



## Johnny Bandura and the 215

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what are you currently all about?**

JB: Hi this is Johnny Bandura.

**AU: Tell us about the latest art project you worked on.**

JB: I created a mural out of 215 individual portraits to honor each child that was found at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

**AU: Describe the art you created and the meaning behind it.**

JB: I used 11"x14" canvas to match as close to an actual human face as I could and used bright oil paints to really bring the images to life. It is a memorial but also a celebration of life. Instead of painting them as children I decided to give them a life they could have lived. To show how we lost a large piece of society.

**AU: Why was this such an important project for you?**

JB: It actually started out very simply I just wanted to paint something to honor the children. It wasn't till after I had completed the second portrait that I decided that I would do a portrait to honor each of the children. As well the Kamloops residential school was where my grandmother went as a child and I couldn't help but imagine

some of the children found could have been her friends and classmates.

**AU: What do you want people to understand about what really happened in Canadian residential schools?**

JB: I think the unmarked grave sites speak for themselves. But we as the public need to listen to the survivors and their families. Really understand and believe the abuse and trauma they suffered as well inter-generational trauma will continue until we address the issues.

**AU: How can this ever be resolved in your opinion?**

JB: Well my opinion I don't believe there's a simple fix for this. To start people need to be held accountable. The federal government has funded and overseen operations of the system since they created them. The Catholic Church ran the schools on the governments behalf. Both organizations have to admit guilt to the genocide and mistreatment of the Indigenous people of Canada. Individuals on both sides of the system committed crimes and were never charged or investigated that needs to change arrests need to be made. More needs to be done to treat the future generations of First Nations people. To honor the victims of genocide we need to honor the decedents of these victims; their families should be given justice. Finding clean drinking water on an Indian reservation in Canada is a rarity. Helping First Nations with providing them with the basic necessities of life is a start to healing and honouring the victims of genocide. That's what I can say to start with resolving this but again that's purely my personal opinion.

**AU: Any plans to keep exhibiting these 215 paintings you created?**

JB: Yes. After the first showing in Edmonton I hope to bring them home to Kamloops to be displayed. As well I'm working on a book because I would like to include some of the stories

residential school survivors shared with me with the paintings and use the the book as a way to educate people in a simple short story format about what happened at residential schools from the people that were there, as well as to give access to the portraits to people who can't make it to a gallery.

**AU: You have been getting a lot of media attention, what has been the message and story behind this artwork you have been sharing?**

JB: I think the message is that these were children that were killed for no reason other than that they were indigenous and they could have gone on to be anything.

**AU: Anything going on with your music or bands these days? Any new projects in the works?**

JB: Well I'm always writing music and needing that release. I'm

trying to bring back a style of music that was popular in the 30s. "Hobo folk" or Hobo rock as I call it. It's basically just telling a story with acoustic guitar accompanying. It's easy to do during Covid as well because it's typically played solo. I'll share some songs later this year

**AU: Any updates on the planned documentary on your early band Sip Yek Nom?**

JB: The Sip doc was suppose to launch filming at PRB 2020 but we all know happened there so it's on the back burner again until the time is right

**AU: How can people find you and support your cause online?**

JB: I'm pretty easy you can find me @johnnybandura on FB and Instagram, and my brand new web page just launched <https://johnnybandura.trubox.ca/>

**AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?**

JB: Who knows what tomorrow will bring, be prepared to improvise. Thank you.

@johnnybandura