

Artifacts collected for 'witness blanket' project



Rosy Steinhauer laughs along with Charles Wood (right) as she holds the pieces of red brick and sandstone taken from the site of the old Red Deer Industrial School that will be used in the Witness: Pieces of History art project by Carey Newman. Wood presented the pieces to Steinhauer on behalf of the Remembering the Children Society.

MYLES FISH/Advocate staff

By [Myles Fish - Red Deer Advocate](#)

Published: **June 09, 2013 6:17 PM**

Updated: **June 10, 2013 10:17 AM**

While the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is working to ensure that the stories of the thousands of young children forced to attend Indian Residential Schools are not lost to history, one artist is on a mission to ensure that the inanimate remnants of the sad legacy live on as well.

Carey Newman, a carver from Sooke, B.C. on Vancouver Island, is working on an ambitious goal to collect 2,500 pieces of memorabilia representative of the residential school era and all the parties involved.

Among the 200 pieces he "has to have" are things from the Parliament Buildings, the Supreme Court, each of the provincial legislatures and churches involved in residential schools, and, most importantly, something from each of the nearly 150 residential and day schools that once existed in this country.

On Saturday, he got a big contribution to his efforts, when the Remembering the Children Society presented the project with a piece of white sandstone from the old foundation of the Red Deer Industrial School and a red brick which was part of the school's boys' residence.

Newman's undertaking will see him assemble all the pieces into a "Witness Blanket" with objects mounted onto a cedar base.

He likened the plan to that of a beaded bracelet "where there are lots of small, solid objects strung together to form a flexible, textile-like surface."

He chose to create a "blanket" because of its universal use as a protective element, and for its importance in his own culture.

"In Salish culture there is a tradition of 'blanketing' - when a blanket is given to offer protection, strength or public recognition. In that manner, this blanket will stand as a woven testament to our shared history, upholding and honouring the survivors and their families," explained Newman.

His own father is one of those survivors, having attended a residential school in Mission, B.C. Newman said his father never shared his experiences with his children when they were younger, and was only able to unburden himself partially when he gave a statement at a Victoria Truth and Reconciliation Commission event.

"The day I turned the age that he was when he was taken, our relationship took a really drastic turn away from an amiable father-son relationship and it wasn't until we'd been through a bunch of

counselling, a bunch of learning to communicate that we were able to repair that damage. It was the day he lost his father, essentially. It's not a direct effect, but it's the kind of thing that happens to the subsequent generations," said Newman.

Newman is still in the early stages of collecting for the project. He has two helpers who will be making gathering trips across the country — Rosy Steinhauer, the grand-niece of former lieutenant-governor and residential school survivor Ralph Steinhauer collected the Red Deer artifacts — until the end of the year.

Newman is receiving support for his project through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission fund, and plans to have it completed in 2014.

For more on the endeavour, visit www.witnessblanket.ca.

mfish@reddeeradvocate.com

Find this article at:

http://www.reddeeradvocate.com/news/Artifacts_collected_for_witness_blanket_project_210775541.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright ©2008 Black Press. All rights reserved.