

# The Guardian

COVERS PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LIKE THE DEW

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Darcy Sark, vice-president of the Aboriginal Survivors for Healing Inc., and Treena Smith, manager of Webster Academic Services at UPEI, unveil a new cabinet to be prominently displayed in Robertson Library. The memorial cabinet is dedicated to the former students of the Shubenacadie Indian residential school. GUARDIAN PHOTO

## Beautiful display of dark past

*Cabinet in UPEI library memorializes former students of Indian residential school*

By Jim Davy  
THE GUARDIAN

While the glass panels of the black ash cabinet are shatterproof, the contents displayed inside represent shattered souls.

Inside the cabinet, the items collectively serve to honour and memorialize former students of the Indian residential school system where incidents of abuse were frequent

and frightening.

Each square of a quilt depicts a personal memory, in most cases, if not all, a painful one, of the Shubenacadie Indian residential school. Former students of that school, residents today of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P.E.I., came together last fall to create the quilt.

Charlotte Morris, a former Shubie student and board secretary of the Ab-

original Survivors for Healing Inc., spoke on the contents Thursday at a dedication unveiling in the Robertson Library at UPEI where the cabinet will be permanently displayed.

Morris says a set of keys to the front door of the school, given to her by a former caretaker, are also central to the memorial exhibit.

The cabinet, which will stand in a prominent, high traffic area of the library,

also contains a picture of the school with staff and students from 1947 standing in front of this building with a dark past.

A framed text of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's 2008 apology to the First Nations of Canada is also part of the exhibit.

ASH vice-president Darcy Sark says the contents of the beautiful cabinet are meant to highlight a sad

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### Beautiful

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part of Aboriginal history that can't be hidden.

"I think the biggest thing that we are hoping for is exposure to what happened in Shubie — not a lot of people know," he said. "We have been working years and years and years with ASH to get the message out there."

Simon Lloyd, a member of the UPEI Art Committee, did not shy away from the horrors that so many aboriginal students were subjected to while forced to attend residential schools in Canada.

"Though beautiful in their way, the documents, images, and objects shown here stand as a stark reminder — as symbols, in fact — and here, surely, lies the most humbling and important lesson of this display for non-aboriginals," he said.

"This cabinet and its contents are being offered to the university in a spirit of reconciliation and remembrance, rather than recrimination or retribution. Though many non-aboriginals may feel a cer-

tain guilt when looking at this display, I hope that we may also take something more useful from it: a determination to do better in future."

Abegweit First Nation Chief Brian Francis says while the abuse of Aboriginal students occurred many years ago in residential schools, the damage still lingers today and continues to impact many in his community.

"I have been to a number of events over the past few years as we have struggled to address and deal with the residential school abuses," he said. "I still struggle to grasp how a country as great as ours could allow such abuses to take place. I don't think I will ever understand."

Lennox Island Chief Matilda Ramjattan lauded the efforts of ASH in dealing with survivors, their families and their communities over the past few years "in what has been a long, arduous journey of understanding, healing and forgiveness of the atrocities inflicted upon the Aboriginal people of Canada through the Indian residential school system."