

A FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES PUBLICATION



STOLEN LIVES

**The Indigenous Peoples of Canada
and the Indian Residential Schools**



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Facing History and Ourselves is an international educational and professional development organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. For more information about Facing History and Ourselves, please visit our website at www.facinghistory.org.

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“The destruction was universally successful: of the hundreds of robust civilizations that existed in the Americas in 1492, not one survives intact today.”

—Daniel Paul, Mi'kmaq elder and scholar

Acknowledgements

Author: Dan Eshet

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Developing a comprehensive book on a complex topic such as the Indian Residential Schools requires the collaboration and contributions of many people. We could not have completed this project without the help of many experts, scholars, and researchers who generously shared their knowledge and insights with the writing team. It is a great pleasure to thank Theodore Fontaine for his kind and generous feedback on an earlier draft of this book and for writing such a powerful foreword. Thank you to Morgan Fontaine for the countless hours spent on the phone during the review process. We are also delighted to thank David B. MacDonald, who reviewed this guide and directed us to many sources, which made the book considerably stronger. And many thanks to the talented Autumn Pham, Mia Lin, and Caycie Soke, who provided us with invaluable research. A big thank you to Margaret Wells, who was part of the team from the book's inception. Margaret generously shared with us her knowledge of *Facing History and Ourselves*, her deep understanding of the challenges in teaching this subject matter, and her great passion for making this history accessible and timely.

A resource that is intended for the classroom requires a close review from educators who know the history it addresses and understand the specific needs of our students as they learn this material. Thank you to our team of educator reviewers who made the time in their very busy schedules to closely read and provide feedback on the manuscript: Raymond Auger, Krista Tucker Petrick, and Faye Tardiff.

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A Letter from Our Toronto Office Director

Six years ago I stood before a room of educators at a workshop. After completing an overview of the work of Facing History and Ourselves and the various histories that we examine through our resources and related professional development for educators, I paused for questions about our work. In that moment, one participant who had travelled to Toronto from Curve Lake, a reserve near Peterborough, Ontario, stood up and with frustration in her voice asked me how I could stand up and claim to be a new educational organization in Canada, an organization with a mission statement declaring that we engage students in examining racism and prejudice, an organization called Facing History and *Ourselves*, and not have a resource that looks at our own Canadian history of institutionalized racism and prejudice.

As I stood before the room of educators at the workshop that day, I knew that what this participant said was valid. I had known it before she spoke, but from that moment on, we worked as an organization to find the funding and build the capacity we needed to develop the resource you are reading today.

With gratitude to TD Bank for providing the lead gift, we began the journey toward the development of this publication. It has been critical for us, as a non-indigenous organization, to work with indigenous partners. We have learned from many people along the way, educators, indigenous leaders, and elders, all of whom welcomed us with patience and shared their knowledge and lived experiences. We are humbled and honoured by their willingness to be part of the development of this resource.

I also want to recognize the important moment in which I write this introductory letter. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for the Indian Residential Schools in Canada has completed its six-year process of gathering testimonies from school survivors across the country. In this resource, you will find several readings that look at the TRC and the important place it has in the telling of the experiences of Indian Residential School survivors. The readings were completed at the time of the final gathering of the TRC and the presentation of its recommendations, but the history of the Indian Residential Schools and its legacy is ongoing, and it is yet to be seen how the Canadian government will implement these recommendations. This resource therefore goes to print acknowledging that there will be many new pieces of the story to be told, new discoveries to uncover, and additional efforts of reconciliation to carry out.

The Truth and Reconciliation commissioners made 94 recommendations to help our country move forward in reconciliation, several of which speak to the role of education. Specifically, number 63 calls for curricular materials that are culturally sensitive and responsible to educate Canadian students about the residential schools and their legacy. It is my hope that this classroom resource will contribute to the creation of a citizenry committed to the reconciliation process.

Leora Schaefer
Director, Toronto Office



“Half-truths have not served the children of Canada well. We have grown up to become a country with huge knowledge gaps about our own beginnings, and the Indigenous nations whose lives and families we have trampled in building the Canada of our imagination. As we prepare to mark our 150th birthday in 2017, let us face ourselves with the gift of new knowledge and honest introspection. Stolen Lives, this rich backgrounder and study guide about Indian Residential Schools, is a well-researched and provocative new tool that offers just such a gift. All our children have a right to the truth...the whole truth. Stolen Lives can help them learn it, and help them explore new pathways to ongoing reconciliation.”

—Dr. Marie Wilson, Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

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Foreword

by Theodore Fontaine

“Will you ever be happy?” A grade 5 student asked me that question following a presentation of my Indian Residential School experiences in her classroom. Although I have told my story to more than 300 audiences across Canada and the United States—and responded to a wide range of questions—no one had ever asked me that, and I wasn’t sure I knew the answer.

For more than 100 years, First Nations and Inuit children were removed from their homes and communities to be locked up in residential schools, operated across Canada as a matter of federal policy decided in the Parliament of Canada. The Indian Residential Schools policy and era were not intended to support or educate our people, but to get us out of the way of settler development and access to the wealth of Canada’s natural resources. Implementation of the policy, primarily carried out by churches acting for the Canadian government, aimed to destroy our cultural and linguistic heritage, legal and religious freedoms, governmental and societal structures, and the very identities of Canada’s Indigenous Peoples. Canada’s policy targeted children to ensure continuous destruction from one generation to the next. I was one of those children, incarcerated in Indian Residential Schools for 12 years, taken in just days after my seventh birthday.

People often ask what happened to me in those schools. Why did my parents leave me there? Did I tell someone about the abuses I endured? Adults ask why they didn’t already know about this. Did I try to run away? Do I forgive the abusers? Children ask why I couldn’t go home to sleep and what I got to eat. Did I tell the principal? Did we have a TV? I tried to answer these questions and more when writing about my experiences in *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools, A Memoir*.

Before residential school, I lived a blissful and joyous life with my family, *mi-shoom* and *kookum* (grandfather and grandmother) and extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins. I spoke only Ojibway and contributed to the well-being of our households by bringing water, wood, and the occasional snared little meal into our homes. For the next 12 years, I was locked up, punished for speaking Ojibway, shamed for being Indian. It was pounded into me that our people were no good, that Ojibway was a language of savages, that we were less than our keepers. I experienced every type of abuse: physical, sexual, mental, and spiritual. Through my many years of healing and reconciliation, I have confronted these damages and abuses to the best of my ability. In writing *Broken*

Circle, some of these abuses were too difficult to include, but I attempted to reveal at least examples of each type. Those were mild in comparison to some of the worst I experienced.

The most insidious bombardment and teaching at residential schools instilled in our young minds hate for who we were, that we were not smart enough or good enough to do what the rest of Canadians can do or become. Those perceptions pervade our lives even today—insinuations that an Indian couldn't be a qualified doctor, lawyer, teacher, nurse, author, or achieve other professional designations.

I am always apprehensive to speak about what happened to me at residential schools. Sometimes I get flashbacks, soul-crushing relivings of traumatic experiences from my young years. I have so often been told that these abuses could not be true, that I must be lying, that representatives of God could never have been perpetrators of child abuse. These denials fill me with guilt for what happened to me and that I have spoken about it and implicated perpetrators, though, ironically, I protect their identities.

Survivors of abuse are often hesitant to speak up. We know the truth of what happened to us, and that some will try to deny or minimize or refute our truth. For me, speaking out is part of my reconciliation, but at times the guilt, blame, and shame that was pounded into me rises inside, a black tide of depression, frustration, and anger. Sometimes I just feel sorry for the perpetrators who abused me. More often, I think about the loss of so many young lives, those who didn't survive and those who did but whose tremendous potential to contribute to our people and Canada was never nurtured or realized.

People don't know about the healing and reconciliation survivors go through. We are plagued by the allegations of people who try to refute and belittle our true experiences. It is hard to listen to those voices who say, "Why can't they just get over it?" My voice is fuelled by other residential school survivors who say, "Thank you for writing your book. Those things happened to me too. They really did happen."

In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its findings, including a summary of its final report and 94 recommendations described in its Calls to Action. It is important to understand that the work of the commission was not brought about by the good intentions of government, but by court order of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. This agreement was a negotiated settlement to legal action taken by residential school survivors to rectify the wrongs and damages done by the genocidal policy of forcing

indigenous children into residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created as an element of this agreement, and its findings and recommendations emanated from thousands of survivor disclosures and testimonies brought to light by the work of the commission.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls Canadians in all walks of life to take action, with multiple recommendations specific to education of youth, newcomers to Canada, and both public and private sectors. I believe that educators are those who will make the most difference, helping generations of youth to build relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples based on our seven sacred teachings of knowledge, love, honour, courage, honesty, humility, and truth.

The words *facing history and ourselves* form a strong descriptor of the hard work of residential school survivors in talking about their experience of this Canadian history so long denied and concealed. Shining a bright light on it, *Stolen Lives* is a critical resource to guide teachers and students in finding their individual and collective opportunities to walk this road of reconciliation. The guide enables learning by exploring the truth of our lived residential school experiences, hearing our voices, understanding our context. After more than 100 years of this genocidal policy, educators now have access to information to teach our children about residential schools. Our children have the right to know and to create a better future for themselves and future generations.

Prior to the research and documentation initiatives of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, information about the Indian Residential Schools had been produced by governments and various non-indigenous organizations and individuals, presenting their own perspectives as factual accounts. It is critical to understand the indigenous traditions of oral history, by which the heritage of our people has been preserved and handed down through the centuries. The importance of capturing this oral history and hearing first-person testimony is critical to success in the classroom, particularly now as the number of survivors of residential schools is fast diminishing. Although our stories may be taken up by our children and grandchildren, the real effects and hidden memories known only to survivors realistically may be lost forever. Although it is most difficult to touch the innermost hurts and scars of our past, survivors have the right to speak about their own experiences. I hope that educators using this guide will invite survivors into their classrooms for students to meet them, see their faces, and hear their voices, that their hearts may be touched so deeply as to never forget.

Canadians must embrace the reality and promise of its First Peoples as we re-discover the pride and resolve to revive and uphold our unique characteristics. I have relearned my Ojibway language and much of our culture, and nothing gives me such joy as to be able to sling my language through conversations with family and friends and to teach a few words here and there to non-indigenous people who express interest in hearing this soaring, descriptive language. I imagine with horror, had the residential schools policy been successful, how many beautiful languages would have disappeared. We cannot retrieve what we have lost, or might lose, from anywhere else in the world. If we lose it here, it disappears forever.

In my visits to all parts of this great land to speak on what happened to us, I try to urge survivors and elders to delve into their memories and talk together about our shared history. We did survive and will never be the “vanishing Indian” or the conquered people. We will always proudly be Canada’s First Peoples, we the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.

I write this foreword with hope and humility as a participant in the tradition of our ancestors: the passing of our true knowledge to the future knowledge keepers and leaders of our wonderful homeland.

Kitchi miigwetch, a big thank you, to Facing History and Ourselves for helping to bring the true history of Canada’s Indian Residential Schools into the present and into the future, and to all the educators who use this guide to show children and youth what truth and reconciliation mean and what it will take to walk the miles to get there.

Will I ever be happy? Perhaps not in the sense that the young student meant it, but each day as I take another step toward reconciliation, I take a step toward finding my way back to the joyous, effervescent, mischievous Ojibway child that the Creator intended me to be.

Theodore (Ted) Fontaine is a member of the Sagkeeng Anishinaabe First Nation in Canada and the author of a national bestseller, Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools, A Memoir. He is a regular speaker and media commentator on Indian Residential Schools. He has been called a survivor but sees himself more as a victor.

Facing History and Ourselves' Scope and Sequence

Stolen Lives embodies the sequence of study that underlies our foundational resource book, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*, as well as all of our other published works. Its structure and pedagogy is rooted in our belief that for young people especially, an understanding of the past should illuminate issues and choices in the present and the future. The exploration of difficult history such as the origins and legacies of the Indian Residential Schools movement raises issues that are both particular and universal. In a Facing History and Ourselves study, students go beyond core historical understandings to think about their own identities and then make connections that relate to their lives and those of the communities in which they live. Through an in-depth examination of the steps and events that led to collective violence, mass violations of human rights, and genocides, students deepen their understanding of the connection between past injustices and the moral choices of the present. This journey is designed to empower them to think about what it means to make a positive difference in their own communities.

The Facing History and Ourselves journey begins with identity—first individual identity (the Individual and Society) and then group and national identities, with their definitions of who can be a member and who cannot (We and They). We focus in this part and throughout the book on the role of language in forging cultures, worldviews, and identity.

How to Use This Resource

This book examines the history of the Canadian Indian Residential Schools and their long-lasting, devastating legacy. The book is introduced by Ted Fontaine, a prominent indigenous leader, an elder, a residential school survivor, and a best-selling author. The body of the guide is composed of a general introduction, an historical overview, seven sections containing readings focused on primary sources, a timeline, and a glossary.

We recommend that teachers read the introductory materials because they provide information not only on the structure of the book but also about our rationale for writing it, as well as a discussion of the central themes that are explored within. We also suggest that teachers direct their students to the timeline and glossary to help them organize the information they encounter and clarify basic ideas and terms used in the text. The historical background illuminates issues that are explored throughout the rest of the resource.

The readings within each section include short framing paragraphs, which are designed to provide context for the primary sources that follow. Teachers will want to select appropriate readings for their students. The readings are relatively short and include Connection Questions to guide reflection. The Connection Questions also offer readers the opportunity to interrogate these primary sources and to think about larger ethical issues raised throughout this study. Note also that there is some overlap between the sections and the historical background. The sections and readings are appropriate for student use, while the historical background is primarily designed to serve teachers, although advanced classes might also find it useful.

Note on Language

Throughout this resource, we have elected to use the term *Indigenous Peoples* as the collective name for the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit—the three groups of Aboriginal Peoples recognized in Canada by law (*Aboriginal Peoples* is the Canadian legal term for the three groups). This term reflects the preferred appellation among the experts, advisors, and teachers who helped create this book. The word *Peoples* is capitalized to indicate the plurality and distinctiveness of the different indigenous groups inhabiting North America since the beginning of human history. When speaking about a specific group, we use the terms *First Nations*, *Métis*, or *Inuit*, but since there are many groups within these categories, we include the names of sub-groups whenever possible (e.g., Ojibway, Cree, Dene, Mohawk). When people self-identify, we include the term or terms they use to describe themselves.

The word *race* appears in a few places in the book. Similarly, in rare cases, other racist terms such as *redskin* are mentioned. Without quotation marks, these terms are used only in primary sources. It is important to know that eugenics and scientific racism as described in the resource are viewed as bad science. Scholarly and scientific authorities today believe that the marginal genetic differences between human groups are, as it were, only skin deep. There is only one race: the human race.

There are a few cases where we cite historical statements that some might find objectionable. Their purpose here is to reflect accurately the attitudes of people whose thoughts shaped the history and legacies of ideas we discuss in this resource.

Introduction

Words and Silences

Why can't indigenous people in Canada just get over Indian Residential Schools? Why can't they just get on with their lives? Indigenous elder, residential school survivor, and author Theodore Fontaine argues that behind these demands to "just move on" is a widespread "societal denial of five centuries of colonization."¹ But despite growing evidence of the destructive nature of the colonization process, and against the growing protests of the Indigenous Peoples and many of their allies, some continue to deny Canada's violent and painful past.

Many examples could be cited of what Fontaine calls societal denial. Indeed, until very recently, many textbooks largely ignored the presence of the Indigenous Peoples encountered by Europeans in North America or treated them as a nuisance they could easily bribe or subdue.² The leading idea behind these denialist statements was that Canada was "discovered" by Europeans who encountered a vast and empty territory. The authors of the Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba explain:

The basic premise is that the first state to "discover" an uninhabited region with no other claims to it automatically acquires territorial sovereignty. Originally, the doctrine was limited to *terra nullius*—literally, a barren and deserted area—as reflected by the noted English scholar of the common law. . . . The concept of *terra nullius* was expanded later . . . to include any area devoid of "civilized" society. In order to reflect colonial desires, the New World . . . [then fell] within this expanded definition.³

This guide is about these issues: the positive and negative power of words and silences to shape the social and natural landscape, to displace identities or create new ones, and to write histories that serve some and dehumanize others. Ideas such as *terra nullius* serve to show the power of words to erase past events and peoples and to reshape the memory of European colonialism.⁴ "Words and silences are powerful things. They hunt together, feeding off each other," writes South African scholar Sven Ouzman. "The power of words is great but the power of silences is greater. Silences are enemies of memory."⁵ Moreover, "words and silences are seldom neutral," Ouzman contends, and those who experienced the interaction with European colonizers often "knew the power of words and silences to exclude," assign identities, and write a version of his-

tory that serves the powerful.⁶ Perhaps the first act of colonialism was indeed a linguistic one: by calling the Indigenous Peoples in North America *Indian*, Westerners displaced them to another continent altogether, while at the same time denying them their identity as members of specific nations.

We are reminded by Métis scholar Tricia E. Logan that national narratives are neatly connected to national identities—that national stories create common memories, which in turn shape a nation’s understanding of its collective self, its identity. Furthermore, Logan and many others insist that changing Canada’s perceived history is imperative not just because that version is untrue but also because introducing indigenous voices can help reshape and correct Canada’s national identity.⁷ These advocates argue that if Indigenous Peoples are truly to be part of Canada, their story must be included in a new and comprehensive narrative.⁸ So for indigenous individuals and communities, bygones can’t be bygones: many have a very different version of Canada’s history. This version includes a vision of the indigenous groups as nations first and Canadian second. The demand to be regarded as separate nations is not simply a reflection of how Indigenous Peoples experience their identity but is instead based on a series of agreements starting with the Royal Proclamation of 1763, where the Crown declared them independent nations.

Sites of Unlearning

Many scholars recognize that parts of the colonial destruction of indigenous lands and livelihood were not officially planned. The development of global commerce, industrialization and urbanization, and new crops and animals, among many other factors, destroyed the fur trade and rendered the indigenous social and economic structures ineffective.⁹ At least some of these factors were part of what Alfred W. Crosby years ago called the Columbian Exchange. This exchange between the indigenous population and the Europeans extended to almost every aspect of life (foods, livestock, language, and instruments and technology, to name a few) and profoundly and negatively altered the ecology of the Americas. More catastrophic, according to Crosby, were diseases such as smallpox, measles, malaria, and yellow fever to which the indigenous population of the Americas had never been exposed. As a result, they had no immunological resistance to these diseases. When the Europeans brought the pathogens ashore, millions were infected and in short order perished.¹⁰ Of the estimated 50 to 100 million non-European people who lived in the Americas before contact, only about 5% survived by the beginning of the twentieth century.¹¹

But it is wrong to ignore the settlers' choices and their catastrophic consequences for the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. As Christopher Powell and Julia Peristerakis argue, many of these destructive processes were part of well-documented policies whose ultimate goal was to destroy the Indigenous Peoples and make room for European settlers. To give just the most obvious examples, there was the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s, which led to the removal of thousands of people and the destruction of their hunting grounds; the intentional killing of the bison in their millions, which destroyed the key element in the survival of many Indigenous Peoples; and the removal of successful Métis farmers from land coveted by European settlers.¹² Almost all indigenous communities, whether nomadic or sedentary, were displaced, their traditional way of life destroyed, and their centuries-old religious beliefs, customs, and social systems nearly obliterated. Daniel Paul reminds us that “it should be noted that the [colonial] destruction was universally successful: of the hundreds of robust civilizations that existed in the Americas in 1492, not one survives intact today.”¹³

The mass slaughter of the buffalo, the expansive settlement of the West, the forced removal in the Prairies and later in the Arctic regions, bans on traditional ceremonies, the replacement of traditional governance with Western forms, the degradation of women's status, discrimination and segregation, and a second-rate and traumatizing education were all part of official policies. After the second half of the nineteenth century, those policies were clearly and systematically designed first to remove indigenous communities as an obstacle for European conquests and settlements and then to destroy the indigenous cultures and remake them after themselves—Western, Christianized, and *civilized* peoples. So it is safe to say that the near physical destruction of Indigenous Peoples was the direct effect of diseases brought by the Europeans but was also intentional, since successive governments were well aware of the consequences of their policies.

The persistent resistance to dealing with the past ignores, in particular, the history of the Indian Residential Schools. Those schools, even by the settlers' own admission, can be regarded as a deliberate campaign aimed at facilitating settlement of the land as well as moulding indigenous minds after Western ways and destroying, roots and branches, any links to indigenous nations, cultures, and traditions. In 1938, at the peak of the Indian Residential Schools' operation, school principal Rev. A. E. Caldwell wrote to Indian agent P. D. Ashbridge from Ahousat, BC. In that letter, he declared:

The problem with the Indians is one of morality and religion. They lack the basic fundamentals of civilized thought and spirit, which explains their childlike nature and behaviour. At our school we strive to turn them into mature Christians who will learn how to behave in the world and surrender their barbaric way of life and their treaty rights, which keep them trapped on their land and in a primitive existence. Only then will the Indian problem in our country be solved.¹⁴

Caldwell, like many Europeans of his time, suggested that the “Indian problem” would be solved only when the Indigenous Peoples in Canada were “liberated” from the shackles of what he called their primitive ways. This perverse idea was the publicly acknowledged rationale for the Indian Residential Schools: civilize, Christianize, liberate. The Royal Commission of 1996 summarized the Indian Residential Schools project in the following way:

Put simply, the residential school system was an attempt by successive governments to determine the fate of Aboriginal people in Canada by appropriating and reshaping their future in the form of thousands of children who were removed from their homes and communities and placed in the care of strangers. Those strangers, the teachers and staff, were, according to Hayter Reed, a senior member of the department in the 1890s, to employ “every effort . . . against anything calculated to keep fresh in the memories of the children habits and associations which it is one of the main objects of industrial education to obliterate.” Marching out from the schools, the children, effectively re-socialized, imbued with the values of European culture, would be the vanguard of a magnificent metamorphosis: the “savage” was to be made “civilized,” made fit to take up the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. Tragically, the future that was created is now a lamentable heritage for those children and the generations that came after, for Aboriginal communities and, indeed, for all Canadians.¹⁵

In other words, the Indian Residential Schools were not learning places. They were, as hundreds of testimonies tell us, sites of unlearning: the forcible unlearning and destruction of mother tongues, communities’ values, traditional beliefs, spiritual practices, and group identities. Rosa Bell, a survivor of Port Alberni Residential School in BC, talks about the deliberate destruction of language:

The government wanted to turn us into white people. Our cultural family units were broken apart. Also, part of becoming “white” was to speak English. Because my parents also attended Residential School they didn’t see the value in teaching us our language. The Indian Agent told them not to speak to their children in Haida because it would not help them in school. My parents spoke Haida with other adults but didn’t make much effort to teach me. My grandma always spoke Haida to me and I tried to understand but it was foreign.¹⁶

According to the 2011 Canadian census, of the 60 indigenous languages that survived colonialism, now only Cree, Ojibway, and the Inuit languages stand a chance of being spoken by future generations.¹⁷ Of course, language alone is not a culture or a worldview. People who speak different languages can share the same worldview. For example, the French and British settlers spoke different European languages but entertained very similar worldviews. Similarly, people who speak the same language—indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians, for example—can have radically different worldviews, views on whether or not Indigenous Peoples are Canadians. Some Indigenous Peoples see themselves primarily as members of their First Nation.¹⁸ But language is an important part of a culture; it can embody and convey the worldview of the people who speak that language. As thousands of indigenous persons' testimonies suggest, the death of a language heralds the death of a culture and the ways in which the speakers of this language interacted with others and interpreted their world.

Genocide

In the 1990s, residential schools scholars such as James R. Miller and many indigenous leaders began to argue that the efforts of the Canadian government to assimilate the Indigenous Peoples in the residential schools embodied the principle of cultural genocide: the intent to destroy the Indigenous Peoples of Canada as a culturally distinct group.¹⁹ Other scholars pushed back, noting that the cultural destruction of a group is not included in the final version of the United Nations Genocide Convention as genocide.²⁰ This debate has continued and, if anything, has picked up pace since. What is the proper way to address the near destruction of Indigenous Peoples, their languages, and their cultures? Natural causes aside, what is the government's culpability in this process? And what would the Indigenous Peoples gain by having Canada include cultural genocide among those genocides it officially recognizes? (For more on this debate, see Section 7.)

For Raphael Lemkin, the Polish Jewish jurist who coined the term *genocide*, the cultural destruction of a group was as important as the physical annihilation of its members. Early in the 1930s, Lemkin went to great lengths to extend his definition of the crime he later called genocide beyond the physical destruction of human beings. "Our whole heritage is a product of the contributions of all nations," he argued in a 1933 paper. For him, the destruction of cultural groups was, in fact, an assault on humanity itself if, indeed, humanity is the

sum total of cultures of the world. So he added another element to his notion of a group's destruction: the "systematic and organized destruction of the art and cultural heritage in which the unique genius and achievement of a collectivity are revealed in fields of science, art and literature." He called this cultural devastation "vandalism." (Lemkin coupled the term with the crime of barbarism, the physical destruction of groups.)²¹

He continued to use the same argument in his *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*:

The world represents only so much culture and intellectual vigor as are created by its component national groups. Essentially the idea of a nation signifies constructive cooperation and original contributions, based upon genuine traditions, genuine culture, and well-developed national psychology. The destruction of a nation, therefore, results in the loss of its future contribution to the world. . . . Among the basic features which have marked progress in civilization are the respect for and appreciation of the national characteristics and qualities contributed to world culture by different nations—characteristics and qualities which . . . are not to be measured in terms of national power or wealth.²²

One of the themes of this guide is the power of language. In the passion of Lemkin's argument, we are reminded once again that words matter. The debate about genocide sometimes gets technical and complex, but that should not obscure the urgency of the debate. Why is this a topic that must concern all of us? What does it mean to all of us, indigenous and non-indigenous?

Jumping forward to 2015, the federally mandated Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report declared the work of the residential schools genocide:

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. *The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as "cultural genocide"* . . . Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. . . . Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next.²³



The children in this photograph, taken ca. 1900, are students at Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School. Their Western-style clothing and hairstyles, which students at residential schools were required to wear, contrast starkly with the traditional dress of their father. Government officials most likely staged this photo to portray the assimilation of younger generations into Canadian culture.

“In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things,” the report’s summary concludes.²⁴ In Lemkin’s understanding, the destruction of traditional indigenous ways of life was a crime against everybody: against the diversity of human societies, and against humanity as a whole. Theodore Fontaine’s powerful words illustrate the terrible loss: “Canada . . . lost forever the rich resources and generations of its First Peoples. The ingenuity and creativity of young minds were extinguished, the extreme amount of potential talent was never nurtured or allowed to flourish, and the character and integrity of Indigenous society founded on prized value and principle were almost destroyed.”²⁵ This is why this issue must concern us all.

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- 1 Theodore Fontaine, “Foreword,” in *Colonial Genocide and Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), vii.
 - 2 Verna J. Kirkness, “Prejudice about Indians in Textbooks,” *Journal of Reading* 20 (1977), 595–600; Penney Clark, “Images of Aboriginal People in British Columbia Canadian History Textbooks,” *Canadian Issues* (Fall 2006), 47–51. For more about the peacefulness and ease of the settlement, see *Riders of the Plains: A Record of the Royal North-West Mounted Police of Canada, 1873–1910* (Edmonton: Hurtig), xviii–ix, quoted in Walter Hildebrandt, *Views from Fort Battleford: Constructed Visions of an Anglo-Canadian West* (University of Regina, 2008), 34.
 - 3 Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, Chapter 5: Aboriginal & Treaty Rights, <http://www.ajic.mb.ca/volume1/chapter5.html>, accessed April 24, 2015.
 - 4 Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, “Colonial Reckoning, National Reconciliation: Aboriginal Peoples and the Culture of Redress in Canada,” *English Studies in Canada* 35 (2009), 1.
 - 5 Sven Ouzman, “Silencing and Sharing Southern African Indigenous and Embedded Knowledge,” in *Indigenous Archaeologies: Decolonising Theory and Practice*, ed. Claire Smith and H. Martin Wobst (London: Routledge, 2005), 208.
 - 6 *Ibid.*
 - 7 Textbooks have been changing in the past two decades to reflect this point of view.
 - 8 Tricia E. Logan, “Memory, Erasure, and National Myth,” in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 149–150.
 - 9 Robbie Ethridge, “Global Capital, Violence, and a Colonial Shatter Zone,” in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 52.
 - 10 For a short version of the thesis, see Alfred W. Crosby, “Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33 (1976), 289–299.
 - 11 The estimates of the pre-Columbian population have been studied by many scholars. In recent years the numbers have been revised upward quite dramatically. Alan Taylor argued that most scholars think as many as 50 million people lived in the Americas and 2–10 million lived north of the Rio Grande before contact. See Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2002), 40. Charles C. Mann discusses the assumption of a 95% death rate (or 5% survival rate) in his book *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 113–14. See also David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 51, 101, 267–8.
 - 12 Christopher Powell and Julia Peristerakis, “Genocide in Canada,” in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 75–86.
 - 13 Daniel N. Paul, “The Hidden History of the Americas: The Destruction and Depopulation of the Indigenous Civilisations of the Americas by European Invaders,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 2 (2004): 167–181.
 - 14 Rev. A. E. Caldwell to Indian Agent P. D. Ashbridge, Ahousat, BC, November 12, 1938, quoted in Rev. K. Annett, “Hidden from History: The Canadian Holocaust,” in *A Country Nourished on Self-doubt: Documents in Post-Confederation Canadian History*, ed. Thomas Thorne and Thor Frohn-Nielsen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 390.
 - 15 Government of Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), vol. 1, chapter 10: “Residential Schools,” accessed December 12, 2014, http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055641/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg28_e.html#99.
 - 16 Linda Jaine, *Residential Schools: The Stolen Years* (Saskatoon: University Extension Press, 1995), 10, quoted (but misattributed) in David R. Gaertner, “Beyond Truth: Materialist Approaches to Reconciliation Theories and Politics in Canada” (dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 2012), 62.

- 17 "Aboriginal Languages of Canada," *The Canadian Encyclopedia* online, accessed December 23, 2014, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people-languages/>.
- 18 Audra Simpson has proposed (at least for the Mohawk) a right of "ethnographic refusal," the right to embrace indigenous sovereignty and to refuse to recognize the sovereignty of the Canadian state to make decisions on behalf of the Mohawk nation. The point is that Mohawk sovereignty was never relinquished, and indeed was affirmed as pre-existing in the John Jay Treaty. See Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 10–11. We thank David MacDoland for this reference.
- 19 James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2012), 9–10.
- 20 "Cultural genocide" was included in the first draft of the Genocide Convention but was taken out because of objection from states such as Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France. See Shamiran Mako, "Cultural Genocide and Key International Instruments: Framing the Indigenous Experience," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 19 (2012), 183; first draft of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, prepared by UN Secretariat, [May] 1947 [UN Doc. E/447], accessed February 12, 2015, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/drafts/>.
- 21 Raphael Lemkin, "Acts Constituting a General (Transitional) Danger Considered as Offense against the Law of Nations," Prevent Genocide International website, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/madrid1933-english.htm#1>, quoted and discussed in Facing History and Ourselves, *Totally Unofficial: Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2007), 11–15.
- 22 Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, 2nd ed. (Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2005), 91.
- 23 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 1–2, 3, 57, accessed June 11, 2015, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 Fontaine, "Foreword," xi.



Historical Background

Who Are the Indigenous Peoples of Canada?

Framing the global effects of colonialism, Canadian scholar David MacDonald states that “indigenous peoples have undergone profound hardship and destruction during centuries of western colonialism. Currently, forty percent of the world’s countries contain indigenous nations, who collectively comprise 370 million people or 5% of the world’s population, divided among over 70 states.”¹ This guide attempts to engage learners in key processes that catastrophically impacted the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

Aboriginal Peoples—the official and legal term for the indigenous populations in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit—have lived in what is now North America for many millennia. In Canada the legal term for these nations is *Aboriginal Peoples*, although some prefer the term *Indigenous Peoples*. The term *Indians* is considered offensive and incorrect by many members of this group. There were no “Indians” before contact with Europe. When Europeans arrived, they believed that they had landed in what is present-day India and began to use this name to describe the local communities: nations of people that lived in both migratory and in permanent, self-sufficient societies. At the start of the sixteenth century, Europeans began to settle the east shores of North America. But more intrusive interactions with the inhabiting nations and colonial efforts to fully settle Canada began two centuries later. Along the way, the term *Indians* came into widespread use among the settlers, alongside thousands of terms and names that forever altered the social and natural landscape of North America. Ultimately, the name served to differentiate between Indigenous Peoples and the settlers, who referred to themselves as Europeans, whites, and, finally, Canadians. It lumped together the entire local population, disregarding its extraordinary diversity (there are, for example, more than 60 distinct indigenous languages today).² As you will see in this guide, the loaded term *Indian* was employed in the spread of disparaging and degrading images of Indigenous Peoples that have contributed to the discrimination against them. To this day, Hollywood films, public figures, and other media routinely exploit false notions of who the Indigenous Peoples are and circulate harmful prejudice and stereotypes that are rooted in this experience.³

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- 1 Jeff Comtassel and Cheryl Bryce, "Practicing Sustainable Self-Determination: Cultural Restoration and Revitalization," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 17 (2012), 151; David B. MacDonald, *Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide: The Holocaust and Historical Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 61. We thank Dr. MacDonald for his enormous help with this guide and for this and many other suggestions.
 - 2 "Aboriginal Languages of Canada," *Historica Canada* website, accessed March 4, 2015, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/>. "Aboriginal languages in Canada," Statistics Canada website, accessed March 3, 2015, http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-314-x/98-314-x2011003_3-eng.cfm.
 - 3 For a classic study of the depiction of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, see Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: the Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Press, 1992); see also Robert Harding, "The Media, Aboriginal People and Common Sense," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 25 (2005), 311–33; "Common Portrayals of Aboriginal People," Media Smart website, accessed May 11, 2015, <http://mediasmarts.ca/diversity-media/aboriginal-people/common-portrayals-aboriginal-people>. Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond's film *Reel Injun* (2010) also explores prejudicial depictions of individuals in Hollywood film.



First Nations

The term *First Nations*, as of 2013, refers to some 617 different communities, traditionally composed of groups of 400 or so who lived in America long before European contact. Historians have divided them into six geographical groups: Woodland First Nations, who occupy forested areas of eastern Canada; Iroquoian First Nations (also known as the Haudenosaunee) in the fertile southern part of the country; Plains First Nations in the Prairies; Plateau First Nations, who live throughout Canada's inland; Pacific Coast First Nations; and the First Nations of the Mackenzie and Yukon River Basins.⁴ Even within these geographical groups, there is a richness and diversity of identity, culture, and customs, although the communities share certain similar characteristics, languages, stories, and outlooks.

First Nations have lived in what is now called North America for tens of thousands of years, surviving the harsh weather by developing extraordinary skills and knowledge of their surroundings, which is sometimes called indigenous knowledge. Some gathered fruits and vegetables and lived off hunting and fishing, practices that required seasonal relocation. In this sense many of the First Nations were "nomadic"; they moved around the vast plains and prairies, responding to the changing seasons and the natural migration of prey. Overuse of land and overhunting of animals were not common before increasing European economic demand for fur, meat, and other products pushed some nations to hunt and fish for commercial purposes.

Most First Nations had a defined territory within which they moved freely in search of food and shelter. Several nations, however, lived in more permanent settlements. The Hurons and the Iroquois, for example, were excellent farmers who lived on the rich land of what is now southern Ontario. A handful of other sedentary nations lived in Ontario, British Columbia, and elsewhere. Traditional First Nations communities were self-governed and supported by complex social structures, which included elected chiefs, healers, elders, and councils who led the bands more or less democratically. As in civilizations around the world, the First Nations sometimes fought each other, although many of these battles were ritualized; the sort of violence and death that occurred in European conflict was rare. Often, First Nations created alliances and lived side by side, respecting each other's independence and traditions.⁵

The Indigenous Peoples of North America developed rich spiritual and cultural traditions. As with every other culture, indigenous traditions provided meaning and values to their members, connected them to past, present, and future generations, and taught them about their place in the natural world.⁶ These traditions were communicated from one generation to another by storytellers, traditional healers, group leaders, and elders, often through music, dance, and elaborate ceremonies.



Mega Press / Alamy

The Mohawk nation of Kahnawà:ke holds an annual pow wow on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec each July. Pow wows are open to all and celebrate the traditional dance, singing, and crafts of indigenous cultures.

Scholars call this method of communication an oral tradition, which means that most of the First Peoples did not develop a written language. That does not mean, however, that they were less developed or less important than civilizations that had written languages.⁷ The unique languages of the First Peoples formed the cornerstone of their cultures. These languages were tightly connected to the indigenous worldview, expressing the most nuanced aspects of the speakers' daily lives, their surrounding nature, and their spiritual and cultural traditions.

Many First Nations view the borders between Canada and the United States as more or less arbitrary. They view much of North America as their traditional homeland and sometimes reject the sovereignty of both the US and Canada, claiming that they were, in fact, occupied or dispossessed (even though various treaties granted them self-governance and autonomy).⁸ Many First Nations, including the Dakota, the Ojibway, and the Huron, have roots in both countries. Others, such as the Mohawk, moved back and forth between them. Some nations migrated to Canada due to political alliances or during times of war and conflict.

4 This information is largely based on "First Nations in Canada," Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Government of Canada website, accessed September 10, 2014, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1307460755710/1307460872523#chp1>.

5 We thank David MacDonald for this and many other points in this section.

6 "Canada's First Nations: Introduction," Canada's First Peoples website, accessed September 10, 2014, http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_groups/fp_groups_overview.html.

7 See, for example, Martin Moore, *Memoirs of the life and character of Rev. John Elliot* [1904–1690] (Boston: Flag & Gould, 1822), 17.

8 For example, the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke belong to the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois Confederacy, which at times controlled much of the northeastern United States and eastern Canada (extending beyond this region at the peak of its power). Viewing themselves as a dispossessed nation, they reject citizenship in Canada (and the US), which to them embodies acceptance of the colonizer's sovereignty. The issue is explored in Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).



The Inuit

The term *Inuit* refers broadly to the Arctic indigenous population of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. *Inuit* means “people,” and the language they speak is called Inuktitut, though there are regional dialects that are known by slightly different names. Today, the Inuit communities of Canada live in the Inuit

Nunangat—loosely defined as “Inuit homeland”—which is divided into four regions.

For centuries these communities have relied on their natural resources, strong leaders, and innovative tools and skills to adapt to the cold, harsh environments of the Arctic north. The Inuit people survived primarily on fish and sea mammals such as seals, whales, caribou, and walruses.⁹ Out of respect for the land and ocean that provided for them, they, like other Indigenous Peoples, used all parts of the animal efficiently for food, clothes, and tools, creating innovative spears and harpoons, parka coats, blankets, and boats. Therefore, to this day, the Inuit place high value on inclusiveness, resourcefulness, collaboration, and “decision making through discussion and consensus.”¹⁰ While individuals are expected to be self-reliant and fulfill their role in society, each member is also expected to support and help the others.

The Inuit have used naming, or renaming, to resist the colonial legacy and practice by choosing names in their own language. When the Canadian government formally recognized the Inuit claims to the land, the inhabitants changed the name of the region to Nunavut, which means “our land” in Inuktitut. Beyond the literal definition, *Nunavut* connotes home and a deep relationship and interconnectedness with the land.

Nunavut is the largest and most northern territory in Canada. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European traders, fishermen, and whalers began to make routine trips to set up summer posts in the vast region. From the beginning of the eighteenth century and as late as the 1930s, a lively fur trade thrived between the Europeans and the Inuit. The territory is far from Ottawa, however, and has historically received little investment or attention. With the end of the fur trade and the depletion of important ocean resources such as whales, many Inuit communities were left without the means to thrive. By the 1940s, the government began to settle the Inuit in permanent communities, and the pressure to adapt to Western ways increased. The traditional ways were discarded and the Inuit became dependent on the government for education, health care, and other services.¹¹ The majority of Canada’s 60,000 Inuit live in small communities of no more than 1,000 people. These are often poor communities, located thousands of kilometres away from each other, which creates vast transportation and communication problems. Some communities, at least for part of the year, are accessible only by airplane. The Inuit formed the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), formerly Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, in 1971. The ITK represents four distinct regional homelands: Inuvialuit (Northwest Territories), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador), and Nunavut, which became its own territory in 1999. After

years of hard-fought negotiations, each region has successfully settled its own constitutionally protected aboriginal rights agreements. In these regions, the Inuit received titles to the land and, under several self-government agreements, expanded administrative powers to govern according to their worldview.

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- 9 For accessible and rich information about the history of the Inuit peoples, see “Inuit Historical Perspectives,” Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami website, accessed March 5, 2015, <https://www.itk.ca/about-inuit>.
 - 10 Government of Nunavut, “Incorporating Inuit Societal Values,” *Implementation of Inuit Societal Values Report* (2013), 4, accessed September 15, 2014, <http://www.ch.gov.nu.ca/en/Incorporating%20Inuit%20Societal%20Values%20Report.pdf>.
 - 11 *The Inuit Way: A Guide to Inuit Culture* (Pauktuuits Inuit Women of Canada, 2006), 4–5, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.uqar.ca/files/boreas/inuitway_e.pdf.
 - 12 “Frequently Asked Questions about Inuit Relations,” Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada website, accessed March 5, 2015, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/>.



Métis

Much like the term *Indian*, the word *Métis* (French for “mixed”) doesn’t do justice to the complexity of this large and diverse group of people. The term describes descendants of both Europeans and First Nations people (the Canadian government did not formally recognize the term until the Constitution Act of 1982). In the narrower sense, *Métis* refers only to the descendants of First Nations people and French settlers and merchants who settled along the Red River in Manitoba.

The history of the *Métis* reflects the intermingling of the French and First Nations ways of life. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fur trade in North America brought British and French traders who exchanged European goods for fur. The First Nations people helped the Europeans learn the lay of the land, local languages, and survival skills. They also connected the Europeans with hunters and trappers who supplied them with furs. Romantic connections between individuals began to emerge from the early days of contact, and the interaction between French traders and First Nations women, particularly Cree and Ojibway women, resulted in descendants of mixed heritage. Over time, these descendants developed language, culture, and traditions distinct from those of First Nations and European Canadians alike. Furthermore, they began to settle in communities of their own.



The Métis people have a language, culture, and set of traditions distinct from those of other indigenous groups. The sash worn by the woman performing a traditional Métis dance signifies the connection of Métis culture to both indigenous and Western traditions.

The first Métis communities settled in the 1700s in the western Great Lakes regions, stretching between areas in the US and Canada (including Ontario, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio). They later moved beyond this area when Europeans began to establish colonies there. The French Métis settled first along the trade routes of the Red River, while the English-speaking, or Anglo, people of mixed ancestry (sometimes also called Métis) settled around Hudson Bay, both in trading villages and corporate towns. While the cultural and linguistic distinctions between the French Métis and the Anglo Métis were more pronounced in the past, the two Métis communities have become more unified over time. The majority of Métis continue to live within what some call the Métis homeland, a loosely defined area along the former fur-trade route, which includes Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories. Métis individuals did not live on reserves, since they did not receive the official Status Indian designation that would have allowed them to join on-reserve bands.

Without the Status Indian designation, the Métis remained isolated from First Nations and Euro-Canadian societies and were often discriminated against by both. The legal battle to acknowledge them as Status Indians continues.¹³ Over the centuries, and in their struggle for official recognition, the Métis groups

assumed specific distinctions, combining indigenous and Western traditions. They adopted symbols to reinforce a collective, mixed identity and create a sense of pride. For example, the sash or belt (*ceinture fléchée* in French) that is still worn by the Métis today for traditional and ceremonial purposes is a direct result of their mixed heritage. The unique Michif language, spoken by Métis of Indigenous-French origin, prominently evidences the fusion of two cultures.

13 The Canadian Press, "Court of Appeal upholds landmark ruling on rights of Métis," CBCNews, April 17, 2014, accessed June 18, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/court-of-appeal-upholds-landmark-ruling-on-rights-of-m%C3%A9tis-1.2613834>.



The Invention of the *Indian*

“The Indian began as a White man’s mistake, and became a White man’s fantasy. Through the prism of White hopes, fears and prejudices, indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become ‘Indians’; that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be.” —Daniel Francis, historian

Since the classical age, when the Greek and Roman cultures flourished, Europeans have been fascinated by people who lived elsewhere: populations unknown outside Europe. First the Europeans called them barbaric; later, when Europe became Christian, they were referred to as pagans; later still, Europeans called them uncivilized. With little communication and minimal travel options, news about Asians, Africans, and later the people of the Americas travelled slowly. Where source information lagged or lacked, the European imagination filled in the gaps with misconceptions and stereotypes. Soon the language describing non-Europeans began to take both negative and romantic tones, reflecting Europeans’ anxieties about the people who lived elsewhere.

When the first European explorers landed in the Americas in 1492 with Christopher Columbus, they referred to the entire indigenous population on the continent as “Indians” because they believed that they had arrived in India. Although it quickly became clear that this was not the case, the name stuck. One of the first acts of the European colonization of the Americas, then, was not the taking of indigenous lands for settlement—it was an act of naming or, more accurately, misnaming. The Europeans imposed this single inaccurate label upon a variety of different peoples. (That said, Columbus’s first encounter with the “New World” did not involve just words; it was extremely violent and included forced servitude, kidnapping, and mass killings.)

In writing about the new people they met, the Europeans assumed a very clear hierarchy between the superior West and the inferior “New World.” To begin with, the Europeans, who had developed a written culture early on, tended to view the history and culture of peoples without a written language as inferior. Since indigenous traditions were not recorded in writing, they were deemed unreliable, mythological, a fiction.¹⁴ Similarly, Europeans dismissed the spirituality of Indigenous Peoples as superstitious and their understanding of the world and its creation as a myth.

Some European writers saw Indigenous Peoples as noble, exotic figures. But this image was a myth in itself; the noble, free “pre-social” being was largely a figment of the imagination of Englishmen and Frenchmen who romanticized

a life without the constraints and corruption in their civilizations. Pushed to the extreme, this view of Indigenous Peoples living a primitive, pre-civilized life implies that they also behaved like animals. Consider, for example, what the French priest Louis Hennepin had to say about the First Peoples he encountered in 1683:

The Indians trouble themselves very little with our civilities. . . . Men and women hide only their private parts. . . . They eat in a snuffing way and puffing like animals. . . . In fine, they put no restraint on their actions, and follow simply the animals.¹⁵

Other Europeans, including many missionaries who worked in colonial Canada, viewed indigenous populations through the lens of religion. To them, these “children of nature” were a living example of the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. In their Garden of Eden, they lived in blissful, child-like ignorance and sin.¹⁶ Some Christians called them noble savages and believed that with time and the proper religious environment, the “primitive Indian” could achieve civilization just like the modern European man.¹⁷

Such Europeans further believed that the differences between the cultures were not innate, for all humans were alike in the eyes of God. As one early North American missionary told the indigenous people he encountered, the Christian God “is a God that will be found of them that seek him with all their hearts; and hears the prayers of all men, Indian as well as English.”¹⁸ This idea was a leading mindset behind the establishment of the religious residential schools.¹⁹ So was the idea of a child-like Indian: these people were to become wards of the state for their own protection and so that they would be civilized and, in the long run, become part of the European Canadian society.

But for some, the difference between the unreligious pagan and the Christian was a vast, even impossible gap to bridge. By the middle of the nineteenth century, impatience with the progress of the civilizing process led to frustration and to yet another stereotype. Now some came to see these people not only as savages but also as “wretched Indians”: cunning, vile, detestable beings.²⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century, Canadian officials had embraced a similar idea and started a campaign to assimilate the Indian using the residential schools.

14 As one scholar put it: “Because the [Aboriginal] had no written records when the first white man reached this continent, he was dismissed by the white man as having no past.” George F. G. Stanley, “As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Historical Comment,” *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies*, ed. Ian L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 1–2.

15 Louis Hennepin, *A Description of Louisiana by Father Louis Hennepin, Recollect Missionary*, trans. John Gilmary Shea (New York: John G. Shea, 1880).

- 16 The image of the “noble savage” persists under a very modern guise: the “ecologically noble savage,” which suggests that indigenous life was not only more peaceful but also much more ecologically sustainable and harmonious than modern society allows. See Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 19–23.
- 17 Carol L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820–1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 33.
- 18 Martin Moore, *Memoirs of the life and character of Rev. John Eliot [1904-1690]* (Boston: Flag & Gould, 1822), 25.
- 19 Carol L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable*, 67–68.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 31–60.



Colonization

When the European powers set their sights on North America, some three hundred years after the so-called discovery of the continent (which for them was the “New World”), it became a location for French and British settlements. The process of assuming control of someone else’s territory and applying one’s own systems of law, government, and religion is called colonization. Indeed, prior to the 1800s, settling the land was not the first priority. The Europeans exchanged goods for furs and meat; they also went on fishing and whaling expeditions before returning to Europe with fish and oil. With the exception of trading posts, primarily along the St. Lawrence River and the coastline, the colonial powers did not attempt to settle the country on a large scale. Between the scattered European settlements, indigenous nations reigned.

At its peak, the fur trade, which lasted almost 300 years, involved thousands of hunters, trappers, processors, guides, indigenous traders (i.e., Cree and Métis), and (primarily) Hudson’s Bay Company merchants. Indigenous people in Canada met their European counterparts on more or less equal terms with mutual benefits. Agreements between the settlers and Indigenous Peoples guaranteed the right of the latter to use and protect their land “as long as the sun shines, the river flows, and the grass grows”—a phrase enshrined in a series of nation-to-nation alliances and treaties.²¹

But with the introduction of new, cheaper fabrics and changes in European fashion, the fur trade began a steady decline. Moreover, with the European expansion to the West and the discovery of gold, the delicate balance between the two communities was disrupted. As one historian wrote, “Until the gold rush of 1858, fur trading had been the dominant industry. . . . With the rush,



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Europeans and Indigenous Peoples of Canada interacted through the fur trade for almost 300 years. This photo is from the 1950s, when the extensiveness of the trade network had much declined from its peak in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

mining became the predominant economic activity: at its peak, there were as many as 20,000 prospectors. Coal mining, as well as forestry and fishing, also emerged during this period, but none rivaled gold in importance [until the mid-1860s].”²² As the Prairies were settled, they became the breadbasket for all of Canada and a growing market for eastern Canada’s industries. In this new economy, there was a smaller role for Cree and Métis traders. Thousands of communities that were touched by the trade with Europe suffered decline too, a process that was exacerbated by the settlers’ increasing encroachment on the land, resources, and ways of life of the Indigenous Peoples of North America.

21 José António Brandão, “The Covenant Chain,” *Encyclopedia of New York State* online, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu/encyclopedia/entries/covenant-chain.html>. These nation-to-nation contracts and agreements go back to the early encounters between European settlers and local nations, when they entered into agreements for the benefit of both sides. Those agreements continued with the Royal Proclamation of 1796 (in which the Crown acknowledged the nationhood and land rights of the Indigenous Peoples) and the official treaties between First Nations, the British Crown, and the Canadian government after federation. Numerous court and government decisions routinely ratified these treaties since.

22 “Canadian Confederation,” Library and Archives Canada website, accessed September 10, 2014, <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/confederation/023001-3030-e.html>.



Colonial Power Struggle

War and political changes also contributed to the destruction of indigenous ways, livelihoods, and physical existence. France and Great Britain, the largest colonial powers in the world, began to clash openly in 1754 over several areas of control, including North America. Two years later, they declared war, and each recruited First Nations to fight on their side. In 1763, at the end of what the British called the Seven Years' War (known as the War of Conquest in French Canada), the Treaty of Paris ceded most of the French territories in North America to Great Britain.

Early European perceptions of Indigenous Peoples were often reflective of the relatively peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship between the two groups. Indigenous nations, particularly those of the Great Lakes region, had a long and close relationship with the French. Thus, the war and the conquest of the French territories by the British created deep tensions around the issue of indigenous sovereignty and the integrity of their way of life.

Minavavana, a Chippewa leader in French Canada, responded to the victory of the British in the war against the French as follows, insisting on the rights of his people:

Englishman, although you have conquered the French, you have not yet conquered us! We are not your slaves. These lakes, these woods and mountains were left to us by our ancestors. They are our inheritance, and we will part with them to none. Your nation supposes that we, like the white people, cannot live without bread and pork and beef! But you ought to know that He, the Great Spirit and master of Life, has provided food for us in these spacious lakes and on these woody mountains.²³

In 1763, at the official end of the war, the victorious King George III of Britain issued a Royal Proclamation meant to establish good relations between the First Nations and the settlers. It was an attempt to address the concerns of indigenous people such as Minavavana; it clearly defined the areas belonging to the Indigenous Peoples, territories where no private squatting, settlement, or sales were permitted.²⁴ The Royal Proclamation was the first public British acknowledgement of the pre-existing rights of First Nations to their lands, and its unique language also recognized the First Peoples as nations. This set the stage for a series of treaties signed between the First Peoples and the British Crown on equal footing: nation-to-nation treaties. To this day, the document serves as an official recognition of the rights of First Nations to their land and of the “sovereignty of the Indian nations.”²⁵

- 23 Minavavana, "We are not your slaves," National Humanities Center, "Becoming American: The British Atlantic Colonies, 1690–1763," accessed September 10, 2014, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/peoples/text3/indianscolonists.pdf>.
- 24 Ian L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier, eds., *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 7.
- 25 *Ibid.*, xi.



Dispossession, Destruction, and the Reserves

By the 1830s and 1840s, when the colonization or settlement of the Canadian region began to shift into high gear, the European settlers pursued laws and regulations to manage the populations with whom they came into contact. The reserve was a common colonial strategy for managing the local indigenous population. Reserves existed in Africa, in the British American colonies, and in Canada, where the colonizers had to address the people they dispossessed—people who seemingly stood in the way of the political and economic plans of European settlers.

By the nineteenth century, Indigenous Peoples in North America found themselves in a deepening crisis. They faced imminent destruction. At the arrival of Christopher Columbus, there may have lived more than 100 million indigenous people in the Americas.²⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, 90 to 99% of them were gone.²⁷ Recent studies show that, contrary to the belief that “Canadian expansion into the West was much less violent than that of the United States,” Canadian colonialism was quite deadly.²⁸ In fact, many thinkers at the time noted the combined effects of European colonialism and feared that the Indigenous Peoples in Canada were marching toward extinction.²⁹

The Indigenous Peoples in Canada were killed in the largest numbers by European diseases such as measles, smallpox, and influenza for which they had no immunity. But they also were killed by European blades and guns and factors directly connected to colonialism—land theft on a gigantic scale, forced removals, and exhaustion of natural resources. Indeed, from the 1830s onward, the indigenous groups were encouraged—at times forced—to give up their old migratory habits, settle on reserves, learn farming and trading, and receive religious instruction.³⁰ The Crown became the trustee of indigenous lands for

protection against illegal sales, poaching, and encroachment (this arrangement, however, took away the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their land; legally, it was not theirs anymore). Other laws forbade the sale of alcohol and protected reserve members from legal actions, taxes, and property seizure. By the middle of the nineteenth century, European settlers began to arrive in North America in droves. They came for gold, for the land, and for the minerals, wood, and fisheries; they no longer sought local partners or needed them.

Nor did they have much use for the bison. James Daschuk of the University of Regina and other scholars suggest that the catastrophic destruction of Indigenous Peoples in North America reached its peak with the decision by the US and Canadian governments to clear the bison herds in the Prairies for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (which was to serve as the main commercial artery to the West). By 1869, the destruction of the bison herds that the Indigenous Peoples relied on for food and other resources was almost complete.³¹ Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald decided to clear the areas of the Indigenous Peoples whose land European settlers coveted. According to Daschuk,

[a] key aspect of preparing the [province of Saskatchewan] was the subjugation and forced removal of indigenous communities from their traditional territories, essentially clearing the plains of aboriginal people to make way for railway construction and settlement. Despite guarantees of food aid in times of famine in Treaty No. 6, Canadian officials used food, or rather denied food, as a means to ethnically cleanse a vast region from Regina to the Alberta border as the Canadian Pacific Railway took shape. For years, government officials withheld food from aboriginal people until they moved to their appointed reserves, forcing them to trade freedom for rations. Once on reserves, food placed in ration houses was withheld for so long that much of it rotted while the people it was intended to feed fell into a decades-long cycle of malnutrition, suppressed immunity and sickness from tuberculosis and other diseases. Thousands died.³²

Daschuk goes on to explain that the largest forced removal, aimed at clearing all indigenous people, was in the territory of Assiniboia, where “within a year, 5,000 people were expelled from the Cypress Hills.”³³ Although officially promoted as a protective place for the endangered population, the reserves served one significant goal: to make room for new European settlers and create a new economic system based on farming where the traditional indigenous ways of living had no place. And so reserves set up later in areas such as British Columbia were “reserves of grace and charity, not of natural or legal rights.”³⁴ In fact, scholars suggest that these reserves served as “social laboratories” where First Nations inhabitants were to become productive, *civilized* Canadians.³⁵

Moreover, “once European settlement began in earnest,” Alan McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn write, “treaties shifted from ‘peace and friendship’ to land surrender.”³⁶ The new treaties, signed between 1871 and 1921 and known as the Numbered Treaties, were therefore drastically different from what had come before. Europeans viewed the land as a vast empty space (in legal terms, *terra nullius*), ready for their taking. Thus, a Department of Indian Affairs officer told a crowd of First Nations listeners in 1876:

Many years ago you were in darkness killing each other and making slaves was your trade. The Land was of no value to you. The trees were of no value to you. The Coal was of no value to you. The white man came he improved the land you can follow his example—He cuts the trees and pays you to help him. He takes the coal out of the ground and he pays you to help him—you are improving fast. The Government protects you, you are rich—You live in peace and have everything you want.³⁷

At the conclusion of the Numbered Treaties, writes James Daschuk, a “blueprint was set for conversion of the indigenous population to agriculture and settlement of the prairies with European farmers.”³⁸ As a result, in the course of clearing the way for European settlers, about half of the land was taken away from First Peoples. In many cases, where the peaceful means did not provide the best way to rid the Prairies of the starving and diseased indigenous groups, the government resorted to deception. Government agents wrote the treaties in a technical language with which indigenous leaders were not familiar, and large discrepancies often existed between the verbal agreement—achieved with translators—and the English written treaties. First Nations received a one-time payment, a relatively small parcel of reserve land, and a yearly cash payment to each group member. The previous nation-to-nation treaties were replaced with new agreements that were, in effect, sales documents.³⁹

26 David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 51, 101, 267–68. The estimates of the pre-Columbian population have been studied by many scholars. In recent years the numbers have been revised upward quite dramatically. As mentioned previously, Alan Taylor argued that most scholars think that as many as 50 million people lived in the Americas and 2–10 million lived north of the Rio Grande before contact. See Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2002), 40. Charles C. Mann discusses the assumption of a 95% death rate (or 5% survival rate) in his book *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 113–14.

27 David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*, x.

28 James Daschuk, “When Canada Used Hunger to Clear the West,” *The Globe and Mail*, July 19, 2013. For more, see Daschuk’s *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (PCS) (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).

29 George M. Dawson (1849–1901) was one of them. He was a Canadian geologist, geographer, anthropologist, and civil servant. See George M. Dawson, “Sketches of the past and present condition of the Indians of Canada,” *The Canadian Naturalist and Quarterly Journal of Science . . . etc.*, vol. 9, ed. Elkanah Billings, Bernard James Harrington, James Thomas Donald (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1881), 158–159.

- 30 John L. Tobias, "Protection, civilization, assimilation: An outline history of Canada's Indian policy," in *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows*, 41.
- 31 Andrew Woolford, "Ethnic Cleansing, Canadian Style," *Literary Review of Canada* [book review], accessed December 1, 2014, <http://reviewcanada.ca/magazine/2013/10/ethnic-cleansing-canadian-style/>.
- 32 James Daschuk, "When Canada Used Hunger to Clear the West."
- 33 James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (PCS), 123.
- 34 George F. G. Stanley, "As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Historical Comment," in *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows*, 10.
- 35 John L. Tobias, "Protection, civilization, assimilation: An outline history of Canada's Indian policy," 41–42.
- 36 Alan D. McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2013), 319.
- 37 Quoted in Cole Harris, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94 (2004), 170.
- 38 James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (PCS), 99.
- 39 Alan D. McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 320.



Defining the Indian

After the 1812 war with the United States ended with no significant border changes, the British Canadians established themselves as the dominant power in the region and began to plan a process of nation building. And by the second half of the nineteenth century, they were ready to do away with the political and cultural independent existence of indigenous nations. In 1876, the British North America Act united three British colonies into the first four provinces of the Dominion of Canada, establishing Canada as a federation of provinces, a dominion under the British Crown.⁴⁰

Canada inherited the British colonial legacy—the practices and ideas regarding the colonized indigenous populations. Now a new era in the relationship between the Dominion and the Indigenous Peoples began. Two main pieces of legislation laid the foundation for what was to be the new Dominion's policy regarding relations with First Nations: the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869. Both aimed to gradually transform First Nations men and women into Canadian citizens, provided that they give up all ties to their native heritage via the acquisition of Euro-Canadian education or that they leave the reserve and become owners of private property. Eventually, the Canadian Parliament consolidated these laws into the Indian Act of 1876, reinforcing previous relations between the settlers and First Nations. This legislation, which, despite its many amendments, still exists today,

brought registered Indians (Status Indians) under federal responsibility. The newly formed Department of Indian Affairs governed nearly all aspects of the Indigenous Peoples' lives, including tribal membership, reserve infrastructure and services, systems of governance, culture, and education. Don McCaskill writes:

After Indians were no longer useful for economic or military purposes, the government established a system of reserves designed to “protect and civilize” native people in order that they might eventually assimilate. The policy was to settle the Indians on the land and, over time, develop them into “productive citizens.” In theory, Indians were to learn to exercise [individual] self-determination and assume responsibilities for their own affairs. Missionaries, educators, Indian agents, judges, and police were sent to the reserves to facilitate the transition from savagery to civilization. The Indians themselves had little to say about the process because there was no political structure within which they could operate effectively.⁴¹

But in the long run, he argues, the system that was designed to facilitate the assimilation of indigenous communities into colonial Canadian society did the exact opposite. It isolated them on the reserves and set them apart: “Encouraged to become self-sufficient, the Indian was prevented from being so in almost every area—economic, political, and administrative.”⁴²

Bonita Lawrence writes that, according to the 1876 Indian Act, the “only individuals who could consider themselves Indian were those who could prove they were related, through the male line, to individuals who were already Status Indians.” As much as the Indian Act was about assimilation, equally important was its power to exclude. Lawrence continues:

Without Indian Status and the band membership that goes along with it, Native people are not allowed to live on any land part of an Indian reserve in Canada. . . . They cannot take part in the life of their own community unless they have Indian Status and hence band membership in that community . . . the colonial act of establishing legal definitions of Indian-ness, which excluded vast numbers of Native people from obtaining Indian status, has enabled the Canadian government to remove a significant sector of Native people from the land.⁴³

The Indian Act created “bands,” designations that included the First Nations but not the Métis, non-Status Indians, or Inuit groups. Right from the start, it discriminated against many people who lived and self-identified as indigenous but were not included in the act's definition of who was “Indian.” What did it mean to be a Status Indian? The original document of 1876 defined someone as being legally Indian if he or she fit these criteria:

First, any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band;
Secondly, any child of such person;
Thirdly, any woman who is, or was, lawfully married to such person.⁴⁴

Anyone who was eligible as a Status Indian could report to the Indian Registry, which would issue an Indian status card that carried information about the individual's identity, band, and registration number.

While being registered as a Status Indian granted individuals certain rights (e.g., permission to live on a reserve, membership in a band, certain tax exemptions, and a few financial benefits), it established a paternalistic relationship between First Nations and the federal government. Overall—and this is key—the Indian Act made all First Nations persons dependent on government institutions for their rights and services, thereby unilaterally striking down their status as independent nations. Many critics have argued that the act essentially made First Nations populations “children” under the supervision of the state and assumed that they were unable to govern themselves.⁴⁵ Legally, they were indeed wards of the state.

Initially, Status Indians who obtained a university degree or became a professional (e.g., a clergyman or lawyer) became “enfranchised,” or gained the right to have full citizenship in Canada—with or without their consent.⁴⁶ But in gaining Canadian citizenship (and the right to vote), these individuals lost their Indian status. Some argue that the intent was to strip First Nations bands of their better-educated or articulate leaders. Loss of status also threatened band membership, because individuals were forced to leave their reserves and assimilate into Canadian culture—the ultimate aim of the Indian Act and its related policies.

The Indian Act, with its focus on men's status, especially undermined the role of women in traditional indigenous society, which was characterized by a substantial degree of gender equality.⁴⁷ The act and other policies reflected the centrality of men in late nineteenth-century European society, which meant that First Nations women lost their leadership roles once the bands' administrations were set up by the government.⁴⁸ The status of women was further eroded by Section 12 (1)(b) of the Indian Act, which stipulated that the Indian status of an indigenous woman in a First Nations band would be revoked if she married a man who was not a Status Indian. This meant that she would also lose her right to band membership, which, among other consequences, would then prohibit her from living and participating in her own community. Furthermore, the loss of status applied to any children the woman might have with that spouse.⁴⁹ The law went against the traditionally

matrilateral rules of descent for various First Nations societies, such as the Huron and the Tsimshian. In these nations, the man joined the household of the woman he married.⁵⁰

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- 40 Only gradually did Canada become fully independent from Britain. The Canada Act of 1982 completed the process and ended all remaining legal ties to the UK.
- 41 Don McCaskill, "Native People and the Justice System," in *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows*, 289.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 290.
- 43 "History of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada," Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, accessed March 5, 2015, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1314977281262/1314977321448>; Bonita Lawrence, "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview," *Hypatia* 18 (2003), 6.
- 44 Excerpt from the Indian Act, 1876, "CHAP. 18: An Act to amend and consolidate the laws respecting Indians," April 12, 1876.
- 45 Regarding the law, McCaskill explains: "Colonialism involves a relationship which leaves one side dependent on the other to define the world. At the individual level, colonialism involves a situation where one individual is forced to relate to another on terms unilaterally defined by the other. The [legal] system [thus] becomes a central institution with which to impose the life of the dominant society." See McCaskill, "Native People and the Justice System," 289.
- 46 John Milloy, "Indian Act Colonialism: A Century of Dishonour, 1869–1969," research paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance, May 2008, accessed March 5, 2015, http://fngovernance.org/ncfng_research/milloy.pdf.
- 47 Christopher Powell and Julia Peristerakis, "Genocide in Canada: A Relational View," in *Colonial Genocide and Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 81.
- 48 In British Victorian culture, women were discouraged from playing a role in public life. They were to stay at home and care for the family. In contrast, indigenous women were as important as—in some nations, more important than—men in running the affairs of their clan or band. See Joanne Barker, "Gender, Sovereignty, Rights," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (June 2008), 262.
- 49 For more details, see Bonita Lawrence, "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview," *Hypatia* 2, vol. 18 (Spring 2003), 7–8.
- 50 The Report of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, vol. 1, 55.



Banning Indigenous Culture

The government's aim, however, was even farther-reaching. It did not seek only to rearrange indigenous communities from within. It wanted all indigenous people in Canada to become "enfranchised," effectively destroying indigenous nations as distinct groups. "In the period in which the British imperial government was responsible for Indian affairs from 1763 to 1860," writes John S. Milloy, a prominent residential schools historian, "Indian tribes were, de facto, self-governing."⁵¹ But now things shifted. Already, in 1857, "a wholly new course was charted. Thereafter, the goal, full civilization [of the Indian], would be marked by the disappearance of those communities as

individuals were enfranchised and the reserves were eroded, twenty hectares by twenty hectares.”⁵² As Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald said in 1887, after the residential schools began to operate, “The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.”⁵³ Yet despite this high talk of Indian enfranchisement, the official process designed to assimilate indigenous people as soon as possible, Indigenous Peoples in Canada could not vote until the 1960s.

Today, Canada prides itself on being a multicultural society, an “ethnic mosaic,” in which people of different backgrounds and heritages are able to live together without losing their distinct identities. This is often set against the analogous idea in the United States, where people have historically talked about a “melting pot”—a metaphor for the blending of diverse ethnic and reli-



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In this photo, men celebrate the sun dance, an annual ceremony practiced traditionally by indigenous groups from the Plains, at the Blood Indian Reserve in Alberta. An amendment passed in 1885 to the Indian Act forbade the practice of this ceremony.

gious identities. Critics suggest, however, that Canada's policies with respect to the Indigenous Peoples within its borders contradict the idea of protecting the separate identities of minorities under one national umbrella. The key issue is that, properly speaking, First Peoples in Canada are not minorities—they have distinct legal and historical relations with the Crown that define them as autonomous nations. The ultimate goal of the Indian Act has always been the assimilation of the Indigenous Peoples as separate nations into mainstream Canada.

For example, to further remove the beliefs, values, and principles at the heart of indigenous identities, the Indian Act suppressed expressions of indigenous culture such as traditional ceremonies, including the sun dance and, in particular, the potlatch.⁵⁴ Europeans regarded these ceremonies as part of a primitive world of superstitions, myth, and magic. Thus Catholic and Protestant missionaries strove to ban them altogether. The discrimination against the ceremonies and greater indigenous cultures was transmitted through legislation, as well. The ceremonies were condemned because they conflicted with the ways of European business, which encouraged frugality, savings, and an exact exchange of goods for money. Not until 1951 did an amendment to the Indian Act remove sections that restricted customs and culture. We should note that while government officials and clergy outlawed sacred objects, totem poles, masks, pipes, and the like, many of those same officials and clergy collected them privately, and often sold them at lucrative prices.⁵⁵

51 John Milloy, "The Early Indian Acts: Developmental Strategy and Constitutional Change," in *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows*, 57.

52 *Ibid.*, 59.

53 *Sessional Papers*, vol. 20b, Session of the 6th Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, 1887, 37.

54 For example, the potlatch, a vital part of the Pacific Northwest First Nations culture, was banned from 1884 until 1951. For a classic description of the potlatch and its significance at the turn of the century, see Franz Boas, "The Potlatch," in Tom McFeat, ed., *Indians of the North Pacific Coast* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1966), 72–80.

55 Stacey Jessiman, "Cultural Heritage Repatriation as a Means of Restorative Justice, Affirmation and Cultural Revival for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada," paper presented at the International Association of Genocide Scholars conference, "Time, Movement, and Space: Genocide Studies and Indigenous Peoples," July 16–19, 2014, University of Winnipeg.



Traditional Education

Anthropologists argue that all societies educate, train, or mentor their sons and daughters. While many do not have formal schools, they can, nevertheless, have an education system that helps younger generations socialize into the norms and expectations of their parents by learning the language, skills, and values needed to become productive members of society. Indigenous societies were no different. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people had traditions, histories, and teaching systems that reflected their experience and directed their lives. The idea that Western culture was superior and that the Indigenous Peoples needed to be Christianized and *civilized* came from the biases of Europeans and their unwillingness to appreciate the complex, largely unwritten teaching processes inside indigenous communities. In truth, explains educator Nathan Matthew,

First Nations education systems served the same purpose as education systems today. Education was the means by which the values, beliefs, customs, lifestyle, and the accumulated knowledge and skills of First Nations peoples were passed from generation to generation. It was also the means by which individuals were prepared to take on specific tasks and roles within the family and community. The traditional education was family and community based. Education was grounded firmly in the First Nations' sense of spirituality and responded to the practical demands of day to day living within a defined traditional territory. Although there was some specialization of instruction by specific individuals, the task of education was undertaken by many people; the parents, elders, and the extended family all contributed their knowledge.⁵⁶

Thus, in traditional North American indigenous societies, children learned through stories and examples about the languages and values of their people and the practical skills needed for daily living, such as fishing and hunting. Parents and other family members were the models of adult behaviour, and children would observe and mimic what they saw. Elders shared stories to instruct the youth, or to warn them against harmful actions, and infused their emerging language with layers of meaning and references drawn from their history and experience. Language was the connective tissue between past and present, between experience and meaning. These life lessons allowed children to find ways to interact with their environment and to develop intellectually, morally, and spiritually. It was a system suited to the indigenous lifestyle, one that had worked for many generations.

Formal education in the West emerged in the nineteenth century as many nations recognized the need to provide basic education for all children—basic proficiency in reading, writing, math, and algebra, as well as new work skills required by the growing mechanization of many trades.

In Canada (as in other colonies of Europe), long before the effects of a modern economy were recognized, indigenous ways of life were profoundly and violently disrupted by the arrival of the European traders, fishermen, missionaries, and settlers. The effects of these changes left indigenous communities without their traditional livelihood, on the one hand, and without the skills and resources to take on a more European lifestyle, on the other.

Both the Canadian government and indigenous leaders realized that something had to be done to help the dying indigenous nations. The Europeans called it the “Indian problem.” Indigenous communities rejected this terminology outright but sought change, too. Many realized that their lives had been altered forever. Indigenous languages, where not already lost, began to lose their importance as English and French were imposed as the languages of business, bureaucracy, and the law. Thus some communities collaborated with the authorities in the building of schools on and off reserves without imagining that they would have to give up their traditional teachings altogether.

56 Nathan Matthew, *First Nations Education Financing*, First Nations Education Steering Committee (2001), Part 1, 3.



Aggressive Assimilation

Facing the resilience of indigenous traditional education in Canada, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, who was also Minister of Indian Affairs, commissioned Nicholas Flood Davin, a journalist, lawyer, and politician, to go to Washington, DC, in 1879 to study how the United States tackled the same issue. At the time, the US had developed a policy of aggressive civilization of Native Americans. This policy, writes anthropologist Derek G. Smith, “had been formulated in the post-Civil War period by President Ulysses S. Grant’s administration . . . and was passed into law by Congress in early 1869.”⁵⁷ The key to this policy was a system of industrial schools where religious instruction



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Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald led the forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from their land and onto reserves in the mid-nineteenth century. For Macdonald, the goal was not just to remove individuals but to assimilate them into mainstream Canadian culture.

and skills training would help the Native Americans catch up with the demands of Western society.

In a confidential report to the Canadian government submitted in 1879, Davin advised Canada to follow this model of boarding schools (industrial and residential schools were essentially the same). His report became the “founding document, in effect the charter document, which specified the terms within which industrial schools functioned for almost a century.”⁵⁸ Davin outlined plans for the creation of 13 new boarding schools, making sure his proposal would not prove too costly to the government.

57 Derek G. Smith, “The ‘Policy of Aggressive Civilization’ and Projects of Governance in Roman Catholic Industrial Schools for Native Peoples in Canada, 1870–95,” *Anthropologica* 43 (2001), 254.

58 Derek G. Smith, “The ‘Policy of Aggressive Civilization,’” 254. The report was titled *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* (1879).

Legislation for the Residential Schools

The assumption behind Davin's proposal was that if indigenous children and youth were separated from their families and educated in the European tradition, they would abandon their traditional values, customs, and lifestyles. Moreover, when the students returned home, they would bring these Western ways to the other community members. For reference and aid, the government also turned to the various church denominations, which had already begun the process of creating missionary schools.

But until 1883, Canada did not have a residential school system. Rather, it had individual church-led initiatives to which the federal government provided grants.⁵⁹ Based on these pre-Confederation religious boarding schools, the government was to seek partnerships with representatives of the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and other churches to operate the schools and to carry out this mission for the state. Religious instruction and discipline became the primary tool to “civilize” indigenous people and prepare them for life as mainstream European-Canadians.

To achieve this goal, Prime Minister Macdonald authorized the creation of new residential schools and granted government funds for those that were



O. B. Buell / Library and Archives Canada / PA-182246

In this photograph, tipis stand just outside the fence of Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School in 1895 in Lebret, Saskatchewan. The tipis likely belong to the First Nations families of children attending the school.

already in place. Macdonald, like others in the government administration, was very clear about the need to break the connection between the students and their communities: “When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with his parents who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write.”⁶⁰

Two models of schooling were pursued: industrial and residential schools. The industrial schools were to focus more on rudimentary farming skills and trades. Those were not boarding schools, although the students often lived in a separate building on site that served as a hostel. The residential schools were to be more academic, though they too offered training in farm work (for boys) and domestic skills (for girls). While a far cry from the boarding schools for Canada’s privileged youth, these offered full board for First Nations students, as they were government-funded. The reality of the Indian education model was not based on principles of schools or academic enrichment, however; rather, the system was founded on principles of “reformatories and jails established for the children of the urban poor.”⁶¹

59 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012), 6.

60 Quoted in *They Came for the Children*, 6.

61 *Ibid.*



The Role of the Churches

The Christian denominations supported the boarding or residential schools over the day school model (though they also ran many of the day schools on the reserves). Recognizing the urgent need to help Indigenous Peoples cope with the destruction of their way of life, J. N. Poitras, an Oblate priest, said:

Allow me to say that hunting is a thing of the past, for the Bands in [my district]. It is a fact of experience that wherever the white people have penetrated, the fur bearing animals have been overrun by lumbermen, prospectors, miners, settlers, etc., who have destroyed the hunting grounds of the Indians [who] as a rule . . . have to have recourse to other means besides hunting to support their families. It will be the case

more especially for the growing generation. They will have to earn their living, as the white people, they must be prepared for it and trained from youth. That training they get in our Industrial and Boarding Schools—nowhere else.⁶²

Indeed, in the same way they worked to convert colonized peoples in Africa, India, and other colonies, the European churches had also sent missionaries to Christianize, train, and educate Indigenous Peoples in what would later become Canada. Some missionaries went out of their way to help indigenous communities in need, although they did so in an effort to convert members of these communities to their own denomination of Christianity. This involved denying the value of indigenous culture, spirituality, and traditions. A directive to the staff of residential schools in Nova Scotia spelled out the Western values the schools were instructed to teach:

In the primary grades, instill the qualities of obedience, respect, order, neatness and cleanliness. Differentiate between right and wrong, cultivate truthful habits and a spirit of fair play. As the pupils become more advanced inculcate as near as possible in the order mentioned, independence, self-respect, industry, honesty, thrift, self-maintenance, [and] citizenship. . . . Discuss charity, pauperism, Indian and white life, the evils of Indian isolation, enfranchisement. Explain the relationship of the sexes to labour, home and public duties, and labour as the law of existence.⁶³

For all involved, there was no distinction between the civilizing and Christianizing mission; they were one and the same. As early as 1852, Rev. Samuel Rose, the principal of Mt. Elgin Indian Residential School at the time, explained the following:

[T]he education of these [Aboriginal] youths has been regarded by me as the work of no ordinary character; an education solemnly important in his connection to the future, with the unborn periods of the time. . . . These youths are to form the class whose histories is to be a most important epoch in the history of the nations to which they belong. . . . This class is to spring a generation, who will either perpetuate the manners and customs of their ancestors, or being *intellectually, morally and religiously elevated*, take their stand among the improved, intelligent nations of the earth, their part in the great drama of the world's doing; or of want of necessary qualifications, to take their place and perform their part, be despised and pushed off the stage of action and ceased to be!⁶⁴

Similarly, years later, a memorandum of the Convention of Catholic Principals in 1924 put it this way:

All true civilization must be based on moral law, which christian religion alone can give. Pagan superstition could not suffice . . . to make the Indians practice the virtues

of our civilization and avoid its attendant vices. Several people have desired us to countenance the dances of the Indians and to observe their festivals; but their habits, being the result of free and easy mode of life, cannot conform to the intense struggle for life which our social conditions require.⁶⁵

The Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches operated the majority of the residential schools even before the Indian Act made such schools the official government policy. These churches ran the two largest religious organizations behind the residential schools: the Roman Catholic Oblates Order of Mary Immaculate and the Church Missionary Society of the Anglican Church (the Church of England). Overall, the Roman Catholic diocese managed as many as 60% of the schools, and the Anglican Church managed 25%. Most of the rest were led by the United Church of Canada (created after 1925 as a merger of several Protestant denominations, including the Presbyterians, Methodists, and smaller denominations).⁶⁶

For better or worse, the contribution of the churches was highly significant. In some cases, residential schools grew out of orphanages and day schools set up by these orders or by women who joined the mission. In addition, several female religious orders supplied teachers, nuns, nurses, and administrators as the system developed.⁶⁷ But after the first decades of the twentieth century, in their zeal to Christianize, the churches competed over students and kept the residential schools system running long after the government began to realize that it was not achieving its goals.⁶⁸ Prejudices against indigenous ways of life and a sense of cultural superiority eventually set the operators of these schools against their students and created the backdrop for the traumatic experience of the humiliation, neglect, and dismissal of indigenous cultures.⁶⁹

The religious mission, however benevolently intended by the churches, was only part of their vision. A 2012 report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission explains the complicated role of the churches as follows:

To both Protestant and Catholic missionaries, Aboriginal spiritual beliefs were little more than superstition and witchcraft. In British Columbia, William Duncan of the Church Missionary Society reported: "I cannot describe the conditions of this people better than by saying that it is just what might be expected in savage heathen life." Missionaries led the campaign to outlaw Aboriginal sacred ceremonies such as the Potlatch on the west coast and the Sun Dance on the Prairies. In British Columbia in 1884, for example, Roman Catholic missionaries argued for banning the Potlatch, saying that participation in the ceremony left many families so impoverished they had to withdraw their children from school to accompany them in the winter to help them search for food. While, on one front, missionaries were engaged in a war on

Aboriginal culture, on another, they often served as advocates for protecting and advancing Aboriginal interests in their dealings with government and settlers. Many learned Aboriginal languages, and conducted religious ceremonies at the schools in those languages. These efforts were not unrewarded: the 1899 census identified 70,000 of 100,000 Indian people in Canada as Christians.⁷⁰

We will explore further the impact of the churches later in this resource. But there can be no denying that the churches had far-reaching influence on both indigenous communities and individuals.

62 Quoted in Donald J. Auger, *Indian Residential Schools in Ontario* (N.P.: Nishnawbe Aski Nation, 2005), 9.

63 Instruction to teachers printed on residential schools register, quoted in Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia* (Lockport: Roseway Publishing, 1994), 47.

64 Rev. Rose Report, 1852, in Elizabeth Graham, ed., *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Ontario: Heflle Publishing, 1997), 230. Emphasis added.

65 Memorandum of the Convention of the Catholic Principals of Indian Residential Schools, Lebert, Saskatchewan, August 28–29, 1924.

66 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children*, 15.

67 Rita McGuire, "The Grey Sisters in the Red River Settlement, 1844–1870," *Historical Studies* 53 (1986), 26.

68 James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 130–33.

69 *Ibid.*, 40.

70 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children*, 15.



Building the Indian Residential Schools System

From 1883 onward, the federal government sought a system to enroll indigenous children in schools. Day schools and industrial schools were to serve alongside the residential schools to meet this growing challenge. One of the most important historians of the residential schools, James R. Miller, estimates that a great number of indigenous students were, in fact, educated in day schools, although the residential schools left the most painful, long-lasting marks on indigenous communities. Day schools, too, were operated by municipal authorities and the churches and attempted to reach the same goals. As a

result, many of the troubles and abuses found in the residential schools were also found in the day schools.⁷¹

The government began with a modest budget of \$44,000 a year in 1883. This money, however, came mostly from cuts to government spending on other indigenous needs. Historians claim that these cuts indicate the government's limited commitment to investing in the program—financially and otherwise—from the beginning. Despite its talk about the urgent need to civilize Indigenous Peoples, the government was determined to educate them on the cheap, relying heavily on the churches and their supporters to chip in.⁷² Since much of the financial burden fell on the local schools, they tried to shift the costs to the parents, often with little success. Most schools used the children in their care to make clothes, grow vegetables, plant trees, raise animals for food, and perform chores necessary for the daily operation of the schools.

As the system grew, so did Ottawa's fears that it was becoming too costly. As early as 1892, barely four years into the plan, the government switched to a new financial system in which the schools received a fixed allowance for every student they had (a per-capita grant). In a short time, schools that were not already struggling began to feel the pinch, and many began to run a significant deficit. This was bad news for all involved—there wasn't enough money to make repairs, to hire enough staff, to pay adequate salaries, or to properly feed the students.⁷³

The immediate result was increased pressure to use student labour to provide goods, food, and services. Moreover, once the per-capita system was in place, schools fought to recruit as many students as they could to increase their grants. Schools were now competing with each other for new students (even as late as the 1950s)—often “stealing” students from one another—since the more students they had, the more money they got. These conflicts increased the suspicions in indigenous communities, adding to concerns that the schools did not meet basic academic standards.⁷⁴ Many parents now simply refused to send their children to church-run institutions. Against this backdrop, the majority in the indigenous communities felt that the schools violated their rights and expectations and that the government was taking their children by force.

At about the turn of the twentieth century, some government officials also became aware that the schools were not meeting their goals. Evidence of just how neglectful and dangerous the schools were for the students began to pile up: reports of dilapidated buildings, shortages of fuel for heating, poor and insufficient diet, unsanitary living conditions, widespread illness, and, above all, the general unhappiness of indigenous students. Academically, the picture was not much different and, in fact, reflected the overall failing of the residential school

project: historian James R. Miller has summarized the situation by saying that “the whole system had been declining into a uniform mediocrity.”⁷⁵ The government provided little leadership, and the clergy in charge were left to decide what to teach and how to teach it. Their priority was to impart the teachings of their church or order—not to provide a good education that could help students in their post-graduation lives.⁷⁶ Moreover, the distinction between industrial and residential schools was fading amid criticism that neither achieved much in the way of teaching meaningful skills or trades. Finally, in 1923, this nominal distinction was abolished and both institutions became residential schools.

First Nations were a prime target of the Indian Residential Schools, the education system this guide explores in detail. For years, they made up the majority of the populations subjected to these schools. For the Inuit, residential schools began much later than in other parts of Canada. For decades, the government chose not to address the economic and social challenges facing the Inuit people. When it did so, it implemented the same educational policy it had implemented elsewhere. It was not until 1951, when the first school opened in Chesterfield Inlet, that the Canadian government became more involved. With declining income from fur and fishing, the government feared the Inuit people would require state assistance. As a result, it started to force Inuit children into residential schools or hostels, smaller student residences.⁷⁷ Western education, the government believed, would help the Inuit help themselves. By June 1964, under growing pressure and threats from the government, nearly 4,000 Inuit children, or 75% of youths aged 6 to 15, were attending residential schools.⁷⁸

The vast distances between communities in the region added to what was, anyway, a tragic experience for most attendees of residential schools. In the most glaring example, in the Arctic and Sub-arctic regions, students were taken from their families, flown hundreds of kilometres away, and were hardly ever able to see their parents again.

The schools also treated Métis students differently. Generally speaking, because the government did not give the Métis Status Indian recognition, fewer were enrolled in residential schools (the schools were part of the protection the government extended to those it defined as Status Indians). Even so, many Métis did end up in the residential schools. As the authors of *Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada* explain:

Many so-called half-breeds, particularly those residing on or near reserves, attended industrial and boarding schools until 1910. A new agreement was then negotiated between the churches and the Department of Indian Affairs. The agreement specified that only children belonging to Indian bands could attend residential schools and

management was to disallow 'the entrance of half-breed children into the Boarding Schools unless Indian children could not be obtained.' The Department of Indian Affairs stipulated that it would not pay a grant or any part of the maintenance or education costs of any half-breed children admitted to the schools. As a result, those Métis allowed to enter the schools did so as objects of charity of the churches because few parents were able to pay the fees. Some Métis were in attendance in almost every school.⁷⁹

One reason for their presence in residential schools was the government effort to address the perception of widespread poverty in indigenous communities. In the 1960s, the government removed as many as 20,000 children from indigenous parents, supposedly as a form of welfare. Patrick Johnston, in a 1983 report titled *Native Children and the Child Welfare System*, coined the term Sixties Scoop to describe this widespread practice. These "scooped-up" kids were sent away to foster families, who were often not better suited to care for them, and many ended up in residential schools.⁸⁰ Others were moved to the United States for adoption.

Over the years, as a result of neglect and funding shortages, the residential schools saw many casualties. Students lived in crowded dormitories and were rarely isolated when sick, which made the schools prone to outbreaks of diseases, most notably tuberculosis and the flu (the "Spanish flu" epidemic of 1918 hit residential schools especially hard). So far, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has confirmed the deaths of more than 6,000 children, with potentially many more yet to be counted. And as evidence of neglect and abuse piles up, it becomes clear that many of these children did not die of disease or natural causes.⁸¹

Some of these issues were known early on and were readily ignored. For example, Dr. Peter H. Bryce, who was a medical inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) in the early 1900s, investigated and reported on the conditions in the residential schools on the Prairies, and his findings were ignored if not outright rejected. He discovered that the health conditions were so appalling and the level of tuberculosis infection so high "as to jeopardize the health of the western Indians in general."⁸² In his 1907 report, Bryce argued that of the students in the schools he surveyed, "7 per cent are sick or in poor health and 24 per cent are reported dead." He cited lack of ventilation and overheating as the main reasons for the widespread sickness in the residential schools.⁸³ In response to the criticism of Bryce and his collaborators, in 1909 the DIA appointed Duncan Campbell Scott to head Indian education.

- 71 "Residential School Locations," Truth and Reconciliation Commission website, accessed June 18, 2015, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=12.k>.
- 72 James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 125.
- 73 Donald J. Auger, *Indian Residential Schools in Ontario*, 15.
- 74 James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 127.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 135.
- 76 P. Raibmon, "A new understanding of things Indian: George Raley's negotiation of the residential school experience," *BC Studies* no. 110 (Summer 1996), 72.
- 77 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children*, 56.
- 78 "Residential Schools," Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada website, accessed March 5, 2015, <http://pauktuutit.ca/abuse-prevention/residential-schools>.
- 79 Larry N. Chartrand, Tricia E. Logan, and Judy D. Daniels, *Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006), 33.
- 80 Margaret Philp, "The Land of Lost Children," *The Globe and Mail*, December 21, 2002, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.fact.on.ca/news/news0212/gm021221a.htm>.
- 81 Jorge Barrera, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission Piecing Fragments from History's Shadows to Find the Missing Children," *APTN National News* website, March 29, 2014, accessed September 30, 2014, <http://aptn.ca/news/2014/03/29/trc-piecing-fragments-historys-shadows-find-missing-children/>.
- 82 James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 134.
- 83 Peter Henderson Bryce, *Report on the Indian schools of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1907), 18. Dr. Bryce (1853–1932) served as the chief medical officer for the Departments of the Interior and Indian Affairs.



“Until There Is Not a Single Indian in Canada”

Duncan Campbell Scott was to run the residential school system at its peak—that is, between 1913 and 1932. Scott was what might be called an extreme assimilationist. As a career civil servant, he was involved in Aboriginal affairs throughout his career (he proposed several amendments to the Indian Act and negotiated one of the major treaties). More importantly, he oversaw the operation of the residential schools. Scott was an active official, and while he seems to have appreciated some elements of the indigenous cultures, he also contributed much to their destruction.⁸⁴ Moreover, in 1924 he proposed an amendment to the Indian Act that banned those under its jurisdiction from hiring lawyers (without the DIA's approval) to represent them in land and rights claims.⁸⁵ For these and many other contributions, experts call Scott the “architect of Indian policies” during the first decades of the twentieth century.⁸⁶

In 1920, Scott also pushed for and passed an amendment to the Indian Act making school attendance compulsory for all First Nations children less than 15 years of age. As a result of the amendment, indigenous enrollment rose to about 17,000 in all schools and to more than 8,000 in residential schools by the end of his tenure. According to Scott's reports, at this point, 75% of First Nations children were enrolled in some school, which he attributed to a growing motivation among them to take up Western education. Clearly, the fact that the education was now compulsory and that, since 1930, it included all children between the ages of 7 and 16 had something to do with these numbers.⁸⁷

While Scott did not think that education alone was sufficient for civilizing the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, he pushed heavily for it. When he mandated school attendance in 1920, he stated, "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. . . . Our objective 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, that is the whole object of this Bill."⁸⁸ Because of his radical position, it is easy to understand why he is often associated with the saying "Kill the Indian, save the man."⁸⁹ In the discussion about whether the Canadian assimilation policies and the Indian Residential Schools constitute genocide, this approach is often key evidence. Scott summarized the prevailing attitudes of Canadian officials: the First Peoples, despite many agreements with the Crown that guaranteed their independence, were to be eradicated as distinct nations and cultures.

By the turn of the twentieth century, there were 18 industrial and 36 residential schools; three decades later, at the peak of the system's operation, there were 77 state-funded residential schools in Canada.⁹⁰ Shortly after, there were 80 schools, of which "over one-half—44—were under various Catholic orders, 21 under the Church of England (later the Anglican Church of Canada), 13 under the United Church, and 2 under the Presbyterians."⁹¹ Over the 150-year span of the Indian Residential Schools system, Canada saw close to 150 schools and 150,000 pupils.

Although Scott was proud of his work and the growing numbers of students in residential schools, things were not looking up. Numbers in schools, wrote Brian Titley, "did not automatically translate into numbers being assimilated. Undoubtedly, the schools experience profoundly affected the outlook of young Indians . . . The vast majority remained distinctly Indian and only marginally

in the workforce, if indeed at all. In terms of its objectives, then, the policy of educating the Indian children in segregated day and residential schools failed.”⁹²

Beyond the failure of the schools with regard to their aims of assimilation, Scott was blamed for the neglect and death of many children. Dr. Bryce, as we have seen, found Scott’s penny-pinching to be the main obstacle in promoting basic reforms that could have saved many lives. But nobody listened to him. A defeated, aging man, Bryce published a pamphlet in 1922 called “The Story of a National Crime.” In it he argued that “Scott, in particular, had consistently failed to acknowledge and address native health needs.”⁹³ It is now estimated that at least 6,000 students died in the residential schools. Most parents never knew that their child had perished.⁹⁴ The death toll of so many students from tuberculosis and other diseases in the residential schools has recently prompted a heated debate about Canada’s responsibility for these deaths.

84 For example, he was responsible for “the outlawing of Aboriginal dance along with the spiritual and cultural ceremonies within which such dancing took place such as the Potlatch and the Sundance.” Nancy Chater, *Technologies of Remembrance: Literary Criticism and Duncan Campbell Scott’s “Indian Poems”* (master’s thesis, Toronto University, 1999), 25–26, available at http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape7/PQDD_0003/MQ45483.pdf, accessed September 12, 2014.

85 Nancy Chater, *Technologies of Remembrance*, 26.

86 Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 22.

87 *Ibid.*, 91–92.

88 National Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, vol. 6810, file 470-2-3, vol. 7, 55 (L-3) and 63 (N-3).

89 This phrase is incorrectly attributed to Scott, though he would likely have agreed with this idea. It belongs to the American Captain Richard H. Pratt. See Mark Abley, “The man wrongly attributed with uttering ‘kill the Indian in the child,’” *Maclean’s*, accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.macleans.ca/culture/books/conversations-with-a-dead-man-the-legacy-of-duncan-campbell-scott/>. See also “‘Kill the Indian, and Save the Man’: Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans,” *History Matters* website, accessed September 12, 2014, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929/>.

90 James R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 116; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children*, 6.

91 George Erasmus, “Notes on a History of the Indian Residential School System in Canada,” presented at “The Tragic Legacy of Residential Schools: Is Reconciliation Possible?” conference, hosted by the Assembly of First Nations/ University of Calgary, March 12–13, 2004, <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/is-reconciliation-possible.pdf>.

92 Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, 93.

93 Megan Sproule-Jones, “Crusading for the Forgotten: Dr. Peter Bryce, Public Health, and Prairie Native Residential Schools,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 13 (1996), 218–19.

94 John Paul Tasker, “Residential schools findings point to ‘cultural genocide,’ commission chair,” *CBCNews*, May 29, 2015, accessed June 16, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/residential-schools-findings-point-to-cultural-genocide-commission-chair-says-1.3093580>. See also Brenda Elias, “The challenge of counting the missing when the missing were not counted,” paper presented at the International Association of Genocide Scholars conference, “Time, Movement, and Space: Genocide Studies and Indigenous Peoples,” July 16–19, 2014, University of Winnipeg.



The Experience of Students

Aside from those who paid the highest price—their lives—many students suffered lifelong trauma, which has also been passed on to children and grandchildren. Psychologists call this intergenerational trauma. For most—though not all—residential school students, those emotional scars were primarily the result of the nature of the schools. The first shock was being forced to leave home. Garnet Angecone is an Anishinaabe elder from the Lac Seul First Nation in Northern Ontario and a survivor of the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School. He writes: “I was ripped away from my loving family. . . . I was afraid. I was lost. I was so lonesome. I felt betrayed. I felt abandoned.”⁹⁵

As soon as the children were taken from their parents and placed in the school, the school staff forbade them from speaking their indigenous languages—the first step in a journey leading to their assimilation. The schools followed directions from the central authorities; for instance, one directive in Nova Scotia instructed teachers: “Every effort must be made to induce pupils to speak English and to teach them to understand it. Insist on English during even the supervised play. Failure in this means wasted efforts.”⁹⁶

Many of the children did not speak any other language besides their indigenous mother tongue, so they were confused and harshly punished for misunderstanding staff directions. At times, speaking an indigenous language led to severe physical punishment, isolation, and humiliation. Former students report having a needle pushed through their tongues and receiving electric shocks.⁹⁷ The message was heard loud and clear: indigenous languages were inferior to English or French and should be discarded.

Religious instruction was also a high priority, and this was enforced vigorously. The goal for many of the religious orders that ran the schools was to convert the children to Christianity and replace indigenous values and spiritualism once and for all. In an effort to instill in the students fear of the Christian God, some instructors frightened the children with images of the horrors awaiting them if they did not embrace Christianity. One student at the Kalamak Indian Residential School remembered that Christian terminology was used to scare students into submission:

That night, just before she turned the lights off, Sister Maura taught us how to pray on our knees with our hands folded. Then she told us about devils. She said they were waiting with chains under our beds to drag us into the fires of hell if we got up and left our beds during the night. When she turned the lights off I was scared to move, even to breathe. I knew those devils would come and get me if I made a

sound. I kept really still. . . . Someone was crying. A long time later, I was still afraid to get up and use the bathroom. In the morning my bed was wet and Sister Superior strapped me. I had to wear a sign . . . saying, I was a dirty wetbed.⁹⁸

Such strict discipline, which was often just another name for abuse, added to the isolation and separation students felt once they were severed from their families. Many students reported a loveless childhood, coupled with humiliation and degradation by school staff. Hunger, poor nutrition, and repetitive food items were common complaints. As one student remembered: “I was always hungry. . . . At school, it was porridge, porridge, porridge, and if it wasn’t that, it was boiled barley or beans, and thick slices of bread spread with lard. Weeks went by without the taste of meat or fish. Such things as sugar or butter or jam only appeared on our tables on feast days, and sometimes not even then . . . I believe I was hungry for all seven of the years I was at school.”⁹⁹

Over and above the daily sufferings, the schools proved to be a breeding ground for all manner of sadistic verbal, physical, and sexual abuses. Poorly supervised priests, nuns, and laymen often used their positions of power to carry out assaults on the bodies of defenseless children.¹⁰⁰ These experiences had many detrimental effects for the students who attended the schools. They continue to torment not only the former residential school students themselves but also their families and communities.

95 Speech by Garnet Angecone, Aboriginal Healing Foundation website, <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/garnets-st-paul-speech.pdf>. See also Jennifer Morrow, *Starting to Talk: A Guide for Communities on Healing and Reconciliation from the Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*, Sioux Lookout Anti-Racism Committee, 2.

96 Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths*, 47.

97 “These schools are our schools,” *The Economist*, October 9, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/america/21588084-and-theyre-much-worse-they-could-be-these-schools-are-our-schools>.

98 Shirley Sterling, *My Name is Seepeeetza* (Toronto: Groundwood, 2008), 19.

99 Bridget Moran, *Stoney Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1988), 38; see also the biography of Mary John in Margaret Freehan, *Stories of Healing from the Native Indian Residential Schools Abuse* (master’s thesis, University of Alberta, 1996), 34. We have used Freehan’s well-documented thesis in this and other sections. Wherever possible, we quoted the original texts she used.

100 Details on these issues and survivors’ testimonies are provided in the “Truth and Reconciliation” section in a later part of this guide.



The Age of Rights?

World War II brought a new awareness of human rights around the world. After the horrors of the Holocaust came to full light, few people could deny the dangers of racism. The anti-colonial movement was growing stronger around the world, and with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 by the newly formed United Nations, many turned their attention to the rights of colonized people globally. In Africa, Asia, and the Americas, liberation movements helped bring the plight of millions under European colonialism to public attention.

In Canada, the experience of World War II left many troubled by two issues in particular: people were alarmed not only by German atrocities but also by new personal awareness of the unresolved injustices committed against Indigenous Peoples. Many indigenous soldiers had volunteered—they did not have to be drafted—to fight in the war for freedom from oppression, racism, and discrimination. This fact shed a new light on the dark history of Canadian-Indigenous relations. “Aboriginal soldiers returning to civilian life,” wrote Alan McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, “brought with them new ideas about their relationship with their country: their experience convinced them that unfinished business existed between Canada and the Aboriginal population.”¹⁰¹

Shortly after World War II, a special joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate began to review the situation in Canada’s 78 existing residential schools and presented its findings in 1948. It had to face a new reality: the indigenous population was growing.¹⁰² With costs increasing, the 1948 report called for the abolition of the residential schools once and for all and for the integration of indigenous people into regular provincial schools. For the next decades, integration became a key policy promoted by the government.

Indigenous leaders were skeptical about the idea of integration. Chief Dan George said in or around 1972, “You talk big words of integration in the schools. Does it really exist? Can we talk of integration until there is social integration . . . unless there is integration of hearts and minds you have only a physical presence . . . and the walls are as high as the mountain range.”¹⁰³

Indeed, critics were quick to point out that while integration sounded better than the idea of assimilation on paper, the two were quite similar in practice. A policy of integration was just as likely to ignore indigenous traditions and cultures and force Indigenous Peoples to accept European norms, values, and

languages. One significant difference stood out: parents and other members of the community were now invited to take part in the education of their children. In that sense, the government replaced the aggressive assimilation policy discussed previously with a softer kind of assimilation; however, both approaches had the same goal.¹⁰⁴ Even with the changes, the residential school system lingered, half-alive, half-dead. It wasn't until 1969 that the government withdrew the schools from the churches' operational authority. It then took an additional 25 years for the last residential school to close.

The period surrounding Canada's 100th anniversary, 1967, proved fateful. When Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau came to power in 1968, he ordered Jean Chrétien, his Minister of Indian Affairs and a future prime minister, to review the Indian Act. The result was the 1969 White Paper (a policy statement).¹⁰⁵

Ignoring other suggestions that focused on addressing the legacy of colonialism by giving special attention to Indigenous Peoples as a group, the government was prepared to launch yet another policy of full integration.¹⁰⁶ Despite the (legal) language of equality, to indigenous leaders this policy read every bit like the old programs for assimilation. The 1969 White Paper recommended the abolition of the Status Indian designation and—gradually—all government protections and provisions for the Indigenous Peoples, including the Indian Act, treaties, and other indigenous rights. The document stated, “The government believes that services should be available on an equitable basis, except for temporary differentiation based on need. Services ought not to flow from separate agencies established to serve particular groups, especially not to groups that are identified ethnically. . . . All Indians should have access to all programs and services of all levels of government equally with other Canadians. . . .”¹⁰⁷ For a short while, Prime Minister Trudeau embraced the vision behind the White Paper with great enthusiasm.¹⁰⁸

101 Alan D. McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2013), 322.

102 John Milloy, “Indian Act Colonialism.”

103 Chief Dan George, from his soliloquy “A Talk to Teachers,” quoted in Verna J. Kirkness, “Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Retrospective and a Prospective,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 39 (1999), 7.

104 Eric Taylor Woods, *The Anglican Church of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools: A Meaning-Centred Analysis of the Long Road to Apology* (dissertation, London School of Economics, 2012), 63–64.

105 For the meaning of the phrase, see Alan Cairn, quoted in P. G. McHugh, *Aboriginal Title: The Modern Jurisprudence of Tribal Land Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47–48.

106 Two years earlier, anthropologist Harry B. Hawthorn had published a critical report that recommended the abolition of the residential schools and the designation of the Indigenous Peoples as “citizens plus” to address past injustices. See Harry B. Hawthorn, *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies*, Parts 1 and 2, 1966–67, Indian Affairs and Northern Development website, accessed September 11, 2014, http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071120104036/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/srvy/sci_e.html.

107 *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* (The White Paper, 1969), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010189/110010001010191#chp1>.

108 Eric Taylor Woods, *The Anglican Church of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools*, 70.



Gathering Anger

The 1969 White Paper was met with widespread opposition both inside and outside of indigenous communities. This opposition would defeat, for the first time, the illusion that the “Indian problem” could be, or should be, assimilated away. Indeed, the 1960s saw the emergence of the anti-war movement and the global rise of a variety of left-leaning movements that focused on individual freedom, equal rights, and faithful recognition of minorities’ identities. Across the border, the US civil rights movement registered remarkable successes in defeating Jim Crow racial policies. In addition, the world had witnessed the growth of the anti-colonial movement and the liberation of many formerly colonized nations. The indigenous leadership was reassured by these trends and linked its struggle with the global fight against imperialism. Additionally, court challenges to legal discrimination against Indigenous Peoples finally gained traction and led to the end of the years of injustice enshrined in the different versions of the Indian Act.¹⁰⁹

Responding with growing anger and assertiveness, indigenous activists rejected the idea of equal treatment before the law as simplistic at best. They argued that it was used to mask decades of accumulated material and political privileges for European Canadians acquired at the expense of Indigenous Peoples.¹¹⁰ Once again it seemed that the government was trying to assimilate the indigenous population rather than respect their rights and treaties. An infuriated Harold Cardinal, an up-and-coming indigenous activist, wrote a response known as the Red Paper. In it he posed a counter policy whose aim was to restore self-governance and indigenous land titles. Cardinal, in fact, turned the debate around, emphasizing the importance of the Indian Act: “The White Paper Policy said that the legislative and constitutional bases of discrimination should be removed. We reject this policy. We say that the recognition of Indian status is essential for justice. Retaining the legal status of Indians is necessary if Indians are to be treated justly. Justice requires that the special history, rights and circumstances of Indian People be recognized. . . . The

legal definition of registered Indians must remain. . . . We want our children to learn our ways, our history, our customs, and our traditions.”¹¹¹

Cardinal was by no means in favor of the discriminatory aspects of the Indian Act. But he felt that the act was the last defense against assimilation and the loss of the few rights Indigenous Peoples had. In many ways, it was a record of the injustices committed against them.

109 Alan D. McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 323–34.

110 Carole Blackburn, “Producing Legitimacy: Reconciliation and the Negotiation of Aboriginal Rights in Canada,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007), 633.

111 “Foundational Document: Citizens Plus,” *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 1 (2011), 194.



Apologies

As we have noted, criticism of colonialism and especially the residential schools reached new heights around Canada’s 100th anniversary. The Anglican Church came under scrutiny because of its association with the colonial elites and its role in the residential schools. In 1969, a book written by sociologist George Caldwell criticized, in no uncertain terms, the operation of the nine residential schools in Saskatchewan. This harsh criticism echoed many earlier critiques: Caldwell argued that students who returned from the residential schools to their community could not reconcile the “Euro-Canadian culture they have been socialized into with Aboriginal Culture they now found themselves in.”¹¹² Neither quite Euro-Canadian nor fully immersed in indigenous culture, they were left to fend for themselves, marginalized, often unemployed, and exposed to a life of crime and alcoholism.¹¹³ The situation, rather than improving, was becoming worse and worse.¹¹⁴ Despite being the target of widespread criticism, the Anglican Church of Canada failed to respond.

But already things were changing inside the Anglican Church. In 1967 it appointed Charles Hendry to write a report examining directly its residential schools. When Hendry submitted his report in 1969, the church adopted its criticism. Entitled *Beyond the Trapline*, the Hendry report stated clearly that the Anglican Church’s educational policies of assimilation and conversion “have smashed native culture and social organization.”¹¹⁵ Moreover, Hendry argued,

The Indians and Eskimo face a total life situation created by two centuries of exploitation, discrimination, paternalism and neglect. They inherited a world their fathers did not make, with no chance of changing it for the benefit of their children. The white conqueror sought his own profit and his own power. The Indians were pushed out of the way.¹¹⁶

After adopting the Hendry report, the Anglican Church, which was frequently criticized for its cultural arrogance, began to make amends. It increasingly participated in indigenous activism, sided with their land and treaty claims, and contributed to community development efforts. The new critical atmosphere inside the church resulted in greater acceptance of indigenous culture and a growing visibility of indigenous believers in the church.¹¹⁷

Such attention to the churches' involvement in the residential schools was part of the growing awareness of globalism, multiculturalism, and pluralism in general. And so, on an ordinary day in 1981, indigenous activist Alberta Billy stood up and told the United Church Executive General Council: "The United Church owes the Native peoples of Canada an apology for what you did to them in residential school."¹¹⁸ Jaws dropped, and the stunned members of the council were speechless. But five years later, the Rt. Rev. Robert Smith delivered an apology (see below). The United Church had been formed in 1925 as a union of the Congregationalist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches. It oversaw the operation of 13 to 15 residential schools, roughly 10% of the total residential schools. In 1986 it made the first of several church apologies.

The government and the major churches, however, remained unmoved. Fearing that an apology would be read as an admission of responsibility and lead to massive lawsuits, they chose to do nothing. The public's lack of interest or knowledge allowed this continued inaction until a shocking testimony given in October 1990 disrupted the silence. When the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Boniface (Manitoba) set up a committee to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct of its clergy, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Leader Phil Fontaine decided to speak up about his experiences at a residential school in Fort Alexander.¹¹⁹ On national television, the charismatic, soft-spoken chief reported openly on the information he had given the church authorities in Winnipeg. Facing millions of viewers, he talked about widespread physical, psychological, and sexual abuse in the residential schools and demanded a thorough inquiry. While Fontaine acknowledged that corporal punishment was widely used on many children and youth at the time, he argued that Indigenous Peoples experienced violence on a different level altogether. He and others felt that because clergymen carried out the abuse, it was more than a

private matter; it became a socially acceptable norm, sanctioned by the highest authority.¹²⁰ When such abuse is made the norm, victims have nobody to complain to and, more importantly, no crime to report, because such behaviour is accepted as normal.

Fontaine's testimony was not the first time such allegations had surfaced and, of course, there were no secret in private conversations between former students of the residential schools. But this time, the reception was different. The media took notice, and Fontaine's story was featured in all the major media outlets.¹²¹ A flood of confessions followed, and the stories of many abused students, referred to since as survivors, came to light. The term *survivors* was borrowed from Holocaust scholarship and was employed to indicate the catastrophic trauma students at the residential schools sustained.¹²² Stories of physical punishment, electric shocks, child exploitation, and sexual abuse filled the airwaves, providing ample evidence as to what, until then, had only been rumoured or discussed behind closed doors.

A series of apologies from the different churches involved in the residential schools followed. The Oblate Conference of Canada issued a public apology in 1991, limited to the "1200 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate living and ministering in Canada."¹²³ Two years later, in 1993, the then Primate of the Anglican Church, Michael Peers, delivered that church's apology in front of the National Native Convocation in Minaki, Ontario. Following the Anglican apology, the Presbyterian Church delivered one in 1994, and the United Church did so in 1998. Finally, in April 2009, Phil Fontaine, who was then leader of the Assembly of First Nations, accepted an invitation from Pope Benedict XVI to receive an official apology from the Vatican. Following the meeting, the pope released a statement saying that "the Holy Father expressed his sorrow at the anguish caused by the deplorable conduct of some members of the Church and he offered his sympathy and prayerful solidarity."¹²⁴ Many indigenous survivors continue to hope that the Catholic Church would provide a more thorough apology, though some dioceses are deeply engaged with indigenous communities in work of reconciliation and forgiveness.¹²⁵

112 Quoted in Eric Taylor Woods, *The Anglican Church of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools*, 113; see also James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 2009), 386.

113 George Caldwell, "An Island Between Two Cultures: The Residential Indian School," *Canadian Welfare*, July-August, 1967, 12–17.

114 John Milloy, "Indian Act Colonialism."

115 William J. Danaher, "Beyond Imagination: 'Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ' (1963) and the Reinvention of Canadian Anglicanism," *Anglican Theological Review* 93, no. 2 (Spring 2011), 239–240.

116 Quoted in Eric Taylor Woods, *The Anglican Church of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools*, 119.

- 117 Ibid, 104–105.
- 118 Martha Trojan, "25 Years Later: The United Church of Canada's Apology to Aboriginal Peoples," *Indian Country Today Media Network*, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/08/15/25-years-later-united-church-canadas-apology-aboriginal-peoples-47418>.
- 119 Woods, *The Anglican Church of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools*, 72–75.
- 120 "Phil Fontaine's Shocking Testimony of Sexual Abuse," CBC Digital Archives, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/phil-fontaines-shocking-testimony-of-sexual-abuse>.
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools* (Toronto: UTP Ethnographies for the Classroom, 2013), Kindle Locations 545–571.
- 123 "An Apology to the First Nations of Canada by The Oblate Conference of Canada," Speaking My Truth website, accessed September 11, 2014, http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=955.
- 124 "The Residential School System," UBC Indigenous Foundations website, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-residential-school-system.html>.
- 125 Per Commissioner Marie Wilson, private communication.



The Government's "Statement of Reconciliation"

By the 1980s, it had become clear that the effects of the residential schools were far greater and longer-lasting than most Canadians cared to admit. Historian John Milloy offers the following assessment:

Through the 1960s and 1970s, the evidence of the destructive impact of the schools, of their institutional parenting of children, and their trans-generational effects accumulated in Departmental files. . . . The schools were factories of disability and deviance more than they were halls of learning.¹²⁶

Tensions between the government and Indigenous Peoples were rising. In 1988, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations George Erasmus warned the Canadian government that ignoring the rights and land claims of Indigenous Peoples could lead to violence: "We want to let you know," he said, "that you are dealing with fire. We say, Canada, deal with us today because our militant leaders are already born. We cannot promise that you are going to like the kind of violent political action we can just about guarantee the next generation is going to bring to our reserves."¹²⁷

After years of criticism, the federal government faced several questions. What was its moral and financial obligation to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada

whose sons and daughters were severed from their families at a young age? What could it do to respond to the critics who pointed to a long history of marginalization, discrimination, and dispossession? And what was the price of doing nothing?

After a series of confrontations, some quite violent, the government decided to act. In August of 1991, it set up the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) to address growing indigenous discontent. The commission spent five years holding public hearings, visiting communities, consulting with indigenous experts, and conducting research. At the end of these five years, in 1996, the commission produced a report evaluating the relationship among the indigenous population, the federal government, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and Canada as a whole.¹²⁸ The report concluded that it was necessary to change the relationship between the communities from the ground up, to develop one “on a new footing of mutual recognition and respect, sharing and responsibility.”¹²⁹

The RCAP created an extensive 20-year plan of changes related to treaties, employment, education, health care, women’s rights, and much more. The report, highly critical of the treatment of indigenous children in residential schools, triggered the first public apology from the government. On January 8, 1998, Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, delivered a written apology to Phil Fontaine, the then Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). The government also set a fund of \$350 million “for community-based healing as a first step to deal with the legacy of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools” and laid plans for community development and strengthening indigenous governance.¹³⁰

But for many indigenous activists and Indian Residential Schools survivors, the statement was too little, too late. Many former students (or survivors) of the residential schools sought a more comprehensive and just settlement, one that would include an apology from the head of state.

Frustrated by the government’s response, in 2005, Phil Fontaine, in his role as National Chief of the AFN, launched a massive lawsuit on behalf of the “First Nations, Survivor, Deceased, and Family Class.”¹³¹ Chief Fontaine explained: “We would rather negotiate than litigate, but we feel compelled to exercise all our options. Each day we lose another survivor. Each day someone passes on without having achieved any sense of justice or healing or redress.”¹³² The First Nations, Survivor, Deceased and Family Class agreed to settle the suit out of court in 2006, signing the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) with representatives of the federal government, the survivors, the AFN, and the churches. It went into effect in 2007.

As part of this agreement, the government was required to set aside some \$2 billion for about 86,000 surviving students (out of an estimated 150,000 students altogether), many of them forced to attend residential schools.¹³³ Each qualified person was to receive \$10,000 for attending such a school, plus \$3,000 for each year at the school (the “Common Experience Payment”).¹³⁴ In a separate process (the “Independent Assessment Process”), survivors who suffered abuse were to be “scored” according to the abuse they endured and would receive additional compensation.¹³⁵

126 John Milloy, “Indian Act Colonialism.”

127 “Standoff at Oka,” CBC Learning website, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP17CH2PA2LE.html>.

128 See Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation*, Kindle Locations 1084–1087.

129 “Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples,” Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada website, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014597/1100100014637>.

130 “Notes for an Address by the Honourable Jane Stewart Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on the occasion of the unveiling of Gathering Strength—Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan,” Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada website, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015725/1100100015726>.

131 “AFN National Chief Files Class Action Claim Against the Government of Canada for Residential Schools Policy,” *MediaNet*, August 3, 2005, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://media.knet.ca/node/1528>.

132 *Ibid.*

133 “A history of residential schools in Canada,” last updated on January 7, 2014 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-history-of-residential-schools-in-canada-1.702280>.

134 *Ibid.*

135 For more on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s mandate, see Schedule “N” of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, Reconciliation Commission of Canada website, accessed February 6, 2015, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE_N_EN.pdf.



Prime Minister Harper’s Apology

As part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. Before its work got under way, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a public apology on June 11, 2008, on behalf of the Canadian government. The apology is part of the process arranged by the government and the First Nations as parties to the agreement, part of an overall attempt to address the government’s role in the history of the

Indian Residential Schools. The apology, delivered in a special joint session of the House of Commons and the Senate, included the following:

Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to offer an apology to former students of Indian residential schools. The treatment of children in Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history. . . . Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country. . . .

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language.

Prime Minister Harper's apology was, by and large, well received by the representatives of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who attended the joint session. But sadly, the following year, at the G20 summit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Harper expressed sentiments that many felt contradicted the content of the apology and cast doubts on its sincerity. He stated:

We're so self-effacing as Canadians that we sometimes forget the assets we do have that other people see. . . . We are one of the most stable regimes in history. . . . We also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother.¹³⁶

136 David Ljunggren, "Every G20 nation wants to be Canada, insists PM," *Reuters*, September 25, 2009, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/09/26/columns-us-g20-canada-advantages-idUSTRE58P05Z20090926>.



Truth and Reconciliation

What action can bring closure to episodes of conflict and mass violation of human rights? What can help create goodwill and trust between groups in the aftermath of such tragic events? Because of the massive lawsuit it faced, the government was almost forced to focus on the Indian Residential Schools, and it set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2008 to address those issues. So what is a truth and reconciliation commission? What are its goals?

Truth and reconciliation commissions have become commonplace since the 1970s. They reflect a global trend of paying more attention to mass violations of human rights. Most such commissions (if not all) focus on crimes carried out by a government against its own citizens. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission is part of a complicated series of reconciliation hearings and events. It is unique in that it does not signify or facilitate a transition from one regime to another. In that sense, it is part of what experts call *restorative* justice rather than *transitional* justice, a process that helps a country move from, say, a dictatorship to a democracy.¹³⁷

Truth and reconciliation commissions are often a way for perpetrators and victims to publicly acknowledge episodes of violence between them. Such commissions provide a space for former enemies to bridge their differences.¹³⁸ For the most part, they are designed to bring about processes of healing, processes that offer victims solace and reassurance that their trauma will not be repeated.¹³⁹ But in Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was focused almost exclusively on victims and their experiences.

The Canadian TRC is not a court; it has no legal authority.¹⁴⁰ It doesn't indict, charge, or convict, but rather serves to open discussion and develop relationships about the difficult subjects surrounding the residential schools experience. We need to remember that for years, survivors of the residential schools did not speak out about their childhood experiences. Many factors contributed to their silence. For survivors, these included the shame and stigma associated with violence and sexual abuse. But language plays a big role here, too—or, rather, the absence of language does. Many survivors could not find the words to describe their painful experiences in the Indian Residential Schools system. As a British Columbia judge said, “[O]ne is drawn to the conclusion that the unspeakable acts which were perpetrated on these young children were just that: at that time they were for the most part not spoken of.”¹⁴¹

Since the beginning of its work in 2010, the commission has been collecting information about what was done to survivors in the residential schools and has worked to make this information public. From this process, the survivors receive public, communal acknowledgement and support for years of injustice and suffering.¹⁴² Therefore, in many ways, the Canadian TRC facilitates the return and inclusion of survivors into the community, those former students whose secret and denied pains prevented them from partaking in day-to-day social activities.¹⁴³

But one of the most important roles the TRC took on, according to Commissioner Marie Wilson, was that of educating the Canadian public, which for many years was oblivious to the suffering of survivors.¹⁴⁴ If this educational goal is met with success, it will alter the ways in which Canadians think about their culture and history, challenging their identity as members of a community that knew no violence—a tolerant, pluralistic community. Such transformation, many believe, is the first step toward reconciliation between the two communities.

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- 137 "Transitional Justice" and "Restorative Justice," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* online. For an in-depth discussion of the relationship between the two concepts, see Kerry Clamp and Jonathan Doak, "More Than Words: Restorative Justice Concepts in Transitional Justice Settings," *International Criminal Law Review* 12 (2012), 339–360.
- 138 See G. G. J. Knoops, "Truth and reconciliation commission models and international tribunals: A comparison," paper presented at "The Right to Self-Determination in International Law" symposium, September 29 – October 1, 2006, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.unpo.org/downloads/ProfKnoops.pdf>.
- 139 Brian Rice and Anna Snyder, "Reconciliation in the Context of a Settler Society: Healing the Legacy of Colonialism in Canada," *From Truth to Reconciliation*, 46, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/from-truth-to-reconciliation-transforming-the-legacy-of-residential-schools.pdf>.
- 140 See "Schedule N" of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website accessed February 6, 2015, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE_N_EN.pdf.
- 141 Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation*, Kindle Locations 1514–1518.
- 142 "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: 'For the child taken, for the parent left behind'" United Nations Conference Room Paper, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website, accessed February 6, 2015, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/TRC_UN_Conference_Room_and_Roundtable_proposal_final_English.pdf.
- 143 For more on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's mandate, see Schedule "N" of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website.
- 144 "Canada's Youth Face Legacy of Indian Residential Schools at 'Education Day' Event," International Center for Transitional Justice website, accessed March 5, 2015, <https://www.ictj.org/news/canada-youth-education-day>.



The Charge of Genocide

In the 1990s, residential schools scholars such as James R. Miller and many indigenous leaders began to argue that the efforts of the Canadian government to assimilate the Indigenous Peoples in the residential schools embodied the principle of cultural genocide: assimilation was intended to destroy the Indigenous Peoples as culturally distinct group.¹⁴⁵ Other scholars pushed back, noting that the *cultural* destruction of a group is not included as genocide in the final version of the UN Genocide Convention.¹⁴⁶ The debate has continued

since then and, if anything, has gained momentum: What is the proper way to address the near-destruction of Indigenous Peoples, their languages, and their cultures? What is the government's culpability?

More and more activists, scholars, and community leaders now call on the government to acknowledge those policies as genocide even if mass killings did not take place in Canada.¹⁴⁷ As evidence, they list policies such as the suppression of indigenous languages and cultures in residential schools, the forced removal of children in the 1960s and 1970s from indigenous families, and the fatal neglect of students in the residential schools system. The debate surrounding this issue raises many questions. What is at stake for Indigenous Peoples? Why is the government reluctant to call it genocide? Why do some groups deny that this classification should apply to the operation of the Indian Residential Schools?¹⁴⁸ (For more on this complex debate, see Section 7 of this guide.)

First things first: How was the term *genocide* originally construed? For Raphael Lemkin, the Polish Jewish jurist who coined the term, the cultural destruction of a group was as important as the physical annihilation of its members. Early in the 1930s, Lemkin went to great lengths to expand his definition of the crime he later called genocide beyond the physical destruction of human beings. "Our whole heritage is a product of the contributions of all nations," he argued in a 1933 paper. For him, the destruction of cultural groups was in fact an assault on humanity itself if, indeed, humanity is the sum total of cultures of the world. So he added another element to his notion of what group destruction meant: the "systematic and organized destruction of the art and cultural heritage in which the unique genius and achievement of a collectivity are revealed in fields of science, art and literature."¹⁴⁹

Many scholars turn for guidance to the UN's Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948 (the Genocide Convention). In Article 2, it defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."¹⁵⁰

When Canada ratified the convention, government officials held that it was designed to address crimes committed in Europe, and especially the Holocaust.¹⁵¹ As a result, Canada rejected several of the key articles. But despite the lack of Canadian legislation on this issue, scholars, indigenous activists, and community leaders maintain that Article 2(e) seems particularly relevant. They argue that the Indian Residential Schools, along with the Sixties Scoop, when thousands of indigenous children were removed from their own families, were in fact attempts to transfer children from one group to another.¹⁵²

Other scholars suggest that the UN's definition is not sufficiently expansive. They argue that the physical destruction of a group should not be the only factor that defines genocide. A group whose political, cultural, and economic structures are denied or destroyed cannot continue to exist as a distinct group. When the things that give a group its collective identity are gone, the group ceases to exist.¹⁵³ Similarly, some argue that if a group's distinctive cultural integrity is destroyed, it can no longer exist as a group. By that logic, since the whole purpose of the Genocide Convention was to criminalize the destruction of groups, what happened in colonial Canada does amount to genocide. Indeed, as we saw above, this is what Lemkin was getting at. Sociologist Andrew Woolford of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg summarizes this view:

If genocide should be understood as the “destruction of group life rather than lives within a group,” then in the case of Canada's indigenous peoples, that means understanding what makes them a group, what defines their cultural cohesion, such as a profound attachment to the land and nature. So, in Canada's colonial past, systematically depriving First Nations of access to their land so European pioneers could settle and railways could be built, is genocidal.¹⁵⁴

The argument about cultural genocide relates directly to the issue at the heart of this guide: the Indian Residential Schools. More and more critics contend that the colonial efforts of assimilation—the undisputed goal of the residential schools—violated the laws of genocide.¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, others continue to note that the cultural destruction of a group is not defined in the UN Genocide Convention as genocide. (Cultural genocide was excluded from the Genocide Convention because of the objections of Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France, among other countries.)¹⁵⁶

Additional problems surround the way genocide is construed: namely, the idea that it is an *intentional*, orchestrated scheme to destroy a group in whole or in part.¹⁵⁷ “Evidence of the clear intent to destroy is elusive when it comes to

making the case for Canadian settler-colonial genocide,” writes Adam Muller of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, but “this is not to say it is wholly absent.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, many point to the writings of Duncan Campbell Scott, who was in charge of the Indian Residential Schools from 1909 to 1932 (in several capacities).¹⁵⁹ In 1910 he stated that “it is readily acknowledged that the Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habitating so closely in the schools, and that they die at much higher rates than in their villages. But this alone does not justify a change in the policy of this department, which is geared toward the final solution to the Indian problem.”¹⁶⁰ Scott’s “final solution” was *assimilation*, not physical destruction, which for genocide scholars means that the term *genocide* must be either qualified as the crime of “cultural genocide” or changed in meaning altogether.

For many, the 2015 Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission seemed to have settled the debate. This national body declared that “the establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as ‘cultural genocide.’” The authors of the Final Report explained:

States that engage in *cultural genocide* set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. . . . Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. . . . The Canadian government pursued this policy of cultural genocide because it wished to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Aboriginal people and gain control over their land and resources. If every Aboriginal person had been “absorbed into the body politic,” there would be no reserves, no Treaties, and no Aboriginal rights.¹⁶¹

There will be more discussion of these issues and questions in Section 7.

145 James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 9–10.

146 Cultural genocide was included in the first draft of the Genocide Convention but was taken out because of objection from Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France. See Shamiran Mako, “Cultural Genocide and Key International Instruments: Framing the Indigenous Experience,” *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 19 (2012), 183; “First draft of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, prepared by UN Secretariat, [May] 1947 [UN Doc. E/447], accessed February 12, 2015, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/drafts/>.

147 Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton, “Introduction,” in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 5–7.

- 148 For information about the debate on this issue in recent years, see A. Dirk Moses, "Does the Holocaust Reveal or Conceal Other Genocides? The Canadian Museum of Human Rights and Grievable Suffering," in Alexander Laban Hinton, Thomas la Points, and Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Hidden Genocide* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 21–51.
- 149 Raphael Lemkin, "Acts Constituting a General (Transitional) Danger Considered as Offense against the Law of Nations," Prevent Genocide International website, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/madrid1933-english.htm#1>. Also quoted and discussed in Facing History and Ourselves, *Totally Unofficial: Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2007), 11–15.
- 150 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Paris, 9 December 1948, United Nations website, accessed October 8, 2014, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/260\(III\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/260(III)). For more information, see Facing History and Ourselves, *Totally Unofficial: Rafael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2007).
- 151 David MacDonald explains, "When Canada [ratified] the UNGC in 1952, we did so highly selectively. Portions of the Convention were excluded from the Criminal Code, such that genocide still means only Article 2 (a) and (b). The official reasons given to parliament . . . was that [the] portions of the UNGC 'intended to cover certain historical incidents in Europe that have little essential relevance to Canada' could safely be omitted. They even asserted that 'mass transfers of children to another group are unknown . . . in Canada.'" See David B. MacDonald, "Genocide in the Indian Residential Schools: Canadian History through the Lens of the UN Genocide Convention," in Woolford, Benvenuto, and Hinton, *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, 309.
- 152 David B. MacDonald and Graham Hudson, "The Genocide Question and the Indian Residential School in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45 (2012), 428; Adam Muller, "Troubling History, Troubling Law: The Question of Indigenous Genocide in Canada," forthcoming.
- 153 Norbert Elias, *Society of Individuals*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001), 183–84, 196–97. For Elias, the balance between a person's we-identity and I-identity is reflective of the society in which he or she lives, so that in more traditional societies the former is stronger, while modern identity veers toward the I-identity.
- 154 Quoted (from interview) in Mary Agnes Welch, "The Genocide Test," *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 12, 2014, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/the-genocide-test-266849891.html>.
- 155 James Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 9–10.
- 156 Shamiran Mako, "Cultural Genocide and Key International Instruments: Framing the Indigenous Experience," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 19 (2012), 183.
- 157 The issue of intentionality is discussed in David B. MacDonald, "Where Are Canada's History Wars? Indigenous Genocide and Public Memory in Australia, the United States, and Canada," forthcoming.
- 158 Adam Muller, "Troubling History, Troubling Law: The Question of Indigenous Genocide In Canada," forthcoming.
- 159 Magen Sproule-Jones, "Crusading for the Forgotten: Dr. Peter Bryce, Public Health, and Prairie Native Residential Schools," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 13 (1996), 217–218.
- 160 Quoted in Anthony Hall, *Earth into Property: Colonization, Decolonization, and Capitalism* (Montreal/Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 676.
- 161 "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future," Executive Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 1–3. Emphasis added.





**IDENTITY,
MEMBERSHIP,
AND HISTORY**

SECTION 1

Language and Identity

This guide focuses on language and identity in the context of the colonial policies—specifically, the Indian Residential Schools—that brought about the near destruction of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. This first section centres on the first step in the Facing History and Ourselves journey: the relationship between individual identity and the social and cultural elements that shape it. Here we will explore the connections between identity, family, religion, ethnic background, our social environment, and public policies. We will also be looking at how a person’s identity can affect his or her choices, self-esteem, and connection to others. Finally, this section examines some of the challenges faced by the three indigenous groups recognized by law, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, when it comes to preserving their traditional identity.

The answer to the question “Who am I?” defines our individual identity. But the answer we give is often complex, since we all have more than one identity. We are members of specific communities and ethnicities, we have religious (or non-religious) affiliations, and we speak different languages, so “Who am I?” is tied closely to other questions, including “Who are we?” All of those factors contribute to our complex identity at different times. Moreover, many people think of their identity as something they can create for themselves. Therefore, it is worth considering how much of our identity is the result of our own choices and how much of it is shaped by other factors outside our control. In the Canadian context, two unique factors also need to be considered: the effect of the residential schools, which were designed to reshape indigenous identities in the image of European white men and women, and the legal system, which defined the Aboriginal Peoples as separate nations with a special relation to the Crown. This was reaffirmed in the 1982 constitution.

Here we focus on language and its power to impact identity. Language can help create a shared sense of identity and belonging. Indeed, the language we speak often connects us to a shared experience, a shared past, a shared culture. When a language disappears, these bonds can be broken. In other words, when people cannot learn the language of their traditional community, they will find it hard to connect with their ancestors’ religion, culture, and history.

As recorded in 2011, there are more than 60 indigenous languages in Canada, which are grouped into 12 distinct language families.¹ Canadian law recognizes only three broadly defined indigenous population groups, so this wide variety of languages is perhaps more revealing of the diversity within the indigenous population. But many of these languages are at risk; some have only a handful of speakers alive. Some are no longer spoken at all. Critics argue that very little is being done to help keep these languages alive.

Guiding QUESTIONS

1. What factors shape our individual or group identities?
2. What role does language play in shaping people's identities? How can the loss of language affect members of the group who once spoke it? How does the loss of language and culture affect people's choices?
3. What is the relationship between language, landscape, and land? How does land help forge a sense of identity?

1 "Aboriginal Languages in Canada," Statistics Canada website, accessed September 22, 2014, http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-314-x/98-314-x2011003_3-eng.cfm.



READING 1 **Culture, Stereotypes, and Identity**

To what extent is our identity influenced by our family and community? How do stereotypes and prejudice affect who we think we are? How can stereotypes affect our sense of pride, security, and independence?

In February 2014, the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth (Ontario) released *Feathers of Hope: A First Nations Youth Action Plan*. This plan lists “steps to hope”—actions recommended by the group of youth leaders as to how the government and First Nations community leaders should address the difficult realities that young indigenous individuals confront in their lives on reserves. In the excerpt below, one of the authors of the report discusses the issue of indigenous identity.

Growing up, much of our identity is formed by our parents, grandparents and our whole communities. It is formed by the things we are taught in school, the attitudes and behaviours directed toward us by others on- and off-reserve and representations we see—or don't see—of ourselves in the media and mainstream Canadian society. How we see ourselves is strongly influenced by our families, in the cultural and traditional sense of the word, i.e., distant relatives, our band councils and First Nations leadership, health practitioners and educators among others. This brings me to question how these influences affect our lives and what impact they have on how we see ourselves as youth and individuals.

To start off, it is difficult to speak about how First Nations youth see themselves. I have met a range of young people from the proudest of the proud of First Nations youth, to those who are extremely self-conscious, withdrawn and voiceless. . . . I find that those who are the most confident are usually the ones who are firmly in touch with their First Nations culture and roots. Having a strong sense of one's identity provides a level of confidence that affects what we do and everything inside ourselves, right down to the decisions we make.

There can be no conversation about identity if we do not mention the pervasive stereotypes that impact the way others and we perceive ourselves. Here are some common terms and ideas that are used to describe First Nations people:

Positive Stereotypes: Spiritual masters, nature-loving, spirit-talking, wise, stoic, traditional, brave, long-haired, warrior.

Negative Stereotypes: Indians, natives, bogans, nates, wh-indians . . . alcoholics, lazy, red-skins, wild, rich, impoverished, druggie, thugs, gangsters, un-grateful, victims, angry, tax-free, brown (or “white”), violent.

Many of these stereotypes are contradictory and create confusion on the part of young people. We, as First Nations people, *need* to start questioning the beliefs we hold about each other and ourselves. Youth need to be engaged in a self-learning process to start undoing the negative images we see and believe about ourselves. We must explore where these beliefs come from and start questioning the validity of the sources and then work to rebuild our identities with positive and empowering self-images. Working with our Elders will be a vital part of this process.

. . . From beat-boxers, hip-hoppers, artists, young leaders, drummers, singers, jingle-dress dancers and athletes to traditional knowledge experts, traditional-medicine students and hunters, we all shared the view that we were a cohesive group, united in our various identities. We were “the 7 Shades of Brown,” to borrow a forum team group name, who came up with this name so that everybody in the group would feel a sense of belonging.

When we have a strong, healthy and positive identity, we feel confident enough to pursue what anybody else would in terms of working towards our life goals, attaining our education and feeling empowered to change our worlds, despite whatever negative messages we hear from others based on the colour of our skin. It is unfortunate that some of the things our parents passed down to us to protect us from things they faced growing up were—although well intentioned—misguided. For instance, some parents chose to not pass their languages down for fear that their children would grow up and face difficulty living in the modern world because it would be hard to know how to speak both our language and English. Traditions were not passed down because of our parents’ fear of stigma and concern that the practice of certain traditions, such as smudging (one of the ways traditional medicines are used), use of our medicines, and use of the sweat lodge and ceremonies would be thought of as “black magic.” This feeling of shame about our traditions and culture was taught to our parents as young children in the residential schools, and is still struggled with today in our homes. . . .

It is hard to identify as a First Nations person in mainstream Canadian society when you carry this sense of shame and live surrounded by people who look down on you. . . .²

Connection QUESTIONS

1. According to *Feathers of Hope: A First Nations Youth Action Plan*, what forces influence indigenous identities in Canada? What similarities and differences do you see between the forces that shape indigenous identity and the forces that shape your identity?
2. What does the report suggest about the relationship between feeling secure in one's identity and having access to one's cultural roots? What do the authors of the action plan suggest about the relationship between language and indigenous culture?
3. What are stereotypes? The authors of the report list both positive and negative stereotypes of indigenous culture. What are the effects of stereotypes on indigenous identity, according to the action plan? Are positive and negative stereotypes equally harmful?
4. What is shame? Where does it come from?
5. How can language bind people together? To what extent is language significant in defining our individual and group identities? How can not sharing a common language create barriers, even if you can find other ways to communicate?

2 "Identity and Culture," in *Together We Are ... Feathers of Hope: A First Nations Youth Action Plan* (Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, 2014), 66–80, available at the Inspiration Foundation website, accessed September 18, 2014, http://www.inspiritfoundation.org/files/6114/0656/0111/Feathers-of-Hope_report.pdf.



READING 2 **Language, Names, and Individual Identity**

How do our names shape our identities? Do they help answer the question, “Who am I?”—or, “Who are we as a group?” Often, names connect us to our family, to our language, and to our traditions. They contain very subtle references to a history, a tradition, or a place.

One example of the relationship between names, traditions, and identity is reflected in Inuit naming practices. For the Inuit, naming is an act that symbolizes continuity and a connection to family and tradition. Names are passed down through several generations to commemorate each person who has previously held that name. Based on the concept of *sauniq*, meaning “namesake” or “bone to bone,” this system is an important aspect of Inuit culture, reflecting the Inuit spiritual beliefs and emphasizing the interconnectedness among



Charles Gimpel / Library and Archives Canada / R10187-229-6-E

Five Inuit boys are pictured here in Cape Dorset in the Northwest Territories in 1958. Within the Inuit culture, names are a powerful link to family and community.

all life forms. Minnie Aodla Freeman shares her personal story of being named in her 1978 book *Life Among the Quallunaat*.

Before I was born, my mother had to decide who would be involved at my birth. . . . The first person who has to be there is a mid-wife, man or woman. In my case it was my grandmother. . . . Also present at my birth was the person I was named after, my other grandmother. This automatically meant that I would never call her 'grandmother' nor would she call me 'grandchild'. Instead, we called each other *sauniq*, *namesake*, *bone-to-bone* relation . . . Our belief is that no one really dies until someone is named after the dead person. So, to leave the dead in peace and to prevent their spirits from being scattered all over the community, we give their names to the newborn. The minds of the people do not rest until the dead have been renamed.³

Connection QUESTIONS

1. Based on the source, why might names be important to the indigenous Canadians?
2. In what ways do names in your community represent connections to family, tradition, or history?
3. What is the relationship between your name and your identity? One way to explore that connection is by taking a few minutes to write about your name. What comes to mind?
4. Indigenous people have often been encouraged or forced to change their names to sound more European. Frequently, this occurred in schools, where indigenous students were given European names. Many indigenous individuals now have European names, often alongside their indigenous ones. While some are fine with their European names, others, often with great difficulty, seek to be renamed according to their tradition. Based on the excerpt above, what cultural and symbolic effects might that practice have had on indigenous families and communities? Why might someone change her name and return to her culture's naming practices?

3 Minnie Aodla Freeman, *Life Among the Quallunaat* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1978), 72, 50.



READING 3 **Words, Places, and Belonging**

This guide explores a disputed territory—indigenous physical and cultural spaces that have been destructively affected by the colonization of Canada. The three readings below explore the relationships between identity on the one hand and culture, land, and landscape on the other. Most ethnic groups and nations associate themselves with their historical birthplace—an area, a country, even a continent—which is central to their identity. The things that make such places so important to ethnic and national groups are traditions, memories, myths, and history. These elements not only connect past and future generations but also weave a rich tapestry where landscapes and identity are often inseparable. But what happens when those links are broken, unintentionally or intentionally? We will explore these themes in the next readings.

Mother Earth

The name *Canada* is an imposition for many Indigenous Peoples. In First Nations' foundational myths, this territory is called Turtle Island, and its meaning is explored in creation stories. These stories describe the birth of these First Nations and their spiritual ties to the land and their surroundings. Traditionally, the indigenous universe is made up of all kinds of beings, and all of them are infused with spirituality. (In other words, there are no distinctions between human beings and other beings in this regard.)⁴ These stories also explain the roles, duties, and purpose of the members of these nations, thus providing them with a well-defined identity. The centrality of land in indigenous worldviews goes even further: as in many other religions, place, especially sacred places, plays an important role in grounding Indigenous Peoples in the physical world.⁵ Therefore, when those places are taken away, or their names are altered, the indigenous spirituality, identity, and perhaps even existence as a distinct group are undermined or even destroyed. The excerpt below, from an essay called “Honouring Earth,” describes the holistic and spiritual importance of the land to such peoples.

Mother Earth provides us with our food and clean water sources. She bestows us with materials for our homes, clothes and tools. She provides all life with raw materials for our industry, ingenuity and progress. She is the basis of who we are as “real human beings” that include our languages, our cultures, our knowledge and wisdom to know how to conduct ourselves in a good way. If we listen from the place

of connection to the Spirit That Lives in All Things, Mother Earth teaches what we need to know to take care of her and all her children. All are provided by our mother, the Earth.

Indigenous peoples are caretakers of Mother Earth and realize and respect her gifts of water, air and fire. First Nations peoples have a special relationship with the earth and all living things in it. This relationship is based on a profound spiritual connection to Mother Earth that guided indigenous peoples to practice reverence, humility and reciprocity. It is also based on the subsistence needs and values extending back thousands of years. Hunting, gathering, and fishing to secure food includes harvesting food for self, family, the elderly, widows, the community, and for ceremonial purposes. Everything is taken and used with the understanding that we take only what we need, and we must use great care and be aware of how we take and how much of it so that future generations will not be put in peril.⁶

Landscape and Identity

Our connections to the land also provide us with a sense of belonging. Is it true, then, that we are where we come from? Australian scholar Ken Taylor writes that “one of our deepest needs is for a sense of identity and belonging and . . . a common denominator in this is human attachment to landscape and how we find identity in landscape and place.”⁷ Taylor explains that geography is not simply our physical surroundings; it is a landscape full of meaning, which it gets from the names, stories, and language we use to organize it. In other words, what makes our surroundings more than nameless hills, lakes, rivers, and forests—what makes all this into a landscape for us as human beings—is the meaning we give it. And in this way, landscapes become symbolic as well as part of one’s group culture and identity. Here are a few reflections on landscape, identity, naming, and meaning from Christi Belcourt (Biidewe’anikwetok), a well-known Métis visual artist.

First Nations, Ojibway, Blackfoot, Indian, Aboriginal, Treaty, Halfbreed, Cree, Status Indian are all fairly familiar English words but none of them are the names by which we, the various Indigenous Peoples, called ourselves in our own languages. By contrast how many Canadians have heard these names: Nehiyaw, Nehiyawak, Otipemisiwak and Apeetogosan? Yet, these are who I am because these are the names my grandparents used to describe and call ourselves. Even “Métis” is not the name people called themselves in the language in Manitou Sakhahigan, the community where my dad was born and raised in. And even that place is not known by its original name but by its English/French name “Lac Ste. Anne.” The issue of naming places in Canada is complex. Some would argue that Canada reflects its

Indigenous roots because there are many place names which are derived from the original Indigenous languages. . . Toronto is a case in point. I would argue that most Canadians are quite comfortable, and even comforted, by the names of the places they call home that are Indigenous in origin—but *only to a point*. As long as they are in name only and don't come with the burden of acknowledging Canada's past colonialist history and the erasure of Indigenous ownership of lands . . . the renaming of lakes, rivers or areas of land from existing Indigenous names into English or other European names is widely recognized by those who have knowledge deeper than a puddle, as a colonialist tool that was used extensively in the claiming of Indigenous lands throughout North, Central and South America. As famed University of California geographer Bernard Nietschmann put it, "More Indigenous territory has been claimed by maps than by guns, and more Indigenous territory can be reclaimed and defended by maps than by guns."⁸

Can this process be reversed? Recently, as part of the Ogimaa Mikana Project, some European names for streets, roads, paths, and trails in the Toronto area have been replaced with names in Anishinaabemowin (the language of the Anishinaabe Nation). The project is led by Hayden King, the director of the Centre for Indigenous Governance and a teacher at Ryerson University. As Lacey McRae Williams writes:

The Ogimaa Mikana (Leader's Trail) project began [in 2013] as a means of reclaiming and renaming streets and places in Toronto. As Hayden explains it, the idea has been to create visible and provocative interruptions in the urban landscape. The two ways Hayden and his team reinsert Anishinaabe language and culture into Toronto are by 1) taking the literal translation of the place name and using the Anishinaabemowin name, and 2) reinterpreting a place name to disrupt [its connection to the European tradition]. At Spadina, for example, the original Anishinaabemowin name replaced the Anglicized street name . . . Ishpadinaa literally translates to "little hill" or "place on a hill" which makes a lot of sense when standing at College looking north up "Spadina Avenue" or even south to the water. On Queen Street the team chose to replace "Queen" with what they ended up titling their project, Ogimaa Mikana, meaning "Leader's Trail". The reason for placing the "Leader's Trail" on Queen Street may not need explaining for some; It did for me however, because like many residents, I took this street name at face value and had associated it with the space it occupies now, "The Fashion District". This name became a part of my everyday, blended in, and I didn't take the time until recently to question its origins. . . .⁹

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What are some names of streets where you live? Have you considered the meaning of these names? What do the names of the streets where you live mean or suggest about who named them?
2. Who has the right to name places morally or legally? What are the effects of naming places? What power does naming give the naming person, group, or institution?
3. How effective do you think such acts of renaming can be? What can renaming give peoples whose language and history is unrecognized? What else might be needed to restore a suppressed culture?

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- 4 For a few examples of creation stories, see *Creation Stories: Canadian First Nations*, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.sd91.bc.ca/frenchj/Students/Creation%20Stories%20First%20Nations.html>.
 - 5 Michael Lee Ross, *First Nations Sacred Sites in Canada's Courts* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 3.
 - 6 "Honouring Earth," Assembly of First Nations website, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.afn.ca/index.php/en/honoring-earth>.
 - 7 "Landscape," Taylor continues, "is not simply what we see, but a way of seeing: we see it with our eyes but interpret it with our mind and ascribe values to landscape for intangible—spiritual—reasons. Landscape can therefore be seen as a cultural construct in which our sense of place and memories inhere." Ken Taylor, "Landscape and Memory: Cultural Landscapes, Intangible Values and Some Thoughts on Asia," a paper delivered at the UNESCO third international conference, accessed September 19, 2014, http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/mow/mow_3rd_international_conference_ken_taylor_en.pdf.
 - 8 Christi Belcourt (Biidewe'anikwetok), "Reclaiming Ourselves One Name at a Time," *DividedNoMore* (blog), January 23, 2013, <http://dividednomore.ca/2013/01/23/reclaiming-ourselves-one-name-at-a-time/>.
 - 9 Lacey McRae Williams, "Reclaiming Spaces/Places: Restoring Indigenous Street Names in Toronto," *Spacing* website, November 4, 2014, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://spacing.ca/national/2014/11/04/reclaiming-spacingplaces-restoring-indigenous-street-names-toronto/>.



READING 4 **Words Matter**

How does it feel to be called something you did not choose for yourself? Over time people have used a long list of words to describe the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, but those words have rarely been the words that the Indigenous Peoples would use themselves. The power of labels comes not only from the choice of words but also from how (and by whom) they are spoken.

Mary Isabelle Young is a scholar of Anishinaabe descent.¹⁰ The Anishinaabe, or Ojibway, peoples are one of the First Nations. In her book *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a Good Way*, Young interviews an Anishinaabe woman of both Cree and Ojibway descent who wishes to go by the name Niin, meaning “me.”

Niin was educated in the formal Canadian school system and grew up in an urban community. In the following passage, she recalls the first instance in her childhood when she encountered the term *Indian*. Although she was unaware of the word’s meaning, the context in which it was used made her conscious, for the first time, of the differences her peers perceived in her.

I’m not sure whether I was in grade one or in grade two; actually I think it was in kindergarten, because my Mom was home at that time. I remember being outside for recess. You know everyone was running around, playing in the middle of the field. All of a sudden I stopped because I realized that a few of the kids who were in my classroom had formed a circle around me. They were going around and around the circle and I realized I was in the middle of this circle. I was trying to figure out what the heck is going on here? They were saying something and I started listening to them. They were saying “Indian, Indian, Indian.” And I was like what? I really didn’t understand myself, first and foremost as an “Indian.” Right in the middle of when they were doing that, the bell rang and everybody just turned toward the door and started walking in. I remember looking down on the ground wondering, what are they talking about Indian, Indian, Indian? I don’t even know how that circle formed in the first place. I didn’t catch it. It just seemed all of a sudden they were all around me and I just stopped, looking at them all. The bell rang right away. I just remember putting my head down, walking, looking at the grass, I was really thinking about, what was that all about? I didn’t even remember it by the time we got to the door. Except for when I got home I asked my Mom.

I remember when I went home, my Mother was standing at the counter. She was baking something or other but she was working at the counter and I just walked up to her and I was watching what she was doing. I remember my chin barely touched the counter and I was watching her. I said, “Mom, what am I?” And she looked down at me and said really fast, “Were people asking you what you were?” I said, “Yes, they were

calling me Indian.” She said, “Tell them you’re Canadian.” I couldn’t really figure out why she was sounding so stern and kind of angry. I just thought okay and I turned around but I remember that afternoon really clearly. I think why it stuck in my mind so much is because they were in a circle ridiculing me. And I don’t even know. I didn’t even take offence because I didn’t know what they were doing. Even though they were calling me Indian, I was still going yeah, so what? So it always puzzled me about why, why they were calling me Indian. And because I didn’t really feel any different from them, even though I knew my skin was darker, my hair was brown, and I had a shinier face. I really didn’t feel any different from them or feel I was different from them.

I just felt we were all just kids. I think that’s when I started learning that there were different kinds of people. I knew that there were different kinds of people by just looking and seeing like different looking people but not people who are different from one another.¹¹

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the word *Indian* meant to the kids in Niin’s class? What factors might have shaped her classmates’ understanding of the word?
2. Niin approaches her mother and asks, “Mom, what am I?” “What am I?” and “Who am I?” are questions that many people ask themselves. How do you explain why the confrontation with her classmates led Niin to question her identity?
3. What do you think of Niin’s mother’s response? Why do you think Niin’s mother told Niin she was Canadian? What did she want Niin to understand about herself? Considering the rest of the excerpt, what might she have wanted Niin’s classmates to learn?

10 Mary Isabelle Young et al., eds., “About the Contributors,” in *Warrior Women: Remaking Postsecondary Places Through Relational Narrative* (Bradford, UK: Emerald Group Publishing, 2012), 191.

11 Mary Young, *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a Good Way, A Narrative Inquiry into Language as Identity* (Manitoba: The Prolific Group, 2005), 47–48.



READING 5 **Language and Worldview**

How can our ideas and beliefs help us answer the question, “Who am I?” How can language describe and even define our identity? As in many other societies, indigenous identities are expressed in specific words, which are, in turn, embedded in cultural practices, political outlook, and religious beliefs. The role of words—that is, language—is therefore very important: it organizes and gives meaning to people’s experiences. Put differently, insofar as a language is tied to the culture and worldview of a group, it is central to that group’s identity, for it defines the way a group understands itself, the world, and its place in it.

In Reading 4, we examined an interview from Mary Isabelle Young’s book *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a Good Way*. Her work features an interview with another participant, Aanung, who talks about the relationship between language and indigenous identity.

As Aboriginal people we look at things in our way; a lot of that is rooted in the language. It comes directly from the language. [It’s] just the way we see the world, the concepts we have and the understanding we have in general. When non-Aboriginal people want to have an understanding or try to understand something from an Aboriginal perspective, I honestly don’t think they can. Our worldview is rooted in the language and it is drastically different from other worldviews. An example is the way we classify things as animate and inanimate. English speaking people consider rocks and trees inanimate and if you want to break it down in a grammatical sense we can talk about those suffixes like *mitick* (tree), *mitickok* (trees, an animate suffix). It shows that we see it as being a living thing with spirit. *Asin*, *asiniik* (rocks). And when you put the “ok” sound, suffix *inninowok* (men), *ekwewok* (women) those are living things whereas things with an “an” suffix like *onagun* (dish), *onagunan* (dishes) are inanimate and they are not living things. That’s the best way I can understand it. It’s different if we speak the language. If we speak about he or she, the context is always in the third person. If we are talking about an action we express it in a verb. *Pimosay*, he or she is walking. There is no distinction between he and she. We use only the third person form.¹²

Alex McKay is an Anishinaabe individual from Northern Ontario and a senior lecturer in the Aboriginal Studies Department of the University of Toronto. He, like Aanung, speaks to the particularities of his language:

Does it confuse you when I refer to animals as people? In my language, this is not confusing. You see, we consider both animals and people to be living things. In fact, when my people see a creature in the distance, the thing they say is: *Awiiyak* (Someone is there). It is not that my people fail to distinguish animals from people. Rather, they address them with equal respect. Once they are near and identify the creatures' shadows, then they use their particular name.¹³

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What is a worldview? Can you think of similar words that express the same idea?
2. In the two excerpts above, the speakers, who both self-identify as Anishinaabe, connect their identities to their worldviews and their language. What do their references to plants and animals as animate objects and their respectful addresses to animals indicate? What values are reflected in the excerpts?
3. In the first excerpt, Aanung says, “When non-Aboriginal people want to have an understanding or try to understand something from an Aboriginal perspective, I honestly don’t think they can.” Do you think she is right? Why? Are there things in your language that cannot be translated to other languages?
4. Is it possible to understand something from another person’s perspective? What challenges might you have to overcome to see things from someone else’s point of view?

12 Mary Young, *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a Good Way, A Narrative Inquiry into Language as Identity* (Manitoba: The Prolific Group, 2005), 47–48.

13 Faymus Copperpot, “Indigenous Language Immersion in Canada,” modified October 11, 2011, accessed September 2014, <http://www.slideshare.net/faymus1/indigenous-language-immersion-in-canada>.



READING 6 **Métis**

Much like the term *Indian*, the word *Métis* is a European term (French for “mixed”) that refers to indigenous people of French or British descent. While the French-speaking and English-speaking groups were previously distinct, today the Métis identity more broadly includes people of mixed First Nations descent and both European heritages. Historically, Métis served as the middlemen between European merchants and indigenous people. The majority of them lived in communities along the routes of the colonial trade, from Ontario westward. Many now reside in urban communities. The Métis did not have official *group* recognition as Aboriginal Peoples until the Constitution Act of 1982, and they were therefore a “non-people” according to the federal government.

The Métis themselves responded to their marginalization by adopting symbols to reinforce a collective identity and create a sense of pride. For instance, the Métis flag, either red or blue with an infinity symbol, represents the joining of the mixed parent nations. While some adhere to their ancestral spiritualism and others to forms of Christianity, many Métis blend Christianity with indigenous spirituality.

As a result of the trade relationships, marriages, and cultural exchanges that developed between the settlers and the First Nations inhabitants, the native languages organically adapted to include European words and structures (as did the European language, but to a lesser degree). *Michif*, the Métis-French language, is one of the most prominent evidences of the fusion of two cultures. This unique language combines verbs from Cree, Ojibway, and other First Nations languages with French nouns and other phrases. Michif was widely used throughout the regions in which Métis people lived and worked. But First Nations languages are in decline among the Métis. While many Métis were multilingual, speaking French or English, First Nations languages such as Cree or Saukteaux, and, often, Michif, there are only 600 speakers of Michif alive today.¹⁴

Guy A. Lavallée is a Métis priest who conducted a series of 65 interviews while investigating the origins of Michif in the St. Laurent, Manitoba, region.¹⁵ He suggests that there is no direct evidence that can explain how Michif took shape. But much is known today about how Creole languages (or “pidgin dialects”) are created when two cultures interact. Many of them were forged in a colonial context where outside settlers interacted with two or more ethnic groups and thought a simplified, common language would facilitate trade and

communication. A classic example is the French-based language called Haitian Creole, which emerged in the eighteenth century as the result of the daily contacts between French settlers and slave owners and their African slaves.¹⁶

In the following passage, one of the interviewees, a Métis elder named Frank Ducharme, reflects upon the development of the Michif language. In an interview, Ducharme follows a tradition of storytelling by narrating in the first person the history of Michif. Like other elders interviewed by Lavallée, Ducharme places the beginning of the language, which is distinct from French or indigenous languages, in the early 1800s:

I have a theory about the origin of our language that we speak and it goes this way: It is, say, in the year 1800 at Red River. This French fur trader who works for the Northwest Company meets this beautiful Indian woman. They get together and, nine months later, I am born. My French father has to leave the household to hunt and trap the furs for the Company; sometimes he is gone for two or three months at a time. In the meantime, I am at home alone with my mother, who does not understand a word of French but who continually speaks to me in her mother tongue, either Saulteaux or Cree. I grow up learning my mother's language. When my father comes home from the hunt, he speaks to me in his language, which is French: he does not know either Saulteaux or Cree. So, I grow up learning both an Indian language and the French language. As I interact and play and speak with other children who were in the same situation as I was, we develop this new language, called Michif French.

Connection QUESTIONS

1. How does the development of the Michif language, as Frank Ducharme describes it, illustrate the way he sees Métis heritage?
2. What does Ducharme's story suggest about the origin of Michif? What does it suggest about the development of languages? About the development of languages in real life?

14 Kevin Ma, "Researcher digs into near-extinct Métis language," *St. Albert Gazette*, March 13, 2013, accessed September 18, 2014, <http://www.stalbertgazette.com/article/20130313/SAG0801/303139972/-1/sag0801/local-researcher-digs-into-near-extinct-m-tis-language>.

15 Guy A. Lavallée, "The Michif French Language: Historical Development and Métis Group Identity and Solidarity at St. Laurent, Manitoba," *Native Studies Review* 7 (1991), 84.

16 Salikoko S. Mufwene, "Pidgin and Creole Languages," accessed June 17, 2015, <http://mufwene.uchicago.edu/pidgin-CreoleLanguage.html>. This essay was originally published in the 2002 edition of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*.



READING 7 “I Lost My Talk”

What is the difference between learning another language the way most people do, voluntarily, and being forced to speak the language of others? How can that affect one’s identity? What are the effects of losing one’s language?

After her mother’s death, Rita Joe, a Mi’kmaw poet and songwriter, spent her childhood in numerous foster homes before attending the Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia. During her time there, she was forcibly required to give up her language. She expresses her experience in the following poem.

I Lost My Talk

I lost my talk
The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.

You snatched it away:
I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my world.

Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,
Let me find my talk
So I can teach you about me.¹⁷

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What images does the poem use to convey a story? How would you describe the emotions behind the words? How is the experience of losing a language described? What does the poet try to convey in her description?
2. In the poem, Rita Joe connects speaking, thinking, and creating. What is she suggesting about the relationship between language and power?

3. In this poem, Rita Joe says “Two ways I talk.” She is referring to her indigenous language, Mi’kmaq, an Eastern Algonquian language, and to English. She has lost one of her “talks.” What conflict seems to exist between the “talks”?
4. What is the poet suggesting about the relationship between language and identity?
5. The poem ends with the words: “Your way is more powerful. / So gently I offer my hand and ask, / Let me find my talk / So I can teach you about me.” Why is it important for the poet to be able to teach “you” about herself?

17 Rita Joe, “I Lost My Talk,” *Canadian Women’s Studies* 2–3, vol. 10 (1989), 89.



SECTION 2

Membership

The previous section explored some of the ways in which language and culture shape how individual identities are formed. In this section, we focus on group identities. Like individuals, groups take on their own identities in a process that is affected by ideas and traditions that come from inside and outside the group. The separation between group and individual identity is often arbitrary. Sociologist Norbert Elias argues that we all have both an *I-identity* and a *we-identity*.¹ Our we-identity, he claims, comes from the life of a group as a group—from the collective social and economic practices, from a shared tradition, and from the cultural institutions in which members of a group partake.² (We will return to this important insight later in the guide.) Elias suggests that the balance between a person’s we-identity and I-identity is reflective of the society in which a person lives and the ideas his or her group shares. Elias suggests that in smaller, traditional societies, the we-identity is stronger, as it is characterized by strong customs, close-knit communities, and an uncontested worldview. In modern mass societies, individuals veer toward their I-identity because many of the traditional bonds inside a group are disrupted by such processes as urbanization, industrialization, immigration, and the proliferation of ideas and beliefs.³ The traditional indigenous life, with its emphasis on interdependence, strong and expansive families, and a deep connection to tradition, fostered a powerful collective identity (we-identity). And it was this sense of “groupness” that was threatened when the government wanted the Indigenous Peoples to become part of a nation of white Christian farmers and urban dwellers.

This section explores the forces that shaped indigenous identities in Canada. In particular, we will consider the ways in which Canadians of European descent responded to both real and imagined differences between themselves and the indigenous people who lived on the land before Europeans arrived.

In the first few readings, we will look specifically at the role of language in group identity. How do classification, categorization, labels, and stereotypes create new groups or shape membership in existing ones? Later in the section, as we move to the discussion of policies, including the Indian Act, we will explore how social policies might create groups or divide existing ones. And, more importantly, what would be the benefits of belonging to a group and the consequences of being excluded? These are questions of what we might call

membership, and they are central both to understanding the history we will examine in this guide and to knowing ourselves and our behaviour more deeply.

These stories provide insight into the ways that humans respond to difference. We live with differences in our daily lives. We make distinctions and categorize the world around us as a way to organize it and make it meaningful. In doing so, we rely on both conscious and unconscious ideas about which differences matter and which do not. Psychologist Deborah Tannen argues that it is natural for people to stereotype others—to ascribe characteristics to them solely because of their membership in a particular group. She explains:

We all know we are unique individuals but we tend to see others as representatives of groups. It's a natural tendency, since we must see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn't be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn't predict a lot about them and feel that we know who or what they are.⁴

While this grouping can easily lead to stereotyping, are there times when categorizing people into groups might be helpful? Very often, recognized differences can help create or support collective norms. Those in turn determine who is a member of our social groups as well as of larger communities, such as nations. In this section, we will examine how Europeans understood and imagined the original peoples they encountered in North America. In other words, the section presents images of indigenous people constructed by Europeans and explores some of the stereotypes, partial information, and prejudices that informed the creation of these stereotypes. Those misconceptions and stereotypes have influenced the way that Canada has expressed its *universe of obligation*—the name Helen Fein has given to the circle of individuals and groups “toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for [amends].”⁵

Guiding QUESTIONS

1. How do ideas about other cultures come into being?
 2. What did it mean to be Indian in the eyes of Canada's European settlers?
 3. How did ideas about Indians affect both the legal status of indigenous people and their sense of belonging in Canadian society?
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- 1 Norbert Elias, *Society of Individuals*, trans. Edmun Jephcott (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001), 183–84, 196–97.
- 2 Christopher Powell and Julia Peristerakis, “Genocide in Canada,” in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 71–73.
- 3 Many contemporary observers and commentators have used the terms “modern” and “traditional” societies to imply the superiority of modern societies to traditional ones in terms of religion, civilization, and morality. We have made every effort, in this guide, to use the terms strictly in the sociological sense: that is, as a commonly accepted distinction between two historically different societies. Our working assumption is that all human societies are in fact civilizations and that they all possess belief systems, worldviews, and moral or ethical codes that should be judged in their own right.
- 4 Mary Roth Walsh, *Women, Men and Gender: Ongoing Debates* (Rensselaer: Hamilton Printing Company, 1997), 84.
- 5 Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 4.



READING 1 “I’m Not the Indian You Had in Mind”

Images of indigenous people, often depicting them in negative stereotypes, have long circulated through various forms of mass media. Familiar images of drums, traditional dress, brave warriors, and half-naked, dancing people wearing feathers and buckskin reinforce the idea that indigenous people are radically different from mainstream society. Many Hollywood films, TV series, fashion shows, and advertisements perpetuate these stereotypes, even though they have very little to do with the ways contemporary (or even historical) indigenous people dress, work, think, and act. Neither do daily news items reflect a realistic picture. “Research shows,” says media scholar Duncan McCue, “that reports from Indigenous communities tend to follow extremely narrow guidelines based on pre-existing stereotypes of Indians.”⁶



Moviestore Collection Ltd / Alamy

The portrayal of the fictional Native American character Tonto in the 1930s radio show and 1970s television adaption *The Lone Ranger* fulfilled many of the negative stereotypes in North American popular culture about Native American and indigenous people.

In the following poem, Thomas King explores the difference between images and stereotypes of indigenous people and how these people actually live their lives in contemporary Canada. King is a photographer, a two-time Governor General's Literary Award nominee, a radio broadcaster, a poet, and a professor emeritus of English at the University of Guelph.

I'm Not the Indian You Had in Mind⁷

I'm not the Indian you had in mind
I've seen him
Oh, I've seen him ride,
 a rush of wind, a darkening tide
 with Wolf and Eagle by his side
 his buttocks firm and well defined
 my god, he looks good from behind
But I'm not the Indian you had in mind.

I'm not the Indian you had in mind
I've heard him
Oh, I've hear him roar,
 the warrior wild, the video store
 the movies that we all adore
 the clichés that we can't rewind,
But I'm not the Indian you had in mind.

I'm not the Indian you had in mind
I've known him
Oh, I've known him well,
 the bear-greased hair, the pungent smell
 the piercing eye, the startling yell
 thank God that he's the friendly kind,
But I'm not the Indian you had in mind.

I'm that other one.
The one who lives just down the street.

 the one you're disinclined to meet
 the Oka guy, remember me?
 Ipperwash? Wounded Knee?

That other Indian.
 the one who runs the local bar
 the CEO, the movie star,
 the elder with her bingo tales
 the activist alone in jail

That other Indian.

The doctor, the homeless bum
the boys who sing around the drum
the relative I cannot bear
my father who was never there
he must have hated me, I guess
my best friend's kid with FAS
the single mum who drives the bus
I'm all of these and they are us.

So damn you for the lies you've told
and damn me for not being bold
enough to stand my ground
and say
that what you've done is not our way

But, in the end the land won't care
which one was rabbit, which one was bear
who did the deed and who did not
who did the shooting, who got shot
who told the truth, who told the lie
who drained the lakes and rivers dry
who made us laugh, who made us sad
who made the world Monsanto mad
whose appetites consumed the earth,
it wasn't me, for what it's worth.

Or maybe it was.

But hey, let's not get too distressed
it's not as bad as it might sound
hell, we didn't make this mess.

It was given us
and when we're gone
as our parents did
we'll pass it on.

You see?

I've learned your lessons well
what to buy, what to sell
what's commodity, what's trash
what discount you can get for cash

And Indians, well, we'll still be here
the Real One and the rest of us
we've got no other place to go
don't worry, we won't make a fuss

Well, not much.

Though sometimes, sometimes late at night
when all the world is warm and dead
I wonder how things might have been
had you followed, had we led.

So consider as you live your days
that we live ours under the gaze

of generations watching us
of generations still intact
of generations still to be
seven forward, seven back.

Yeah, it's not easy.

Course you can always go ask that brave you like so much
the Indian you idolize
perhaps that's wisdom on his face
compassion sparkling in his eyes.
He may well have a secret song
a dance he'll share, a long-lost chant
ask him to help you save the world
to save yourselves.

Don't look at me.

I'm not the Indian you had in mind.

I can't.

I can't.⁸

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What does the title of the poem mean?
2. Define the term *stereotype*. What stereotypes does King's poem evoke?
3. What is the impact of the repetition of the phrase "I'm not the Indian you had in mind"?

4. Do you experience a gap between how you see yourself and how others see you? What is the danger of stereotypes? What are effective ways to respond when you or someone you know is the target of stereotyping?

- 6 Duncan McCue, "News Stereotypes of Aboriginal Peoples," Reporting in Indigenous Communities website, <http://www.riic.ca/the-guide/at-the-desk/news-stereotypes-of-aboriginal-peoples/>.
- 7 This spoken-word piece is dedicated to Thomas King's son Benjamin, who asked King to write a poem that rhymes before he dies.
- 8 Thomas King, "I'm Not the Indian You Had in Mind," available as spoken-word piece from the National Screen Institute, <http://www.nsi-canada.ca/2012/03/im-not-the-indian-you-had-in-mind/>.



READING 2 **The Idea of the *Indian***

What are the ideas the first Europeans brought with them to Canada to determine how they would respond to the Indigenous Peoples they encountered? European voyagers, clergymen, merchants, and, later, policy makers in the so-called New World projected an array of ideas onto the people they would describe as *Indians*. Those ideas were formed even before contact, when Europeans responded to the encounters with non-Europeans in other places, such as Asia and Africa. When they met the indigenous populations in North America, peoples of whom they had little knowledge, Europeans imposed these older ideas and stereotypes.

This reading is designed to explore these prejudices and stereotypes. Many of these ideas are still circulating in the media today, and it is important to learn the origins of these problematic notions. A word of caution: *the language in the excerpts below is offensive and racist*. The offensive words and terms are not presented here as valid; instead, they provide opportunities to study how stereotypes work.

When the French and British began to receive news about North America from merchants, explorers, and missionaries, the local people were often described as noble, simple people. Some Europeans imagined the indigenous communities as an ideal primitive society, living freely in a simpler and more peaceful state than in Europe. Other Europeans also described them as barbaric, a term the Greeks and Romans used to describe people who did not speak their language or share their culture.⁹ At other times, Europeans used the term *savage* to describe people they believed to be uncivilized. In the seventeenth century, Francis Daniel Pastorius, the founder of Germantown, Pennsylvania, wrote about the local people he encountered:

The natives, the so-called savages . . . they are, in general, strong, agile, and supple people, with blackish bodies. They went about naked at first and wore only a cloth about the loins. Now they are beginning to wear shirts. . . . They strive after a sincere honesty, hold strictly to their promises, cheat and injure no one. They willingly give shelter to others and are both useful and loyal to their guests. I once saw four of them take a meal together in hearty contentment, and eat a pumpkin cooked in clear water, without butter and spice. Their table and bench was the bare earth, their spoons were mussel-shells with which they dipped up the warm water, their plates were the leaves of the nearest tree, which they do not need to wash with painstaking after the meal, nor to keep with care of future use. I thought to myself, these savages have never in their lives heard the teaching of Jesus concerning temperance and contentment, yet they far excel the Christians in carrying it out.¹⁰

The Europeans, fascinated by the life they discovered in the Americas, quickly placed the people they called Indians inside their own worldview. Many Europeans were devout Christians, and to them the Indian represented humanity in its infancy; they likened these people to Adam and Eve.¹¹ The Europeans believed that the differences between themselves and the Indians could be overcome in a civilized and religious environment. Thus, the “savages” could become just like them—European.¹²

But this view of indigenous life had a darker side. The Western image of indigenous people in North America led many to the judgment that noble savages were also uncivilized, animal-like creatures. For example, the French priest Louis Hennepin did not spare the First Peoples he encountered in 1683 from his harsh judgment. His report on this encounter led to a crude assessment of these “uncivilized” people:

The Indians trouble themselves very little with our civilities, on the contrary, they ridicule us when we practice them. When they arrive in a place, they most frequently salute no one . . . If there is a chair before the fire, they take possession of it, and do not rise for any one. Men and women hide only their private parts . . . They treat their elders very uncivilly . . . Their conversation whether among men or women is generally only indecency . . . They never wash their platters which are of wood or bark, nor their bowls or their spoons . . . They eat in a snuffling way and puffing like animals . . . When they eat fat meat, they grease their whole faces with it. They belch continually. Those who have intercourse with the French, scarcely ever wash their shirts, but let them rot on their backs. They seldom cut their nails. They rarely wash meat before putting it in the pot . . . In fine, they put no restraint on their actions, and follow simply the animals.¹³

Connection QUESTIONS

1. As you read the two passages, what strikes you about their tone? Psychologists explain that all of us bring our own biases into our experiences. Those biases impact how we respond. What biases do you think each of the authors brought into their experiences with the indigenous people they encountered?
 2. In the reading “Culture, Stereotypes, and Identity,” we encountered positive and negative stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples. Where do you find examples of both kinds of stereotypes in these excerpts?
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- 9 Douglas Harper, "Barbarian" entry, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, Dictionary.com, accessed February 23, 2015, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/barbarian>.
- 10 Francis Daniel Pastorius, "Circumstantial Geographical Description of Pennsylvania, 1700, including later letters to Germany," in *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey and Delaware, 1630–1707*, ed. Albert Cook Myers (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1912), 384–385.
- 11 The image of the "noble savage" persists under a very modern guise: the "ecologically noble savage," which draws on earlier notions and claims that Aboriginal life was not only more peaceful but also much more ecologically sustainable and harmonious than modern society allows. See Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 19–23.
- 12 Carol L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820–1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 33.
- 13 Louis Hennepin, *A Description of Louisiana by Father Louis Hennepin, Recollect Missionary*, trans. John Gilmary Shea (New York: John G. Shea, 1880), <http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.5234:6.lincoln>.



READING 3 **From Noble Savage to Wretched Indian**



Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr., via Wikimedia Commons

In 1830, George Catlin (1796–1872) embarked on a number of expeditions throughout North America, during which he visited First Nations and recorded their customs and appearances in painting and writing. The French poet, essayist, and critic Charles Baudelaire commented that Catlin’s paintings “captured the proud, free character and noble expression of these splendid fellows in a masterly way.” *Stu-mick-o-súcks*, *Buffalo Bull’s Back Fat*, *Head Chief*, *Blood Tribe*, pictured above, is Catlin’s 1832 portrait of the chief of the Blackfoot tribe, whose territory straddled the present-day border between the United States and Canada.

Some Europeans, like the American painter George Catlin, looked at the Indigenous Peoples of North America as a representation of indigenous people before Western civilization developed: pure, bold, and noble beings. Such Europeans called the indigenous people they encountered “noble savages.” Catlin was, according to one scholar, “a steadfast champion of the Noble Savage myth, which described American Indians as independent beings of stately bearing, brave but honorable warriors and beautiful princesses, gifted orators, and creatures of innocence and simplicity living from the bounty of nature.”¹⁴ In the nineteenth century, during the Romantic period, many European authors embraced the idea of the noble savage and used it to express their longing for simplicity, beauty, and deep connection to nature.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, European policy makers became impatient with the slow progress of their plans to civilize indigenous groups who insisted on maintaining their traditions. This frustration was shown in yet another stereotype. Now, not only were the Indians savage: they were also known as *wretched Indians*.¹⁵

Charles Dickens, the most popular British writer of the mid-1800s, captured the change in attitude in his 1853 essay “The Noble Savage.” Before this essay was written, Dickens attended an exhibition of the works of George Catlin. In the essay, Dickens reacts to the main theme of Catlin’s work—the nobility of the indigenous people the artist encountered in North America.

To come to the point at once, I beg to say that I have not the least belief in the Noble Savage. I consider him a prodigious nuisance, and an enormous superstition. His calling rum fire-water, and me a pale face, wholly fail to reconcile me to him. I don’t care what he calls me. I call him a savage, and I call a savage a something highly desirable to be civilised off the face of the earth. . . . [H]e is a savage—cruel, false, thievish, murderous; addicted more or less to grease, entrails, and beastly customs; a wild animal with the questionable gift of boasting; a conceited, tiresome, blood-thirsty, monotonous humbug.

Yet it is extraordinary to observe how some people will talk about him, as they talk about the good old times. . . . There was Mr. [George] Catlin, some few years ago, with his Ojibbeway Indians.¹⁶ Mr. Catlin was an energetic, earnest man, who had lived among more tribes of Indians than I need reckon up here, and who had written a picturesque and glowing book about them.¹⁷ With his party of Indians squatting and spitting on the table before him, or dancing their miserable jigs after their own dreary manner, he called, in all good faith, upon his civilised audience to take notice of their symmetry and grace, their perfect limbs, and the exquisite expression of their pantomime; and his civilised audience, in all good faith, complied and admired. Whereas, as mere animals, they were wretched creatures, very low in the scale and very poorly

formed. . . . It is not the miserable nature of the noble savage that is the new thing; it is the whimpering over him with maudlin admiration, and the affecting to regret him, and the drawing of any comparison of advantage between the blemishes of civilisation and the tenor of his swinish life. . . . To conclude as I began. My position is, that if we have anything to learn from the Noble Savage, it is what to avoid. His virtues are a fable; his happiness is a delusion; his nobility, nonsense. . . . [T]he world will be all the better when his place knows him no more.¹⁸

Connection QUESTIONS

1. Look at the image created by Catlin. What do you think he is trying to convey about his subjects?
2. Read Dickens's words carefully. How does he describe the people he calls Indians, and what does he suggest should be done with them? According to Dickens, what was wrong with Catlin's paintings of indigenous people?
3. Dickens, who was famous for his support of the working class, did not see the Indigenous Peoples of North America as worthy of his sympathy. In the excerpt, he states, "I call him a savage, and I call a savage a something highly desirable to be civilised off the face of the earth." He ends his essay by saying that "the world will be all the better when his place knows him no more." What do you think he means? How would you interpret this attitude? What could be some implications of this attitude if it were made into policy?
4. Identify some ways that Dickens's essay divides "we" from "they." Who are the "we" that Dickens speaks of? Who are the "they"? What sets them apart?

14 Joseph B. Herring, "Selling the 'Noble Savage' Myth: George Catlin and the Iowa Indians in Europe," *Kansas History* 29, no. 4 (2006/2007), 228, http://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2006winter_herring.pdf.

15 Carol L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable*.

16 For an image created by Catlin of a young chief, see *Boy Chief Ojibbeway*, Fine Art America, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://fineartamerica.com/featured/boy-chief-ojibbeway-george-catlin.html>.

17 Dickens mentions George Catlin's work, which he had seen in person when Catlin exhibited his paintings in London shortly before this essay was written. He may have also read Catlin's *Souvenir of the North American Indians, as they were in the nineteenth century; A Numerous and Noble Race of Human Beings, Fast passing into Extinction Leaving no Monuments or Records of Their Own in Existence* (1850). A facsimile of the book and the illustrations can be found in the New York Public Library's Digital Collections, <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?466037>.

18 Charles Dickens, "The Noble Savage," *Littell's Living Age* 481 (1852), 325–327.



READING 4 **Race Theory**¹⁹

The race theory of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on bad science and ideas that are discredited by people who study genetics today. It is worth exploring them nevertheless, not only to better understand the history of racism but also because these ideas continue to reverberate in the way some people talk about racial differences today. Twenty-first-century race theories view race primarily as a social category that plays a role in how people interact with each other (often negatively). While there are minuscule genetic differences between groups, those have no effect on the moral, intellectual, or dispositional differences between them.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, scientists and anthropologists began to talk about the differences between Europeans and the indigenous population in terms of race. During that time, many scientists had begun to promote the idea that different races had different hereditary makeups and, as a result, had different physical and mental capacities. They decided that some races—usually theirs—were superior to others. Soon scholars, politicians, clergymen, artists, and others began to use pejorative terms such as *redskin* to mark the differences between the indigenous people and the Europeans.

Among the first supporters of racial science was the American anthropologist Samuel George Morton. Building on the common observation that human beings have bigger brains and more skills than any other animal species, Morton falsely speculated (with very little evidence) that the same is true within the human species; a person's intelligence, personality, and morality, he assumed, were linked to skull size.²⁰ Smarter groups or races have larger brains and are therefore more advanced than others, Morton theorized, and he claimed that this was an “objective” way to rank the different races he identified. Morton also believed that the larger a group's skull capacity, the more “civilized” the group could be.²¹ Scientists have long since discredited these ideas.²²

Drawing from his pseudo-scientific research, Morton grouped people based on their physical features and compiled characterizations of each “race” into an 1839 volume called *Crania Americana*. In the excerpts below, Morton contrasts descriptions of Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans.

Europeans

The Caucasian Race is characterized by a naturally fair skin, susceptible of every tint; hair fine, long and curling, and of various colors. The skull is large and oval, and its anterior portion full and elevated. The face is small in proportion to the head, of an oval form, with well-proportioned features. . . . This race is distinguished for the facility with which it attains the highest intellectual endowments. . . .

The spontaneous fertility of [the Caucasus] has rendered it the hive of many nations, which extending their migrations in every direction, have peopled the finest portions of the earth, and given birth to its fairest inhabitants. . . .

Native Americans

The American Race is marked by a brown complexion; long, black, lank hair; and deficient beard. The eyes are black and deep set, the brow low, the cheek-bones high, the nose large and aquiline, the mouth large, and the lips tumid [swollen] and compressed. . . . In their mental character the Americans are averse to civilization, and slow in acquiring knowledge; restless, revengeful, and fond of war, and wholly destitute of maritime adventure.

They are crafty, sensual, ungrateful, obstinate and unfeeling, and much of their affection for their children may be traced to purely selfish motives. They devour the most disgusting [foods] uncooked and uncleaned, and seem to have no idea beyond providing for the present moment. . . . Their mental faculties, from infancy to old age, present a continued childhood. . . . [Indians] are not only averse to the restraints of education, but for the most part are incapable of a continued process of reasoning on abstract subjects. . . .

Africans

Characterized by a black complexion, and black, woolly hair; the eyes are large and prominent, the nose broad and flat, the lips thick, and the mouth wide; the head is long and narrow, the forehead low, the cheek-bones prominent, the jaws protruding, and the chin small. In disposition the Negro is joyous, flexible, and indolent; while the many nations which compose this race present a singular diversity of intellectual character, of which the far extreme is the lowest grade of humanity. . . .

The moral and intellectual character of the Africans is widely different in different nations. . . . The Negroes are proverbially fond of their amusements, in which they engage with great exuberance of spirit; and a day of toil is with them no bar to a night of revelry.

Like most other barbarous nations their institutions are not infrequently characterized by superstition and cruelty. They appear to be fond of warlike enterprises, and are not deficient in personal courage; but, once overcome, they yield to their destiny, and accommodate themselves with amazing facility to every change of circumstance.

The Negroes have little invention, but strong powers of imitation, so that they readily acquire mechanic arts. They have a great talent for music, and all their external senses are remarkably acute.²³

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What assumptions did Morton make about the differences between humans? What did he and other nineteenth-century theorists like him believe that race explained? How might someone living at his time have challenged Morton's assumptions?
2. What role do ideas about race play in your community? How do they influence the way people think and act?

19 Contemporary terms contained in this reading, including "redskin" and "Negros," reflect the terminology used at the time this primary source was written. Neither these terms nor the value judgment Morton and his contemporaries attached to them are acceptable today.

20 Alexandra Horowitz, "Why Brain Size Doesn't Correlate With Intelligence," *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/why-brain-size-doesnt-correlate-with-intelligence-180947627/?no-ist>.

21 Morton's skull study was criticized by many scientists. For more on the subject, see Nicholas Wade, "Scientists Measure the Accuracy of a Racism Claim," *New York Times*, June 13, 2011.

22 We thank David Jones for his help with this section (private communication, June 17, 2015).

23 Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana* (John Pennington, 1839) 5, 6, 50, 54, 81.



READING 5 **They Have Stolen Our Lands**

How did the Indigenous Peoples view Europeans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? There is no one answer to this question. But one view that is shared by many was expressed in 1910 by the chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan, and Couteau nations of British Columbia:

At first they looked only for gold. We knew the latter was our property, but as we did not use it much nor need it to live by we did not object to their searching for it. They told us, "your country is rich and you will be made wealthy by our coming. We wish just to pass over your land in quest of gold." Soon they saw the country was good, and some of them made up their minds, to settle it. They commenced to take up pieces of land here and there. They told us they wanted only the use of these pieces of land for a few years, and then would hand them back to us in an improved condition; meanwhile they would give us some of the products they raised for the loan of our land. Thus they commenced to enter our "houses," or live on our "ranches." With us when a person enters our house he becomes our guest, and we must treat him hospitably as long as he shows no hostile intentions. At the same time we expect him to return to us equal treatment for what he receives. . . .

Presently chiefs (government officials, etc.) commenced to visit us, and had talks with some of our chiefs. They told us to have no fear, the queen's laws would prevail in this country, and everything would be well for the Indians here. They said a very large reservation would be staked off for us (southern interior tribes) and the tribal lands outside of this reservation the government would buy from us for white settlement. They let us think this would be done soon, and meanwhile until this reserve was set apart, and our lands settled for, they assured us we would have perfect freedom of travelling and camping and the same liberties as from time immemorial to hunt, fish, graze and gather our food supplies where we desired; also that all trails, land, water, timber, etc., would be as free of access to us as formerly.

What have we received for our good faith, friendliness and patience? Gradually as the whites of this country became more and more powerful, and we less and less powerful, they little by little changed their policy towards us, and commenced to put restrictions on us. Their government or chiefs have taken every advantage of our friendliness . . . in every way. They treat us as subjects without any agreement to that effect, and force their laws on us without our consent and irrespective of whether they are good for us or not. They say they have authority over us. They have broken down our old laws and customs (no matter how good) by which we regulated ourselves. They laugh at our chiefs and brush them aside. Minor affairs

amongst ourselves, which do not affect them in the least, and which we can easily settle better than they can, they drag into their courts. They enforce their own laws one way for the rich white man, one way for the poor white, and yet another for the Indian. They have knocked down . . . the posts of all the Indian tribes. They say there are no lines, except what they make. They have taken possession of all the Indian country and claim it as their own. . . . They have never consulted us in any of these matters, nor made any agreement. . . . They have stolen our lands and everything on them and continue to use 'same' for their 'own' purposes. They treat us as less than children and allow us 'no say' in anything. They say the Indians know nothing, and own nothing, yet their power and wealth has come from our belongings. The queen's law which we believe guaranteed us our rights, the B.C. government has trampled underfoot. This is how our guests have treated us—the brothers we received hospitably in our house.²⁴

Connection QUESTIONS

1. How do the chiefs describe the Europeans? How do you think they would explain the behaviour of the settlers?
2. Imagine a conversation between the chiefs and the other writers you have encountered in this section. What might the chiefs have to say to Darwin, Morton, and others?

²⁴ Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Premier of the Dominion of Canada, from the Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau Tribes of British Columbia, presented at Kamloops, August 1910, accessed May 7, 2015.





ENGAGING HISTORY

SECTION 3

The Indian Act and the Indian Residential Schools

“The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.” –Sir John A. Macdonald, 1887

In the previous sections, we talked about the ideas that Europeans falsely employed to categorize the Indigenous Peoples of North America. These prejudicial categories soon became instrumental in managing and controlling these nations; indeed, they provided an excuse for moving the First Nations (and Métis) out of the way of the European settlers. In this section, we will examine how some of these views were put into action after Confederation in 1867.

By the 1870s, with the processes of European settlement and the removal of First Nations to reserves under way, the Dominion government faced a number of dilemmas: Was there a solution to the problems faced by the Indigenous Peoples, many of whom were pushed to live on the brink of starvation on small and unproductive plots of lands by European violence? What would long-term solutions look like, besides charity and urgent humanitarian assistance (which the government was frequently forced to provide, however reluctantly)? How did these possible solutions fit with the colonists’ own interests and prejudices?

In addition to the treaties, which were signed under duress with different First Nations, the government passed the Indian Act to formalize its relations with the First Nations. As part of the act, the government also turned its attention to education. At the time, many Europeans believed that with time and Western education, the Indigenous Peoples would assimilate into the settler society, which the Europeans believed to be a positive change. What they considered progress is today recognized an attempt to eradicate indigenous cultures. In a now-famous paper, residential schools scholar John Milloy argues that the Indian Act effectively ended indigenous forms of self-government and made First Nations people wards of the Canadian government. “Successive

federal governments, Liberal and Conservative,” he maintains, “over the next century, in amendments to the 1869 Act and in new Acts, spelled out, in increasing detail, a colonial structure that passed control of First Nations people and communities into the hands of the Indian Affairs Department.”¹

Several options for bringing Western education to the Indigenous Peoples were tried before federation, including manual-labour schools, day schools, and boarding schools. Most if not all of these schools were run by Christian churches, with varying degrees of religious instruction taught along with farming and trade-skills training. The government eventually chose the boarding schools, or the Indian Residential Schools, as its most important institution designed to assimilate the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. The most distinctive characteristic of the Indian Residential Schools system was that it tore indigenous children from their families and left them in the care of complete and often hostile strangers—the schools’ religious instructors.

Guiding QUESTIONS

1. What were the assumptions behind the Indian Act?
2. What were the goals of the Indian Residential Schools?
3. What can the goals of the residential schools tell us about the European views of indigenous cultures? What consequence did those views have for non-Europeans?

1 John Milloy, “Indian Act Colonialism: A Century of Dishonour, 1869–1969,” National Centre for First Nations Governance, 2008, accessed May 8, 2015, http://fngovernance.org/ncfng_research/milloy.pdf.





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The Indian Act of 1876 granted the Canadian government control over many aspects of Indigenous Peoples' lives, including the management of housing, health services, the environment, and other resources on reserves. In this photograph, an indigenous Canadian woman is shown on a reserve in 1930.

The Indian Act

Laws can take abstract ideas and implement them in real life. A law makes following a rule mandatory, and law enforcement ensures that people obey that rule. But while laws can provide order and protection, they can also express prejudice and be used to discriminate.

In 1876, the British North America Act united three British colonies into the first four provinces of the Dominion of Canada, providing Canada with its own government and federal structure. This new Canadian government inherited the colonial legacy of Great Britain, including two legislations: the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869. Both aimed to force Indigenous Peoples to give up all ties to their heritage via the acquisition of Euro-Canadian education or by leaving the reserve and becoming owners of private property. Since the 1830s, the British authorities, and later the Canadian government, had set up reserves to settle the Indigenous Peoples and remove them from areas the newcomers desired to settle or develop. The reserves were small, unproductive land tracts where the Indigenous Peoples were forced to live by the act.

Eventually, the Canadian Parliament consolidated the Gradual Civilization Act and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act into the Indian Act of 1876. This new legislation, which still exists today despite its many amendments, brought Status (registered) Indians under federal jurisdiction. The Department of Indian Affairs, formed by the act,

governed nearly all aspects of the lives of First Nations communities, including band membership, reserve infrastructure and services, systems of governance, culture, and education.

The Indian Act of 1876 created the legal category of Status Indian, a category that had long-lasting implications for the First Nations of Canada. Once it entered into law, the act imposed a single common legal definition, lumping together different nations and languages into the broad category of First Nations.

What does it mean to be a Status Indian? The original document of 1876 defined someone as being legally Indian if that person fit these descriptions:

- First. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band;
- Secondly. Any child of such person;
- Thirdly. Any woman who is, or was, lawfully married to such person.²

A key element was the law's definition of who was Indian and what Indianness was. (The term *Indian* was used several centuries before—the law simply formalized its use. It is worth noting, however, that none of the many clans, bands, alliances, and nations ever called themselves Indian.)

According to the Indian Act of 1876, the “only individuals who could consider themselves Indian were those who could prove they were related, through the male line, to individuals who were already Status Indians,” writes Bonita Lawrence. Thus the policy created “new” members of society whose legal status, rights, and limitations were defined by law; the Indian Act made formal a new Canadian group. Equally powerful was the Indian Act's power to exclude. Among the groups that were not considered Indians were the Inuit and Métis people. Individuals could easily lose their status, and “without Indian Status and the band membership that goes along with it,” Lawrence notes, “Native people are not allowed to live on any land part of an Indian reserve in Canada. . . . They cannot take part in the life of their own community unless they have Indian Status and hence band membership in that community.” In fact, she writes, “the colonial act of establishing legal definitions of Indianness, which excluded vast numbers of Native people from obtaining Indian status, has enabled

the Canadian government to remove a significant sector of Native people from the land.”³

The Indian Act has been reformed many times since 1876. Over the years, its most offensive clauses were repealed or altered, including those restricting the movement of individuals outside of reserves, outlawing indigenous ceremonies, and discriminating against women. But to this day, the Indian Act continues to regulate significant parts of life for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, such as band membership, taxation, band governance, elections, rights to land and other resources, and education.

But however bad this legislation is, it recognizes the First Nations of Canada’s legal relationship with the Canadian government and affirms their rights and status not as minorities but as independent groups.⁴ Few indigenous activists would like to see it simply go away before settling the relationship between the Crown and First Nations on a better foundation.



In the crowded and understaffed residential schools, the physical and domestic chores performed by students were critical to keeping the schools afloat. Here, children are seen cutting logs at Fort Resolution Indian Residential School in the Northwest Territory.

The Residential Schools

The Indian Act of 1876 made the education of First Nations groups a federal responsibility. The government was authorized to contract with the different provinces as well as with church authorities to establish boarding schools for indigenous education. The Indian Act empowered the Minister of Indian Affairs to enroll and place all indigenous children (excluding, for many years, the Métis) in school. Then Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald was very clear about the need to sever the connection between the students and their indigenous communities: “When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with his parents who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write.”⁵

Until 1883, “Canada did not have a residential school system,” but rather, had “a series of individual church-led initiatives to which the federal government provided grants.”⁶ Based on these pre-Confederation religious boarding schools, the government sought partnerships with representatives of the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and other churches to operate the schools and carry out this mission of Indian education for the state. Education was to be the primary tool to “civilize” the First Nations and prepare them for life as mainstream European-Canadians.⁷ A far cry from the boarding schools for Canada’s privileged children, the residential schools were, in

fact, built on the model of “reformatories and jails established for the children of the urban poor.”⁸ But from 1883 onward, the government sought a system to enroll all First Nations children in schools. Day school and “industrial schools” were to serve alongside the residential schools to meet the challenge. Roughly 150,000 indigenous students (mostly from First Nations communities) went to residential schools, although a great number of indigenous students attended day schools. While both types of schools espoused the mission of civilizing the Indigenous Peoples and were run by the churches, the residential schools left the most painful marks on Indigenous Peoples in Canada.⁹

The government’s residential schools system began with a modest budget of \$44,000 a year in 1883. This money, however, mostly came from cuts to government spending on other indigenous community needs. Thus, the funding of the system was marked by the reluctance of the government to fully invest in the program. Not long after the residential schools system emerged, critics began to denounce its economic utility, its care for student health, its limited academic success, and its failure to create a cadre of young “assimilated Indians.” By the 1940s, the failure of the system as a whole was evident.

The residential schools struggled with poor funding, poor and unsuitable nutrition, unsanitary conditions, and poor medical care. Students lived in crowded dormitories and were rarely isolated when sick. This practice made the schools prone to outbreaks of diseases, and they were hit hard by tuberculosis and flu epidemics, including the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918. Overall, more than 6,000 students died in the residential schools.¹⁰ The death toll of so many students from tuberculosis and other diseases in the schools recently prompted a heated debate about Canada’s responsibility for these deaths.

- 2 Excerpt from the Indian Act, 1876, “CHAP. 18: An Act to amend and consolidate the laws respecting Indians.”
- 3 Bonita Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview,” *Hypatia* 18 (2003).
- 4 Erin Hanson, “The Indian Act,” Indigenous Foundations University of British Columbia First Nations Studies Program, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-indian-act.html>.
- 5 Quoted in Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children* (Winnipeg: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012), 6.
- 6 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children*, 6.

- 7 Two models of schooling were pursued: industrial and residential schools. The industrial schools were to focus more on broad work skills and trades. Those were not boarding schools, although the students often lived in a separate building that served as a hostel. The residential schools were to be more academic, though they too were to offer training in farm work (for boys) and domestic skills (for girls).
- 8 *They Came for the Children*, 13. Of course, not all the schools were industrial or residential schools. The majority of indigenous students actually went to day school on the reserve (or in cities). Still, it was the residential school experience that had the most lasting impact on the Indigenous Peoples.
- 9 "Residential School History: A Legacy of Shame," Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, accessed June 18, 2015, http://www.med.uottawa.ca/sim/data/Images/Residential_Schools.pdf
- 10 John Paul Tasker, "Residential schools findings point to 'cultural genocide,' commission chair says," *CBCNews*, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/residential-schools-findings-point-to-cultural-genocide-commission-chair-says-1.3093580>. See also Brenda Elias, "The challenge of counting the missing when the missing were not counted," paper presented at the International Association of Genocide Scholars conference, "Time, Movement, and Space: Genocide Studies and Indigenous Peoples," July 16–19, 2014.



READING 1 **Killing the Indian in the Child**¹¹

By the second half of the nineteenth century, there were growing concerns among European settlers about the future of the integration and assimilation of the indigenous population of Canada. Those concerns stemmed from the frustration of settlers with the persistence of what they called the Indian problem. The expectation that the indigenous groups would simply give up their ways of life and embrace European languages and culture had not materialized. Frustration grew in proportion to the desire to clear the way for new settlers, a goal that could only be achieved either by removing indigenous communities from their land or assimilating them and forcing them to give up their land rights as separate peoples. The educational experiments on or near the reserves proved to be ineffective in encouraging children to give up their culture and traditional ways of life. The students, said a government report, did not “carry back with them to their homes any desire to spread among their people the instruction which they have received. They are content as before to live in the same slovenly manners. . . . The same apathy and indolence stamp their actions as is apparent in the rest of the Indians.”¹² As a result, in both the United States and Canada a new idea began to take root: indigenous children would have to be taken from their parents and educated separately in a boarding school so that the pull of family, tradition, and custom would not affect their assimilation.

But these institutions were not going to be based on the model of the traditional British upper-class boarding schools. To many, the Indian Residential Schools would represent a combination of the Victorian poorhouse, a penal institution, and a religious seminary. Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, who was also Minister of Indian Affairs, commissioned Nicholas Flood Davin, a journalist, lawyer, and politician, to go to Washington, DC, in 1879. Davin was sent to learn about the policy of “aggressive civilization” of Native Americans in the United States, where the idea of separating, educating, and assimilating indigenous children had recently been put into practice.¹³ The key to this policy was a system of “industrial schools” where religious instruction and skills training were combined to help the Native Americans catch up with the demands of Western society. In a confidential report to the Canadian government in 1879 called *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds*, Davin advised Canada to follow this model (the distinction between industrial and residential schools is discussed in the Historical Background section of

this guide, but essentially they were the same). His report, eventually known as the Davin Report, became the “founding document which specified the terms within which industrial schools functioned for almost a century.”¹⁴ It included the following:

The industrial school is the principal feature of a policy known as that of “aggressive civilization.” This policy was inaugurated by President Grant in 1869. But as will be seen, the utility of the industrial schools had long [before] that time been amply tested. Acting on the suggestion of the President, Congress passed a law early in 1869, providing for the appointment of the Peace Commission. This Commission recommended that the Indian should, as far as practical, be consolidated on a few reservations, and provided with “permanent individual homes”; that the tribal relation should be abolished; that lands should be allotted [to individuals] not in common; that the Indian should speedily become a citizen of the United States, enjoy the protection of the law, and made [accountable to it]; that, finally, it was the duty of the Government to afford the Indians all reasonable aid in their preparation for citizenship by education in Industry and in the arts of civilization. . . . From 1869 vigorous efforts in an education direction were put forward. But it was found that the day-school did not work, because the influence of the wigwam was stronger than the influence of the school. Industrial Boarding Schools were therefore established, and these are now numerous and will soon be universal. The cry from the Agencies where no boarding industrial schools have been established is persistent and earnest to have the want supplied.

The experience of the United States is the same as our own as far as the adult Indian is concerned. Little can be done with him. He can be taught to do a little at farming, and at stock-raising, and to dress in a more civilized manner, but that is all. The child, again, who goes to a day school learns little, and what little he learns is soon forgotten, while his tastes are fashioned at home, and his inherited aversion to toil is in no way combated. . . .

The Indian character, about which some persons fling such a mystery, is not difficult to understand. The Indian is sometimes spoken of as a child, but he is very far from being a child. . . . The Indian is a man with traditions of his own, which make civilization a puzzle of despair. He has the suspicion, distrust, fault-finding tendency, the insincerity and flattery, produced in all subject races. He is crafty, but conscious how weak his craft is when opposed to the superior cunning of the white man . . .¹⁵

Davin and his generation believed in what J. A. Macrae, the Indian Affairs Department Inspector of the North West, said in 1886:

The circumstance of the Indian existence prevents him from following that core of evolution which had produced from the barbarian of the past the civilized man of today. It is impossible from him to be allowed slowly to pass through the successive stages from the pastoral to an agricultural life and from an agricultural one, to one of manufacturing, commerce or trade as we have done. He has been called upon suddenly and without warning to enter upon a new existence. Without the assistance of the government, he must have failed and perished miserably and he would have died hard entailing expense and disgrace upon the country.¹⁶

At the height of the residential schools system, it was run by an extreme “assimilationist” named Duncan Campbell Scott.¹⁷ Scott, a civil servant in the Department of Indian Affairs, is widely viewed as the most ardent supporter of the residential schools and the policies associated with them: the removal by consent or by force of tens of thousands of indigenous children from their homes, some as young as two or four years of age; the attempts to deprive these children of any connections with their parents; the institution of an underfunded, willfully neglectful system where thousands of students perished from malnutrition, poor medical care, and diseases; the creation of an education system where child labour was a norm and where academic achievements were severely compromised; and the consistent lack of oversight and accountability in a system where physical and sexual abuse were rampant.

In 1920, Scott also pushed for and passed an amendment to the Indian Act making school attendance compulsory for all First Nations children under 15 years of age.¹⁸ While he did not think that education alone was sufficient for civilizing the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, he advocated heavily for it. When he mandated compulsory school attendance in 1920, he stated,

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone . . . Our objective 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, that is the whole object of this Bill.¹⁹

Connection QUESTIONS

1. Define the word *assimilation*. What is *integration*? What are the similarities and differences in the meanings of the words? Many of the education-system leaders in this reading are described as assimilationists. What were their goals?

2. Why did Davin and his contemporaries think that Aboriginal Peoples needed to be civilized? What, according to Davin, was “aggressive civilization”?
3. What did Davin mean when he said that the “influence of the wigwam was stronger than the influence of the school”? What did it mean in terms of the education policy he recommended?
4. What was Davin’s view of the indigenous people? What were the obstacles to their assimilation? What kind of schooling was Davin advocating?
5. According to the quotation from Duncan Campbell Scott, what was the purpose of the residential schools? What vision is reflected in this paragraph regarding Canadian society?

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- 11 This phrase is commonly but incorrectly attributed to Duncan Campbell Scott, though his actions as the head of the DIA between 1913 and 1932 suggest that he might have agreed with the idea..
 - 12 *Report of the Special Commissioners Appointed to Investigate Indian Affairs in Canada*, Journals of Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada from 25th of February to 1st June 1858, appendix no. 21, part 3, session 1853, quoted in John Milloy, *A National Crime*, 18.
 - 13 This policy, writes anthropologist Derek G. Smith, “had been formulated in the post-Civil War period by President Ulysses S. Grant’s administration . . . and was passed into law by Congress in early 1869. See Derek G. Smith, “The ‘Policy of Aggressive Civilization’ and Projects of Governance in Roman Catholic Industrial Schools for Native Peoples in Canada, 1870–95,” *Anthropologica* 43 (2001), 254.
 - 14 Derek G. Smith, “The ‘Policy of Aggressive Civilization,’” 254.
 - 15 Nicholas Flood Davin, *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* (1879), in., *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, ed. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 229–301.
 - 16 Quoted in John Milloy, *A National Crime*, 27.
 - 17 Scott was a civil servant for much of his life and was involved in indigenous affairs throughout his career (he negotiated, for example, one of the treaties). He served as deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932 and oversaw the operation of the residential schools. Scott, a renowned Canadian poet, appreciated elements of indigenous culture, but he contributed directly to its destruction—perhaps more than anybody. See Nancy Chater, “Technologies of Remembrance: Literary Criticism and Duncan Campbell Scott’s Indian Poems” (MA thesis, University of Toronto, 1999), http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape7/PQDD_0003/MQ45483.pdf, 25–26. Moreover, in 1924, he proposed an amendment to the Indian Act that was adopted, forbidding Aboriginal people from hiring lawyers without the DIA’s approval to represent them in land and sovereignty claims. For these and many other contributions, Scott is called by experts the “architect of Indian policies” during the first decades of the twentieth century. See also Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 22.
 - 18 Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 91–92. As a result of the amendment, indigenous enrollment rose to about 17,000 in all schools and to over 8,000 in residential schools by the end of his tenure. According to Scott’s reports, at this point, 75% of indigenous children were enrolled in some school, which he attributed to a growing motivation among them to take up Western education. Clearly, the fact that the education was now compulsory, and that since 1930 it included all children between the ages of 7 and 16, had something to do with these numbers.
 - 19 National Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, vol. 6810, file 470-2-3, vol. 7, 55 (L-3) and 63 (N-3).



READING 2 **The Role of the Churches**

The stated purpose of the Indian Residential Schools was to make the Indigenous Peoples of Canada embrace Western values and Christianity (those two sets of beliefs were almost inseparable at the time). In the eyes of many state officials, the agent that could and should bring about such rapid change was the Christian church. Missionaries of all denominations embraced the cause of Christianizing and civilizing the Indigenous Peoples in Canada long before the Davin Report of 1879. Indeed, in the 1880s there were already four church-run boarding schools in operation.²⁰ Frustration with day schools and other forms of missionary work led all the Christian denominations to support the model of boarding or residential schools. In the decades to come, the government turned over operation of most of the residential schools to the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches.²¹ Most people of European descent at the time shared the view that Christianity and civilization supported each other (if they were not actually synonymous). As early as 1852, Rev. Samuel Rose, the principal of Mt. Elgin residential school at the time, explained:

[The education of these] youths has been regarded by me as the work of no ordinary character; an education solemnly important in his connection to the future, with the unborn periods of the time. . . . These youths are to form the class whose histories is to be a most important epoch in the history of the nations to which they belong. . . . This class is to spring a generation, who will either perpetuate the manners and customs of their ancestors, or being *intellectually, morally and religiously* elevated, take their stand among the improved, intelligent nations of the earth, their part in the great drama of the world's doing; or off want of necessary qualifications, to take their place and perform their part, be despised and pushed off the stage of action and ceased to be!²²

A memorandum of the Convention of Catholic Principals in 1924 expressed similar sentiments:

All true civilization must be based on moral law, which Christian religion alone can give. Pagan superstition could not suffice . . . to make the Indians practice the virtues of our civilization and avoid its attendant vices. Several people have desired us to countenance the dances of the Indians and to observe their festivals; but their habits, being the result of free and easy mode of life, cannot conform to the intense struggle for life which our social conditions require.²³

The clergymen and women who took on administrative and teaching roles in the schools often saw themselves as a protective force for the indigenous people



Canada Dept. Indian and Northern Affairs / Library and Archives Canada / e011080274

Although government funded, the residential schools were operated by churches, with clergymen and women serving in most teaching and administrative roles. This photo was taken at Cross Lake Indian Residential School in Manitoba in 1940.

without considering the perspectives of the cultures from which their students came. A 1911 report of the Alberta Methodist Commission said this:

The Indian is the weak child in the family of our nation and for this reason presents the most earnest appeal for Christian sympathy and co-operation . . . [W]e are convinced that the only hope of successfully discharging this obligation to our Indian brethren is through the medium of the children, therefore education must be given the foremost place.”²⁴

A 2012 report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission explains the complicated role of the churches:

To both Protestant and Catholic missionaries, Aboriginal spiritual beliefs were little more than superstition and witchcraft. In British Columbia, William Duncan of the Church Missionary Society reported: “I cannot describe the conditions of this people better than by saying that it is just what might be expected in savage heathen life.” Missionaries led the campaign to outlaw Aboriginal sacred ceremonies such as the Potlatch on the west coast and the Sun Dance on the Prairies. In British Columbia in 1884, for example, Roman Catholic missionaries argued for banning the Potlatch, saying that participation in the ceremony left many families so impoverished they had to withdraw their children from school to accompany them in the winter to help them search for food.

While, on one front, missionaries were engaged in a war on Aboriginal culture, on another, they often served as advocates for protecting and advancing Aboriginal interests in their dealings with government and settlers. Many learned Aboriginal languages, and conducted religious ceremonies at the schools in those languages. These efforts were not unrewarded: the 1899 census identified 70,000 of 100,000 Indian people in Canada as Christians.²⁵

Connection QUESTIONS

1. How did Rev. Samuel Rose justify the missions and policies of the residential schools? What purpose did he believe the schools served?
2. What language is used in the different passages from religious leaders to describe Indigenous Peoples and their culture? What language do these religious leaders use to describe their own mission? What might we learn from the contrasts between their motivations and their rationalization for the policy? What might the contrasts reveal about their biases?
3. What, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, was the role of the churches in colonial Canada? Is it possible to reconcile the two main roles identified by the report (an assault on and protection of indigenous culture)? If yes, how?
4. The introduction to Section 2 described Helen Fein's definition of a universe of obligation—the circle of individuals and groups “toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for [amends].”²⁶ How might the religious leaders in this reading have described their obligation to the Aboriginal Peoples? How did they propose to express that obligation? How did those ideas conflict with indigenous beliefs, expectations, and rights? Based on what you've read so far, what might Fein say about the way some of the religious leaders quoted in the reading defined their universe of obligation?

20 Other origins can be traced to pre-Confederation educational experiments in Europe and the array of industrial and missionary schools in the US and Canada. See John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1999), 13–14.

21 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children*, 15. The two largest religious organizations behind the residential schools were the Roman Catholic Oblates Order of Mary Immaculate and the Church Missionary Society of the Anglican Church (the Church of England). They became the main organizations behind the system, with the Roman Catholic Church running as many as 60% of the schools, the Anglican Church 25%, and the United Church of Canada (created after 1925 as a merger of several Protestant denominations, including the Presbyterians, Methodists, and smaller denominations) running the remainder. The Jesuits, despite their intense missionary work in Canada (early on) and around the world, operated only two residential schools after Confederation. The Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Britain and the US operated a few schools, as well.

22 Rev. Rose Report, 1852, in Elizabeth Graham, ed., *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Ontario: Heflle Publishing, 1997), 230. Emphasis added.

- 23 Memorandum of the Convention of the Catholic Principals of Indian Residential Schools, Lebert, Saskatchewan, August 28–29, 1924.
- 24 T. Ferrier, "Report for the Alberta Methodist Commission," 1911, quoted in John Milloy, *A National Crime*, 28.
- 25 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children*, 15.
- 26 Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 4.



SECTION 4

The Residential School Experience

Most survivors of the residential schools experienced their time at the schools as profoundly painful and destructive. Torn from their parents and communities, they were thrown into schools where human connection with adults was harsh, cold, and even abusive. At the schools, they were forced into the care of strangers—people from an unknown culture whose main goal was to eradicate their values, traditions, and beliefs. Alone, isolated, and sometimes assaulted both physically and emotionally, indigenous students were left to struggle on their own with no parental love or community support. While not all schools were alike, and not every student experienced the schooling in the same way, many were scarred for life. They entered their adult lives with no family model to follow, no connections to their parents and traditions, and, most of all, little preparation for the inhospitable world that consistently denied their experience. Educated in a grey zone between two competing cultures—theirs and the Europeans—they reported feeling socially disoriented and inadequately educated.

This section walks the reader through the experiences of different survivors from the time they were torn from their families through to their daily routines, the effects on other family members, and the effects the second and third generations experience to come after them to this day.

Guiding QUESTIONS

1. What did a policy of “forced assimilation” look like in practice?
 2. What was life like for indigenous students in the residential schools?
 3. What were the gaps between the language of the missionaries and the realities of the schools?
-



READING 1 **Parental Dilemmas**

Not all parents rejected the idea of the residential schools. Some hoped that Western education would be a bridge to a better life. Others, sometimes second- or third-generation graduates themselves, were influenced by messages about the fate of those who did not embrace Christianity and attend these schools. Indigenous elder, residential school survivor, and author Theodore Fontaine describes his mother's own take on the issue this way:

Mom and Dad's wishes and justification for my attending residential school were confusing for Mom. Knowing me, and having seen me grow and be a part of her, was a natural and joyful experience for her. She'd had no experience of growing up with her own mother and knew only residential school life until her marriage to Dad. She'd lost three children to residential school before me and didn't want to lose more. Still, she strongly believed that attending residential school would allow me to succeed in a white person's world. She also feared the Church and its teachings. She didn't want to offend the priests and nuns and feared excommunication, and so was persuaded to believe that having her children under the Church's exclusive authority was what the Creator wanted. She thought that Church officials and their helpers were infallible. Unwavering conviction like hers made it easier for the federal government and the Church to control and weaken our people. Mom and Dad had never been subjected to Roman Catholic Church teachings before they went to residential school, so everything they heard was new and had to be true, in their eyes, because priests said they represented Jesus Christ and God, who to us was the same as the Creator. Mom and my aunts told stories of sermons that illustrated the dire consequences that could follow if they opposed the Church and its representatives.¹

Connection QUESTIONS

- 1.** What were the dilemmas Fontaine's mother faced?
- 2.** What forces influenced the willingness of Fontaine's mother to have him attend one of the residential schools?
- 3.** How does this passage help explain some parents' willingness to allow their children to attend the residential schools?

1 Theodore Fontaine, *Broken Circle* (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2010).

READING 2 “The Welcome”

The first day at these schools was sometimes especially painful, in some cases almost tragically so. Author Gilbert Oskaboose was a student at the Garnier Residential School in the town of Spanish, Ontario, and was later a reporter for the *Serpent River First Nation*. The narrative below, titled “The Welcome,” is based on Oskaboose’s personal story, the story of a child caught between the traditional ways of his people and the non-indigenous culture. The account begins with an encounter between Little Wolf and a Catholic priest. (Priests were called Blackrobes because they wore black cloaks.)

Little Wolf saw it coming but couldn’t believe it was actually happening. The Blackrobe’s huge, hairy hand flew up, appeared to hang in midair as it drifted through a lazy semi-circle, and exploded violently in the boy’s face. The blow slammed him into the hard stone ends of an iron gate. Dazed and shaken, he lay in the dust, dimly aware of split lips and warm salty blood making angry red patterns on a brand new buckskin shirt.

‘Indian lankquitch iss verbotten! You will not spik hitt again.’

Far off in the swirling mists of pain and confusion, a door slams, a lock turns. Empty walls bear mute witness to the sounds of muffled sobs torn from a small frightened boy huddled in a darkened corner.

In the fall of 1945, accompanied by his father and armed with a burning hunger for knowledge, the firstborn of an Ojibway chief strides boldly up to the massive gates of the Garnier Residential School for Indians located in the tiny town of Spanish in Northern Ontario.

Behind these great walls, the elders say, are endless rows of books, the Whiteman’s talking leaves, birdtracks on something called paper, the essence of his power and magic. Behind these great walls are the Jesuits, the ‘Blackrobe’ priests and Faithkeepers of an angry white god who throws lightning and sends pox and keeps ‘hellfire’ for anyone who dares to defy him—or His helpers.

The Hudson Bay man had told them the letter that came from The Great White Fathers in Ottawa was an invitation for Little Wolf to study medicine with the Blackrobes. Truly, it was not a matter to be taken lightly, and they travelled many miles in a swift bark canoe and on foot to keep this meeting with destiny.

Father and son held each other for a long time, the boy burying his face into the warm folds of his father’s heavy woolen shirt, picking up the subtle scents of tobacco, of campfires and of the wild lonely places they had travelled through to get to this place.

His father broke the embrace first, turned away and busied himself rummaging through his pockets for the letter Little Wolf was to present to the headman.

‘You be a good boy now,’ the gentle Ojibway syllables caressed his ears for the last time. ‘The Whites are like geese that darken the sky before the winds of winter, their numbers are many; our people are like dead leaves, few and scattered. The Circle is broken; the Sacred Hope is shattered. Maybe the Blackrobes will take pity on us and teach you a cure.’

Little Wolf stayed and watched his father turn and walk away. He stayed, filled with anticipation and perhaps a little fear, to ring the great bell for admission into this strange and wondrous place.

The echoes had scarcely died away when a tall gray-haired man, garbed in the long flowing black robes of the Jesuit order, glided down a sprawling staircase and strode towards the boy.

Surely one of such noble bearing must be the headman or maybe even a chief of the Blackrobes. It was a good sign. Fitting and proper that a chief be there to greet the son of another chief.

Not wishing to show his small fears, nor to appear overly eager to greet a Holy Man, Little Wolf took one step forward—and in his most solemn ceremonial voice—extended the traditional Ojibway greeting for strangers.

The Blackrobe’s huge hairy hand flew up . . . ²

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What did Little Wolf and his father expect from the school? How did Little Wolf feel when he first arrived at Garnier?
2. What kind of “welcome” did Little Wolf receive? Why? What accounts for such brutality? How do you reconcile the violence with the stated goals of the school from the last readings of the previous section?
3. Oskaboose’s father said: “The Whites are like geese that darken the sky before the winds of winter, their numbers are many; our people are like dead leaves, few and scattered. The Circle is broken; the Sacred Hope is shattered. Maybe the Blackrobes will take pity on us and teach you a cure.” How do you interpret his message? What kind of medicine was Little Wolf expecting to learn?

2 Gilbert Oskaboose, “The Welcome,” *Toronto Star*, July 18, 1988.

READING 3 **First Days**

What did the first steps of “assimilation” look like in practice? How did the schools begin to break students’ connection to their indigenous communities?



J. F. Moran / Library and Archives Canada / PA-102575

Students at the Fort Simpson School in the Northwest Territories in 1922 hold up letters that spell “Goodbye.” For most students, entering a residential school meant saying goodbye to their families, language, and culture.

A typical first day at a residential school consisted of a removal of indigenous identity and an introduction to the new rules, regulations, and lifestyle to which the children would have to adhere. The next passage is from Albert Canadien’s *From Lishamie*, in which he recounts his first day at Fort Providence Catholic School.

I wasn’t afraid up to this point, but the sudden appearance of the Sisters did frighten me. Before I could think, my mother let go of my hand and the Grey Nuns guided me through into the parlour. The reality hit me: I was being taken away from my parents! I started crying and tried to hang onto the door frame as the Sisters pulled me away. Trying her best to sooth me, my mother kept promising she would come back and visit us soon. By this time, my sister had already been led away. She had been here before and knew what was expected of her, so she picked up her bag and followed one of the Sisters to the girls’ section of the building. I’m sure she heard my cries and screams. . . .

I spent my first day at the residential school with the other new boys. Some of us were silent and scared, with tears in our eyes and not knowing what to do. Some of the other boys were sobbing uncontrollably. The two Sisters who were supervising the boys gathered us on the first floor of the building in a large room with benches along the walls. This was the boys' recreation room. From there, we were led in single-file upstairs to a large dormitory on the second floor and were each assigned to a bed. One of the older boys, who had been through residential school before, acted as our interpreter. We were told to undress, put our clothes on our bed and get ready for a bath.

Once in the bathtub, the Sister poured a green-coloured liquid onto our heads and bodies, and we washed ourselves. Our clothes and other personal belongings were taken away and we were all given denim coveralls. We were to wear these at play and at work for the duration of our stay at the residential school. . . .

When the Sisters returned, one of them motioned for us to get into a single file again. Then we followed the other Sister out of the room and downstairs to the basement level for supper.

The dining room was a large, open area. A piano or organ sat against the wall in the middle of the room. This more or less indicated the separation point between the boys' and girls' dining areas. The girls' designated area was on one side of the room and the boys' area on the other. We sat on benches at long tables. I looked up as the girls entered their dining area and tried to catch a glimpse of my sister, but I didn't see her. I turned my gaze to the enamel plate in front of me on the table. That enamel plate also served as a bowl for soup and porridge. I couldn't eat much because I had a lump in my throat. I kept thinking of my parents, getting very homesick, and I started to cry again. The Sisters didn't pay too much attention to me at that time, maybe because I was new to the ways of the residential school. They also knew I was there to stay no matter what.

After supper, we all stood up and said grace, just like we had done before supper. Once again, I didn't understand what was being said. I was to learn and memorize this meal prayer both in French and English. Later on, we even sang grace in French before meals. Whether we said grace or sang grace depended on the Sister supervising at mealtime.

Bedtime that first evening was the hardest for me. I was used to sleeping an arm's length from my dad. But tonight I would sleep alone in a strange place and it scared me. The dormitory was not that big, but to a small, seven-year-old, it was huge and intimidating. The walls and the ceiling of the dormitory appeared to be very high, much higher than the walls of our log house back home. It was a big change from our log house in Lishamie to the nuns' big house.³

In her book about the experience of the Mi'kmaq children at the residential school at Shubenacadie, Isabelle Knockwood reports on this moment of transformation as she and her sister Rosie experienced it. Soon after watching their mother leave, she writes,

Our home clothes were stripped off and we were put in the tub. When we got out we were given new clothes with wide black and white vertical stripes. Much later I discovered that this was almost identical to the prison garb of the time. We were also given numbers. I was 58 and Rosie was 57. Our clothes were all marked in black India ink—our blouses, skirts, socks, underwear, towels, face-cloths—everything except the bedding had our marks on it. Next came the hair cut. Rosie lost her ringlets and we both had hair short over our ears and almost straight across with bangs. Rosie carried me to the lavatory. . . . There were two large mirrors on each end of the room. Susie stopped and let me look at my new self. I started to laugh because I looked so different and my sister looked different too . . .⁴

Connection QUESTIONS

1. Describe Albert Canadien's first day of residential school. What words and images does he use to help the reader understand the experience from his perspective?
2. The introduction to this reading includes the word *assimilation* in quotation marks, asking what "assimilation" looked like in practice. What word or words might Canadien have used instead of *assimilation* to describe his experience?
3. Canadien's story recounts a series of details about his first day. Why do you think he shares so many of them? What is the point he is trying to convey to the reader?
4. How did the teachers in the school seek to change Canadien's identity? What is lost when one is forced to change his or her identity so violently?
5. Why do you think students were forced to go through the sort of drastic physical transformation that Isabelle Knockwood describes? What could be the purpose of the identical clothes they were given? The haircuts? The numbers they received?
6. How do you explain why Knockwood laughed when she saw her image in the mirror? What might she have been feeling?

3 Albert Canadien, *From Lishamie* (Canada: Gauvin Press, 2012), 50–54.

4 Quoted in Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaq Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia* (Lockport: Roseway Publishing, 1994), 28.

READING 4 Curriculum

What did the curriculum in a residential school look like? While curricula varied from one school to another, each emphasized immersion in the dominant Canadian culture and discouraged, often violently, any connection to students' own culture and traditions. Below are some of the curricular guidelines from residential schools in Nova Scotia from the 1930s.

Language: Every effort must be made to induce pupils to speak English and to teach them to understand it. Insist on English during even the supervised play. Failure in this means wasted efforts.

Reading: Pupils must be taught to read distinctly. Inspectors report that Indian children either mumble inaudibly or shout their words in a spasmodic fashion. It will be considered a proof of the incompetency of a teacher if pupils are found to read "parrot fashion", i.e. without an understanding of what they read. Pupils should understand as they read. The sentence is a unit of thought. Bend every effort to obtain intelligible reading.

Religious Instruction: Scriptural reading, the Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, The Life of Christ, etc.

Ethics: In the primary grades, instill the qualities of obedience, respect, order, neatness, and cleanliness. Differentiate between right and wrong, cultivate truthful habits and a spirit of fair play. As the pupils become more advanced, inculcate as near as possible in the order mentioned, independence, self-respect, industry, honesty, thrift, self-maintenance, citizenship and patriotism. Discuss charity, pauperism, Indian and white life, the evils of Indian isolation, enfranchisement. Explain the relationship of the sexes to labor, home and public duties, and labor as the law of existence.

Sanitation: Great care must be exercised by the teacher to see that the schoolroom is kept thoroughly clean. The floors should be swept daily and scrubbed frequently. Ventilation should receive earnest attention. The air in the schoolroom should be completely changed during recess and at the noon hour, even in the coldest weather, by opening of windows and doors. Spitting on the floor, or inside the school building, should not be allowed.

General: Instruction is to be direct, the voice and black-board the principal agents. The unnecessary use of text-books is to be avoided. Do not classify students in advance of their ability.⁵

Connection QUESTIONS

1. Duncan Campbell Scott, a leading advocate for the Indian Residential Schools, explained, “Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic.” How does this curriculum align with his objective?
2. The first item in the list emphasizes the need to teach the students English. Why do you think it was included at the top of the list?

5 Quoted in Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia*, 92. Knockwood went to the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School in Nova Scotia between 1936 and 1947. She uses this memo to illustrate the schedule in the school.



READING 5 **Language Loss**

The government and school administrators stressed the importance of enforcing the use of English (and sometimes French, and at times even Latin for Mass and other religious rituals), as they recognized the strong link between language and culture. The ban on indigenous languages created tremendous confusion and tensions among the students. Many of the students did not speak any English when they entered the schools, and they could not possibly understand what was expected of them. For others, speaking the native tongue was a form of resistance—a way to hide from the school staff their true emotions and thoughts. But the schools usually responded to the use of native languages forcefully.

Bestselling author and commentator on Indian Residential Schools Theodore Fontaine went to Fort Alexander Residential School in Manitoba and spoke only Ojibway as a child. Here is how he describes his experience at the school:

Once when we were all in the playroom, I was playing on the floor with several friends, reliving a picture show we'd seen at movie night and using small objects like stones and pieces of wood to act as the cowboys. I was startled when Sister S., the supervisor that day, almost knocked me on my back as she wrapped her powerful, bony arm around mine. I'd inadvertently said something in Ojibway. She'd assumed I was referring to her when a couple of the boys laughed at my comment. She yelled that she'd wash out my mouth with soap but instead dragged me to where she'd been sitting. I was shoved into a closet behind her chair. It was under the stairs leading to the second floor and it was used to store brooms and other cleaning materials.

I don't remember how long I was in there, but it seemed like an eternity. I was desperate. I tried to sit up but banged my head on the overhead stairs. I tried to see the light under the door. Hearing the sounds of play outside the closet at least made me feel closer to my classmates. I clenched my eyes to visualize my cousin Dee and me frolicking at Treaty Point. I stretched my legs—which rattled a pail in the closet and then upset it. Sister S. hissed at me to be quiet. At least her crackly voice reassured me that someone was nearby. I sobbed for a while, to no avail. Eventually she let me out. Her first word was "*Tiens!* (Take that!)" followed by a warning not to speak my "savage" language.

...

As a young boy I spoke only Ojibway. I did know certain things in English from hearing them said by others. . . . My education in English was long and tedious, and the lessons sometimes very surprising. Spending time on our reserve and hearing

Ojibway had allowed the priests and others in authority to learn some of our language and sometimes understand the gist of our conversations. The nuns in particular would listen intently when we whispered and talked in Ojibway. They'd pretend not to hear or understand us so as to catch us saying something they didn't like. I thought then that this was one of the reasons we couldn't speak our language. I later learned that they thought it was a language of savages and not created by God.⁶

Other punishments to prevent the children from speaking their native languages included forced isolation, withholding of meals, and washing the child's mouth with soap. In extreme cases, teachers gave students electrical shocks or pushed needles into their tongues to associate the speaking of their mother tongue with excruciating pain.⁷

Connection QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the use of English and French was so heavily enforced in school and the use of indigenous languages resulted in punishment? What effects, both short- and long-term, do you think the enforcement of European languages had on the students?
2. How important is your language to your identity? In what ways does language tie together places, people, and traditions that are the centre of one's identity?
3. What is lost for individuals and a culture when a language is no longer spoken?

6 Theodore Fontaine, *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools* (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2010), 106–109.

7 "These Schools Are Our Schools," *The Economist*, October 9, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/america/21588084-and-theyre-much-worse-they-could-be-these-schools-are-our-schools>.



READING 6 **Schedule and Discipline**

European ideas of discipline were a central component of the Indian Residential Schools. Often, Europeans viewed Indigenous Peoples as lacking the discipline to make a decent living. To this day, a common insulting stereotype of Indigenous Peoples is that they are lazy (see Reading 1: Culture, Stereotypes, and Identity). Historically, European notions of hard work and discipline have been closely associated with the ideas of independence, individualism, and self-sufficiency (see Reading 4: Curriculum).⁸ Indeed, the prevailing belief among Euro-Canadians was that if people worked hard enough, they would succeed in life, and that failure to do so was a sign of poor discipline. But most failed to recognize the ways in which the colonial policies, discrimination, and lack of any meaningful investment in the reserves had negatively impacted the prosperity of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Indeed, many Europeans believed indigenous values needed to be eradicated and replaced with Western ways.

Because money was limited and students' labour was vital, many residential schools taught only half days. Daily life consisted of prayers and lessons for half the day, generally in the mornings. In the second half of the day, boys were trained in farming and basic crafts. Girls received instruction in domestic skills, very frequently sewing and mending their own clothes. In addition, students were assigned chores such as milking cows, collecting eggs, cutting and splitting firewood, picking fruit, and doing kitchen work. All activities, from the time the students woke up to the time they went to sleep, were directed by a bell. This system of discipline and surveillance at the residential schools starkly contrasted with the traditional education methods of the indigenous communities, in which discipline was indirect and non-coercive. Use of textbooks, memorization, and formal teaching also contrasted with indigenous oral tradition and learning methods, which emphasized learning from experience and from the wisdom of elders and other community members.⁹

Also in contrast to the traditional ways of life, in which people's chores were tied to the seasons and concrete communal needs (such as hunting and harvesting, which had to be performed at specific times), the residential schools enforced a harshly methodical schedule. In 1851, Samuel Rose, a principal at the Methodist Mount Elgin Residential School in Ontario, explained the schedule in his school:

Regulations. – The bell rings at 5 A.M. when the children rise, wash, dress and are made ready for breakfast. At half-past-five they breakfast; after which they all



Girls attending the residential schools received training in domestic skills such as sewing and needlework. Here, Mi'kmaq girls are shown in a sewing class at Shubenacadie Indian Residential School in Nova Scotia in 1929.

assemble in the large school-room and unite in reading the Scriptures, singing and prayer. From six till nine the boys are employed and taught to work on the farm, and the girls in the house. At nine, they enter their Schools. At twelve, they dine and spend the remaining time till one in recreation. At one, they enter School, where they are taught till half-past three, after which they resume their manual employment till six. At six they sup and again unite in reading the Scriptures, singing and prayer. In the Winter season the boys are engaged in the Evening school, and the girls are taught needle-work until 9, when all return to rest. They are never left alone, but are constantly under the eye of some of those engaged in this arduous work.¹⁰

Dorothy Day, who attended Mount Elgin from 1929 to 1930, relates what a typical morning at school looked like and describes the heavily regulated schedule the children had:

You had five minutes to get up when the first bell would ring, five minutes to get up and put your clothes on, five minutes to run two flights of stairs and be downstairs and stand in line for the second bell to go in and wash your hands and face. And that's all they give you—five minutes to wash your hands and face and brush your

Daily Schedule at Mount Elgin School, 1951

5 a.m.	Bell rings, students rise, wash, and dress
5:30 a.m.	Breakfast, then prayers
6–9 a.m.	Boys work on farm and girls in house
9–12 p.m.	School
12–1 p.m.	Lunch and recreation
1–3:30 p.m.	School
3:30–6 p.m.	Work on farm
6 p.m.	Dinner and prayers
evening	In winter boys in evening school, girls learn needlework
9 p.m.	Bedtime

Source: Hope Maclean, "Ojibwa Participation in Methodist Residential Schools," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 25 (2005), 115.

This daily schedule illustrates how students at Mount Elgin Industrial Residential School were kept on a strict schedule from the time they awoke at 5 a.m. to bedtime at 9 p.m.

teeth, and comb your hair and stand in line again. We'd be running over each other to get down those stairs—it was good exercise—no wonder nobody ever put on weight. They'd be standing at the bottom of the stairs with a watch to make sure you were down there in 5 minutes. You should see the girls coming down there—we had those boots that laced up high and they'd tie them together and lace them when they got to the bottom. If you weren't down there—up you would go to get the strap. They would give you the strap for being late—you were supposed to be down there when you were supposed to be.¹¹

Finally, discipline went hand in hand with a strict schedule of religious instruction. Terry Lusty, who attended St. Joseph's Indian Residential School from the age of three, describes it as follows:

Every morning we went to church service. Every evening was Benediction. Everyday. And with me it got to a point where I was just saturated with religion. I turned my back on it later because it was just overwhelming. You virtually lived, ate, and breathed religion. In school you had catechism. You had the Bible and the prayers and all the Latin, learning the Latin words. I can still spiel them off today, even though I haven't used it for so many years. But don't ask me what they mean. But as if that wasn't enough, on top of that because I had a singing voice, I had to be part of the choir. I had to be an altar boy . . .¹²

Connection QUESTIONS

1. How did the structure of the school day respond to the prejudices and stereotypes instructors at the residential schools had about indigenous culture?
2. As you read the two passages from Dorothy Day and Terry Lusty, what words stand out?
3. What are the qualities of a good school? You might create a word map to record your ideas. Then create a contrasting word map based on the descriptions of the residential schools. You might want to add to it as you continue reading this section.
4. How do these descriptions of the schedules at residential schools compare to your own school day? What is missing from the schedule at the residential school? What do you think would have been the impact of such differences on the lives of the children who attended residential schools?

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- 8 See John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1999), 3.
 - 9 Derek Smith, "The 'Policy of Aggressive Civilization' and Projects of Governance in Roman Catholic Industrial Schools for Native Peoples in Canada," 260.
 - 10 Rev. Rose Report, 1851, in Elizabeth Graham, ed., *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Ontario: Hefle Publishing, 1997), 227–28.
 - 11 Elizabeth Graham, *The Mush Hole*, 436.
 - 12 *100 Years of Loss: The Residential School System in Canada, Teachers' Guide* (Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2011), 117.



READING 7 **Punishment and Abuse**

Traditional indigenous education, including adult responses to misbehaviour, rarely involved physical punishment. In sharp contrast, many of the methods used by the staff and faculty at the residential schools to discipline students involved severe corporal punishment. Forms of physical punishment were acceptable in both Europe and British North America and were common at the elite boarding schools in Britain at the time. But the residential schools were no elite boarding schools, and for many students the physical punishment experienced in the residential schools was physical abuse. Rather than preparing students for life after schooling was complete, a mixture of willful neglect and abuse negatively impacted many residential school students for the rest of their lives.

The line between punishment and abuse was frequently crossed. Many in the schools' administrations believed that the students' independent spirit had to be broken in order for them to accept a new way of life. Students who did not adhere to school schedules and regulations received strappings (whippings) and were often humiliated in front of peers. Students who tried to escape from the schools had their hair cut very short. Indeed, such offences would earn students long hours—even days—in a dark and secluded closet, often without real food.¹³ (The cutting of hair on the first day at school or for punishment had a profound meaning. Long hair has a deep and spiritual meaning in indigenous cultures. To many, it serves as an extension of a person's mind, reflective of its strength and beauty. The hair length and style also distinguish between different indigenous nations. And symbolically, the cutting of a person's hair by an enemy is an act of humiliation and forced submission.¹⁴)

The staff at the Mohawk Institute even built a prison cell for those who tried to escape.¹⁵ Indeed, disobedience and escape were two of the most common forms of resistance to the harsh, foreign discipline. In the 1990s, as the truth behind the treatment of indigenous students came to light, it became clear that discipline and punishment could easily lead to physical abuse. And since the abusive behaviour of some staff of the residential schools was covered up, some of them routinely abused their students both sexually and physically.¹⁶

Geraldine Sanderson, who attended Gordon's Indian Residence in Saskatchewan from 1959 to 1964, talks about her classmates' desires to return to the familiarity of home. However, few ever made it very far, since the schools were often established in isolated areas, and punishments for those who were caught were harsh. She explains:



Saskatchewan Archives Board P-A8223 (1)-(2)

These photographs are examples of staged “before and after” photos taken by government officials. Here, Thomas Moore, a young indigenous boy who attended Regina Industrial School, is portrayed with short hair and Western-style clothing. Officials and missionaries created such propaganda so that they could adopt it as evidence of the radical, “beneficial” changes the schools brought about in their students.

Gordon’s Indian Residence is an Anglican Institution. When I attended there, students were confirmed when they reached age 13.¹⁷ It was a really big deal. Everyone was confirmed.

I attended school at the Gordon’s residence from 1959–1964. I was nine years old when I started there. Every year a big bus would come to pick us up at the reserve and take us to the school. It took over three hours to get to Gordon’s from the James Smith Reserve. It was a long way from home. I was a very little girl. I got very lonesome.

Every once in a while students would run away, trying to get home. They would travel at night, helping themselves to vegetables and fruit from gardens along the way. One time we even took a pony from a farmer’s yard and rode it for several nights trying to get home. We hardly ever made it home, we were usually caught. And then we were punished.

Punishment for running away varied. One boy was hauled up in front of all the assembled students by the principal. He had a reputation for being mean. He forced the boy to pull his pants down and gave the boy 10–15 straps with a great big leather strap. Girls often had their head shaved bald if they tried to run away so that

everyone would know. It was awful. I felt very ashamed. We also had to scrub the stairs with a toothbrush.¹⁸

When students who could not take the separation from their parents and the harsh environment ran away from the school and were caught by the school staff or the Indian agents, they often received strappings or were struck with the “cat-o-nine tails,” a whip with a cotton cord and nine knotted thongs, commonly used for punishment by the British navy and army.¹⁹ For offences such as running away, students also received hours of isolation in dark closets, boiler rooms, or abandoned areas of the school.

Even common childhood accidents like bed-wetting were punished harshly. Lorna, who was at the Mohawk Institute from 1940 to 1945, describes the “shock treatments” the girls would receive, regardless of whether they had actually wet their beds.

They used to give us shock treatments for bed-wetting. A lot of us never wet our beds but we still had to do it anyway. They said it worked for the girls but it didn't work for the boys. They couldn't really ever find out why, but I think it was because of the sexual abuse that went on there. . . . They used to bring in a battery—a motor of some sort or some kind of gadget, and he'd put the girl's hand on it and it would jerk us and it would go all the way through us from end to end—it would travel. And we would do that about three times.²⁰

At the Alberni School on Vancouver Island, which was in operation from 1892 to 1973 under the United Church, punishments were particularly harsh, and treatment of the children was often brutal. A staff member in 1961 and 1962, Marian MacFarlane, was fired for attempting to rescue a young child from a severe beating.

The local dentists were given free Novocaine by the government for the Native kids, but the traditional practice after the war years was for them to hoard the Novocaine for their practice in Port Alberni and just work on the Indians without painkillers. Everyone in the school knew about this and condoned it, from the principal on down. No one minded when Indians were hurt, naturally; they were being beaten every day.

To give you an example of the prevailing mentality towards Indians, I once caught a matron beating a little girl with a piano leg. She was just murdering that kid, who was maybe six years old, and she would have killed her if I hadn't have grabbed the matron and socked her one. So off the matron goes to complain to John Andrews, the principal. That would have been in 1962. You know what Andrews did? He fired me for hitting the matron! And you know what he said? 'I couldn't let the matron go because she plays the organ on Sundays. Anything she did to that little squaw would

have been better than us losing our organist.' Well, that shows you what we were dealing with: the lives of the Indian kids were completely expendable. They were considered less than human, almost like a disease we had to get rid of.²¹

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What do these stories about punishment reveal about the attitudes of school officials toward their students? Why do you think that physical punishment was so common? What do you think school officials were trying to achieve with the physical punishments? At what point does punishment become abuse?
2. How does Marian MacFarlane explain why the dentists did not give painkillers to the indigenous students? What is represented by such acts? As you read the different accounts from the students in this reading, what insights do you get about what it might have been like for a student at one of the Indian Residential Schools? What adjectives do the students use to describe their experiences?
3. How do you explain the principal's reaction to MacFarlane's attempt to stop the matron from beating the student? What message was sent by firing MacFarlane instead of the matron? What do you wish the principal had done?

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- 13 In 1914, the Mohawk Institute was sued and fined after Nelles Ashton, the principal, imprisoned for three days two girls who had escaped from the school. The girls received only water for sustenance. See Elizabeth Graham, ed., *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Ontario: Heffle Publishing, 1997), 110.
 - 14 For a selection of elders' testimonies regarding the importance of hair in Native American and indigenous cultures, see <http://www.whitewolfpack.com/2013/08/elders-talk-about-significance-of-long.html> (accessed May 12, 2015).
 - 15 Elizabeth Graham, *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools*, 23.
 - 16 For painful testimonies on this topic, see Garnet Angeconeb, "Garnet's Journey: From Residential School to Reconciliation," accessed February 26, 2015, <http://garnetsjourney.com/chapters/residential-school/>.
 - 17 Confirmation is a Christian rite in which a young member of the church affirms his or her faith. It marks the fact that the person is mature, understands the teaching, and can become a full member.
 - 18 Geraldine Sanderson, "Running Away," Residential Schools website, accessed February 26, 2015, <http://allaboutresidentialschools.weebly.com/personal-stories.html>.
 - 19 Understanding Slavery Initiative website, http://www.understandingslavery.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=532:cat-online-tails&Itemid=255.
 - 20 Elizabeth Graham, *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools*, 378.
 - 21 Marian MacFarlane, testimony at Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre forum, Vancouver, BC, February 9, 1998.



READING 8 **Resistance**

Shortly after the residential schools system began, parents, who had for the most part been reluctant to send their children away, began to voice their discontent with the schools. This was especially true for graduates of these schools, people who had experienced firsthand the harsh and sometimes abusive treatment by residential school staff members.²² Many indigenous leaders believed that the residential schools were a violation of the treaties between the government and First Nations. When the government signed these treaties, it promised to provide education for children on the reserves. Even those who had wanted government education did not envision a situation in which the children would be taken away from them to undergo a complete cultural transformation.²³ The law, however, was clear: after 1920, all First Nations children had to be educated. In many cases, parents were forced to give up their children under threat. Letters from students, even though they were censored by school staff, brought news about the poor conditions and harsh discipline to the parents. Indigenous parents then brought their complaints to a missionary or to the Department of Indian Affairs. Sometimes the complaints would lead to an investigation of the school and some action, such as an increase in food supplies or the dismissal of an inappropriate staff member. Sometimes family or members of the community would go directly to the principal of a school and demand that their concerns be addressed.

Some parents went even further and removed their children from residential schools, placing them in day schools on the reserve or in schools of a different denomination that they felt were kinder to the children. Some families went so far as to hide their children when the Indian agents came searching for them. Residential schools historian James R. Miller conducted an interview with a man who attended Whitehorse Baptist Mission School from 1951 to 1953. The grandmother of the interviewee protected her grandson from missionaries when they came to her house searching for him. The man recalls:

My grandmother was very, very upset. I distinctly recall the third time—my final year at the Baptist Mission school—when these missionaries came again to take me away, I was at that time living with my grandmother and my aunt . . . who was a blind person. They in a sense were my immediate family. . . . When these missionaries came to the door and they said, “Well, we have permission to take [name deleted] to this Whitehorse Baptist Mission school,” and they came to physically take me out of my home, I hung on to my grandmother’s legs. I was crying, of course, and my grandmother was very angry. She was quite old—in her sixties, probably.

I remember her taking her *tut* as we called it, walking cane—and beating this missionary, this white missionary over the backside, and saying, ‘You leave my grandson alone. You are not taking him anywhere.’ And my aunt Pat came out—and she was blind then, too—and saying the same thing, supporting her mother. And saying that you cannot take this child from this home no matter what permission you have. They didn’t produce any written document at the time . . . My grandmother stood by me, and she was able to drive these white missionaries out of our home. And they finally left in defeat. And this is one Indian child who didn’t get to go to the Whitehorse Baptist Mission school forever after.²⁴

Students would express their displeasure, as children tend to do, by not cooperating with school authorities and through small acts of defiance. They would sometimes give their teachers derogatory nicknames in their native languages, which was amusing to them and their peers, since the teachers in question did not understand indigenous languages. In doing so, they not only mocked the authority of the system but also kept alive the very thing the schools sought to eradicate. Continuing to speak their languages and choosing not to forget them, both in school and on the reserve, was often another conscious decision of defiance. Lillian Elias, who attended residential school in Aklavik, a part of the Northwest Territories, tells of her refusal to have her language beaten out of her:

When they roughed us girls up that’s when I really would get scared. I never got roughed up myself, but I got put in a post a couple of times because I said one word in my language. I think that’s why I really fought to keep my language. Because they didn’t want me to speak it I thought to myself, “you’re not going to keep me from speaking my language”, and so I really picked it right back up when I got out of there. I picked it up with my grandparents. I lived with my grandparents all the time. My grandparents being there, and my mom and dad and my aunts and my uncles, we had like a little community. . . . I got strong. I’m very powerful, I must say, I am today because of when I think back and I think that I couldn’t do this, I couldn’t do that, that’s why I never lost my language because I wasn’t going to let them beat me. I wasn’t going to let them take everything away from me. They could take my pride and things like that but not my language.²⁵

A few students also refused to cooperate with faculty and staff by not participating in class, ignoring their coursework, or not eating their meals. Also common was what Celia Haig-Brown defines as “organized crime.”²⁶ Among these crimes was theft, particularly stealing food from the kitchens. Students who had access to the food supply would sneak out food and then develop a system to barter it. Although these acts were brought about by pure hunger and elicited guilt afterward, many students stood in solidarity with one another and did not report these actions.

A more extreme way of resisting for those who did not attempt to run away was through acts of arson. In rare instances, students burned their school down, as was the case at the Mohawk Institute, which was set on fire twice.²⁷ Pupils believed that setting their institutions on fire was a solution to their problems, as outbreaks of fire would either destroy the school and close it down altogether, leaving students free to leave, or would result in expulsion for the culprits, ensuring that they did not have to return.²⁸

These acts allowed parents and students alike to speak out, as well as act out, against a system that took away their ability to make decisions about their lifestyle and method of education.

Connection QUESTIONS

1. The title of this reading is “Resistance.” What does the word mean in the context of the Indian Residential Schools? How would you describe the behaviours in this reading—as resistance? Defiance? Disobedience? What is the line between resistance and crime?
2. What were the forms of resistance that parents and students displayed in residential schools? How effective do you think they were? What else could Indigenous Peoples do to protest the decisions of the government? What made protest and resistance so difficult?
3. What do you think drives individuals and groups to engage in acts of resistance in spite of the risks, such as corporal punishment?

22 Elizabeth Graham, ed., *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Ontario: Heffle Publishing, 1997), 9; see also the reports of Rev. James Musgrove, principal of Mt. Elgin, 234–35.

23 Megan Sproule-Jones, “Crusading for the Forgotten: Dr. Peter Bryce, Public Health, and Prairie Native Residential Schools,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 13 (1996), 208.

24 Quoted in James R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 343.

25 Lillian Elias, “We Were So Far Away: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools,” Legacy of Hope Foundation, <http://weweresofaraway.ca/survivor-stories/lillian-elias/>.

26 Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2002), 102.

27 Elizabeth Graham, ed., *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Waterloo, Ontario: Heffle Publishing, 1997), 100.

28 *Ibid.*, 23, 31.





**IN THE
AFTERMATH**

SECTION 5

Apologies

In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality. We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ. . . . We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be.

—United Church Apology to First Nations, 1986¹

What are the ways in which a government can redress its oppressive actions against its own people? This question has been the subject of many discussions in the aftermath of episodes of mass violation of human rights and genocides. In some cases, such as the Holocaust, the international community set up a legal process to try the perpetrators in court. In other places, such as Chile, the government set up national commissions to investigate the crimes committed by former dictators and offer reparations to the victims.

Often included in this process, which is called transitional justice, are *apologies* and *truth and reconciliation commissions* (the subject of the next section). The goals of these elements in transitional justice are not only to shed light on past crimes and, in some cases, to sentence perpetrators of these crimes but also to help the groups involved in the conflict move on to more peaceful futures.

In 1969, the Trudeau government declared a new policy known as the White Paper. (For more on the policy, see Section 8.) The policy sought to do away with all the treaties and agreements with the First Nations groups in Canada, beginning with the Royal Proclamation of 1763, and integrate members of these groups as ordinary Canadians, thereby ignoring their legally recognized rights to cultural autonomy and self-government under the treaties and the Royal Proclamation.² The federal government soon faced growing opposition to this policy and was forced to withdraw the policy paper. Also, in the 1970s and early 1980s, numerous Supreme Court cases and agreements upheld some of the land rights and treaties First Nations had signed with the government decades before.³

Although the United Church responded first and apologized in 1986 for its role in the operation of the residential schools, the schools and their tragic effects on their students went unacknowledged by the leadership of the main bodies running them: the Catholic orders and the Anglican Church. Both were slow to respond to the changing tide, and, concerned about the legal and financial consequences of any admission of wrong-doing, they remained silent.

But a shocking testimony given in October of 1990 shattered the silence in which the abuse in residential schools was shrouded. Phil Fontaine, then Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, decided to speak up about his experience in a residential school in Fort Alexander. On national television, the soft-spoken chief reported on a meeting with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Boniface (Manitoba) during which he described widespread physical, psychological, and sexual abuse in the residential schools and demanded a thorough inquiry.⁴ He called for the church to set up a committee to investigate allegations of the sexual misconduct of its clergy.⁵ This was not the first time such allegations had surfaced (the topic was sometimes discussed in private conversations between former students of the residential schools). But this time, the repercussions were different. The media picked up Fontaine's story, and it was featured in many major media outlets. A flood of confessions followed, and the stories of many abused students, referred to since as survivors, came to light. Soon the churches were forced to acknowledge their actions in the past. Cautiously, some say even reluctantly, they offered their apologies.

Guiding QUESTIONS

1. What is an apology, and what can it accomplish?
2. In what ways can apologies help a society move toward a more peaceful future?
3. Is it enough to say you are sorry? What besides apologies might be needed in a process of reconciling past injustices?

1 "Apology to First Nations Peoples (1986)," United Church of Canada website, accessed November 17, 2014, <http://www.united-church.ca/beliefs/policies/1986/a651>.

2 According to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), "Aboriginal visions of self-government are as varied as their traditions, circumstances, and aspirations. Scores of detailed proposals for self-government have been drawn up by Aboriginal Peoples across Canada. The Commission identified [several] models, each with many possible variations. These models are all realistic and workable in the framework of the Canadian federation." See "Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," Canadian Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014597/1100100014637>.

3 Alan D. McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2013), 323–326.

- 4 "Phil Fontaine's Shocking Testimony of Sexual Abuse," CBC Digital Archives, accessed November 17, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/phil-fontaines-shocking-testimony-of-sexual-abuse>.
- 5 Eric Taylor Woods, *The Anglican Church of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools: A Meaning-Centred Analysis of the Long Road to Apology* (dissertation, London School of Economics, 2012), 72–75.



READING 1 **The Churches Apologize**

In the late 1970s, the churches of Canada were coming under increasing scrutiny because they were so closely identified with the colonial project of civilizing and Christianizing the Indigenous Peoples, operating the residential schools, and the disastrous consequences of both. Still, not much happened, at least not publicly. But on an ordinary day in 1981, indigenous activist Alberta Billy stood up and told the United Church Executive General Council: “The United Church owes the Native peoples of Canada an apology for what you did to them in residential school.”⁶ This bold statement left many members of the council speechless. Five years later, after much discussion and soul searching, the Rt. Rev. Robert Smith delivered the apology below in the name of the United Church.⁷

Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your Elders an understanding of creation and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich, and to be treasured. We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality. We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition for accepting the gospel. . . . As a result you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be. We ask you to forgive us. . . .⁸

The Canadian Catholic Church did not have a collective role in the residential schools; decisions were often made by individual dioceses and orders. It also did not make a collective apology for the role the various dioceses played in the residential schools system. Pope Benedict XVI met Aboriginal leaders in 2009 and expressed his sorrow for the experiences of the residential school survivors. Many critics argue that this was not a full apology.⁹ Individual bishops did apologize, following the example of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This order, in charge of the largest number of the residential schools, offered this apology in 1991:

Next year, 1992, marks the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Europeans on the shores of America. As large scale celebrations are being prepared to mark this occasion, the Oblates of Canada wish, through this apology, to show solidarity with many Native people in Canada whose history has been adversely affected by this event. . . . As well, recent criticisms of Indian residential schools and the exposure of instances of physical and sexual abuse within these schools call for such an apology. . . . We apologize for the part we played in the cultural, ethnic, linguistic,

and religious imperialism that was part of the mentality with which the Peoples of Europe first met the aboriginal peoples and which consistently has lurked behind the way the Native peoples of Canada have been treated by civil governments and by the churches. We were, naively, part of this mentality and were, in fact, often a key player in its implementation. We recognize that this mentality has, from the beginning, and ever since, continually threatened the cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions of the Native peoples.

We recognize that many of the problems that beset Native communities today—high unemployment, alcoholism, family breakdown, domestic violence, spiraling suicide rates, lack of healthy self-esteem—are not so much the result of personal failure as they are the result of centuries of systemic imperialism. Any people stripped of its traditions as well as of its pride falls victim to precisely these social ills. For the part that we played, however inadvertent and naive that participation might have been, in the setting up and maintaining of a system that stripped others of not only their lands but also of their cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions we sincerely apologize. . . .

In sympathy with recent criticisms of Native Residential Schools, we wish to apologize for the part we played in the setting up and the maintaining of those schools. We apologize for the *existence of the schools themselves*, recognizing that the biggest abuse was not what happened in the schools, but that the schools themselves happened . . . that the primal bond inherent within families was violated as a matter of policy, that children were usurped from their natural communities, and that, implicitly and explicitly, these schools operated out of the premise that European languages, traditions, and religious practices were superior to native languages, traditions, and religious practices. The residential schools were an attempt to assimilate aboriginal peoples and we played an important role in the unfolding of this design. For this we sincerely apologize.

We wish to apologize in a very particular way for the instances of physical and sexual abuse that occurred in those schools. . . . Finally, we wish to apologize as well for our past dismissal of many of the riches of native religious tradition. We broke some of your peace pipes and we considered some of your sacred practices as pagan and superstitious. This too had its origins in the colonial mentality, our European superiority complex, which was grounded in a particular view of history. We apologize for this blindness and disrespect. . . .

. . . Sincerity alone does not set people above their place in history. Thousands of persons operated out of this mentality and gave their lives in dedication to an ideal that, while sincere in its intent, was, at one point, naively linked to a certain cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic superiority complex. These men and women sincerely

believed that their vocations and actions were serving both God and the best interests of the Native Peoples to whom they were ministering. History has, partially, rendered a cruel judgment on their efforts. . . .

Recognizing that within every sincere apology there is implicit the promise of conversion to a new way of acting. We, the Oblates of Canada, wish to pledge ourselves to a renewed relationship with Native Peoples which, while very much in line with the sincerity and intent of our past relationship, seeks to move beyond past mistakes to a new level of respect and mutuality . . .

Reverend Doug Crosby OMI

President of the Oblate Conference of Canada

On behalf of the 1200 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate living and ministering in Canada¹⁰

Finally, in 1992, the Anglican Church, too, offered an apology. It came about late and after years of internal changes and criticism, similar to the changes the Catholic orders went through. Primate Archbishop Michael Peers offered a shorter apology in the name of the Anglican Church. Here are the key sentences from the apology: “I am sorry, more than I can say, that we were part of a system which took you and your children from home and family. I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity. I am sorry, more than I can say, that in our schools so many were abused physically, sexually, culturally and emotionally. On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I present our apology.”¹¹

Connection QUESTIONS

1. How would you define the term *apology*? What purposes do apologies serve? What are the qualities of a good apology?
2. What “confusion” did the United Church admit to? Read its apology carefully.
3. What did Reverend Doug Crosby apologize for in his statement from the Conference of Oblates? What responsibility does he take? What words does he use to describe the intent of the Oblates in the past?
4. Reverend Crosby wrote: “We apologize for the existence of the schools themselves, recognizing that the biggest abuse was not what happened in the schools, but that the schools themselves happened.” What point was he trying to make?

5. The Anglican apology reads: “I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity.” What is Archbishop Michael Peers, who delivered the statement, apologizing for? What does he mean by “we tried to remake you in our image”? How is that idea related to the idea of assimilation? What religious echoes are found in the statement? What might they mean?
6. How do these apologies measure up to the qualities of a good apology that you listed in response to question 1?

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- 6 Martha Troian, “25 Years Later: The United Church of Canada’s Apology to Aboriginal Peoples,” *Indian Country Today Media Network*, accessed November 17, 2014, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/08/15/25-years-later-united-church-canadas-apology-aboriginal-peoples-47418>.
 - 7 The United Church was formed in 1925 as a union of the Congregationalist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches. It oversaw the operation of 13 to 15 residential schools (roughly 10% of the total). It made a more sweeping apology in 1998 and has committed itself since to working closely with indigenous communities to meet their needs and expectations.
 - 8 “Apology to First Nations Peoples (1986),” United Church of Canada, <http://www.united-church.ca/beliefs/policies/1986/a651>.
 - 9 “The Residential School System,” University of British Columbia Indigenous Foundations website, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-residential-school-system.html>.
 - 10 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, “An Apology to the First Nations of Canada by the Oblate Conference of Canada,” Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, accessed November 17, 2014, http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/oblate_apology_english.pdf.
 - 11 “The Apology—English,” Anglican Church of Canada, accessed November 17, 2014, <http://www.anglican.ca/relationships/apology/english>.



READING 2 **The Government Apologizes**

By the 1980s, it became clear that the effects of the residential schools were far greater and longer-lasting than most non-indigenous Canadians cared to admit.¹² The government was reluctant to admit wrongdoing even in the face of rising tensions with Indigenous Peoples. In 1988, George Erasmus, head of the Assembly of First Nations, warned the Canadian government that ignoring the rights and land claims of the Indigenous Peoples could lead to violence. “We want to let you know,” he said, “that you are dealing with fire. We say, Canada, deal with us today because our militant leaders are already born. We cannot promise that you are going to like the kind of violent political action we can just about guarantee the next generation is going to bring to our reserves.”¹³

In August of 1991, the government established the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) to address growing indigenous concerns and issues. It did so in response to increasing anger in indigenous communities and a series of violent conflicts. In 1996, after five years of extensive research and interviews, the commission produced a highly critical report. It concluded that it was necessary to fundamentally change the relationship between the government and the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Instead of the paternalistic government policies, the relationship between the two communities should be based “on a new footing of mutual recognition and respect, sharing and responsibility.”¹⁴ The RCAP created an extensive 20-year agenda of changes related to treaties, employment, education, health care, women’s rights, and other issues. Its report triggered the first public apology from the government.

On January 8, 1998, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jane Stewart delivered a written apology to Phil Fontaine (at that time the Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations). It was called a Statement of Reconciliation. After thanking the commission, Stewart said:

Sadly, our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal people is not something in which we can take pride. Attitudes of racial and cultural superiority led to a suppression of Aboriginal culture and values. As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of Aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian

Act. We must acknowledge that the result of these actions was the erosion of the political, economic and social systems of Aboriginal people and nations. . . .

One aspect of our relationship with Aboriginal people over this period that requires particular attention is the Residential School system. This system separated many children from their families and communities and prevented them from speaking their own languages and from learning about their heritage and cultures. In the worst cases, it left legacies of personal pain and distress that continue to reverberate in Aboriginal communities to this day. Tragically, some children were the victims of physical and sexual abuse. . . . To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry.¹⁵

The government set a fund of \$350 million “for community-based healing as a first step to deal with the legacy of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools,” and it laid plans for community development and strengthening indigenous governance.¹⁶ Many Indigenous Peoples, however, felt that the statement came too late and that the offered reparations were too small. Survivors of the residential schools felt that a more comprehensive and just settlement was needed, including a more authoritative apology from the government.

Overall, the indigenous communities and their representatives felt that the reparations fell short of their expectations; they expected bigger sums and a commitment to helping people with their land claims and social and cultural challenges. For many, the issue was broader than the residential schools, and Stewart’s apology was not enough.

For years, individual residential school graduates were pursuing legal actions against the government, claiming physical and mental abuse caused by their teachers. Efforts to resolve these legal claims were under way by 2003 (on the basis of individual lawsuits), but the indigenous leaders were left out. In response, in 2005, Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), launched a class-action lawsuit on behalf of First Nations survivors.¹⁷

After long negotiations, the claimants agreed to settle out of court, signing the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) in 2006 with representatives of the churches and the Indigenous Peoples. As part of the agreement, the government committed to starting a process of reconciliation with former students and survivors of the residential schools. In accordance with the claimants’ demand, the agreement included a government apology, a reparations program, and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which began in 2007. On June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a

public apology in front of a joint session of Parliament and representatives of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, who appeared in full ceremonial dress. He said:

The treatment of children in Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history. . . . Two primary objectives of the residential schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption that aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child.”

Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country. . . . The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language . . .

The legacy of Indian residential schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today. It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. . . . Therefore, on behalf of the government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to aboriginal peoples for Canada’s role in the Indian residential schools system.

To the approximately 86,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. . . . The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long.

The burden is properly ours as a government, and as a country. . . . The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. We are sorry.¹⁸

Connection QUESTIONS

1. As you think about apologies that you have personally received, which ones had meaning and which did not? Can you think of personal examples in which the language of the apology contributed to how you felt about it?
2. Re-read the excerpt from the Statement of Reconciliation. What did the government apologize for? What was the government taking responsibility for? Can the speaker, Jane Stewart, apologize for the actions of past governments?
3. In Harper's apology, what precisely is the government apologizing for? As you read the statement, does it appear that the government is taking full responsibility? If so, for what?
4. Just a year after the apology, at the G20 summit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Harper expressed a sense of pride in Canada and Canadian history. He stated:

We're so self-effacing as Canadians that we sometimes forget the assets we do have that other people see. . . . We are one of the most stable regimes in history. . . . We also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them. . . . Canada is big enough to make a difference but not big enough to threaten anybody. And that is a huge asset if it's properly used.¹⁹

Do his words contradict his apology? If you could speak to him about the two public statements, what would you say? What would you want to ask?

- 12 John S. Milloy, "The Early Indian Acts: Developmental Strategy and Constitutional Change," in *Sweet Promises: A Reading on Indian-White Relationships in Canada*, ed. J. R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; 1991), 56–58.
- 13 "Standoff at Oka," CBC website, accessed November 17, 20014, <http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP17CH2PA2LE.html>.
- 14 "People to People, Nation to Nation," Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada website, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014597/1100100014637>.
- 15 Government of Canada, "Statement of Reconciliation, in "Address by the Honourable Jane Stewart . . . on the occasion of the unveiling of Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan," Jan. 7, 1998, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada website, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015725/1100100015726>.
- 16 Government of Canada, "Statement of Reconciliation."
- 17 "AFN National Chief Files Class Action Claim Against the Government of Canada for Residential Schools Policy," *MediaNet*, August 3, 2005, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://media.knet.ca/node/1528>.
- 18 "Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered a full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system," Prime Minister of Canada website, accessed Nov. 17, 2014, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2008/06/11/prime-minister-harper-offers-full-apology-behalf-canadians-indian-residential>.
- 19 David Ljunggren, "Every G20 Nation Wants to be Canada, Insists PM," *Reuters*, accessed November 17, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/09/26/columns-us-g20-canada-advantages-idUSTRE58P05Z20090926>.

READING 3 **Are Apologies Enough?**

Prime Minister Harper's apology was, by and large, well received by the representatives of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who attended the joint session. They viewed it as an important symbolic act of acknowledgement and a step toward restoring faith between the groups. The apology was a symbolic act on a grand scale. Many who worked for years with the hope of hearing an apology felt that it might have been the beginning of a new era. Private indigenous citizens also reacted to the apology, and their responses varied from awe to confusion, and from acceptance to apprehension.²⁰

While many among the public were gratified when Prime Minister Harper delivered the government's apology, some indigenous leaders thought that it fell short of what they hoped to hear. Lynda Gray was the executive director of the Urban Native Youth Association at the time. She wrote:

I can only imagine how meaningful the apology would have been to the aboriginal community if he had chosen to walk the walk instead of talk the talk of reconciliation. Some of the important things that the prime minister chose not to share with Canadians include the destruction of the cultural and spiritual traditions that would have helped our communities to recover from the residential-school experiences and the learned negative behaviours of violence, women-hating, homophobia, and elder abuse . . . [as well as] Canada's refusal to sign on to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

. . . Research reports such as the Cedar Project—historical trauma, sexual abuse, and HIV risk among young aboriginal people who use injection and non-injection drugs in two Canadian cities—clearly show the link of the ongoing multigenerational effects of the residential-school experience on our young people. . . . Prime Minister Harper acknowledges the ongoing effects of the residential-school experience but has not made any meaningful commitment to foster positive change, especially for our young people. . . . As many have stated, it will take much more than an apology to help our communities move beyond the dark times that many of us are facing as a direct result of the residential-school experience.²¹

Thohahoken Michael Doxtater is the director of the Indigenous Education Project at McGill University. He posted the following response:

Indigenous people seek remedies to a long list of injustices that go far beyond the residential schools' direct and collateral victims addressed in Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology this week.

The closing of the residential-school door leads down a hallway lined with other doors most Indians know about. The partnership now involves walking down that hallway together.

My grandmother, Belva, my mother, June, and my older sisters Frances, Lynda and Lillian have more than 100 descendants. . . . Whether my relatives went to residential school or on-reserve schools, we all received an Indian Affairs education that tried to extinguish the Indian in us. . . .

Was the apology a show? Aimed only at the residential schools issue, was Canada saying, “We know you feel bad because one of our family burned down your house . . . but we’re only paying for the windows?”

Canada constantly flaunts the \$2 billion it has spent on residential-school payouts. The apology leads Canadians to continue to believe they are actually paying the bill.

For example, the same day the Conservative government was apologizing to aboriginals, Conservative MP Pierre Poilievre told a radio audience in Ottawa that Canada has spent a “tremendous amount of money”—\$10 billion in its 2007–08 budget with another \$4 billion for the apology.

He also said Indians needed to learn about “hard work.”

What the average Canadian heard is a message about how a large burden has fallen on the Canadian taxpayer to pay for native affairs.

For all that, the statement did make remarkable concessions.

First, Canada recognizes that collateral victims of residential schools are now admitted to the dialogue about reparations. Medical, social, and mental research provides evidence on the impact of the transmission of intergenerational trauma.

Second, the admission that “it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes” has implications in international law. The 1948 UN Genocide Conventions prohibit such forcible removal.

Third, Canada has ended its Indian termination policy. . . . Harper said early in Canada’s apology that “this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm and has no place in our country.”

Fourth, Harper’s benediction returns Canada to foundational principles between the Crown and indigenous peoples formed in our collective memory. “God bless you all, and God bless our land,” he said invoking God and country . . .

Other issues remain. There's the uninformed sterilization of native girls up into the 1980s. And the sorry inventory of conditions on reserves where disease, drinking water, housing and intergenerational transmission of trauma create enormous social problems. In the 1980s, an Indian Affairs treaty implementation report said Canada owed indigenous people for land, resource, and treaty obligations that amounted to \$11.5 trillion. Across the continent, vast tracts like the Great Lakes watershed have underlying title retained by indigenous people whose communities are treaty-based.

I met my cousins Mariah and Maryanne for supper. They asked me if I'd applied for any of the residential-school settlement money. They said they were getting \$35,000. "I'm going to get a new car," Maryanne said. "I already got one," said Mariah.

"Do you feel healed?" I asked.

They both laughed.

So did I.²²

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What specific concerns do Lynda Gray and Thohahoken Michael Doxtater raise about Harper's apology? What else might the indigenous people have wished Harper had said?
2. What might Thohahoken Michael Doxtater be saying in this statement: "We know you feel bad because one of our family burned down your house . . . but we're only paying for the windows"?
3. What can an apology accomplish as a means of moving toward justice and reconciliation? What else needs to happen?

20 "Reactions to Harper's Apology," *Wawatay News Online*, June 26, 2008, accessed July 14, 2014, <http://www.wawataynews.ca/node/13426>.

21 Lynda Gray, "Why Silence Greeted Stephen Harper's Residential School Apology," *The Georgia Straight*, June 12, 2008, accessed November 17, 2014, <http://www.straight.com/news/why-silence-greeted-stephen-harpers-residential-school-apology>.

22 Thohahoken Michael Doxtater, "When it comes to Harper's apology, words are not enough," *The Gazette* (Montreal), June 14, 2008, <http://www.canada.com/story.html?id=053dccb3-ca98-40de-b39b-1c5d674a398c>.



SECTION 6

Truth and Reconciliation

“The residential school issue is not about making others feel bad or guilty. This issue is about truth and understanding. Truth and understanding are two key ingredients that will lead to healing and reconciliation.” –Garnet Angecone, elder, residential school survivor, journalist

The 2007 agreement discussed in the previous section included setting up a truth and reconciliation commission. What is a truth and reconciliation commission? What are its goals? Where does it fit into the bigger picture of helping a nation move from a state of conflict and injustice to one where the groups involved live more or less peacefully?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is part of a complicated series of reconciliation efforts. It is one of several tools in a process experts call transitional justice.¹ Transitional justice is a multifaceted process designed to help victims overcome historical injustice and trauma and reconcile with those who harmed them. Experts say that for transitional justice to work well, it has to include a version of these elements: truth discovery (what really happened?), justice (i.e., punishment for perpetrators, reparations for victims), and reconciliation. In Canada, as explored in the last section, the process also included apologies, which are a critical part of reconciliation: the perpetrators—in this case, the churches and the government—show remorse, and the victims can then forgive and begin to heal the relationship with them.²

In addressing the question of justice, the Indian Residential Schools Agreement allotted monetary compensation to former students—referred to as survivors—of the residential schools. It set aside some \$2 billion for about 86,000 surviving students (out of roughly 150,000 students altogether) who attended residential schools.³ Each qualified person was to receive \$10,000 for attending such a school, plus \$3,000 for each year at the school (called the Common Experience Payment).⁴ In a separate process, called the Independent Assessment Process, each survivor’s testimony received a “score” from an adjudicating judge based on the abuse the survivor had endured, and the survivor would receive additional compensation. In addition, the agreement set aside \$60 million for the truth and reconciliation process—the focus of this section.

The establishment and operation of truth and reconciliation commissions has become a commonplace practice since the 1970s. Most of the commissions that have been formed focus on crimes carried out by a *government* against its *own citizens*. Since the 1970s, there have been at least 40 such commissions, and some are still active today. They are often not a judicial tool or legal court but rather a way for perpetrators and victims to publicly acknowledge episodes of violence between them (systematic violation of human rights, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, for example). The primary goal of a truth and reconciliation commission is to help victims express their pain, find out exactly how the crimes committed against them or their loved ones were carried out, and receive the public's recognition for past crimes. In some cases, victims are able to meet perpetrators face to face. The commission usually serves as a meeting place for former enemies to bridge the differences between them and find ways to move forward.⁵ For the most part, these commissions are designed to bring about healing, a process that offers victims solace and reassurance that their trauma will not be repeated or forgotten.

The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission is unique in that it did not include any transformation in government (as was the case in South Africa). It is also unique in that it was funded by residential school survivors and included many traditional elements of indigenous cultures. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission focused on victims and their experience; with a few exceptions, perpetrators did not take part in the efforts to uncover the truth about crimes committed in secrecy. The proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission consisted of numerous local and seven national events, in which people affected by the residential schools shared their experience in writing, in private testimonies, or in public. These events were open to everyone, since the goal was to educate the public about this painful history; some of the proceedings were streamed online or televised nationally. In 2014, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission finished collecting these testimonies, and its final report was published in 2015. The testimonies and all collected documents and artifacts are archived at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, housed at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, and are available to the public for educational and research purposes.

Guiding QUESTIONS

1. What does a nation need in order to overcome a history of conflict and injustice?
2. What role can a truth and reconciliation commission play in helping a nation, individuals, and groups heal from past trauma?

3. How can such commissions help victims reconcile with the people and institutions that harmed them? Can these commissions help to strengthen the foundation of a democracy?

- 1 For more on the South African process and truth and reconciliation commission, see Facing History and Ourselves, *South Africa—The Struggle for Freedom*, forthcoming, 2015.
- 2 See “What Is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?” Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website, accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=10>.
- 3 “Reconciliation... towards a new relationship,” Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/reconciliation/index.php?p=312>.
- 4 For details about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s mandate, known as Schedule “N” of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, see “Our Mandate,” Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=7>; “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,” United Nations Conference Paper, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website, accessed Dec. 3, 2014, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=7>.
- 5 See G. G. J. Knoops, “Truth and Reconciliation Commission Models and International Tribunals: A Comparison,” paper presented at symposium on “The Right to Self-Determination in International Law,” September 29 – October 1, 2006, The Hague, Netherlands, <http://www.unpo.org/downloads/ProfKnoops.pdf>.



READING 1 **Why Reconcile?**

For years, survivors of the residential schools did not speak about their childhood experiences. Many factors contributed to their silence. The shame and stigma associated with violent and sexual abuse stopped many from speaking out. Moreover, many survivors could not find the words to describe their painful experiences in the Indian Residential Schools.⁶

Laurel Wood, a community activist and artist working in the Ontario town of Sioux Lookout, described an encounter with a business associate who, upon meeting her, asked, “Don’t you think they should just get over it and stop asking for handouts? . . . People really suffered in Europe during the wars and look what they’ve been able to do. They just need to pick themselves up and get on with it.” Wood remembers being “completely taken aback.” She wondered, “How could I begin to describe the legacy of hopelessness and pain that followed a systematic attack on all First Nations people of our country, for hundreds of years? Where could I begin to summarize the unresolved and ongoing problems that First Nations people face on a daily basis?”⁷

Wood was one of many who were not able to “just get over it.” Garnet Angeconeb is an Anishinaabe elder and a survivor of the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School. As part of his work with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Angeconeb discussed his long and painful journey and the positive effects of breaking the code of silence surrounding the residential school experience:

In my childhood . . . I was ripped away from my loving family. This caused a lot of painful confusion. Once inside the Indian Residential School system, I was afraid. I was lost. I was so lonesome. I felt betrayed. I felt abandoned. I was abused: physically, culturally, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and yes, sexually.

After leaving the residential school, I became very angry. I was bitter. I was mad at myself. I was mad at my parents. I was mad at the government and at the churches. I was angry at my Creator. I was mad at the world. At the time there was an unwritten code of silence. Nobody talked about their negative experiences and bad memories of the residential school. . . . [Many years later in] 1992, I sat face-to-face with the man who had abused me, a man who had caused so much misery in my life and in my community. I challenged him to own up to his actions. . . . After the face-to-face meeting had ended in total denial, I felt so alone again.

I also experienced denial from some members of my family and community. There was silence from the government. The church didn't know how to respond to my allegation of abuse. Sadly, there was silence from my own leaders. I know now that the issue was likely too overwhelming—too painful—for them to deal with . . .

In the fall of 1993, the Ontario Provincial Police had launched a full investigation into the allegations of abuse. . . . The man continued to deny all charges. Initially, he pleaded 'not guilty' to all charges. . . . Between the police investigation and the legal wrangling, my life had turned for the worse. I was drinking a lot. My marriage was failing. I was angry. It seemed that life had become unbearable. I had dragged my family into a living hell . . .

[Finally] in January 1996, our abuser was convicted. He was sentenced to four years in prison. . . . In the fall of 2001, I made overtures to church officials. I had one goal in mind—that was to meet my abuser to begin dialogue that would hopefully lead to the spirit of forgiveness. I thought if nothing else, I wanted to shake his hand.

Such was not to be. I was told that he had passed away the year before. The news hit hard. I felt sad. I asked myself—how do I forgive someone who has passed away? So in the spring of 2002, at a healing gathering, I found the courage to speak to the spirit of my abuser. In front of my immediate family and other witness-



The Canadian Press / Darryl Dyck

Residential school survivor Joe George of the Tselei-Waututh First Nation (right) and elder Marie George embrace at a proceeding of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2013.

es, I spoke words of forgiveness. At that moment, I felt a heavy burden had been lifted. Somehow I felt my spirit was at ease. It is in setting ourselves free from our burdens—whatever they may be—that we must engage in good conversation. As citizens of this country, we must be engaged in meaningful dialogue. We can no longer be afraid to talk to each other. We shouldn't have to settle our differences in the courts. We can no longer speak to each other through the media.⁸

Darlene Auger, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Regional Liaison for Alberta, explained the importance of speaking about and sharing the Indian Residential Schools experience in the following way:

It is healing when you begin to talk about it because it becomes real, and you put it out in front of you and you can look at it. You separate yourself, you begin to separate yourself from it. You are not your pain. You are a beautiful, wonderful spirit, beautiful, wonderful human being that has had a really bad experience perhaps, a really painful experience. But it is not what you are all about. And so, to talk about it, to share it, and even more, to record it, to create a permanent record of it, so that the future generations can hear it, can see you, that's even more profound.⁹

Connection QUESTIONS

1. According to Laurel Wood, why is it that many former students of the residential schools can't "just get over" the experience? What does it mean when someone says "just get over it"? Have you ever been told to get over it? How did this make you feel?
2. Garnet Angeconeb talks about an "unwritten code of silence" surrounding the experience in the residential schools. What does he mean by that? Why does he think it's important to break that code of silence?
3. What is forgiveness? What does it mean when groups—not individuals—are involved?
4. Angeconeb also says that "as citizens of this country, we must be engaged in meaningful dialogue." What could such dialogue look like? What would it involve?
5. Darlene Auger says that "it is healing when you begin to talk about it." What does she mean by this? Do you agree with her? How does she define healing?

6 Legal scholar and anthropologist Ronald Niezen quotes a British Columbia judge who said, "One is drawn to the conclusion that the unspeakable acts which were perpetrated on these young children were just that: at that time they were for the most part not spoken of." See Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), Kindle Locations 1514–1518.

- 7 Jennifer Morrow, "Starting to Talk: A Guide for Communities on Healing and Reconciliation from the Legacy of Indian Residential Schools" (The Sioux Lookout Community Coalition for Healing and Reconciliation), 4, www.slarc.ca/sites/default/files/Starting%20to%20Talk%20Handbook%20-%20Halifax.pdf.
- 8 Aboriginal Healing Foundation website, <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/garnets-st-paul-speech.pdf>. See also Jennifer Morrow, "Starting to Talk: A Guide for Communities on Healing and Reconciliation from the Legacy of Indian Residential Schools" (The Sioux Lookout Community Coalition for Healing and Reconciliation), 2.
- 9 Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation*.



READING 2 **Can There Be Justice Without Truth?**

For many survivors, the most difficult issue in moving toward healing has been revealing the pain they endured at the residential schools. For them, reconciliation without truth was not possible. As Garnet Angeconeb, elder, residential school survivor, and journalist, puts it, “truth and understanding are two key ingredients that will lead to healing and reconciliation.”¹⁰

Peter Irniq was born in 1947 in Naujaat/Repulse Bay, in the area now called Nunavut, in the Arctic. In 1958, after the government decided to take on the education of the Inuit, Irniq entered Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School in Chesterfield Inlet. Between 1963 and 1964, he attended Sir John Franklin School in Yellowknife and, later, was sent to learn “southern” trades in the Churchill Vocational Centre in Manitoba. Irniq later became a teacher, activist, and political leader responsible for the introduction of Inuit language and cultural programs into northern schools. In the excerpt below, Irniq discusses why he thinks it is important to uncover the truth behind the experience of indigenous students in the residential schools.

When I was a young man . . . I became very shy of my own culture. I became very embarrassed about my own culture because that's how we were brought up to be by the Canadian Government colonialism in our communities. We were always laughed at because we lived in igloos. We were laughed at because we dressed in Caribou clothing and because Inuit traditionally kiss by kissing with your noses. That's how the society knew us at that time and they made fun out of these things. . . . I have always maintained that southern Canadians have a right to know what we went through at the Residential School. Health care givers have a right to know what we went through at the Residential Schools. You see, with the Residential School my generation of Inuit went through quite a lot. We were sexually abused. We were physically abused. We were mentally abused.

Canadians should be asking more about what happened to us at various Residential Schools throughout Canada. That's what they should be asking. They should be taking more interest about these Inuit who moved from an igloo to the microwaves in less than forty-five years, so that's what they should be asking more about us, about the experiences of Residential Schools, the legacy of Indian and Inuit Residential Schools in Canada.

I have told my fellow Inuit in the last couple of years that they should speak out; they should speak out more about their experiences at the Residential School. This will

form part of the history, Canadian history, particularly the Inuit. It's something even though that we were abused by the members of the Church at that time, we don't hold grudges against the people who did these things to us. It embarrassed us. It embarrassed me . . . But the abuses—We want to make sure that these kinds of things never happen to young people again, little children, in the future. We don't hold grudges against those people, but we want to make sure that these things never happen to young people again, little children, never again. Never!¹¹

Connection QUESTIONS

1. A report from the organization Human Rights Watch on the need for truth and reconciliation said this about South Africa: “If a country is to come to terms with its past and successfully turn its attention to the future, it is essential that the truth of the past be officially established. It is impossible to expect ‘reconciliation’ if part of the population refuses to accept that anything was ever wrong, and the other part has never received any acknowledgment of the suffering it has undergone or of the ultimate responsibility for that suffering.”¹² Why do you think the report emphasizes that a society seeking to move forward must first establish the truth about the past? What do you think is the relationship between truth and justice?
2. For many years, Peter Irniq felt embarrassed by his Inuit language and culture. What did he do to “take his culture back”?
3. Irniq also strongly believes that Canadians have a “right to know” the truth about the schools. As you read his reflection, what do you think Irniq believes Canadians will know from learning about the residential schools? How might that knowledge impact the future?
4. How important is it that citizens know the truth about their nation’s past? Why might some people resist efforts to uncover difficult histories?

10 Garnet Angeconeb, “Speaking My Truth: The Journey to Reconciliation,” in *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential Schools*, available at the *Speaking My Truth* website, http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=800.

11 “Peter Irniq,” *We Were So Far Away: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools*, Legacy of Hope Foundation website, <http://weweresofaraway.ca/survivor-stories/peter-irniq/>.

12 Letter to President de Klerk in *Accounting for the Past: The Lessons for South Africa from Latin America*, Human Rights Watch website, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/southafrica/1.htm>. Quoted in Brian Rice and Anna Snyder, “Reconciliation in the Context of a Settler Society,” in *Speaking My Truth*, http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=686.



READING 3 **Reconciliation**

Richard Wagamese is an Ojibway man from the Wabassemoong First Nation in northwestern Ontario. He is a professor, a journalist, and the author of many books, including *Indian Horse*. Although not a residential school graduate, Wagamese was deeply affected by the residential schools. The majority of his extended family went to these schools, and he grew up in the context of their legacy of trauma, violence, and abuse. In the following essay, he describes his road to reconciliation. The essay explores the strength, spiritual resources, and resilience many indigenous people turned to in their personal journey to peace.

I lived in two foster homes until I was adopted at age nine. I left that home at age sixteen; I ran for my safety, my security, and my sanity. The seven years I spent in that adopted home were filled with beatings, mental and emotional abuse, and a complete dislocation and disassociation from anything Indian or Ojibwa. I was permitted only the strict Presbyterian ethic of that household. It was as much an institutional kidnapping as a residential school.

For years after, I lived on the street or in prison. I became a drug user and an alcoholic. I drifted through unfulfilled relationships. I was haunted by fears and memories. I carried the residual trauma of my toddler years and the seven years in my adopted home. . . .

My brother Charles tracked me down with the help of a social worker friend when I was twenty-five. From there, I returned to the land of my people as a stranger knowing nothing of their experience or their pain. When I rejoined my people and learned about Canada's residential school policy, I was enraged . . . I knew that those schools were responsible for my displacement, my angst, and my cultural lostness. For years I carried simmering anger and resentment. The more I learned about the implementation of that policy and how it affected Aboriginal people across the country, the more anger I felt. I ascribed all my pain to residential schools and to those responsible. . . .

But when I was in my late forties, I had enough of the anger. I was tired of being drunk and blaming the residential schools and those responsible. I was tired of fighting against something that could not be touched, addressed, or confronted. My life was slipping away on me and I did not want to become an older person still clinging to a disempowering emotion like the anger I carried.

So one day I decided that I would visit a church. Churches had been the seed of my anger. . . . I chose a United Church because they had been the first to issue an apology for their role in the residential school debacle. They had been the first to publicly

state their responsibility for the hurt that crippled generations. They were the first to show the courage to address wrongdoing, abuse, forced removal, and shaming. They had been the first to make tangible motions toward reconciliation. . . .

I was uncomfortable at first. . . . Then I noticed the old woman beside me sitting with her eyes closed as the minister spoke. She looked calm and peaceful, and there was a glow on her features that I coveted. So I closed my eyes too and tilted my head back and listened.

I ceased to hear the liturgy that day. . . . Instead, with my eyes closed, all I could hear was the small voice of the minister telling a story about helping a poor, drug-addicted woman on the street despite his fear and doubt. All I heard was the voice of compassion. All I heard was a spiritual, very human person talking about life and confronting its mysteries. . . . I went back to that church for many weeks. The messages I heard were all about humanity and about the search for innocence, comfort, and belonging. I do not know just exactly when my anger and resentment disappeared. I only know that there came a time when I could see that there was nothing in the message that was not about healing. . . . After I came home to my people I sought out teachers and healers and ceremonies. . . . What I heard from that minister those Sunday mornings was not any different from the root message of humanity in our teachings. With my eyes closed there was no white, no Indian, no difference at all; the absence of anger happened quietly without fanfare. . . .

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission makes its tour of the country and hears the stories of people who endured the pain of residential schools, I hope it hears more stories like mine—of people who fought against the resentment, hatred, and anger and found a sense of peace. Both the Commission and Canada need to hear stories of healing instead of a relentless retelling and re-experiencing of pain. They need to hear that, despite everything, every horror, it is possible to move forward and to learn how to leave hurt behind. Our neighbours in this country need to hear stories about our capacity for forgiveness, for self-examination, for compassion, and for our yearning for peace because they speak to our resiliency as a people. That is how reconciliation happens. . . .¹³

Although the term *reconciliation* is quite popular among activists and scholars in the field, it is not entirely accepted by some Indigenous Peoples.¹⁴ They argue that the term does not fit Canada's history—that there was never a period of peaceful relationship between the Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian settlers, and so the *re* in *reconciliation* is wrong. They argue that they aim for *conciliation* instead. John Amagoalik told the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission, “Since Europeans arrived on our shores more than five hundred years ago, there has never really been a harmonious relationship between the new arrivals and the original inhabitants of North America. The history of this relationship is marked by crushing colonialism, attempted genocide, wars, massacres, theft of land and resources, broken treaties, broken promises, abuse of human rights, relocations, residential schools, and so on.”¹⁵

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What does the word *reconciliation* mean?
2. What were the milestones in Richard Wagamese’s process of reconciliation? What did he find in the church? How did it alter his views about the church? About his pain?
3. Wagamese argues that “both the Commission and Canada need to hear stories of healing instead of a relentless retelling and re-experiencing of pain.” Do you agree with his statement? What might be gained from hearing stories of conciliation and reconciliation?
4. Why does John Amagoalik prefer the term *conciliation* over *reconciliation*?

13 Richard Wagamese, “Returning to Harmony,” in *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School*, 153–158, available at the *Speaking My Truth* website, http://speakingmytruth.ca/v2a/?page_id=295.

14 John Amagoalik, “Reconciliation or Conciliation? An Inuit Perspective,” in *Speaking My Truth*, 37–38.

15 John Amagoalik, “Reconciliation or Conciliation,” 37. See also Rupert Ross, “Telling Truths and Seeking Reconciliation: Exploring the Challenges,” in *Speaking My Truth*, http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=697.



READING 4 **Who Is to Blame?**

Government officials, school administrators, clergymen and women, and laymen associated with the running of the residential schools were not the primary focus of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But the abuses committed by individuals and institutions formed a central part of the testimony provided by survivors and their families and supporters. By and large, individual perpetrators were not named at Truth and Reconciliation Commission events, although their crimes and abuses were the subject of many, if not all, of the testimonies given. In several public events, members of different churches and government officials did appear in person and offered apologies.¹⁶

To some, the absence of testimony from the people who were in charge of running the schools points to a great weakness. President of the Métis National Council Clément Chartier appeared at several Truth and Reconciliation Commission events.¹⁷ At the Saskatoon National Event held on June 22, 2012, he said: “To reach full reconciliation there has to be two parties. It can’t just be the Métis nation speaking to itself.”¹⁸

In the absence of perpetrators, many survivors feel that reconciliation at this stage can only be an internal process with the hope that other forms of reconciliation will follow. As the Regional Chief for Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, Morley Googoo, said in a gathering of the Outreach Residential School Atlantic Committee, “We have to reconcile among ourselves.”¹⁹

Justice Murray Sinclair, one of the commissioners and Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, explains this stage as follows:

Reconciliation is about establishing a respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Before we can have mutual respect, we have to understand the importance of ensuring that Aboriginal people in future generations have self-respect. That’s a difficult thing to do because it involves undoing a lot of things that are founded on the racism of the past . . . [T]hat this history of oppression, of taking away from Aboriginal people their faith in themselves, their belief in their systems and culture, their ability to speak their language, their understanding of their own history, has resulted in a population of young Indigenous people who are not only angry and frustrated [but] also feeling at a loss because they want those things put back into their lives. They want to know what it means to be Anishinaabe, they want to know what it means to be a Cree, to be a Dene, to be a Dakota.²⁰

Fred Kelly, a residential school survivor who was a member of the indigenous team that negotiated the settlement agreement, thinks about reconciliation this way: “Blame for forced attendance in a residential school and the terrible experiences must be directed somewhere. Certainly there is blame, but rather than vengeance, the Survivor seeks an understanding of what transpired. The person makes peace with himself or herself. . . . More than anything else, one must forgive oneself.”²¹ Kelly offers this public statement of reconciliation regardless of whether he is able to meet the people who ran the residential schools:

A government founded on peace, order, and good government and yet responsible for inflicting the horror of the residential school system is one that I am prepared to meet with to discuss the rule of law that includes enforcement of Aboriginal rights and treaties as the basis for a reconciled future. A church that validated the ruthless superiority complex of European monarchs to persecute Indigenous people, steal their land, and overrun their cultures by condemning them as ways of the devil is one I am also prepared to discuss reconciliation with. . . . A clergy abiding a faith founded on the teachings of Christ, who so loved the purity and innocence of children, yet whose own agents inflicted sexual and physical abuse on Aboriginal children are men and women I am prepared to meet in my community to discuss reconciliation. And should they still believe in hell, may they be spared. Yes, Father, I am prepared. In ultimate personal reaffirmation, it was not God that hurt generations of innocent children, but the human beings in the churches who undertook to deliver Christianity and inflicted the sorrow in His name. It is not my right or prerogative to forgive what was done to my brothers, my sisters, and my dearest friends as they must speak for themselves and, unfortunately, many of them are now dead. Nevertheless, I dedicate this statement of reconciliation to their memory. I can speak for myself, Father.²²

Connection QUESTIONS

1. President of the Métis National Council Clément Chartier argued that “to reach full reconciliation there has to be two parties. It can’t just be the Métis nation speaking to itself.” What does he mean? What questions might you ask him?
2. Morley Googoo, Regional Chief for Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, said in a gathering of the Outreach Residential School Atlantic Committee, “We have to reconcile among ourselves.” What do you make of this statement? Do you think that this view limits the scope of the reconciliation that can be achieved by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

3. Fred Kelly provides the terms that make it possible for him to reconcile with the government and the church. What are they? Can they be applied more generally?
 4. Define the term *perpetrator*. Consider who you think was responsible for the crimes of the residential schools. Were all of those who were responsible perpetrators?
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- 16 Ronald Niezen notes that the commission “thoroughly extinguished the identities of possible perpetrators from its proceedings, preventing their names from even entering the record through survivor narratives, and maintaining their invisibility and anonymity all the way through [its] activities.” See Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation: Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 183–185, 221–223.
- 17 Many Métis are excluded from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission proceedings and compensation agreements because the group wasn’t recognized as “Indian” and the majority of its youth did not attend the state-sponsored residential schools. The issue is now being debated in the courts.
- 18 Quoted in Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation*.
- 19 Chief Morley Googoo, statement to the Outreach Residential School Atlantic Committee, meeting under the auspices of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, Glooskap Heritage Centre, Millbrook, Nova Scotia, March 6, 2012. Quoted in Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation*.
- 20 “Reconciliation through Education,” *Queen’s Gazette*, March 30, 2015, accessed May 8, 2015, [http://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/reconciliation-through-education?fb_action_ids=10152918600429332&fb_action_types=og.shares&fb_source=other_multiline&action_object_map=\[573352646101525\]&action_type_map=\[%22og.shares%22\]&action_ref_map](http://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/reconciliation-through-education?fb_action_ids=10152918600429332&fb_action_types=og.shares&fb_source=other_multiline&action_object_map=[573352646101525]&action_type_map=[%22og.shares%22]&action_ref_map). We thank David MacDonald for this and many other references.
- 21 Fred Kelly, “Confession of a Born Again Pagan,” in *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacies of Residential Schools* (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2008), 30.
- 22 Fred Kelly, *From Truth to Reconciliation*, 30. This and other testimonies were curated by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.



READING 5 **“A Spectre in Our Midst”: How the Indian Residential Schools Affect an Entire Community**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has not only focused on the individuals who attended the residential schools but has also provided space to explore how the effects of survivor experiences sent ripples across the communities. Intergenerational survivors like Richard Wagamese, who is quoted below, explore not only the issue of reconciliation but also the effect of residential schools on those who did not even attend them.

I am a victim of Canada's residential school system. When I say victim, I mean something substantially different than “Survivor.” I never attended a residential school, so I cannot say that I survived one. However, my parents and my extended family members did. The pain they endured became my pain, and I became a victim. When I was born, my family still lived the seasonal nomadic life of traditional Ojibway people. In the great rolling territories surrounding the Winnipeg River in Northwestern Ontario, they fished, hunted, and trapped. . . . We lived communally. Along with my mother and siblings, there were my matriarchal grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Surrounded by the rough and tangle of the Canadian Shield, we moved through the seasons. Time was irrelevant in the face of ancient cultural ways that we followed.

But there was a spectre in our midst.

All the members of my family attended residential school. They returned to the land bearing psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical burdens that haunted them. Even my mother, despite staunch declarations that she had learned good things there (finding Jesus, learning to keep a house, the gospel), carried wounds she could not voice. Each of them had experienced an institution that tried to scrape the Indian off of their insides, and they came back to the bush and river raw, sore, and aching. The pain they bore was invisible and unspoken. It seeped into their spirit, oozing its poison and blinding them from the incredible healing properties within their Indian ways.

For a time, the proximity to family and the land acted as a balm. Then, slowly and irrevocably, the spectre that followed them back from the schools began to assert its presence and shunt for space around our communal fire. When the vitriolic stew of unspoken words, feelings, and memories of their great dislocation, hurt, and isolation

began to bubble and churn within them, they discovered that alcohol could numb them from it. And we ceased to be a family.

Instead, the adults of my Ojibway family became frightened children. The trauma that had been visited upon them reduced them to that. They huddled against a darkness from where vague shapes whispered threats and from where invasions of their minds, spirits, and bodies roared through the blackness to envelope and smother them again. They forgot who they were. They struck back vengefully, bitterly, and blindly as only hurt and frightened children could do.²³

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What are, according to Wagamese, the effects of the residential schools on the Ojibway people?
2. Look up the word *spectre* if you don't know it. What is the spectre of the residential schools, according to Wagamese? How does he describe it?
3. Re-read the last paragraph. What do you think Wagamese is trying to say about the effects of the Indian residential schools on his family? How does he explain his relatives' behaviour?

²³ Richard Wagamese, "Returning to Harmony," in *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential Schools*, 153–158, available at the *Speaking My Truth* website, http://speakingmytruth.ca/v2a/?page_id=295.



READING 6 **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Future**

There are various ways in which victims of abuse unintentionally pass on their injuries to future generations. One example that the survivors of the residential schools often bring up is that when they were sent away from their families, they lost touch with their parents and thus had no family model to guide them when it later came to raising children of their own.

Yet another example of the long-term ripple effect of the residential schools has to do with how hurtful ways of treating people are passed from one generation to another.

Rupert Ross served as a criminal prosecutor for many years, working primarily in remote indigenous communities in northwestern Ontario. He has also studied indigenous ideas of justice and has written quite extensively on this and related topics. In the excerpt below, Ross shares insights about the positive effects the Truth and Reconciliation Commission can have by addressing the cycle by which trauma and violence can be passed from one generation to another.

I worry that all of the truth and reconciliation opportunities brought to their grandparents, all of the financial settlements and apologies from churches and governments, will do virtually nothing to help those damaged children. What they need is truth, reconciliation, and healing with—and between—their traumatized parents, and nothing less will do. . . .

[A] Cree grandmother interpreted it this way: People who do violence to others somehow grew up learning that relationships were things built on values like fear, anger, power, jealousy, secrecy, greed, and the like. To counter that, it was necessary to begin teaching them how to establish relationships based on the opposite values like trust, openness, generosity, respect, sharing, caring, and love. . . . In her view, we need to give those people the experience of good relations, not an even deeper experience of bad ones. For the first time, I began to see how people who were abused as children could grow up to be abusers of children: they stayed in exactly the same kinds of relationships they learned as children, only the roles reversed when, as adults, the power came to them. I have also learned that most of them vividly recall the pain they felt as kids, so they know the pain they themselves are causing. Unfortunately, they have never been given ways out of those relationships, and their self-hatred grows.

Perhaps this is another worthwhile challenge for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: fostering the creation of processes where traumatized families can escape the violent relational patterns they absorbed as children and start living within healthy relationships instead, before their children are irrevocably damaged.²⁴

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What is intergenerational or multigenerational trauma? How can one generation pass its trauma to another?
2. How, according to Rupert Ross, does the pain and abuse of parents manifest itself in the feelings and actions of their children?
3. Can the Truth and Reconciliation Commission help in stopping the transmission of past trauma, pain, and abuse from one generation to another? How?

²⁴ Rupert Ross, "Telling Truths and Seeking Reconciliation: Exploring the Challenges," in *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential Schools*, available at the *Speaking My Truth* website, http://speakingmytruth.ca/v2a/?page_id=697



SECTION 7

History in Search of a Name

Some scholars, activists, and indigenous leaders are not content with the apologies or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission events alone. They would like Canada to acknowledge that the colonial policies that affected the indigenous communities so deeply amount, in fact, to genocide. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a body that resulted from a settlement agreement between the Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian government, declared in 2015:

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. *The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as "cultural genocide"* . . . Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. . . . Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next.¹

This section examines the heated debate that led to this declaration as a way for us to consider what is at stake in the way we remember the past. The debate we follow is particular to the story of the Indian Residential Schools, and yet it raises universal questions about the way the events of the past impact individuals, communities, and nations today.

Guiding QUESTIONS

1. What is at stake when people argue over the words used to describe past crimes?
2. What is genocide? What is cultural genocide?

3. Why might some resist the use of the word *genocide* to describe what happened at the residential schools? Why might some insist that the word *genocide* be used to describe those same events?

1 "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), 1–2, 3, 57, accessed June 11, 2015, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf.



READING 1 **Genocide**

The term *genocide* was defined by the Polish Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin. In 1941, he escaped from eastern Europe and the German occupation that killed most of his family, settled in the United States, and continued his lifelong effort to outlaw the killing of ethnic, religious, cultural, racial, or national groups.² In his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, published in 1944, Lemkin chose a new term to describe what until then was “a crime without a name.”³

The term Lemkin coined comes from the Greek word *genos*, a group defined by kinship, and the Latin *cide*, to destroy or kill (as in *pesticide* or *homicide*). Genocide, then, signifies the destruction of a group of people as a collective with common culture and identity, not just the killing of a lot of people. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted by the United Nations in 1948, just a few years after the horrors the Holocaust. Lemkin was adamant that the term was not simply meant to apply to crimes of the past: it also offered a framework to help prevent future atrocities. He sought a broad definition of *genocide* that included *cultural* and *economic* destruction, but those did not make it into the final draft that was subsequently adopted by the United Nations.

Article 2 of the convention of 1948 defines genocide as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such”:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.⁴

Connection QUESTIONS

- 1.** What are the key elements of the UN Genocide Convention (UNGC)? As you reflect on the language in the Genocide Convention, what do you see as the differences between killing individuals, however many, and killing members of a group?
- 2.** The Genocide Convention includes the word *intent* in the definition of genocide. What does that word mean in this context? How do you prove intent? What kinds of

evidence would you need? How does the requirement to prove intent help distinguish genocide from other mass atrocities?

3. Which articles, if any, of the Genocide Convention seem to you to be most relevant to the treatment of Indigenous Peoples in Canada? Why?
4. Canada adopted the Genocide Convention in 1952. When it did, the Genocide Convention became the law of the land in Canada. But, says David MacDonald of the University of Guelph, “When Canada [ratified] the UNGC in 1952, we did so highly selectively. Portions of the Convention were excluded from the Criminal Code, such that genocide still means only Article 2 (a) and (b). The official reasons given to parliament . . . was that [the] portions of the UNGC ‘intended to cover certain historical incidents in Europe that have little essential relevance to Canada’ could safely be omitted. They even asserted that ‘mass transfers of children to another group are unknown . . . in Canada.’”⁵ How does the selective ratification of the convention impact the legal definition of genocide in Canada?
5. Read Chapters 6 through 9 of the Facing History and Ourselves resource *Totally Unofficial: Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention* (2007). In comparison with other international crimes you are familiar with, what is unique about the crime of genocide? Why did the Genocide Convention define genocide as the attempt to destroy a group in *whole* or in *part*? What did Raphael Lemkin think about the role of cultural destruction in the crime of genocide?

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- 2 For more information, see Facing History and Ourselves, *Totally Unofficial: Rafael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2007).
 - 3 “A crime without a name” was a phrase Winston Churchill used in 1941 to describe the barbarity of the German troops, who executed tens of thousands of civilians, the vast majority of them Jews, as they advanced in eastern Europe. See James T. Fussell, “A crime without a name”: Winston Churchill, Raphael Lemkin and the World War II origins of the word ‘genocide,’” Prevent Genocide International website, accessed December 24, 2014, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/genocide/crimewithoutaname.htm>.
 - 4 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Paris, December 9, 1948, accessed October 8, 2014, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/260\(III\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/260(III)).
 - 5 David B. MacDonald, “Genocide in the Indian Residential Schools: Canadian History through the Lens of the UN Genocide Convention,” in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Woolford, Benvenuto, and Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 309.



READING 2 **A Canadian Genocide in Search of a Name**

In the 1990s, more and more scholars, activists, and indigenous leaders began to demand that Canada recognize the treatment of Indigenous Peoples as genocide.⁶ In a recent article, “A Canadian Genocide in Search of a Name,” Phil Fontaine, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, along with Michael Dan, a medical doctor and philanthropist, and Bernie M. Farber, the son of Holocaust survivors and executive director of the Mosaic Institute, called on Canada’s government to accept responsibility and do just that.⁷

It is time for Canadians to face the sad truth. Canada engaged in a deliberate policy of attempted genocide against First Nations people. . . .

Some have argued that the beginnings of this genocide had its seeds in the establishment of the Indian Act of 1876, which legalized First Nations as an inferior group and made them wards of the state. In truth, these were just words on paper compared with accusations lodged against the Canadian government by our first Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Peter Bryce, in 1907. . . .

Dr. Bryce uncovered a “national crime” pertaining to the health of First Nations people. . . . According to Bryce, Canada’s aboriginal people in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan were being “decimated by tuberculosis and . . . the federal government possessed the means to stop it.” Instead, it chose such a minimalist approach that, in the medical opinion of Dr. Bryce, it “amounted to almost nothing.” . . .

We must ask ourselves: When does genocide become genocide? This might seem an absurd question, but history isn’t always forthcoming with a neat little package bearing the label “genocide, open with caution.” . . . Under [the UN Genocide Convention’s] definition, Canada’s treatment of its First Nations, even in our own lifetime, meets the genocide test:

The recently exposed nutrition experiments carried out in the residential schools meets the criteria under point [2] (b).

The residential school system itself, and the practice of forcibly removing First Nations children from reserves and placing them with adoptive non-aboriginal families, common in the 1960s, and referred to as the Sixties Scoop, meet the criteria under point [2] (e).

The decision by the government in the 1900s to allow native children to die of tuberculosis meets the criteria under point [2] (c).

This list is by no means exhaustive. . . .

The Government of Canada currently recognizes five genocides: the Holocaust, the Holodomor, the Armenian genocide, the Rwandan genocide and Srebrenica.

The time has come for Canada to formally recognize a sixth genocide, the genocide of its own aboriginal communities; a genocide that began at the time of first contact and that was still very active in our own lifetimes; a genocide currently in search of a name but no longer in search of historical facts.⁹

Connection QUESTIONS

1. According to the authors of the passage above, in what ways were the residential schools genocidal? Do you agree with the authors? Why or why not?
2. Dr. Peter Bryce was commissioned by the Canadian government to investigate the health conditions in the residential schools at the beginning of the twentieth century, and he wrote a book called *The Story of a National Crime: Being a Record of the Health Conditions of the Indians of Canada from 1904 to 1921*. How does the inclusion of a reference to Bryce impact the author's argument?
3. While there are no legal obligations that would come with recognizing the actions of the residential schools as *genocide*, what moral and ethical obligations might come with that recognition?
4. Bernie Farber, mentioned in the reading, recently published an essay in which he argues that “no amount of research, no recounting of first-hand memories recited by thousands of residential school survivors seems enough to halt those who simply refuse to accept our historical role in attempting to wipe out Indigenous culture and thousands of its people from our land.” Farber goes on to say that Gregory Stanton, the president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, claims that “denial is the final stage of genocide.”

With these reflections in mind, why do you think activists, survivors, and scholars fought to have the residential schools activity classified as genocide? What did they and supporters like Farber hope to achieve?

5. In her prize-winning 2003 book about genocide, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, scholar and diplomat Samantha Power stressed to use the word *genocide* as part of the effort to stop and prevent them. Two years later, the world faced rapid escalation of violence and mass killings in the Darfur region of Sudan. Under pressure from different grassroots and political organizations, then President

George W. Bush declared the action of the Sudan government against the Darfurians genocide.⁹ This use of the “G-word” was a victory to many who consider genocide the worst international crime. But the killings did not abate following this declaration, and the number of dead and displaced people continues to rise, estimated today at 300,000 deaths and 6 million displaced people.¹⁰

In light of these facts, what do you think is the value of the label *genocide*? Is it just symbolic? Would the use of the word *genocide* help in Canada? What else is needed to end the ongoing pain, loss, and suffering of the Indigenous Peoples?

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- 6 Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton, eds., *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 5–7.
 - 7 Both Michael Dan and Bernie Farber head the Gemini Power Corporation, which is supporting First Nations in their efforts to create sustainable industries.
 - 8 Phil Fontaine, Michael Dan, and Bernie M. Farber, “A Canadian Genocide in Search of a Name,” *The Star*, July 19, 2013, accessed October 3, 2014, http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2013/07/19/a_canadian_genocide_in_search_of_a_name.html.
 - 9 Jim VandeHei, “In Break with U.N., Bush Calls Sudan Killings Genocide,” *The Washington Post*, June 2, 2005, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/01/AR2005060101725.html>.
 - 10 George Phillips, “Don’t forget about Bashir and Sudan,” *The Washington Examiner*, June 23, 2015, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/dont-forget-about-bashir-and-sudan/article/2566764>.



READING 3 Cultural Genocide

More than two decades ago, residential schools scholars such as James R. Miller and indigenous leaders began to describe the efforts of the Canadian government to *assimilate* the Indigenous Peoples through the residential schools and other related policies as cultural genocide—arguing that assimilation was intended to destroy the Indigenous Peoples of Canada as a culturally distinct group.¹¹ Other scholars, mostly outside Canada, have noted that the *cultural* destruction of a group is *not* defined in the UN Genocide Convention as genocide (cultural genocide was excluded from the final document because of the objections of colonial states such as Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France).¹²

Scholar Steven Katz wrote about genocide in the specific context of the Holocaust and defined it narrowly as the *intent* to carry out “unmediated, unintended, complete *physical* eradication of every Jewish man, woman and child.” Separating the Holocaust as a unique atrocity, Katz went on to argue that it “is this unconstrained, ideologically driven imperative that every Jew be *murdered* that distinguished the Holocaust from all prior anti-Semitism and, to this date, all subsequent, however inhumane, acts of collective violence.”¹³ Scholar David MacDonald explains that Katz and others therefore “exclude all other instances of genocide in world history, including the genocide of North America’s indigenous peoples and the Armenian genocide.”¹⁴

Yet, for Raphael Lemkin, the man who coined the term *genocide* in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, the cultural destruction of a group was as important as the physical annihilation of its members. According to Lemkin,

The world represents only so much culture and intellectual vigor as are created by its component national groups. Essentially the idea of a nation signifies constructive cooperation and original contributions, based upon genuine traditions, genuine culture, and well-developed national psychology. The destruction of a nation, therefore, results in the loss of its future contribution to the world. . . . Among the basic features which have marked progress in civilization are the respect for and appreciation of the national characteristics and qualities contributed to world culture by different nations—characteristics and qualities which . . . are not to be measured in terms of national power or wealth.¹⁵

In 1946, when the newly founded United Nations began debating the creation of an international agreement for the prevention and punishment of genocide,

it accepted Lemkin's view.¹⁶ The United Nations General Assembly, where these ideas were debated, then instructed one of its bodies to draw up a draft of this international agreement for its next session. A subsequent draft, written by the United Nations Secretariat, defined cultural genocide as "any deliberate act committed with the intention of destroying the language, religion or culture of a . . . group, such as, for example, prohibiting the use of the group's language or its schools or places of worship."¹⁷ But, as international law expert William A. Schabas observes, the final version of Article 2 ended up being "a much-reduced version of the text prepared by the Secretariat experts." To this day it does not mention cultural genocide. However, Schabas explains, the final version we have today includes "an exception to this general rule, allowing 'forcible transfer of children from one group to another' as a punishable act."¹⁸ In that sense, the Genocide Convention "categorized forcible child transfers as cultural genocide."¹⁹ David MacDonald argues that Article 2 (e) indeed brings the residential schools under the Genocide Convention without any need to alter its language.²⁰

Legality aside, why do so many activists and scholars now want to define forcible assimilation (as was carried out in the residential schools) as genocide? Political correspondent Mary Agnes Welch writes:

The idea of cultural genocide is particularly important for Canadian First Nations because few mass killings or instances of direct physical destruction occurred in Canadian history. But, there are many cases of policies whose indirect intent was to destroy culture at the very least, and First Nations would argue the upshot was the same—the end of them as a people. Tacking on the word "culture" somehow signals something was less than real genocide. Instead, scholars are arguing that destroying a group's culture amounts to genocide plain and simple, with no need for a qualifier that softens the blow.²¹

Sociologist Andrew Woolford of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg explains in an interview:

If genocide should be understood as the "destruction of group life rather than lives within a group," then in the case of Canada's indigenous peoples, that means understanding what makes them a group, what defines their cultural cohesion, such as a profound attachment to the land and nature. So, in Canada's colonial past, systematically depriving First Nations of access to their land so European pioneers could settle and railways could be built, is genocidal.²²

Andrew Woolford, Adam Muller, and others therefore argue that if genocide is the targeting of a group's existence as a group—that is, its "groupness"—then

all acts designed to affect the group’s destruction—physical, cultural, political, economical, or otherwise—should be counted as genocidal.²³

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What might Lemkin mean when he says, “The world represents only so much culture and intellectual vigor as are created by its component national groups”? How is that statement relevant to the destruction of the Indigenous Peoples as distinct groups?
2. Why do you think Steven Katz separates the Holocaust from all other forms of ethno-cide or mass atrocity? Compare Katz’s thinking about the idea of genocide with that of Lemkin and others in this reading. Where is there overlap? What differences do you notice? How do these ideas influence your thinking about the crimes that occurred as part of the residential school system?
3. Canada’s Department of the Interior stated in an 1876 report:

Our Indian legislation generally rests on the principle, that the aborigines are to be kept in a condition of tutelage and treated as wards or children of the State. . . . [The] true interests of the aborigines and of the State alike require that every effort should be made to aid the Red man in lifting himself out of his condition of tutelage and dependence, and that is clearly our wisdom and our duty, through education and every other means to prepare him for a higher civilization by encouraging him to assume the privileges and responsibilities of full citizenship.²⁴

Lemkin states that “among the basic features which have marked progress in civilization are the respect for and appreciation of the national characteristics and qualities contributed to world culture by different nations.” How different is Lemkin’s notion of civilization from the colonial version discussed in the Department of the Interior report? How important is this discussion in determining what constitutes genocide?

4. The scholars Christopher Powell and Julia Peristerakis argue that we all have two identities: an individual identity and a collective identity. This idea was also expressed by sociologist Norbert Elias, who used the terms *I-identity* and *we-identity* to describe these dual identities.²⁵ The *we-identity*, these scholars suggest, comes from the life of a group as a group, from the collective social and economic practices, from a shared tradition, and from the cultural institutions members of a group partake in.²⁶ What happens when those practices are disrupted or destroyed? What happens to the group’s identity? What happens to it as a group? Why do you think Powell and Peristerakis, like others discussed in the reading above, argue that the destruction of a group’s way of life amounts to genocide?

5. Sociologist Andrew Woolford suggests that genocide should be defined as the “destruction of group life rather than lives within a group.” What might he mean by that? How different is this idea from Lemkin’s understanding of genocide? What do you think a conversation between Steven Katz and Andrew Woolford might include? What would each want to say to the other?
6. *Globe and Mail* journalists Gloria Galloway and Bill Curry interviewed special adviser to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission John S. Milloy, who told them, “Some have been reluctant to use the word *genocide* out of concern that it would be seen as an attempt to equate Canada’s history with the genocide of Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War, although . . . the term *cultural genocide* is appropriate to the aboriginal experience in this country.”²⁷ In what ways do the goals of the residential schools fit the idea of genocide, and in what ways do they not fit? What might Milloy have meant about some people being reluctant to call this genocide? Why?
7. Is there a difference between genocide and cultural genocide, in your opinion? Does the addition of the word *cultural* matter?

- 11 James R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2012), 9–10.
- 12 Shamiran Mako, “Cultural Genocide and Key International Instruments: Framing the Indigenous Experience,” *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 19 (2012), 183.
- 13 Steven Theodore Katz, *Continuity and Discontinuity between Christian and Nazi Anti-Semitism* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 74.
- 14 David MacDonald, “Canada’s history war: Indigenous genocide and public memory in the United States, Australia, and Canada,” *Journal of Genocide Studies*, forthcoming, 2015.
- 15 Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation - Analysis of Government - Proposals for Redress*, 2nd ed. (Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2005), 91.
- 16 United Nations Resolution 96 (1), “The Crime of Genocide,” declared: “Genocide is the denial of the right of existence of entire human groups . . . Such denial of the right of existence shocks the conscience of mankind, results in great losses to humanity in the form of *cultural* and other contributions represented by these human groups, and is contrary to moral law and to the spirit and aims of the United Nations . . . The general assembly, therefore, affirms that genocide is a crime under international law . . . for the commission of which principals and accomplices . . . whether the crime is committed on religious, racial, political or *any other grounds*—are punishable.” United Nations Resolution 96 (1), “The Crime of Genocide,” United Nations website, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/033/47/IMG/NR003347.pdf?Emphasis+added>.
- 17 Quoted in Kurt Mundorff, “Other Peoples’ Children: A Textual and Contextual Interpretation of the Genocide Convention, Article 2(e),” *Harvard International Law Journal* 50 (2009), 76.
- 18 William A. Schabas, “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law, accessed June 17, 2015, http://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/cppgc/cppcg_e.pdf.
- 19 Kurt Mundorff, “Other Peoples’ Children,” 82.
- 20 David B. MacDonald and Graham Hudson, “The Genocide Question and the Indian Residential School in Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45 (2012), 428.
- 21 Mary Agnes Welch, “The Genocide Test,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 12, 2014, accessed Nov. 25, 2014, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/the-genocide-test-266849891.html>.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Adam Muller, “Troubling History, Troubling Law: The Question of Indigenous Genocide in Canada,” forthcoming.
- 24 Department of the Interior, “Annual Report for the year ended 30th June, 1876,” Parliament, Sessional Papers, No. 11, 1877, xiv.

- 25 Norbert Elias, *Society of Individuals*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001), 183–84, 196–97. For Elias, the balance between a person's *we-identity* and *I-identity* is reflective of the society he or she lives in, so that in more traditional societies the former is stronger, while modern society moves people toward the *I-identity*.
- 26 Christopher Powell and Julia Peristerakis, "Genocide in Canada," in Woolford, Benvenuto, and Hinton, eds., *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, 71–73.
- 27 Gloria Galloway and Bill Curry, "Residential schools amounted to 'cultural genocide,' report says," *The Globe and Mail* website, June 2, 2015, accessed June 18, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/residential-schools-amounted-to-cultural-genocide-says-report/article24740605/>. Milloy himself was previously reluctant to use the term *genocide*, saying, "The purpose of the [federal government's] policy is to eradicate Indians as a cultural group . . . If genocide has to do with destroying a people's culture, this is genocidal, no doubt about it. But to call it genocidal is to misunderstand how the system works." John S. Milloy is quoted in Bill Curry and Karen Hewlett's article "Natives Died in Doves as Ottawa Ignored Warnings," *The Globe and Mail*, August 22, 2012, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/natives-died-in-doves-as-ottawa-ignored-warnings/article4309756/?page=all>.



SECTION 8

Civic Choices

The lives of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada are deeply intertwined with the colonial history of the country, during which they were robbed by the government and other agencies of rights afforded to them by legally binding treaties and of their land, which was illegally seized by the government and private developers. Today, indigenous individuals and communities work to reconcile their worldview, traditions, and aspirations for self-expression and autonomy with the political and social reality of twenty-first-century Canada. But a larger and more universal issue is bound up in this. What makes us members of a free society? In democratic societies, the fundamental assumption is that individual rights, equality before the law, and a measure of protection from government interference in individual choices would ensure the greatest freedom to all. Some would argue that those defenses are also the best protection against prejudice and discrimination.

The indigenous struggle challenges some of these assumptions and forces us to look more closely at the ideas behind our democracies. Specifically, it exposes the tensions between individual and group freedoms. The strain exists because in a democracy, a person's religious, political, or ethnic associations are viewed as secondary to his or her membership in the national community. For example, the government and parliament, as representative of the nation as a whole, are the bodies that make decisions about policies and new laws. Religious groups, ethnic minorities, and political organizations cannot impose their views on the rest of the nation. In fact, citizenship is given to everybody regardless of religious, political, or ethnic affiliation. However, many indigenous groups in Canada claim rights not only for their members as individuals but also autonomy inside or, to an extent, alongside the nation of Canada. They claim the right to exercise their autonomy as people in control of their own destiny, both as individuals and as a group of people.

What does the struggle of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit for their pre-existing rights look like? What are activists and leaders hoping to achieve? The first part of this section explores the challenges we just discussed, and the second focuses on the Blue Quills First Nations College. In the last readings of this section, we will consider stories of how young people use their history and culture to build bridges to others and toward the future.

Guiding QUESTIONS

1. Are individual rights enough to ensure freedom for all?
 2. What kinds of rights should a group have when its members seek to express themselves as a group, not just as individuals?
 3. Can the Canadian democracy accommodate Indigenous Peoples who argue that they are, in fact, a sovereign nation?
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READING 1 **White Paper, Red Paper**

In 1969, Jean Chrétien, then Indian Affairs and Northern Development minister and later prime minister (1993–2003), presented a policy statement called the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy. It would later become known as the White Paper and would serve as the backbone of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s “Just Society” policy. It highlighted the “right of Indian people to full and equal participation in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Canada” and insisted that “to argue against this right is to argue for discrimination, isolation and separation.” The document stated that “the government believes that services should be available on an equitable basis. . . . Services ought not to flow from separate agencies established to serve particular groups, especially not to groups that are identified ethnically. . . . All Indians should have access to all programs and services of all levels of government equally with other Canadians. . . .”¹ This idea may sound appealing to some, but to many indigenous people, it was not. Activists, scholars, and community leaders read it as yet another campaign to deny their rights to assert their “group identity and autonomy.” It was, in the eyes of many critics, a thinly veiled attempt to get rid of the treaties, the nation-to-nation agreements. A reporter for the *Globe and Mail* summarized the dilemma:

For most Canadians, that seemed only fitting after a decade marked by immense struggles worldwide against segregation and for equality. But it also meant that Indians would lose their centuries-long unique status. Treaties would be scrapped. Indian lands, long owned collectively under the trusteeship of the Crown, would be privatized and distributed to Indians individually. The Indian Affairs bureaucracy would shut down.²

For the Indigenous Peoples in Canada, this was just another attempt to disperse them as nations and force them to assimilate into Euro-Canadian society. They believed that if it were carried out, their aspirations of governing their own affairs would be shattered forever.

Part of a global trend seeking to claim rights for women, blacks, and colonized nations, a new generation of indigenous activists came of age in the 1960s. These activists rejected the ideas behind the new policy and began a campaign to force the Canadian government to honour its past agreements with the indigenous nations. For many, Trudeau’s Just Society proposal was yet another attempt to assimilate the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Their outrage would

eventually force the Trudeau government to abandon the policy. One of this new generation's activists was Harold Cardinal, who was then president of the Indian Association of Alberta. In his mid-twenties, Cardinal rose to prominence among First Nations, serving multiple times as leader of the Indian Association of Alberta. In 1970, in response to the idea of this "just society," Cardinal wrote a fiery retort—a book called *Unjust Society*, later known as the Red Paper—which opened with these words:

The history of Canada's Indians is a shameful chronicle of the white man's disinterest, his deliberate trampling of Indian rights and his repeated betrayal of our trust. Generations of Indians have grown up behind a buckskin curtain of indifference, ignorance and, all too often, plain bigotry. Now, at a time when our fellow Canadians consider the promise of the Just Society, once more the Indians of Canada are betrayed by a programme which offers nothing better than cultural genocide.

The new Indian policy promulgated by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government, under the auspices of the Honourable Jean Chrétien, minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and Deputy Minister John A. MacDonald, and presented in June 1969 is a thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation. For the Indian to survive, says the government in effect, he must become a good little brown white man. The Americans to the south of us used to have a saying: "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." The MacDonald-Chrétien doctrine would amend this but slightly to, "The only good Indian is a non-Indian."

. . . It sometimes seems to Indians that Canada shows more interest in preserving its rare whooping cranes than its Indians. And Canada, the Indian notes, does not ask its cranes to become Canada geese. It just wants to preserve them as whooping cranes. Indians hold no grudge against the big, beautiful, nearly extinct birds, but we would like to know how they managed their deal. Whooping cranes can remain whooping cranes, but Indians are to become brown white men. The contrast in the situation is an insult to our people. Indians have aspirations, hopes and dreams, but becoming white men is not one of them.³

In response to the public outrage this and other publications inspired, the government shelved the White Paper policy. Moreover, in the next five years, several court cases and agreements reaffirmed the rights of indigenous people to their lands.⁴

Connection QUESTIONS

1. What was the main idea behind the White Paper? Why did Harold Cardinal reject it? On what grounds?
2. What were the key issues, according to Cardinal, that could guarantee indigenous recovery? How different was his vision from the government policies of assimilation (and individual rights)?
3. According to Cardinal, what was the basis for indigenous demands for justice? How does indigenous sovereignty or autonomy conflict with the vision of the White Paper? Do you think that indigenous autonomy can be accommodated inside the Canadian political system? How?
4. An upstander is someone who stands up to injustice and fights for what he or she believes in and to create change. In what ways is Harold Cardinal an upstander?

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- 1 Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (The White Paper, 1969), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010189/110010001010191#chp1>.
 - 2 William Johnson, "Indians and the Just Society," *The Globe and Mail*, June 24, 2009, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/indians-and-the-just-society/article4280735/>.
 - 3 Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, Ltd., 1999), 1.
 - 4 Robert M. Bone, "Colonialism to Post-Colonialism in Canada's Western Interior: The Case of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band," *Historical Geography* 30 (2002), 61–64.



READING 2 **Blue Quills**

Harold Cardinal's vision was soon tested. Included in the White Paper of 1969 was a proposed phase-out of the Indian Residential Schools. That year, 1969, the government took exclusive control of the residential schools and officially ended its partnership with the churches (although many teachers remained unqualified, and the abuse continued).⁵ The government prepared to migrate all indigenous children into Canadian public schools. Attempts to close one school, however, were met with overwhelming protests from the indigenous community. But why did indigenous representatives object to the closing of a residential school? These schools, after all, were viewed as a colonial tool for assimilation and a centre of indoctrination and abuse.

In the 1950s, the Blue Quills Indian Residential School in Alberta was one of nearly 20 residential schools in the province. Located since 1931 in St. Paul, Blue Quills served the seven nearby reserves. But the school was unlike anything students encounter today. It was run by Catholic Oblate priests and Grey Nuns who imposed a severe regime of prayers, child labour, and learning from 6 a.m. to bedtime at 7:30 p.m. Students in the school felt completely isolated and imprisoned. One student reported, "We didn't have any chance to interact with other people. It was an institution with a big wire fence around it, literally."⁶ Louis Lapatack, who studied there for 13 years, provides a glimpse into the school's harsh discipline. On his first day, after he kicked a ball that accidentally hit someone in the face, he reported, "I was marched in here . . . and I was given a strap on both hands no questions asked. . . . That is what I recall about my first day here at the residential school." Looking back on his years in the school, he said: "It was too harsh. It was very strict . . . you had to be tough to survive."⁷

Over the next two decades, the school's teachers opened up and began to accommodate indigenous needs, language (Cree), and expectations. Several secular teachers joined the staff, and half-day labour ended.⁸ Then, in 1970, the government was moving to phase out the residential schools system altogether and the school was scheduled to be closed. But the indigenous communities of the Saddle Lake/Athabasca district had a different idea in mind. Representatives of the local reserves requested a meeting with the Department of Indian Affairs. When a meeting was finally held, the plan was laid out:

the superintendent planned to close Blue Quills, transfer all the students to a new high school in St. Paul, and dedicate the old school “as a residence for white high school students. Alarmed, committee members proposed that the school be turned over to Indian management.”⁹ But the authorities rejected the proposal, arguing that the indigenous community was not ready for the task of managing the school. Community organizers felt otherwise. They called for a grassroots protest in the form of a sit-in, which attracted more than 300 protestors over a month. Ceremonies were held, prayers were said, and volunteers from all over the country supplied food and other necessities.¹⁰ Years later, Charles Wood, manager of the nearby Saddle Lake band and one of the activists who protested the government’s decision, recalled:

We have been told that native culture was not good, and that our customs were no-good pagan rites for so long that it was hard for us to believe we were good enough [to run our own schools]. But, one evening, one of the elders stood up and asked: How many of you have studied up to grade 12? No hand showed. Then, How many of you have studied up to ninth grade? A few hands. See? the old man said, almost none of us can claim to have received an education. But the white man, the clergy, have been in charge of our education for over a century. We can’t do worse than them.¹¹

By that time, Harold Cardinal, president of the Indian Association of Alberta, had stepped in to lead the campaign. The demonstrations continued for about a month, and the protesters decided they would continue the sit-in until they could actually meet with Minister Chrétien. Chrétien finally relented. Cardinal and a delegation of some 15 representatives then flew to Ottawa for intense negotiations. After three days of back and forth, Chrétien withdrew the proposal to close the school and signed an agreement to transfer control to the indigenous school committee. Blue Quills became the first school to be officially administered by indigenous representatives.

The very first constitution of the Blue Quills School after its takeover in 1970 detailed the desire that its founders and supporters had for their children in taking the education of their own people back into their own hands:

Our greatest desire is that our children progress in the white man’s education, while continuing to retain their dignity and self-respect as Indian people. The past experience in schools organized and run by the non-Indian segment of society has submerged the Indian personality and left the people with little initiative. We have come to realize that we must take part in planning and in carrying out those plans if

we are ever to regain our proper place in the social life of our own country. We can no longer be content to let others do our thinking for us. We, ourselves, must take the action which will remove the discrepancies which have existed in education for Indians in the past.

We must have the power to choose the teachers who will do the best work with our children, and the power to dismiss those who prove unsuitable. We must have the power to create an environment which will encourage the students to expend their best effort, knowing that it is possible to achieve goals which hitherto have seemed unattainable.

This will mean establishing a proper balance of cooperation and communication between teachers, board of directors, parents, and students. It will mean staffing the school with Native people or others who will encourage the students to realize their capabilities and the opportunities awaiting them in the modern world.¹²



Edmonton Journal / Provincial Archives J-547

Premier of Alberta Harry Strom, President of the Indian Association Harold Cardinal, and Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chrétien (left to right) met to negotiate the fate of Blue Quills Residential School, now Blue Quills First Nations College, in Ottawa in 1970.

In the first five years of its operation, Blue Quills focused on education for elementary and middle-school students. Gradually, it began to accept students of high-school age. Since then, it has developed into a post-secondary institution providing adults with degrees that embrace indigenous culture at undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate levels, with some of the teaching taking place in the Cree language and with a curriculum that embraces both indigenous wisdom and Western thought. Blue Quills focuses on arts, technology, nursing, trades, and leadership programs, but a central emphasis

is on language revitalization, especially of the Cree language, using programs that were “developed in response to the growing awareness of language loss . . . and the desire for effective strategies for language revitalization within our communities.” The role Blue Quills plays in these efforts “is one of supporting language teachers and providing language education to the communities we serve.”¹³ Blue Quills is one of many examples of successful, independent indigenous educational institutions.

Connection QUESTIONS

1. The Blue Quills charter explains, “Our greatest desire is that our children progress in the white man’s education, while continuing to retain their dignity and self-respect as Indian people.” What do you think that means? What values are behind the statement?
2. How did the protestors understand the difference between the residential schools for “Indians” and “Indian-controlled” schools? What kind of model did the Blue Quills School set for indigenous education? What were the most important ideas behind it? What was it designed to achieve?
3. In what ways do you think Blue Quills and other indigenous schools promote indigenous pride and self-confidence?

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- 5 John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1999), xvii; “The Residential School System,” Indigenous Foundations website, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-residential-school-system.html>.
 - 6 Diane Persson, “The Changing Experiences of Indian Residential Schooling: Blue Quills, 1931–1970,” *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 153.
 - 7 “First Nations transform residential school into Blue Quills College,” CBCNews, March 25, 2014, available at www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/first-nations-transform-residential-school-into-blue-quills-college-1.2586161.
 - 8 Diane Persson, “The Changing Experiences of Indian Residential Schooling,” 158–162.
 - 9 Lucy Bashford and Hans Heinzerling, “Blue Quills Native Education Centre: A case study,” *Indian Education in Canada: Volume 2: The Challenge*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 128.
 - 10 Lucy Bashford and Hans Heinzerling, “Blue Quills Native Education Centre,” 128.
 - 11 “Native Awakening: Alberta Indians occupy a rural residential school and signal a new era in native activism,” *Le Canada: A People’s History*, CBC Learning website, <http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP16CH2PA3LE.html>.
 - 12 “Goals of the Blue Quills Native Education Council (1970),” in *Blue Quills First Nation College: 30th Anniversary* (2001), 5, <http://www.bluequills.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/BQ-30th-Anniversary-Book.pdf>.
 - 13 Blue Quills First Nation College website, “Indigenous Language,” <http://www.bluequills.ca/indigenous-language>.



READING 3 **Building Bridges through Culture**

Stories passed down in Inuktitut, the Northeastern Canadian Inuit language, tell about the history and traditions of the Inuit, from child-rearing practices to uses of the land to dream interpretation. Other forms of communication, including dance, ceremonies, sacred objects, and singing, are also ways to pass on legacies. Such is the case for the tradition of throat-singing, or *Katajjaq*, that has been a part of Inuit culture for thousands of years. It is performed as a friendly singing competition between two women. The first person to laugh or stop singing loses.¹⁴ The songs imitate sounds of nature, like the flow of water in a river. They also tell of ancestors' everyday experiences—imitating, for example, the sounds of dogs panting as they pull sleds over ice.

Katajjaq is sometimes described as an “almost-lost” art form. It was banned alongside other indigenous ceremonies and practices for decades, but it has resurfaced in the last 20 to 30 years.¹⁵ Karin Kettler and her sister Kathy are part of a revitalization of *Katajjaq*, performing throat-singing as the duo Nukariik, which means “sisters” in Inuktitut.¹⁶

Evie Mark is a well-known Inuit throat-singer and activist from Ivujivik. In an interview with *Musical Traditions*, Mark explains how important throat-singing has been for her:

There were a lot of elders who would throat-sing. It would amaze me. How could these two old women create such unique kind of, out of the world type, of sound? How could they create such spiritual sound? How can they do that? I want[ed] to learn too; so it became one of my goals, as a young girl.

... For me, it's about identity, it's about who you are, where your environment is. Throat-singing is strengthening my identity. The same thing with the youth. Even though I was raised by my grandparents, like a pure Inuk, some people in my community put me down because I was half-white. I wanted to prove them wrong. Now I realize I did not have anybody to prove to. But then, when you're nine years old, ten years old, when you are being put down, it's easy to believe in them.

Although I am half-white, I consider myself a true Inuk. But my white background allows me to share my culture to non-Inuit societies, like very English societies, French societies. I am able to say we are Inuit people, I am an Inuk person, this is where we come from. So I am able to share knowledge; I am able to say this is who we are. I have performed in many countries all over the world, in so many different places,

hundreds of schools, different stages, in Montreal, all across Canada, Greenland, England, Denmark, and other places.¹⁷

In many ways, Mark's story is representative of her place within a generation of bridge-builders between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. Some believe that they can, in these ways, help point the way to a new understanding of Canada's history and future.

Connection QUESTIONS

1. According to Evie Mark, what is the importance of a cultural practice such as throat-singing? What is gained by reviving the tradition?
2. What has throat-singing done for Evie Mark's identity? How has it helped her both within and outside of the Inuk community?
3. Do you and your family have any cultural traditions that have been passed down over time? How did you learn them? What do you know about their origins?
4. What is gained from Mark's sharing of her traditions with non-indigenous people in Canada? In what ways is Mark an upstander?

14 Bruno Deschênes, "Inuit Throat-Singing," *Musical Traditions*, January 1, 2001. Throat-singing has a unique and extremely recognizable sound, but techniques do vary across the Inuit population. Generally, unlike melodic or harmonizing singing, *Katajjaq* has no notes and is based more on rhythm and tempo. Words are rarely used; instead, syllables without meaning and breathing techniques make up the music. See *Alaska Dispatch News*, October 23, 2013, <http://www.adn.com/video/inuit-throat-singing-sisters-canada>.

15 Jackie Loohaus, "Sisters performing almost-lost art," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 6, 2003. See also "Inuit Throat-Singing," *The Magazine for Traditional Music throughout the World* website, accessed September 19, 2014, <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/inuit.htm>.

16 *Inuit Art Quarterly* (Winter 2001), 15.

17 Bruno Deschênes, *Musical Traditions*, January 1, 2001.



READING 4 **Feathers of Hope**

In March 2013, the Feathers of Hope Youth Forum took place in Thunder Bay, Ontario. More than 100 youth from 62 northern indigenous communities participated by sharing their “lived experiences” and talking about “issues affecting their lives” in Northern Ontario. On the last day of the forum, the young participants presented what became its publication, *Feathers of Hope: A First Nations Youth Action Plan*, to a group of community and government leaders.

The plan strived to address the legacy of colonialism and residential schools within their own communities while discussing larger issues of mental and physical health, substance abuse, and the tragedy of youth suicide. It also addressed the importance of strengthening First Nations teachings, culture, identity, and education through the healing and growing process. The plan also tackled such practical issues such as finding sustainable funding and community role models and mentors for continued activism, and how to build a movement. These young activists pointed, first and foremost, to the importance of indigenous youth leadership in building a sustainable movement to strengthen their communities and cultures for future generations. Recommendations were made by the forum on all of these issues under the heading “Taking Steps to Make Hope Real.”

Goals and Activism

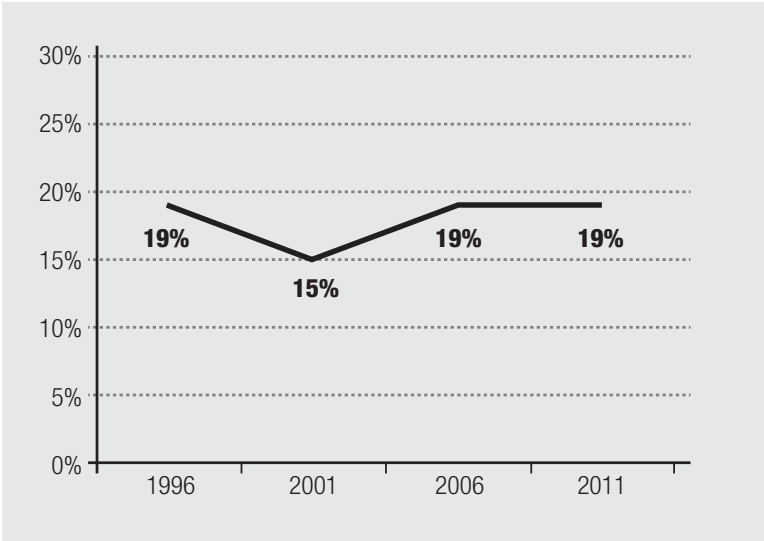
The poverty and “conditions of hopelessness” faced by some of the indigenous communities in Northern Ontario motivated the five young people who, in their roles as “Youth Amplifiers” for the Ontario Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth, organized the forum over a period of almost two years. At the forum’s conclusion, they stated:

The Feathers of Hope forum process showed that partnerships that support safe space and respect, allow young people to speak powerfully and passionately about their determination to achieve change. This is, in essence, why this project is so important to us. First Nations youth deserve better than the lives of neglect and marginalization we have been forced to live due to the failure of government, First Nations leadership and consequently our communities to meet our most basic needs. . . . Feathers of Hope helped young people realize they could share their feelings and experiences, talk about their wants and needs, dreams and hopes for the future, and add their voices and energies to work with their communities, leadership and government to create real change.¹⁸

In total, the plan summarized the diverse experiences and perspectives of more than 175 youth living on-reserve in Northern Ontario. This revealed a strong desire to move forward and grow alongside their cultures and communities:

We feel like we have a foot in two worlds—the modern and the traditional—and yet we are disconnected from both. The residential schools have disconnected many of us from our histories and our treaties. We want to speak our languages. We want to have a deeper connection to the land, our traditions, communities and elders and live in communities where we can give back and help one another. These things are important because they strengthen our sense of identity as First Nations young people. But we are more than this; we are also modern, wanting the education and post-secondary experiences of non-First Nations people. We are young people wanting access to opportunity and success.¹⁹

Education Attainment of Indigenous Canadians, 1996–2011



This data demonstrates a promising trend in education attainment among Indigenous Canadians between 1996 and 2011: the proportion of those with less than high school education declined, while the proportion of those with a post-secondary education rose. Read *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. What else do you think can be done to further improve educational attainment among Indigenous Canadians?

The plan made many recommendations on many topics, including those addressing the legacy of the residential schools. These focused on dispelling myths by striving to do the following:

1. Establish a nationally recognized day that commemorates the lives stolen by residential schools and the impacts the schools continue to have in the lives of First Nations young people, adults and elders.
2. Establish a First Nations History Month (like Black History Month).
3. Design and implement, with the input of First Nations youth, curriculum that teaches the truth about what happened in residential schools, day schools and the Sixties Scoop to counteract the harmful stereotypes and false and misleading “debates” that play out in the media.
4. Establish partnerships and scholarships for First Nations young people to promote access to broadcasting and media resources and help create real First Nations content.
5. Fund the establishment of more networks like the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, and cover the issues of importance to Aboriginal peoples in all our diversity.
6. Make the publication of blatantly racist articles in the media subject to “hate laws.”
7. Begin with families. We need families to have the support necessary to begin healing.²⁰

Overall, the *Feathers of Hope Youth Action Plan* encouraged engaged and community-based youth activism focusing on the “importance and power of hope.” Acknowledging that there are “no quick fixes to the challenges facing First Nations children and youth, their family and communities,” the plan offered steps “that can be followed to start a change process focused on improving our lives and healing our communities.”

Connection QUESTIONS

1. How do the activists behind the *Feathers of Hope Youth Action Plan* describe their goals? What role does identity play?
 2. As you read their action plan, which items feel most important to you?
 3. How do you define your community? What challenges does your community face? If you were to make an action plan for your community, what would it include? What kind of activism do you think would help engage people with these issues positively?
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- 18 "Letter from the Youth Amplifiers," in *Together We Are . . . Feathers of Hope: A First Nations Youth Action Plan* (Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, 2014), 10–11, Inspiration Foundation website, accessed Sept. 18, 2014, http://www.inspiritfoundation.org/files/6114/0656/0111/Feathers-of-Hope_report.pdf.
- 19 "Executive Summary," *Feathers of Hope*, 13.
- 20 "Taking Steps to Make Hope Real," *Feathers of Hope*, 34.



Timeline

Early History

Indigenous Peoples¹ have lived in what is now North America for many millennia. Comprised of various nations of people, First Nations² and Inuit³ lived in both migratory and permanent, self-sufficient societies. Like all other human civilizations, they developed religious, cultural, and economic institutions, technologies, unique languages, and complex worldviews. They also maintained complex trade routes throughout the Americas, as well as well-developed forms of diplomacy, alliance-building, and governance.

Sixteenth Century: European Contact

Europeans arrived on the east shores of North America at the start of the sixteenth century. For the first 300 years, settlements remained mostly on the east coast, where trade posts and administrative centres served a thriving trade with First Nations. French and British merchants and fishermen were primarily concerned with taking furs, fish caught in the area, minerals, and foods and plants found in the Americas back to Europe.

1620: First Christian Missionary Schools in New France

The Récollets, a French order of the Franciscan missionary group, established the first residential school in the province of New France, near Quebec City. Missionaries were an integral part of the colonial expansion of France and Britain. They were among the first Europeans to interact with the Indigenous Peoples in North America and were the first to try to Christianize them.

Seventeenth to Eighteenth Century: North American Fur Trade

The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fur trade in North America brought British and French tradesmen who exchanged European goods for furs and many other products. At the fur trade's peak, thousands of indigenous hunters, trappers, processors, guides, European traders, and Hudson's Bay Company merchants traded with each other with mutual benefits. The First Nations people helped the Europeans learn the lay of the land, local languages, and survival skills, and they also connected the Europeans with hunters and trappers who supplied them with furs. Intermarriage was also common during this period.

1756–63: Seven Years' War

The Seven Years' War was fought amid mounting colonial tensions between the imperial powers of Britain and France over several areas of control around the globe, including North America. Upon declaring war on one another, Britain and France each recruited First Nations to fight on their side. The war ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763, which surrendered most of the French territories in North America to Great Britain.

1763: Royal Proclamation

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued by Britain's King George III. It stated that all the traditional land of the Indigenous Peoples would be considered indigenous land until ceded by treaty. In acknowledging indigenous land rights, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 set out protective terms and guidelines for settlement in indigenous territories in North America and to secure their rights. From this time on, the British Crown began entering into alliances and official treaties with various indigenous nations.

Nineteenth Century: Destruction of the Bison

It is estimated that the bison population of North America dwindled from 30 million to less than 1,000 within the span of the nineteenth century. Settler expansion in the American and Canadian prairies, expansive hunting, destruction of grazing grounds, drought, and widespread disease resulted in near-extinction of the bison. Many Indigenous Peoples lost a major element of their livelihood and, as a result, saw their way of life destroyed. Bison were used for food, clothing, tools, and shelter. Moreover, First Nations had a deep religious and spiritual relationship with the bison.

1830s: Beginnings of the Reserve System

From the 1830s onward, many Indigenous Peoples were encouraged, and at times forced, to give up their old migratory habits, settle on the reserves,⁴ learn farming and trading, and receive religious instruction. In the 1850s, a series of legislative enactments redefining the boundaries of indigenous community, property, and land use increased pressure to relocate. In the 1950s, under a government policy of moving the Inuit to permanent settlements, this group began to abandon its traditional nomadic ways of living and settle in pre-planned, government-sponsored communities.

1831: Mohawk Indian Residential School

The Mohawk Indian Residential School opened in Brantford, Ontario, in 1831. This industrial school was the longest-running school in the system. The school was officially closed in 1970. The Six Nations group, which owns it, is working to preserve the building and its legacy for educational purposes.

1857: The Gradual Civilization Act

The Gradual Civilization Act was passed in 1857. The act aimed to transform indigenous individuals into Canadian citizens, provided that they give up all ties to their native heritage via the acquisition of Euro-Canadian education and language.

1867: The Constitution Act

The Constitution Act (also known as the British North American Act) was enacted in 1867 to unite three British colonies to become the first four provinces of the Dominion of Canada, providing Canada with its own government and federal structure.

1869: Neighbouring US Policy of “Aggressive Civilization” Passed

The American policy of “aggressive civilization” of Native Americans was passed into law and created a system of “industrial schools.” The policy was key to the writing of the Davin Report (1879), which recommended, and subsequently helped to implement, a residential and industrial schools system for indigenous children in Canada.

1869: The Gradual Enfranchisement Act

The Gradual Enfranchisement Act, passed in 1869, aimed to transform indigenous men into Canadian citizens, provided they leave the reserve and become owners of private property. “Enfranchisement,” or the process of becoming a full Canadian citizen, came with the downside of losing both legal Aboriginal status and the right to band members’ traditional land.

1867–1914: Conquest of the “West”

An expansionist government policy concerning settling the “West” (what is now Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan) began in 1867. The policy encouraged massive European settlement through immigration without any consultation with its Métis⁵ and First Nations inhabitants. In 1869, Métis leader Louis Riel formed a provisional government in the Red River settlement (Manitoba) and led the Red River Rebellion against the surveying and allocation of Métis land for settlement.



Chronicle / Alamy

In 1869, Louis Riel led the Métis in the Red River Valley to rebel against the Canadian government and petition for their rights. Riel is viewed as a hero by many in Canada.

1871–1921: Signing of the Numbered Treaties

The Numbered Treaties were a series of 11 treaties signed between indigenous nations and the government of Canada between 1871 and 1921. The agreements constituted an arrangement where indigenous nations were promised nominal compensation in exchange for surrender of their rights and titles to their lands. Many in Canada think that the Indigenous Peoples were coerced into signing the treaties. There were also major discrepancies between what was in the written treaties and what indigenous signatories understood by the treaties.

1876: The Indian Act

The Indian Act was enacted by the federal government to combine all previous legislation regarding the First Nations and to bring them under federal jurisdiction. This act created the term *Indian* as a legal category and defined Status Indian,⁶ which excluded Inuit and Métis people. The act gave the government, through the Department of Indian Affairs, the power to create laws and policies regarding Indians and Indian affairs such as membership, reserve infrastructure and services, systems of governance, culture, and education.

1879: The Davin Report

The Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds, written by politician and lawyer Nicholas Flood Davin and commissioned by Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, was published in 1879. It recommended the creation of an industrial schools system for Indian children. This system was designed to separate children from their parents, community, and culture.

1881–1885: Building of the Canadian Pacific Railway

Between 1881 and 1885, the Canadian Pacific Railway was built between Eastern Canada and British Columbia. It was instrumental in the settlement and development of Western Canada but also in the forced relocation of a number of Indigenous Peoples.

1883: Residential Schools System Established by Government

Adopting the recommendations of the Davin Report in 1883, the government established a system that enrolled all First Nations children in day schools, industrial schools, or residential schools.

1884: Banning of the Potlatch and Other Expressions of Indigenous Cultures

An 1884 amendment to the Indian Act banned the potlatch⁷ and other expressions of indigenous culture, such as traditional ceremonies.

1892: Formal Agreement Between Church and Government

In 1892, a formal agreement was established between certain Christian churches and the federal government to operate and manage residential schools across Canada.

1907: Warnings about Health Conditions in Schools

Dr. Peter H. Bryce, a medical inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs, released a report in 1907 highlighting the appalling health conditions of residential schools in the Prairies.

1920: School Made Compulsory for First Nations Children

Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1913–1932, lobbied for and passed an amendment to the Indian Act that made school attendance compulsory for all First Nations children under 15 years old.

1922: *The Story of a National Crime* Is Published

Dr. Peter H. Bryce published a pamphlet called *The Story of a National Crime* in 1922, in which he argued that the government failed to address the health needs of students in Indian Residential Schools, which resulted in otherwise avoidable illness and death.

1923: Abolishment of Distinction Between Residential and Industrial Schools

The government abolished the distinction between residential and industrial schools; both types were then considered residential schools.

1944: Raphael Lemkin and the Term *Genocide*

In 1944, Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jewish jurist, coined the term *genocide* in his writings concerning his analysis of the extensive and horrific crimes of Nazi Germany against the Jews and against other peoples Germany targeted in its military expansion. He based much of his analysis on the treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I and other periods of willful destruction of peoples. Lemkin was a fierce advocate of the legal recognition of genocide as an international crime, which culminated in the drafting the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

1948: The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

In the wake of World War II and the Holocaust, and as a result of Raphael Lemkin's tireless advocacy, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948. However, the Genocide Convention, as it came to be known, failed to include "cultural genocide" in its definition of the crime.

1951: Chesterfield Inlet Residential Schools Open for Inuit Children

At the end of World War II, the US military reported deplorable living and health conditions among Inuit in the Canadian Arctic, an area that had been largely ignored by the Canadian government. In response, the first of several residential schools officially opened for Inuit students in Northern Canada in 1951.

1952: Canada Selectively Ratifies the UN Convention

In 1952, the Canadian government selectively ratified the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Canada's ratified version excluded the provisions defining genocide as "deliberately inflicting on

the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

1960s: Changing Social Landscapes and the Closure of Residential Schools

The 1960s saw the emergence of the antiwar movement and the rise of a global movement focused on individual freedom, equal rights, and faithful recognition of minorities’ identities. A new generation of indigenous activists came of age and advocated for indigenous rights and culture. Simultaneously, residential schools across the country began to close, as the Indian Residential Schools system was being phased out by the government.

1960s: The Sixties Scoop

In the 1960s and 1970s, the government removed as many as 20,000 children from indigenous parents, nominally as a form of welfare. This period is colloquially referred to as the Sixties Scoop.

1964: Residential Schooling for Inuit Children Expands

By June 1964, nearly 4,000 Inuit children, or 75% of youths aged 6 to 15, were attending residential schools.

1969: Government Ends Partnership with the Churches

In 1969, the government ended its partnership with Christian churches in the residential schools program and launched educational integration programs. Some schools remained under church control until the end of the system.

1969: The White Paper

Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau released the White Paper of 1969, which recommended the abolition of the Status Indian designation and the gradual abolition of all government protections and provisions for Indigenous Peoples, including the Indian Act, treaties, and other indigenous rights. This was also known as the Just Society policy.

1970: The Red Paper

Amid indigenous protests against the assimilationist ideas of the White Paper, the president of the Indian Association of Alberta, Harold Cardinal, published his book *Unjust Society* (also known as the Red Paper), which posed a counter policy whose aim was to restore self-governance and land titles to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. As a result of widespread pressure, the Just Society policy was shelved.

1970: Indigenous Community Takes Over Management of Former Residential School

After nationwide protests and intense negotiations between the Indian Association and the government, the management of the former Blue Quills Indian Residential School in Alberta was handed over to the surrounding indigenous communities.

1986–1994: Churches Apologize

Between 1986 and 1994, the United Church, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Anglican Church, and the Presbyterian Church formally apologized for their involvement in and management of residential schools.

1990: Phil Fontaine Discusses Abuse in Schools

In October 1990, then Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs leader Phil Fontaine openly discussed his experiences of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse as a residential school student and demanded a national inquiry. As a result, survivors came forward with a flood of similar confessions and stories.

1991: Establishment of Royal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (RCAP)

Faced with growing frustration and protest surrounding the state of indigenous communities and rights, the government established the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in August of 1991. It was funded to hold public hearings, visit communities, consult with native experts, and produce a report and recommendations about how to improve the relationship between the government and the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

1996: RCAP Releases Report

In 1996, the commission produced a highly critical report on the topic of indigenous, non-indigenous, and government relationships with the goal of restoring indigenous rights, land, and self-government. That year, the last residential school was closed.

1998: Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Apologizes

On January 8, 1998, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jane Stewart delivered a written apology to Phil Fontaine (who served at that time as the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations).

1998: Aboriginal Healing Foundation Created

The government allocated a fund of \$350 million for programming for healing and laid plans for community development and strengthening indigenous governance. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established to manage the fund.

1999: Creation of Nunavut

In 1999, the Canadian government formally recognized the Inuit claims to their traditional land. The inhabitants changed the name of the region to Nunavut, which means “our land” in Inuktitut. Nunavut is the largest and most northern territory in Canada, and its creation gave its Inuit inhabitants more administrative power to govern the region according to their traditional form of governance.

2005: Phil Fontaine Launches Lawsuit on Behalf of Survivors

Phil Fontaine, then national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, launched a class-action lawsuit on behalf of the “First Nations, Survivor, Deceased and Family Class.” The lawsuit consolidated roughly 13,000 individual lawsuits and 19 class actions.

2006: Lawsuit Settled: Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) Signed

The First Nations, Survivor, Deceased and Family Class agreed to settle their lawsuit out of court and sign the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) to begin a process of reconciliation with survivors of the residential schools system. The agreement included a government apology, a reparations program, and the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

2007: Truth and Reconciliation Commission Established

In 2007, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was officially established as a part of the IRSSA; \$60 million was allocated for the commission.

2007: Reparations Program of IRSSA Commences

In 2007, the IRSSA compensation program began through both the Common Experience Payment program and the Independent Assessment Process; \$2 billion was set aside for roughly 86,000 surviving students.

2008: Prime Minister Makes Official Apology

On June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a public apology in front of a joint session of the Canadian Parliament and representatives of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

2009: Pope Benedict XVI Addresses Legacy of Residential Schools with Survivors

In April 2009, Pope Benedict XVI, acknowledging the Catholic Church's role in the Indian Residential Schools system, invited Phil Fontaine, then National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, to the Vatican.

2010: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Information and Testimony Collection

In 2010, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission began collecting information about what was done to survivors in the residential schools and worked to make this information public. This process provided survivors of the Indian Residential Schools with public, communal acknowledgement of and support for years of injustice and suffering. The last public national gathering took place in June 2015.

2015: Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concludes Its Work

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded its work in June with a three-volume report on the Indian Residential Schools. This includes a volume on reconciliation with 94 recommendations for the federal and provincial governments and all Canadians.

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- 1 According to the Canadian Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, Aboriginal Peoples are "the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people—Indians, Métis and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs." See <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642/1100100014643> (accessed March 18, 2015). Canadian law defines those who belonged to the First Nations as Indians. We elected to use the term First Nations throughout this guide.
 - 2 According to the Canadian Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, First Nations is "a term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word 'Indian,' which some people found offensive. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term 'First Nations peoples' refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and non-Status. Some Indian peoples have also adopted the term 'First Nation' to replace the word 'band' in the name of their community." See <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642/1100100014643> (accessed March 18, 2015). We elected to avoid the loaded term *Indian* throughout this guide. The exceptions to this rule are when the term is used in reference to Canadian legal terminology (e.g., Status Indian or the Indian Act) or when the word appears in a primary source.
 - 3 According to the Canadian Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, Inuit peoples are the original "people in Northern Canada, who live in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Northern Labrador. The word means 'people' in the Inuit language—Inuktitut." See <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642/1100100014643> (accessed March 18, 2015). The singular of *Inuit* is *Inuk*. The loaded term Eskimo, which once referred to the Inuit, is no longer acceptable in Canada today.

- 4 According to the Canadian Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, a reserve is a “tract of land, the legal title to which is held by the Crown, set apart for the use and benefit of an Indian band.” See <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642/1100100014643> (accessed March 18, 2015).
- 5 According to the Canadian Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development website, Métis are “people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree.” See <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642/1100100014643> (accessed March 18, 2015).
- 6 According to the Indigenous Foundation of the University of British Columbia, “‘Status Indians’ are registered under the Indian Act on the Indian Register—a central registry maintained by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) . . . The Indian Act of 1867 defined ‘Indian’ as: 1. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band; 2. Any child of such person; 3. Any woman who is or was lawfully married to such person.” Status Indians are entitled to a few benefits stipulated in treaties signed between their bands and the British Crown. See <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-indian-act/indian-status.html> (accessed March 19, 2015).
- 7 The potlatch is a ceremony practiced by the Indigenous Peoples and Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest. During the celebrations, the host lavishes property and gifts (such as blankets) on the kin group in a show of power, prestige, and generosity. The potlatch is also used to mark special events such as marriage, birth, death, and the initiation of new leaders. See “Potlatch,” *Encyclopedia Britannica* online, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/472732/potlatch>.



Glossary

Aboriginal: Stemming from the mid-seventeenth-century Latin term *aborigines*, meaning “original inhabitants,” Aboriginal is the preferred legal term in Canada for the large and diverse grouping of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit nations. It is used synonymously with the term *indigenous* in various parts of Canada.

Animism: In some indigenous cultures, there is no distinction between animate and inanimate things. All beings are considered living and soulful. Anthropologists call this worldview animism.

Assimilation: This term refers to the process whereby one group or individual’s culture is absorbed into another, creating one single cultural entity, giving up distinct group or individual identity. Believing that indigenous cultures were inferior, the Canadian government, since the middle of the nineteenth century, put forth a series of policies to assimilate the Indigenous Peoples into settler Canadian society.

Colonization: This term refers to a situation in which one nation takes over and settles a geographic area populated by other, indigenous peoples. For example, the area now known as North America was colonized by Europeans from the sixteenth century onward at the expense of the indigenous populations that had been living there for millennia.

Common Experience Payment: The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement set aside some \$2 billion in monetary compensation for about 86,000 surviving students (out of roughly 150,000 students altogether). These funds were distributed through the Common Experience Payment, which provided each qualified person \$10,000 for attending such a school, plus \$3,000 for each year at the school.

Constitution: Canada’s constitution was signed in 1982 and affirmed indigenous pre-existing rights: Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes and provides protection to the rights granted to Indigenous Peoples in the Royal Proclamation and subsequent treaties. While the Constitution recognizes rights such as logging, fishing, hunting, and the rights to land, it did not settle the issue of indigenous self-government. But in recent years, the Canadian government adopted policies that recognize in principle the right for self-government as stipulated in the treaties.

Creation myth: A creation myth is a story that describes the creation of the world and is passed down through the generations. According to some indigenous creation myths, the Great Spirit constructed four orders of the world: the physical world, the plant world, the animal world, and the human world, all of which were tightly connected to and dependent upon each other. Many variations on the theme of creation exist, but most of them make the connection between human beings and the world that surrounds them.

Day school: Alongside residential schools and industrial schools, day schools were part of the residential school system for indigenous children in Canada. Often located on the reserves, these schools served about two-thirds of indigenous students throughout the history of the system. They were operated by both municipal authorities and the churches, and they attempted to reach the same goals as the Indian Residential Schools: Christianization and assimilation. Many of the troubles and abuses found in the residential schools were also found in the day schools.

First Nations: First Nations have lived in North America for tens of thousands of years. Today, the term refers to some 617 different communities, traditionally composed of groups of 400 or so. These nations enjoy a richness and diversity of identity, culture, and customs. Many view North America as their traditional homeland and do not recognize aspects of US and Canadian sovereignty. Alongside the Métis and Inuit Peoples, First Nations are part of a larger grouping officially called the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada.

Genocide: In 1944, Raphael Lemkin coined the term *genocide* to describe the intentional and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group. *Genocide* stems from the Greek word *genos*, which means “race,” and *cide*, which means “to destroy.” It was legally defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 (the Genocide Convention). When the Canadian government selectively ratified the Genocide Convention in 1952, it excluded crucial elements of the convention. Many indigenous leaders, activists, and politicians have publicly called on the Canadian government to recognize the Indian Residential Schools system as genocide.

Independent Assessment Process: The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement allotted monetary compensation to former students of the residential schools and set aside some \$2 billion for about 86,000 surviving students (out of roughly 150,000 students altogether). A portion of these funds went toward the Independent Assessment Process, a separate process through which survivors who suffered abuse received additional compensation.

Indian: When the first European explorers landed in the Americas in 1492 with Christopher Columbus, they referred to the entire indigenous population on the continent as “Indians” because they believed that they had arrived in India. The term came into widespread use among the settlers, and it lumped together entire local populations, disregarding their extraordinary diversity. Ultimately, the name Indian served to differentiate between Indigenous Peoples and the settlers, who referred to themselves as Europeans, whites, and, finally, Canadians.

Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement: Signed by the government and representatives of the Indigenous peoples in 2006, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began a process of reconciliation with former students of residential schools. It stipulated a government apology, a reparations program, and the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Reparations to former students came in the form of monetary compensation; \$2 billion was set aside for about 86,000 surviving students (out of roughly 150,000 students altogether).

Indigenous: A generic term for communities of people who resided on territories before they were invaded and/or colonized (primarily by Europeans). Many descendants of these communities have a historical and cultural continuity with their pre-colonial ancestors. For some, the term *indigenous* is preferable to *Aboriginal* in reference to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Canada.

Industrial schools and residential schools: The government initially pursued two models of schooling for indigenous children following the recommendations of the Davin Report: residential and industrial schools. This school system was founded on the belief that cutting indigenous children off from their communities and culture would help them better assimilate into Canada’s Western society. In contrast with the residential schools, which were more academic, the industrial schools focused more on farming skills and trades. In 1923, the distinction between the two was abolished and both became “residential schools.” Lack of funding, prejudice, cultural isolation, and abuse made these schools poor and traumatizing educational institutions for indigenous students.

Inuit: The term Inuit refers broadly to the indigenous population of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. *Inuit* means “people,” and the language they speak in the Canadian Arctic is called Inuktitut. For centuries, these communities have relied on their natural resources, strong leaders, and innovative tools and skills to survive in the Arctic north. Today, the Inuit communities of Canada live in the Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland, and the region is divided into four territories.

Off-reserve/On-reserve: Since the beginning of the reserve system in the 1830s, many First Nations people have resided on reserves in Canada. Historically, reserves served as “social laboratories” where First Nations inhabitants were to become productive, “civilized,” Christianized, and assimilated into the settlers’ ways of life. There is a growing population of people who live “off-reserve” in urban or simply non-reserve locations. Over the years, many reserves have transitioned into relatively autonomous self-governed communities. The most recent Canadian census reveals that just over 50% of First Nations individuals registered as Status Indians reside off-reserve.

Métis: The term broadly describes descendants of mixed European and First Nations ancestry. In a narrow sense, Métis refers only to the descendants of First Nations people and French settlers in Manitoba. The history of the Métis reflects the intermingling of their different ways of life during the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North American fur trade. Eventually, these descendants developed distinct language, culture, and traditions.

Noble savage: Post-contact with indigenous peoples, some European writers saw them as noble, exotic figures who, despite their “primitive” culture, could behave heroically (an idea that was common in many Hollywood films until very recently). This idea was a myth in itself; the “pre-social” idea of indigenous people was largely imagined and romanticized. Pushed to the extreme, this view implies that they also behaved crudely, irrationally, and violently, like animals.

Oral tradition: Indigenous traditions provide meaning and value to their members, connect them to past, present, and future generations, and teach them about their place in the natural world. These traditions are communicated from one generation to another by storytellers, traditional healers, group leaders, and elders, often through music, dance, and elaborate ceremonies that are referred to as oral tradition. Historically, Westerners tended to dismiss non-written cultures, such as those of the Indigenous Peoples, as inferior.

Race theories: European race theories emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from colonial encounters with indigenous people and a growing interest in heredity, later known as genetics. Race theorists promoted the idea that different human groups had different hereditary makeups and, as a result, had different physical and mental capacities. Scientists spoke of the indigenous population in terms of race. Pejorative terms like “redskin” were used to mark the differences between the indigenous people and the Europeans. These ideas, although widely considered untrue today, continue to reverberate in Western culture and media.

Reconciliation: A popular term among activists and scholars in the field of indigenous history and issues, *reconciliation* refers to the act of repairing a fractured or damaged relationship between two parties. In Canada, it refers to the reconciling between the Indigenous Peoples and the descendants of Canada's European settlers through truth-seeking, education, and efforts to restore indigenous autonomy and culture.

Reserve system: The key tool of a common colonial strategy, reserves were small, barely habitable areas where the colonizers sought to manage the people they dispossessed. In Canada, the 1850s saw a series of legislative enactments redefining the boundaries of First Nations communities, property, and land use, which increased pressure to relocate to reserves. Lack of investment and poor government services exacerbated First Nations isolation, leaving many reserves economically depressed and prone to violence and crime.

Residential schools system: Beginning in 1883, the federal government sought a system to enroll indigenous children in schools. The residential schools system was part of a larger government agenda to assimilate indigenous people into settler society by way of education. Relying almost exclusively on churches to provide the teachers, administrators, and religious instructors, the system was severely underfunded and marked by inferior educational standards and achievement: neglect, malnutrition, abuse, and disease were widely reported. In recent years, researchers discovered that some schools even carried out dangerous medical experiments. It is also estimated that more than 6,000 students died of disease and abuse while enrolled. Over a 150-year span, the government and churches operated close to 150 schools where some 150,000 indigenous youth were enrolled.

Self-identification: To self-identify means to define oneself as something without reference to or reliance on external—usually legal—definitions. Historically, many indigenous people in Canada had to self-identify because they did not fit inside the narrow and discriminatory scope of who was “Indian” as defined by the Indian Act.

Sovereignty: Sovereignty defines a state's freedom to mind its own internal affairs and to govern its own people. Some notions of sovereignty are not exclusive: several notions of First Nations self-government can be (and in fact are) accommodated within the Canadian political system.

Status Indian: The Indian Act of 1876 created the legal category of Status Indian, which referred to an Indian registered under the act. Although receiving this status provided one with certain benefits, such as tax exemptions, the Indian Act established a paternalistic relationship between First Nations

and the federal government. (For example, Aboriginal individuals living on a reserve could not leave it without permission from the Indian agent. Also, Status Indians were not able to vote until the 1960s.) It discriminated against many people who lived and self-identified as indigenous but were not included in the act's definition of who was Indian. This legal category, despite many amendments to the act, still exists today.

Survivors: The term *survivors* was first used to refer to individuals who lived through the Holocaust and other genocides; many believe residential school students share similar symptoms with other survivors, including emotional detachment, guilt, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. First used in the 1990s in the discussion of the experiences of indigenous students in the residential schools system, the term also refers to former students of these schools, individuals who suffered neglect and physical and sexual abuse at the hands of their supposed teachers and instructors.

The Indian Act: Enacted by the federal government in 1876, the Indian Act combined all previous legislation regarding the First Nations and brought them under federal jurisdiction. This act created the term Indian as a legal category and defined Status Indian (registered Indian), which excluded Inuit and Métis people. It gave the government, through the Department of Indian Affairs, the power to create laws and policies regarding “Indians” and “Indian” affairs such as membership, reserve infrastructure and services, systems of governance, culture, and education.

Treaty: A treaty is a legally binding agreement between two sovereign nations. In Canada, various treaties between First Nations and the British Crown have been signed over the decades. The intent of many treaty agreements was to initiate a system in which First Nations peoples would share the land with the settler society but retain their autonomy and inherent rights to land and resources.

Truth and reconciliation commissions: Truth and reconciliation commissions have become commonplace since the 1970s. They reflect a global trend of paying greater attention to mass violations of human rights. Most of a commission's work is focused on crimes carried out by a government against its own citizens. Since the 1970s, there have been at least 40 truth and reconciliation commissions established worldwide, and some are still active today. Truth commissions involve a multifaceted process designed to help victims overcome historical injustice and trauma and reconcile with those who harmed them. Part of what experts call transitional justice, a truth and reconciliation commission typically includes the elements of truth-seeking, justice, and reconciliation. Established under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement,

Canada's commission began collecting survivor testimonies and related historical information in 2010. In an effort to make this information public, the commission's archive was opened in 2014. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, on June 3, 2015.



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