features the names of over 1,000 students and 86 communities. Please visit to read the information panels, sit on the benches, and appreciate the garden of ceremonial grasses and plants.

ARE YOU A FORMER STUDENT

of Assiniboia Residential School in Winnipeg?

Please Help Us Connect with Former Students.

Do you have photos, yearbooks, or other
memorabilia from Assiniboia Residential School?



CONNECT. SHARE. REMEMBER.

Please connect with the Legacy Group to join our mailing lists, to receive future newsletters by mail, and to participate in upcoming events and educational projects.

Please contact the Legacy Group through our website at www.assiniboiaresidentialschool.com



ASSINIBOIA RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
◀ LEGACY GROUP ▶

Assiniboia Residential School Legacy Group Inc.

Board Members

Elder Mabel Horton – Co-President

Elder Betty Ross – Co-President

Alyssa Bird

Cathy Cook

Zachary Lee

Darian McKinney

Ada Uddoh

Ruth Wiwchar

Andrew Woolford

Project Advisor

Morgan Fontaine

Executive Director

Toni Kipling

Please visit our website:

<https://assiniboiaresidentialschool.com/>

Donations can be made to the ARSLG
through The Winnipeg Foundation:

<https://bit.ly/3W6J5i4>



DONATE TODAY!

Assiniboia Residential School

Legacy Group Inc.

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