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Lessons in Race: Curriculum in Indian Residential Schools, 1900–1966

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Abstract

The twin goals of "Christianization" and "civilization" for Aboriginal children were propagated in many features of Indian Residential School life. This article examines one of those features: the curriculum selected and taught to the students. The educational program of Indian Residential Schools was at its foundation focused on a Christianizing mandate. The core textbooks of the schools were Christian readers and workbooks, which varied between the different denominations, yet still uniformly sought to teach children the importance of traditional Christian values and beliefs. Layered into the basic coursework were carefully selected social lessons designed to demonstrate the differences between the white majority and Aboriginal minority, the superiority of the white population, and the importance of Anglo-Canadian state citizenship. These messages were reinforced through the lessons in history books, storybooks, and supplementary reading materials provided in the classroom. The words and images of these publications preyed upon the loneliness and isolation of the student, who straddled a divide between what was "Indian" and what was "white" — a divide between past and present, evil and good, and subject and citizen. This article provides a concentrated empirical analysis of school curriculum to illuminate how oppression was constructed and reinforced in the pedagogy of Indian Residential Schools.

Who Calls? by Donalda Dickie, 1931

Who calls?
The Red man, poor and sick,
He calls.

Who comes?
The White man, rich and strong,
He comes.

Who watches?
To see that pity reigns,
God watches.[1]

[1] This poem featured in one of the history textbooks used by the Blue Quills Indian Residential School, in St. Paul, Alberta. Donalda Dickie and Helen Palk, *Pages from Canada's Story, Book One* (Toronto: D.J. Dent & Sons, 1931), 37.

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) issued its final report on the system of Indian Residential Schools and the program of assimilation implemented among its students. The report found that the school system facilitated a mission of "cultural genocide" against Aboriginal people, by "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group."[2] Many survivors of the schools described the experience of this culturally destructive process. The memoirs of Stoney Chief John Snow recall that in the school at Morley, Alberta, "education consisted of nothing that had any relationship to our homes and culture" and that "the only good people on earth were non-Indians and, specifically, white Christians."[3] A similar sentiment was expressed in the statements of former student Elaine Durocher about her time in the Roman Catholic school in Kamsack, Saskatchewan. Elaine remembered that "we were told we were little, stupid savages, and that they had to educate us."[4]

The public discussions surrounding Indian Residential Schools have emphasized the suffering and pain of survivors through individual stories and accounts like those above. On the other side of the dialogue, however, is a community of former teachers and officials who argue that the school system was one of good intentions gone wrong.[5] They stand against a blatant dismissal of the intentions of teachers, and some have even gone so far as to defend the work done in the schools and the teaching methods of its educators.[6] While these voices are a minority in the academic discourse, they pose a continued challenge to confronting the legacy of the Indian Residential School system.

This article seeks to make explicit the intent of the Indian Residential School system through an analysis of how the schools attempted to systematically indoctrinate children with the chosen curriculum. The pedagogical approach within the schools was part of an intentional program of cultural oppression, not a result of failed good intentions. The framework put forth by Paulo Freire for understanding how education is a practice of domination serves as the theoretical lens for this analysis.[7] The power of written words and taught lessons within the schools reveal the tactics of assimilation as they sought to transform the students from a "pathology of healthy society" in the classroom.[8] An analysis of the textbooks and reading material carefully selected by the federal Department of Indian Affairs and provided to children sheds light on this process. Such material opens a window of insight into the attempted naturalization of white, Christianized values and the construction of the Indigenous "other" as savage and primitive. During the 1920s, the Department had begun to "standardiz[e] the instruction offered" in the schools.[9] While the process of standardization was slow and varied between schools and provinces, curriculum was made consistent and regulated by 1930, and the subsequent two decades saw a peak in the number of schools thus regulated across Canada.

This study focuses on various textbooks available for student use between 1900 and 1966, when the federal government withdrew from its involvement in the schools. It argues that the textbooks, readers, workbooks, and library books chosen by school administrators formed the foundation of the assimilative program implemented by the Department of Indian Affairs and Christian churches. These books sought to shape the consciousness of Aboriginal children to think and act like white Canadians. Yet the curriculum

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[2] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 1.

[3] Ibid., 83.

[4] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), *The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 41.

[5] See Eric Bays, *Indian Residential Schools: Another Picture* (Ottawa: Baico Publishing, 2009).

[6] See Bernice Logan, *The Teaching Wigwams* (Tangier, NS: R.B. Logan, 1993–1995).

[7] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1972).

[8] Ibid., 63.

[9] LAC, RG10, Volume 6345, File 751-2, Part 1. "Requisition for School Material," dated 13 June 1947.

and texts dehumanized the students and sought to reinforce their status as oppressed individuals in a social system that saw their race as inherently inferior. The consequences of this fatalistic dichotomy have been voiced many times by survivors of the schools, who speak of a lasting identity crisis and a legacy of self-hatred and psychological trauma.

Background

The twin goals of the Indian Residential School system were the "civilization" and "Christianization" of Aboriginal people across Canada. Aboriginal culture, beliefs, practices, and languages were deemed by colonial powers to be at best inferior to the more "civilized" dominant culture and at worst, evil and dangerous. The government therefore determined early on that it had a "moral obligation" to stamp out any remnants of Aboriginal culture by removing children from the care of their parents and homes to be "elevated from the paths in which their parents had walked."[10] The result of this overarching belief in white superiority and Aboriginal inferiority was the establishment of hundreds of institutions that taught students Anglicized values of family, agriculture, gender relations, religion, citizenship, and scholarship. The school system was more than just the residential schools — which is the term applied to the full-time boarding schools — it also included many day schools on reserves, which had a similar curriculum and often acted as "feeders" to the residential schools.

Throughout this article, the term "Aboriginal" describes individuals of Indigenous descent in Canada. This term includes all students who attended the schools discussed in this article, including those who would not have qualified for "Indian" status under the *Indian Act*. Commonly in the past, however, the term "Indian" referred to any individual of Indigenous descent, and "squaw" referred to Aboriginal women. Thus, in certain cases the terms "Indian," "squaw," and "tribe" will appear, but only in the context of quotations or classifications from individuals of the time period discussed.

The recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission has focused the public spotlight on colonial pedagogical paradigms. Publications by Marie Battiste and Paulette Regan have addressed the persistent colonial lens through which Canadians view their own history. In her book *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, Battiste highlights the paradox of an educational curriculum for Aboriginal students that tells the narrative of history from the viewpoint of the colonizers. This prevents students from establishing a relationship with the events, by negating their own roles and the lasting consequences that still impact their lives. Battiste says that such a pedagogy leads to a "fragmented existence" where sense of self is divided between Aboriginal and Canadian identity.[11] Regan in turn addresses the "unsettling" nature of discussions which highlight these legacies of colonialism. Canada's history of Aboriginal subjugation has led to a continued process of trauma and dysfunction within Aboriginal communities and families. *Decolonizing Education* is targeted at a non-Aboriginal audience and calls for an uncomfortable overhaul of the current dominant mindset through self-reflection on white privilege and systems of discrimination in Canada today.[12] Both of these scholars provide a resounding call for a re-evaluation of the ideological frameworks that structure public education and knowledge sharing in Canada.

Historians have also weighed in on the discussion of programs of education. Catherine McGregor has recently published a discussion of social studies curricula for Aboriginal schools in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut after the federal government transferred control of curriculum to the territorial government in 1969.[13] She found that the territorial curriculum was very different from the former federal

[10] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. Memorandum dated 15 July 1897.

[11] Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2013).

[12] See Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

[13] Nunavut officially separated from the Northwest Territories in 1999 to become an independent territory.

one, terming it a "culturally responsive" curriculum which focused on the culture and society of the local Aboriginal people — primarily the Dene and Inuit peoples — and incorporated their linguistic identities. McGregor found that the territories initially adapted curriculum from Alberta and Ontario and through a process of implementation and revaluation have continuously sought ways to provide a "culturally founded" education which emphasizes the child's experience but imparts necessary knowledge of a globalized world.[14]

This more recent approach to culturally inclusive education is shockingly different from its historical predecessors in Indian residential and day schools. Critical investigations of these schools abound in the academic literature, with some early graduate theses produced in the 1970s and 1980s,[15] and many fundamental historical works published during the 1990s.[16] Roland Chrisjohn's 1997 work with Sherri Young and Michael Maraun, titled *The Circle Game* explicitly stated that Indian Residential Schools were a tool of systematic oppression by the federal government.[17] *The Circle Game* also direct linked this oppression to the legal and psychological legacies of the schools, and Chrisjohn has been a foundational voice in the discussion of how to bring justice to survivors. Two of the most comprehensive histories on residential schools also come from this time, published by Jim Miller and John Milloy. Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision* and Milloy's *A National Crime* both systematically analysed the residential schools on reserves and broke down the brutal reality of the system.[18] These works provide a comprehensive discussion of the many aspects of residential school life, including its intellectual foundations and a detailed analysis of the everyday experiences of students. These works revealed that disease was a constant companion of students within the schools, along with poor sanitation and limited, poor-quality school supplies, clothes, furniture, and even food. The schools were primarily funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and run by the different religious denominations across Canada. The consequence was a system with little to no effective oversight — as both government and church officials turned a deaf ear to parent and student complaints about abuse and neglect within the schools.[19]

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[14] Catherine McGregor, "Creating Able Human Beings: Social Studies Curriculum in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, 1969 to the Present," *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation,* Special Issue: "Education North of 60" (2015): 57–79.

[15] See Jacqueline Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School: White 'Rites' for the Indians of Old North-West" (master's thesis, Carleton University, 1970); Sylvia Dayton, "Ideology of Native Education Policy" (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1976); and James Tandy, "Curriculum in the Morley School, 1923–1958" (master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1980).

[16] See James Miller, "Owen Glendower, Hotspur and Canadian Indian Policy," in *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) , 323–44; Agnes Grant, *No End of Grief: Residential Schools in Canada* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1996); James Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Jennifer Pettit, "To 'Christianize and Civilize': Native Industrial Schools in Canada" (PhD diss., University of Calgary, 1997); and Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1998).

[17] Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young with Michael Maraun, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1997).

[18] J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) and John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

[19] Ibid., pp. 160–77.

The early historical works from the 1990s have been followed by more recent studies which illuminate specific aspects of the school experience —survivors' stories and narratives,[20] critiques of policy,[21] descriptions of the breakdown of health among students,[22] and analyses of the lasting legacies in modern society.[23] Yet room remains in the literature for more investigation, especially of the functions of the schools as educational institutions. The Department of Indian Affairs set out certain subjects which it desired the children to focus on at school. The residential schools housed children for at least ten months of the year, so that they could be entirely removed from the influence of their parents — "in order that the benefits of their school training may be lasting."[24] For half the day, students were taught basic agriculture and domestic skills. The other half was dedicated to academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. All these subjects were taught in English or French, depending on the region of each school — the majority were English. This article focuses solely on the textbooks, readers, and novels supplied to English-speaking schools in Canada. While this admittedly excludes some evidence, as French schools also had a selection of textbooks designed with a similar purview, the Department of Indian Affairs was administrated in English and the conceptualization of the schooling system was also primarily focused on an Anglophone education. Additionally, the Protestant churches who administered many of the schools taught in English, especially in regard to their foundational religious texts. The schools imposed strict discipline based on the Christian norms of morality and conformity which students were taught to follow during their prolonged stays in the schools. These factors combined to create what was deemed a "competent education" for Aboriginal children.[25]

This article discusses one aspect of the system of education: the textbooks and literature the students were exposed to. These books were selected from lists issued to the schools by the Department of Indian Affairs or ordered from local stores which had agreements to supply Department-funded schools. The Department allowed schools to order a different set of core textbooks for each grade depending on the religious denomination of the schools. Protestant and Catholic schools had separate lists of "core" readers for grades 1 to 8. In addition to the core texts, schools could order textbooks in history, arithmetic, spelling and English language, and a variety of arts and crafts.[26] The school reading shelves and infirmary were populated with one or two copies of other books that students could choose to read. These books came from various local and international suppliers, including Moyer's School Supplies in Edmonton, the MacMillan Publishing Company in Toronto, and publishers in the United States and England.[27]

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[20] See Theodore Fontaine, *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools, A Memoir* (Vancouver: Heritage House Publishing, 2010).

[21] See Richard Enns, "'But What Is the Object of Educating These Children If It Costs Their Lives to Educate Them?' Federal Indian Education Policy in Western Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2009): 101–23.

[22] See Paula Larsson, "Circular Progress: Health and Healthcare within Albertan Indian Residential Schools, 1920–1950" (master's thesis, University of Calgary, 2015).

[23] See Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory Kipling, *Aboriginal People, Resilience and the Residential School Legacy* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003); Deborah Chansonneuve, *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People. A Resource Manual* (Ottawa: The Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005); Elizabeth Fast and Delphine Collin-Vezina, "Historical Trauma, Race-based Trauma and Resilience of Indigenous Peoples: A Literature Review," *First Peoples Child and Family Review* 5, no. 1 (2010): 126–36; and Dee Dionne and Gary Nixon, "Moving beyond Residential School Trauma Abuse: A Phenomenological Hermeneutic Analysis," *International Journal Mental Health Addiction* 12, no. 3 (2014): 335–50.

[24] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. Memorandum dated 15 July 1897.

[25] Ibid.

[26] LAC, RG10, Volume 6345, File 751-2, part 1. "Standard Text Book Order Form."

[27] LAC, RG10, Volume 6345, File 751-2, part 1. "Requisitions for Supplies," 1940–1952.

Curriculum in the Schools

The books and stories contain a variety of lessons for their audience. It becomes clear from first glance that the books were often intended for urban children, as many of the stories and lessons assume the reader knows about cities, grocery stores, modern appliances, and other aspects of everyday urban life in Canada.[28] The stories are usually moral ones — meant to instill in children the accepted habits of healthy eating, cleanliness, discipline, obedience, and the ability to think about the world around them. They were also educational, providing information about where food comes from; describing how factories process clothes, milk, toys, machines, and other goods; and depicting different countries and cultures around the world. The educational programmes were similar to the provincial public school curricula across the country, and residential schools were in fact encouraged to conform to the standards set out by their respective provinces.[29] To this end, schools were provided with an additional order form listing the "textbooks authorized by the province" in which they were located.[30]

Yet this encouragement stopped short of enforcing provincial public school standards and indeed prioritized a Christian-focused education. A clear divide already existed between secular state education and religious education in the early twentieth century in Canada. As the Canadian state developed — incorporating more provinces and formulating new educational legislation — the provinces formally took over the administration of education to its youngest citizens. School attendance for the general populace was compulsory in almost all Canadian provinces by the later nineteenth century, excluding Quebec.[31] Secular education was the norm (everywhere but Quebec); Ontario was the first to pass education acts, in 1841 and 1843. Thus began the divided school system, which maintained both public secular schools and separate denominational schools for young children.[32] Early public school promoters such as Egerton Ryerson saw education as more than a means by which individuals could obtain scholarly training. They believed that education would be the gateway to curing the perceived social problems of the populace, such as crime, poverty, vagrancy, and idleness.[33]

The state therefore played a crucial role in providing a secular education from the beginning of Canada's public education systems. Indeed, religious instruction and denominational schools were only allowed in a new district if a non-denominational school was already present.[34] Yet federal officials took an entirely different stance on the education of Aboriginal children. These schools were almost exclusively associated with religious denominations, leaving little room for secular education of any sort. When first implementing the system of schooling on reserves, the Department had decided that the churches were better positioned to implement a civilizing program due to their extensive missionary efforts among Aboriginal communities.[35] It was also content to allow the churches to continue running the system they had first implemented and to bear the cost of Aboriginal education.

The churches took very seriously the continued presence of Christianity in the residential school system and viewed it as part of a larger war between Christianity and secularism in Canada. The churches

[28] For example, the first reader in the Crabtree Basic Series is titled *In the City and on the Farm*, and three dozen of these books were ordered by the Blue Quills Indian Residential School in 1944.

[29] LAC, RG10, Volume 6015, File 1-1-6-Alta, Part 1. Letter written by Russell T. Ferrier, dated 17 May 1922.

[30] LAC, RG10, Volume 6345, File 751-2, Part 1. "Requisition for School Material," dated 13 June 1947.

[31] Terence Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics: Gallicanism, Romanism, and Canadianism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 111.

[32] Ibid, 111.

[33] Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1977), 31–32.

[34] Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics,* 11.

[35] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. Memorandum dated 15 July 1897.

stubbornly held onto their control of the schools — and of the souls of those who attended them. Stark division existed between the religious institutions themselves. The Catholics were divided between the English and French sects, and the Protestant churches were similarly working in opposition to the Catholic ones.[36] The venomous rivalries on each side were aptly described in one memorandum submitted to the Department of Indian Affairs in 1892, which stated:

> The Methodists, for instance . . . firmly believe that the doctrinal teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are based on deadly error and tend directly to foster ignorance, superstition, and moral and spiritual darkness in the minds of those who are brought under their influence. The Roman Catholics, in their turn, hold substantially the same views, and if possible even more strongly, with regard to the tenants [sic] and effects of Evangelicalism.[37]

The churches were thus highly competitive in establishing new schools and recruiting students, and were known to resort to both threats and bribes to enroll children. The Department referred to this competition as "constant bickering and petty jealousies," which manifested in continual complaints from priests on each side about the actions of the other.[38]

The priority of a religious education for children in the residential schools was consistent throughout the next fifty years. The religious focus went unquestioned and unchanged by the government, which accepted the need for a religious-based education on reserves. This is seen in the discussions in 1946–1948 under a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons appointed to examine and consider changes to the *Indian Act*. Numerous briefs to the committee addressed the education in Indian Residential Schools across the country. Many First Nations communities weighed in on the debate, some demonstrating a passionate desire to remove the religious aspect of the education. Chief Teddy Yellowfly of the Blackfoot Reserve in Alberta voiced opposition to a school system which acknowledged the legitimacy of only Catholic and Protestant spiritual practices while discriminating against traditional Aboriginal beliefs.[39] In turn, the different churches argued for the continued need for religious education on reserves. According to the Catholic churches, strong religious oversight was needed for Aboriginal children — especially the young girls — in order that "their moral stamina would be strengthened."[40] The Anglican brief stressed that Canada itself had been founded "on Christian principles," and argued that therefore "secular education is clearly inadequate to enable our native Canadians to attain full citizenship in such a State."[41]

Not surprisingly, then, Christian themes were inherent in the majority of books students had access to in school. The schools often ordered numerous copies of Catholic and Protestant workbooks, Bibles, books on catechism, and Gilmour's Bible history.[42] Additionally, the main textbooks and readers were chosen from two separate lists provided by the Department — one for Protestant schools and one for Catholic schools. The Catholic readers were selected from the series Catholic Corona Readers. These readers, written by a Catholic institute of sisters called the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, were first published

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[36] Ibid., 137–8.

[37] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. "Memorial of the Members of the Baptist Ministerial Association of the City of Toronto," dated 27 May 1892.

[38] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. Letter dated 15 July 1897.

[39] The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), vol. 1, part 2, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 2, 1939–2000* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 31.

[40] Ibid., 33.

[41] Ibid.

[42] LAC, RG10, Volume 6345, File 751-2, Part 1. "Requisition for School Material," dated 31 December 1943.

in the 1920s as "factual and imaginative material that appeals to pupils" providing "a natural introduction of the religious element" to early learning.[43] They contained short stories emphasizing the presence of God in everyday life and the respect of Catholic teachings. By the 1950s, the Catholic schools had switched to a new series of Christian books — the Faith and Freedom series. It was aimed at "carrying the teaching of reading skills to new heights of perfection" while simultaneously teaching "the Catholic principles of Christian Social Living."[44] Like the Catholic Corona Readers, the Faith and Freedom series expounded basic Christian teachings and stories from the Bible but focused more on teaching children how to live every day according to proper Christian values. For instance, the early readers for younger grades taught children about the function of houses and buildings within the city or town, proper modes of play with friends based on gender, and appropriate behaviours for boys and girls. Most readers especially focused on the idealized structure of family life and the roles of parents and children in the modern Canadian family.[45]

Such lessons were inherently cruel. The family values expounded by the Christian readers relied heavily on characterizations of an idyllic family — mother and father figures who practised suitable gender roles and instructed the child protagonists in appropriate societal norms and Christian values. This ideal was unattainable by students confined within an institution and denied the family connection that each protagonist enjoyed. Such stories would have played upon the loneliness and despair of children separated from their families. In one example, in a short reader titled *This Is Our Family*, two children named David and Ann do the dishes as a surprise for their mother.[46] In another story, two young boys visit a trailer which serves as a house for a small, poor family. The boys learn that many buildings can serve as houses, not simply the big houses that they would see in the city. At the conclusion of the story, their father wisely tells them "A house cannot make us happy. But we can make a house a happy home to live in," and their mother agrees.[47]

Family and Re-socialization

Although the setting of a traditional family in a traditional home would have been common in urban Canada, it did not characterize the happy memories of home for many Aboriginal students. Survivors of the schools often relate potent memories of family home life before they went to a residential school and during their summer breaks. Pauline Dempsey, one such student, wrote an account of her time in the St. Paul's Indian Residential School in Alberta, which she attended between 1934 and 1942.[48] She vividly recollects her mother's large garden and family excursions to collect berries — "for saskatoons, chokecherries, bull berries, and strawberries."[49] In her memories, traditional foods such as pemmican and berry suet were commonly eaten and meat was plentiful on the table because her "dad killed and butchered his own meat . . . we had bacon and ham."[50] These sumptuous meals stood out as a happy memory for Dempsey and her sister, as "mother probably knew that our meals at the boarding were terrible for the most part and that's why she made it especially nice for us during the two months we were home."[51]

[43] Edward A. Pace and Thomas E. Shields, *The New Corona First Reader*, vol. 26 of *Catholic Educational Review* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1928), 643.
[44] LAC, RG10, Volume 6345, File 751-2, Part 1. Faith and Freedom series pamphlet.
[45] These themes were present in the readers titled *Our First Book*, *Here We Come*, *This Is Our Home*, *This Is Our Family*, *These Are Our Friends*, and *These Are Our Neighbours*.
[46] Sister M. Marguerite, *This Is Our Family*, Faith and Freedom series (Toronto: Ginn and Co., 1942)., 6–11.
[47] Sister M. Marguerite, *These Are Our Friends*, Faith and Freedom series (Toronto: Ginn and Co. 1951), 12.
[48] Pauline Dempsey, "My Life in an Indian Residential School," *Alberta History* 59, no. 2 (2011): 22.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid, pp. 22–23.
[51] Ibid.

Similarly strong memories of home are seen in the memoirs of Indigenous author Theodore Fontaine. Fontaine begins his discussion of home with a powerful statement: "I remember and treasure times of feeling happy, protected and safe from when I was at home as a young boy and from even later in life with Mom and the family."[52]

Yet while in the schools, children were purposefully removed and isolated from their family unit. This was justified early in the school system by a belief that Aboriginal parents could not be good guardians for their children. Both the government and the churches believed that Aboriginal parents — far from being the wise role models seen in the pictures in their books — were irresponsible and even dangerous to the well-being of the child. This consistently negative attitude toward Aboriginal parenthood persisted over the next few decades. A 1910 letter from the Department noted that a small boarding school for orphaned children had been opened by an Aboriginal couple and stated "for the ordinary mortal it is difficult to conceive how children, seven or eight of them, can be better cared for in a log house by an Indian man and his wife than they would be at a regular boarding school."[53] In 1930 the principal of St. George's Residential School in British Columbia wrote a letter to the Department stating the importance of "eradicat[ing] old evils and traditions by segregation of the young."[54] A similar sentiment prevailed more than ten years later, when the Superintendent of Welfare and Training for the Department, R. Hoey, wrote that the majority of "Indian homes" in Canada were "not equipped" to provide children with the "care necessary for their development" — development which would enable them to "detach themselves from primitive instincts and primitive modes of living."[55] The need to remove the Aboriginal child from the Aboriginal family was still expounded as a goal of the schools as late as 1957. At this time the principal of Gordon's School in Saskatchewan wrote that if Aboriginal students were to ever successfully "work and live with 'whites' then they must begin to think as 'whites.'"[56] Some schools did allow parental visits on Sundays — but these meetings were carefully controlled so as not to interfere with the "development" of the child.[57]

The juxtaposition of images of an ideal family life in the textbooks with the reality of their own family life — and their forced removal from it — served to reinforce the lessons in their readers. Students were exposed to an ideal that pushed them to become "white," while reinforcing the idea that separation from their Aboriginal "nature" was necessary for them to be happy. Those who internalized these lessons would have had their own development deeply affected since they were trained to judge themselves, their parents, and their extended family. Such narratives ensured the child was torn between the values and beliefs of their culture and those of the Christian faith, which throughout this period continuously condemned Aboriginal practices as evil and morally dangerous.

Books would have been a form of escapism for children who sought to re-imagine a life outside the residential school. The majority of protagonists in the stories the children read were white. Children in the picture books were often depicted with blonde or red hair, light skin, and an obvious Anglo-Canadian background. One happy set of images from the 1940 Crabtree Basic Series shows a happy family on a picnic. Their fair skin and rosy cheeks contrast with their light yellow and chestnut hair. The family sits cross-legged on a linen blanket, with an open picnic basket, a lunch spread out on cups and plates, and even a tall glass pitcher of lemonade. The father reaches across the blanket to skewer an egg with a fork, while the mother dishes out salad for the children from a colourful bowl in the centre. The father and son sit side-by-

[52] Theodore Fontaine, *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools: A Memoir* (Victoria, BC: Heritage House Publishing, 2010), 50.

[53] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. Letter to the Honourable Robert Rogers, 1910.

[54] LAC, RG10, Volume 6001, File 1-1-1, Part 3. "The To-day and the To-morrow of the Indian Child," letter written by A.R. Lett, dated 25 February 1930.

[55] LAC, RG10, Volume 6001, File 1-1-1, Part 4. Letter written by R.A. Hoey, dated 9 May 1941.

[56] The Final Report of the TRC, vol. 1, part 2 *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 2*, 19.

[57] Pauline Dempsey, "My Life in an Indian Residential School," , 22–27.

side in the first image, with the mother and daughter paired together in the second image on the next page. The result is a happy family, spending time together outdoors. Yet the impression is one of bright colours, light skin, gender separation, and orderly modern domesticity. Young Aboriginal children would have understood outdoor meals, but not the modern white picnic ideal.[58]

Thus, the children would have had difficulty relating to these characters, as not only was the domestic situation of a family picnic unattainable while at school, the individuals engaging in the activity were something the children were not — white. To teach the children to be "white" was of course the ultimate goal of their education. Authorities believed that only by acting like white children and accepting the values of the white family could Aboriginal children have "an equal chance of success in life with their white brethren."[59] Yet this goal was also known to be realistically unattainable — as church and Department officials (and society at large) also believed "Indians" to be a "thriftless, irresponsible species of manhood."[60] The children therefore lived in a state of perpetual failure, knowing they should strive for a life of whiteness, yet living in a system that considered their nature to be inherently wrong.

The children in their stories often led lives of considerably more freedom than did residential school children. While protagonists in the books could walk to a friend's house, go to the grocery store to buy produce for their mother, spend evenings with their parents, and play with their siblings, these were privileges that were denied to students in the schools. One survivor remembered the feeling of being taken away from home when he was young, stating "That's when the trauma started for me, being separated from my sister, from my parents, and from our, our home. We were no longer free. It was like being, you know, taken to a strange land."[61] Of the many styles of house that children in the books could live in, none of the acceptable houses depicted were like Aboriginal homes — or of boarding schools. The idealized world of the school reader was a reality which Aboriginal children simply could not obtain.

Race and Racial Characterizations

One exception to the norm of a white protagonist in the textbooks and primary readers stands out. Donalda Dickie — a normal-school instructor, writer, and avid supporter of progressive education — published two readers for Aboriginal children from grades 1 to 3. These readers starred two Aboriginal children, Joe and Ruth, and depicted their everyday life in an Aboriginal family and at school.[62] The family and home life was a blend of traditional practices with a more modern setting. Joe and Ruth live with their mother and father and a pet dog, in a log cabin in the woods. The two children are shown collecting water from a stream, using a sling shot to kill a hare, and gathering firewood. The parents both wear their hair in long braids, although dressed in Western clothing. Ruth cares for her doll with long blonde hair. These books were used primarily in early English teaching and are among the few stories found in the Indian Residential Schools that demonstrated a lasting Aboriginal identity, even in the setting of the idealized family. Schools ordered these readers for the youngest students, who would have identified with Joe and Ruth's ethnicity. Yet despite this early progressive inclusion of Aboriginal protagonists, the lessons were nonetheless similar to the stories of the Christian readers — gender roles and divides were obvious, and while the family still

[58] Eunice Crabtree, *To School and Home Again*, Crabtree Basic Series (Lincoln, NE: University Publishing, 1940), 76–77.
[59] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. Memorandum dated 15 July 1897.
[60] LAC, RG10, Volume 6001, File 1-1-1, Part 3. "The To-day and the To-morrow of the Indian Child," letter written by A.R. Lett, dated 25 February 1930.
[61] TRC, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, 39.
[62] See Donalda J. Dickie and George Dill, *Two Little Indians* (Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1933); D.J. Dickie, *Joe and Ruth Go to School* (Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1940).

fished and hunted, they would come back to the modern house to cook and eat their food, rather than camping as in a more traditional lifestyle.[63]

Another striking feature of the textbooks and readers was the characterization of racial difference. Although Aboriginal protagonists were rare, a wide spectrum of representations of Aboriginal characters did feature in several works included in residential school curricula, in both the educational readers and the common literature on the shelves for students to read. The *Beacon Second Reader* — often ordered for Grade 3 children learning to read and write — features a short story about a young settler boy named John living in "long ago" New England. The boy is kidnapped by a group of "squaw," from whom he eventually escapes.[64] He is the hero of the story, and the Aboriginal characters are portrayed as fierce individuals who commonly attack the log cabins of the white settlers to take captives. When they capture John, he is holding a pair of skates. The Indigenous characters are confused by these objects, and do not understand their function, thinking they are "some of the white man's magic."[65] As John begins a new life among his captors, he easily impresses them with his manly words and actions, even protesting being made to farm by yelling "hoeing is for squaws, not for warriors."[66] Despite being adopted by an "Indian mother" and residing with the natives for over a year, John is always planning his escape. Eventually he gets away by tricking them into letting him take his skates to the river, and he skates back to his house, having outsmarted the natives.

The Aboriginal characters in this story have no unique identity or memorable characteristics — none are even given a name. They are simply "squaws" or "Indians" and as a group they serve as the antagonists which John must overcome. The story emphasizes their childlike understanding of the world, believing in magic and the secret power of the white man, while the audience is fully aware that the objects of power — the skates — are perfectly ordinary items. John, who "bravely" faces his captors and continuously outsmarts them, is the embodiment of white superiority. Although a child, he has more awareness and intelligence than a whole community of "Indians" and he uses his superior intellect to avoid assimilating into the "tribe" while captive. Despite being adopted and finding ways to emulate the "tribal" language and values, he never truly conforms to the practices of his captors, choosing to instead assert his dominance whenever possible. In the end, John cleverly tricks them and escapes home to his family cabin, thereby reaching a civilized, white home once again.

One storybook titled *Friendly Stories* contains a whole chapter on "Indians."[67] Many short stories are found in this chapter, including one about "Little Ugly Face" who is treated poorly by her cruel, beautiful sisters. This story is an adapted Cinderella story, set in an "Indian village."[68] Because she is so ugly and is forced to wear rags by her beautiful sisters, Little Ugly Face is not allowed to go to a dance and feast in the village. She is told she must go to the woods instead, where she meets a turtle who tells her to wash her face in a nearby lake. She does this and is suddenly the most beautiful girl in the village, with large sparkling eyes and long shining hair. Her sisters grow jealous when they see her and they also try to wash in the lake, but they drown instead. Another story features Big Snapping Turtle, who decides to start a war with the Indians. He is captured by them, but he, like John, is able to manipulate his captors, who are similarly shown to lack a basic understanding of the world. The turtle tricks the Indians into throwing him

[63] For a more thorough discussion of Dickie's progressive attitude to education and in particular her depiction of Aboriginal people, see Rebecca Coulter, "Getting Things Done: Donalda J. Dickie and Leadership Through Practice," *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 28, no. 4 (2005), 669–99.

[64] James H. Fassett, *The Beacon Second Reader* (New York: Ginn and Co., 1914), 102–11.

[65] Ibid., 105.

[66] Ibid., 108.

[67] Arthur Gates and Miriam Huber, *Friendly Stories* (New York: MacMillan, 1934), 145–87.

[68] Ibid., 160–71.

in the river, where he pretends to drown. Thinking they have defeated him, the Indian warriors "laugh and dance" at the side of the river. But Big Snapping Turtle swims to the other side and escapes.[69]

The residential schools could order other similar storybooks as well, including a Grade 2 reader called *Pueblo Indian Stories* and another titled *Swampy Cree Legends*.[70] The latter is a pronounced ethnology of the art of storytelling by the Manitoba Swampy Cree, written by a white listener who claimed himself fascinated by the "stories of a primitive, mysterious people." The author, Charles Clay, had much to say about how the stories he recorded showed a unity among humans worldwide, as their many themes resembled traditional stories of other lands. This striking similarity, he believed, would be a matter of "thoughtful consideration" for "Indian missionaries, and Indian administrators," as "deep in his heart, the Indian, for all his naiveté and impecuniosity and carelessness, is a poet."[71] While these stories have few Aboriginal characters, they are meant to be a characterization in and of themselves, as they are presented as a stereotype of the wise words of Aboriginal storytellers. In this case the use of the archetype of the "noble savage" expounding wisdom to his listeners gives the writer a certain authority over the stories. They are transformed from superstition and fable and gain the power of insight when written down and retold by a white man.

Many of the literary stories with Aboriginal characters follow similar narratives. The authors were universally of an Anglo-white background and their stories reveal the implicit Western values they were meant to impart. In "Little Ugly Face" the main character is rewarded for her meek and humble nature, becoming beautiful when she washes her face. Her sisters, on the other hand, are punished for their vanity and selfishness. In the stories containing male characters, the Aboriginal warriors are often easily tricked by others due to their childlike intelligence. They are driven by the more basic instincts of humans — they are inclined to violence, yet easily laugh and dance when they find something humorous. Thus they often act unreservedly and childishly, and many pictures show them painted and wearing traditional outfits. In *Swampy Cree Legends,* the Aboriginals are depicted as a mystical, disappearing race, whose stories should be preserved as artefacts of the past. Such depictions were reinforced by the educational books also used in the residential schools.

History and Geography

The main purpose of the educational books was to enforce the curriculum of history, geography, and social studies. These textbooks, with numerous stylized depictions of Aboriginal people, formed the core literature for students in the residential schools. This was especially true of the history textbooks, where Aboriginal people appear in many of the narratives about the foundation of Canada. One textbook used by various schools, *Pages from Canada's Story,* explains much about the discovery of the "New World" by Europeans and the settlement of Canada. The European explorers feature as the main protagonists of the story, which emphasizes their "heroic" travels and "brave" deeds. These historical narratives are Eurocentric, only mentioning the Indigenous peoples as they interact with the white explorers. The Aboriginal peoples are introduced with descriptions of their childlike demeanour, as in the literary storybooks. For instance, the textbook describes the first meeting between Christopher Columbus and the natives of North America as similar to the domestication of wild animals. The natives are struck with fear and awe of the white men, whom they do not understand, and they must be calmed by the newcomers:

[69] Ibid., 177–84.

[70] Arthur I. Gates, *Pueblo Indian Stories* (New York: MacMillan, 1940) and Charles Clay, *Swampy Cree Legends* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1938).

[71] Clay, *Swampy Cree Legends,* xii.

> At first they were afraid, but soon they came slipping out from among the trees, creeping nearer and nearer. Columbus and his men coaxed them to come to them. They offered them many pretty things, such as ribbons, little bells, glass beads, bits of brass and silk. The natives shouted with joy at these gifts. They knelt on the sand and touched Columbus. They felt his white hands and fingered his scarlet cloak. Columbus spoke very gently to them so as not to frighten them.[72]

The text continuously mentions the gifting of such "trinkets" to Aboriginal people, emphasizing their easy, childlike amusement at trivial items.[73] It then discusses in more complexity the relationships between different explorers and the native peoples of the New World, describing in turn the encounters of the English and the French. Throughout the textbook, the Aboriginal people are described interchangeably as "natives," "Indians," "squaws," "braves," and "savages."

Although the immoral actions of the white explorers against the Aboriginal communities are sometimes mentioned,[74] only a few stories condemn the white men for their part in the loss of native lives after contact. The devastation of smallpox receives a mere two pages, beginning with a description of how the Aboriginals "were unreasonable savages and were quite ready to blame the 'blackrobes' for any misfortune that came to them."[75] The "blackrobes" are the missionaries, whom the Aboriginals (quite rightly) blamed for the spread of smallpox. Neither the role of the Europeans in bringing the disease, nor the massive death toll which resulted, is mentioned in the book.

The conflicts depicted within the textbook similarly reveal inherent assumptions about Canada as a country of and for white Europeans, rather than one populated originally by Aboriginal peoples. Early "Canada" is personified frequently in the text, often as the "child" of Samuel de Champlain. Many pages are devoted to describing how Champlain founded the country; at his death, "Canada was fatherless."[76] This symbolic parent–child relationship created a connection between the early white explorers and the land they had claimed. Such a relationship left little room for Aboriginal claims to land ownership or of being the first settlers of Turtle Island.[77] Indeed, in the words of the textbook, the Iroquois people were the greatest threat to Canada. While conflict with the mighty Iroquois nations indeed threatened the early colonies of New France , the description inverts the train of events. Through such texts, students were taught that the Europeans were the rightful occupiers of the land and the First Nations were the threat to its settlement. When the Iroquois were "handled" by the French, the book claimed that Canada was "saved from the Iroquois"[78] — thereby drawing a clear line between those who belonged to the land of Canada and those who endangered it. The textbook continues in a progressive narrative, which pits European pioneers against the harsh winters, the wild land, the hostile "Indians," and eventually, other European occupiers. At the end of the book the heroes of the past have conquered all foes, the white settlers have joined together, and it concludes: "thus the old Quebec became the new; French and British join hands, inheriting the glory of the past and looking courageously toward the unknown future."[79]

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[72] Dickie and Palk, *Pages from Canada's Story,* 20.

[73] Ibid., 20, 29, 31, 33.

[74] For instance, the reader discussed Jacques Cartier's actions during his three voyages to the village of Stadacona, on the site of present-day Quebec City. Cartier famously kidnaped the Chief Donnacona on his second voyage, along with several other men, to transport them back to France. Donnacona died while in France and never returned to his home village. The reader states that this event was a "very cruel thing."

[75] Dickie and Palk, *Pages from Canada's Story*, 77.

[76] Ibid., 73.

[77] Turtle Island is an early Indigenous name for North America.

[78] Dickie and Palk, *Pages from Canada's Story*, 96, 129.

[79] Ibid., 202.

This textbook is a qualitative example of the historical narratives to which children within residential schools were exposed. Although only one textbook has been discussed at length here, other school texts followed similar themes in their discussion of Canadian history.[80] The frontier narrative stands out clearly —a clash between "civilization and wilderness, humans and nature, whites and Indians."[81] Such stories maintain a vein of colonial nostalgia, referring to the explorers of the past as brave heroes and dreamers of a better world. Thus nostalgia and memory were coupled to create a romanticized version of history, in which Columbus could be remembered as a gentle nobleman who spoke softly to Aboriginal people so as not to frighten them. Such a perspective presented an idealized filter for history and allowed the authors to look back on a varied past with a misleading sense of longing or wonder.[82] The Anglo-Canadian textbook authors expressed this by glossing over the negative aspects of history — for instance, the enslavement of Aboriginal people by the Spaniards — and instead using a narrative that allowed for a triumphant progression from savage nature to civilization. Euro-Canadian readers would have been able to situate themselves in a present which was constructed by the historical memory of their national forefathers' struggle to overcome the many conflicts of settlement.[83]

But Aboriginal children who read the textbooks would have reached a far different understanding of the events. Their ancestors were reduced to constrained identities that lived solely through interactions with the white Europeans. Aboriginal people did not exist independently in the narrative, and their unique histories were absent. Their unique cultures were made known to the reader only through the differences from the European way of life. For instance, when discussing the houses of the missionaries, the text stated, "the Fathers divided their house into three parts, with rooms leading from one to the other. This greatly astonished the Indians, whose houses consisted of one room only."[84] The Europeans were the main actors and the "Indians" were reduced to a series of reactions. Much as the colonized cannot exist without the colonizers, the constructed historical memory put forth by these textbooks reflected a reality where the notion of "Indian" could not be understood without a concept of the white norm.

Such racial differences were explicitly laid out in the geography textbooks used in residential schools. The schools were supplied with different editions of Frye and Attwood's *New Geography* over the years. These textbooks provided students with information about the different regions of the earth, the types of environments found worldwide, crops and animals in each region, and various kinds of people. In the earlier editions of *New Geography*, the "races" of people were described explicitly by their physical characteristics. The text provided a breakdown of the "many classes of people" which populated the world, which were divided into "five great groups called races."[85] These races were "the *black* or *negro* race, the *red* or *Indian* race, the *Brown* or *Malay* race, the *yellow* or *Asian* race, and the *white* race."[86] Not surprisingly, the white race was deemed "the leading race in the world, in commerce, in power, in art and in general intelligence." Later editions were more descriptive of the positive characteristics of the other races, describing the "Indians" as "strong and brave," and even acknowledging that the early settlers learned many skills from the Aboriginal people. Nonetheless, Aboriginal people were still described as the

[80] This includes the social studies texts Eleanor Harman and Marsh Jeanneret, *Story Workbook for Canadian History* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1946); George Williams Brown, Eleanor Harman, and Marsh Jeanneret, *The Story of Canada* (Vancouver: Copp Clark, 1950); Harry Court and Lillian Court, *Our Empire* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1928).

[81] Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Communit*y (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 17–18.

[82] Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory* (London: Routledge, 2011), 3.

[83] Ibid., 6.

[84] Dickie and Palk, *Pages from Canada's Story*, 75.

[85] Alexis Everett Frye, *New Advanced Geography* (Boston: Ginn, 1903), 33–38.

[86] Ibid.

"Indians" or the "red savage" and the text concluded that "most of them now live in good houses and have their own schools," thereby promoting the fact that they had become more "civilized."[87]

The progressive narrative was similarly expressed in the books for younger children. Many educational books for the lower grades use crafts and activities to teach about the lives of "Indians long ago." One such book, titled *Indians Long Ago and Now,* featured many drawing and colouring activities about "the primitive ways of the early inhabitants of our country,"[88] showing teepees, traditional clothing, and different environments which Aboriginals lived in. It also outlined many games that would teach children how to sing, dance, walk, and talk as an "Indian" would have in the past.[89] The first section of another craft book, *Busy Hands,* featured "Indians" with three lessons on building a wigwam, a canoe, and a bow and arrow. Such activities were thought to make lessons about "those people" more "real" to children.[90] Students of the Blue Quills Indian Residential School remembered these lessons well, where they were made to put on "little powwows" and "dance like Indians."[91] One former student spoke of the humiliation students felt at these types of activities, stating:

> They had laughed at some of this, you know, make us do some of the things that was culturally done, eh, but to turn it around and make it look like it was more of a joke than anything else. It was pretty quiet when we would do those little dances. There was no pride. It's just like we were all ashamed, and we were to dance like little puppets.[92]

Such books always made it clear that activities in "Indian study" provided children with knowledge about a past way of life.[93] Contemporary Aboriginal people were to be different, wearing Western clothes and living a Westernized lifestyle.

Citizenship and the "Civilizing Program"

The emphasis on Aboriginal practices as things of the past promoted the civilizing program of the residential schools. To teach children about "Indian" customs of "long ago" was to juxtapose Aboriginal lifeways with the new, Anglo-Christian lives students were meant to lead in the present. This message was reinforced by an education that highlighted the values of modern Canadian society. Children were exposed to a variety of lessons that would groom them to be future citizens of Canada.[94] These lessons — and citizenship itself — were intimately tied to an acceptance of Anglo-Canadian culture, and thus many of the books were meant to help with the process of modernizing the Aboriginal children. To achieve their full "civilization" the children in the English-speaking schools were to be given all "the elements of an English education."[95]

Public education had long been a means to unify the fragmented communities that had settled the country. The provinces had set about teaching an Anglo-Canadianism to the new immigrant populations

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[87] Ibid., 5.
[88] Ada Polkinghorne and Helen Mirick, "Author's Foreword" in *Indians Long Ago and Now* (Chicago: Ditto, 1938).
[89] Ibid.
[90] Isabelle Bowker, "Preface" in *Busy Hands: Construction Work for Children* (Chicago: A. Flannagan, 1904).
[91] TRC, *The Survivors Speak,* 57.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Polkinghorne and Mirick, "Author's Foreword" in *Indians Long Ago and Now*.
[94] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. "Memorial of the Members of the Baptist Ministerial Association of the City of Toronto," dated 27 May 1892.
[95] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. "Memo of Resolutions," 25 November 1907.

in the early twentieth century.[96] A similar program was implemented in denominational schools, as English Catholic and Protestant sects sought to ensure that they, rather than the French factions, controlled the western reaches of the country. As the majority of the west was English-speaking by law, maintaining Anglicized education was seen as a way to unify Canada. Precisely this attitude was expressed in 1910 at the Catholic Eucharistic Congress by Archbishop Bourne of Westminster, who stated, "it is only by bringing the English Tongue . . . that Canada can be made a Catholic Nation."[97] A similar sentiment influenced Aboriginal education programs, which aimed to "make citizens out of" the Aboriginal children.[98]

Yet an "English" education required more than just instruction in the English language. Students learned much about the culture and history of Britain and its Empire.[99] They studied the history of the Stuart kings and about "cavemen" from "Britain long ago."[100] Photographs of the King and Queen of England and Canada were made "available for distribution to Indian schools" by the Department.[101] Many traditional European fairy tales and nursery rhymes formed the basis of their learning English.[102] Lastly, the curriculum provided contemporary scientific beliefs about health and hygiene, with easy-to-understand textbooks and stories.

A common theme in the early readers — grades 1–3 — was of healthy eating. This lesson still populates children's books today and its structure is familiar to a modern reader. The children in the stories desire to eat sweets or cakes, but the parents explain why they need to eat a "square meal" made of "everything you need to make you grow."[103] In the Grade 1 Crabtree reader , many images and lists of items that make up a "square meal" follow the formula of fresh vegetables, eggs, milk, a large portion of meat, and usually some form of cake or tart for dessert. But this diet would have been quite unfamiliar to most children at the residential schools. Food was prepared in large vats in the kitchen to feed the entire school at once. As such, most meals were liquid: milky porridge, weak stews, and soups populated the school menus, and providing adequate portions of meat and vegetables was a continuous problem.[104] One former student, Pauline Dempsey, recalled how rarely indeed students found meat or fat in the stews they were served:

> Any fat which was in the stew we fished out and used for butter for our bread. Whoever found a piece of fat would pass it onto the next girl who then used it and passed it onto the next until it was used all up. Sometimes it became so dirty it did not resemble fat any more but looked more like a piece of eraser![105]

Lack of variety or balance in the diet was not the only problem with the menus at the residential schools. Students and parents commonly complained that the children were simply not receiving enough food of any sort. Letters from students of the Onion Lake Residential School in Saskatchewan revealed that they

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[96] Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics*, 167.

[97] Ibid.

[98] LAC, RG10, Volume 6039, File 160-1, Part 1. "Memorial of the Members of the Baptist Ministerial Association of the City of Toronto," dated 27 May 1892.

[99] For instance, the A.L. Everychild series was often ordered by schools as supplementary reading and contained many different lessons on English history.

[100] Margaret Elliot, *In Britain Long Ago*, no. 2, and *Under Stuart Kings*, no. 5, A.L. Everychild series (Leeds: E.J. Arnold & Sons, 1935).

[101] LAC, RG10, Volume 6345, File 751-2, Part 1. L.C. Latour to Indian Affairs Branch, 12 October 1942.

[102] LAC, RG10, Volume 6345, File 751-2, Part 1, "Requisition for School Material," dated 24 September 1942.

[103] Eunice Crabtree, *Under the Roof*, Crabtree Basic Series (California: California State Department of Education, 1940), 6–10.

[104] LAC, RG10, Volume 6340, File 751-13, Part 1. "Report of Travelling Nurse, Blue Quills Indian Residential School," 19–20 February 1923.

[105] Dempsey, "My Life in an Indian Residential School," 22–27.

often cried due to their continuous hunger.[106] At other schools students were known to steal food from the cupboards and kitchens, and prepare their own meals with rabbits or other animals they caught outside.[107]

The mismatch between the lessons of their schoolbooks about healthy eating (and indeed good morals) and the reality of the food served at the schools illustrates another of the great ironies of education within the residential schools. Students were taught that they should make healthy choices about their meals yet had little actual control over the food they ate. The menu was dictated by the school cooks and regulated by the school's limited budget. The many picture books and lessons on "square meals" were looked at with hungry eyes by underfed children, who were presented with vivid images of the meals they were deprived of, while simultaneously learning that these meals were the ones they should choose to eat.

The other tenets of health were similarly difficult for children to follow in the schools. Although their textbooks described "safe and healthy living" and emphasized cleanliness, regular medical care and vaccinations, and consistent toothbrushing, these were expensive luxuries that students most often went without.[108] Books like *Growing Big and Strong* warned about "very bad hitchhikers" (germs), yet students could not stay home to avoid most diseases that spread in the institutions.[109] In addition to consistent overcrowding and resultant bed sharing, schools often could not afford to provide children with individual towels for washing, which meant easier transmission of contagious diseases like lice, scabies, and conjunctivitis. Additionally, since toothbrushes were ordered by schools only once every few years, students had difficulty maintaining dental care.[110] As for health care and vaccinations, those were entirely under the control of Department and school officials, not the students themselves. Their lack of control over these health factors made it very difficult for students to conform to the health standards expounded by their textbooks.

Conclusion

Although this article has focused primarily on the text and images that sought to oppress the students, an important argument addresses the hidden curriculum of the Indian Residential Schools, which was an expression of the unjust social order based on a hierarchy of racial fitness and gender dominance. Within the schools it was expressed in several ways — through the rigid "banking" style of education that taught that teachers and school officials were central to all action, power, agency, knowledge, and authority, while students were passive receivers of that knowledge and authority.[111] In this style of education, knowledge is bestowed upon those deemed to know nothing by the individuals who perceive themselves as the primary holders of knowledge. Paulo Freire discusses how such a system of education mirrors the social order, as "students are transformed into receiving objects" which "kills their humanity and inhibits their creative power."[112] This attitude could be expressed through the discipline of students and in the everyday encounters that marked the difference between students and teachers. One primary example is the different types of food provided to students and teachers. While students were limited to the food from the school kitchens, reports reveal that teachers and principals had access to treats and better meals —chocolate,

[106] Milloy, *A National Crime*, 109.
[107] Ibid., 112.
[108] For more discussion on the sanitary conditions of the Indian Residential Schools, see Larsson, "Circular Progress," 162.
[109] J. Mace Andress, Isadore Goldberger, and Marguerite Dolch, *Growing Big and Strong* (New York: Ginn and Co., 1939), 174.
[110] Ibid., 123.
[111] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 59.
[112] Ibid., 64.

canned salmon, beef, fresh fruit, and numerous other items unobtainable by students.[113] Also the meagre school funding led to run-down buildings and few supplies for the students. Lack of funding would have implicitly conveyed to pupils their lack of value to the state and churches which had placed them within the institutions. These existential inequalities reinforced the hierarchy of the social order.[114]

Abuse in the schools was an easy leap within this hierarchy. The superstructure of the traditional family was usurped by a new family system, with principals, teachers, and staff members acting as the new "parents" to the children under their control. Abuse is an extreme expression of a power structure and can be viewed as "an exaggeration of patriarchal family norms."[115] Many accounts of sexual abuse from survivors implicate perpetuators who fit this new superstructure — some of them the school principals.[116] As those who suffered from oppression and abuse learned that power was derived from these actions, many victims would in turn become perpetrators as they sought to assert their own agency in a system that failed to protect them.[117] Many students responded also by running away from the schools — one Indian Agent described the constant fleeing of students from the St. Paul's Residential School in Alberta in 1930 as an "epidemic of truancy."[118]

Many factors combined in the Indian Residential Schools to prevent a healthy and successful education for Aboriginal students. The curriculum focused on instilling them with Christian, Anglo-Canadian values. Yet this system was rooted in assumptions about white superiority and the triumph of modernity. To Aboriginal students, the assumption underlying such lessons was that their cultural heritage was wrong — had even threatened the country itself — and that the lifeways of "Indians" were better practised in a child's playroom than in the modern world. Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, declared in 1920 that "our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department."[119] The Aboriginal child was to be remoulded based on a Christian value system that emphasized appropriate belief systems, gender roles, and spirituality. Layered upon the religious teachings was an Anglicized Canadianism, which expressed ideals of race and the Canadian state, science, and hygiene.

These lessons were expressed through the words and pictures of the textbooks, readers, and activity books they used in class. Although the students were constantly exposed to the colonial pedagogy, determining what information was actually absorbed or internalized by the students themselves is difficult. They were all actors within the system as a whole and would have brought their own understandings to the texts as they sat through classroom lectures. Nevertheless, such a curriculum could not succeed in the face of an inflexible definition of race which sought to reinforce their oppression and the hierarchy of white dominance. The words of Thaddee Andre recall wanting "to resemble the white man, then in the meantime, they are trying by all means to strip you of who you are as an Innu. When you are young, you are not aware of what you are losing as a human being."[120] To be born "Indian" justified state intervention in one's

[113] John Milloy, *A National Crime,* 117.

[114] The notion of the hidden curriculum is a very large topic and could serve as a study in and of itself. Although it has only been mentioned here in brief due to space constraints and the focus of this article on written curriculum, much more could be said about this concept, and many examples of this reinforced social order are seen in the testimony or survivors of the school system. See TRC, *The Survivors Speak*.

[115] Cathy Caruth, *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in the Theory & Treatment of Catastrophic Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 132–3.

[116] TRC, *The Survivors Speak*, 153–64.

[117] Paulo Freire discusses how this type of behavior demonstrates "sub-oppression" as the oppressed emulate their oppressors in their attempt to gain power. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30.

[118] LAC, RG10, Volume 6374, File 764-10, Part 1. J.E. Pugh, "Report for Month of January," 31 January 1938.

[119] E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 50.

[120] TRC, *The Survivors Speak,* 56.

upbringing and ensured students were denied autonomy over food, cleanliness, family, and health — all key features of good citizenship. The resulting lesson was a dichotomy of two identities — the Aboriginal identity that they could never truly leave behind, and the Anglo-Canadian identity they could never truly achieve.