

**EDUCATING FIRST-NATION CHILDREN IN CANADA:**

**The Rise and Fall of Residential Schooling**

by

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in conformity with the requirements for  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines a controversial episode in the history of educating First-Nation children in Canada - - the rise and fall of the residential school system. Viewed initially by the Canadian government as an appropriate means of social assimilation, the residential school system was eventually abandoned as official policy, but not until after prolonged resistance to it on the part of First Nations peoples, whose concerns first led to demands for “Indian Control of Indian Education” and later to the creation of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Revelations of abuse shocked Canadian society and did much to hasten the demise of the residential school system. A statement of reconciliation made by the federal government on January 7, 1998 acknowledged past wrongs and set the stage for a more viable relationship between Natives and non-Natives in Canada in the twenty-first century.

The policy of educating First-Nation children in residential schools is examined in the context of “cultural studies” literature in geography and anthropology, including the works of established figures like Carl Sauer, Alfred Kroeber, and Clifford Geertz. The lens of the “new cultural geography”, however, offers considerable interpretive assistance, especially such notions as David Sibley’s “geography of exclusion” and Steve Pile’s “geographies of resistance.” Government documents housed in the National Archives of Canada are also consulted, as well as literature in the fields of education, politics, law, sociology, and psychology.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ORIGINALS**

<b>AFN</b>	<b>Assembly of First Nations</b>
<b>DIAND</b>	<b>Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development</b>
<b>ICIE</b>	<b>Indian Control of Indian Education</b>
<b>INAC</b>	<b>Indian and Northern Affairs Canada</b>
<b>NAC</b>	<b>National Archives of Canada</b>
<b>NGS</b>	<b>National Geographic Society</b>
<b>NIB</b>	<b>National Indian Brotherhood</b>
<b>RCAP</b>	<b>Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>



## INTRODUCTION:

### TRUE SORROW OR CROCODILE TEARS?

January 7, 1998 is an important landmark in the relationship between the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and the First Nations peoples of Canada<sup>1</sup>. It was on this day that Jane Stewart, the Department's Minister, stood before the Assembly of First Nations, survivors of the residential school system, and the people of Canada to express government regret for its participation in the operation of residential schools and for the abuse that occurred in them (see Appendix 1). Many have wondered whether Stewart's words, broadcast and reported throughout the nation, constitute an expression of true sorrow and reconciliation - - an "apology", as the media dubbed it - - or a charade of crocodile tears. At first glance, one would think that it was a sincere apology -- but was it? Media and public reaction were mixed. Whether convinced or skeptical, the ongoing response is sure to shape future relations between Natives and non-Natives in Canada in the next century.<sup>2</sup>

For a better understanding of Stewart's statement, the reason for its articulation, and the current state of affairs between Aboriginal peoples and the federal government with respect to education, it is important to examine the historical

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<sup>1</sup> The term "First Nations," according to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs website (1997), "came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word 'Indian.'... [It] refers to the Indian people of Canada, both Status and Non-Status."

<sup>2</sup> The term "Native," according to Frideres (1993), constitutes Status Indians, non-Status Indians, and Metis peoples.

processes that have led us to this point in time.<sup>3</sup> The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP 1996, 3) puts it this way: “The [circularization] of the medicine wheel urges us to keep the whole picture in mind, even though the individual component parts may be compelling. As we wrestle with issues in the education of the child, the youth, the adult, and the elder in turn, we will be reminded that the problems encountered by adults today are rooted in education processes in the past.” The RCAP wording is a kind of gestalt - - the whole appears to be decidedly greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, it is important to consider all aspects, but especially past relationships when trying to comprehend First Nations education today and the litigation between the crown and the survivors of the residential school system.<sup>4</sup> Though this thesis will not focus on the legal aspect of the residential schools, nor the issue of compensation to survivors, it should be noted that this is a controversial subject, one that the Canadian government will be confronted with for some time.

### **How Did the Controversy Begin?**

In 1895 Alexander Pope (1895:7) wrote:

Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutored mind  
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;  
His soul proud science never taught to stray  
Far as the solar walk or milky way.

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<sup>3</sup> The term “Aboriginal,” as defined in the 1982 Constitution (section 35, clause 2), includes “the Indian, Inuit and Metis peoples of Canada.”

<sup>4</sup> The term “Indian” refers to Status Indian as defined in the guidelines in the *Indian Act*. It is used in this thesis in a historical context, one that embodies a legal and political discourse.

Pope's poetic images are very much representative of the time in which he lived. It was common in his day, and even until quite recently, to believe that the best way to educate Indians was through assimilation. Historically, it was the mission of many Europeans to convert Indians to Christianity. Ironically, just as the "white man" repeated his attempts to conquer the Indian, the Indian has maintained efforts to survive conquest. This is evident in the government's establishment of the reservation system and the Natives' response with demands for self-government. First Nations education has been seen very much as a means of assimilation; however, over the past few decades, Aboriginal peoples, particularly in Canada, have attempted to take control of their own education. Education is viewed as a key element of cultural survival by many Native groups, not just in Canada, but throughout the world.

The residential school controversy in Canada was not an isolated phenomenon. In several countries that were dominated by colonialism, including New Zealand, Uganda, and Australia, systems similar to the residential school system, where the ideas of assimilation and civilization endured, existed well into the twentieth century. Though individual countries had different policies with respect to eliminating Aboriginal culture, the goal was the same: assimilation. In Australia, thousands of children were removed from their homes, only to become wards of the state and be placed in "homes" or institutions. As in the residential school system of Canada, Cunneen and Libesman (1995: 45) argue that in Australia "the rationale behind removals was to indoctrinate Aboriginality out of the next generation. The children were taught to think, act and behave as whites." Many Aboriginal children

were taken because they were deemed to be “neglected” in the eyes of the state and the court. Once placed in these “homes,” the children were not allowed to return to their communities, and many were taught to think that “blacks on reserves were dirty, untrustworthy, bad” (Cunneen and Libesman, 1995: 46). It was thought that this assimilationist approach, in the words of Cunneen and Libesman (1995: 50), would “solve the ‘Aboriginal problem.’” As we shall see, the same views characterized official thinking in Canada, and indeed surface in the *Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs* furnished by Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of the Department from 1913-1932.

The actions and policies taken against the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islanders in Australia have been described by Cunneen and Libesman (1995: 45) as “attempted cultural genocide, because its objective was to destroy an entire culture.” Genocide is a strong word to invoke in any context, so we must be clear about what we mean by the term. As defined by Article Two of the United Nations’ *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948), and accepted in modified form by the government of Canada in 1949 (Canada 1949: 2), the term genocide refers to *any* of the following:

- 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.

Though the first four clauses of the article do not directly apply in the Australian and Canadian contexts, the fifth clause does. Indian children *were* forcibly taken from

their homes and communities in both countries, being displaced and made wards of the state in institutions in Australia and in residential schools in Canada. Furthermore, these children *were* forced to learn the “white man’s” ways as well as to reject their Aboriginal culture. Some children were put up for adoption as yet another means of “assimilating” and “civilizing.” Indirectly, though, many children were harmed both mentally and physically through abuse.

It is impossible to study and understand First Nations education in Canada, including a UN definition of attempted cultural genocide, without attempting to understand the past. The history of First Nations education involves more than just residential schools, for it also entangles the Church (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and United or Methodist), the federal government, and government legislation. George Santayana maintained that we are supposed to learn from history in order not to repeat it. He has been proven wrong time and again. Hegel (1902: 49) put the matter quite differently: “What experience and history teach us is this: that people and governments never have learnt anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it.” This sober appraisal certainly applies to First Nations education. Ever since the arrival of Europeans on American shores, First Nations education has been considered to be the responsibility of the “white man,” not the Indian, especially after 1850 in the case of Canada. History and government, we will see, are interconnected, and will remain so until First Nations people are allowed to exercise complete control over their own education.

Before proceeding into the discussion on Indian education, I believe that for a

thesis such as this, it is important that my position as an English-speaking, white, heterosexual, Catholic-Canadian female in her mid-20s from Kingston, Ontario be stated, so as to recognize my own biases. I cannot speak as an Aboriginal person or as someone who survived the residential school system. As a teacher, however, the issue of education is one that is important to me.

Chapter 1, “Whose Culture is it Anyway?: First Nations, Education, and the Study of Geography,” provides a broad theoretical framework and reviews literature pertinent to the principal area of research. This literature is varied in its disciplinary roots, but cultural geography and cultural anthropology are well represented by the likes of Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, and Carl Sauer. Of particular importance is the literature on resistance and exclusion, most notably by the historian James Scott and by the geographers David Sibley and Steve Pile. Because very little has been written on this topic within geography, resources from within the discipline are limited. To make up for this shortcoming, I undertook archival research in which I examined documents from the National Archives of Canada. Furthermore, I also scrutinized government documents, as well as those from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). Some of these include the *Annual Reports from Indian Affairs*, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength*, and *Indian Control of Indian Education*.

Chapter 2, “Displacement and Assimilation: First-Nation Children in Residential Schools,” examines the use of residential schools by the government and the Church in their attempt to displace and assimilate First-Nation children into “White” society. This chapter shows that government policy technically constituted a form of “cultural

of “cultural genocide”, as defined by the criteria outlined earlier. The chapter also examines government policies pertaining to residential schools, as well as the issue of abuse. Government policies are articulated in the Annual Reports of Indian Affairs, many of which were written by Duncan Campbell Scott. Though residential schools existed in the 1800s, they did not become prominent until the turn of the century. Therefore, for the purpose of this chapter, the period that is highlighted stretches from approximately 1900 until the 1930s. Though the last residential school closed in the 1980s, much of the resistance against these schools came in the 1960s and 1970s. Illustrative material in the form of maps and graphs will be included to demonstrate not only school distribution by denomination and province but also the spatial displacement suffered by Indians. This chapter charts the rise of residential schooling.

Chapter 3, “Resistance and Assertion: ‘Indian Control of Indian Education,’” examines indigenous resistance to residential schools and integration in provincial schools by focusing on the 1972 document “Indian Control of Indian Education” (ICIE) and its significance for First Nations people and their education. This section can be considered the aftermath, or “fall” of residential schooling. It is important to ascertain why this resistance occurred in order to begin to understand the ICIE document. This chapter therefore analyzes the document, what it entailed, and if what was proposed by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972 was ever implemented. The choice of examining ICIE is important as it links the past to the present, as its creation was considered to be a turning point in First Nations education. Though analysis pertains to ICIE and other Assembly of First Nations documents, an

examination of a section of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) is also included.

In the Conclusion, “Has the Healing Begun?”, I try to assess the apologies made by the four churches responsible for residential schools, but particularly the government’s statement of redress made on January 7, 1998. The issue of educating First-Nation children, particularly in residential schools, remains a contentious one. I close by reflecting on the future of First Nations education as we enter the twenty-first century.



## CHAPTER ONE

### WHOSE CULTURE IS IT ANYWAY? FIRST NATIONS, EDUCATION, AND THE STUDY OF GEOGRAPHY

*The label geography, as that of history, is no trustworthy indication as to the matter contained. As long as geographers disagree as to their subject it will be necessary, through repeated definition, to seek common ground upon which a general position may be established.*

- Carl O. Sauer, *The Morphology of Landscape* (1925)

Although Sauer, as quoted above, was referring to the discipline of geography as a whole, his comments are particularly relevant to his area of research -- historical-cultural geography. Since the 1970s, there has been an ongoing debate within cultural geography between a loosely-defined Sauerian school of thought, also referred to in the literature as the Berkeley School, and an equally loosely-defined "new" cultural geography. The Berkeley School, according to Marie Price and Martin Lewis (1993: 1), contends that cultural geography "studies the relations between human communities and the natural world, investigating the transformation of natural landscapes into cultural ones." On the other hand, "new" cultural geographers, including such practitioners as James Duncan, Denis Cosgrove, and Peter Jackson, argue that cultural geography "examine[s] the patterns of significance in the landscape and their reflexive role in molding social relations." They further reason that these patterns blend "with the spatial patterning of race, class, and gender in the modern urban context" (Price and Lewis 1993: 1). Debates between each school of thought have emerged, and though at first glance they may seem

incompatible, strands of each in my opinion can fruitfully inform any study in historical-cultural geography.

The first two parts of this chapter will examine these debates amidst the development of this sub-discipline, but regardless which side of the debate one chooses to align oneself, the notions of imaginary geographies, representation, and identity are evident. Within these notions lie the geography of resistance and the geography of exclusion. Notions of imaginary geographies and geographies of resistance and exclusion help to expand the literature to a different level by incorporating other sub-disciplines of geography. The geographies of exclusion and resistance pertain to the displacement of children from their communities and families, and the demand for their return. A third part focuses on the relevance of this literature with respect to my research on First Nations education in a Canadian cultural context. The final part discusses the methodology used for this research. I would like to stress that very little has been written on First Nations education within geography, and consequently resources are limited. It is a topic that is important, however, especially for Canadians concerned not only with First Nations education but with the nature of education in general.

### **Culture and Cultural Geography**

Carl Sauer, whom many regard as the “founding father” of American cultural geography, believed cultural geography to be “‘how people live in their land..., what their ecological relationship is to the land’, and whether that relationship is or is not ‘harmonious’” (Price and Lewis 1993: 7). Sauer’s ideas concerning culture and

cultural geography are related closely to those of the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, who studied under one of his discipline's "founding fathers", Franz Boas. It is often said that Kroeber's views, especially his notions of the "superorganic" nature of culture, influenced Sauer's way of thinking. Culture, of course, is a fiercely debated concept. Ron Johnston and his associates (1996: 116) write in the *Dictionary of Human Geography* that: "over the course of the modern period the meaning of culture has changed from reference to skilled human activity...to refer to the whole set of activities through which a human group encompasses and transforms nature, including 'human nature'.... [It also refers to] the refined individual spirit, and finally to the collection of intellectual and artistic practices deemed to indicate and be produced by such spirits."

Culture, defined anthropologically, is thought to be "a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, laws, morals, and customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1871: 1). Clifford Geertz (1973: 89) considered it "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life." Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963: 357) contend that it consists "of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups."

While Kroeber makes reference to the use of symbols, Sauer was more interested in material culture. Many of Kroeber's ideas about culture, however, mirror those of Sauer. In fact, Jackson (1989: 17) argues that Sauer "shared Kroeber's emphasis on

patterns of culture and on its essentially acquired, transmitted or achieved nature, as opposed to its allegedly ascriptive qualities [ as well as the]... belief that culture was the property of human groups, not individuals, and that it was embodied in custom and tradition.”

This last point is the basis for Kroeber's concept that culture is “superorganic.” The superorganic “adopts the view that culture is an entity at a higher level than the individual, that it is governed by a logic of its own, and that it actively constrains human behaviour” (Jackson 1989: 18). In other words, culture is above individuals and cannot be reduced to the individual level. Furthermore, Kroeber is quoted in Duncan (1980: 184) as stating that “a thousand individuals do not make a society. They are the potential basis of a society; but they do not themselves cause it. Rather it is the socio-cultural level which causes men to behave as they do.” This idea of the superorganic is reflected in the work of T.S. Eliot (1947: 21), for Eliot states that the “culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs.”

How does the superorganic apply to cultural geography? In his “Foreword to Historical Geography”, Sauer (1941: 358) states that “human geography, then, unlike psychology and history, is a science that has nothing to do with individuals but only with human institutions, or cultures.” Sauer’s views have also influenced Zelinsky (1973: 40-41), who writes:

[We] are describing a culture, not the individuals who participate in it. Obviously, a culture cannot exist without bodies and minds to flesh it out; but culture is also something both of and beyond the participating members. Its

totality is palpably greater than the sum of its parts, for it is superorganic and supraindividual in nature, an entity with a structure, set of processes, and momentum of its own, though clearly not untouched by historical events and socio-economic conditions.

These ideas may be interpreted to mean that culture is stagnant and does not change. Culture, however, does undergo change over time and space. "New" cultural geographers such as Cosgrove (1989: 123) contend that "culture is not something that works through human beings, rather it has to be constantly reproduced by them in their actions."

### **The Cultural Landscape**

Any study in cultural geography would not be complete without examining the concept of the cultural landscape. Kroeber's ideas of culture and the superorganic are evident in Sauer's conceptualization of the cultural landscape. Sauer (1925: 321) states that "the term 'landscape' is proposed to denote the unit concept of geography, to characterize the peculiarly geographic association of facts....The facts of geography are place facts; their association gives rise to the concept of landscape." Sauer (1925: 321-322) goes on to argue that "by definition the landscape has identity that is based on recognizable constitution, limits, and generic relation to other landscapes, which constitute a general system...[Thus] the geographic landscape is a generalization derived from the observation of individual scene." It should be noted that Sauer outlines two forms of landscapes: the natural and the cultural. The natural, however, is incorporated into the cultural landscape. Sauer (1925: 337) explains that forms, such as climate, land, and vegetation, are thought of "in their relation to one another and in their place in the landscape, each landscape being a

definite combination of form values. Behind the forms lie time and cause...[The] factors are justified as a device for the connection of the forms, not the end of inquiry.” He further argues that these factors and forms “lead toward the concept of the natural landscape which in turn leads to the cultural landscape” (Sauer 1925: 337).

Cultural landscape, then, is comprised of elements such as population, housing, production of primary products, and communication, all of which are “the words of man that characterize the landscape. Under this definition we are not concerned in geography with the energy, customs, or beliefs of man but with man's record upon the landscape” (Sauer 1925: 342). The cultural factor for Sauer focused predominantly on material culture, but Price and Lewis (1993: 6) argue that he “never limited the term 'artifact' to concrete objects.” In fact they further contend that “he viewed any human modification of the landscape as artifactual.” In Sauer's (1925: 343) eyes the cultural landscape, to quote a celebrated passage, emerges as follows:

[It] is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases, and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different--that is, an alien--culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of an older one. The natural landscape is of course of fundamental importance, for it supplies the materials out of which the cultural landscape is formed. The shaping force, however, lies in the culture itself.

In essence, Sauer “claimed that the objects existing together in landscape form an indivisible whole in which land and life have to be viewed together....He made a

conceptual division of natural and cultural and landscape, the former being a stage upon which 'culture' then operated in a process of transformation" (Cosgrove 1983: 2).

### **Landscape as Text**

Sauer's ideas have not gone without criticism, most notably by Jackson, Cosgrove, and Duncan. Like their rejection of the superorganic and material culture, "new" cultural geographers have abandoned landscape analysis of rural environments for conceptualizing and examining landscape as a text underwritten by temporal, spatial, and ideological practices. The concept of landscape as text challenges the "morphological restrictions" (Johnston *et al* 1996: 318) that were associated with the Berkeley School. Arguments that advance the notion of "landscape as text" have "(a) sought to explain landscape change in terms of social processes and practices; and (b) subjected the cultural construction of the concept of landscape as a 'way of seeing' to searching investigation, often drawing upon aesthetics, art history and cultural studies, and feminist theory" (Johnston *et al* 1996: 318).

Given this view, then, it can be argued that "a text encourages the reader to carve it up, to rework it, to produce it....[It] is a place in which the reader as writer can wander" (Duncan and Duncan 1988: 119). As with a novel, film, or piece of art, we, as geographers, are being asked to deconstruct a landscape and re-discover its multiple layers of meaning, which can help to decode some of the political, socio-economic, and historical aspects of the landscape. In the Duncans' analysis of landscape, they argue that the French scholar Roland Barthes "was not interested in describing landscapes in and of themselves, but in showing how their meanings are

always buried beneath layers of what he termed ideological ‘sediment’” (Duncan and Duncan 1988:117).

These ideas are further explored by other cultural geographers, including Cosgrove and Ley. Just as questions can be asked of text, so too can they be asked of landscapes. Ley (1985: 419) argues that postmodern landscapes can be read as text, as well “as a product which expresses a distinctive culture of ideas and practices.... A careful reading of the built environment might reveal distinctive values towards heritage, ecology, social relations and a mass culture.” Cosgrove (1988: 567-568) states that “concepts like landscape have been subject to detailed deconstruction over the past decade.” He further elaborates:

[The] Duncans (1988) make explicit use of poststructuralist reader theory to examine its treatment as text ..... They regard text as a set of beliefs made intelligible through the organization of space as a symbol, and in spatial symbols as such. Dominant meanings are ascribed to places and landscapes are ‘produced’. Interpretation of such meanings in textual landscapes is, of course, always unstable and contested through the production of alternative meanings.

Over the past decade, therefore, notions of “landscape as text” have entered the subdiscipline of cultural geography, especially in the realm of “new” cultural geography. Cosgrove (1989: 567-568) notes that this approach encourages “not only a re-reading of socio-spatial practices but invit[es] greater sophistication in our exploration and interpretation of specific sites and locales.”

### **Critiques of the “New” Cultural Geography**

Some of the tenets of the “new” cultural geography have been subjected to critical scrutiny, among others by Price and Lewis. Price and Lewis point out that



much of the research in “new” cultural geography focuses on the developed world, in an urban setting, and in the present. It seldom focuses on the underdeveloped world, in a rural setting, and on the past. Secondly, it is ironic that many of the new cultural geographers criticize Sauer and the Berkeley School for their studies on material culture, because as Price and Lewis (1993: 6) argue “this view is more appropriate for certain non-Berkeley branches of cultural geography.”

Furthermore, Price and Lewis (1993: 2) argue that “adherents of the old school...are drawn to empirical questions rather than conceptual positioning; as a result, few are interested in pressing the issue. Moreover, most “traditional” cultural geographers find the pugnacious style of contemporary geographical debate distasteful.” In fact, both sides of the debate offer interesting ideas within cultural geography; however, rather than trying to reconcile their respective positions, practitioners on either side have become more and more polarized from each other.

Price and Lewis (1993: 12) suggest, using a notion of Barnes (1989: 143), that:

“Traditional” cultural geographers...must take up the challenge of retaining and revitalizing their own field. In doing so they would be advised to grapple with some of the sophisticated social-theoretical constructs now being offered by the new school. And members of both schools... would do well to consider “celebrat[ing] the richness and diversity of the world.”

With this in mind, perhaps it is possible for these two schools of thought to discover a means to a common understanding. One such area where both contribute is the idea of representation and imaginary geographies. Within this realm exist the geographies of exclusion and resistance. Though ethnographic in nature - - an approach often associated with Sauer - - geographers such as Duncan, Ley, Rose, and Sibley have made contributions to this area of study.

## **Identity, "Imaginary Geographies," and Cultural Geography**

All cultures have what Said (1978) terms "imaginative geographies," what Hall (1995: 182) calls "landscapes of the mind." The idea is that "there is a strong tendency to 'landscape' cultural identities, to give them an imagined place or 'home', whose characteristics echo or mirror the characteristics of the identity in question" (Hall, 1995: 182). It is important to define what identity might constitute in a geographical realm. Gillian Rose (1995: 85) defines identity in terms of space as "how we make sense of ourselves." "Geographers", she continues, "have argued that the meanings given to a place may be so strong that they become a central part of the identity of the people experiencing them." Although Rose's definition is typically geographical, with respect to space, Rutherford's (1990: 19) approach is more cultural and ethnographical. He argues that "identity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural and economic relations we live within." Since my research is both geographic and ethnographic in nature, both definitions will be taken into consideration.

The connection between culture, identity, and imagined geography, Hall (1995: 182) contends, "helps to construct and to fix in place a powerful association between culture and 'home'. We think of our culture as a home - - a place where we naturally belong, where we originally came from, which first stamped us with our identity.... To be among those who are the same cultural identity makes us feel, culturally, at home. Cultures give us a powerful sense of belongingness (sic), of security and familiarity." This can be said for many first-generation immigrants, who may live in ethnic communities in large urban centers, where the large proportion of the

community's population is of the same culture, such as Chinatown and Little Italy in Toronto. These communities provide a sense of belonging, security, and familiarity to newly arrived immigrants by providing services and communications in the native language, as well as maintaining some traditional customs and religious practices. Therefore, the people in these communities are providing a "cultural home" for others with similar cultural identities.

While the idea of imaginary geographies may seem positive, it does have some drawbacks, particularly in representation and imagery. The concern, however, is that it is the Western world that creates these imaginary geographies, or images. More often than not, the images that are produced do not necessarily reflect that of the culture in question. Duncan and Ley (1993: 2) assert that "the question of how we should represent the world has usually been taken for granted." They further contend that "we should strive to produce as accurate a reflection of the world as possible." Keeping this in mind, it can be argued that our representations of the world are nothing more than "partial truths" (Clifford and Marcus 1986). This idea begs the following questions: whose version of the truth are we telling? Whose perspective is it? Is there more than one truth? Who decides on these truths and if they are perspectives or actual truth? Is it only Western culture that decides what is "true" and what will be written as "history"?

*National Geographic* is one example of attempting to project "truth" and attempting to describe other cultures through imagery; however, the representation of other cultures can either be inaccurate or does not reflect a true representation of a specific culture outside or even inside the United States. Arm and arm with the

American government and large corporations, the periodical and the National Geographic Society (NGS) set out on an American political agenda and attempt to “look... at the rest of the world from the vantage point of the world’s most powerful nation” (Lutz and Collins 1993: 6). With this perception, the periodical, therefore, focuses on the idea of “otherness.” In other words, it tries to define what America is not by employing images of the exotic and everything that is not American, or as Lutz and Collins (1993: 26) describe it “the West versus the rest.” *National Geographic*, then, may be seen to be a repository of American values and traditions. It promotes the notion of a “national vision” and a “reflection of American national identity” (Lutz and Collins, 1993: 6). The problem, though, is that this so-called national vision and American national identity is only reflective of one section of the population - - the upper/middle class.

As Lutz and Collins illustrate, there is little mention of the Native populations of the United States or Canada in the *National Geographic* except the Inuit, in the case of the latter, who are viewed as exotic and the Other by the popular magazine because they are geographically removed from American society. Furthermore, little is mentioned about the remaining minority groups in the United States, except when stories deem these groups as another “culture” far removed from the predominant one and shown in a negative light. As a tool within the geography curriculum in the public education system, *National Geographic* could be useful in teaching students about issues and cultures on a global scale; however, the information that is provided for students is biased in favour of the United States. In his critique of Ruth Benedict's work, Geertz (1988: 106) summarizes the idea of otherness and the United

States by stating that “our own forms of life become strange people: those in some far-off land, real or imagined, become expectable behaviour given the circumstances. There confounds Here. The Not-us (or Not-U.S.) unnerves the Us.”

These notions of otherness and the Us/not-Us, particularly in *National Geographic*, are examples of exclusionary thinking. By excluding marginal groups, we socially construct who belongs and who does not. These ideas echo the sentiments of David Sibley (1995). Sibley (1995: 49) writes in his *Geographies of Exclusion*:

There is a history of imaginary geographies which cast minorities, ‘imperfect’ people, and a list of others who are seen to pose a threat to the dominant group in society as polluting bodies or folk devils who are then located ‘elsewhere’. This ‘elsewhere’ might be nowhere, as when genocide or the moral transformation of a minority like prostitutes are advocated, or it might be some spatial periphery, like the edge of the world or the edge of the city.

Exclusion can exist in a variety of forms. Extreme measures, such as ethnic cleansing or racial segregation exclude those who are considered the ‘other’ for one reason or another. The act of exclusion aims to create spaces of domination and spaces of purification. In the words of Sibley (1995: 4), it “draws particularly on colour, disease, animals, sexuality and nature” with “the idea of dirt as a signifier of imperfection and inferiority, the reference point being the white, often male, physically and mentally able person.” It is within this space that society decides what belongs and what does not, or more specifically, who belongs and who does not. Sibley (1995:3) argues that “who is felt to belong and not to belong contributes in an important way to the shaping of social space.”

Radical examples of a society's attempt at maintaining and cleaning untidy spaces include the "ethnic cleansing" of Jews, homosexuals, Catholics, and anyone who was not considered "white Aryan" in Nazi Germany, the "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims by Serbs in Yugoslavia, and closer to home, the removal of Aboriginal peoples onto reservation lands and their displacement from home, land, and communities to residential schools, so as to hide the "untidiness" perceived to exist by the majority.

Residential schools, in Sibley's terminology, can be considered a "spatial periphery," part of the "elsewhere" where Aboriginal people were displaced from their communities. They constituted a factory by which the Church and the government would attempt to produce and concoct "white" people, or members of the dominant group, out of Aboriginal people, the people whom Sibley calls the "imperfect people." The problem is that this scheme didn't work, for when many Aboriginal people left the schools they were discriminated against in mainstream society by the dominant group. Furthermore, many did not feel that they belonged in their own community. In other words, many survivors of these schools were truly displaced, and even more so, many have not healed from their experiences in the residential school system.

Those who feel excluded in spaces where domination and purification prevail are likely, at some point, to resist the status quo and oppression. The term "resistance," like culture, has several definitions by both academics and the excluded/oppressed. For the purpose of this thesis, I follow the lead of Steve Pile (1997: 15), who states that "resistance is less about particular acts than about the desire to find a place in a

power-geography where space is denied, circumscribed and/or totally administered.” Resistance is therefore constructed as the attempt at trying to find a place in a dominant and purified space. These ideas are evident in the work of James Scott, as well as the work of Sibley.

Scott’s (1990: 108) primary argument centres around “the link between the hidden transcript and the experience of domination.” The hidden transcript, as defined by Scott (1990: 115), “is a self-disclosure that power relations normally exclude from the official transcript. No matter how elaborate the hidden transcript may become, it always remains a substitute for an act of assertion directly in the face of power.” Scott’s idea of the hidden transcript contains three main points. First, it is a social creation and a consequence of power relations among the excluded. Second, “like folk culture, . . . [it] has no reality as pure thought; it exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted and disseminated within these offstage social sites” (Scott 1990: 119). And third “the social spaces where the hidden transcript” flourishes are themselves a feat of resistance; they are conquered and vindicated “in the teeth of power” (Scott 1990: 119). In other words, a form of resistance to the dominant culture demands the need for what Scott (1990: 118) identifies as a “negation” or hidden transcript, which “will effectively provide a general normative form to the host of resistant practices invented in self-defense by any subordinate group.” It can be further reasoned that the formation of a hidden transcript is supported by the creation and maintenance of barriers between the dominant culture and the excluded (Scott 1990).

These points can be expanded beyond the hidden transcript onto a more general

plane affecting the social entity between the excluded and the dominant culture. Scott (1990: 135) insists that a form of dependence among the excluded “favors the development of a distinctive subculture, often with a strong “us vs. them” social imagery. Once this occurs . . . the distinctive subculture itself becomes a powerful force for social unity as all subsequent experiences are mediated by a shared way of looking at the world.” While I agree with some of what Scott has to say, his argument that all subordinates or excluded parties will agree and become a powerful force because they share the same experiences is too generalized. While this may apply for some, it does not recognize the individual. It assumes that persons are a) excluded from the dominant culture; and b) that because persons are excluded for a particular reason that they should share the beliefs of others who are in the same situation. Certainly, I am not arguing that those who feel excluded, and/or oppressed, do not share similar views, but it should be noted that it is a generalization and may not apply to everyone.

Unlike Scott, Pile (1997: 2) does not focus his attention on the idea of a hidden transcript but rather on

the ways in which resistance uses extant geographies and makes new geographies and [on] the geographies that make resistance. This in itself unsettles discussions of resistance that see it as the inevitable outcome of domination, since power - - whether conceived of as oppression or authority or capacity or even resistance - - spread through geography can soon become uneven, fragmentary and inconsistent.

Pile examines the ways in which space and place affect resistance in the dominated space between elites and subordinates. He argues that “at the heart of questions of resistance lie questions of spatiality - - the politics of lived space” (Pile 1997: 27).



Pile (1990: 4) does not focus primarily on one form of resistance, but acknowledges that different forms of exclusion and oppression require different responses; where some forms of resistance are “about mass mobilization in defence of common interests, where resistance is basically determined by the action: the strike, the march, the formation of community organisations, and in either geographically circumscribed communities . . . or in spatialised communities.”

### **Cultural Geography and First Nations Education**

Before discussing First Nations education and its relationship with cultural geography, it must be stated that there have been individuals, both within and external to the discipline, who have questioned whether or not in fact that this topic is geographical. My research falls into the categories of traditional cultural geography and “new” cultural geography. While some of the research is informed by a Sauerian perspective, it also benefits from the work of new cultural geographers such as Duncan, Cosgrove, and Jackson. The literature on resistance and exclusion are particularly important to my research question.

Given Sauer’s definition of cultural geography, it should be noted that my research is neither ecological in nature nor pertains to the physical environment. It does focus, however, on how Native people live on their land and their relationship with the community. Education has a profound effect on the various socioeconomic issues that are predominantly associated with the reserve system. Some of these include higher-than-average crime and incarceration rates, increased child welfare, lower incomes, poor housing, and high drop-out rates among students.

Charters-Voght (1991: 117) maintains that education is a “vehicle for addressing...[the] problems that are affecting [native] communities.”

Sauer himself was very much interested in Native peoples, especially those of Middle America, and on the survival of their culture, as well as the impact that Spanish conquistadors and imperialism had on Indian land and life. He was also keenly interested if not in Indian education *per se* then in educating about Natives, especially to young people. In his now almost forgotten elementary school text, *Man in Nature: America Before the Days of the White Man* (Figure 1) Sauer describes for nine and ten-year olds what life was like for Indians throughout the Americas before contact with the Europeans. He writes: “Before the white men came all the land belonged to the Indians. This book is about Indian days. The Red Man lived in the land much as he found it. He was much more part of nature than we are. By learning how and where the Indians lived, we shall learn what kind of country the white man found. We shall then know better what he has done with it” (Sauer 1939: 8).

Sauer’s ideas were quite radical for the times in which he lived, as most people, especially those in government, were formulating ways of assimilating and civilizing Aboriginal people, denying the fact that Aboriginal peoples were the First People of the Americas. Sauer (1939: 8) states further to his young audience:

We think it is a good thing to know about Indian days. We could not live like the Indians, even if we wished to do so. We have our own ways of living. But we did not need to cut down so many forests, and we did not need to destroy so much wild game. Often we have made the land poor and ugly. The land was natural and beautiful in Indian days. Perhaps we should make parts of it look once again as it did in Indian days.

Lovell (1995) has argued that *Man in Nature*, while it can be read in several

A FIRST BOOK IN GEOGRAPHY

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# MAN IN NATURE

America Before The Days of The White Men

By CARL SAUER, Chairman, Department of Geography, University of California

Illustrated by ANTONIO SOTOMAYOR ~ ~ ~ ~ ~



EDUCATION  
LEO BAISDEN  
*Assistant Superintendent,  
City Schools, Sacramento, California*

ETHNOLOGY  
ISABEL KELLY  
*University of California*

GEOGRAPHY  
MARGARET WARTHIN  
*Formerly with  
American Geographic Society*

MAPS  
AILEEN CORWIN  
*Formerly of  
University of Oklahoma*



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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

New York ~ Chicago ~ Boston ~ Atlanta ~ Dallas ~ San Francisco

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Figure 1: Title Page of Carl Sauer's Elementary School Text, *Man in Nature: America Before the Days of the White Men* (1939, reprinted 1980).

different ways, is concerned with issues that today are at the heart of critical postmodern studies. He (1995: 7) asserts that the text:

espouses tolerance of, and respect for, cultural differences; it questions long standing...notions of what conventionally passes as progress; it promotes awareness of issues of power and hegemony and celebrates life at the level of living things, plants and animals, birds and flowers as well as human communities; it challenges predominant Eurocentric constructions of history, and what happened in history, by giving the achievements and accomplishments of native peoples center stage; it calls for greater comprehension of the links between environment and society...; it emphasizes Native American viewpoints, Native American perspectives, and reminds us poignantly of the enormity of what has been lost.

Inevitably, *Man in Nature* reveals, in subtle, under-stated ways, the consequences that colonialism and imperialism have had on Aboriginal peoples in the Americas, from the Inuit in the Canadian North to the Maya of Guatemala.<sup>5</sup>

Like Sauer's research, my area of research also reflects upon the consequences of empire. Although it does not date back to 1492, there was, and still is, a form of internal colonialism that exists within government policy, such as the *Indian Act* and its control over Indian education. Altbach and Kelly (1978: 23) argue that internal colonialism "implies the absorption of the colony into one nation-state, controlled by the colonizer....In the modern world eradication may not entail genocide but rather obliteration of nationhood through assimilation." This was achieved by means of removing Indians because of expansion; segregating them on reserves; forcing assimilation; accelerating domination by the colonizers; and creating racist ideologies (Perley, 1993: 120). Within Canada, the Department of Indian Affairs controlled,

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<sup>5</sup> The term Inuit, according to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (1997) website, refers to "an Aboriginal people in northern Canada, who live above the tree line in the Northwest Territories, [Nunavut], and in Northern Quebec and Labrador."

and does so even to this day, a considerable amount of the lives of Aboriginal peoples, such as education, land, taxes, health, and domestic infrastructure. Inevitably, “difference...is not seen in its own terms, but is perceived only in relation to the identity of the observer....The notion of the ‘uncivilized’ [Native] works to establish the West as civilized” (Rose, 1995: 103-104). Aboriginal peoples were seen as “the Other” in the Americas, so as Rutherford (1990: 22) articulates:

The center expels its anxieties, contradictions and irrationalities onto the subordinate[s]... filling it with the antithesis of its own identity; the Other, in its very alienness, simply mirrors and represents what is deeply familiar to the center, but projected outside of itself. It is in these processes and representations of marginality that the violence, antagonisms and aversions which are at the core of dominant discourses and identities become manifest - - racism, homophobia, misogyny and class contempt are the products of the frontier.

Rutherford's argument was, and still remains, deeply rooted in the policies of the DIAND and the federal government. In the past, the government's goal was to civilize and assimilate these people by means of residential schools. This goal existed even as late as the 1960s with the “Sixties Scoop” - - adoptions of Native children by non-Native families. It was hoped that this goal would be achieved through education. Like Native peoples who captivated the interest of Sauer, education has had a profound effect on the cultural identity and cultural survival of Native communities in Canada, particularly since Confederation.

While my research recognizes the individual's and the nation's experiences within the system and some of the differences that exist, a substantial portion of my research examines Native education in terms of the superorganic. In other words, it analyzes the topic holistically because the fact remains that Native education does not just

belong to history - - it is still under the jurisdiction of the Federal government and the DIAND.

### **Methodology**

Before proceeding to the following chapters on First Nations education, it seems appropriate to say a few words about methodology. While undertaking my research, I consulted government documents and policy statements, including those from the National Archives of Canada, Annual Reports of the DIAND, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1972) the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996), and *Gathering Strength* (1998), the Canadian government's response to the RCAP. Newspapers, journal articles, policy papers, and publications from DIAND were also consulted. It is important when utilizing documents to bear in mind Hodder's (1994: 394) wise counsel. He notes "texts can be used alongside other forms of evidence so that the particular biases of each can be understood and compared. Equally, different types of text have to be understood in the contexts of their conditions of production and reading."

It is therefore crucial to remember that specific documents are written for specific audiences, a term of reference which is usually reflected within them. For example, reports written by Indian agents and doctors were produced solely for the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. On the other hand, Annual Reports written by the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs for the Superintendent General and the public, illustrated how well the Department was functioning. Many negative aspects, such as poor health conditions and abuse, seldom received mention.

Like the Annual Reports, publications written by the government were specifically written for the public. Typically, publications present the government's perspective on issues that concern Natives such as education, health, and housing, rather than stating the Natives' views. Therefore, these documents are selective in what is written. Other documents, such as the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, present many of the problems and issues which need to be addressed with respect to Aboriginal peoples. The RCAP, though, is written for both the public and the government, and proposes many recommendations for the government with respect to attempting to correct past wrongs. Other documents consulted include those written by the Assembly of First Nations (formerly known as the National Indian Brotherhood) which are written in retaliation to policies put forth by the government on Native issues from the perspective of Natives. They are written for the purpose of providing information for Natives as well as government and non-Natives.

It is important for both the reader and the researcher to realize that, in many government documents and archive material, Native voices are silent. Was this silence accidental or deliberate and exclusionary? After spending a considerable amount of time researching and reading these documents, I am led to believe that this was yet another "geography of exclusion", as the dominant voice of government is the voice that one hears the most. It is vital for a topic such as this, therefore, to search for alternative documents that include Native voices. Such texts exist, including the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Assembly of First Nations documents, and *Indian Control of Indian Education*. It is Native lives that were affected by residential schools. It is First Nations education today that is being

discussed. Hearing Native voices evoking Native perspectives is an integral part of my research project.



## CHAPTER TWO

### DISPLACEMENT AND ASSIMILATION: FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

*There she stood in the doorway  
I heard the mission bell  
And I was thinking to myself  
This could be Heaven or this could be Hell.....  
Last thing I remember  
I was running for the door  
I had to find the passage back to the place I was before  
Relax said the nightman  
We are programmed to retrieve  
You can check out any time you like  
But you can never leave*

The Eagles, "Hotel California" (1976)

The song, "Hotel California," may represent the notion of popular culture for many, but a closer reading of the lyrics suggests that the "hotel" is in fact an institution. Whether this institution is an asylum or a prison or a residential school is open to interpretation. Two things, however, are worth noting: the role of the institution can either be a good experience or bad experience - - "is this Heaven or is this Hell" - - and, even though a person may physically leave the institutional environment, that person's mind and soul are fixated on the past. For some individuals, events that occurred in the past, especially in childhood, haunt and traumatize them well into adulthood, resulting in emotional wounds that are hard to

heal. These occurrences may seem insignificant to others, but to those who suffered through them - - being bullied or teased as a child, or having been shipped off, educated, and abused in a residential school - - they often constitute a difficult experience to overcome. Many survivors of residential schools, for example, have come forward with testimony of what happened to them and their friends, testimony now recorded in such documents as the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP), *Breaking the Silence* (1994), and *Indian Residential Schools: The Nuu-Chah-Nulth Experience* (1996), a study that was completed by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council in British Columbia. To this day many First Nation individuals are still haunted and affected by the past. One survivor (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1996: 164) recounts:

We can't shake it, it's right into you! You can't shake it, I mean you can work on it, and you can better yourself, but you can't, you can build around the damage, the scars, but you can't shake it. I'm just starting to deal with it, I'm just starting to deal with the residential school effects. My life has been one terror, I'll tell you. I mean, you get scared of yourself, what you're going to do, you know, because you don't know how to handle situations. I never looked back, looked back, never was interested. I was gone, I don't know, maybe 10 straight years or something, without even looking back to my life.

This chapter discusses First Nations education in the context of the residential school system. Government policies that led to the establishment of residential schools are examined, as are the tragic revelations of abuse. Finally, the matter in question will be evaluated and be seen to constitute a form of genocide, particularly cultural genocide.

### **Origins of Residential Schooling**

Between 1750-1850, schools were operated by the Roman Catholic and the

Anglican Church. Although indigenous languages were still used in the schools, the churches were resolutely dedicated to converting Indians to Christianity. In fact, the advancement of education and the participation of the Church were intertwined, often with good intention. In 1824, for example, “Thomas Davis, an Indian Chief, donated his house as a school to the Methodist Church and retired to his log cabin in the woods” (Indian and Inuit Affairs 1982, Appendix C: 4). In other cases the Church had an influence on grammar and language. In 1836 “the Reverend James Evans, having developed a Cree syllabic orthography, produced the first Cree grammars and primers. In 1833 Father Belcourt at St. Eustache was credited with having developed a Chippewa language grammar for use in his work” (Indian and Inuit Affairs 1982, Appendix C: 4).

It was during this era that the industrial school was introduced. The first was established in 1848 in Alderville located north of Cobourg, Ontario, and the second in 1849 in Muncey located southwest of London, Ontario (Indian and Inuit Affairs 1982, Appendix C: 4). The focus of these schools was not only to provide an academic education but also to concentrate on a “practical” training, such as carpentry and farming. The problem was that many of these trades were European-oriented. The significance and importance of these schools became more predominant after 1850. Regardless of the situation, any “governmental decisions were related more to the best means of development of the colonies than to the rapidly changing educational requirements of Indian children” (Indian and Inuit Affairs 1982, Appendix C: 4).

1850 constitutes a major turning point in Indian education because that year was

one of the first instances that non-Natives believed that Indian children should be educated separately. The reasoning behind this thinking was that it would supposedly protect Indians from social exploitation due to “growing immigrant communities” (Indian and Inuit Affairs 1982, Appendix C: 4). Before Confederation, Indian education was still the exclusive domain of the Churches; however, the schools did receive some financial support from Upper and Lower Canada.

In 1867, after Confederation took affect, the provinces received jurisdiction over education under Section 93; however, under Section 91.24, the federal government would maintain control of “Indians and lands reserved for the Indians” (Department of Justice 1989: 28). In 1876, the government legislated the *Indian Act*, a document that pertains to the control of Indians in Canada, including control over Indian education, as written in Sections 114-122. Olive Dickason (1992: 333) asserts that “Indians saw educational facilities as a right guaranteed by treaty, by which the government had promised ‘to preserve Indian life, values, and Indian government authority.’ The whites, however, saw another purpose for schools: their use as instruments for assimilation.” The problem with the Act, however, is that it does not clearly define the government’s role or its control with respect to Indian education, as it tends at times to be merely suggestive. In many instances the Act states that the Minister may appoint someone, or may provide a service. Thus there is no definitive control and the government’s role is vague. Although the *Indian Act* was updated in 1985, the sections pertaining to education remain out-of-date - - for instance, the clauses referring to truant officers, which do *not* exist in mainstream education, are still present. The Act lays out what the aim of Indian education actually was. In the

Statement of the Responsibilities and General Functions of the Department of Indian Affairs, it is spelled out clearly that “the law [Act] provides protection for Indian lands, and properties, prevents exploitation of their real and personal estate, provides for their education, for the administration of their funds and finally arranges for their enfranchisement, and thus enables them to attain full citizenship.”<sup>6</sup> This assimilation process to full citizenship was to be achieved via curriculum and pedagogy, as well as federal government policy.

### **Assimilation as Government Policy**

By 1872, residential schools were a major feature of the Indian education system and had been set up in every region of the country. They were run by the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches with funding from the federal government. Figure 2 shows, with remarkable geographical patterning coast to coast, that the majority of the schools by 1936 were located in the Western provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, followed by Ontario and Manitoba, then Quebec, which had fewer schools than those located in the Northwest Territories. However, the number of schools increased in Quebec after 1936 to a total of five (Miller 1996). What is interesting to note is that, with the exception of Nova Scotia, there were no residential schools in the Maritimes. Shubenacadie, located in Nova Scotia, was the only school for the entire East Coast. Children from

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<sup>6</sup> “Statement of the Responsibilities and General Functions of the Department of Indian Affairs,” in *History of Indians in Canada - Memoranda, Speeches, papers presented by Duncan C. Scott 1922-1939* RG 10 v.6812 Reel C-8535 File 481-1-14: 2, National Archives of Canada (hereafter cited as NAC).

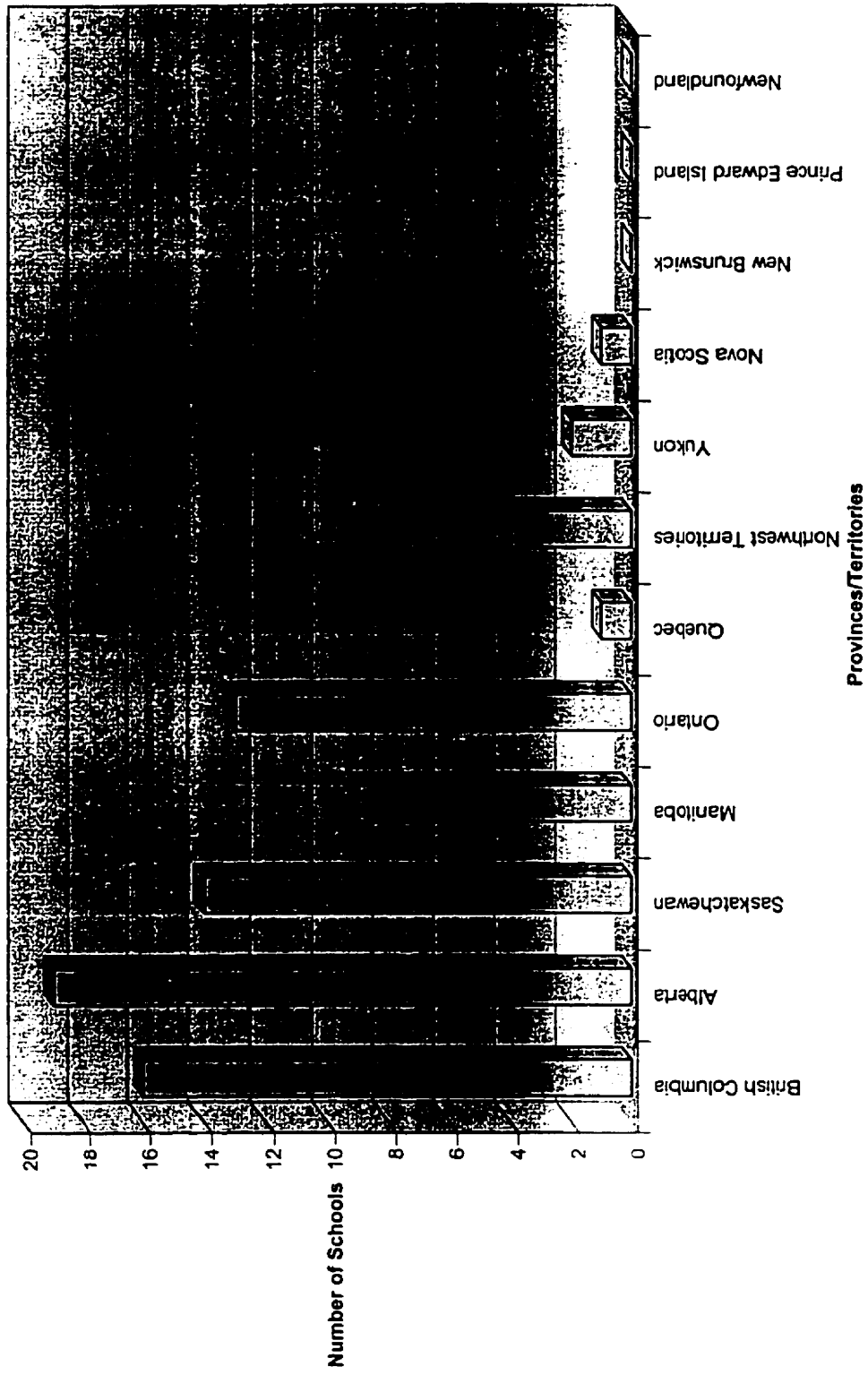


Figure 2: Residential Schools by Province/Territory, 1936.

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1936.

New Brunswick were forced to travel to Nova Scotia to attend to school. Figures 3 and 4 reveal the number of schools by denomination and province. Though the Catholic Church operated a significant number of the schools, the presence of the Anglican, the Methodist, and the Presbyterian Churches should not be underestimated. There is a misconception by some scholars, including Sherene Razack (1998:180), that residential schools were solely "run by the Catholic Church." Figures 3 and 4 refute this popular assumption. It is interesting to note that both the Anglican and Catholic Churches had an influence in most provinces where residential schools existed. Figures 5 through 8 map the location of each school and its denomination. Though schools in the West were evenly distributed, the East tells a different story. In Ontario (Figure 7) the majority of schools were located in Northern Ontario, as the only schools located in the south of the province were Mount Elgin and the Mohawk Institute in Brantford. While most of the schools in Northern Ontario were accessible by motor vehicle, those in Fort Albany and Moose Factory were not and one could only travel to these locations by air. This made visitations by families of children not from the area difficult, if not impossible. Figure 8 illustrates those schools in Quebec and the Maritimes. What is interesting to note is that, with the exception of Shubenacadie and Fort George, the remainder of the schools were located in Southern Quebec - - quite the opposite of Ontario, where schools were far flung. There being only one school in the Maritimes meant displacement for many Micmac living in New Brunswick and Cape Breton Island, who were forced to travel to central Nova Scotia to be educated. By 1900 there were 61 residential schools in operation in Canada with an annual enrollment of 3,257. By

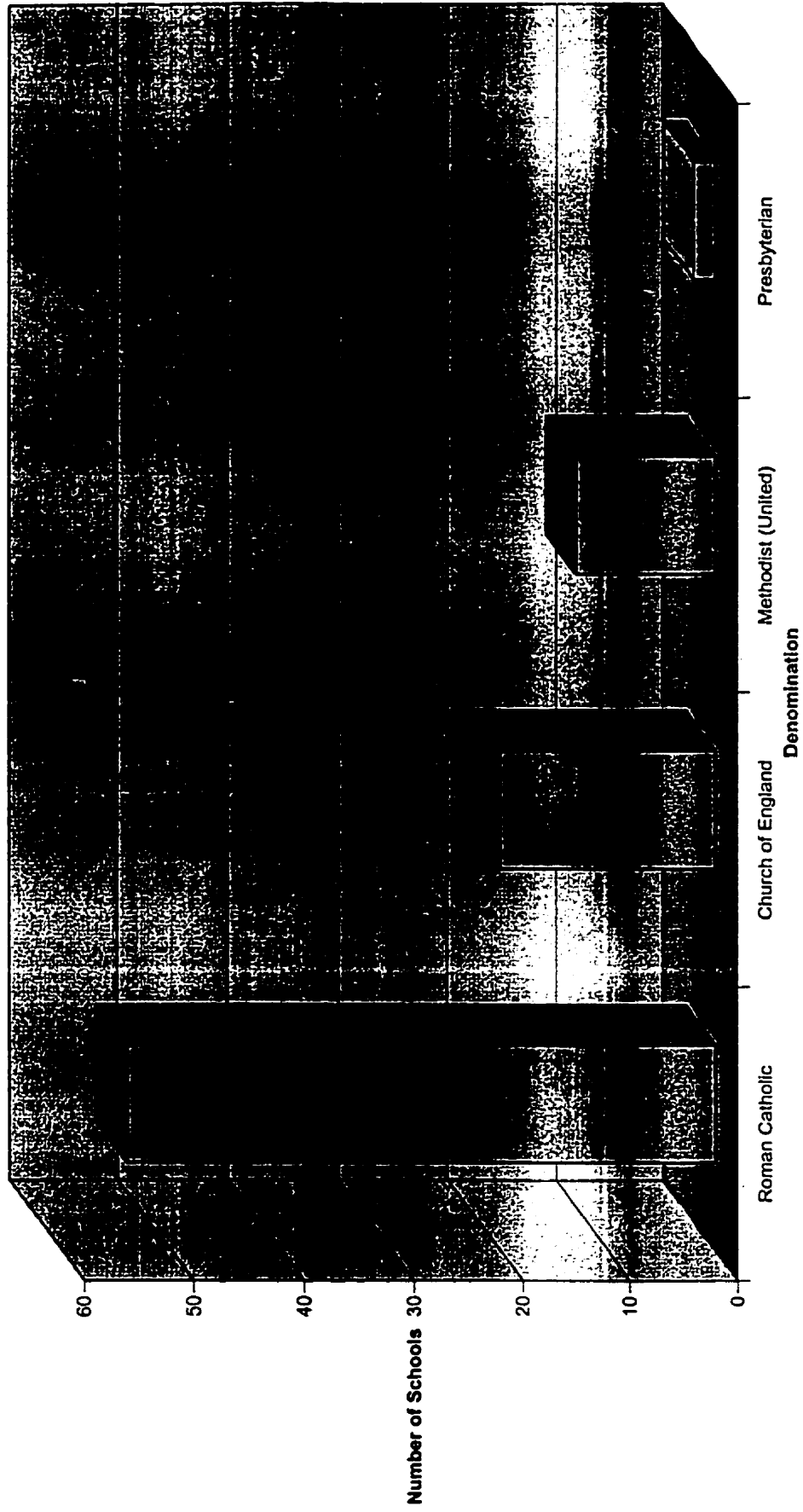


Figure 3: Residential Schools by Denomination, 1936.

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1936.



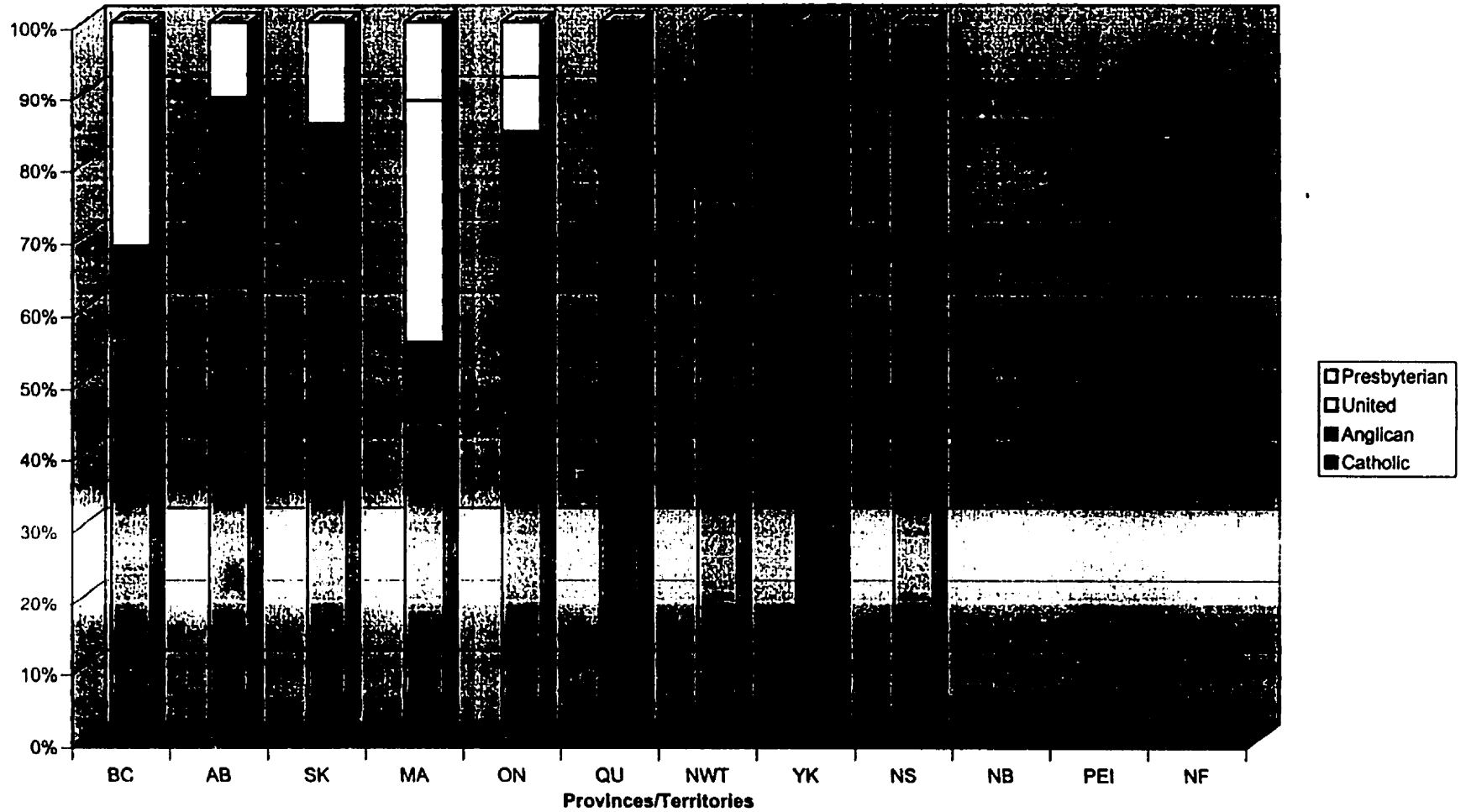


Figure 4: Residential Schools by Province/Territory and Denomination, 1936.

Source: *Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1936.*

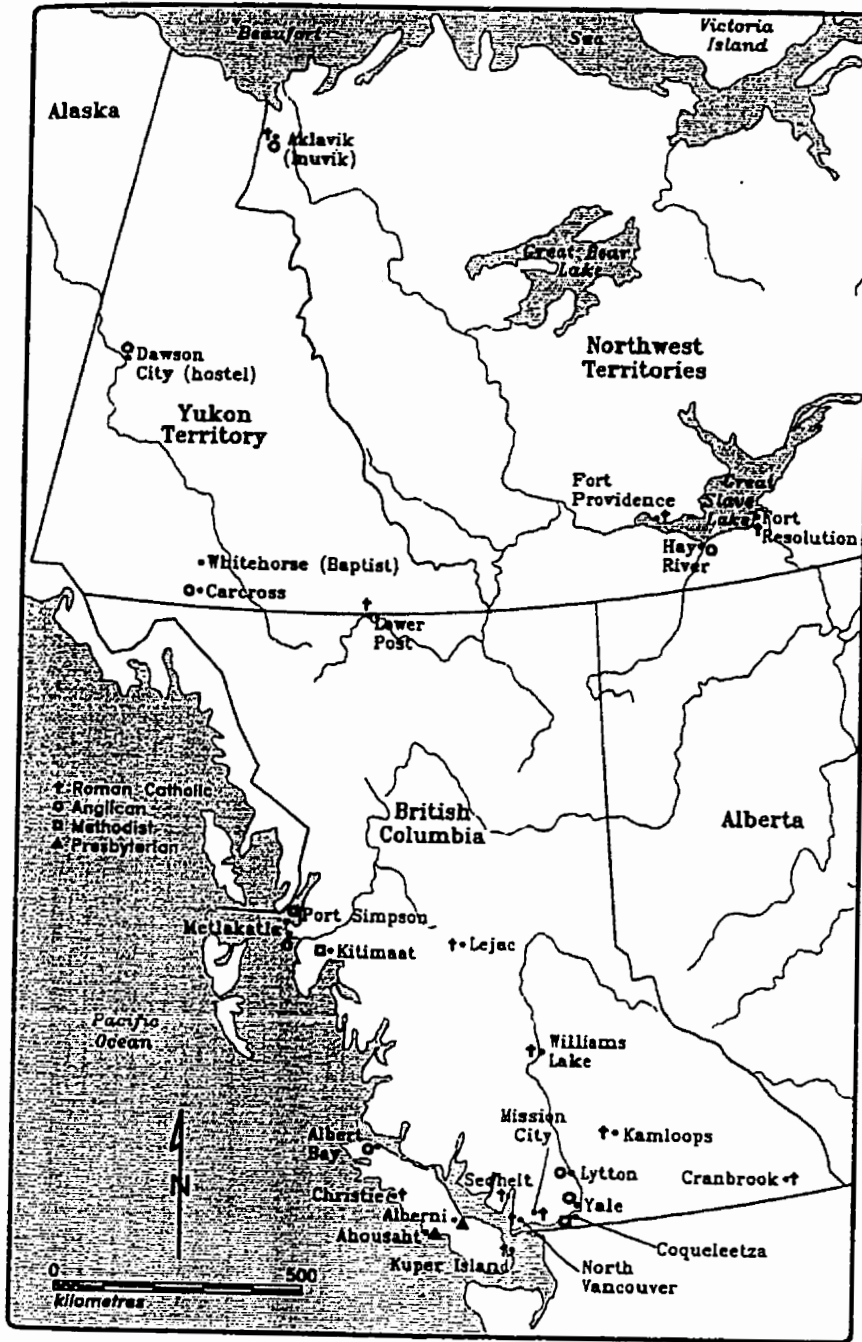


Figure 5: Residential Schools in British Columbia and the North

Source: J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1996).

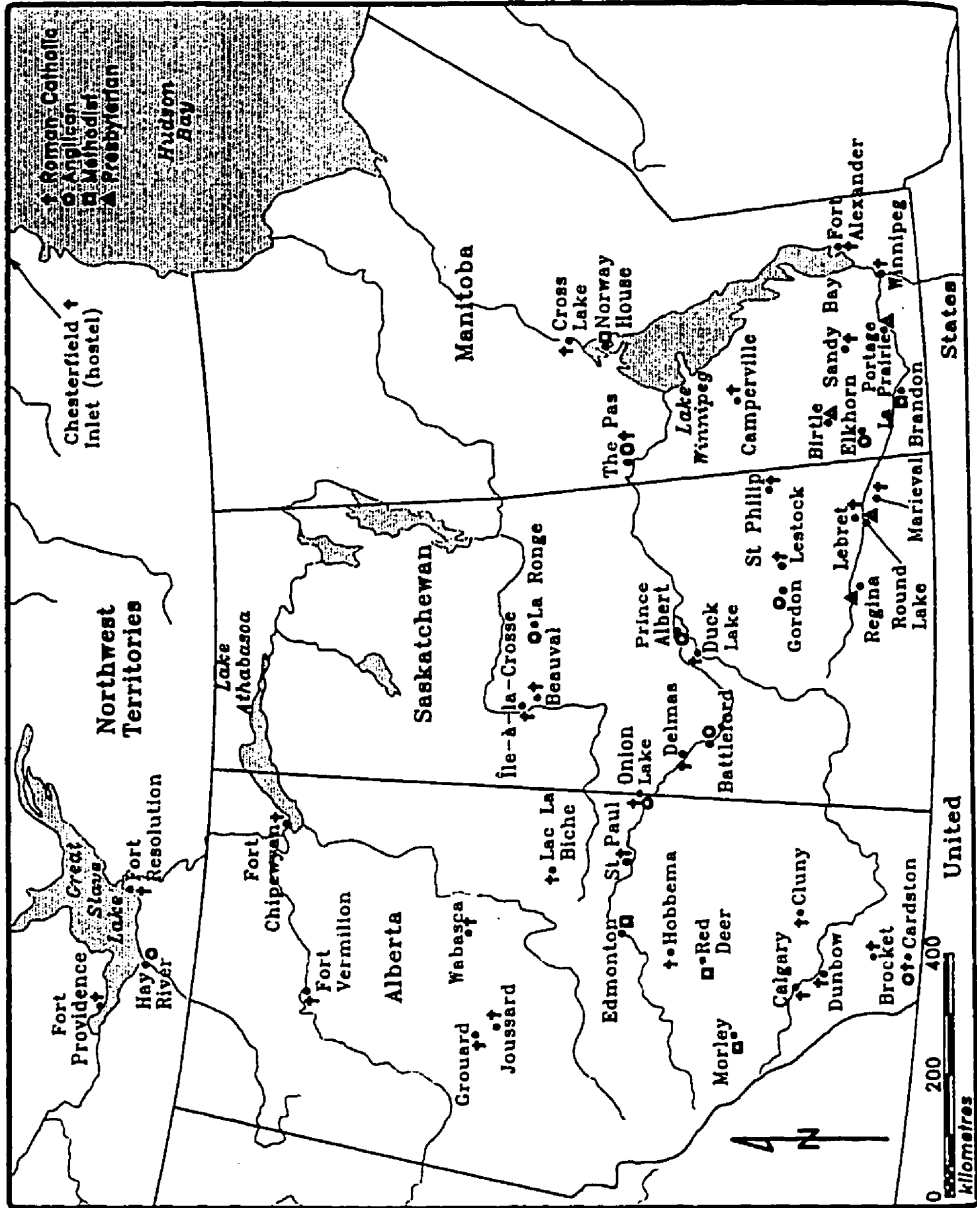


Figure 6: Residential Schools in the Prairie Provinces and the Southern Northwest Territories

Source: J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1996).

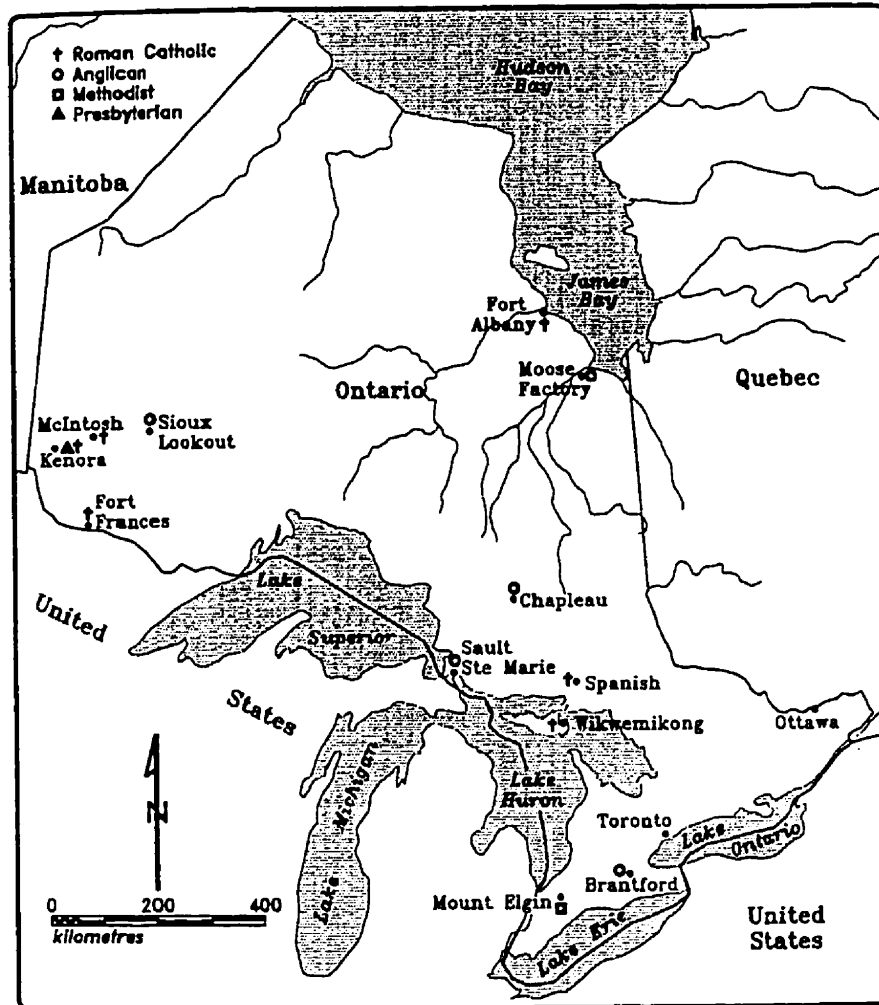
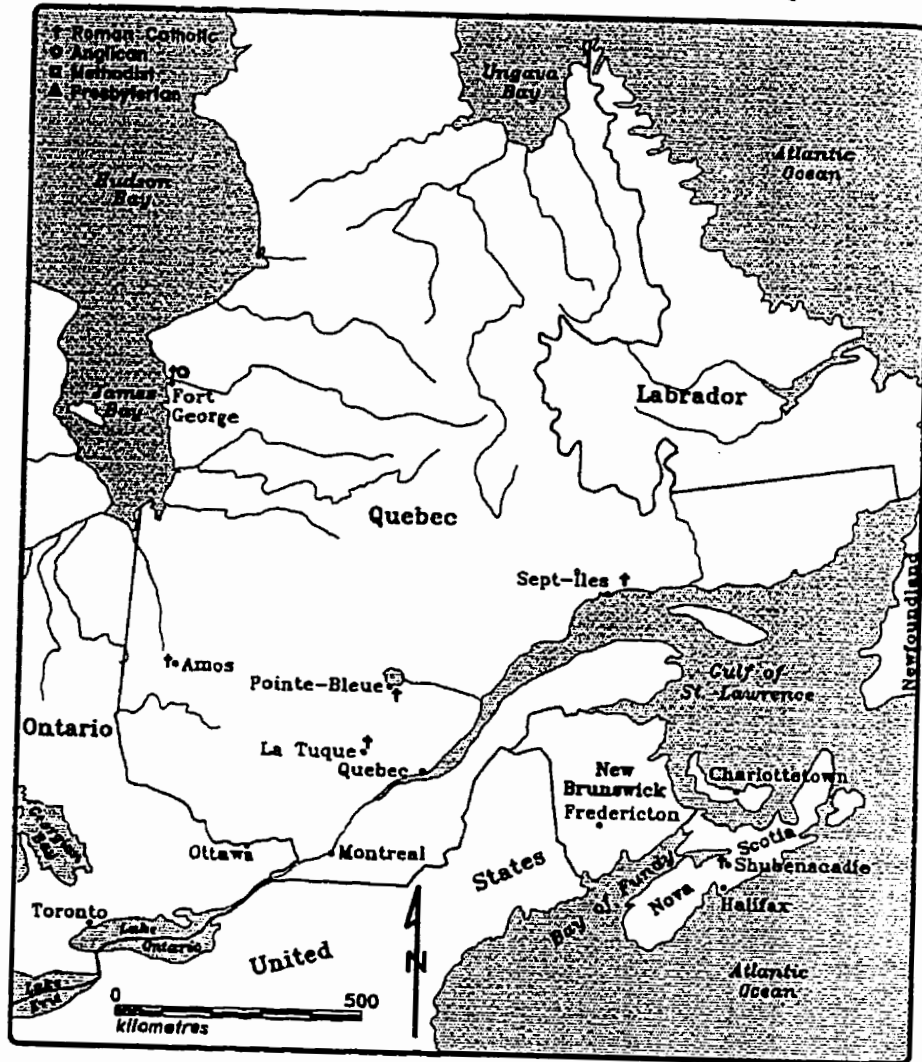


Figure 7: Residential Schools in Ontario

Source: J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1996).



**Figure 8: Residential Schools in Quebec and Nova Scotia**

Source: J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1996).

1920 school attendance was compulsory for all Indian children aged 7-15, by 1930, Indian children could be committed to boarding schools and kept there until the age of 18 on the authority of an Indian agent. In the Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs (1920: 13), Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General at the time, somberly justifies the paternalistic and authoritarian rationale of the Department of Indian Affairs:

Prior to the passing of these amendments the Act did not give the Governor in Council power to make regulations enforcing the residence and attendance of Indian children at residential schools, as the department could only commit to a residential school when a day school is provided, and the child does not attend. The recent amendments give the department control and remove from the Indian parent the responsibility for the care and education of his child, and the best interests of the Indians are promoted and fully protected.

Scott believed that increased school enrollments (Figure 9) were a result of compulsory education and that it was proof that Indians were on their way to becoming “civilized.” In the Annual Reports (1931: 11) he not only attributes the increase in attendance to mandatory education but also notes that “the main reason for improvement in attendance at Indian schools is a growing conviction on the part of our wards that their children must be better fitted for the future. Fewer and fewer natives are finding it possible to live by the chase and they are turning towards education to prepare themselves for encroaching civilization.” Dickason (1992: 335), however, argues that the statistics tell another story. In 1930, she tells us, “three-quarters of Native pupils across Canada were in grades one to three; only three in one hundred went past grade six. By mid century, the proportion of Amerindian

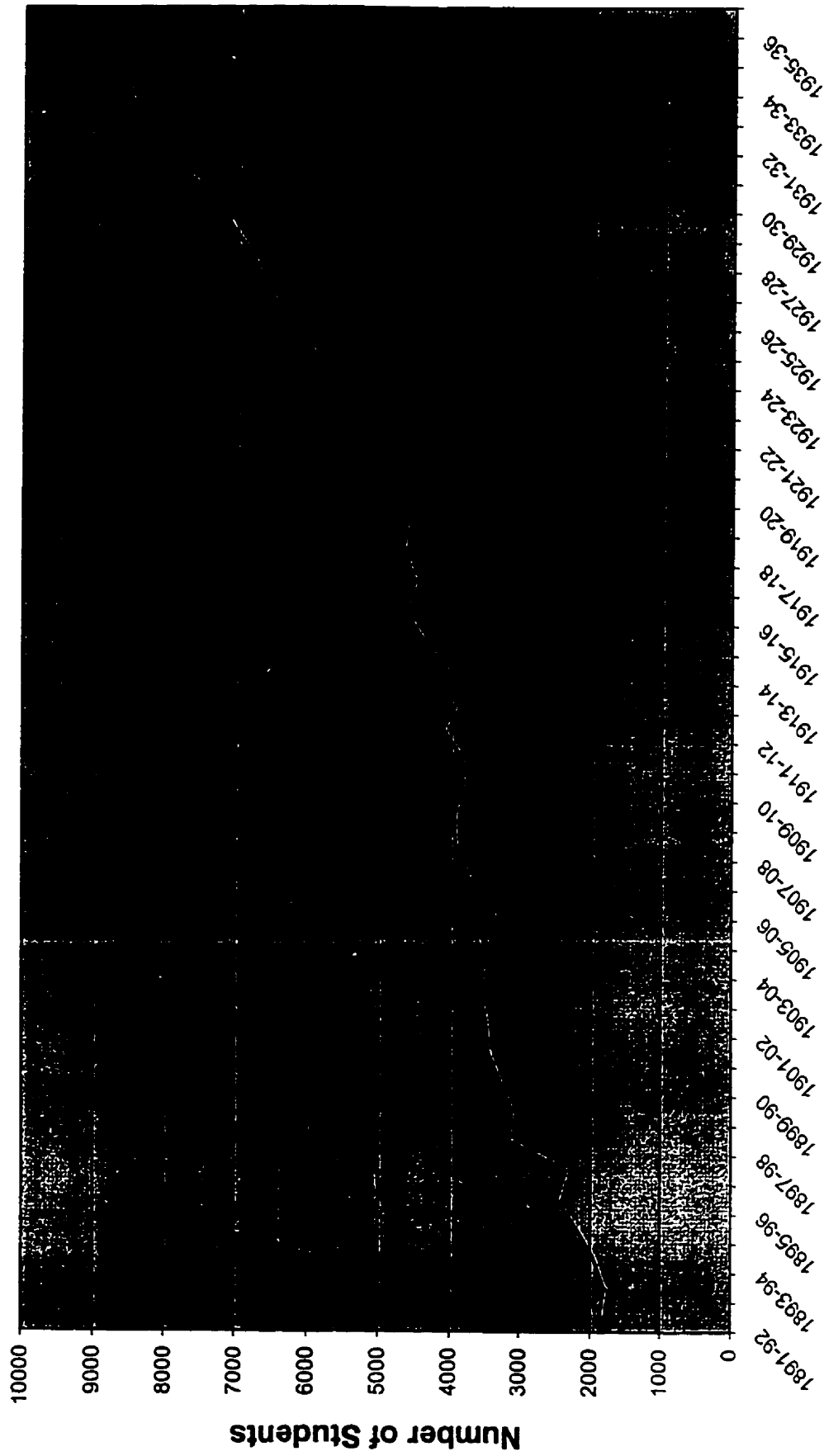


Figure 9: National Enrollment of Students in Residential Schools, 1891-1936

Source: Annual Reports of Indian Affairs, 1891-1936.

students beyond grade six had risen 10 percent, an improvement, but only one-third of the comparable level of white children.... As late as 1951, eight out of every twenty Indians over the age of five were reported to be without formal schooling, in spite of regulations for enforced attendance.”

Residential schools were favoured over day schools, as it was believed they accelerated the process of assimilation, removing the children and displacing them from their homes and communities for extended periods of time. There were two types of schools: the boarding school, which was usually located on the reserve; and the industrial school, located off the reserves and close to white centres, with more elaborate programs. By 1923, Indian Affairs merged both boarding schools and industrial schools together to form what we know as residential schools. The objective of these schools was to assimilate and enfranchise Indians, forcing them to lose their culture and Indian identity. This is made clear in the Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs. One report (1920: 13) explicitly states that “the ultimate object of our Indian policy is to merge the natives in the citizenship of the country” and “an increasing number are accepting enfranchisement and taking up the responsibilities of citizenship. Although there are reactionary elements among the best educated tribes, and stubborn paganism on the most progressive reserves, the irresistible movement is towards the goal of complete citizenship.”<sup>7</sup> Coates (1984-85: 8) argues, based on his research experiences on the Carcross Residential

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<sup>7</sup>Annual Reports 1920: 8; 1927: 8; also “The Indians of Canada,” RG 10 v.6812 Reel C-8535 File 481-1-14: 3 (NAC).



School in the Yukon, that

the missionaries clearly wished to recast Indian values and customs. Their efforts to undermine Native spirituality, supplant indigenous leadership and denigrate long-standing customs represented a major challenge to Native societies.... The clergy were agents of directed culture change, representatives of an expansive, ethno-centric Euro-Canadian culture determined to leave their imprint on the less advanced, 'heathen' societies of the underdeveloped world. Through the boarding school program, the missionaries and the government hoped to transform the children into 'better' Canadians, offering the intellectual and technical skills deemed necessary for fuller participation in the larger Euro-Canadian society and the Christian values required to separate the students from their 'heathen' past. In so doing...the residential schools called the question of existing native habits and values, setting the children against the standards of their parents and home communities.

Government policies of assimilation and desires "to civilize" are a reflection of the attitudes at the time. The government believed that "the Indians are minors in the eye of the law."<sup>8</sup> In other words, the government viewed Aboriginal people as children, or wards of the state (Annual Reports 1921: 7), a group of people in need of protection. Furthermore, the government perceived Aboriginal people to be intellectually suited to the assimilation process. This sentiment is echoed in many government documents. One of them asserts, for instance, that "the mental endowment of Indians is hardly inferior to that of other races. We find that where there has been long contact with civilization Indian pupils of the present can compete successfully with white children."<sup>9</sup>

Many schools were organized with the same attitudes as characterized

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<sup>8</sup>"Statement of the Responsibilities and General Functions of the Department of Indian Affairs," in History of Indians in Canada - Memoranda, Speeches, papers presented by Duncan C. Scott 1922-1939 RG 10 v.6812 Reel C-8535 File 481-1-14: 3 (NAC).

<sup>9</sup>"Indian Education," in History of Indians in Canada - Memoranda, Speeches, and Papers presented by Duncan C. Scott 1922-1939 RG 10 v.6812 Reel C-8535 File 481-1-14: 21 (NAC).

government policy. In the Rules and Regulations for the Mohawk Institute, located near the Six Nations reserve near Brantford, it is stated that the school was “established for the purpose of civilizing the Indians and advancing the Christian Religion among them, and imparting a good education, combined with all kinds of industrial training, to the youth of both sexes of the Six Nation and other tribes of Indians.”<sup>10</sup> The goal of assimilation was not an isolated incident or even restricted to a particular geographic location. This attitude was still prevalent by 1948, even after the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on the *Indian Act* heard demands from First Nations groups to put an end to the policy and the practice of segregated education in 1946 (Indian and Northern Affairs 1993: 2). In a letter to the director of the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources from the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Saint Boniface, Manitoba, assimilation of Indian children from the perspective of the Church and its teachers appears to be justified. A portion of the letter reads:

We are aware that the goal of education is their eventual assimilation, but for the majority of Indians it is not possible to achieve this aim while the pupils are still in a formative stage. As the teachers would not easily understand and adapt themselves to the psychology of the Indian, this would be detrimental to the Indian pupils.

Assimilation cannot be achieved by intermingling Indians and whites but [instead] by the gradual uplift of Indian cultural, social, and economic standards through education and welfare work.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>“Rules and Regulations,” in Reports, Correspondence and Memoranda regarding the Mohawk Institute 1915-1921, RG10 v. 2771 Reel C-11276 File 154,845 pt1A (NAC).

<sup>11</sup> Letter to Mr. R.A. Hoey, Director, Indian Affairs Branch, Dept. of Mines and Resources, Ottawa June 4, 1948 from Saint Boniface, Manitoba (Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate) from P. Scheffer, Qu’appelle Agency-Qu’appelle Residential Schools - General Administration 1936-1948, RG10 v.6327 Reel C-9807 file 660-1 pt3 (NAC).

The “gradual uplift of Indian cultural, social, and economic standards through education,” alas, entailed abusive practices, which will now be discussed.

## **Abuse**

The issue of abuse, particularly physical and sexual abuse, is one that has been associated with the residential school system. Abuse in residential schools now features regularly as an item of discussion in the media. It also surfaces in recent Canadian literature, as illustrated by the following passage from Tomson Highway’s novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998:77-78). Highway writes:

When Gabriel opened his eyes, ever so slightly, the face of the principal loomed inches from his own. The man was wheezing, his breath emitting, at regular intervals, spouts of hot air that made Gabriel think of raw meat hung to age but forgotten. The priest’s left arm held him gently by this right, his right arm buried under Gabriel’s bedspread, under his blanket, under his sheet, under his pyjama bottoms. And the hand was jumping up, reaching for him, pulling him back down..... He didn’t dare open his eyes fully for fear the priest would get angry; he simply assumed, after a few seconds of confusion, that this happened at schools, merely another reason why he had been brought here, that this was the right of holy men.

Other forms of abuse besides the physical and the sexual also occurred, notably emotional or mental anguish as well as cultural degradation.

Emotional abuse took two forms:(1) neglect and loneliness and (2) displacement from home and community. One survivor (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1996: 63) recalls:

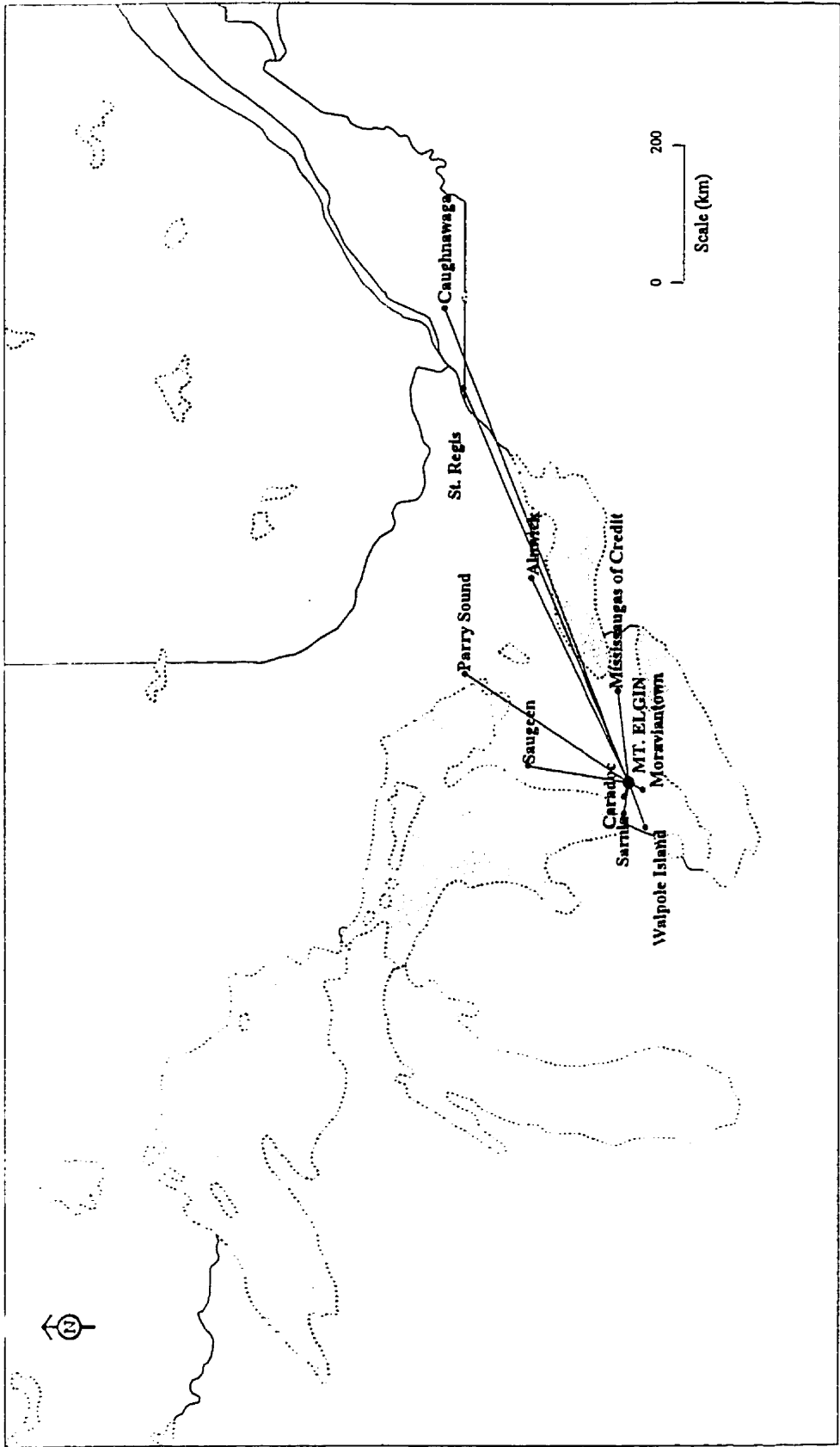
There wasn’t any sort of emotional treatment, you were just kind of left alone, as long you’re, you know, as long as you didn’t make waves, or you know, give them any reason to beat on you, they just basically left you alone if you were inconspicuous... Well, it just seemed really strange and lonely because I knew there was nobody there, you know, for me, we couldn’t like,

there was nobody close. No relatives, no family, no emotional support, or any kind of support, you know, you were alone, you were really obvious. I didn't know anybody, you know. It was fairly obvious that it was a singular thing, you're on your own.

Many children were taken to be schooled unimaginably long distances from their homes and communities. Figures 10, 11, and 12 illustrate the displacement of students for three schools operating in Ontario - - Mount Elgin in Southern Ontario and Shingwauk and Spanish in Northern Ontario. Though, in some cases, children came from nearby reserves, in others they had to travel very great distances, as did those students from Mohawk communities in Quebec. It is this displacement and forceful removal of Aboriginal children that contravenes Article II, clause (e) of the *Geneva Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Those children who attempted to run away were sought out by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, where a file was issued for the "truant" (RG10 C-9809 v.6330, file 660-10, pt1, NAC). Captured "truants" were returned to school to face punishment. Their individual resistance by means of truancy usually received beatings, but instances are recorded of children's hair being cut so as to recognize and stigmatize the culprits. One survivor (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1996: 68) relates:

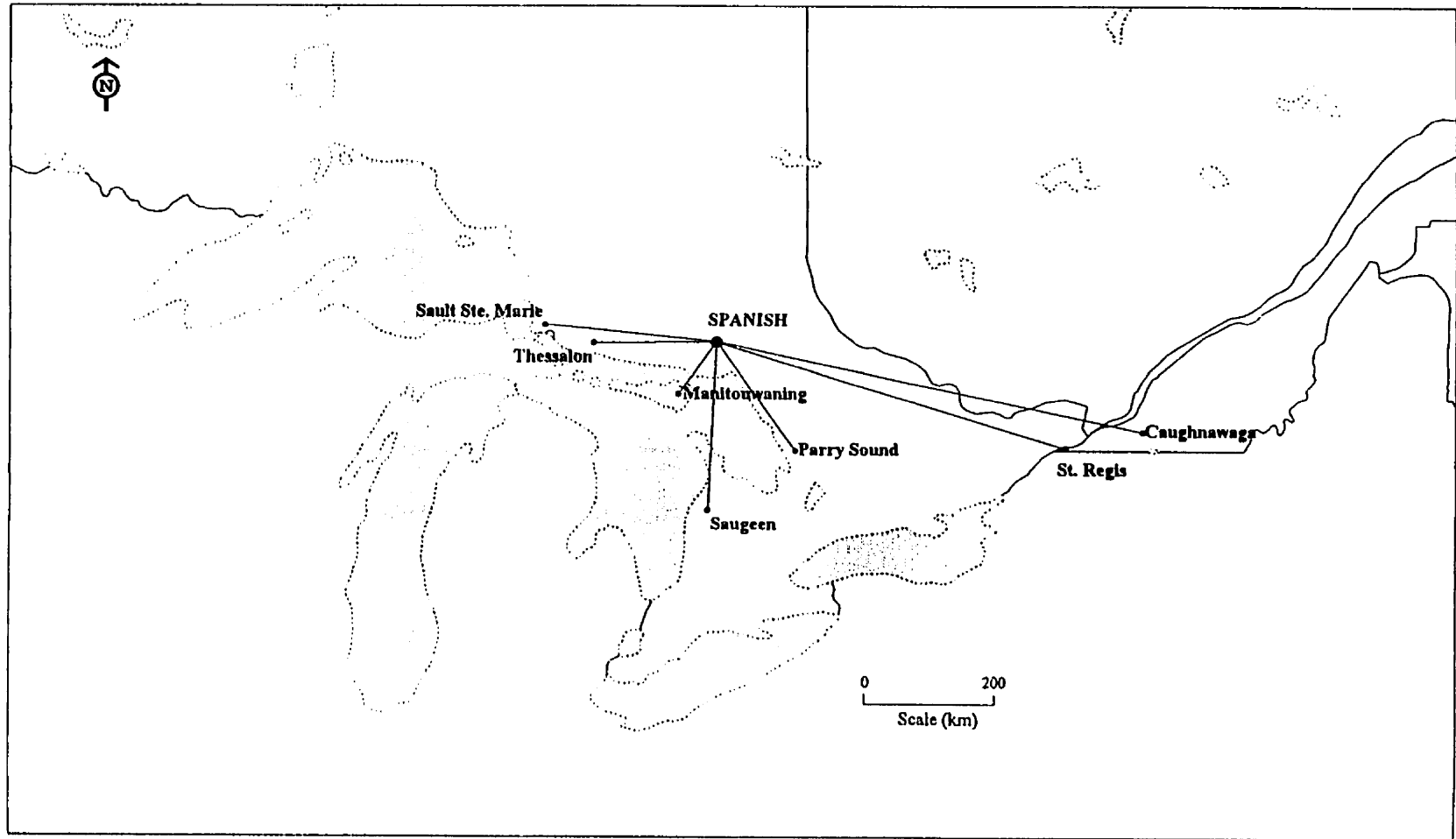
When we ran away, they'd send the cops after us, or they'd send the supervisor after us, and drag us back and everybody would get a crack at beating us. And usually the first one that would get a crack at us would be the principal, hey. And then he'd pass us to the supervisors, and they'd get their crack at it.

Living conditions at many residential schools were often uncomfortable because of crowding, sickness, including tuberculosis, and even death. Students were not



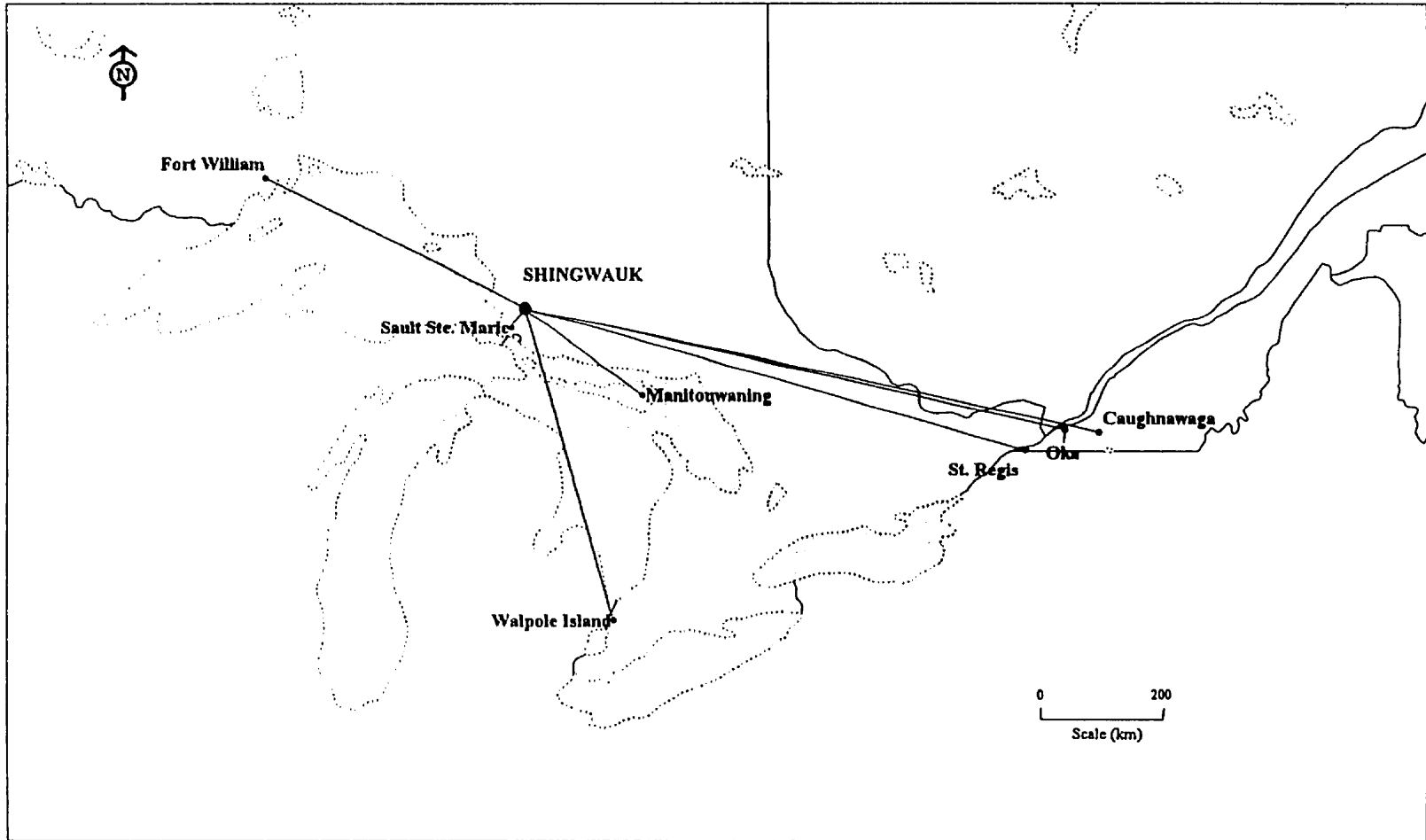
Source: *Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1914*

**Figure 10: Displacement of Students from Communities to Mount Elgin, 1914**



Source: *Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1914*

**Figure 11: Displacement of Students from Communities to Spanish, 1914**



Source: *Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1914*

**Figure 12: Displacement of Students from Communities to Shingwauk, 1914**

only subjected to the harsh physical conditions of the school but also to harsh discipline by the missionaries. Strict rules and regulations, including the forbiddance of the practice of Native languages and traditional religions, were strongly imposed. Disobedience usually resulted in severe punishment, such as whipping. In the study undertaken by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (1996:70), one survivor described the physical abuse that occurred and even the description of the strap that was used for the beatings:

[H]e'd lock us in the dorm at night, cause they were always locked at night, I guess to keep the kids I guess controlled or whatever. And he'd sneak up to the door, like there's a window in the door, and he'd sneak up and he'd listen. And if he'd hear a noise, he'd open up the door and systematically strap everybody in bed, go through the whole room, just beat! , beat!, beat!, beat!, all the way through the dormitory, he'd beat every kid in the room, if he heard a sound.... One of those three-inch straps, about three inches by a quarter inch thick, and a couple of feet long... They were a standard issue with supervisors, everybody had one... Well, they'd be laying in bed, he'd just hit them, and as they were laying in bed, he'd just come through... and just start hitting everybody... wherever he happened, you know, probably in their legs and their feet, you know, cause they'd be laying with their feet to the aisle. So, they'd get hit around their legs or their mid-section or what have you, whatever he could reach. That was a lot of punishment.

The report of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council, as well as the chapter pertaining to residential schools in the Royal Commission, are full of similar descriptions . The Royal Commission (1996, 1) bluntly states:

At the heart of the vision of residential education...there was a dark contradiction, an inherent element of savagery in the mechanics of civilizing the children. The very language in which the vision was couched revealed what would have to be the essentially violent nature of the school system in its assault on child and culture. The basic premise of resocialization, of the great transformation from 'savage' to 'civilized', was violent....In the vision of residential education, discipline was curriculum and punishment an essential pedagogical technique.



Some of the “pedagogical techniques” that were used in the residential schools were recalled by survivors in the Commission. One survivor testified (RCAP 1996, 1) that

besides the usual beatings ‘I have seen Indian children having their faces rubbed in human excrement....The normal punishment for [a] bedwetter...was to have his face rubbed in his own urine,’ and for those who tried to escape, ‘nearly all were caught and brought back to face the music.’ They were... ‘struck with anything that was at hand...I have seen boys crying in the most abject misery and pain with not a soul to care.’

A study on abuse in residential schools conducted by the Cariboo Tribal Council (1991: 169) is particularly damning:

The disciplinary practices employed at residential and nonresidential schools would help characterize the learning environments encountered by the students. Many personal accounts of residential schools relate experiences bordering on the realm of physical torture, such treatment often being rationalized as discipline by those inflicting it....Nevertheless, [the results] that did emerge portray residential schools as environments consistently more harsh than nonresidential schools....[Furthermore], both physically painful punishment and psychologically injurious tactics were employed; both the mind and the body were the subject of attack in residential schools.

The Cariboo Tribal Council focused its efforts on uncovering incidents of physical and emotional abuse, but it unearthed reports of sexual abuse, which occurred in the school setting and has had lasting effects. The Council estimates that sexual abuse in the Williams Lake area occurred in between 48 and 70 percent of its interview sample. It (Cariboo Tribal Council 1991: 176) found that

the extent of sexual abuse in the First Nations populations...is...not as extreme as some might have believed. However, it is indisputably serious and has had a psychological impact on abuse survivors in a manner not distinguishable from that seen in non-First Nations populations....Careful thought must also be given to the fact that such a serious level of abuse within the community must impact...on the entire climate

The issue of sexual abuse in residential schools is especially disturbing. It is

difficult to read accounts by victims of rape and sexual abuse who are adults, but it is even more distressing to read detailed accounts of the same nature knowing that a) it happened to children; and b) these crimes were committed by religious leaders. Although policies of assimilation and the issue of sexual abuse may seem to be two separate issues, sexual abuse became an indirect result of being placed in the residential school system. However, it also involved issues of power, responsibility, coercion and pervasion on the parts of those in authority at the schools. The following testimonies are not pleasant to read but I feel they must be recounted in order to ascertain what happened to Indian children under the state's alleged protection. They are extracted from the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (1996:101; 105-106;92-94) document:

**Testimony 1:** [T]he night watchmen used to come around. And they used to just take their pick each night. And you'd lay there, afraid to go to sleep cause you didn't know if it was going to be you, and then relieved that it's not you. But at the same time...you can hear some girl cry. And in the morning, you see how ashamed they are. Nothing you can do about it. And there was another supervisor, on the boy's side, at the same building. He used to get [Name withheld] drinking, and then he'd do the same thing to some girl. Sometimes, they'd pick a girl and bring er up to their room.

**Testimony 2:** [Name withheld] was a pig....was the guy I hated, I hated the most, because of what he did to, not only to me, but to other boys. I just learned, just recently how, just what an asshole he was. And I was a part of this, part of the group that he abused... The things he used to do was, one of the things was cock inspection. He'd bring the individuals into his office, and I can remember going there. He'd want to inspect my cock. And I did it, because of who he was. And he'd take a close look at my pecker, and say it was an inspection, for health reasons. You know, he'd have a close look at it, be down there touching. And that was a part of his thing...I can remember...he was trying to get close to me. And, that bothered me. But, one night he came into the dorm, came to my bed, and woke me up...I can remember being sick; I was real sick that night. And he was stroking my

forehead, and whispering to me, 'it's okay, I know you're sick', and he comforted me... And eventually, he'd rub the other parts of my body, and, eventually get down to my cock. And, he gave me a hard-on...Right in the dorm, where 30, 40 other guys were sleeping. I don't know what time it was. And eventually, he just started sucking my cock. And I was just laying there, being afraid, 'what the fuck's going on here; no-one has ever done this to me before?' Then he left.... I was probably about 11, 12 [years old].

**Testimony 3:** This man used to make little boys carry him around on their back, while he had an erection, you know. That was his way of satisfying his needs...But I remember him asking us to do that, even though we weren't actually carrying him, he was able to run his penis up against our backs, and that was his sexual gratification I guess. And I'll elaborate more on that part of my life there, the sexual abuse. You know, those fuckin pricks, you know they never ever realized the damage they were doing, or the damage that they've done to the children that went to that Residential school. I can attest to that, cause forty years after I'm still suffering from that, whether I like it, it's still part of me and I have to get this anger from my system. But one particular night, I remember, I was in dorm four I guess, dorm four or five. So I guess I'd have to be 11, 12 years old at that time. I remember having a really bad toothache, cause I had really bad teeth in those days. And knocking at the door, until Plint [one of the supervisors] came to the door. And I told him what was wrong with me. And he said, well come to my room. And this has to be the middle of the night, two, three o'clock in the morning. And he immediately took me to my room and said before I fix your teeth, I want you to do something for me. Standing there naked with an erection, and trying to force his prick into my mouth! Which I refused to do. And also kissing you, you know, with his foul, cigarette tasting mouth, and sticking his tongue half way down his throat. And I think, again I can't say if he did that to other boys, I'm sure that he did, I'm sure that he did you know. I was rather a frail kid in those days, and I think he picked on those kinds of boys.

The policy of assimilation, particularly the suppression of Native languages, also involved educational practices that some contend are a form of cultural genocide. The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996, 3) states that "the destiny of a people is intricately bound to the way its children are educated. Education is the transmission of cultural DNA from one generation to the next. It shapes the language and pathways of thinking, the contours of character and values, the social skills and

creative potential of the individual. It determines the productive skills of a people.”

The problem, however, is that in the case of residential schools the transmission of culture was not the culture of Aboriginal children, but rather of white European Christian culture. In fact, the Department of Indian Affairs claimed that it “had the close co-operation of religious denominations in the education of the Indian. Thus Christianization and education go hand in hand.”<sup>12</sup> The department’s definition of success was if Aboriginal people assimilated well into Canadian society after finishing school. They were pleased to report in 1920 that Indians “are every day entering more and more into the general life of the country. They are farmers, clerks, artisans, teachers, and lumbermen. Some few have qualified as medical doctors and surveyors; an increasing number are accepting enfranchisement and taking up the responsibilities of full citizenship.”<sup>13</sup> The focus in the curriculum, which served as the basis for this “success,” was based not only on learning English but also on learning domestic duties, such as sewing and cooking for girls and farming duties for boys. Furthermore, Indian children were also forced to learn and practice Christian doctrine and values, punctuality, and discipline. One survivor (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1996: 138) remembers:

[I] was taught the basics, math, English, and social studies. But, there was LOTS of religion...I remember being taught the Lord’s Prayer by one of the older senior girls. Like, when I was in grade two, one of them, I used to have

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<sup>12</sup>“Indian Education,” in RG 10 v.6812 Reel C-8535 File 481-1-14, History of Indians in Canada - Memoranda, Speeches, papers presented by Duncan C. Scott 1922-1939: 21 (NAC).

<sup>13</sup>“The Indians of Canada,” in RG 10 v.6812 Reel C-8535 File 481-1-14 History of Indians in Canada -Memoranda, Speeches, papers presented by Duncan C. Scott 1922-1939: 2-3 (NAC); also Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs 1920: 8; 1927: 8.

to go see one of them, to learn Hail Marys and the prayers... [We learned] all the basic subjects, plus I think we used to get an hour of catechism.

Regardless of what children learned, Indians were not allowed to contribute to the development of curriculum or to exercise any control over schools. The goal was assimilation and the means was education, though how “successful” the schools were depends on who one asks. The government claimed that this method and the education of Aboriginal children was successful, but was it and for whom? Many First Nations children lost their Native language as a result of these policies. Three survivors in the study by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (1998: 140) echo these sentiments:

**Survivor One:** And I think, even myself, a bit of my cultural knowledge, history has been affected, and that’s a little bit of hurt, which has taken away.... mainly, was my language. I spoke nothing but my own language when I went there. And I, there was two or three times I got my mouth washed, hey? Because I spoke my language. But as years went by, when things started to change in society, we didn’t want to be Indian anymore. You know? We wanted to be like the whiteman.

**Survivor Two:** In a sense I think we were made to learn the ways of the white man, because in a way, from the very first day, I was forbidden to speak my language. That’s the only language I knew, when I arrived there.

**Survivor Three:** Well, they were trying to make us into white people. You know, they beat on us all the time for our own language and stuff, whenever we got any art work from home or beads or anything like that, they were pretty much confiscated.

Many were also forced to start believing in a religion that was foreign to them, only to question later in life this and other assimilationist endeavors. Castellano (1971: 272) asserts that “the education which has been thrust with varying degrees of competence upon the Indian child has been white man’s education formulated in

white terms.”

Inevitably, these attempts to assimilate and enfranchise Indian students had drastic effects upon the identity of these students. It is perhaps no wonder that in the past, as Castellano (1971: 275) put it, “young Indians have felt compelled to make the choice: Will I be Indian or will I be white?” These ideas triggered an identity crisis for Natives, as they were literally forced to make a choice between being Native or being “white,” though many who tried to assimilate were not accepted by non-Natives. Castellano (1971: 275) points out that even those who did try to “pursue success on these terms could survive only by embracing white values which then operated as a filter through which acculturated Indians saw and judged their people.”

The “knock-on” social effects that abuse has had on former students of residential schools obviously vary, but it is often very damaging, including men who beat their wives, parents who seldom show affection to their children, a negative impact on relationships with others and themselves, alcohol and substance abuse, low self esteem and self-confidence, and in some cases suicide. The Cariboo Tribal Council (1991: 171) suggests that the whole scheme may in fact have backfired:

Residential school students indicated that their school experience had a greater positive influence on their feelings about Native culture and their own Native identity than did nonresidential students. The residential school experience might serve to explain part of the current interest in rediscovering and developing Native culture presently seen in these communities. The long-standing emphasis within the residential school having been an unlearning Native ways of life, residential school may have created a backlash of people reasserting their Native identity.

The backlash that constitutes Native resistance is discussed in the following chapter.

Before concluding this chapter, however, it is important that we ask the question: “Do these attempts of assimilation and abusive practices constitute a form of cultural genocide?”

### **Cultural Genocide and the Residential School System**

Several scholars, most notably Agnes Grant (1996), John Boyko (1998), Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young (1997), and Elizabeth Graham (1998) assert incontrovertibly that the residential school system was indeed a form of cultural genocide. Webster’s Dictionary (1987: 397 ) defines genocide as “the deliberate extermination of a race of people.” This definition, however, seems to conjure up images of the Holocaust and the persecution of Jews by the Nazis during World War II. While not trying to underestimate the impact and the atrocities that occurred in that context, it should be emphasized that genocide, as defined by the United Nations, is much more complex than stating that it involves “the deliberate extermination of a race of people.” We noted in the Introduction that Article (II), Clause (e) of the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* recognizes “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” as an eligible criterion. Furthermore, as stated in Article III of the Convention, those acts that are deemed punishable under international law are:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

Article VI spells out that those charged with genocide may be “tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.”

Chrisjohn and Young (1997: 43) define cultural genocide as the “destruction of the specific characteristics of a group.” When the draft Convention was established, genocide had three components: physical, biological, and cultural. Certain countries, most notably the United States and Canada, objected to it. Eliminating a category of cultural genocide was undertaken for political reasons, as both countries could have been found guilty under the Convention. Boyko (1998: 202) informs us how Canada confronted the problem:

General Assembly Resolution 96 defined genocide and proclaimed it an international crime but left it to UN signatories to pass enabling legislation to address it. Canada signed the resolution but then narrowed genocide’s definition when it came to the House of Commons in 1952 by remaining silent on the resolution’s third article, which dealt specifically with cultural genocide. It was thus with a clean conscience and narrow, whitewashed legislation that a new weapon was developed to continue the genocidal attack.

Boyko’s notion of “genocidal attack” involved two forms. The first was the adoption of Native children by non-Native families interprovincially as well as internationally, especially in the United States from the 1950s to the 1980s (Fournier and Crey 1997; Kimmelman 1985). These so-called “neglected” children -- Fournier and Crey’s (1997: 82) designation of them -- were the victims of what Boyko (1998: 203) calls “state-sanctioned kidnapping, planned and initiated by bureaucrats while their compatriots were still wrestling with watering down Resolution 96.” Boyko



(1998: 204) categorizes the individuals involved “Sixties Scoop” children. The second genocidal attack entailed the residential schools and the forced transfer of children from their communities, a policy that lasted well into the latter part of the twentieth century, as the last residential school to close was Shubenacadie in Nova Scotia in 1988.

While the Convention does not cite cultural genocide per se as genocide, it does clearly state that the forcible transfer of “children of the group to another group” is considered as such. Native children were forcibly taken from their homes, families, and communities and put into residential schools. The important question is not “who was involved?” nor “where did the children go?” or “when did this occur?” but “*why* did this happen in the first place?” As we have seen, the goal was to assimilate the children and make them “white”, and the means by which the government and the four churches would attempt to do this was through education. The assimilation process included loss of language, involuntary labour in many schools, a European curriculum, and discipline/physical abuse. In order for this to occur children had to be taken forcefully from their homes. In other words, displacement and assimilation went hand-in-hand.

It should be noted, however, that not all Indian children were subjected to residential schools. Miller (1996: 141-142) notes that “residential schools catered to but one-fifth (19.7 percent) of school-age Indians and Inuit...Only 36.2 percent of the status Indian children between six and fifteen who were in any sort of Indian Affairs school were in boarding or industrial schools.” It is important to realize that

although one-third of Indian children were in residential schools, they were *still* displaced from their families and communities. Under the UN definition, this *still* constitutes genocide, regardless of the number of children who attended these schools.

## **Conclusion**

All nations have episodes that constitute a dark past, and Canada is no exception. While most Canadians believe that they live in a harmonious and peaceful country, it comes as a surprise to some to learn about our racist treatment towards minority groups such as the Chinese, the Japanese, and our own First Nations people. While researching the issue of residential schools, I was taken aback at times by the reaction of fellow Queen's students, and other Canadians, who were unaware of (1) what a residential school was; (2) that the government used the residential school system as a means to assimilate Aboriginal people into Canadian society; and (3) the countless cases of abuse that occurred with the walls of these schools. This obliviousness to a sad, if not tragic, part of Canadian history seems especially problematic in view of recent media coverage of the government's "statement of reconciliation," the focus of the concluding chapter. As a researcher, but more importantly, as a teacher, I find it increasingly difficult to comprehend this unawareness. I believe there is a pressing need to inform not only students but also ordinary Canadians who are unaware of the policy and traumatic legacy of residential schooling. The importance of this education relates back to Santayana's and Hegel's comments in the introductory

chapter. As well, it echoes the thoughts of Michael Ignatieff (1999: 167) in *The Warrior's Honor*. Ignatieff, taking his cue from James Joyce, writes:

To awake from history, is to recover the saving distance between past and present and to distinguish between myth and truth. Myth is a version of the past that refuses to be just the past. Myth is a narrative shaped by desire, not by truth, formed not by the facts as best we can estimate them but by our longing to be reassured and consoled. Coming awake means to renounce such longings, to recover all the sharpness of the distinction between what is true and what we wish were true.

As we move into the following chapter, it will become evident that a geography of exclusion with which many Canadians are unfamiliar was eventually challenged by, and gave way to, a geography of resistance. This was achieved by the formulation, in 1972, of "Indian Control of Indian Education," which became not only a strategy of resistance to government policies but also a means of actually taking over First Nations education.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESISTANCE AND ASSERTION: "INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION"

Since the creation of the *Indian Act* in 1876, almost every public aspect of Native life has been controlled by the federal government, education most of all. Prior to 1972, the goal of the government was to assimilate and "civilize" Indians into mainstream society by means of residential schools, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Geoffrey York (1990: 26) recalls the words of John Peter Kelly, leader of the Ojibways of Treaty Number 3: "Education is like love...we cannot delegate others to exercise it on our behalf." Kelly's words, in reference to the government's control of Indian education, echoes the sentiments of many First Nations peoples in the early 1970s. Their words demanded changes within the system, changes that produced a shift from government hegemony to "Indian control of Indian education." Perhaps one of the most influential and important voices at this time was the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB). In 1972, the NIB presented to Jean Chrétien, then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the policy paper "Indian Control of Indian Education" (ICIE). This document challenged the status quo and questioned the government's colonial policies on Indian education in Canada. In their struggle for greater autonomy, Natives wanted control over their own education policies, rather than being dictated to by the federal government. ICIE, therefore, set a precedent and created a foundation for a new era in First Nations education .

It can also be construed, in Steve Pile's terminology, as an expression of the geography of resistance. "Indian Control of Indian Education" certainly was concerned with the "desire to find a place in a power-geography where space is denied, circumscribed and/or totally administered" (Pile, 1997: 15). This dominated space had been controlled by DIAND and, prior to 1972, First Nations people had always been denied a space in this power-geography.

Although children resisted residential schools and integrated provincial schools in the late 1960s through truancy, it was an act of individual resistance. This chapter, however, addresses the reasons behind a collective form of Indian resistance and the creation of the ICIE document. The role of internal colonialism, the conditions associated with First Nations education, and the forging of a relevant education for First-Nation children, involving the need for local control, are crucial considerations. The chapter discusses the ICIE document in some detail, especially how ICIE reflects First Nations beliefs, values, and the First Nations philosophy of education. An evaluation is made of the results of ICIE over the past twenty-five years, focusing on the changes that have been made in the system as well as on an Assembly of First Nations' review of ICIE fifteen years after it was written.

### **Indian Control of Indian Education**

The existence in Canada of a form of internal colonialism, recognized by scholars such as Altbach and Kelly (1978), was one reason for the development of ICIE. As outlined in the Introduction, internal colonialism was achieved by various means:

removing Indians because of expansion; segregating them on reserves; forcing assimilation and civilization; accelerating domination by the colonizers; and creating racist ideologies (Perley 1993: 120). Internal colonialism was a feature of governmental policies pertaining to Indian affairs, particularly within education. Altbach and Kelly (1978: 22) argue that “schools not only taught behavioural norms inappropriate to living in Native...societies, they also taught narrow vocational skills that could not be practiced anywhere but in the colonizer’s domain.”

Although Altbach and Kelly deal with an American context, their arguments pertain also to the Canadian situation. Titley (1986: 75) explains that Indian education in both day and residential schools “was one of the key elements in Canada's Indian policy from its inception. The destruction of the children's link to their ancestral culture and their assimilation into dominant society were its main objectives.” As emphasized in Chapter Two, this idea was imbedded in government policy such as the *Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs*.

The belief in assimilation and acculturation continued well into the modern era, as demonstrated in the 1969 *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, more commonly known as the “White Paper.” According to Dickason (1992: 385), the Trudeau government devised the policy as “a response to the American Indian Movement that had risen in Minnesota in 1968” and considered it a “governmental recipe for equality.” Chrétien (DIAND 1969: 6) argued that “all shall be treated fairly and that no one shall be shut out of Canadian life, and especially that no one shall be shut out because of his race. This belief is the basis for the

Government's determination to open the doors of opportunity to all Canadians, to remove barriers which impede the development of people, or regions and the development of the country." While acknowledging inequality between mainstream society and First Nations and attempting to redress it was commendable, the approach that Chrétien and the Trudeau government took proved quite inappropriate. They argued (DIAND 1969: 6) that Indians "are entitled to equality which preserves and enriches Indian identity and distinction; an equality which stresses Indian participation in its creation and which manifests itself in all aspects of Indian life." How could First Nations peoples enrich their identity and distinction when they were being asked by the federal government to assimilate into mainstream society?

In preparing the "White Paper," the Canadian government failed to incorporate the findings of the Hawthorn Report, entitled *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians in Canada: Economic, Political, and Educational Needs and Policies* (1967). With respect to education, the Hawthorn Report (1967: 142) stated:

[I]t is difficult to imagine how an Indian child attending an ordinary public school could develop anything but a negative self image. First, there is nothing from his culture represented in the school or valued by it. Second, the Indian child often gains the impression that nothing he or other Indians do is right when compared to what non-Indian children are doing. Third, in both segregated and integrated schools, one of the main aims of teachers expressed with reference to Indians is 'to help them improve their standard of living, or their general lot, or themselves' which is another way of saying that what they are and have now is not good enough; they must do and be other things.

The Hawthorn Report also highlighted the fact that the quality of First Nations schooling was far below the national average, with a dropout rate of 94 percent

(Dickason, 1992: 384). The Hawthorn Report recommended that Indian students be integrated with the rest of the school population, that Indians have available to them the opportunity of being taught in their own languages, and that school texts should be changed because they were often inaccurate, biased, and insulting on the subject of Aboriginal peoples.

While many Natives agreed with the Hawthorn Report, they opposed the “White Paper” because it “advocated assimilation through Indian equality within the dominant society” (Barman *et al* 1987: 1). The “White Paper” would have eliminated protection, special status, exemptions, and all constitutional and legislative bases of discrimination for or against Indians, including the *Indian Act*, DIAND, and treaties. In Dickason’s (1992: 385) eyes this would have “enabled the Indian people to be free - free to develop Indian cultures in an environment of legal, social and economic equality with other Canadians.” The “White Paper,” therefore, would have affected the reserve system, taxation, and the rights of Natives, as well as education, since education would have been under the jurisdiction of the provinces. First Nations leaders were quick to point out that “until the socioeconomic status of Indian people approximated the level of other Canadians, the discriminatory provisions of legislation constituted a modest kind of protection which they could not afford to lose. The discussion of jurisdictional matters served to raise further Indian consciousness of the need for self-determination, for active Indian participation in the remaking of an Indian education system” (Indian and Inuit Affairs, 1982, Appendix C: 7-8).



Native communities across Canada encounter all sorts of social, economic, and political problems associated with the reserve system. This was a second reason for the establishment of ICIE. Some of these problems pertain to education itself, while others relate to demographics, housing, income, crime, and imprisonment. Kirkness (1992: 14-15) outlines some of the conditions pertaining to education in 1971. She notes the following:

- (1) a drop out rate four times the national average (96% of Indian children never finished high school);
- (2) 'inaccuracies and omissions' relating to the Indian contribution to Canadian history in texts used in federal and provincial schools;
- (3) the majority of Indian parents were uninformed about the implications of decisions made to transfer children from reserve schools to provincial schools.

Unfortunately, many of these conditions continue to plague Native communities. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN 1988, 1997) cites the grim conditions that have existed over the past ten years, which show Native Canada to be part of the concept of the "Fourth World." Some of these conditions include:

- **Demographics:** The population growth rate for Aboriginal people is 2.3 times greater than the overall Canadian figure. Aboriginal children 0-14 years account for 38 percent of that population compared to 19 percent for the rest of Canada within the same age group.
- **Education:** Illiteracy rates among First Nations peoples range from 65-75 percent; 50 percent of Natives fail to reach grade 12; 27.9 percent of First Nations have less than a grade 9 education compared to 13.9 percent of the Canadian population.
- **Housing:** Housing is so scarce that 40 percent of First Nations families must share their homes with other families. Many homes lack running water, sewage disposal or indoor plumbing facilities.
- **Labour:** On reserves, the unemployment rate is three times as that of the Canadian average and social assistance dependency rates, as of 1992, are four times that of the national rate. Some 30 percent of on-reserve people are unemployed and 43 percent are dependent on social assistance.
- **Prisoners:** First Nations people are over-represented in proportion to their

population in federal penitentiaries. In Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the North, First Nations people represent 40 percent of the prison population. The proportion of First Nations juveniles who are considered delinquent is three times the national rate.

There was, and still is, a need among Native communities to improve these conditions. To accomplish this goal requires Natives to take action in controlling their own education. The Sabaskong Bay band council stated to DIAND that “ ‘our citizens will no longer tolerate second-class citizenship, impoverished living and inferior education....Education is the escalator that moves people from poverty and misery to human dignity and comfort’ ” (York, 1990: 26).

Another reason for ICIE was the desire to transfer control of education from the federal government to First Nations peoples so that the latter could make their education relevant to themselves and their own needs. During the 1960s, the government began to realize that residential schools were too costly. Many began to close; however, there was pressure for the provinces to take control and integrate First Nations children into non-Native schools. The NIB, however, maintained that they did not want either the federal or the provincial governments to have control. Perley (1993: 125) argues that Indian control of education is founded on two key principles. The first is that “the pace and direction of development have to be determined by the First Nations.” This involves “a process of liberation for both the colonized and the colonizer.” Perley maintains that this dynamic “liberates the colonized from the shackles of control by an oppressive, dominating, and paternalistic society” as well as releasing the colonizers “from their colonial

mentality and preoccupation ...over First Nations.” A second principle is that “the process of decolonization has to be driven and directed by the Aboriginal people,” a principle acknowledged in the “White Paper.” However, while the government agreed that the goals of First Nations peoples should be directed by First Nations people, it further stated that “government can create a framework within which all persons and groups can seek their own goals” (DIAND, 1969: 6). Some observers took this statement to mean that the government would still be controlling how First Nations approached their goals. Perley (1993: 125) argues that the second principle is “the responsibility of First Nations people,” maintaining that a “decolonized education system may have the effect of greater participation of Aboriginal people at all levels of a truly pluralistic education system, but it is not a question of the ‘colonizer’ opening up places to ‘accommodate’ Aboriginals. Aboriginal people have the responsibility to decide the terms under which they participate; otherwise relationships of dependency are reinforced.”

The concept of local or band control is that “education can be given based on native values and that native culture can be maintained with the help of the school” (Canadian Education Association 1984: 7). Why is this significant? Prior to ICIE, when education was solely the concern of the federal government, there was a continuous erosion of Indian identity. Castellano (1972: 272) argues that “most Indian students discover that in school they are subject to persistent assaults on their self-esteem and that, far from leading them into self-realization, the education system holds out dubious rewards on the condition that they give up their birthright of being

Indian.” Only when education and school curriculum are relevant to Aboriginal needs can Native students begin to learn about themselves and regain their self-esteem and identity.

The reasons indicated for the creation of ICIE are reflected in the document of the same name. The National Indian Brotherhood (1972: 3) believed “the time has come for a radical change in Indian education. Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of the Indian people. We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity, with confidence in their personal worth and ability.” ICIE, therefore, outlined a set of criteria that Indian education should conform to; since 1972, it has largely done so, focusing on (1) First Nations views of education; (2) the role of parents; (3) issues of local control and responsibility; (4) curriculum, Native values, and the language factor; (5) the role of teachers; and (6) and problem of integration . These key considerations will now be looked at in turn.

### **First Nations Views of Education**

The NIB (1972: 1) advances the following philosophy of education:

In Indian tradition each adult is personally responsible for each child, to see that he learns all he needs to know in order to live a good life. As our fathers had a clear idea of what made a good man and a good life in their society, so we modern Indians want our children to learn that happiness and satisfaction come from pride in oneself, understanding one's fellow men, and, living in harmony with nature.....We want education to give our children the knowledge to understand and be proud of themselves and the knowledge to understand the world around them.

Three elements are singled out (1) pride in oneself, (2) understanding one's fellow

men, and (3) living in harmony with nature. Natives feel that pride encourages them to acknowledge and utilize their skills to make a living. They also feel that, with an understanding of others, they will be able to respect the cultural differences that are manifested between themselves and other Canadians. The last element, which involves living in harmony with nature, preserves the equilibrium between humans and the natural environment. Each of these elements ensures that the beliefs and values of First Nations culture are perpetuated through the education system. Barman *et al* (1987: 5) argue that there has been a revival of aspects of traditional culture among Natives in Canada, such as “sun dances, sweatlodge ceremonies, fasting, potlatches, and spiritual healing rituals,” in order to help “reaffirm their identity.” This reawakening has helped to create a foundation for an “emerging philosophy of Indian education as similarly bicultural, blending the old and the new into a unique synthesis encompassing all aspects of a child's development.”

The NIB document (1972: 2) explains how the attitudes and values of Native culture are expected to be transmitted to the younger generations, recognizing especially the role that education plays in shaping these attitudes and values:

[W]e want education to provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian tradition and culture. The values which we want to pass on to our children, values which make our people a great race, are not written in any book. We believe that if an Indian child is fully aware of the important Indian values, [that child] will have reason to be proud of our race and of himself as an Indian.

We want the behaviour of our children to be shaped by those values which are most esteemed in our culture. When our children come to school they have already developed certain attitudes and habits which are based on experiences in the family. School programs which are influenced by these values respect cultural priority and are an extension of the education which

parents give children from their first years. These early lessons emphasize attitudes of: self-reliance, respect for personal freedom, generosity, respect for nature and wisdom.

### **The Role of Parents**

In order for the above beliefs to be implemented, it is obvious that parents must play a vital role in the education of their children. The NIB (1972: 3) states that “if we are to avoid the conflict of values which in the past has led to withdrawal and failure, First Nation parents must have control of education with the responsibility of setting goals. What we want for our children can be summarized very briefly: to reinforce their Indian identity [and] to provide the training necessary for making a good living in modern society.” The NIB (1972: 3) document maintains that parents “are the best judges of the kind of school programs which can contribute to these goals without causing damage to the child.”

### **Local Control and Responsibility**

ICIE outlines three areas of responsibility for Indian education. First, there is the bureaucratic matter of jurisdiction for education. The NIB (1972: 27) asserts that the “transfer of educational jurisdiction from the federal government to provincial or territorial governments, without consultation and approval by Indian people, is unacceptable.” At the same time, however, the NIB (1972: 27) believes that “it is the responsibility of the federal government to provide funding for schools.” The second area of responsibility is local or band control. The NIB(1972: 27) advocated that “band councils should be given total or partial authority for education on reserves,

depending on local circumstances, and always with provisions for eventual complete autonomy, analogous to that of a provincial school board vis-a-vis a provincial Department of Education.” This authority includes responsibilities such as administrative needs, budgeting, deciding upon school facilities, hiring staff, developing curriculum and adult education relevant to the area, and the provision of counseling. The third area of responsibility is related to representation on school boards. Not all First Nations children are enrolled in federal or band-operated schools because some children live off the reserve or there are no local elementary or high schools on the reserve. These children, therefore, must attend provincial or territorial schools. ICIE (1972: 27) states that “there must be adequate Indian representation on school boards which have Indian pupils attending schools in their district...[and that] provinces/territories [should] make laws which will effectively provide that Indian people have responsible representation and full participation on school boards.” In essence, the NIB strongly argued that change was drastically needed to ensure that the Native voice would be heard by all levels of government with respect to Native children's education.

### **Curriculum, Native Values, and the Language Factor**

There is an obvious link between curriculum and Native values. In ICIE (1972: 9), Natives suggest that the curriculum should “recognize Indian culture, values, customs, languages, and the Indian contribution to Canadian development.” Curriculum is not stagnant. NIB (1972: 9) argues that curriculum “is a precise

instrument which can and should be shaped to exact specifications for a particular purpose. It can be changed and it can be improved.” ICIE also suggests that Native people become involved in the creation of the curriculum. This process will ensure that Native values are reflected in the education system. ICIE offers several ways in which the quality of education could be improved, as “curricular reform... is a cultural change. For Indian education, this involves changing the culture of the schools to incorporate Indian cultures more accurately” (Barman *et al* 1987: 16). Therefore, the removal of material that is biased, inaccurate or negative towards Native history and culture must be addressed. There must similarly be an increase of Aboriginal content within the curriculum, and the creation of a Native studies program for all levels of education with the input of Aboriginal people. Finally, there must be a discontinuation of I.Q. and standardized testing on Native children, since the NIB (1972: 10) insists that these tests do not accurately reflect the level of intelligence of ethnic and Native students. I.Q. and standardized testing, according to Hagedorn (1994: 30), contain “a cultural and class bias.” Hagedorn cites an example of how these tests were biased, stating that “white, native anglophone, middle and upper-class individuals averaged higher on I.Q. tests than did non-white, non-native-English speaking, or lower class individuals - - not because the former were more intelligent but because the use of written English was a more central, and therefore, more familiar, feature of their lives.”

An important feature of any curriculum is that of the language of instruction. Natives, the NIB (1972: 15) observes, are “expressing growing concern that native



languages are being lost, that the younger generations can no longer speak or understand the mother tongue.” In a survey conducted at a First Nations Convention (1991) in Ottawa, it was recorded that only three languages (Cree, Inuktitut, and Ojibway) have a realistic chance of long-term survival. Seven indigenous languages - - Black Foot, Carrier, Chipewyan, Dakota, Micmac, Montagnais-Naskapi, and Nass-Gitksan - - are identified as being endangered, with forty-three classified as on the verge of extinction. The NIB (1972: 14-15) advocates that language “is not simply a vocal symbol; it is a dynamic force which shapes the way a man looks at the world, his thinking about the world and his philosophy of life. Knowing his maternal language helps a man to know himself; being proud of his language helps a man to be proud of himself.” Barman *et al.* (1987:14) stress that “the role of language in the education of Indian children is a central one. The knowledge of both an Indian language and of English or French is crucial to the dual goals of Indian education: English or French for instrumental or economic reasons, and an Indian language for reasons of cultural transmission and of identity development.”

These ideas and the relationship between language, identity, and education are repeated and emphasized by the Assembly of First Nations (1993) in *Reclaiming our Nationhood, Strengthening our Heritage: Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. In the document, the AFN (1993: 96) declares:

Aboriginal languages were given by the Creator as an integral part of life. Embodied in Aboriginal languages is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values, and the fundamental notion of what is truth. Aboriginal language is an asset to one's own education, formal and informal. Aboriginal language contributes to greater pride in the history and culture of the community; greater involvement and interest of parents in the education

of their children; and greater respect for Elders. Language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared and transmitted from generation to generation. The key to identity and retention of culture is one's ancestral language.

These principles are applied within ICIE. The NIB (1972: 28) advocates that "Indian children must have the opportunity to learn their language, history and culture in the classroom." This can be achieved in two ways, either by "teaching in the native language [or] teaching the native language" (NIB 1972 : 15). To achieve this goal, however, it is necessary to have teachers, teachers-aides, or elders in the community who are fluent in the local language to teach the language to the children. If it is not taught, the language will become endangered or, worst of all, lost forever.

### **The Role of Teachers**

Closely associated with the language of instruction used in First Nation education is teacher training. The training process to prepare both Native and non-Native teachers to work in First Nation education is of concern for many Native people. In terms of selection criteria, the dilemma is whether or not to involve Native people who may lack the academic qualifications to teach but who possess both a talent and enthusiasm for teaching. ICIE (1972: 18) suggests that training programs should be developed to enable Natives to better their academic standing and become teachers. By developing such training programs, Native communities could utilize the human resources within the community.

Non-Native teachers are also a source of concern for the Native community. Native people often feel that non-Native teachers lack an understanding of Native

culture. ICIE (1972: 19) suggests that the training of non-Native teachers should include courses in inter-cultural education, Native languages, and teaching English as a second language. Barman *et al.* (1987: 14) emphasize that there is a need to train teachers who are sensitive to Aboriginal culture and “who can function biculturally, that is, in Indian and non-Indian cultures, regardless of their racial and ethnic groups membership.”

### **Problems of Integration**

The National Indian Brotherhood finally examined the problems of integration, mostly related to the placement of Native students in provincial/territorial schools. The NIB (1972: 25) believed that, in theory, integration as a concept “provides for growth through mingling the best elements of a wide range of human differences...and must respect the reality of racial and cultural differences by providing a curriculum which blends the best from Indian and non-Indian traditions.” The idea of integrating students so that they can learn and be aware of other cultures may be admirable, but in practice it worked out very differently. In fact, past experiences have shown that “it has been the Indian student who was asked to integrate: to give up his identity, to adopt new values and a new way of life” (NIB 1972: 25). In order for this situation to change it would require that parents participate in their child's education. As well, curriculum and text books, usually designed and written by non-Natives, must “recognize Indian customs and values, First Nation languages, and the contributions which the Indian people have made to

Canadian history.” Finally, non-Natives “must be ready to recognize the value of another way of life; to learn about Indian history, customs and language; and to modify, if necessary, some of their own ideas and practices” (NIB 1972: 25-26). Only when these four factors are met can integration be successful for both parties.

From 1972 on, ICIE, therefore, has set out an ambitious new agenda for First Nation education and has served the model for policy over the past twenty-five years. Has ICIE been successful in accomplishing its goals? The following section will attempt to answer this question by examining the results of the National Indian Brotherhood's document and the significance it has had for Natives after it was presented to, and accepted by, the government in 1973.

### **The Results of ICIE**

On May 24, 1973, Jean Chrétien presented his statement on education, particularly his reply to ICIE, to the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on First Nation Affairs and Northern Development. His reaction to the document appeared to be positive and optimistic, as Chretien (1973: 4) states that ICIE “is the culmination of the search for a new direction in native education...[and that the] paper [is] a significant milestone in the development of Indian education in Canada.” Chrétien (1973: 5-12) further responded to the document by stating that DIAND would take immediate action on the following matters:

- the involvement of natives in administrative affairs;
- that federal programs would not be transferred to the provincial/territorial system without approval from Natives;
- that those Native children who are in provincial/territorial schools would

be taught material that related to their own culture, and curriculum and Native content should meet the needs of Natives;

- that native language instruction be provided and the number of teachers fluent in the native language be increased.

Some issues, such as curriculum amendment, were complied with. There is still disagreement, however, over what specifically constitutes “control” of education. In his concluding remarks, Chrétien (1973: 13-14) commented that “the Department's role will increasingly become that of a service function to which Bands can turn as they feel the need for consultation, for discussion, and for provision of specialized educational services; however, the control and responsibility will rest with the Bands to chart their educational course seeking whatever assistance they require from whatever source they desire.” While his remarks appear to be positive, Chretien’s idea of ‘control’ remains vague and undefined. And while he implied that First Nations would have full control over their own education, this proved not to be the case. Chretien’s approach was deemed a “devolution approach” by the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996, 3), which noted that the process of transformation has been slow and is still underway.

### **The Transformation to Band-Controlled Schools**

Since the implementation of the ICIE policy, many federally controlled schools have converted to band-controlled schools; however, some federally controlled schools still exist, predominantly in Ontario. The first Native school to undergo transformation was Blue Quills near St. Paul, Alberta in 1970. The NIB used Blue Quills as a model for developing their policy. York (1990: 45) informs us that

“courses in the Cree language became part of the curriculum. Attendance began to increase, and the school expanded to cover high school as well as elementary school grades.” Unlike in the past, Bashford and Heinzerling (1987: 129) elaborate, “the atmosphere of the school was to reflect the high Indian value placed on good human relations, sharing and a family-like feeling among student, teachers and administrators. Staff members were to understand Indian life, and Indians were to receive priority in hiring.” This model, in conjunction with ICIE, set a precedent for other schools eager to begin the process of transformation.

By the early 1980s, 450 of the 577 First Nation bands in Canada had taken control of their own schools. By 1984, Dickason (1992: 337) tells us, “187 bands were fully operating their own schools, almost half of them in British Columbia and most of the remainder on the prairies.” By the end of 1983, a fifth of First Nation students were enrolled in band-operated schools. These numbers have increased, for York (1990: 45) points out that by 1990, “about 28 percent of Canada's 82,000 Indian elementary and high school students [were enrolled in band controlled schools]... There are about 240 band-controlled schools in the country....A few regional groups,[particularly] the Nishgas of British Columbia and the Cree of northern Quebec, have established their own school boards.”

Although more and more schools are becoming band controlled - -“51% of federally funded schools in 1993-94” - - it should be noted that there are several definitions of control (Canada 1996). Barman *et al* (1987: 9) identify five in total: political, administrative, financial, personnel, and curricular.

Political control, as defined by Barman *et al* (1987:9), “involves the transfer of power from the federal government to local band educational authorities...[and has only been] achieved in a limited number of cases through a long and arduous process involving politicians, legal experts, educators, and parents.” This form of control appears to be but a part of self-government; full political control is very rare.

Administrative control involves the administration of schools and programs for Native children. In other words, it acts somewhat like a school board in the sense that it encompasses “the establishment of an operational unit within the main offices of the board to centralize the administration of services” (Barman *et al* 1987: 9). The problem is that Natives are not represented in the negotiations for funding. Funds for these units are received by provincial governments “via Master Tuition Agreements with the federal government, which are negotiated and agreed upon without full knowledge and participation of the appropriate representatives of Indian peoples; [moreover], the identification and recovery of the flow of these monies is usually closed to the scrutiny of Indian people” (Barman *et al* 1987: 9-10).

In conjunction with administrative control is a third form of control -- financial. In essence, money is given to schools by DIAND; however, expenditures are decided upon at the local level. A fourth form of control, personnel, refers to the hiring of staff for schools. This form of control is practiced by many schools, and in some cases, can be a two- step process. The “first selection [is] undertaken by the school administrator, and a second selection by board and community members. The latter step is particularly sensitive to cultural considerations such as behaviour,

interactional patterns, ethnic and racial orientation, and teaching styles” (Barman *et al* 1987: 11). The final form of control refers to curriculum because “what is taught [to] Indian children is perhaps the most important type of control, since it is central to the socialization of the child and to the survival of Indian culture” (Barman *et al* 1987: 11).

So far, this discussion of the First Nation view of Indian education has been focused on the 1972 document ICIE. The following sections will examine the Assembly of First Nations' reaction to ICIE fifteen years after it was presented to the government. I will also address some of the recommendations made in the RCAP.

### **National Review of First Nations Education**

In 1988, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) published the *National Review of First Nations Education*. This publication was a revision and an update of ICIE. The AFN (1988: 14) believes that the “federal government has failed to implement the 1973 Indian Control of Indian Education policy in the manner intended by the policy paper.” The AFN feels that the government has not made any attempt permitting First Nations to have complete control over education. The Assembly (1988: 13) asserts that “First Nations education remains under the firm control of the Government of Canada which has consistently defined Indian Control to mean merely First Nations’ participation and administration of previously developed federal education programs.” This review also claims that the federal government still has control over the allocation of funds for Native education. By keeping this



control, the federal government remains associated with the operation of the Native schools (AFN 1988: 13). Many of the arguments put forward by the Assembly of First Nations are reiterated by the Royal Commission in its report. This report was published in 1996 and is significant as it addresses those issues pertaining to Aboriginal people which the government has tended to ignore. In doing so, RCAP has become a tool to attempt to mend the wounds and help to bridge the gaps that exist between Aboriginal people and the government. This report has then forced the government to respond to the recommendations made by the Royal Commission. The government's response, *Gathering Strength* (1998), will be examined in the following chapter.

The Royal Commission's (1996, 3) findings reinforce those of the AFN. It observed the following:

[F]ederal policy has been moving in the right direction since 1972, [it has] ... failed to take the decisive steps to restore full control of education to Aboriginal people. Nearly 70 percent of Aboriginal education has been in the hands of provincial or territorial authorities, with few mechanisms for effective accountability to Aboriginal people and involvement of parents. Aboriginal people have been restricted in their efforts to implement curricula that would transmit their linguistic and cultural heritage to the next generation. Financial resources to reverse the impact of past policies have been inadequate.

At this point, it must be mentioned that the recent shift to band-controlled schools does not comply with the founding ideals of ICIE. Bands have the ability to operate the school but they must do so under the guidelines of the DIAND. In order to have Indian control of Indian education, bands must control the funding of their own education (Goddard 1993: 165). Only when bands have financial *and* political

control will they have full control over First Nation education. This full control will provide the opportunity to utilize education to its full potential as a means of cultural survival. Education for Aboriginal peoples extends far beyond the classroom, and into the survival of the nation and the culture, which for many includes self-government. In fact, the Royal Commission (1996, 3) recommends that all “governments act promptly to acknowledge that education is a core area for the exercise of Aboriginal self-government.”

Furthermore, in a survey that was conducted by the AFN (1988: 74), it was found that almost half of the teachers stated that they need more cultural training. This statistic is decidedly alarming - - these are the teachers who are instructing Native students about Aboriginal culture. How can teachers impart sensitivity to a culture that many do not fully understand? The issue of Indian control of Indian education is clear to most Natives. They want to be free to control the education of their children and to ensure the survival of their culture, while preparing them also for the outside world, notably meaningful employment and the pursuit of higher education in a university or college setting. Local control of First Nation education is in the best interest of the Native community.

In the *Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, the Assembly of First Nations (1993: 92-93) provides a guideline as to how these goals can be achieved. The report reads:

Recognition by First Nations’ rights to self-government must be entrenched in the constitution. It must encompass the right of Aboriginal peoples as the First peoples to govern the land, promote their languages, cultures, traditions and educational practices ....Our aim is to make education relevant to the

philosophy and needs of First Nations people. We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability. We believe in education as a preparation for total living, as a means of free choice of where to live and work, and as a means of enabling us to participate fully in our social, political and educational advancement ....

Implementation of the recommendations in Tradition and Education must proceed. Consensus on and movement towards a transition to meaningful First Nations jurisdiction over education must take place immediately....Negotiations must take place immediately to establish an independent body, such as a National Aboriginal education council, to assume responsibility for policy planning, coordination and transfer or jurisdiction acceptable to First Nations as defined in Tradition and Education and the 1972 Indian Control of Indian Education policy paper.

In addition to this guideline, the AFN addresses the concerns of language and education. The AFN outlined three main goals in its *Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1993: 97). These goals emphasize(1) fluency and literacy in the mother tongue; (2) a shift towards having Aboriginal languages as the official languages of Native communities which would be used in everyday life; (3) and official recognition of Native languages by the government. The AFN (193: 97-102) outlines ten ways to achieve these goals. Some of these include:

The government of Canada through legislation must recognize, protect and promote First Nations languages on the same basis as English and French and enshrine this right in the constitution....All levels of government must redress the damage caused by past efforts to suppress First Nations languages and cultures.... Canadian churches must redress the damage caused by past efforts to suppress First Nations languages and cultures....First Nations must make Aboriginal languages a central element of their education system....First Nations governments must protect and promote First Nations languages and culture in their constitutions, self-government accords and land right agreements....First Nations must be supported to make their languages a central element of community life...First Nations must take the responsibility to strengthen their languages .

It must be emphasized that it is not just the AFN that supports these ideas. With respect to language, the Royal Commission (1996, 3) asserts that “most Aboriginal children are not offered the option of schooling in an Aboriginal language. English and French are the only choices. This sends a powerful message to Aboriginal children that their languages are not important. The dominance of English or French in the school environment diminishes the vitality of the Aboriginal language in the child’s communication world.” In many cases, this form of discrimination continues into adulthood, as attested by Ovide Mercredi, the former National Chief of the AFN, in a letter to Mme. Michelle Falardeau-Ramsay, the Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission (see Appendix 2).

Mercredi stated that Native languages have “actually been the object of parliamentary ridicule” for he notes that “in May 1995, Inuit MP Jack Anawak was accused of contempt of Parliament for answering a question in Inuktitut. The May 5, 1995 edition of the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the Reform House Leader commented that, ‘Anawak should only speak briefly in Inuktitut in the House such as the length of time it takes to yawn, pause between sentences or take a drink of water.’” This insensitive and inappropriate comment from Elwin Hermanson, former House Leader of the Reform, illustrates some of the intolerant attitudes that still exists for Native peoples, even as we enter the next millennium. It is quite obvious that some still believe, like Hermanson, that Native languages “are not important” (Canada, 1996, 3). The Royal Commission (1996, 3) recommends that Native language education become a priority and be used to “complement and support

language preservation efforts in local communities” through language instruction “involving elders and fluent Aboriginal speakers in programs to enhance Aboriginal language acquisition and fluency [and to develop] instructional materials.”

The Royal Commission (Canada 1996, 3) not only recommends that schools hire Aboriginal teachers, administrators, and support workers but also urges that the curriculum be holistic. In other words it “must address the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical development of participants.” The importance and significance of holistic education can probably be best described by Verna Kirkness and Dave Courchene Jr., who provided the following statements, given at a conference in Nelson House, Manitoba in 1986 on how holistic education fits within the grand scheme of things. Kirkness (1986: 27) argues that:

It seems that what we’ve been trying to do is put our children into social studies. We’ve been trying to put our culture in this whole big school program. I think what we have to start trying to do is put education into our culture. I think our culture is first. That means our way of life is first, then education is second. We need to do that to get our own way of life, our First Nation way of life, and then we try to put education there instead of the other way around..... “Whole” education is important and what we have to start doing is not only teaching to the head but we have to teach to the body and to the spirit and to our feelings.

Many of Kirkness’s ideas are present in Courchene’s (1986: 32) argument, but he acknowledges that ICIE has not been working to better the situation in the schools.

He asserts that:

I think we’ve tended as a people to adopt other systems of education for our young people and we’re finding it just isn’t working. We’ve had the opportunity to have education in our community in what they call local control since 1974. So basically 14 years we’ve been at it and I think we’re no further ahead when we took over in 1974.... The sacrifice that we’re

making is that they're forgetting about who they are...I think what has to happen in terms of the education of our young people is we have to begin teaching them. Not only in school, but we also have a big responsibility as parents to begin teaching our children our language, our traditional values, our beliefs, and all those other things that give us the answers to the direction we want to go in the survival of our people.

Therefore, considering some of these ideas in relation to holistic education, the Royal Commission (1996, 3) recommended that governments collaborate with Aboriginals and educators to develop "curricula that [will] reflect Aboriginal cultures and community realities" and that will include "the perspectives, traditions, beliefs and world view of Aboriginal peoples." These are only a few of the recommendations that the Royal Commission has made in its report on education, but they are some of the most important because they will affect children most. If the government seriously considers and implements the recommendations in the Royal Commission, then perhaps a positive change can occur, especially for the students who would find school to be more relevant to them and their community.

As we journey into the twenty-first century, the recommendations by both the AFN and the Royal Commission for both education and language are crucial First Nation control of education and for First Nation cultural survival. These recommendations are just as pertinent for education in off-reserve locations and in urban areas, where cultural survival is just as crucial.

### **Off-Reserve Education and Urban Areas**

A chapter on contemporary First Nation education is not complete without mentioning education for Natives off reserves, particularly those in urban areas.

There are two types of schools within the urban area: the survival school and the provincial/territorial school. The purpose of a survival school, as McCaskill (1987:162) sees it, “is to promote and preserve Indian language, values, and history in order to survive as a distinct people within the larger Canadian society.” There are eight survival schools in Canada: five are located in urban areas (Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, and Toronto), two are located on reserves but near cities (Kahnawake near Montreal and Akwesasne near Cornwall), and one is located in a rural area (St. Charles) in Ontario. Most of these schools were established in the 1970s and early 1980s. Their founding “can be traced to a concern felt by members of the Indian community, particularly parents, that the schooling their children were receiving in the public system was seriously deficient” (McCaskill 1987: 159). Some of these concerns, as addressed by McCaskill (1987: 159), include high drop-out rates, discrimination against Native students, and the consistent “labelling [of] Indian students as ‘trouble-makers,’ ‘slow learners,’ and ‘under-achievers.’”

McCaskill (1987: 162) states that there are four common goals for survival schools, namely “(1) to provide an educational setting that will develop in students increased self-esteem and a stronger Indian identity; (2) to encourage students to live in harmony with themselves, the community, and the environment; (3) to encourage self-reliance through personal decision-making and life skills; and (4) to provide quality academic education.” These four goals are the underlying basis for the Kahnawake Survival School near Montreal, where half the subjects are taught in English and the other half in the Native language of the community, as in an

immersion program. In order for an immersion program to succeed, as has been proven with the French-immersion program, it would require students to begin at kindergarten or at the grade one level. In fact, psychologists such as Peter Gray (1991: 426) believe that “children have a greater capacity for language learning ... than do adults;” thus, the younger the child, the easier the learning process for that child. A program such as this would be beneficial to help preserve the Native culture, and the language of that particular community.

The principal ideas of ICIE, such as Native awareness and Native content in the curriculum, Native representation on school boards, and integration, would apply to those students who are in provincial/territorial schools in urban areas. Douglas (1987: 180-181) explains that “the aim...has been to facilitate the successful integration of Native people into the urban community and to assist those who are alienated from the processes of schooling.” A large part of the problem is that many non-Natives are ignorant of Native issues and Native culture, and as Douglas (1987: 181) attests, this “lack of education about Native people in the larger society has contributed to the failure to address the many and varied legal, social, economic, and cultural difficulties facing Native people.” Obviously, this is cause for concern because if Native studies or issues are not being taught in the classroom, then those Native students attending provincial/territorial schools are not being exposed to information about their own culture.

However, this is not to say that integration of both cultures in provincial/territorial schools is not possible, for it can be successful. Successful



integration and Native studies/Native education depends upon a number of factors, most importantly that the teacher be open-minded, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic about the subject, and can easily motivate the students to learn about the issues, as well as a curriculum that is culturally sensitive.

## **Conclusion**

During the 1970s, Native resistance to the status quo began to ignite across the country because of poor conditions on reserves, policies of internal colonialism such as the 1969 “White Paper,” and the need not only for local control but also to make education relevant to Native students. The National Indian Brotherhood’s document, “Indian Control of Indian Education,” was the first time that the government had ever accepted, in theory, the views of Natives in regards to their own education. “Indian Control of Indian Education” was more than just a pedagogic document - - it was a statement of resistance against the government and the many years of being oppressed by the residential school system and the DIAND. One of the major points of contention is local or band control instead of federal control. Although there has been an increase in band-controlled schools, it does not necessarily mean that Indian control of Indian education has been achieved. The second point of contention is language and teacher training, because of their direct connection to cultural survival, both on and off reserve.

As we close the chapter on the twentieth century and look forward to a new era, one wonders if Native bands will receive full control of their own education, that is

political, administrative, financial, personnel, and curricular authority to do as they think best. A precedent has been set, however, and although full control has not been achieved, things have moved in a positive direction. Whether or not First Nations have “band control”, Indian control of Indian education will not exist as long as there is involvement by federal and provincial/territorial governments. It can only be hoped that with the help and recommendations made in the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, we will see a change as we enter the next millennium.

On a much broader scale, it is also important to educate non-Natives, as Douglas (1987: 183-184) recognizes:

Native education is not only for Native people. It is designed to promote mutual respect and understanding between the Native and non-Native segments of Canadian society. Native education is not necessarily an alternative programme. It is designed to create harmony and unity in an integrated society, and it should not be divisive... It can be seen, therefore, that the definition of Native education involves two important initiatives: (a) the education of Native people and, (b) the improved education about Native people for everyone (that is, Native Studies).

As an educator, I wholeheartedly endorse this argument and hope that as we enter the twenty-first century, more teachers will incorporate more material pertaining to Native issues in their curriculum units and lesson plans, instead of limiting the topic to one or two lessons. On a personal note, it is rather disappointing to know that many students leave high school knowing very little about the Indians’ people, especially in the social sciences. Sadly, this is a reflection of the curriculum, as well as the background and training of teaching staff.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **HAS THE HEALING BEGUN?**

In terms of the overall relationship between First Nations peoples and the Government of Canada, the 1990s have shown that change can occur, particularly with respect to the attitudes of the government and the various religious denominations affiliated with the residential school system. Whether or not the recommendations of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP), and the response to it by the federal government, will have a significant impact, or indeed any impact at all, is difficult to say. By way of conclusion, I will consider some of the key events that occurred during the 1990s, most notably the apologies made by the various churches that were involved in running the residential schools and the statement of reconciliation expressed by the government. I will also reflect briefly on the future of First Nations education in Canada.

#### **The Politics of “Apologies”**

Moves towards an apology for residential school abuses were initiated by the United Church in 1986. Another five years passed before, in 1991, the Oblate Conference of Canada formally apologized for their role in the tragedy. Shortly after this, the Bishops of Ontario, the Church of England, and the Presbyterian Church expressed regret for their participation - - in 1992, 1993, and 1994 respectively. Twelve years elapsed from the time of the first moves to apologize until the government actually acknowledged its role and participation in the residential school

trauma. This “apology” was a cornerstone of *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan* (1998), the government’s response to the RCAP.

At first glance, the apologies made by the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and United (Methodist) Churches, as well as that made by the Canadian government, appear to be sincere, honest, and sorrowful. But were they? Newspaper articles reporting the government’s statement certainly thought so. Some of the headlines that appeared after Jane Stewart’s announcement included “Federal *apology* fails to mollify native leaders” (Anderssen and Greenspon 1998); “Natives divided over *apology*” (Globe and Mail 1998); “*Apology* to natives should have come from Chrétien” (Speirs 1998); and “Residential school left lasting scars: Cree leader reluctant to accept *apology*” (Laghi 1998)<sup>14</sup>. However, in order to assess whether or not these statements were sincere, honest, apologetic, and sorrowful, a closer examination is needed.

Each denomination apologized for their actions and their role in residential schools. On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, for example, the Archbishop and Primate (see Appendix 3) stated that:

I accept and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God. 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 you 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.

The United Church (see Appendix 3) similarly confessed its sins and admitted

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<sup>14</sup> The term “apology” has been emphasized in italics by the author.

that it “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.” Furthermore, it asked the First Nations Peoples for forgiveness. Like the previous two denominations, the statement by the Presbyterian Church and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate expressed, in great length their sorrow for sins such as colonialism, abuse (sexual, physical, mental), assimilation, and for the existence of the schools themselves. For this they asked forgiveness from Aboriginal Peoples (see Appendix 3). The government expressed its regret for “past actions of the federal government which have contributed to these difficult pages in the history of our relationship together .... [The government] acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools .... To those of you who suffered at residential schools, we are deeply sorry” (Canada 1998).

In order to determine the question of sincerity, one needs to define more clearly the terms that are used by the various parties, particularly “apology,” “reconciliation,” “sorry,” “regret,” and “confess.” Perhaps it may seem that some of these terms are synonyms for each other, especially apology and reconciliation. However, I believe they are not. According to Webster’s dictionary definition (1987: 834), “reconcile” is defined as “to bring together again in love or friendship; to induce (someone) to accept something disagreeable; to make or show to be consistent; to reach a compromise agreement about [differences].” “Apology,” on the other hand, means something entirely different. It is defined (Webster 1987: 43) as

“an expression of regret for wrongdoing; an excuse or defense,” very similar to the term “sorry,” defined as “feeling regret” (Webster 1987: 947). Furthermore, “regret” can be defined as “to wish that some matter or situation could be different from what it is” (Webster 1987:839 ), whereas to “confess” is “to own up to, admit” (Webster 1987:204 ).

This game of semantics may seem irrelevant, but it is standard practice within the realm of politics and law, and these definitions are the key to comprehending fully what is really meant by the various parties. With respect to the four denominational churches, they consistently use the terms “apology,” “forgiveness,” “confess,” “regret,” and “sorry.” Furthermore, they apologize for not only the abuse that occurred but also the assimilation attempts, even the existence of the schools, for which they ask for forgiveness. I believe that the heads of these Churches were sincere in their apologies. However, as the head of the Anglican Church of Canada pointed out, he was apologizing on behalf of the Church although “there are those in the church who cannot accept the fact that these things were done” in the first place (see Appendix 3).

The government, on the other hand, uses the term “reconciliation” on a number of occasions, and the only time that the expression “sorry” is utilized is in reference to the physical and sexual abuse that occurred in the schools. Nowhere in the body of the text which the media labeled as an apology does the government *actually* apologize for (1) removing Aboriginal children from their home and displacing them from their communities; (2) placing them in residential schools; and (3) trying to

assimilate and 'civilize' them. At most, the government "acknowledges" its role, and expresses its "profound regret" (Canada 1998).

For the average Canadian who might have read the "Statement of Reconciliation" in the newspaper the day after Jane Stewart's speech, it would be assumed that this statement not only constituted an apology but also was sincere. I believe that this statement does *not* constitute an apology. It is a statement that appears to mend gaps, one that talks of "renewing [the]... partnership" (Canada 1998) between the Canadian government and Aboriginal peoples. I believe that a person can reconcile differences, and even regret that something happened, but not necessarily be apologetic for it. It appears that one of the main reasons for this statement's existence was due to pressure by the AFN and Aboriginal peoples, and as reported in the press, "since becoming the country's top native leader last summer, one of [Phil] Fontaine's pet projects has been a lobbying effort to get Ottawa to make up for sending aboriginal children to residential schools across the country to assimilate them into white culture" (Tibbetts 1998: 12). Though the government is contributing \$350 million towards the healing process for those affected by residential schools, I believe that the statement made by the government was patronizing to both Canadians and Aboriginals because it was what the average person wanted to hear. Since the government's response to the Royal Commission was only released in January 1998, it is difficult to know what long-term impact the statement of reconciliation will have on Aboriginal peoples.

## **First Nations Education in the Next Millennium**

Although it is questionable when, or even if, both sides will renew the “partnership” that Jane Stewart speaks of, First Nations education in the twenty-first century must not rely upon government but rather upon Aboriginals and Aboriginal groups themselves to further the development of Indian Control of Indian Education. Goddard (1993: 167) argues that “it is now time to evaluate how Indian education should meet the new millennium.” Goddard asserts that “Indian control of Indian education as envisaged 20 years ago has not occurred. It is time to question the whole concept of band-controlled schools and to determine whether in fact they are an idea whose time has gone.” I disagree. Although ICIE has been slow to be implemented, it is not fair to say that it is “an idea whose time has gone.” The AFN has certainly been critical of the document; however, at a National Conference on Education in November 1996, entitled “Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century,” the ideas and issues raised were the underlying principles of ICIE, specifically, jurisdiction, resourcing and financial control, curriculum development and community involvement, and finally to provide a holistic education. This concept is probably best described by those who attended the conference and what they perceived to be critical for First Nations education for the next century. For example, Grand Chief Charles Fox of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation in Ontario, stated:

First Nations have a right to comprehensive education programming which includes, but is not limited to cultural and traditional, daycare, pre-school, elementary, secondary, language, special education, post secondary, upgrading, vocational, human resource development and adult education; that right is not externally circumscribed. Education is a lifelong holistic process (AFN 1996: 9).



For some, it is imperative that education extend beyond the walls of a classroom, as it involves the community, one's involvement in the community, and life in general. Marie Smallface-Murule, president of Red Crow Community College in Alberta, asserted:

Everyone needs to know what their rights are. Elders need to be involved in our schools to reconnect with who we are ..... Our students need to have their own identity and idea about their heritage. We have collective rights to control our future. We have our own homeland, education and history .... It is essential that we have knowledge of our history prior to colonization; which can be drawn from our languages and our individual histories as First Nations (AFN 1996: 11).

Donna Young, of the Indigenous Education Coalition, Ontario, and Chief Nathan Matthew, of the North Thompson Band in British Columbia, relate education not only to the elders but to the past, colonialism, and residential schools. Young contended:

On a world scale many cultures have been enormously successful in transmitting their cultures through the formal system of schooling. In fact, their success has been so great that they have imposed their cultures, languages and beliefs on others through colonization. Education can be used as a tool: it can both destroy and build cultures. In the development of every nation, there is a need for an evaluation of the education system. Part of this process should be a critical examination of the philosophy on which the school is based. (AFN 1996: 36).

Chief Matthew (AFN 1996: 35) proclaimed:

We need an attachment to our past and this is through our elders. There is a way to attach what we are doing now to the past. Sometimes however, our elders are not always available to us to contribute to the education process. Fifty years after leaving residential schools, the negative experience of shunning our language has effected the belief systems of some of our elders and their belief that there is value in our culture and languages.

Gilbert Whiteduck, of the Kitigan Zibi Education Council in Quebec, perhaps

summed up best how First Nations education should be approached for the next millennium. He argued (AFN 1996: 28) that “education systems for the 21st century must be founded on ‘vision, responsibility, accountability, transformability, inclusion, recognition, the Sacred Circle and communication.’ The answer lies in our elders, our people and our responsibilities.” In other words, it should be up to Aboriginal peoples to decide the direction of First Nations education, not the government.

Green (1990: 38) reiterates the AFN's ideas and argues that “the shape of Native education in Canada ‘in the year 2000 and beyond’ will be a direct reaction of the resolve of Native people to create their education in their own [way]... It has been well demonstrated that they are the only ones capable of doing it right.” Furthermore, as part of the Decade of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations formed a Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples in 1993. With respect to the education of Aboriginal peoples, the declaration (Part IV, Article 15; in Morrison, 1997: 320-321) states that:

Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education in the State. All indigenous peoples also have this right and the right to establish and control their education systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

Indigenous children living outside their communities have the right to be provided access to education in their own culture and language.

States shall take effective measures to provide appropriate resources for these purposes.

This clause is very similar to many of the concepts put forth in the National Indian Brotherhood's “Indian Control of Indian Education,” but at a global level. Heading

into the twenty-first century, the United Nations document could be beneficial to support ICIE and Aboriginal peoples in Canada against the government. What Aboriginal peoples believe to be appropriate in terms of methods and resources may vary from the government's perspective. Regardless, it must be Aboriginal peoples and the elders who should educate generations to come. This education is more than academic curriculum, but it also relates to issues of identity, spirit, and community, which will be relevant to every aspect to their lives.

First Nations education in Canada has remained a contentious issue between the government and Aboriginal people for well over a century. Though the last residential school closed in 1988, the topic has remained sensitive and controversial issue, a veritable thorn in the government's side. Though the various churches involved in residential schooling have apologized not only for the abuse but also for the assimilation attempts, it took the government until 1998 to admit publicly that it, too, played a key role in the operation of the residential schools. There was no apology, however, for its assimilation attempts. Such an apology doubtless would have caused many more legal problems and litigations, in which the government did not want to engage, as it is already dealing with several litigations pertaining to the abuses that occurred within the schools. The government no doubt wishes to limit its liability, so as to avoid a deluge of lawsuits. Furthermore, compensation to victims is also a concern among Aboriginal peoples, as are the social implications such as poverty, suicide, and marriage breakups created by both the impact of residential schools and compensation (CBC transcripts 1998). This is an issue in which both the

government and Aboriginal peoples and groups, such as the Assembly of First Nations, are currently investigating.

If the government is truly sorry for its actions and the many assimilation attempts taken against Aboriginal peoples, then it should sincerely apologize. The government claims that they want to mend the gap and reconcile, but how can a party do such a thing without apologizing for past wrongdoings. Currently, it is at the point where the notion of trust barely exists because so many negative things have occurred by the government towards Aboriginal people. The statement of reconciliation is a first step, but it needs to move beyond that. An apology should be made out of principle because it is the right thing to do. However, it is questionable if the government will do this because the thought of such an action seems to cause many bureaucrats to start calculating in their heads how much the process will cost in litigation and compensation. A cynic could hardly be faulted for noting that money is the “bottom line,” not principle and integrity. Although, the responsibilities of apologizing should include action to improve the current education system for today’s youth, and a healing program for survivors, not just those who were physically and sexually abused, it must start with the government acknowledging that they were wrong and apologizing for their past actions.

Controversy over residential schooling is not likely to disappear, and neither is debate about “Indian Control of Indian Education” as expressed by elders and other Aboriginal peoples. The irony is that we have tried to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into a Western way of thinking, teaching, and even being, but I believe there is much

to be said about the Aboriginal approach to education, in that education is more than academics and learning within a classroom setting. Many Native students believe that what is taught to them is irrelevant to their lives, their community, and has no impact upon them, so why should they even bother with the likes of Shakespeare, European history, and so forth? Though there are some individual teachers who take it upon themselves to make the curriculum relevant, many do not. Perhaps the Aboriginal pedagogical approach is one method that could be studied and used by non-Native teachers with their students in the next century. This is not by any means appropriation, but rather a sharing of ideas. It is the West needing to learn from Aboriginal peoples, an act we should have begun centuries ago.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **STATEMENT OF RECONCILIATION - LEARNING FROM THE PAST**

**JANE STEWART, MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN  
DEVELOPMENT**

**JANUARY 7, 1998**

As Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians seek to move forward together in a process of renewal, it is essential that we deal with the legacies of the past affecting the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including the First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Our purpose is not to rewrite history, but, rather, to learn from our past and to find ways to deal with the negative impacts that certain historical decisions continue to have in our society today.

The ancestors of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples lived on this continent long before the explorers from other continents first came to North America. For thousands of years before this country was founded, they enjoyed their own forms of government. Diverse, vibrant Aboriginal nations had ways of life rooted in fundamental values concerning their relationships to the Creator, the environment, and each other, in the role of Elders as the living memory of their ancestors, and in their responsibilities as custodians of the lands, waters and resources of their homelands.

The assistance and spiritual values of the Aboriginal peoples who welcomed the newcomers to this continent too often have been forgotten. The contributions made by all Aboriginal peoples to Canada's development, and the contributions that they continue to make to our society today, have not been properly acknowledged. The Government of Canada today, on behalf of all Canadians, acknowledges those contributions.

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.

Against the backdrop of these historical legacies, it is a remarkable tribute to the strength and endurance of Aboriginal people that they have maintained their historic diversity and identity. The Government of Canada today formally expresses to all Aboriginal people in Canada our profound regret for past actions of the federal government which have contributed to these difficult pages in the history of our relationship together.

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.

The Government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools. Particularly to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of sexual and physical abuse at residential schools, and who have carried this burden believing that in some way they must be responsible, we wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry.

In dealing with the legacies of the Residential school system, the Government of Canada proposes to work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, the Churches and other interested parties to resolve the longstanding issues that must be addressed. We need to work together on a healing strategy to assist individuals and communities in dealing with the consequences of this sad era of our history.

No attempt at reconciliation with Aboriginal people can be complete without reference to the sad events culminating in the death of Métis leader Louis Riel. These events cannot be undone; however, we can and will continue to look for ways of affirming the contributions of Métis people in Canada and of reflecting Louis Riel's proper place in Canada's history.

Reconciliation is an ongoing process. In renewing our partnership, we must ensure that the mistakes which marked our past relationship are not repeated. The Government of Canada recognizes that policies that sought to assimilate Aboriginal people, women and men, were not the ways in which Aboriginal people can participate fully in the economic, political, cultural and social life of Canada in a manner which preserves and enhances the collective identities of Aboriginal communities, and allows them to evolve and flourish in the future. Working together to achieve our shared goals will benefit all Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

On behalf of the Government of Canada

The Honourable Jane Stewart, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

The Honourable Ralph Goodale, P.C., M.P.

Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians

(Canada, 1998; Stewart, 1998a,1998b)

## APPENDIX 2

### LETTER FROM OVIDE MERCREDI, FORMER NATIONAL CHIEF OF THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

Dear Mme. Falardeau-Ramsay:

First Nations languages are being violated by the dominant English/French speaking Canadian culture. In Canada, there are several measures to protect language rights. Canada's official languages, English and French, are constitutionally protected, which ensures their use, permanence and the encouragement of their utilization in all activities in the state.

Indeed, far from protecting or encouraging the use of Aboriginal languages, Aboriginal language use has actually been the object of parliamentary ridicule. In May 1995, Inuit MP Jack Anawak was accused of contempt of Parliament for answering a question in Inuktitut. The May 5, 1995 edition of the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the Reform House Leader commented that "Anawak should only speak briefly in Inuktitut in the House such as the length of time it takes to yawn, pause between sentences or take a drink of water." (*Ottawa Citizen*, Friday May 5, 1995, P. A3).

Canada's Official Languages Act of 1969 protected the equality of the English and French languages, guaranteeing the right to access government services in either language. In section 23 of the Charter, minority languages rights in education are protected; however, this does not apply to Aboriginal languages.

When the Act was amended in 1988 to include rights entrenched in the Constitution, it included redress for individuals who allege infringement of their rights under the Official Languages Act. As the Act does not clearly define non-official languages, speakers of heritage languages must rely on section 15, which recognizes Canada's

multicultural nature. It does not specifically address language, but does provide for equality and freedom from discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical capacities.

In Canada, of all the provinces and territories, only the Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes Aboriginal languages as official languages along with English and French.

It is an outrage, considering the amount of money spent on the official languages compared to that spent on the languages of the First Peoples of Canada. In 1996-97 the Government spent a total amount of \$10,509,000 on the Official Languages. That is roughly \$5 million on English and \$5 million on French languages. Under the Native Social and Cultural Development Program Support for Aboriginal Languages initiatives, funding was provided for the total amount of \$925,000 from 1986-1995. The above mentioned program has not existed since 1995 and the two new agreements covering aboriginal languages extend only into the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Section 2 of the Declaration of Human Rights explicitly states that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms, set forth in this Declaration without distinction, such as color, sex, language, religion, political affiliation other opinion national or social or birth or other status...” If such is the case, our rights as First Nations people are being infringed on by the greater society. This is a violation of human rights and freedoms as expressed by the Declaration. We have the right to be treated fairly and equitably as the French or the English. We have been snubbed by Ministers and virtually ignored by the Government of Canada. We have been to the Ministers and to the Prime Minister, yet still our issues are not addressed, or worse they are addressed in a way that does not contribute to our dignity and respect as First Nations People.

Through such behaviour, the Government of Canada is violating Article 30 of the Declaration which states that “nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.” Such treatment as explained above is unacceptable. What will it take for us to be able to exercise our rights and freedoms as a First Peoples of Canada?

I would be happy to provide you with the specific instances of the violations if this will assist the appeal process. Please advise me to a course of action. Our rights are being violated, even according to the Declaration of Human Rights and we are not willing to be stripped of our rights as First Nations.

Please contact our office to set up a meeting to discuss these very critical issues at (613) 241-6789.

Yours truly,

Ovide Mercredi  
National Chief

(from photocopy found at the AFN resource centre; dated June 5, 1997)

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **APOLOGIES MADE BY THE VARIOUS CHURCHES**

#### **Statement by the National Meeting on Indian Residential Schools**

We are sorry and deeply regret the pain, suffering and alienation that many experienced. We have heard their cries of distress, feel their anguish and want to be part of the healing process...

Therefore, we:

- pledge solidarity with the aboriginal peoples in their pursuit of recognition of their basic human rights;
- reiterate our respect for the dignity and value of their cultures and spiritualities and reaffirm the principle of inculturation;
- will support aboriginal peoples in pressing governments at all levels to respond to their legitimate aspirations;
- urge the federal government to assume its responsibility for its part in the Indian Residential Schools;
- urge our faith communities to become better informed and more involved in issues important to aboriginal peoples.

All dioceses in which Residential Schools were located and that are represented here agree to set up, in collaboration with aboriginal peoples, a process for disclosure, which respects confidentiality, and for healing of the wounds of any sexual abuse that occurred in Residential Schools....

The group that assembled here this week is firmly committed to building a renewed relationship with the aboriginal peoples and is very aware that much work still remains to be done.

Saskatoon (March 1991)

### **Apology by the Anglican Church of Canada**

I also know that I am in need of healing, and my own people are in need of healing, and our church is in need of healing. Without that healing, we will continue the same attitudes that have done such damage in the past.

I know that healing takes a long time, both for people and communities.

I also know that it is God who heals, and that God can begin to heal when we open ourselves, our wounds, our failure and our shame, to God. I want to take one step along that path here and now.

I accept and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God.

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 you 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 offer our apology....

I know how often you have heard words which have been empty because they have not been accompanied by actions. I pledge to you in my best efforts, and the efforts of our church at the national level, to walk with you along the path of God's healing.

The Archbishop and Primate (August 6, 1993)

### **Response by Elders and Participants**

It was offered from the heart with sincerity, sensitivity, compassion and humility. We receive it in the same manner. We offer praise and thanks to our Creator for his courage.

We know it wasn't easy. Let us keep him in our hearts and prayers, that God will



continue to give him the strength and courage to continue with his tasks.

(August 1993)

**Apology Statement to Native Congregations in The United Church of Canada**

Long before my people journeyed to this land, your people were her, 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 depths and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ.

We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the Gospel.

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.

We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.

(August 1986)

**Apology by the Presbyterian Church of Canada**

We acknowledge that the stated policy of the Government of Canada was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the dominant culture, and that The Presbyterian Church in Canada cooperated in this policy. We acknowledge that the roots of the harm we have done are found in the attitudes and values of western European colonialism, and the assumption that what was not yet moulded in our image was to be discovered and exploited.....

We confess that The Presbyterian Church in Canada presumed to know better than

Aboriginal peoples what was needed for life. The Church said of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, "If they could be like us, if they could think like us, talk like us, worship like us, sing like us, work like us, they would know God as we know God and therefore would have life abundant". In our cultural arrogance we have been blind to the ways in which our won understanding of the Gospel has been culturally coordinated and because of our insensitivity to aboriginal cultures, we have demanded more of Aboriginal peoples than the gospel requires, and have thus misrepresented Jesus Christ who loves all peoples with compassionate, suffering love that all may come to God through him. For the Church's presumption we ask forgiveness.

We confess that, with the encouragement and assistance of the Government of Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada agreed to take the children of Aboriginal peoples from their own homes and place them in Residential Schools. In these schools, children were deprived of their traditional ways which were replaced with Euro-Canadian customs that were helpful in the process of assimilation. To carry out the process, The Presbyterian Church in Canada used disciplinary practices which were foreign to Aboriginal peoples, and open to exploitation in physical and psychological punishment beyond any Christian maxim of care and discipline. In a setting of obedience and acquiescence there was opportunity for sexual abuse and some were so abused. The effect of all this, for Aboriginal peoples, was the loss of cultural identity and the loss of a secure sense of self. For the Church's insensitivity we ask forgiveness.....

We ask, also, for forgiveness from Aboriginal peoples. what we have heard we acknowledge. It is our hope that those whom we have wronged with a hurt so deep for telling will accept what we have to say.

(1994)

## **An Apology to the First Nations of Canada by the Oblate Conference of Canada**

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Canada wish, after one hundred and fifty years of being with and administering to the Native peoples of Canada, to offer an apology for certain aspects of that presence and ministry...

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...are not so much the result of personal failure as they are the result of centuries of systemic imperialism.....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 those instances of physical and sexual abuse that occurred in those schools. We reiterate that the bigger issue of abuse was the existence of the schools themselves but we wish to publicly acknowledge that there were instances of individual physical and sexual abuse. Far from attempting to defend or rationalize these cases of abuse in any way, we wish to state publicly that we acknowledge that they were inexcusable, intolerable, and a betrayal of trust in one of its most serious forms. We deeply, and very specifically, apologize to every victim of such abuse and we seek help in searching for means to bring about healing.

(July 1991)