



# Ambiguous Losses

Epidemics, Orphans, and Unmarked Graves

## Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Canoe Sheds, Truth, and Reconciliation.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Indian Residential Schools — The Untold Story of A Lifeboat for the Least of Society.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Settler Historians are Busy Rewriting History to Make You Feel Enraged and Guilty.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The Forgotten Tuberculosis Plague — Residential School Factualism is Not a Crime.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Phantom Students of Genocide.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Sacred Responsibility Tarnished by the Rewriting of History.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>“They gave me a number...” Indian Residential School Denialism and Genocide.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Unmarked or Mass Graves? Epidemic or Genocide? Some Historical Context on Canada’s Residential Schools.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Genocide Accusations in Canada —.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>When Pro-bono turns to <i>Cui Bono</i>.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Manufacturing a Genocide.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>The Balkanization of Canada.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>The Dangerous Allure of Omitting Facts and.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Historical Context on Residential Schools.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>CBC Does Not Represent all Canadians.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Contrary to their Mandate.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>The Canadian Indian Residential School Genocide – Guilty without a Fair Trial.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Senate Testimony Reveals Missing Children’s Names and Graves are on Ancestry.com.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>What if the Knowledge Keepers are Wrong about Residential School Bodies and Graves?.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Every Living Child Matters Most of All.....</b>	<b>95</b>

*Cover image taken in the Cowley graveyard, Southern Alberta.  
Photo credit: Clive Shaupmeyer.*



*The first is when a person is physically absent yet psychologically present. A child who is given up for adoption, a soldier who is listed as missing in action, or a divorced father who is no longer living with his children are all examples. Family members may not know if the person is still alive or the state of his or her wellbeing.*

*Although the person is not physically present, he or she is still very much a part of the psychological family and continuously in family members' thoughts. For the family who experiences ambiguous loss, the situation is stressful and oftentimes cruel in its unending torment. Because the loss is intangible or uncertain, the mourning process for family members becomes complicated. Ambiguous loss is characterized by factors that inherently impede the grieving process (Boss, 1999, 2002). For example, it is cognitively difficult to understand what has happened or why.*

### ***Ambiguous Loss and the Family Grieving Process,***

*Gabrielle Betz & Jill M. Thorngren, Montana State University*

*One need only read this sad story in Eric Bays' book, "Indian Residential Schools: Another Picture." Bays explains that at the Hudson's Bay trading post at Albany, a father showed up saying there was no food in the family tent and that his wife was ill. The father then died. The Hudson's Bay sent out men with food, only to find the family in a tent, the mother deceased with five children around her. A two-month-old baby was given up to a relative, the 16-year-old joined other relatives on a hunt, and the remaining three children, a boy and two girls, came to the residential school. During a flu epidemic, the youngest of the three died at the school.*

*This vignette is a repeating story through the history of Indian Residential Schools. Orphaned children. Families in distress. This also is an example of why many Indigenous people 'know' there are missing children from their communities — and why they feel certain the loss is directly associated with Indian Residential Schools.*

# Introduction

In the early 1980's, I spent several years working on a series of historical documentaries for CTV Calgary. My research supervisor was Dr. Hugh Dempsey, then curator of the Glenbow Museum. The project meant our tiny production crew had to drive all over Southern Alberta to interview hundreds of people - pioneers, historians, and descendants of those who signed Treaty 7. Many hours were spent in the Glenbow Museum combing through archival images and documents; in my spare time I was reading history books. I learned things I had never been taught at school, about things that happened in my own 'backyard' and I grew to love Canadian history and Canada.

I grew up in Ponoka, Alberta, just south of Maskwacis (then called "Hobbema"). This is the townsite for the four First Nations bands: Samson Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, Ermineskin Cree Nation, and Montana First Nation. Years later I worked in Ponoka as a sub-contractor to Alberta Human Resources as a career and employment officer. About 30% of my clients were aboriginal. At the time, the total population on reserve was about 13,000 people. Unemployment on the reserve was about 90%. Most of the Indigenous young people I met were bright and eager to find a way into the larger society, and all they wanted was a hand up, not a handout. I saw great promise and had great hopes for them. Many found rewarding work; some found opportunities in the skilled trades through the innovative NAIT-in-Motion/First Nations Training-to-Employment program that brought the classroom to reserves across Alberta.

I find the present public obsession with Indigenous graves and genocide destructive to the future of Indigenous youth and the future of Canada. I do believe that people are missing loved ones, and I believe it is related to the phenomenon of 'ambiguous losses' as outlined in the forward. Based on the research I have done, I don't think there will be many unmarked graves or unidentified missing persons found because historically, the children at residential schools, hospitals or sanatoriums were well documented, simply because the funding for the child came from the government, and documents had to be in order. I do believe that there are some cases where names were confused due to being anglicized, or where a child may have been sent from a school to a hospital, then on to a sanitorium for Tuberculosis treatment, and then perhaps on to a different school – and thus the child was 'lost' to friends and community – but not to the system. Certainly, for all the children in that school, when a classmate disappeared, sent away for treatment, it must have been jarring. And for the patient – terrifying! Some TB treatments took many months or years, so indeed, that person became 'missing' in the lives of students, even if they still existed elsewhere. TB had a tremendous stigma to it then (as it does now in the northern Inuit communities) so that people did not talk about it socially. It was a frightening, forgotten plague that loomed, like the Grim Reaper, over every family in all of society, up until about the 1950s when vaccines and antibiotics were developed.

I hope this collection of essays might offer some insights on this complex and, for many, painful historical topic of Indian Residential Schools. Some vignettes are repeated in the essays as they were written at different times.

We are on a dangerous path. *Truth commissions are temporary, official, and non-judicial bodies set up by states to examine past violations or crimes, generally to foster lasting peace and/or reconciliation* (Freeman, 2006; Hayner, 2011; United Nations Secretary General, 2004).<sup>1</sup> Instead, we've had church burnings, threats of violence and now demands to censor those like me who teach history. There are calls to silence people like me who present a broader view of Indian Residential Schools – broader than missing children and claims of genocide. I present the missing historical context. I am a 'factualist' – for I am now an elder of my society, carrying on the traditional teachings that I learned from *Potai'na* – Dr. Hugh Dempsey, and all the other elders from the 1980's documentary work, who entrusted me with their stories, to carry them forward to the future, so that people would better understand the past.

I choose life. I press on. All these things of my life's experience have driven me to write this down for you, knowing how contentious some issues are, because I must tell the truth and be honest. That is my sacred responsibility to those who taught me so much. – Michelle Stirling, July 27, 2023

---

<sup>1</sup> Genocide Against Indigenous Peoples: The Experiences of the Truth Commissions of Canada and Guatemala

# Canoe Sheds, Truth, and Reconciliation



IMAGE: Big Rock – Okotoks sacred to the Blackfoot Nation  
SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA COAXIAL AT ENGLISH WIKIPEDIA [GFDL ([HTTP://WWW.GNU.ORG/COPYLEFT/FDL.HTML](http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html)) OR CC BY 3.0 ([HTTP://CREATIVECOMMONS.ORG/LICENSES/BY/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/))]%5D, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A terrible but true statement from Canada's past:

*“If we had only been allowed to carry on the business in our own way for another two years, there would have been no trouble now as to feeding the Indians, for there would have been none left to feed: whisky, pistols, strychnine and other like processes would have effectively cleared away these wretched natives.”*

*– Alexander Staveley Hill, Ex-whisky trader, Southern Alberta*

Truth and reconciliation are important for healing wounds.

Truth should include historic context.

The historic context of the First Nations and Metis people of the Canadian plains should include the circumstances of the Indian Wars in the United States as well as the deadly smallpox epidemics that preceded the arrival of Europeans in Western Canada.

In the 1860's, the United States was swept up in a bloody Civil War between the North and the South. Canada by Confederation in 1867 was a country of some 3,200,000 and 662,148 acres of "snow" in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. According to Wikipedia, the US population was 31,443,321.

Sir John A. MacDonald had a vision of a unified country of Canada from sea to sea to sea. Sparse population and vast distances made that vision seem impossible.

Captain John Palliser had surveyed the western territories in detail in 1859, and had proposed a plan for European settlement. As the US Civil War ended in 1865, Canadians feared the huge Union Army, with its million-man standing force, might just march into the West – "Rupert's Land" and take over. (*Note: confusingly for today's reader, the Canadian west was also referred to as the North West Territories in this time*) So, in 1869, the Canadian government purchased Rupert's Land from the Hudson Bay Company for 300,000 pounds Sterling. British Columbia waited, watching – barred by the seemingly impenetrable Rocky Mountains.

By 1872, survey crews from the US and Canada had set the 49th parallel border – but this invisible line meant nothing to the nomadic aboriginal people who followed the depleting buffalo herds or the white whisky traders, many of whom were ex-Confederate soldiers, hardened by the horrors of war.

At the time, Canada's entire budget was \$19 million – the US was spending \$20 Million every year on Indian Wars alone. By contrast to the violence south of the border, Canada had essentially been founded on friendly trade relations between the French and Scottish *courier de bois* and their aboriginal partners.

But in 1873, trader Abe Farwell witnessed the aftermath of the massacre of his trading partners, the Assiniboine tribe, by American vigilantes who had brutally slaughtered them in the Cypress Hills. He went east to tell his tale and his story galvanized the creation of the North West Mounted Police.

Some 300 North West Mounted Police marched west later that year, across the desert-like region of the great Canadian plains. They came in peace, and within a year [restored security to the region](#) by getting rid of the whisky traders and establishing a presence along the border. The "Mounties" (as they became known) later gave sanctuary to Sitting Bull and his people who escaped the US following the Battle of Little Big Horn wherein General Custer and his men had been killed by them.

The truth is, that Canada sent out the North West Mounted Police to protect the nation's border and its people. A tiny force of 300 men were nothing compared to the US and their cavalry. But law and order prevailed, as did recognition of the invisible border. Today, we cannot imagine the sea change occurring in the lives of aboriginal people at the time. Tribes had been decimated by smallpox. In the 1837-40 smallpox outbreaks in the US, entire First Nations villages were wiped out. Malnutrition had set in among First Nations as the buffalo – once numbering an estimated 60 million on the plains – had been reduced to about 1,000 by the 1880's.

A descendant of Rev. McDougall of the Stoney Mission recalled to me that **his ancestor had adopted 17 native children as they had been orphaned by smallpox**. Likewise, it was the missionaries who created a written form for many aboriginal oral languages, and created dictionaries to preserve the wisdom and knowledge of the people.

The buffalo were disappearing as was the nomadic aboriginal way of life.

Today, claims of genocide and cultural genocide against aboriginal people are bandied about, but in the context of history and the above evidence, it seems this is not true. The Mounties came to protect, and did protect Plains aboriginal people. There was no intent to wipe out the people.

True – the reservations were never part of the historic treaties. It should be noted that the Mounties found that incoming settlers thought it would be ‘okay’ to shoot any Indian who meddled with their cattle. Separation may have seemed appropriate; especially in light of continued Indian Wars and conflicts in the US.

### **What of residential schools?**

Let’s go further back in time. Let’s look at how E. Pauline Johnson, *Tekahionwake*, was seen in Canadian and British society (1816-1884). She was a Canadian poet and child of a British mother and Mohawk chief. She was honoured in society; undoubtedly a role model for Indian Affairs authority Duncan Scott who was also a poet (1862-1947) and who likely felt this type of ‘foot-in-both-cultures’ person would be the outcome of his department’s work. He shared a view many Canadians share today: *“I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone...”*

As evidence, Pauline Johnson, a mixed race woman, managed to stand alone- even before his time. And she [paddled her own canoe](#).

She dressed as and dined with British high society; she performed in Anglo and Mohawk attire. Ms. Johnson herself had only 3 years of Indian day school education, yet became a writer; both parents being literate.

Schooling for anyone in the early days of Canada was considered a luxury. Prior to 1880 in England most children aged 4 and up were working! Poor children in Britain were not provided with free public education; boarding schools were the norm only for the well-to-do.

Consequently, in Canada First Nations children were provided with what white children were often denied – free, full education.

**That the methods were heavy-handed cannot be denied;** some brutal disciplinary methods, like caning, were the norm in British society right up to the 1990's.

## Disease

First there was smallpox. In the 1837-40 smallpox outbreaks in the US, entire First Nations villages were wiped out. Malnutrition had set in amongst First Nations as the buffalo – once numbering an estimated 60 million on the plains, had been reduced to about 1,000 by the 1880's.

Next, the Spanish Flu of 1918 wiped out an estimated 50-100 million globally. Records in Saskatchewan show that those who died were buried as soon as possible to avoid further contamination.

“Nearby, he found three Indians lying dead, and not far away a young man worked alone to dig graves for his parents and his brother and sister.” At least 20 First Nations children are recorded as dying in one residential school alone at that time of Spanish Flu.

Consequently, it is no surprise that residential schools were planned with graveyards. Death was common.

That many children died there should come as no surprise. Death was common across Canada from tuberculosis up until the 1950's. **Tuberculosis (TB) was often considered a shameful thing within families, never to be mentioned.** “TB ravaged First Nations people in Saskatchewan as early as 1884. Death rates ten times higher than among whites were due to drastic changes in lifestyle, poverty and overcrowding.”

Dr Ferguson's surveys of Indian schools and the reserves of the Qu'Appelle Valley in the mid 1920s, showed that up to 90% of First Nations children and adults were infected with TB. (Wherrett 1977:109; Houston 1991:94-95)

More orphans were created by the Spanish Flu of 1918. This hit young adults more than grandparents or children.

*In her book, Eileen Pettigrow, tells of a travelling salesman who called at a store at Paradise Hill and found both the proprietor and his wife dead. “Nearby, he found three Indians lying dead, and not far away a young man worked alone to dig graves for his parents and his brother and sister.”*

*Read also how many people died in unmarked graves – buried as soon as possible in the hopes of stemming disease, even though they were adult white men from out of province – their bodies were not allowed to be sent home and they ended up in unmarked graves...just like many aboriginal children: “During the flu epidemic of 1918, harvesting was still going on, but the operations ceased*



*because of illness of the crews. There are stories of entire threshing crews – many of them men from the East who had come west on harvest excursions – found dead as a result of the flu. At Strongfield it was reported that in one nine-man threshing crew (all transients), seven of the men died in a bunk car.*

Aimee Hill recalls that when the Methodist Church at Hawarden was turned into a hospital, her mother offered her services as a practical nurse. “I recall her telling of her experiences at that time, when men, sometimes name and home unknown, lay dying alone among strangers” Hill writes. “I remember seeing three coffins, piled one on top of the other, sitting outside of the church awaiting burial in a common grave.”

[www.wdm.ca/skteacherguide/WDMResearch/1918SpanishFlu.pdf](http://www.wdm.ca/skteacherguide/WDMResearch/1918SpanishFlu.pdf)

To give an idea of the scope of this epidemic, in [Pittsburgh](#), 1 in every 100 people died of the flu. Here is a record of the carnage in [Alaskan villages](#).

**First Nations peoples in Canada have suffered, no doubt. But – they have survived.**

First Nations and aboriginal people in Canada were not slaughtered as in the US Indian Wars. The intent of residential schools of the 1880’s was to provide them with a way to integrate into European-style society, become literate and thus become independent. That’s not genocide.

A 1948 Geneva Convention definition of genocide specifically applies to circumstances of armed conflict. Protecting public health and providing education so that a people can ‘stand alone’ does not constitute genocide, no matter how brutal the methods were by today’s standards.

And still today there is a need for education for aboriginal youth in Canada. The aboriginal youth of Canada don’t need [sheds for canoes and paddles](#), as Prime Minister Trudeau recently said.

The aboriginal youth of Canada need a way ‘in’ to society – a hand up – education and acceptance.

One way is to bring practical training to the reserve. It’s been effective in Alberta for many. Maybe it will work elsewhere too.

But... how about housing? Fresh, safe water? Hope.

How about a balanced telling of history. Without residential schools, many thousands of children would have died of disease and malnutrition. Without the early work of missionaries and traders to document the oral languages with a written alphabet and dictionaries, these languages would have been lost.

In these same times, in the European world, children were often given up to orphanages when poor widows could not support their needs. Homes frequently burned down as kerosene lamps were used. People died of diseases and infections we can easily treat today. Death and unmarked graves were common to all.

Residential schools were a product of their time and context. It is only fair to set that context first when discussing truth and reconciliation.

~~~~~

NAIT-in-Motion Aboriginal Trades Training comes to reserve:

<http://www.nait.ca/71628.htm>

<http://www.nait.ca/72559.htm>

Robert Carney [Review of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#)

## Indian Residential Schools — The Untold Story of A Lifeboat for the Least of Society

By Michelle Stirling ©2023

Joanna Baron writes a compelling case in [The Hub Canada](#) to reject the criminalization of residential school denialism. She prefers that the court of public opinion and open, civil debate remain the forum for addressing those who challenge the ‘genocide’ narrative about Indian Residential Schools. Baron describes it: *“Canada’s policy of residential schools was unmistakably evil and cruel, stripping children from their families, meaning-making traditions, and communities.”*

This statement shows why open debate must continue on this topic. Like many Canadians, Ms. Baron is repeating what has been said in the press; the historical evidence shows a much different picture. There is a significant untold story.

Residential schools were often the only safe harbour for victims of dysfunctional families and the only home available to Indigenous orphans.

Contrary to common belief, children were not dragged from the arms of their parents by the RCMP or government agents, priests or nuns. Prior to 1920, no child was mandated to go to Indian Residential Schools; this legislation brought residential schools into line with public school education regulations but was rarely enforced. It only applied to Status Indians, not all Indigenous children. Families had to choose to enroll their child, sign an admission form, and the child had to pass a medical exam. The child had to be age 7 or older to be admitted.

Joanna Baron is correct that challenging the public narrative on Indian Residential Schools must not be criminalized, precisely because when we look at the Kimberly Murray report “Sacred Responsibility” we find errors, significant errors of fact. Kimberly Murray is the one who wants to silence dissenting voices like mine.

Let us review a key case study in the Murray report “[Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials](#)” to show you what I mean.

In the case of Marieyvonne Alaka Ukaliannuk, we are told in “Sacred Responsibility...” that she was ‘taken’ from her family at age 4. First of all, as an Inuit child, Marieyvonne was not subject to the Indian Act residential school attendance law. She was not required to attend. Secondly, the minimum age for enrollment was 7 years old, unless a child was orphaned, destitute, or from a family in distress. The public record shows that her mother last saw Marieyvonne when her father was holding her, as her mother was departing south for tuberculosis treatment in about 1963. Meaning, the 4-year-old Marieyvonne was likely given up for care as her father could not care for her or other children, without a maternal figure. TB treatments were typically months or years in length. This important information is not stated in the Marieyvonne story in Kimberly Murray’s report.

“The last time I saw her was when I was going on the plane for TB,” said Marieyvonne’s mother, Therese Ukaliannuk, in Inuktitut.[1]

Note—If mother or guardian signs, agent must forward full explanatory note.

I hereby certify that the above application for admission has been read over and interpreted to the parent or guardian and that the contents were understood by him or her and that I witnessed his or her signature to this document.

I recommend the admission of the above child, who is of good moral character and is eligible to be admitted as a grant-earning pupil.

*J. G. [Signature]*  
Agent

\*Principal or other official of the school must not sign as witness.

Note—All the above particulars must be fully given, especially the “Name of Band,” “No. of ticket under which child’s annuity is paid” and “Religion.” The minimum age for admission is seven (7) years, except in the case of an orphan, destitute or neglected child. When application is made for the admission of such cases, full particulars should accompany the application.

Form No. 1-A 406  
R 7724 (over)

Close up the end note of an Indian Residential School enrollment form outlining minimum age or conditions for enrollment.

The Kimberly Murray report states that Marieyvonne went to a residential school, when she actually went to a hostel with an associated day school. Reportedly she suffered a

head injury there and was taken to a hospital further south for specialized care. The Kimberly Murray report says that Marieyvonne got Tuberculosis at the hospital, which is unlikely as TB is not contagious in short-term contact. Far more likely that Marieyvonne had latent TB, contracted from her infected mother, which manifested itself later. Small children are unable to mount an immune defence against TB. The report goes on to say the child later got meningitis and was transferred to facilities where this could be treated. TB meningitis was common in small children. Marieyvonne became a quadriplegic due to this infection, according to Kimberly Murray's report. She was taken in by the charitable facility, [Cecil Butters Memorial Hospital](#) (Butters Centre) in Austin, Quebec, where she subsequently died at age 8 in 1967.

One should recall that prior to contemporary social services and universal health care (law enacted in 1966), families often gave up guardianship of children with long-term care needs to government or charitable homes, as they did not have the physical or financial means to care for them. In some cases, as best described in the PBS documentary "[The Forgotten Plague](#)," a TB diagnosis was the 'social kiss of death' for an entire family — and even is today in [northern communities](#) where the [stigma of a TB diagnosis](#) leads people to avoid medical care, thus putting others at great risk. It would have been unlikely that the Ukaliannuk family could have cared for Marieyvonne as a paraplegic child in 1966 in Igloodik.

We are led to believe in the Kimberly Murray report that all of these actions related to Marieyvonne's care were taken in some malicious or indifferent manner to the family, when it is more likely that once the child left the home, she was given up to the state because the family could not care for her. If anything, the state provided increasing levels of care for the child; sadly, this care took her farther and father from home. What was the alternative in the late 1960s?

Not found in the Kimberly Murray report is that one of Marieyvonne's brothers, Bobbi, stated that his mother and father were alcoholics, blaming their grief and this addiction on his sister disappearing. He claimed that his family's life was impacted by Indian Residential Schools (even though there is no record of either parent attending one).[2] Since Marieyvonne was enrolled at such a young age, 3 years below the minimum age, one may also ask if the home environment was unsafe for her then if alcohol was an issue in the family.

Her brother Bobbi carried her middle name 'Alaka' as his and he recounted in his interview the tragic lives of his family members, claiming that his sister had 'disappeared' from a residential school and was found murdered — which is not supported by the documented evidence, nor by the Kimberly Murray report.

As he recovered from cancer at the Ottawa Hospital, Bobbi took the opportunity to tell his personal story.

From an Ottawa cancer hospital statement in French [translated]: *“Just before leaving hospital in May, he [Bobbi] wanted to tell his story, marked by homelessness, his parents’ alcoholism, the suicides of two of his brothers and the disappearance of his five-year-old sister from a residential school, who was later found murdered”*

*“... My entire family was affected by residential schools, but people don’t know it,” says Ukaliannuk. “My father and mother became alcoholics because they didn’t know how to deal with the situation. They blamed each other for what happened to my older sister because she was simply missing... My mother learned of my sister’s grave only 50 years later. She is in Quebec.”*

As shown above, Bobbi was living a family myth. There is no evidence that Marieyvonne was murdered. Thousands of families lost children in those early days to disease. Those losses did not impact the entire family as Bobbi insinuates about the impact on his own family of his sister’s care in far away hospitals.

In a few short hours of researching, independent researcher Nina Green found the above facts about Marieyvonne Ukaliannuk and her family, which dispute the narrative in the Kimberly Murray report. So, what does this say about the quality of research of this \$70 million ‘Sacred Responsibility’ report? What does it say about Kimberly Murray’s urgent insistence to have existing public records become subject to Indigenous data sovereignty? What does it say about the proposed plan of Kimberly Murray to criminalize researchers and writers who question the ‘genocide’ narrative, and who show evidence that the ‘genocide’ narrative is not true?

As historian Robert Carney pointed out in his review of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People’s report, many times children were enrolled by their parents in Indian Residential Schools so that their parents were free to go hunting or trapping, which was their gainful employment. Carney was the father of Mark Carney, former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor who was born in Fort Smith NWT where his father was a Catholic School administrator.

Robert Carney outlined in his work, in some cases residential school was cheaper for the family and more secure for the children, and certainly a refuge for orphans. He wrote of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *“It would have been fair to acknowledge that many traditional [Indian Residential] boarding schools, in some cases well into the twentieth century, took in sick, dying, abandoned, orphaned, physically and mentally handicapped children, from newborns to late adolescents, as well as adults who asked for refuge and other forms of assistance.”*

One need only read this sad story in Eric Bays' book, "Indian Residential Schools: Another Picture." Bays explains that at the Hudson's Bay trading post at Albany, a father showed up saying there was no food in the family tent and that his wife was ill. The father then died. The Hudson's Bay sent out men with food, only to find the family in a tent, the mother deceased with five children around her. A two-month-old baby was given up to a relative, the 16-year-old joined other relatives on a hunt, and the remaining three children, a boy and two girls, came to the residential school. During a flu epidemic, the youngest of the three died at the school.

This vignette is a repeating story through the history of Indian Residential Schools. Orphaned children. Families in distress. This also is an example of why many Indigenous people 'know' there are missing children from their communities — and why they feel certain the loss is directly associated with Indian Residential Schools.

In this one instance, we see that seven people vanished from the tribal community within days. The mother and father died. All but two children vanished; one too young to remember anything — the older 16-year-old likely traumatized at being suddenly orphaned. Were these parents given a proper burial in that community? Did anyone tend their graves? Are there markers to remember them by name? If not, it would be as if an entire family simply disappeared.

Would the orphaned 2-month-old have been told about their biological mother and siblings? What would the 16-year-old have remembered about his family, as he grew up? Just that his younger siblings vanished into an Indian Residential School and never came back. Typically, all Indian Residential School students with parents would have been brought home for summer holidays by the government. But with no surviving parents, the younger children could not have been sent home, so they remained at their new 'home' — the Indian Residential School. To the community, they became 'missing children' who never returned from Indian Residential Schools.

My decade of working on historical documentaries under the guidance of the late Dr. Hugh Dempsey, leads me to be a strong supporter of Indian Residential Schools — a historical realist, you might say. Dr. Dempsey was married to Pauline Gladstone, a successful Indian Residential School graduate, and his father-in-law was Senator James Gladstone, another successful graduate of Indian Residential Schools. Far from being an 'apologist' or 'denier,' I am one who recognizes that Indigenous people were facing a massive techno-cultural transition, and the Indian Residential Schools were intended to give the young people the tools to find a place in this new world. In today's parlance, to 'learn to code.'

In the story in The Hub Canada, Joanna Baron mistakenly repeats the lie that there was an "*announcement of the detection of 215 human remains*" found at the Kamloops

Indian Residential School. In fact, no remains have ever been found there to date. This is important information!

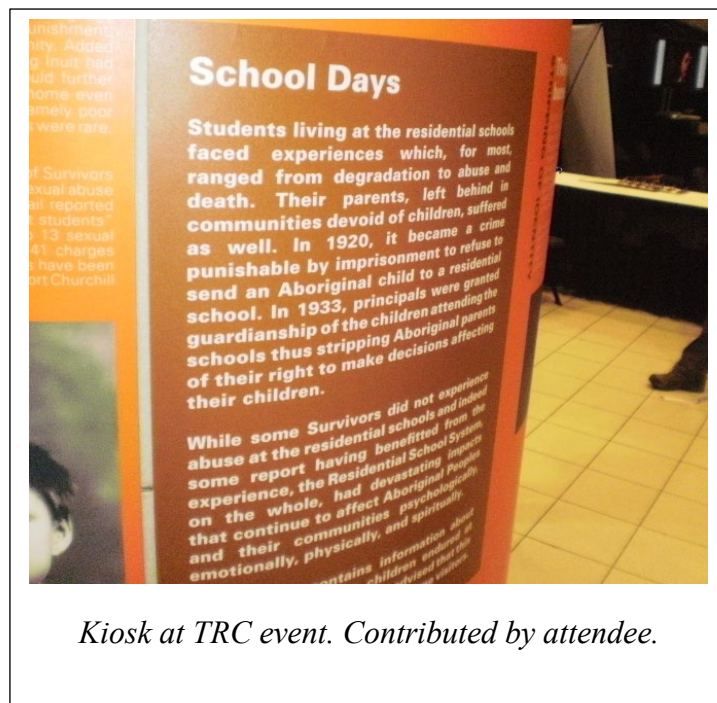
Those facts about student attendance could be verified because the schools, Indian Agents and government kept extremely accurate records about the students for both accounting purposes, related to government funding for family or school, and death reporting.

In effect, by allowing statements for compensation without cross-examination of any kind, this was a lack of due process that violates the constitutional principles of Section 11, as civil and criminal accusations have been made in public and in private sessions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, without recourse for the accused to properly defend themselves. This has morphed into an entire nation — Canada — being subject to a public hanging for genocide when the evidence does not support these hearsay claims.

**Canada is in the process of paying at least \$60 billion in reparations to Indigenous people.** It started with about \$5 billion to those who attended Indian Residential Schools, then expanded to include claims for other forms of alleged abuse, such as foster care for children and unreliable drinking water on reserve. None of these claims has ever been subject to cross-examination or substantiating evidence beyond *ipse dixit* allegations of the aggrieved. This financial bonanza is due to the “Litigation Guidelines” of 2019, implemented by then Minister of Justice and Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould, days before she left office. These are, in effect, [‘reparations by stealth’](#) according to Dr. Thomas Flanagan.

As for Truth and Reconciliation, the process was also marred by bias. Witness the misleading and biased claims in the “School Days” statement on the kiosk that greeted incoming guests to TRC events.

As I described above, Indian Residential Schools served as orphanages and the equivalent of today’s “\$10 a day daycare” back in the years when parents were still working as hunters and trappers. Contrary to the statement on the TRC kiosk, communities were never ‘devoid of children’ because only 1/3 of all eligible Status Indian



*Kiosk at TRC event. Contributed by attendee.*

children ever attended Indian Residential Schools — or 1/6th of all Indigenous children (which includes First Nations, Inuit and Metis). Parents had to sign their children up for enrollment; there was often a waiting list; and parents could and did withdraw their children as they saw fit.

It is true that of the 113 years of operation of Indian Residential Schools, some 400 children tragically died at school, typically due to TB or Influenza. A medical death certificate was issued. If a child died due to accident or injury, an inquest was held into the death. The religious facilities, as has been their custom throughout centuries, provided last rites, a proper funeral and burial, either at the local community church graveyard (sometimes on site of the school) or the child's body was returned for burial at the home reserve.

Based on the foregoing, Canadians should be questioning the quality of research and the broad assumptions drawn by Kimberly Murray in her report. Much of the research is faulty and the facts are easily found in public documents.

Perhaps that is why Kimberly Murray is insistent in her report that Indigenous data sovereignty be a priority; that all records concerning Indigenous people be transferred and secured into Indigenous-only management.

Because the evidence in the historic record shows there was no cultural, nor was there a physical genocide at Indian Residential Schools.

In light of this, Canadians should be asking questions about the lack due process, dollar figures for compensation, the efforts to secure and conceal historical public documents, and whether the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) will be exploited for further unconstitutional claims like — 'land back' — based on a fictional genocide.

This article shows how a more informed perspective changes the story about Indian Residential Schools from one of being 'unmistakably evil and cruel' to that of having been a lifeboat for the least of society, in a time when there were no social safety nets of any kind. That many individuals did suffer is well known; less known is that many thrived and that Indian Residential Schools saved thousands of orphaned Indigenous children's lives.

Baron is right that "*The solution to ignorance or prejudice in a free society can never be censorship.*"



This article shows why it is important for writers and researchers to have full access to historical records and to be free to write and present additional research.

[1] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/mother-daughter-grave-search-1.3682042>

[2] [Un patient inuit raconte son histoire -](#)

## Settler Historians are Busy Rewriting History to Make You Feel Enraged and Guilty

By Michelle Stirling ©2023

On National Indigenous People's Day, it was a pleasure to see many young Indigenous people expressing pride in their roots with images and positive messages across Twitter. Years ago, I worked as a career and employment counsellor. Some 30% of my clients were aboriginal people. At the time I was pleased to see that so many Indigenous youth, were enthusiastic and willing to work, only wanting a 'way in' and perhaps a 'hand up' — not a handout.

Less welcome on Twitter were the various articles posted by 'settler' historians presenting Indigenous Canadians of note, mostly because the biographical articles included historical rewrites to mislead the public.

One story was that of Chief Dan George. He was a remarkable man and had an exceptional career and influence on the generation of Indigenous people who came after him.

One of the stories posted it was from "[The Daily Hive](#)" authored by "Canadian History Ehx" — aka Craig Baird.

[@CraigBaird](#)

Follow

*Settler living on Treaty 6 land. Host of Canadian History Ehx, From John to Justin & Canada A Yearly Journey. All part of the Curiouscast Network*

In the story, the almost mandatory mantra appeared: "His English name was Dan Slaholt, but his last name was changed to George when he was **forced into Residential School** at the age of five."

Independent researcher Nina Green pointed out immediately that as per Baird's article, Chief Dan George was born July 24, 1899. He would have been 5 in 1904. Children under

the age of 7 were not allowed admission to Indian Residential Schools unless they were orphaned, destitute or from a risky home. Likewise, as Nina explained, the Indian Act didn't mandate compulsory attendance at a residential school until 1920, and even then, the parents didn't have to send their child to a residential school if there was a day school on the reserve.

I hereby certify that the above application for admission has been read over and interpreted to the parent or guardian and that the contents were understood by him or her and that I witnessed his or her signature to this document.

I recommend the admission of the above child, who is of good moral character and is eligible to be admitted as a grant-earning pupil.

\* *X. Heribis*  
Signature of Missionary or other Witness

\*Principal or other official of the school must not sign as witness.

Note—All the above particulars must be fully given, especially the "Name of Band," "No. of ticket under which child's annuity is paid" and "Religion." The minimum age for admission is seven (7) years, except in the case of an orphan, destitute or neglected child. When application is made for the admission of such cases, full particulars should accompany the application.

FORM No. 1-A 406  
R 7724

(OVER)

*Close up of the "Note" on a Department of Indian Affairs admission form clarifying eligibility for Indian Residential School and minimum age.*

Was George forcibly taken away? And how did he get into Indian Residential School if he was underage?

According to [Encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com) "His father believed it was best for his children's future to learn English, so he decided to send George's older brother to the Mission school. However, the boys were so close that Harry refused to go without his little brother, and so his father sent both boys. They knew no English when they arrived and were forbidden to speak their native language. George found the priests and nuns, in their strange garb, "terrifying for a little boy of my age," as he told biographer Hilda Mortimer in *You Call Me Chief: Impressions of the Life of Chief Dan George*. They saw their parents twice a month. "Every two weeks we'd catch the streetcar to the end of the line," he recalled, "then walk seven miles to get home on a Friday night."

So, it looks like Chief Dan George's parents voluntarily sent him and his brother Harry to Indian Residential School to learn English because his dad felt it would be best for the children's future. He was right. Chief Dan George became a literary icon and actor. In English.

The Encyclopedia.com article continues: “George did well in school, but government funding for Native American education stopped when a student reached the age of 16. “I remember I cried when I left, for I felt that if I was to get anywhere in life I needed to study and learn more,” he told Mortimer. “But I packed my clothes and walked the miles home.”

Chief Dan George cried. Because he had to **LEAVE** an Indian Residential School.

Chief Dan George rejected radical Indigenous action. The Canadian Encyclopedia states: “George refused to become involved, believing that using guerrilla tactics was counterproductive. According to Notable Native Americans, he was more “interested in changing predominant images of Native Americans in the media, as well as derogatory images that many Indians had of themselves.”

“George died in his sleep on September 23, 1981, on British Columbia’s Berard Reservation where he had been born. He left behind six children and 36 grandchildren.”

Another profile posted on Twitter to celebrate National Indigenous People’s Day was that of Richard Wagamese. I met Richard years ago when he was in Calgary, writing for the Calgary Herald, and I always enjoyed his work.

[Craig Baird’s tweet](#) reads: “Richard was born on Oct. 14, 1955, in Minaki, Ontario to **parents who were forced into Residential Schools**, causing lifelong trauma for them.”



However, The [Canadian Encyclopedia](#) entry about Richard, written by Jules Lewis, April 18, 2017, says that Richard’s parents were removed from their homes and placed in residential school. This suggests that both his parents came from destitute or dysfunctional families, and this intergenerational issue is echoed in the events described by Lewis.

“(Richard Wagamese’) first home, as he recalls in his essay “The Path to Healing,” in *One Story, One Song* (2011), “was a canvas army tent hung from a [spruce](#) bough frame.” As a toddler, he lived communally with his parents, siblings, his maternal grandmother, uncles, aunts and cousins.”

“When he was almost three years old, his parents left him and his three siblings alone in a bush camp for days while they were drinking in a town about 96 km away. Cold and hungry, the children managed to cross a frozen bay to seek shelter in the small railroad town of Minaki, where a provincial policeman spotted them and dropped them off at the Children’s Aid Society. From there, the siblings were taken away in what is known as the [Sixties Scoop](#), a government program in Canada that aggressively “scooped” [Indigenous](#) children from their homes and placed them into foster care.”

Richard did suffer a great deal, being bounced from foster home to foster home. He also narrowly escaped death, being left alone for days while a toddler when his parents went drinking.

Later in life, he did reconnect with his mother, and [his 2008 description of her residential school days](#) is positive, not bleak or horrific at all. “My mother has never spoken to me of abuse or any catastrophic experience at the school. She only speaks of learning valuable things that she went on to use in her everyday life, things that made her life more efficient, effective and empowered,” he wrote. Likewise, he noted that his mother’s Christian faith was prominently displayed, “There is a cross on the wall, a Bible by her bed and a picture of Jesus in the living room.”

Indian Residential School records indicate that his mother was part of a very large family, and she was admitted to school underage at 6 by special request of the principal who averred that her two older sisters then at school “can look after her probably better than the mother could at home.”

As has been said of Indigenous people, many have shown their exceptional resilience in the 200-year transition from hunter-gatherer culture to a world of high-tech.

And as it was for Chief Dan George, English literacy was the ticket for Richard Wagamese.

Wagamese said of his motivation for writing: “Simply and briefly put, I get my inspiration from the knowledge that there is someone out there in the world who is just like me — curious and desiring more and more knowledge of the world and her people. I write so that when they pick up one of my books there is an instantaneous connection, like we’re collaborating on the story.”

It seems that Indian Residential Schools are not what causes [intergenerational trauma](#), but more likely Complex Post-Traumatic Stress, from the extreme changes, from the inculcation of alcohol and its worst effects on aboriginal communities, from the decades of concurrent deaths and injuries on reserve, whether it be the early smallpox epidemics that orphaned thousands of children, Tuberculosis plague that walked, like a Grim Reaper, through every village, the Spanish Flu that again orphaned thousands of children, or today's deadly fentanyl crisis, where young and beautiful Indigenous women and men are laughing today — cold and dead tomorrow.

“Settler” historians are doing damage to Indigenous youth by relentlessly accusing Indian Residential Schools of being the root cause of dysfunctional and deadly elements in rez life, never addressing the fact that many children's lives were saved and enriched at these schools. Without them, thousands of orphaned children or those in dangerous homes would have died.

“Settler” historians somehow haven't read Ruth Teichroeb's book “Flowers in my Grave,” which documents the horrors of child abuse on reserve — specifically the tragic life of Lester Desjarlais.

“Settler” historians virtue signal about their fake interpretations and politically correct historical claims so they can be cool and in vogue, never acknowledging that the selfless nuns and priests at residential schools provided a safe harbour, food, medical care, inspiration and skills for people who faced an unstoppable transition at the speed of light, from traditional living on the land, to landing on the moon.

*As noted in Shingwauk's Vision, an Assiniboine Chief recalled: “...Our children and grandchildren will be taught the magic art of writing. Just think for a moment what that means. Without the aid of a spoken word our children will transmit their thoughts on a piece of paper, and that talking paper may be carried to distant parts of the country and convey your thoughts to your friends. Why even the medicine men of our tribe cannot perform such miracles.”*

This miracle came to Chief Dan George and Richard Wagamese. Their talking papers still speak to us, even though they have crossed into the Great Unknown.

May they inspire Indigenous youth to shake off the contrived claim of ‘genocide’ which will never lead to reconciliation, and which is not the truth. If you would like to know more of the truth of history, read the many works of Dr. Hugh Dempsey, who documented so much of treaty history and key people of the time. Unlike the rage

farming of ‘settler’ historians, Dr. Dempsey’s work and the vision of those early elders who signed the treaties will leave you inspired.

As Chief Dan George would have been taught at the residential school that he wept to leave behind, the Creator’s message is that “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”

## The Forgotten Tuberculosis Plague — Residential School Factualism is Not a Crime

By Michelle Stirling ©2023

***Warning: The following historical information may be triggering to some. I am following the wisdom of the Elders who spoke at the “Sacred Responsibility” ceremony saying we must all be truthful and honest. I am doing so with residential school factualism. See Indian Residential School Records [here](#).***

According to a [Radio Canada report](#) of June 17, 2023, “Federal Justice Minister David Lametti has said he is open to applying the same criminal and civil penalties to those who deny residential school abuses that exist against those who downplay or deny the existence of the Holocaust.”

If anything should stop, it should be this appalling attempt to pretend there is any historical parallel between Indian Residential Schools and the World War II intentional genocide — Holocaust — of 6 million Jews and millions of others who were either dissidents or deemed to be ‘undesirables’ to the Nazi regime.

I watched the morning ceremonies that were part of the presentation of [“Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials.”](#) The Independent Special Interlocutor, Kimberly Murray, has just issued her interim report on Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools.

The report proves one thing. The forgotten tuberculosis (TB) plague caused the deaths of thousands of Indigenous people. This does not prove there was a genocide, nor do the many reported potential unmarked graves prove there was a genocide.

## Burial Policy at Residential Schools

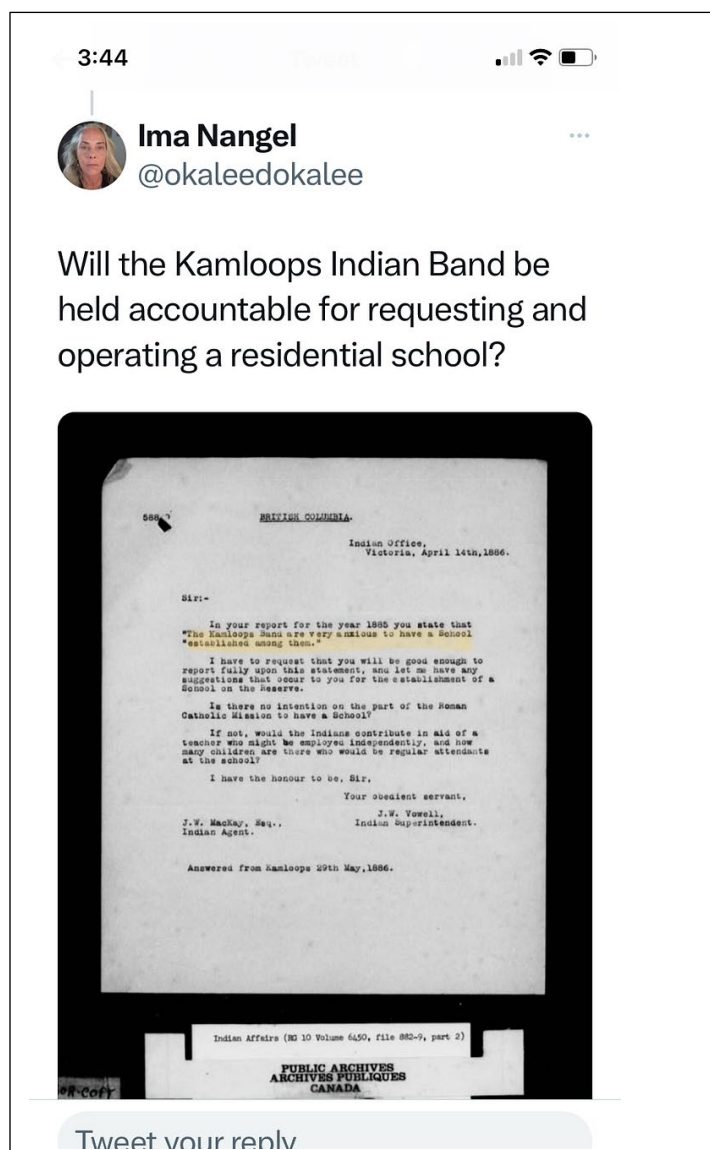
From the TRCs “Missing Children” report: “At some point in the early twentieth century, Indian Affairs formalized its policy on the burial of students who died at residential schools. The policy is recorded in an undated memorandum by J. D. McLean, who was departmental secretary from 1897 to 1933. According to McLean: “Funeral expenses are met from Relief Vote [money set aside for welfare-related expenses], if a pupil of an Indian residential school dies elsewhere than at the school, and provided the parents or guardians are unable to pay the costs of burial. When a pupil dies at a residential school, it is considered by this Department that the school authorities should be responsible for the expenses. Occasionally, the Department has paid the cost of transporting the body from the school to the home of the parents, when the parents have refused to permit burial at the school.”

## Kamloops Indian Residential School Death Records

Of the 19 Kamloops Indian Residential School students listed in [Nina Green's death register](#) who are identified as having died in hospital, 18 were buried on their home reserves (the place of burial of the other one is unknown). The Department most likely paid for transportation in most of those cases, both to the hospital and then to the home reserve. Of the 4 students who died while at the school, 2 were buried at the home reserve, which in both cases was distantly located from the school. In the 3rd case, the burial is “likely” in the home reserve. The place of burial is not listed in the 4th case.

## Tuberculosis — The Forgotten Plague

TB was rampant across Canada until the 1950's when antibiotics and vaccines were successfully developed as treatments.



Well into the 1920's TB was considered by many to be hereditary. Thus, a TB diagnosis could cast a pall over a family's social status, making them outcasts, it might limit personal freedoms, and future hopes. As we saw during COVID, police then were obligated to enforce public health orders which included a legal mandate to forcibly remove sick people; so it was back in the day, the RCMP could forcibly remove persons at risk of TB from the home. Consequently, like a cancer diagnosis in the 1960's was shrouded in secrecy, TB was often kept secret from the public to the point that sometimes TB victims were buried in unmarked graves. A good documentary was made by PBS that sets the context of TB as "[The Forgotten Plague](#)."

Deaths by plague do not constitute genocide. The "Sacred Responsibility..." report cites a sequential timeline of the many discoveries of unmarked graves across Canada. Serious criminal accusations have been made about deaths at residential schools. Yet, the areas said to be unmarked graves have not been marked as possible crime scenes; no excavations have been done to discover if there are coffins or bodies at any of these sites. Once there are excavations, then an appropriate step would be exhumations and forensic study and DNA matching.

The federal government has even contracted a [Dutch-based NGO](#) that is experienced in recovering human remains, but the [National Advisory Committee](#) on Residential Schools Missing Children and Unmarked Burials says they do not want to work with them.

Even the existence of graves and bodies would not prove if there were criminal acts. "Sacred Responsibility..." confirms the high ratio of TB deaths in the personal stories that it chose to highlight. As historian Robert Carney, father of Mark Carney, pointed out years ago, children at Indian Residential Schools had a higher TB survival rate than children on reserve where such comparative records were kept; none-the-less, TB was the grim reaper of the time for all Canadians.

The "Sacred Responsibility..." report lists the sequential dates of 'discovery' of unmarked gravesites across Canada. However, as Terry Glavin reported in "[Year of the Graves](#)," many of these unmarked gravesites were already well-known to their Indigenous communities as local graveyards. Often, as in the case of Cowessess First Nation, the graveyard held the remains of all community members. In some cases, the graves had lost their original wooden crosses or headboards, disintegrated with time.

### **Who Cared for the Graves?**

Is it not curious that no one cared enough about these graves to maintain them?

No one cared enough to seek out their loved ones, lost 40, 60, 100 years ago, until now? The case studies in the "Sacred Responsibility..." seem to confirm that many 'missing'



children were under care for TB, which in those times was considered highly contagious and required isolation from others, along with painful treatments, until the development of modern medications.

Perhaps the answer is found in the fact that TB is truly a *forgotten* plague in mainstream society. “Tuberculosis” is mentioned 13 times in the “Sacred Responsibility...” interim report. “Genocide” is mentioned 73 times. Even to this day in Indigenous communities, [TB has a powerful stigma](#), to the point that people actively avoid diagnosis and treatment — to the detriment of all.

In the past, it was not uncommon to bury a TB victim without a named marker, to prevent societal rejection of the entire family. Likewise, tending a grave requires geographic proximity, time, money and traditional custom; something not shared by all Indigenous cultures.

### **Traditional Tribal Customs Varied**

If we look at a community graveyard for example, on the Blood/Kainai Reserve, we see that some graves are tended, and some are not. Perhaps the loved ones of those buried here have all passed on or perhaps it is not the community custom.

I watched the morning ceremonies that were part of the presentation of “Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials.”







*A series of images from the graveyard on the Kainai/Blood reserve overlooking the former St. Paul's Residential School, taken in 2012. The names of the passed are blurred to honor and protect the family's privacy. Courtesy Mark DeWolf, former Indian Residential School student.*

Elder Onistaya Kopi — Chief Keithmoon, M. Ed., gave an interesting power point presentation about the Kainai/Blood Reserve and their customs. He also told the story of Okotoks “Big Rock” and the story of Napi. This was one of the traditional stories that I did a documentary about with Dr. Hugh Dempsey who was later made an honorary chief of the Kainai Nation and was given the name Potai’na (Flying Chief).

Onistaya Kopi told us in the livestream that in Kainai tradition, the bodies of people who died were put up in trees where the sun and sky could take back their spirits, while the birds and animals could take whatever food they needed. After a time, the cleaned bones of the dead would fall from the tree and the Kainai people would gather them up and bury them in a special sand hill where no one lives nearby and that is only for this special purpose. A ritual burial ceremony of some kind for the bones would take place. He lamented the fact that those who died away from the community at Indian Residential Schools were unable to be given a traditional spiritual ceremony like this.

Yet we see in the images of the community graveyard above, on the Kainai Reserve, overlooking St. Paul's, there are conventional graves, even some from the 1950's, with carefully tended gravestones; along with others overgrown with grass, where lonely white crosses are the only marker of a lost loved one.

WHEREAS:-

F 764-9

It has been considered advisable to replace the St. Paul's School old buildings(C.of E.) with a modern building and up-to-date equipment & that the proposed school will have adequate accomodation for a large number of children-  
Whereas:-

Provision will have to be made for the raising of sufficient foodstuffs for the sustenance of the pupils of the school & sufficient fodder for the proper feeding of all live-stock kept in connection with the institution.

Therefore be it Resolved:- That we, the assembled members of the Blood Band of Indians & resident on the Blood Reserve, offer to the Department of Indian Affairs a block of land on the said Blood Reserve of 640 acres or whatever more may be deemed necessary for the carrying on of the enterprises of the school. The location of the said block of land to be determined at a later date by the xxx Church representatives & the Officials of the Department.

SIGNED FOR & ON BEHALF OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BLOOD BAND OF INDIANS.

*Joe Mountain Horse*  
.....  
Witness  
*Joe Bull*  
.....  
Witness.

*Shot Bull* <sup>Ho</sup>  
.....  
Chief  
*Running* <sup>Ho</sup>  
.....  
Head Man  
*Thomas* <sup>Ho</sup>  
.....  
Head Man  
*Joe Healy*  
.....  
*Smith Bull* <sup>Ho</sup>  
.....  
Opas

Kainai/Blood band offer reserve land for the reconstruction of St. Paul's Indian Residential School (Anglican, Church of England)

### The Tuberculosis Plague — “Captain of all these men of death”

On Page 7 of the “Sacred Responsibilities...” report, the sad story is told of “The Over 50 Year Search to Find Marieyvonne Alaka Ukaliannuk.” There are many technical faults in this story in claiming it as an example of a victim of Indian Residential Schools.

Marieyvonne was only 4 years old. She did not qualify for Indian Residential School enrollment. She was Inuk, and only Status Indians were covered by the legal mandate to attend Indian Residential Schools. She was sent to Chesterfield Inlet, Northwest Territories (now in Nunavut), which did not have an Indian Residential School, only a hostel and a day school.

In the footnote to the story, the first footnote of the report, the CBC story of July 17, 2016, tells us that: “The last time I saw her was when I was going on the plane for TB,” said Marieyvonne’s mother, Therese Ukaliannuk, in Inuktitut.

So Marieyvonne’s mother had been sent away for Tuberculosis (TB) treatment. TB treatments in the south were typically months or years in duration.

Thus, it is likely that Lucien, Marieyvonne’s father, applied for government assistance to care for his daughter. This was common; there are dozens of documented historic examples of single parents or orphaned children being taken into care by residential schools, simply because there was no one else to give them sustenance and the necessities of life.

Lucien’s obituary says that on his passing he had nine children, 16 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. It is unknown if he had more children at the time that Marieyvonne went to Chesterfield Inlet, or if he needed to go hunting or run a trap line, something he could not do so without someone to care for his little daughter.

Marieyvonne’s tragic story ended up with her developing TB, likely contracted from her mother and carried in the form of ‘latent TB’, contrary to the report’s claim that she contracted it during a hospital stay. TB takes a long time to develop; it’s not something you pick up from short-term contact in a hospital as the report suggests.

Her condition became more complex as she acquired meningitis ([TB meningitis is common in children around the age of 5](#)) and ultimately became a paraplegic. She died in a care home in Quebec, thousands of miles from home, and alone.

However, it seems the health and government authorities did all they could to provide ever more complex medical care for Marieyvonne, at no cost to the family.

### **The Three Sisters**

The stories of Betsey (aka Betzie), Isobel and Nora Osborne follow in the “Sacred Responsibility...” report. This story occurred in the 1920s and 30s; the report states: “...three sisters from Pimicikamak (Cross Lake) Cree Nation — Nora, Isobel, and Betsey

(Betzie) Osborne — were taken away from their community, one by one. Their family never saw them again.”

Independent researcher, Nina Green, has found the Department of Indian Affairs “Application for Admission” form to enter St. Joseph’s school for Betzie Osborne, dated Dec. 9, 1939, listing her as the 8-year-old daughter of Roman Catholic parents, Salamon Osborne and Sara Jane Wiskey. Her admission form was authorized by her father. It was noted that Betzie did not speak English. The number under which her annuity was paid was 398. Clearly, her family had already embraced Catholicism, thus the claim that children were forcibly taken away to be indoctrinated into Christianity at residential schools is disputed by this evidence.

Nina also found the “Physical Examination” form — the medical exam — for Betzie’s entry into school dated August 9, 1939. While the “Sacred Responsibility...” report claimed Betzie was healthy, the medical report shows that she did suffer from scabies, but in the opinion of the examining doctor, she did not have active tuberculosis (TB). The form also asks if there are any medical conditions within the family that the school should be aware of. The attending physician, Dr. Turpel, wrote “Father somewhat dead mentally” and “Elder sister — *dementia praecon* care” (presumably a form of early dementia or schizophrenia, possibly related to tuberculosis meningitis).

This evidence debunks the claim that children were simply randomly or forcibly taken or that their health was not considered. It appears there was due process, with a medical exam in August, and then application for admittance in December of 1939. Parents had to apply to admit their children to residential schools and the schools did a medical check on the incoming child to affirm the child’s state of health. Likewise on the Department of Indian Affairs admission form, at the bottom it states, “Minimum age for admission is seven (7) years, except in the case of an orphan, destitute or neglected child.”

This information shows conclusively that Marieyvonne, the first noted missing child case in the “Sacred Responsibility...” report was too young to be registered in residential school. So, it confirms the notion that since Marieyvonne’s mother was going south for TB treatment, the child would have been considered ‘orphaned.’ The structure of the admission form strongly suggests that Marieyvonne’s parent or parents had to make a formal application — she was not just forcibly ‘taken’ away as described in the report.

According to the “Sacred Responsibility...” report the family’s search for the Osborne girls’ records was difficult and convoluted and occurred many years after the fact — now 84 years. There was sufficient recordkeeping by the various agencies involved that it was possible to find their death certificates and determine where they had been and where they were buried.

However, all three sisters died of TB, Betsey at age 15, Isobel at age 22, and Nora at age 25. Other than the fact that all three sisters presumably attended Indian Residential School for some time, it is unclear why the deaths of young adults Isobel and Nora should be conflated with Indian Residential Schools. The report says they were never seen again. One has to wonder at the sequence of allowing your children to go to school one-by-one if no one is returning. However, once a person was diagnosed with TB and sent for care, people were generally required to remain at the care facility until the TB was cleared from the body, or they passed on.

### **Canadians are Paying Millions of Dollars for Faulty, Incomplete Research**

Clearly, there is a problem with Kimberley Murray's multi-million-dollar national organization with a mandate to find missing children, as it has made false statements to the public in the interim report. Either the organization's researchers cannot find or have concealed the archived government registration forms, while independent researcher Nina Green found the documents cited above within a few days.

The 1920s and 30s were extremely lean times in Canada. It is historically documented that many families began sending their children to Indian Residential Schools following World War I because the cost of living rose dramatically. Having the children housed and fed by the Indian Residential School system alleviated the burden on the family.

The interim report "Sacred Responsibility..." proves there was a Tuberculosis plague in Canada, as was reported in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) documents.

### **Residential Schools Fulfilled Treaty Obligations and Indigenous Council Requests for Education**

Though many Jews have expressed empathy for the situation of Indigenous people in Canada, the plethora of documented historical evidence about Indigenous Residential Schools does not provide for any scintilla of comparison with the Holocaust. If the objective of the Canadian government and religious leaders was to obliterate Indigenous people, why were Indian Residential Schools built in the first place, providing shelter, clothing, medical care, food and practical skills training? Why did missionaries create syllabic 'alphabets' and dictionaries to maintain aboriginal languages? Though many of the services at Indian Residential Schools were meager at the outset, in the context of a time when all people were poor but the few wealthy, Indian Residential Schools saved the lives of thousands of orphaned Indigenous children and provided skills for everyone who had to prepare for the entry into a changing society. This type of radical change is a recurring generational theme — one we face now in all of society with the "Just Transition." It should be noted but is nowhere in the report that only about 1/3 of the relevant potential student body attended Indian Residential Schools — 2/3rds did not go to residential schools. Based on this, even the claim of 'cultural genocide' falls. Why did that majority not preserve the Indigenous culture?

Few Canadians know much about their own history. Nor do they understand the superficial method of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The process was cathartic, allowing individuals to express their personal stories. The reports rely on personal recollections that were not subject to cross-examination, nor was there any requirement to present substantiating evidence. We can say that the ~6,000 voices that were heard (about 4% of all those who ever attended Indian Residential Schools) do not represent the experiences of the other 96%.

Many of those positive stories, like that of [Pauline Gladstone Dempsey](#), or her father, Senator Gladstone, recount that they were enriched by their experience and training at Indian Residential Schools.

That many children suffered is evident in the TRC documentation. Compensation payments have been made with little demand for evidence other than that a person attended the school and stated that they were harmed.

However, this does not meet the typical minimum standards for justice in the context of rule of law, where evidence, witnesses, cross-examination and proof are required, but in light of the time passed and the pain expressed by many Indigenous people, the basic judicial standards were waived.

It is no surprise that Canadians are asking themselves, should the real and perceived trauma of aboriginal people deserve to be placed above all the standards of knowledge, trial and discovery that we used to abide by?

Now we have the Special Interlocutor, Kimberly Murray, ramping up the emotions surrounding this painful topic by claiming that residential factualism — like the information I am providing here — is some kind of crime.

According to a Radio Canada report (in French) she said: “Holocaust denial is violent. Holocaust denial is calculated. Holocaust denial is harmful. Holocaust denial is hate,” Ms Murray said, adding that it was the last stage of genocide.

In fact, it is hateful and an incitement to accuse Canadians and their forefathers and mothers of genocide against Indigenous people. The evidence shows that thousands of Canadians died of tuberculosis, including most of the children who died at Indian Residential Schools. TB was the largest killer of all Canadians until the 1950’s, and that is the ‘forgotten plague’ in Canada and by extension, the reason for some missing children and unmarked graves.



As a Canadian Jew who travelled many hours on buses in Israel over the course of a decade, alongside elderly men and women wearing short sleeved shirts in the hot summer air, I could never accustom myself to seeing the arms with tattooed numbers, nor could I cope with the Holocaust stories of what they went through in Nazi Germany, told to me by the survivors or their children.

It is deeply offensive to suggest there is anything in common in the Canadian history of Indian Residential Schools with the genocide of the Jews in the Holocaust of World War II. My rejection of this myth and provision of factual information is not a criminal offense. It is an act of truth and honesty in keeping with the Elders' wisdom.

*Many thanks to Nina Green and Pim Wiebel for the detailed research of archival records and statistics and to Mark DeWolf, contributor.*

Additional references:

<https://irsrg.ca/>

<https://indianresidentialschoolrecords.com/>

## Phantom Students of Genocide

By Michelle Stirling ©2023

The body of a former Indian Residential School student, in perfect shape, has been exhumed in northern B.C. The person was a student of the Lejac Indian Residential School. Her parents were also residential school students — they went to the Williams Lake Indian Residential School where they met, subsequently married and had a large family. In the Catholic tradition, their daughter's exhumed uncorrupted body is evidence of sainthood.

[Rose Prince](#) was one of nine children of Jean-Marie and Agathe Prince of the Nak'azdli Carrier First Nation. One of the first Catholic families of Northern British Columbia, Rose's father was known as "Church Chief" as he sang at Our Lady of Good Hope church. He worked as an interpreter for the priest and was custodian of the buildings.

*"When Rose turned six, her parents sent her to the school at Fort St. James, which was run by the Sisters of the Child Jesus, under the direction of Father Joseph Allard, OMI. Less than a year later, on January 16, 1922, Rose, with those of her siblings already in school, was included in the 75 children transferred from the Fort St. James School to the brand new Lejac Indian Residential School, built by the Canadian Government at the request of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Normally, she would have stayed there for*

*her primary education, 10 years or so only interrupted by summer vacations. In fact, she will stay there all her life.”[\[1\]](#)*

The outcome of her life in a residential school, a life of humility, piety, and modest kindness to all, resulted in the exultation of her body in death; her uncorrupted remains were exhumed in 1951 to move them to a new burial site. The new grave of Rose Prince has become a place of pilgrimage for people seeking healing, peace, connection with G-d, and renewal of faith.

Many people will not believe this story.

Some people have no faith in G-d.

Some reject the Catholic religion.

Others, like Tanya Talaga, whose [op-ed](#) in the Globe and Mail of May 12, 2023, accuse the Oblate Fathers who ran dozens of Indian Residential Schools, of ‘sin’ and of genocide.

Yet, many people will believe Tanya’s claim of genocide with no physical evidence at all!

To date, no bodies have been exhumed to lend credence to this heinous accusation. To date, no one has produced evidence that any parents had children go missing and did not know what happened to them. Children who died were properly buried. In most cases, the parents signed the death certificates. Ground Penetrating Radar can only identify ‘disturbances’ — not coffins or bodies. And even if other bodies are found in unmarked graves at or near former Indian Residential Schools, that is only indicative of death, not murder.

The body of Rose Prince has been exhumed. Her life is a testament to the compassion of the Oblate Indian Residential Schools. Contrary to claims that children were forced to attend, students were registered to attend by their parents. Parents could continue their work on the trapline or hunting, unhindered by little children. This is not genocide.

These schools also took in the halt, the lame, and the sick. This is charity, not genocide.

Robert Carney was a historian and former University of Alberta professor, and father of the well-known Mark Carney. In his peer-reviewed papers and in his review of the [1996](#)

[Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#) he explained that residential schools were the local social services and medical hub, from their outset.

Indeed, Rose Prince was disabled with a painful back deformity. As she entered her teens, her sister died of pneumonia, her mother died of influenza while on the trap line in 1931, and her baby six-year-old sister died two years later. Rose elected to remain at Lejac Indian Residential School her entire life, humbly performing any necessary tasks and living her life in prayer.

Contrary to claims of cultural genocide at Oblate residential schools, many of the Oblate Fathers were fluent in Aboriginal languages. Some wrote dictionaries and created written forms of oral languages to ensure their survival. Rose Prince also brought her language into Christian prayer.

*“... with the help of a hymnal and a prayer book in the Dakelh language, that of the Carrier First Nations, she teaches the students to sing and pray in their own language. Even the sisters adapt to this initiative, and prayers and hymns alternate in Dakelh and English.”*

Rose Prince was diagnosed with tuberculosis later in life and died in Vanderhoof hospital in August of 1949 at the age of thirty-four.

By contrast, Talaga’s claims of genocide rests upon phantom students. ‘Possible unmarked graves’ is not proof of anything other than a phantom genocide.

## Sacred Responsibility Tarnished by the Rewriting of History

By Michelle Stirling ©2023

Canada has been engaged in a process of truth and reconciliation for decades, trying to address grievances of the past over Indian Residential Schools and treaties. This has been a costly public process, but one which most Canadians felt was important to undertake, though many would be alarmed to know the compensation price tag has shifted from [\\$5 billion to where it now hovers about \\$60 billion](#), with more to come. This is more than Canada’s commitment to NATO should have been, but we say we cannot afford that. [\[1\]](#)

More recently, as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, Kimberly Murray was appointed by Order in Council to a 2-year term as special adviser to David Lametti, to be known as Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools. Her position is that of a civilian advisor to the Minister, and she was charged with acting as liaison with families and former students of residential schools (often self-described 'survivors') with the purpose of researching the truth and reporting on it.

Overstepping her bounds of advising the Minister, in January of 2023, Kimberly Murray took it upon herself to issue a [21-page document](#) to Jose Francisco Cali Tzay, the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Human Rights, making numerous false claims about Indian Residential Schools.

This is unconscionable as her position did not qualify her to do so, and Cali Tzay is investigating Canada, in part because China has accused Canada of committing genocide against Indigenous people.

Kimberly Murray appointed herself to provide the evidence to Cali Tzay, despite virtually all her claims in the document being false or wildly exaggerated. Archival documents disprove her claims.

In her interim report of June 2023, she explains:

*In the first year of my Mandate, I have engaged with Indigenous people, governments and churches, and international experts. I have also attempted to advance public awareness and education about the truths of the missing children and unmarked burials.*

In a move driven by political correctness, as there was no evidence presented and no debate, on Oct. 27, 2022, the entire House of Commons voted to declare Indian Residential Schools an act of genocide.

Likewise, despite Kimberly Murray claiming to advance 'the truths of the missing children and unmarked burials' her report "Sacred Responsibility..." is filled with mistruths and deceptions — even though the historical facts and evidence are readily available. At least for now.

Why do I say that? Because a key part of Murray's recommendations in the report is that Indigenous data sovereignty be made a priority, meaning that all historical data which is now part of the public record, as related to Indigenous people, would become protected

material under Indigenous only supervision. She advises the government to go ahead and make laws, even though her final report will not be released until June 2024.

Why is this a problem?

Well, we are presently paying some \$10 million for the work of the Special Interlocutor's office and investigations, but Ms. Murray and her team are rewriting history.

We are not finding the missing children.

It is likely there are none.

Or if any, perhaps a handful of orphans who may have passed on with little documentation during Spanish Flu or tuberculosis epidemics, which often wiped-out whole families. In such times of crisis, normally strict documentation procedures may not have been followed to a T.

Let me give you an example of how the "Sacred Responsibility..." report rewrites history.

"Sacred Responsibility..." recounts the story of three sisters in the Osborne family — Betsy (sic), Nora and Isobel — who were 'forcibly removed' from their home, sent to a residential school, and were never seen again, according to Kimberly Murray. The St. Joseph's Indian Residential school described in the report did not exist then! It had been burnt down in 1930 in a fire started by disgruntled students, which killed 12 students and Sister Superior, who died trying to save the children in the third-floor dormitory. Two other sisters suffered grievous injury — one suffering a broken back and another broken legs. The children were also seriously frostbitten after evacuation into the — 20 F dark night.

The [1931 census shows Solomon Osborne](#), his wife Sarah Jane, and their children all living as a family at Cross Lake Reserve.

APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION

To the Director of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, Canada

Dec. 28th 1939

Sir, I hereby make application for admission of the undermentioned child into the St. Joseph Indian Residential School; to remain therein under the guardianship of the Principal for such term as the Minister of Mines and Resources may deem proper:

Indian name of child Osborne
English name Etzie
Age 8 1/2 years
Name of Band Cross Lake
No. of ticket under which child's annuity is paid 398
Father's full name and No. Salomon Osborne 398
Mother's full name and No. Sarah Jane Wiskey 398
Parents living or dead Living
State of child's health Good
Religion R. Catholic
Does applicant speak English? No
Previously attended Never attended school for years

Signature of father: Salomon Osborne

NOTE-If mother or guardian signs, agent must forward full explanatory note.

I hereby certify that the above application for admission has been read over and interpreted to the parent or guardian and that the contents were understood by him or her and that I witnessed his or her signature to this document.

I recommend the admission of the above child, who is of good moral character and is eligible to be admitted as a grant-earning pupil.

Signature of Missionary or other Witness: Y. Herbin

Signature of Agent: J.C. [unclear]

\*Principal or other official of the school must not sign as witness.

NOTE-All the above particulars must be fully given, especially the "Name of Band," "No. of ticket under which child's annuity is paid" and "Religion." The minimum age for admission is seven (7) years, except in the case of an orphan, destitute or neglected child. When application is made for the admission of such cases, full particulars should accompany the application.

FORM No. 1-A 406 R 7724

(OVER)

Indian Affairs. (RG 10, Volume 6261, file 577-10, part 1)

PUBLIC ARCHIVES

ARCHIVES PUBLIQUES

CANADA

The above is an archival copy of Betzie Osborne's admission form for school, and it does, confusingly say, St. Joseph Indian Residential school. However, a Catholic Day School had been built on reserve by that time. As noted on the form, the parents had to apply for enrollment. Betzie and her sisters were not 'forcibly taken' as the Murray report claims. Sadly, all three of the sisters died of Tuberculosis at care facilities much later on. Tuberculosis was rife in Canada among all populations until the 1940s-50s when antibiotics and vaccines were developed.

The Murray report attempts to rewrite Canadian history, giving the perception that:

a) Children were forcibly removed from homes and taken to Indian Residential Schools against their parents' and community wishes. In fact, the children had to be enrolled by their parents and be of age 7. Children younger than age 7 could be admitted if they were orphaned, if the family was destitute or dysfunctional.[\[2\]](#)

b) The children, once removed to Indian Residential Schools, were never seen again. In fact, in most cases children were given government funded transportation home (flights to very remote communities) for summer holidays and their parents re-admitted them to the schools in the fall. Orphaned children would remain at the school; many lived there for their entire lives, some becoming staff members as they came of age.

c) That communities were opposed to Indian Residential Schools. In fact, witness the letter from the archives of the Cross Lake Band petitioning the federal government to rebuild the school. [The petition reads:](#)

*To the Department of Indian Affairs*

*Petition For the rebuilding of St Joseph's Residential School at Cross Lake, Man.*

*We the undersigned treaty Indians of the Cross Lake Reserve of Manitoba regretting the lost of our Residential School, given to us by the Department of Indians, Affairs, and considering the great loss we have made for the Education of our children since two years, and for the future wishing that a good education will be still given to our children and out grand-children, we the undersigned are wishing and begging from the Department that considering our great desire of education for our children this same Department will agree to our petition for the Rebuilding of our Residential school as soon as possible so that our children won't be deprived any longer from a good education. So in faith of which we gave our signatures. (signed) The Treaty Indians and Half Breeds of Cross Lake Manitoba*

Likewise, historical documents show that parents were able to visit their children, and often did.

As historian Robert Carney noted, for parents who were hunters or running a trapline, residential schools ensured that the child was provided with food, care, housing and education, so that the parents could do their work. How is this different than the role that schools, including boarding schools and even daycare, provides to parents today? Even the federal government is advocating for \$10-a-day daycare as a boon to parents; Indian Residential Schools served a similar no cost function to working or poor parents back in the day.

So, this is the danger of Indigenous data sovereignty. Canadians will not be able to access historical records which are presently in the public domain, to ferret out whether or not the many exaggerated or fictional claims of people like Kimberly Murray are true or not.

We are spending millions of dollars on a Special Interlocutor's office and reporting function to find the 'truth' and meanwhile Murray has provided a UN Special Rapporteur with false evidence, outside of her stated mandate. Canada is about to spend >\$60 Billion in compensation for Indian Residential Schools and related actionable demands, which should be subject to factual verification and parliamentary review, but which is subject to neither.

At present, claims of aggrieved former students have been accepted as fact without cross-examination or substantiating evidence required. Individuals are being compensated with anywhere from \$20,000 to ~\$125,000 per person, based on the severity of the claims of abuse.

Normally if civil or criminal claims of abuse were made in the public forum, there would be charges laid and a trial with evidence. That is not happening. Billions of dollars are slated to be paid out — furthermore, without any parliamentary review. This entire process is happening outside of normal parliamentary oversight.

And now, key participants are advocating for the sequestration of historical records under Indigenous data sovereignty.

Thus, history will be rewritten and will never be able to be unwritten.

This is not a future prediction. According to independent researcher Nina Green, of the [41 images of quarterly returns for Cross Lake on the NCTF Archives website](#) today, all but one are merely cover pages..



In truth, we are getting deception and no reconciliation from this process; we are being fed misinformation and the truth is about to vanish under Indigenous data sovereignty.

And where are the children of the phantom genocide?

So far, all children are accounted for with registration forms for Indian Residential Schools; those who died at school have documented inquiry records, death certificates and were buried either back home on reserve or in the community graveyard nearby. Overtime, the graves became unmarked because nobody cared until now.

The question should be, *why do people suddenly care so much now about unmarked graves and missing children* – so much so, that they want the historical archives locked away from the general public, whose ancestors’ taxes underwrote 113 years of funding for such educational, medical services and documentation? Why do we not find dozens of police reports of missing children over the years? Why did parents, like the Osbornes, send all three children to school if they knew they would not see them again?

History belongs to all of us. It is our sacred responsibility to preserve access to it for all. And it should be Kimberly Murray’s sacred responsibility to record history correctly and not do a rewrite to suit an agenda.

[1] [https://www.cgai.ca/growing\\_the\\_defence\\_budget\\_what\\_would\\_two\\_percent\\_of\\_gdp\\_look\\_like#:~:text=3%20Two%20per%20cent%20of,per%20cent%20is%20%2441.3%20billion](https://www.cgai.ca/growing_the_defence_budget_what_would_two_percent_of_gdp_look_like#:~:text=3%20Two%20per%20cent%20of,per%20cent%20is%20%2441.3%20billion).

[2] In such a case, it may be that the child was apprehended for safety; this included provisions under the health act to remove persons at risk from Tuberculosis infected homes (similar to what we often saw during COVID with family separations for public health reasons).

## “They gave me a number...” Indian Residential School Denialism and Genocide

By Michelle Stirling ©2023

In commentaries by former residential school students, usually those who self-identify as ‘survivors,’ they state that when they entered the school “*They gave me a number...*” and go on to detail how they were often stripped of their clothes, subjected to vigorous showers, and scrubbing and their hair cut off.

For people who have surface knowledge of the Nazi Holocaust of the Jewish people (and others) in Germany during World War II, this sounds familiar. Even some Jewish

scholars, who should know better, see Indian Residential Schools as genocide because of apparently dehumanizing indicators like this.

Rodney Clifton, Professor Emeritus of the University of Manitoba, actually worked at Stringer Hall from 1966–67, the Anglican Mission hostel in Inuvik, NWT, whose student residents attended Sir Alexander Mackenzie School. His explanation of receiving students is both horrifying and enlightening.

It is horrifying because he describes some of the returning students to the hall as wearing the exact same clothes that they had left in, though now in a shambles. For some, their clothes had not been changed in the two summer months and the kids had not had a bath, the water being too cold on the barren tundra. He describes the children as having stood in smudge fires while at home with their parents, to fight off the vicious biting insects of the Northern Tundra (this was long before “Deep Woods OFF” or similar repellents). For those unfamiliar, the famous Canadian tune “[The Blackfly](#)” offers a glimpse of how such biting insects can drive one to distraction. Thus, dirty, smoky, and smelly, many of the children often also had pus-filled infected insect bites on their heads and even in their ears. Lice were also common.

This situation required that the child be submitted to showers and vigorous scrubbing upon arrival, and likely the burning of unsalvageable clothes be done immediately. Clean institutional clothing was provided as part of the educational package and to provide commonality between students, so there was no difference between those who might have nicer clothing than those were poor.

For some children, this showering and loss of personal effects was emotionally dehumanizing, but it was absolutely necessary to return the child to a healthy condition and allow for treatment of the pus-filled sores. Likewise, to live in close community, common public health considerations required that infectious or contagious conditions be treated and healed.

And what of the number assigned?

Rodney was supervising 85 boys ages 12 to 21 in three dormitories for 22 hours for 6 days a week. In the event a child was not well, Clifton was required to sit up all night with the child and call the nurse if the child’s condition worsened.

In the book “[From Truth Comes Reconciliation](#),” Clifton recounts how a large part of his job was spent in the laundry storage room, where all clothes for all children and staff (including himself) were sorted...by Rodney...**by number** and placed in the relevant numbered cubicle.

That is all.

That was the purpose for the number assigned to the child.

Unlike in Auschwitz, this number was not tattooed on the child's body.

Let us say the children and youth had two changes of institutional clothes — pants, shirts, socks, and underwear. That's  $85 \times 4 \text{ items} \times 2 = 680$  pieces of clothing, and two sets of numbered towels and facecloths = 340 sets, washed and sorted once weekly. Just to keep the students in clean laundry.

Public hygiene in such residential facilities is extremely important, particularly in the north of Canada where [tuberculosis \(TB\) was, and still is, prevalent and highly contagious](#). Many people are latent carriers of TB but the symptoms are not manifest. Thus, sharing of clothes and towels was prevented by this numbered system, which also ensured properly sized clothes were available to students.

Children were not commonly referred to by number in Indian Residential Schools, as Jewish people were in Nazi Holocaust death camps in Poland and in the Nazi labour and concentration camps across Europe. In Indian Residential Schools, children were typically referred to by name.

It is true that often children's names were Anglicized or translated while attending Indian Residential Schools. The purpose of the schools was to prepare the children and young people for participation in the larger society, so this convention was no different than that applied to incoming immigrants to Canada. Immigrants who presented a difficult-to-pronounce European name, were summarily admitted to Canada with a simpler version of their name like "Smith."

Prior to Christmas and Easter holidays, those children at Stringer Hall whose families were geographically close enough, were given transportation home for celebrations. Those children whose families lived in very remote locations remained behind as the travel time and cost were prohibitive for short visits in those days; but when summer break came, they were given government paid transportation home.

**No one ever left a Nazi death camp to go home for seasonal celebrations.**

At the end of the school term, the children were given paid transportation home to their parents for another two months where they were free to enjoy their language, culture and no baths, no clean clothes, no regular meals, and little to no medical treatment.

Undoubtedly the children experienced painful culture shock at residential schools — especially in the first year; [immersion language learning](#) is difficult for anyone, but also most effective; their parents enrolled them for this education — hoping to give them skills and a better chance for the future. And the parents kept enrolling their children, year after year!

That's not genocide. Not even close. These are facts no one can deny.

More than six million people never left Auschwitz and the other concentration camps and death traps the Nazis set up across Europe. More than 11 million people (not only Jews) were turned to ashes. Those who did leave, were skeletons, starving, near death, covered in lice, dehumanized, demoralized, a [sorry remnant of humanity](#).

To compare Nazi death camp genocide to Indian Residential Schools is a perversion of history.

[Note: The following is the second article I wrote on this topic. I have since had an opportunity to review the documents of several individuals and I suspect there are very few missing children or undocumented deaths/graves; though over time the markers have likely disintegrated.]

## Unmarked or Mass Graves? Epidemic or Genocide? Some Historical Context on Canada's Residential Schools

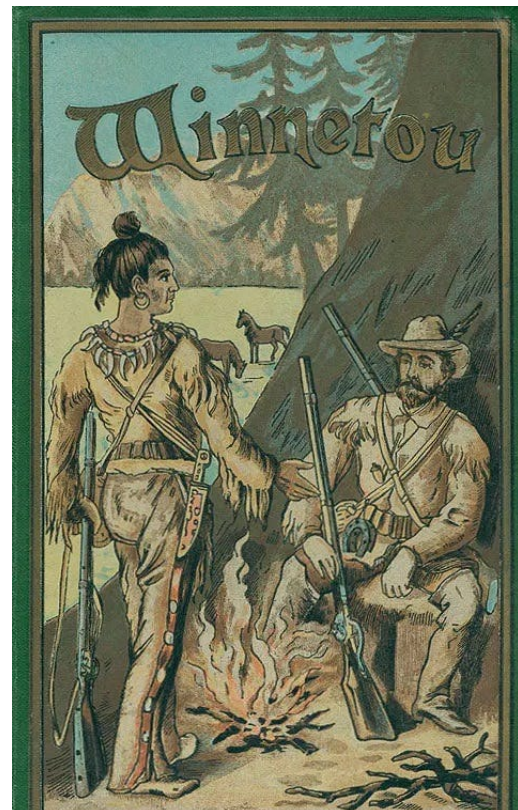
By Michelle Stirling

International and domestic media have had a field day covering the announcements of unmarked graves at residential schools. The news reports often quickly slip from 'unmarked' to 'mass' graves, dialing up the emotional angst as the latter phrase implies an intentional act of genocide over an act of negligence, or simple lack of maintenance of once-marked graves in abandoned cemeteries where wooden crosses or markers disintegrated over time. Likewise, the graves announced in the press were 'discovered' by the use of Ground Penetrating Radar, a technology that only sees anomalies below the surface, but not what is there, or if there is even a coffin; it cannot identify a body.

Canada has done a great deal work for decades, trying to [document the testimony](#) of former students of residential school, including a detailed report about missing children and unmarked burials, but there is little record of this in the international media reports. In other words, the fact that there are unmarked graves and missing children is not news to Canadians and has not been for decades. Graveyards were part of the design of such institutions of the time, for practical, not nefarious reasons.

On July 19, 2021, the New York Times ran a [touching story of former residential school students](#) in the US and their sad experience, referring to recent reports of unmarked graves in Canada, but curiously failed to mention that the US was running Indian Wars from 1622 to 1924, with a genocidal intention of wiping out US aboriginal people or subduing them by force. By contrast, at the same time Canadians were making treaties with First Nations people and sending the Mounties (RCMP/NWMP) west to stop the genocide of the Blackfoot nation at the hands of US whisky traders who had made an incursion into Southern Alberta. For the most part, Canadians had had peaceful trade relations with aboriginal people since the early days of European contact.

Canada's Maclean's magazine of July 16, 2021 enlisted Turkish-based journalist Adnan R. Khan to write "[Coming to terms with a national shame](#)" with the opening line "*The lessons from other countries that have had to confront mass graves are clear — shining a light into our darkest corners is the only way forward*". He then jumps the shark to compare the unmarked graves of Canada's residential schools, with mass graves due to gruesome foreign intertribal wars, and then on to compare them with the German Holocaust, referring to his German wife's experience. Somehow he never mentions that at the time that Canada was putting aboriginal children in schools to teach them European skills like English, reading, writing and math, and placing sick aboriginal people in tuberculosis sanatoriums save their lives, Germany had an ongoing [public euthenasia program from 1900 to 1945](#), wherein sick or people deemed 'defective' or a problem for society were [gassed in carbon monoxide chambers](#). These were ordinary German citizens, and this was public policy long before the actual Holocaust. He also doesn't mention that many [Germans have a deep fascination for North American Indians](#), born of the entirely fake stories about the Noble Brave "Winnetou" written by Karl May. In fact, across Germany there are Karl May dress-up clubs where grown men culturally appropriate traditional aboriginal attire for



Karl May fictional 'Winnetou'

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c9/Karl\\_May\\_Winnetou\\_I\\_bis\\_III\\_001.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c9/Karl_May_Winnetou_I_bis_III_001.jpg) Verlag Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

their meetings; many have tipis set up in their backyards. Some Indian artefact museums in Germany hold human scalps of aboriginal people and are reluctant to return them to Canadian aboriginal tribes for proper burial.

In a recent [Toronto Sun op-ed](#) of July 16, 2021, Warren Kinsella takes residential school conspiracy thinking to a whole new and ridiculous level. In it, Kinsella seems to believe that the people like myself who are [insisting on a fact-based discussion about residential school graveyards](#) are somehow equivalent to White Supremacist neo-Nazis. This Kinsella conspiracy theory is taken to even greater heights as he questions, at the end of his commentary, why would people be buried in unmarked graves unless there was something to hide.

Clearly, Kinsella has little grounding in history.

**It has taken me a while to gather the strength to write this article because I am aware that it is a painful topic for former students and descendants of residential schools, and a contentious issue in society.** But the topic has become so distorted and so lacks historical context, that I feel I must speak up. I have written about the topic of reconciliation and historical context before, [some years ago](#). This commentary will expand on some of the issues of public health at the time. Former residential school students (referred to in the media as survivors) and descendants, the media and general public, should be made aware of some of the background of these residential schools and the context of epidemics, disease, and public health care of the time. Residential schools had graveyards because many people, especially children, died of what are treatable causes today, prior to the development of modern medicine, advanced public health care and antibiotics. Deaths of children were also high because the field of pediatric medicine did not develop until into the 1930s.

As retired judge Brian Giesbrecht writes [in an essay](#) for the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, published July 27, 2021: *“But countless untended and too often forgotten burial sites exist in Canada from coast to coast that contain the bodily remains of people from every ethnic group. In many cases, the wooden crosses that were routinely used to mark the graves of the poor have long since turned to dust, and the cemetery sites have returned to nature. This is particularly true on Indian reserves, where tending cemeteries is not a usual cultural practice for many. And, many residential schools burned down, or were abandoned, and their cemeteries were not maintained. It is also the responsibility of individual families, and not the government or church, to provide markers and maintain graves. Not all indigenous families participate in that admittedly colonialist Christian practice. Simply put, there are unmarked graves all over the country.”*

Historians typically compare the difference in culture and style of development of Canada and the US in two simple phrases. Canada — Mission then Mountie outpost. USA

— Saloon then Boot hill. So, it is no surprise that the Canadian government employed various religious orders to develop residential schools in order to attempt to meet their treaty obligations of providing education to indigenous children, or that the RCMP “Mounties” would be called upon to enact the enrollment. Both groups were present in the distant West and North, and both had existing relationships with aboriginal people and often spoke their languages.

Macleod's Magazine print edition (Cover title: “*The Real Black Mark when it comes to Canada's military*”) ran four emotional articles about residential schools and unmarked graves. **None of them mentioned the word ‘tuberculosis’ (TB).** Until the 1960's, TB was the largest cause of death for all Canadians. Indeed, in this [short video about the history of the Lung Association of Canada](#), it is emphasized that there was no public health care for anyone in Canada, and that TB and polio epidemics were the drivers for creating one. Chief Dan George has a brief cameo in the video, lauding the Lung Association's work.

### **And who was on the front line of treating TB? Christian Churches.**

Zilm and Warbinek (2006) write of the BC history: “*Church organizations were the first to bring nurses to B.C. communities. The Sisters of Saint Ann initiated nursing services in Victoria in 1858 during the B.C. gold rush. Other gold rush centres opened small hospitals, most of them community supported rather than financed through churches. As the two West Coast colonies grew, the capitals at Victoria and New Westminster developed larger hospitals. After Florence Nightingale established her school of nursing in 1860, many Canadian hospitals, including those on the west coast, opened schools based on this model. Some graduates then established small private hospitals in their homes, often specializing in care of “consumptives” (patients with pulmonary TB). Unfortunately, few archival records exist of these entrepreneurial nurses. In Vancouver, the Anglican Church founded a hospital under Sister Frances Redmond in Vancouver in 1887 and the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) established a small tent hospital in 1886 when the city was designated the terminus for the railway.*”

For those not familiar with Canadian history, many of the early Christian missionaries (and early Mounties like Colonel Macleod — who the Blackfoot people named “Stamixotoken” (Bull's Head)) mastered local aboriginal languages and even created [written alphabets \(syllabics\) and dictionaries](#), often translating Biblical passages or school texts. The early missionaries in the Canadian West, like [Rev. George McDougall](#), also took in orphaned aboriginal children. A descendent of Rev. McDougall told me that his ancestor adopted 17 orphaned Blackfoot children; their parents had died of smallpox.

Indeed, the smallpox epidemic of the 1870s wiped out thousands of aboriginal people who had no natural immunity to the virulent disease as it swept across North America.

Yet today, with modern sanitation, good food supply, excellent public health standards and the smallpox vaccine, the disease has been declared to have been eradicated.

Likewise, despite the furor over residential schools in the west, few people know that there were residential schools dating back to 1620 in pre-Confederation Canada, as discussed in Robert Carney's (1995) "[Aboriginal Residential Schools Before Confederation: The Early Experience](#)". He notes that the Jesuits had adopted a more Amerindian approach to interpersonal relations than that of the European view of children that was prevalent at the time:

*"Some of the lessons learned by seventeenth century French missionaries concerning the efficacy of aboriginal residential schools were apparently remembered by the Jesuits when they took up aboriginal schooling again in the 1840s. They followed certain pedagogical principles in what could be described as bush or wilderness schools. These principles included "tact, infinite patience and gentleness," – in effect a rejection of the European idea of childhood, "which always saw the man in the child" and which regarded childhood "as a period of preparation, obedience, as discipline, often of a harsh character."*

Carney, a University of Alberta professor and former Catholic residential school principal and regional administrator was a historian who knew the material in depth. He disputed what he felt was a rather simplistic view of residential schools [in this commentary](#) on the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People.

**Side note:** Robert Carney was the father of Mark Carney, UN Special Envoy on Climate Change. In this [2014 article](#), Robert Carney was quoted as saying that northern residential schools tried to maintain aboriginal wilderness life. By contrast, his son Mark Carney, appears to be selling First Nations the [modern-day version of 'glass beads' – carbon credits](#) and such-like, which entail "the lack of delivery of an invisible substance to no one." But I digress.

None of the foregoing context appears in mainstream media stories about the residential schools. For non-Canadian readers, it should be noted that there are more than 600 distinct aboriginal tribes in Canada, so the issues and impacts related to residential schools can vary greatly by tribe, geographic location, and period of time.

TB was reportedly endemic to aboriginal people, at least on the plains. Scrofula, a glandular swelling that is a precursor for TB, had been identified in aboriginal people by Captain John Palliser when he surveyed the border (1857–1861) between what would become Canada and the US. Bison are carriers of TB, but early Plains Indians ate a rather hardy 'keto' diet of buffalo and led open air, nomadic lives, which likely meant TB did not fully manifest itself until their diet drastically changed with the near total decimation of



the buffalo by about 1870, and the switch to a carbohydrate rich (if meagre) European diet. Living in stationary camps on reserve, in cramped and squalid conditions with large numbers of family members and poor diets meant TB rapidly became an epidemic.

As noted above, tuberculosis was the greatest killer of all Canadians until the 1960s. In BC, Zilm and Warbinek (2006) report that: *“In the late 1910s and early 1920s, TB was still of epidemic proportions in B.C.... in 1922, the death rate for Asians was 440 per 100,000 and for the “white population” was 78 per 100,000; the figure for First Nations people in B.C. may have been up to 20 times higher (Norton, 1999).”*

Indeed, the Truth and Reconciliation final report about residential schools states (pg 93) that: *“From those cases where the cause of death was reported, it is clear that until the 1950s, the schools were the sites of an ongoing tuberculosis crisis. Tuberculosis accounted for just less than 50% of the recorded deaths....”*

The report lists several other respiratory conditions that were prevalent causes of death which combined account for a total of some 66.1% in the named register.

To reorient myself to the public health situation of the early 1900s, I watched the excellent PBS documentary *“The Forgotten Plague”* which documents the ravages of tuberculosis on individuals and society. The documentary shows that initially people did not know how TB was transmitted. Most people and doctors thought TB was hereditary and this myth continued long after medical experts knew it was transmitted by a germ, discovered in 1882 by Robert Koch.

Ironically, once Koch’s discovery became part of the mainstream medical assessment of people, *“The Forgotten Plague”* documentary explains that those with TB who had previously been accepted in society, once diagnosed, were ostracized.

As noted in Moffat et al (2013): *“Before the discovery of antituberculosis drugs, those suffering from TB were institutionalized in TB sanatoriums for a “rest cure,” which was the dominant means of TB treatment at the time. Once admitted to the sanatorium, patients were often required to stay for extended periods of time — months, or even years. Treatment included rest, relaxation, emphasis on proper nutrition, and exposure to fresh air and sunshine. Sanatoriums also performed an important infection control purpose in that they removed the infectious individual from healthy society (Long, 2007).”*

Many of the people interviewed in *“The Forgotten Plague”* are former sanatoria patients; most of their family members had died of TB before they were fortunate enough to get treatment — that was the situation at the turn of the century. One of the speakers in the

documentary reports he was in a sanatorium for 12 years before being released as healthy.

The Truth and Reconciliation residential school report is very critical of the fact that children who were infected with TB were brought to residential schools, thus infecting others. It is difficult to determine today whether those children may have been sufferers of [Latent TB](#) — whose condition would not have been identified as there are no external symptoms. The children may have been taken from a high-risk TB home situation, only to have Latent TB develop and infect others at the school, as the stressful circumstances, isolation and poor diet may have led to the disease taking over the body. Children of about age 5 and under are unable to mount an effective immune response to TB.

The Truth and Reconciliation residential school report also refers to an ‘*unnamed register*’ of deaths. “*Unnamed*” seems ominous and indicative of a lack of care, however it could refer to a loss of continuity of identity if individuals were transferred in or out of the school for health reasons.

[Moffat et al](#) (2013) in “*Sanitoriums and the Canadian Colonial Legacy: The Untold Experiences of Tuberculosis Treatment*” note that “*within the context of TB, public health officials were granted the authority to coercively institutionalize the affected, forcibly removing infected individuals and placing them in sanitoriums (Shedden, 2011)*”. Due to the long treatment periods, contact with family, culture and heritage was lost. One aboriginal testimonial in Moffat reads: “*My brother went to the sanatorium and stayed there for seven years because he was allergic to the medication. It took seven years for the tuberculosis to go dormant. I never knew my brother. My older sister has no memory of him. My siblings never met their brother until he was thirteen. He was a total stranger. That’s the emotional part — that we had a brother we never knew.*”

Moffat also presents testimony that children who recovered from TB, when they returned to the reserve and their families, were often bullied as ‘fatty’ or mocked for their pale skin, a symptom of the disease and due to lack of outdoor activity. TB treatment primarily consisted of a highly regimented schedule, very substantial meals along with resting outdoors in the fresh air. Though the food was probably welcome in a time when many people suffered malnutrition, the forced bed rest, imposed upon aboriginal children by people who did not speak any aboriginal language and whose customs were completely foreign to aboriginal family life on the reservation must have been torture for the children who were incarcerated in sanitoriums.

Jetty (2020) explains that “*Some young children who recovered from TB were sent directly from TB sanatoria to residential school, adding to their trauma...Families may not have been informed about the well-being or whereabouts of children taken to sanatoria. Some children died, and families may not have known where they were*

*buried. Children who returned to their home communities may not have understood the language, skills or social norms anymore.”*

This kind of experience of loss of family connection was not unique to aboriginal people in Canada’s residential schools.

In *“Stigma and silence: oral histories of tuberculosis”*, Kelly (2010) recounts the isolation, loneliness, and disconnection to family of Irish tuberculosis sufferers who, as children, spent years in recovery in sanatoriums. In Raymond Hurt’s *“Tuberculosis sanatorium regimen in the 1940s: a patient’s personal diary”* (2004) one gets a glimpse of the extreme regimentation of a sanatorium (albeit in the UK), and how once diagnosed, that individual faced rejection from her husband, and was separated from her 15-month-old baby, all in an effort to save her life and prevent her family from being infected.

Likewise, regarding those who died of TB while at the residential schools, as victims of a contagious disease they were [buried with haste](#). TB generated tremendous social stigma then as now. Historically, rather than expose a family to being socially ostracized for having a TB victim in the family, individuals might be buried without a marker. (I cannot say if this was the norm in residential schools; it did happen in broader society.) In terms of markers, certainly, unless people were wealthy in those early days, the [common grave marker](#) was a simple wood cross or headboard.

In the early days of Canada, death was common for all — including infants and children off reserve as reported by [Matthews](#) (1997). In 1891, of 117 deaths in Alberta, 65 were under 15 years of age. Also, he notes this sad story — *“The newspaper report of a baby death in 1904 ends with this: “Mr. and Mrs. Graham have been most unfortunate with their children, having lost four within the last three years.””*

Matthews also explains that in order for a body to be shipped to relatives, there had to be a coroner’s certificate. Likewise, if a body was to be shipped any distance, it would need to be embalmed. (I didn’t know that embalming developed out of the US Civil War, where people wanted the body of their loved ones shipped to them.) Matthews work relates to Alberta; I do not know if these were the terms elsewhere in Canada. In light of the fact that some residential schools were rather remote, and operating budgets were very small, it is unlikely that either coroner or undertaking services would have been available or affordable for shipping bodies home. The Truth and Reconciliation report, Volume 4, discussed in detail the issue of costs of shipping bodies versus local burial and that victims of contagious disease required a sealed casket — a significant expense in those times — and that families would have to pay for those costs.

There were/are laws under the [Quarantine Act](#) against shipping victims of contagious conditions anywhere, so as not to introduce a disease vector elsewhere.

In the 1950's, a [third of the Inuit population](#) were infected with TB. The Canadian government made concerted efforts to provide treatment for these people, even if the methods were heavy-handed and heartless by today's standards. "*When tuberculosis epidemics spread among northern Inuit communities in the 1950s and 1960s, thousands were transported to southern hospitals and sanatoria for treatment.*" If the Canadian government had been intent on wiping out aboriginal people, such efforts to heal people of TB would not have been done. Even today in aboriginal communities, TB is a serious problem. This is partly because the [social stigma](#) of TB means victims and their families may avoid treatment, rather than face community rejection.

It is also known that many aboriginal children also suffered from violence and sexual abuse at residential schools. This is painfully well documented in the Truth and Reconciliation reports.

In parallel with Canadian aboriginal testimony, Kelly (2010) in interviews with Irish TB survivors, found that many people had been unable to talk about their experience with anyone. The Irish survivors also describe their family relations as broken. In interviews with Susan Kelly, while finally talking about their experience, some TB survivors were overcome by suppressed memories of sexual abuse. She writes: "*In studies in America, polio survivors report 'having been sexually abused at three times the rate of the general population of people who were children in the '50s'. Dr Frick a psychologist specialising in polio sufferers, in the New York Times writes, 'If there was a paedophile in the family or on a hospital staff and a child was unable to run away, you can guess what might happen'. There were many children with tuberculosis who were also unable to run away.*"

Combine such horrors with the sheer geographic isolation of most residential schools, the inherent isolation of immersion-style language learning, the distances that made family visits impossible, then many more graves, some unmarked, came from suicides and self-harm. In early times, suicide victims were buried in unmarked graves as the person's last, desperate act was seen as blasphemous.

Likewise, we know from testimony and some school records that many lives were lost when able-bodied children tried to run away from schools and ended up dying in hostile terrain or drowning in deep water.

As for mass graves? Indeed, there will be a few mass graves found due to Spanish Flu epidemics. From the Truth and Reconciliation report, "[Missing Children and Unmarked Burials](#)" Volume 4 we read: "*Several of the schools were overwhelmed by the influenza*

*pandemic of 1918–19. All but two of the children and all of the staff were stricken with influenza at the Fort St. James, British Columbia, school and surrounding community in 1918. Seventy-eight people, including students, died. Initially, Father Joseph Allard, the school principal, conducted funeral services at the mission cemetery. But, as he wrote in his diary, the “others were brought in two or three at a time, but I could not go to the graveyard with all of them. In fact, several bodies were piled up in an empty cabin because there was no grave ready. A large common grave was dug for them.”*

Regarding the brutal treatment, it is astounding that corporal punishment, such as the strap, was only outlawed in [Canadian public schools in 2004](#). It had been outlawed in the 1980s in the UK, where [caning was the norm](#) for those who violated school rules. My late father had attended a British boarding school in the 1930s. His hands were caned black and blue, his left hand tied behind his back, and he was made to stand in the corner and be mocked by his peers for the heinous crime of being left-handed.

The residential school and sanatoria experience was traumatic and life-changing for all participants, but it does not meet the definition of genocide; the schools intended to provide language, math and reading skills to make participation in broader society possible and the sanatoria intended to return people to a state of health.

Perhaps some of this historical context will help former students and descendants make sense of what happened and why. This is not an excuse; it is simply historical context. References to studies of other populations like the Irish TB former students or US TB and polio victims is provided to further support the testimony of aboriginal people who suffered brutality and abuse at Canadian residential schools.

Some people are calling for the exhumation of remains or other kinds for reclamation. I empathize with the deep sense of loss of those who do not know where their loved ones are buried. My own child is buried in an unmarked grave far from me, as is my grandfather, who was a decorated World War I veteran and an aviation pioneer in Scotland and Canada. When my thoughts turn to them, the sense of loss and emptiness is disorienting, incomprehensible at times. But that is how it was and that is how it is, for me. I choose to press on and honor their memories in other ways than looking back.

**I am deeply concerned that other major aboriginal issues in Canada, like sufficient, good quality housing and clean drinking water on reserves, and treatment of existing and [on-going TB infections](#) in some [aboriginal populations](#) — the needs of the LIVING — are being upstaged by the media cacophony about the dead, and particularly the media inferences of mass graves and genocidal intent.** It would be nice if the important issues like clean water and proper housing that would enhance the health and life of present-day people could get headline news.

It is sad and annoying to me that mainstream media reporters seem reluctant to do any additional research on these stories to set historical context. Their hyped-up coverage must surely further torture the broken hearts of those people who are already suffering. This click bait news is also driving a rift between Canadians, driving rage in those who do not know this history, leading to the vandalization and burning of churches ([54 as of this writing](#)), and on the other hand, creating resentment in people who do know this history or who at least know the claim of genocide is unwarranted. Present day Canadians who had no role in the residential schools are being smeared in the international press in a manner that is inconsistent with the historical facts. This will not lead to reconciliation or practical solutions for the real needs of aboriginal people in Canada and will destabilize what had been growing and friendly partnerships between many aboriginal people and off-reserve society in Canada.

I hope this post might help some people have a better understanding of the times.

## Genocide Accusations in Canada — When Pro-bono turns to *Cui Bono*

By Michelle Stirling ©2023

Archeologist [Paul Racher's article](#) in the National Post of July 15, 2023 makes the argument that 'genocide' is an appropriate term for Indian Residential Schools and states that what he cannot abide is the insinuation of some critics of the term genocide that the trauma inflicting on former students (sometimes fatal, he notes) is overblown.

According to a [Globe and Mail article](#) of Jan. 22, 2018, titled: "Excavating Canada's Past with a Newly Critical Eye," Paul Racher "*...used to be a part-time Volkswagen mechanic and furnace installer, now has a staff of dozens thanks to the early 2000s court decisions that reaffirmed the Crown's duty to consult with Indigenous peoples. This led to a boom in archeological consulting.*"

At the time of the Globe and Mail story, Mr. Racher was offering pro-bono archeological consulting to the Mohawk Institute. Seven years later he has a 'staff of dozens.' Some [\\$320 million](#) is the amount of money dedicated for searching for unmarked graves at former Indian Residential Schools.

The Mohawk Institute where Mr. Racher was offering his services for free in 2018 was featured in the 1886 loyalty tour of the east for Western treaty chiefs as an example of

how Indian residential schools — especially those devoted to industry and agriculture — could help the children of the treaties acquire the language and skills necessary for the new agro-industrial era on the Prairies.

When we review historical documents about the origins of Indian Residential Schools and the alleged genocide we find that it was actually Indigenous chiefs who saw these schools as the key to a better future for their people. Thus, the element of ‘intent’ to commit genocide does not hold water.

For example, Chief Red Crow (Mi’k ai’stoowa) was chief of the Kainai people of the Blackfoot nation and a signatory to Treaty 7. Recall that at the time of signing of Treaty 7 in 1877, the North West Mounted Police (RCMP) had arrived 3 years earlier and had stopped the slaughter of the Blackfoot people by American whisky traders, some of them war-hardened Confederate soldiers. At that time, Indian Wars were raging across the US and the US Cavalry continued until 1924. The US was spending \$18 million a year on Indian Wars; that was Canada’s entire operational budget. The US had a million-man standing army at the end of their civil war in 1865.

Canada had never had this kind of confrontational relationship with Indigenous people; having conducted ~300 years of mutual beneficial economic trade. The tiny force of three hundred red-coated RCMP (to distinguish them from the blue-coated Cavalry), scattered across the prairies, had created a network of law enforcement. The trust in the RCMP was created by people of impeccable integrity like Colonel Macleod. This led to Chiefs like Crowfoot and Red Crow to agree to sign the treaties, and to them commanding their braves to stand down and not cross the Medicine Line to engage with the US Cavalry.

In thanks for this loyalty to the Crown, Western Canadian treaty chiefs were given a tour by train to the East to see existing educational facilities, and to see how different life was, and would be, in the West. One place they visited was the Mohawk Industrial School, founded years after Joseph Brant’s visit to England, where he went, seeking a model for industrial education for his people.

After Chief Red Crow of the Kainai people had visited the Mohawk Industrial School in Ontario, during the Prime Minister’s loyalty tour in 1886, he was aware of the program being offered and its merits. He chose to send Shot Close (his adopted son), also known as Frank Red Crow, to St. Joseph’s Industrial School at Dunbow in 1894 in order to learn ranching and farming. Red Crow saw the future of his people in these industries.

*“In the Spring of 1896, Red Crow made a trip with Singing Before to see their son Frank at the industrial school. They were pleased to see that the boy, hair cut short and dressed in a grey uniform, could speak perfect English. His complete isolation from the Blood Reserve had helped to transform him into the kind of person whom Red Crow*

*hoped would lead his people in the future.” (Red Crow: Warrior Chief, by Hugh Dempsey, 1980. Page 203).*

Frank Red Crow graduated from the school and became a successful rancher and subsequently band chief.

Based on his commentary about allegations of genocide in Canada, against Indigenous people, Paul Racher’s claims rely entirely on the Truth and Reconciliation Committee first-person recollections, rather than having done any broader search of historical documentation like that above. He also refers to his friend’s story of [abuse at the school](#), which he says was ‘unspeakable’ — therefore he dares not retell the details. This is how she told her own story to [Toronto Life](#) in 2021. Her purported abuser, Rev. William John Zimmerman, had been made an honorary member of the Mohawk Nation. He [died in 1982](#).

As was the case for so many Indigenous children who ended up at Indian Residential Schools, Racher’s friend and her six brothers and sisters were orphaned by her father’s death and mother’s subsequent psychological breakdown. The children were given shelter, food — bad as they claim it was, and an education at The Mohawk Institute. Undoubtedly the loss of her father and shortly thereafter the loss of her mother’s presence was devastating for a child; being abruptly placed in an entirely different context of the Mohawk Institute would have layered on that sense of [‘ambiguous loss.’](#) A further psychological shock would have been the sexual abuse she suffered.

That some people were abused at such residential schools is known; but wrong as this is, it is not genocide.

Indeed, when we look at the history of Canada, the largest forgotten piece of history is the [Tuberculosis plague](#) that only ended for much of the world in the 1950s as vaccines and antibiotic treatments became available. Many families recount losing an unending number of their loved ones due to this ‘captain of all men of death.’ With the death of one or more parents or siblings, lives were irreversibly altered. Many also lived with the fear of having contracted TB themselves, or suffering stigma from their community of friends, family and all social networks. Disease and death were rampant in the early days in all strata of society.

As with the story recounted in Eric Bays’ book “Indian Residential Schools: Another Picture” in one case an Indigenous family of seven virtually disappeared from a northern community in the space of days. The father managed to get to the trading post saying his wife was sick and there was no food at their camp. He then died. The Hudson’s Bay sent out some men with grub, only to find the wife had also died and was surrounded by a 2-month-old baby, three small children and a 16-year-old. The baby was given over to



relatives; the older boy joined a hunt, and the three orphans were taken in by an Indian Residential School.

For that community and the survivors, all of these people would be missing and the one link for their absence would be the residential school. Over time, the story may have taken on a genocidal impression due to these ambiguous losses. In fact, the school saved three children's lives — at least for a time. One of the small children died later during an influenza epidemic. It is very unlikely the body would have been sent home as there were no parents to receive and arrange a proper burial. However, Bays' book shows that all these events and tragic deaths were documented in some way. It would be interesting to know if the graves of the mother and father are marked in their home community, and if the adopted baby grew up knowing anything about the biological family or not.

Much of the genocide claims can be untangled by simply cross-referencing school records, inquest reports, death certificates and burial records. Except in the worst times of epidemics, like that of the Spanish Flu, detailed records were kept by the schools, Indian Agents and the government as this documentation about students drove the schools' funding.

Surely, as an archeologist, Mr. Racher should understand that when people claim there was a genocide, cross-referenced archival documents should be able to prove or disprove the claim at the first instance. Next, if large numbers of named individuals are not accounted for, an excavation at an unmarked grave would establish if there were reason to go further. There may not be.

In a rational world, when confronted with claims of genocide, we should first pursue full investigation, cross-examination of all eyewitnesses, physical evidence from (i.e., documents, diaries, letters, receipts, other eyewitness and character statements) and of course, excavation at the known unmarked burial sites. If excavation reveals a coffin or human remains, full exhumation should be conducted, and a forensic assessment to determine the identity of the body and the cause of death.

Then all these puzzle pieces would be fitted together in a court of law where these claims could be proven one way or the other *beyond a reasonable doubt*.

This has not taken place in any way, shape or form with respect to the charge of 'genocide' against Canada and its Indian Residential Schools.

Curiously, many Canadians like Racher fight to maintain the label of 'genocide' against Canada for the crime of educating students who could neither read, write nor do math. For the crime of giving orphans a home when they had no alternative — even if was

traumatic for many and far from a paradise. People do forget that in the context of the time, almost everyone was poor, and many people ate not much more than porridge as their staple. Whether [Cream of Wheat](#) or [Red River Cereal](#) this was breakfast for [generations of Canadians](#).



Painted by N. C. Wyeth for Cream of Wheat Co. Copyright 1907 by Cream of Wheat Co. WHERE THE MAIL GOES, CREAM OF WHEAT GOES.

<https://creamofwheat.com/about/>

As shown herein, it was the Treaty Chiefs, governments and the network of religious orders and missions who provided the essential tools to transform the skills of hunter-gatherers into competent participants in an agro-industrial world. Would people have preferred the exclusion of Indigenous people from the broader world — thus leaving them victimized rather than enabled?

In Canada, the ‘genocide’ claims related to Indian Residential Schools have led to lucrative research grants, the establishment of a [\\$60 million University of Manitoba endowment](#) for the building of a special institute to house the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, the flourishing of a whole new branch of academic studies, [\\$72 million](#) for the 8 year long Truth and

Reconciliation process, \$10 million for the operations of the [Office of the Special Interlocutor](#), and now compensation to self-proclaimed victims of abuse that has blossomed from [\\$5 billion to \\$60 billion](#) — all without any evidence of genocide presented; all claims accepted as truth.

Sadly, it looks like this is a booming business for some.

Likewise, in terms of geopolitics, China has capitalized on the Canada’s adoption of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). A day after UNDRIP received Royal Assent and three weeks after the claim of 215 unmarked graves (alleged to be those of children murdered by priests and the graves dug at night by other children, living today) by the Kamloops Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc band, China accused Canada of genocide at the UN. Aside from this as a [slap back at Canada](#) for its allegations of a Chinese genocide against the Uighur people. China’s interest is clear. The [rare metals war](#). Canada and Indigenous people are sitting on a literal gold mine of these ‘[critical minerals](#).’ Whatever China can do to drive a wedge between these resources and Canada’s sovereign government is a win for them and their [Made-in-China-2025](#) goals.

And we are doing nothing to defend ourselves!

Unmarked graves and unfounded accusations of genocide have become a growth industry in Canada, one that is literally leeching the lifeblood from the nation and driving possibly permanent wedges between diverse groups in the country. It is also a lever for the [Indigenous 'land back' movement](#), which appears to rely on claims of the most heinous crime of genocide for the most unprecedented reparation — all the 'land back' in Canada to Indigenous people; if not by deed, then by declaring, or rather [legislating](#), all suspected [unmarked burial plots](#) as 'sacred' and therefore untouchable by anyone else for any reason.

If advocates have their way, anyone who brings forth evidence like that presented in this article may go to jail for pointing out these uncomfortable facts.

Look at the numbers and the lack of evidence. It is sickening to have to ask yourself this about 'genocide' claims against Canada. But ask it. Who benefits?

Ask Paul Racher, the former part-time Volkswagen mechanic and furnace installer, who, in the space of 7 years, now employs 'dozens of people' in his archeology business.

## Manufacturing a Genocide

### The Balkanization of Canada

PUBLISHED ON [WOKE WATCH CANADA](#) 27 JUN 2023

*By Michelle Stirling*

There's a remarkable 2017 news story about [James Louie's 2007 quest](#) to have the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues declare Canada guilty of genocide regarding forced assimilation, generally ascribed to Indian Residential Schools. Louis is from the Lil'wat Nation in British Columbia which never had a treaty with Canada.

Way back then, 16 years ago, Canada had not signed the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Now we have signed on and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act received Royal Assent on June 21, 2021. On June 20, 2023, Justice Canada issued a glossy [Action Plan](#) to implement UNDRIP, one which appears set to turn Canada upside down and Balkanize it, break it and bankrupt it.

Too harsh?

Let's see what happened with Louie's original request. The APTN article states: "He asked the forum to use the Declaration to augment the UN's convention on genocide. Specifically, Article 7 of UNDRIP which reads:

*"Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group."*

Louie argued that his nation was sovereign and thus all of Canada's actions to assimilate his people were illegal.

APTN reporters consulted with Kathleen Mahoney, a legal expert on genocide, who pointed out that there is no retroactivity in the UN Genocide law signed in 1948. However, the article explained that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is designed to prosecute states for such crimes, but another state would have to make the charge.

Well, well, well. Guess what happened on June 22, 2021? China accused Canada of genocide! Remarkable timing, considering UNDRIP had received Royal Assent the day before. And what prompted China to do this? Was it just payback since Canada and several western nations had called for an investigation into China's treatment of the Uyghur people as possible genocide? Or is there a bigger picture?

The genocide charge by China against Canada may be difficult to prove, as intent would have to be proven, often quite difficult.

A further prompt for China was that on May 22-23, 2021, the Kamloops Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation claimed to have found the unmarked graves of 215 children at the former Indian Residential School, making reference to Knowledge Keepers' comments that these children were murdered by priests and nuns and secretly buried by six-year-old classmates in the middle of the night.

By May 30th, Canada's flag was flying at half-mast, a form of self-incrimination, where it stayed for half a year. Canada Day celebrations were cancelled as a consecutive series of discoveries of unmarked graves proliferated across the country with remarkable, impeccable timing.

Remarkable timing.

Coincident to all this, on July 26, 2021, a new Governor General, Mary Simon, was appointed – the first Indigenous Governor General in Canada’s history. On August 15, 2021, the newly installed Governor General [approved the request](#) of the Prime Minister to dissolve parliament, abandoning the next fixed election date of Oct. 2023. Likewise, the Conservative party’s demands to see [unredacted documents](#) related to the abrupt firing of two scientists at Winnipeg’s Level 4 biolab, where allegations of a possible [security breach or espionage](#) related to allegations of improperly sending samples of deadly Ebola and Henipah viruses to China, as reported June 10, 2021, collapsed upon the election call.

But back to the efforts to have Canada charged with genocide. The APTN 2017 article about James Louie’s quest also explained Mahoney’s view that though it might be possible to charge Canada under various human rights legislation, like that adopted by Canada in 2000, Canada would have to declare itself guilty of genocide, which, at the time, Mahoney thought was quite unlikely.

Surprise!

Oct. 27, 2022, the entire House of Commons voted unanimously to declare Indian Residential Schools as genocide, without a shred of evidence.

On June 8, 2022, Kimberly Murray had been appointed Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools.

On January 30, 2023 Murray made a submission to the [UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People](#). On March 03, 2023, a copy was sent to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The document opens with these three points:

*1. The existence of unmarked graves and burial sites of children who died while being forced to attend Indian Residential Schools<sup>1</sup> in Canada is a stark reality of the ongoing harm of assimilative government laws and policies that have targeted Indigenous Peoples. The Indian Residential School System was put in place for the express purpose of “killing the Indian in the child” and has been characterized as genocide by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC, 2015), Canada’s National Inquiry on*

*Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG National Inquiry, 2019) and by the Canadian House of Commons (2022).*

*2. For over 100 years, more than 150,000 First Nation, Inuit and Métis children were taken from their parents and communities and placed in state-funded, church-run Indian Residential Schools. Based on significant documentary evidence and Survivor testimony, the TRC concluded that many children who were forcibly taken to these institutions were subject to neglect, malnutrition, substandard health and living conditions, exposure to contagious diseases, mistreatment, medical experimentation, and extreme physical, sexual, spiritual and mental abuse by those entrusted with their care.*

*3. Unfortunately, many First Nations, Inuit and Métis children were never returned home from Indian Residential Schools. Survivors have shared testimonies of children who were there one day then disappeared the next, of newborn babies being put into incinerators, of being forced to dig the graves of children who died, and of knowing where on former Indian Residential School grounds children are buried in unmarked graves.*

In all three of the foregoing statements there are serious errors or exaggerations and for statement 3. there is no evidence of any of these horrific claims, only statements from former residential school students, decades after their attendance at school as children.

And sure enough, in March of 2023, UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights came to Canada for 10 days to investigate, leaving with a statement that residential schools are an [‘appalling legacy.’](#) His final report will be out in September (just in time for the House of Commons to resume and for Truth and Reconciliation Day!) Seems pretty obvious what his report will say.

As we have seen throughout history, nations guilty of genocide have to pay staggering reparations.

Canada began reparations for Indian Residential Schools back in 2007. In 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in Canada and in 2015 the final report was released to the public. The TRC was an activity within the largest class-action settlement claim in Canadian history, for the [Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#). Though the TRC work was substantial, it was not comprehensive, gathering only the *recollections* of participants. The people not subject to cross-examination nor were they required to present evidence or witnesses. While this may have been cathartic for former students, a legal standard of evidence was not met. The 6,500 statements represent about 4% of all students who had ever gone to Indian Residential Schools. The published reports are only a fraction of the entire

testimonies given, according to a fellow researcher. Sources report that the budget to interview former teaching staff was substantially cut, and many potential witnesses with positive stories to tell were concerned about retaliation. Thus, the report is imbalanced.

Contrary to Kimberly Murray's statement to the UN Special Rapporteur and UN Expert Mechanism, nowhere in these thousands of recollections in the TRC are there statements of students disappearing. Though claims were made of murders, and subsequently the claims of unmarked graves began popping up across the country, no criminal investigations began. The alleged crime scenes have not been cordoned off by the RCMP, but by First Nations bands themselves.

As journalist Terry Glavin pointed out, in his article "[The Year of the Graves](#)" of May 26, 2022, virtually all of the alleged 'unmarked gravesites' were well-known to the communities and well-documented for many years prior. They were often the common burial grounds for all members of the community from early times. The wooden crosses or headboards had simply disintegrated over time. No one cared about these graves at all, until a sudden confluence of interests, trying to frame Canada as being guilty of genocide.

Now the Kimberly Murray document, "[Sacred Responsibility...](#)" released June 16, 2023, includes erroneous claims in individual cases of Marieyvonne Alaka Ukaliannuk and Betzie Osborne, claiming they were forcibly taken from their homes to Indian Residential Schools, when this is not what the [documented evidence](#) shows. There are many other false or misleading claims in this document which experienced historical researchers ferreted out within hours of the report's release.

Kimberly Murray wants to shut down any questions about the unmarked graves issue, despite there never having been any criminal investigation into any one of the gravesites, and despite the fact that in her own report, she claims there are first-hand witnesses to the heinous murders described in lurid detail.

Kimberly Murray is a [lawyer](#). She should surely appreciate that murder...or on a grand scale...genocide, is a criminal offense. The first step in a criminal matter is to immediately secure the alleged crime scene, open a criminal investigation, question the witnesses, gather evidence and begin excavations to determine what is at these locations.

Yet Kimberly Murray did not call for such action once appointed, nor does her report call for such action.

Instead, Kimberly Murray calls for people like me, who bring forth the facts in this Kafka-esque ordeal, to be criminally treated like a Nazi Holocaust denier with fines or jail. Both Justice Minister and Attorney General David Lametti and Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations have expressed agreement on that in public statements and on social media.

It should be noted that in an interview published by [The Hub, featuring David Frum](#), he pointed out that the need to silence dissenting voices probably stems from the money involved for compensation of those declared victims of Indian Residential Schools. Most Canadians are likely unaware that this is on the order of Cdn \$60 billion, more than the current [Canadian defence budget](#). On top of that, the Canadian government has big plans for “[Nature-based Climate Solutions](#)” – basically the hawking of untouched forests, lands and waters for sale as carbon credits while pretending to be saving the planet – deals which could be in the hundreds of billions or ultimately trillions of dollars. Most of this land is on or near Indigenous claimed territories. The test case appears to have been the [Great Bear Rainforest](#), which Canadians co-funded but do not financially benefit from.

It is deeply concerning that the Justice Ministry’s “UNDRIP Action Plan,” issued June 20, 2023, just days after the Kimberly Murray report, makes the following statements:

*In addition to the measures set out under the “Oversight and Accountability” and “Monitoring and Reviewing” elements of the “Legislated Priorities” section, the Government of Canada will take the following actions in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples:*

*107. Support the ongoing work of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools and act upon her recommendations, including with a view to aligning federal laws with the UN Declaration. (Justice Canada)*

*108. Support an independent Advisory Committee that will provide guidance on prioritization, standards and recommendations on approaches to sharing different types of Indian Residential School documents, and to lead a whole-of-government process to scope and develop a federal approach to identify and share Indian Residential Schools-related documents with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada)*

*109. Develop distinction-based mechanisms to formalize participation of Indigenous peoples’ representative institutions throughout the Government of Canada’s processes for: ongoing implementation of Canada’s obligations under international human rights treaties; monitoring and reporting on Canada’s obligations under those*



*treaties; followup on recommendations by international human rights bodies; and consideration of adherence to international human rights treaties to which Canada is not yet party. (Canadian Heritage)*

There was no time for critical review between the issuing of the “Sacred Responsibility...” and the publishing of Canada’s UNDRIP Action Plan. There is no criminal investigation or evidence to back up the claims of murder and genocide. And yet there is Kimberly Murray’s urgent demand that historical researchers who show evidence debunking fatuous claims of disappearing or missing students should be treated as Holocaust deniers. The entire process appears to be built on sand.

What Canadians don’t see coming is the demand for more reparations for the unproven ‘genocide’ – which, based on recurring comments from those at the presentation ceremony of “Sacred Responsibility...” will include a lot more of money and a lot of ‘land back.’ Maybe all of it!

Based on my view of UNDRIP implementation and the Indian Residential School genocide claims, if you thought the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s was troublesome, *you ain’t seen nothing, yet*. Canada has 630 distinct First Nations communities, 50 nations and 50 languages, not to mention the Metis and Inuit as separate peoples.

The Kimberly Murray report and the submissions to the UN Expert Mechanism and UN Special Rapporteur are seriously flawed and lack evidence and should be withdrawn. But the impetus of Kimberly Murray’s demands for immediate change in law, without waiting for her final report (due in June 2024) to outlaw “residential school denialism” and to lockdown “Indigenous data sovereignty” suggests there is no desire for accurate inquiry, evidence or facts on the part of the federal government or other actors.

Meanwhile, those Canadians who are concerned about China meddling in elections, should zoom out and see China’s hand tipping the balance in this vast geopolitical passion play, one that begins with a pretend genocide, but may end with a real one, or with violent internal conflict.

What most Canadians don’t see at all is that Canada is full of all the rare metals and energy that China needs to implement its publicly stated plan of [#MadeInChina2025](#) – where it will become the dominant global manufacturing centre for all high-tech and advanced industries, all of which require the critical minerals we have, most of which are located on land adjacent to Indigenous areas. In fact, as Guillaume Pitron has documented, there’s a [rare metals war](#) going on. We’re in it. We just don’t know it. It’s a [war without rules](#).

Recall that a Chinese vessel made an unannounced and therefore illegal landing at [Tuktoyaktuk in 1999](#) and since then has announced it plans to use the Northwest Passage for shipping. In 2017, the Liberal government gave approval for [China to sail through the Arctic](#) on grounds that the ship was on a research mission.

So how could the implementation, or non-implementation of UNDRIP be problematic for Canada?

In a 2011 academic paper by Frances Widdowson, titled: “Aboriginal Rights and Our Common Future: The Perils of Endorsing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” she writes:

*“It was maintained that recognition of a right to self-determination for indigenous peoples also could have a significant impact on a state’s prosperity because “if indigenous peoples constitute a “people” for the purpose of self determination, they may have the right to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources. This could have far-reaching implications for the economic well-being of a state, especially where the group concerned is territorially cohesive, concentrated in an area rich in natural resources, and claiming the right to self-determination in order to secede from the state.”*

Widdowson, then a tenured professor at Mount Royal University, long a critic of the [aboriginal industry](#) of Canada and the [Indigenization of universities](#), the impetus for which stems mostly from the [reconciliation recommendations](#) of the flawed and narrow TRC report, was [summarily fired by MRU](#) and labelled a heretic by society. Had the TRC included more personal testimonies like that of [Pauline Gladstone Dempsey](#), it is unlikely that UNDRIP would have been adopted in Canada. And had more Canadians understood Widdowson’s critical review of aboriginal affairs, that it is creating a two-tiered society that is [separate but unequal](#) and unsustainable, it is unlikely Canada would be facing international charges of genocide or reparations in the billions, the threat of land back demands or extortionary violence.

Following news reports of the alleged 215 unmarked graves at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, some [71 churches in Canada were vandalized](#) or burned down by arsonists.

Also remember that in winter of 2020, Indigenous activists shut down Canada’s road and rail infrastructure for two months in well-planned, well-coordinated activity that nearly cratered the economy. That activity was initiated at the February 2019 [“PowerShift”](#) 5-day conference in Ottawa. Seems like such a coordinated shut

down could easily happen again. That action was related to the Wet'suwet'en rejection of pipeline development on their territory which they say contravenes their Indigenous sovereignty and tribal laws. This kind of world view is endorsed by UNDRIP. Thus, Canada's conventional rule of law becomes irrelevant.

Canada is guilty of geopolitical naivety, but we're not guilty of genocide. From James Louie's first attempt in 2007 a real case for claims of genocide against Canada has been made, manufactured, one might say, by various parties that filled in the blanks that he was missing. It's no wonder that a small sidebar throughout the UNDRIP Action Plan says: "*Ajuinnata (Inuktitut meaning: A commitment to action/to never give up.)*" It is coincidental, perhaps, that this is also a word near and dear to Governor General Mary Simon, as reported on her Wikipedia page: "Simon considers the concept of *ajuinnata* as an important theme for her mandate as governor general."

We're about to be Balkanized by UNDRIP.

One side is determined to never give up; the other is asleep.

(Note: A reader has offered some additional information - [Comments - Manufacturing a Genocide](#) )

End.

#### **References to Unrestricted Warfare:**

[http://airforceapp.forces.gc.ca/cfawc/eLibrary/Journal/Vol1-2008/Iss1-Spring/Books/Unrestricted%20Warfare-Chinas%20Master%20Plan%20to%20Destroy%20America\\_e.pdf](http://airforceapp.forces.gc.ca/cfawc/eLibrary/Journal/Vol1-2008/Iss1-Spring/Books/Unrestricted%20Warfare-Chinas%20Master%20Plan%20to%20Destroy%20America_e.pdf)

Unrestricted Warfare

[https://ia600201.us.archive.org/0/items/Unrestricted\\_Warfare\\_Qiao\\_Liang\\_and\\_Wang\\_Xiangsui/Unrestricted\\_Warfare\\_Qiao\\_Liang\\_and\\_Wang\\_Xiangsui.pdf](https://ia600201.us.archive.org/0/items/Unrestricted_Warfare_Qiao_Liang_and_Wang_Xiangsui/Unrestricted_Warfare_Qiao_Liang_and_Wang_Xiangsui.pdf)

## The Dangerous Allure of Omitting Facts and Historical Context on Residential Schools

*Note: A shorter version of this article was published in the Western Standard, another version at FCPP.*

Michelle Cyca's article in The Walrus about [residential school denialism](#) of May 4, 2023, gets one thing right. She mentions tuberculosis. Once.

Like many who write about those who suffered at residential schools, Cyca seems oblivious to the context of the times – in denial of it – one might say. Tuberculosis was the greatest killer of all Canadians until about 1960. About 60% of the children at residential schools who died, were taken by TB – or – consumption as it was called then. As Dr. Bryce noted, most of the children who came to the schools were infected by it, many who came to the schools had been orphaned by it. The ratios of those back home who died from it are much higher than the students who were attending schools where they were fed regularly, instructed on modern health and sanitation methods of the time, and given medical care.

Let us set a frame of reference for the issue of public health and history.

In the course of the recent COVID epidemic many people stood on their doorsteps in the evening and banged on pots and pans to celebrate the commitment of well-paid medical workers on the front line of infectious danger. But the selfless commitment of the priests, nuns, ministers, and Indigenous staff, who worked and lived in residential schools, earning a pittance, who were living with the risk of contracting highly contagious and deadly TB from their small charges, is disparaged daily in the press.

No pot banging for you men and women, acting in the service of G-d with no PPEs, danger pay or special shopping hours.

Thus, let us keep in mind the strange psychological phenomena that swept through society during COVID, as we contemplate a time when, as of 1908, 1 Canadian died every hour from TB during the day, and 2 died every hour of the night. (Wherrett)

Robert Carney was an eminent Canadian historian and former University of Alberta professor and father of the more famous Mark Carney. Robert Carney's work is crucial to understanding residential schools as he did not self-identify with the silly moniker of 'settler historian.' He wrote before the time of 'woke' historians and reporters who try to make history into what 'should have been, if it were only today.' He wrote about what was – including the good and the bad – unlike those of today who only write about the bad.

Michelle Cyca's article attempts to smear any person who brings historical context to the discussion of residential schools, calling them 'deniers.' As Robert Carney wrote in his critique of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report (which was a similar study to that of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee reports of today): *"In commenting on the appropriateness of historical comparisons, [Norman] Davies states that "to sympathize with those who have suffered does not mean that historians who discuss harmful experiences should abandon their critical faculties, ignore the full range of human catastrophes or avoid all comparisons." This does not imply that*

*juxtaposing and comparing events will necessarily lead to them being equated. It means instead, according to Davies, that "We mustn't rush to the conclusion that [an historical event] is unique before we have compared it to other events which in some ways resemble it."*

Thus, it is quite appropriate to compare other institutions of the time. Carney wrote: *"Aboriginal residential schools were organized along lines similar to other boarding schools. This fact apparently formed no part of the Commissioners' deliberations. Had this been otherwise, they might have acknowledged that their descriptions of Aboriginal schools as "places where boisterous and unorganized games" were forbidden and where there was "employment for every moment" were equally applicable to upper class boarding schools like Upper Canada College. In referring to the "repetitive chores" assigned pupils in Aboriginal schools, the chapter does not mention that they were much the same as the ones children faced daily in isolated rural areas and reserves. But such comparisons would have led to competing analyses and opposing interpretations of residential schooling as an historical event, an outcome which the Commissioners evidently wanted to avoid. Hence nothing is said about the training given Aboriginal children in their home communities being regarded as arduous and unappreciated by some of those on the receiving end."*

What we also never hear from commentators like Cyca, perhaps because she has been misled by settler historians like Sean Carleton, is that Indian Residential Schools were the local social services and medical hub in their time.

Robert Carney explained: *"But unlike most other boarding schools whose objective was to school children in a highly controlled residential setting, Aboriginal boarding schools were multipurpose institutions that took in many children who suffered from various forms of social, emotional and physical distress. The chapter contends that these "social welfare" functions did not become prevalent until a decade or two before the schools were closed. The fact is that Aboriginal residential schools always played a major role in caring for children in need."*

We hear repetitive stories from repeaters like Cyca, of children being forcibly taken from their homes to go to residential schools. In fact, except for removing a child from a dangerous family setting where the child was at risk, attendance at school was voluntary until 1920 and force was rarely used. In fact, the 2011 Lebeuf Report on IRS and RCMP on the role of officers about truancy (p. 62) says that officers were involved in less than one hundred cases between 1905 to 1965; typically, community members would also be involved in truancy searches as there was a danger to the children.

However, it may be that former students are conflating the fact that some family or tribe members were forcibly removed from their families for medical treatment for Tuberculosis.

*1914, Amendment to Indian Act: “Section 6 gives the Superintendent General power to make regulations for the prevention and mitigation of disease, etc. This will enable the department to deal effectively with epidemics, to establish quarantine, etc., and to commit to hospitals and sanatoria persons suffering from tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases.”*

If we consider the many heavy-handed police efforts during the COVID epidemic, where the police officers were trying to enforce health directives, whether regarding the numbers of people gathered or their physical proximity, masked or unmasked, vaxxed or unvaxxed or unstated, perhaps we can begin to understand the complexities of a time when TB was a very serious threat to the entire community. There was no cure per se (until the 1950s) and the socio-economic consequences for a TB infected person and their family were extremely destructive. This was true for all Canadians, but the challenge of language, distance from care, culture compounded the fear for Indigenous people.

A very touching film called “The Necessities of Life” ([French](#): “Ce qu’il faut pour vivre”) by Benoit Pilon shows the complicated challenge of trying to heal a tubercular Inuit man in a Quebec sanatorium where there was no common language. The Inuit man, Tiivii, and his family go on board a Canadian government medical ship up north, where he is diagnosed as having tuberculosis. He is told he must go south, leaving his wife and children behind. He is reluctant, but his wife insists. In the background we see a child being taken from a mother – both screaming and crying as they are torn apart.

Tiivii arrives in a world beyond his imagination, one of travelling in cars through a city and living in a building made of bricks and stone with stairwells, not a tent or igloo surrounded by low fjords and hills. As with the stories of homesick children at residential schools, this Inuit man tries to run away, longing for his family and the familiar beauty of his vast, open homeland. The medical treatments are painful, and it is difficult for the doctors and the compassionate nurse to explain why or how this pain will help him get well. Around him are a handful of other male patients, some with horrendous coughing and gagging; some suffering tubercular hemorrhages where suddenly a fountain of blood will spit from a patient’s mouth.

As I watched this beautiful film, it confirmed for me my earlier thoughts that some of the more lurid accusations about residential schools related to allegations of murder and disappearance may be conflation of real events that are actually related to TB symptoms, removal of students to sanatoria, and the pain and horror of medical treatments (collapsing a lung, poking needle between the rib), the gory nature of a person suddenly spewing volumes of blood, people withering away to be like skeletons, people dying.

This is not denial. This was the reality.

As in the film, some people did not recover from TB. Thus, the fact that former students or family members know there are missing children, is reality. It is likely that the missing person died of TB (or other causes) and their body lies in a local grave, marked with a simple wooden cross. For those waiting at home, the person is missing.

The only curious part is that no one really looked until recently. This raises serious questions that no one wants to let people ask. It is curious that the first big reveal was in Kamloops, near the path of the Trans Mountain Pipeline. Thus, claims of 'genocide' and mass graves significantly raise the stakes and provide substantial headline fodder for blood thirsty newspapers. It also meant court testimony from protestors had even more heart-rending commentary, such as that of hereditary Chief Sawses, who claimed he should not serve 28 days in jail for obstructing the pipeline as he had already [served 10 years in jail in an Indian Residential School](#) for not committing any crime. This kind of material takes the Tar Sands Campaign geopolitical trade war to a whole new level.

Michelle Cyca admits in her article that: *"My own grandmother, who attended St. Michael's Indian Residential School in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, also spoke warmly of her time there."*

But she asks no questions about the sudden surge across Canada, in what appears to be a coordinated campaign of Ground Penetrating Radar discoveries of unmarked graves, followed by this or that Indigenous group making land back claims or launching resource related lawsuits.

Cyca states children died by the thousands due to neglect; how many cases were in fact a rejection of medical aid for TB or other ailments?

Though in the West, during the Treaty negotiations, the 'medicine chest' of Western medicines was a key demand by Chiefs, Western approaches to health were not always accepted by Indigenous people, despite the Canadian government sometimes providing an entire hospital.

*1913, Six Nations: "After being given a faithful trial of four and a half years the Six Nations' hospital was closed on March 31 last. In spite of the earnest endeavours of the department, the Indian superintendent, the medical superintendent and the hospital board, it has been found that Indians suffering from tuberculosis will not take advantage of the undoubted facilities offered by the institution for effecting a cure until their cases are so far advanced as to be hopeless, and only a few of the advanced cases entered the hospital. It was, therefore, decided by the hospital board and the council*

*that, the expense not being commensurate with results, the hospital should be closed...An efficient board of health assists the medical officer in enforcing sanitary measures. The council-house, where large gatherings are held, is regularly and thoroughly cleaned after each meeting, carbolic acid being freely used. The medical officer and others have taken advantage of every opportunity of urging improved dwellings, cleaner surroundings, particularly in regard to drinking water, and the general observance of the laws of health. A largely attended meeting was held in the Ohsweken Baptist church on the evening of what was designated 'Tuberculosis Sunday,' and addressed by the pastor, the medical officer and the superintendent."*

As we saw during COVID, our typical concepts of sanitation changed radically as for some time, everything that entered a household was separated and wiped down with sanitizer. Every store, restaurant, business required hand sanitization before entry. It was a strange time that divided families, friends and business partners.

Imagine decades ago, how bizarre it must have felt for children coming from communal living on a trap line or in tipi to a place with beds and bathrooms where the religious sisters and brothers strictly enforced things like hand washing and strictly enforced no sharing of food or utensils for reasons of public health. Yet their parents had signed their children up to go to school. Unless one was orphaned, only registered children attended Indian Residential Schools, and there was a waitlist.

*1913, Micmacs Agency, Nova Scotia: "Much more care is being taken by Indians as regards cleanliness, it being difficult to teach them the necessity of isolation in case of tuberculosis, as they do not believe it to be infectious."*

TB itself is a trickster in how it presents. Often there are no outward symptoms for a long time. The person simply becomes weaker and more exhausted. Unless there is a proper physical exam with an Xray, it is impossible to know the real condition of the lungs. TB can move throughout the body as well, attacking joints and bones, even manifesting as [tubercular meningitis](#), which is most common in children ages 1 to 5.

In previous articles I have mentioned the contemporary work ["Finally when I started falling down": Indigenous tuberculosis patient experiences of health and illness on the Canadian prairies."](#)<sup>2</sup> The paper documents the fear and reluctance of today's Indigenous adults to seek medical care, much of it based on historic experience that patients either remembered or had been told about. They remembered that people in their communities disappeared for years, sometimes forever if the diagnosis was TB. Those who returned home from the san told of painful treatments and how they suffered in isolation from family and friends. In the testimonies in the 'falling down' paper, people expressed fear that they would lose their job, or they'd be ejected from their



home, family or ostracized by their circle of friends. Thus, the patients interviewed literally relied on over-the-counter pain relief pills for months, hoping their symptoms were 'nothing but a cold.' Finally, their body forced them to seek medical help when the disease was so advanced, as one patient said he did not go to the doctor, "until I started falling down."

In today's modern, even sterile environment, it is difficult to turn back the page to a time when TB was rampant when people typically used a cloth handkerchief to sneeze or cough into. A novel solution was developed in the absence of today's fancy Kleenex which was the use of newspaper to blow your nose into, and then one could simply throw the paper away (or preferably burn it). Even the poor could 'afford' this solution, and it significantly helped stop the spread of TB. This was a time when laws were written to make it illegal to spit, in an effort to halt the spread of TB in public places.

At the time, when people hemorrhaged blood, often the bedsheets, and even clothes of a diseased or deceased would be bundled up and burned to try and prevent the spread of the disease. Witnessing such events would be traumatizing to any person, let alone a homesick child in a residential school or TB sanatorium.

Just as Indigenous people in many communities did not think TB was infectious, in off-reserve communities, people were terrified that that TB was hereditary as well as infectious. This did lead to some social practises intended to exclude Indigenous people from society as it was widely known there was a higher TB infection and mortality rate among Indigenous people. Yet those G-d serving men and women in religious orders at Indian Residential Schools sacrificed themselves to the care and education of the children.

Though a microcosm of the burden on society that TB imposed, the impact of COVID on our social interactions, our economy, health care system and personal health care practises, might make us think of how challenging it was, especially in the early days, to care for children who literally had no idea what was intended by some of the practices meant to keep them healthy and alive.

Since not all potential students went to residential or day schools, and most attended on average only 3 years, we must ask the uncomfortable question about why the other members of Canada's Indigenous society did not maintain their own language, culture and skills that the plaintiff residential school students claim was 'stolen' from them?

The plaintiff residential school students are given prominence in the Truth and Reconciliation Committee reports, but in truth, the TRC only interviewed 6,500 people. While this is a significant number of people, it is really only about 4% of all attendees

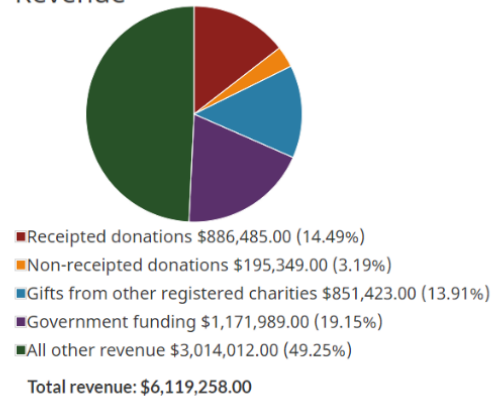
over time. We cannot assume that everyone we did not hear from had these same experiences.

I understand from a research colleague that many former staff, some of whom were Indigenous, were too intimidated to testify to support the positive story; they were afraid of recrimination or retaliation. Indeed, many First Nations reserves are rife with drug gangs, which of course is automatically blamed on residential schools, too. Say or do the wrong thing on that reserve and your house might get burned down or you might get beaten up. This is the opposite of the Ten Commandments that were taught at residential schools.

Thus, when Michelle Cyca only includes one mention of TB in her story, rather than explaining the historical context, readers will feel repulsed to read her claim that one quarter of all students who had been registered in residential schools died. The factual corollary to this claim is that three quarters of all students attending residential schools lived, meanwhile back on reserve, the Grim Reaper TB - ‘captain of all these men of death’ – swept through with his mighty scythe.

But in fact, while I critique this work of Michelle Cyca, I condemn the lack of editorial due diligence by the staff at The Walrus, particularly because it is a Canadian ‘charity’ that is not only taking money from the pockets of taxpaying Canadians to vilify those same taxpayers, but also because [the editors are doing a terrible job](#) of making sure that stories have journalistic and historical integrity. I count 12 people in their editorial department (though one is on leave). Surely with a total revenues of \$6,119,258.00 a year, of which \$1,171,989.00 (19.15%) comes from government and \$851,423.00 (13.91%) are gifts from other registered charities along with a dozen people in editorial, stories on Indian Residential Schools should be filled with facts like those I have presented here free of charge, without payment from any source, provided simply by my own passion for accurate history and a love for Canada.

Revenue



Received donations \$886,485.00 (14.49%)  
Non-receipted donations \$195,349.00 (3.19%)  
Gifts from other registered charities \$851,423.00 (13.91%)  
Government funding \$1,171,989.00 (19.15%)  
All other revenue \$3,014,012.00 (49.25%)

**Total revenue: \$6,119,258.00**

I guess, let us apply what Cyca says about those with dissenting views on Indian Residential Schools to the Walrus ‘charity’ and see how it fits: “And it doesn’t hurt that there is money to be made in peddling contrarian views, particularly when they validate the egos of fragile people preoccupied with their own irreproachable goodness.”

Am I doing this right?

I guess a “*registered charitable nonprofit with an educational mandate to create forums for conversations on matters vital to Canadians*” that leaves out vital facts is a reality denier. This is an organization that claims in their CRA description: “*The Walrus Foundation publishes independent, fact-based journalism...*”

No pot banging for you, for this story, Walrus. And not for your Board Chair, Jodi Butts, wife of Gerald Butts. Independent. Fact-based. Really?

## CBC Does Not Represent all Canadians.

### Contrary to their Mandate

Hello,

I would like to offer this rebuttal to the report of the above titled report of May 27, 2023.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/murray-sinclair-jim-mccrae-resignation-1.6856909>

I look forward to you keeping your stated position of the CBC representing the views of all Canadians.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Stirling  
Alberta

## The Canadian Indian Residential School Genocide – Guilty without a Fair Trial

CBC reported that Murray Sinclair, former chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, expressed outrage at the appointment of James McCrae, former Attorney General of Manitoba, to a provincial judicial selection committee, claiming that McCrae’s recent articles that held dissenting views on Indian Residential Schools were ‘residential school denialism.’

As a former lawyer and judge, surely Sinclair knows that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees an accused “(d) to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.”

In this case, Canada is the accused. We are accused of genocide by China. The UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples was just here to investigate and he, not so impartially stated upon departure, that residential schools constitute an ‘appalling legacy.’

Indeed, the 6,000-odd personal testimonies in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports reveal many cases of horrific accusations of abuse. But these are personal statements, recollections from decades ago, not cross-examined and not supported by evidence. Despite the name of the commission using the word “Truth,” few people are aware that the commission was designed with a bias to provide catharsis for those reporting, thus there was no confrontation with alleged perpetrators nor was there cross-examination or a requirement to present substantiating evidence or witnesses. People who self-identified as residential school survivors were [specifically sought out](#); the budget for hearing from school staff was cut to one tenth of its original \$100,000. The recorded testimonies of non-aboriginal staff done by a professional historian were not transcribed. The total TRC budget was \$60 million.

The 6,000-odd people who testified make up only about 4% of all the students who attended Indian Residential Schools. So, we don’t know what the other 96% experienced.

We do know that many of the people who dedicated their lives to serving the children at Indian Residential Schools were not heard and those still living were horrified by the accusations.

*“The [Grey Nuns worked with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate](#) in about eight of the 15 Catholic residential schools in Alberta, St-Yves said. Altogether, more than 800 members of her order worked in about 20 different schools over many decades.”*

*“A lot of those sisters are not alive anymore,” she said. “So, we cannot verify (the stories).”*

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission went so far as to deem Indian Residential Schools as ‘cultural genocide’ because most of the former students who gave their recollections said they had lost their language and culture while attending school. In fact, the Oblate brothers and other missionaries were the ones who created syllabic ‘alphabets’ for a written form of several Indigenous languages to preserve the culture.

The announcement of the discovery of 215 ground disturbances at the Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds, deemed to be unmarked graves of missing children, was exploited by China, which has publicly stated it will be a world dominant power by 2049. Many senior military people say China is conducting a global [“War Without Rules.”](#) China flipped an attempt by Canada to have

China investigated for genocide against the Uyghur people, into an investigation of Canada for genocide against Indigenous students at Indian Residential Schools.

But Canada and the former residential school workers are not being considered ‘innocent until proven guilty.’ The unvetted statements of 4% of former students and the media circus which escalated Ground Penetrating Radar ‘disturbances’ to unmarked graves, to mass graves to mass murder has convicted – by public trial in the press - this country and thousands of residential school workers of a genocide that did not happen. The international consequences could be severe if the UN report condemns Canada of genocide without proper evidence or due process.

Why do I say no genocide happened?

The evidence at Indian Residential Schools shows that students were enrolled by their parents; they returned every summer to their parents. This is not genocide.

Some students died at school, typically of tuberculosis (TB) though sometimes other illnesses or injury. In each case there is a death certificate, often signed by the parents. This is not genocide.

In the case of Simon Jeffries of the Shishalh Nation, for instance, reported by APTN as a ‘missing’ child, there is a death certificate, there was an inquiry into his death (intestinal obstruction), and he is buried in the local cemetery. This is not genocide.

These sad events were carefully documented by the Indian Residential School operators because of Catholic and other religious tradition, and also because schools or bands got their funding based on where the individual was resident. If a student passed away, that funding was stopped, of course.

Robert Carney, the father of Mark Carney, was an eminent historian and University of Alberta professor. In several of his papers he notes that residential schools were the social services hub, that orphans or children from dysfunctional or dangerous families were given priority for care. Giving shelter to orphans is not genocide. It is Christian charity.

Carney also noted that the schools were the local medical center, especially in the early days. Thus, there may be unmarked graves of local people or travellers who succumbed to an illness while seeking help at an Indian Residential School, but it is unlikely that these are bodies of students as all students were carefully accounted for.

China led a terror-state alliance accusing Canada of genocide at the UN, on June 22, 2021, three weeks after the Kamloops claims of unmarked graves. In a case of blinding stupidity, on Oct. 27, 2022, Canadian members of parliament unanimously voted to describe Indian Residential Schools as ‘genocide’ without any valid evidence offered, going along to get along with an NDP motion sponsored by Leah Gazan.

This is on top of Prime Minister Trudeau's statement in June of 2019 that he accepted the Missing and Murdered Women report as 'genocide,' a claim staunchly rejected by [retired Canadian general Romeo Dallaire](#), who served during the Rwandan genocide.

Perhaps the MPs voted out of compassion for those who did suffer at Indian Residential Schools; perhaps out of a misguided sense that this would be a reconciliatory step; perhaps political expediency; perhaps not wanting to face the cancel culture that destroyed Senator Lynn Beyak who argued for a more balanced view of history – whatever the case, our own elected officials have also condemned our own country as guilty of genocide, without trial.

China's terror-state coalition must be doing high-fives and backflips at our geopolitical stupidity. In terms of trade, international finance, investment and internal civil unrest, the stakes are now very high for Canada on an issue that has never been proven in a court of law!

Conviction without trial for the worst of all crimes shows how the political myth of genocide is leading to a debasement of judicial norms. Because Canada has been convicted without trial, we are left with having to prove that the Indian Residential School system wasn't a genocide. In other words, we find ourselves proving a negative.

And those who try to present evidence in this matter are summarily cancelled.

Murray Sinclair continues that cancel culture in his attack on James McCrae, reminiscent of China's own 'struggle sessions' under Mao, which demanded absolute compliance with the party line. One has to wonder why there is a rush to silence people with significant historical knowledge on this matter or to bully them into silence with epithets like 'residential school denier,' when the very fate of Canada's future may rely on the claims of unmarked and mass graves which have never been exhumed, and the recollections of decades ago, of only 4% of residential school attendees.

Particularly when the wealth of historical evidence shows that [students thrived](#) and their limited education (an average of 3 years for most) gave them the skills to operate in contemporary society. How else were people able to present their personal stories to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? They learned something.

There is an 'appalling legacy' of [tragic dysfunction](#) in many Indigenous communities.

Look to the complicated grief caused by the present-day unrelenting fratricide going on with the massive fentanyl and suicide deaths in many Indigenous communities, driven by aboriginal gangs.

Who is responsible for the influx of fentanyl to Canada? [China](#). A 2003 US Department of Justice report on [Transnational Activities of Chinese Criminal Gangs](#) reports that the "The Akwesasne

Mohawk Territory in northern New York, Walpole Island, Ontario at the west end of Lake Erie, and the Niagara frontier region at the east end of Lake Erie have been transit points into the United States from Canada for trafficking migrants and goods.”

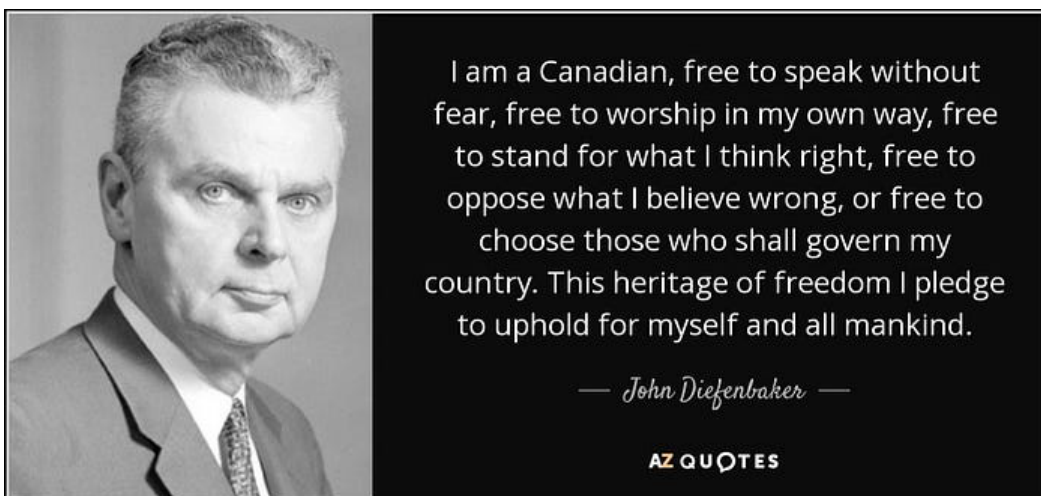
Don't blame nuns and priests for the sins of heartless gangsters. Don't convict Canada of 'genocide' just because some media reporter is a repeater of unsupported claims or a former judge and lawyer fails to observe the fundamental principles of a fair trial, instead actively inciting a public hanging in the media.

## Senate Testimony Reveals Missing Children's Names and Graves are on Ancestry.com

The Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples just released a report titled, "[Honoring the Children Who Never Came Home: Truth, Education and Reconciliation](#)." In it they strongly advocate for censoring people like me who like to educate you with the truth about Indian Residential Schools so that we can find meeting points for reconciliation. They state it this way as Recommendation 6: *"That the Government of Canada take every action necessary to combat the rise of residential school denialism."*

Wow. That sure flies in the face of my sacred Canadian creed:

*"I am Canadian, a free Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship God in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, free to choose those who govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind."* (John Diefenbaker, House of Commons Debates, 1 July 1960)



In the transcript of the [Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples of 21 March 2023](#), Kimberly Murray testifies her frustration that they can't find an international judicial body to charge Canada with genocide, because a number of people have said Indian Residential Schools were genocide.

Kimberly Murray was appointed by an [Order in Council](#) to be Special Interlocutor under this mandate: *"The Special Interlocutor will function independently and impartially, in a non-partisan and transparent manner to achieve the objectives of her mandate."*

In her interim report "Sacred Responsibilities...", she breaches that federal mandate saying: *"I want to emphasize this point: my role is to give voice to the children. It is not to be neutral or objective — it is to be a fierce and fearless advocate to ensure that the bodies and spirits of the missing children are treated with the care, respect, and dignity that they deserve."*

Thus, the intended-to-be-impartial Special Interlocutor said to the Senate committee: *"We have said in this country, over and over, it was genocide. It was genocide. Senator Audette said that in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Former senator Murray Sinclair said it. A former Supreme Court of Canada Justice said it. Most recently, Canada said it and passed that motion. So what now? Where is the accountability? If the International Criminal Court isn't going to take steps to hold the state accountable, then absolutely, we need to find another mechanism."*

Saying the word 'genocide' does not make it so.

Concerning in the Senate testimony is the reference to former Senator Murray Sinclair's off-the-cuff claim that there may be 25,000 lost children or more. There is no evidence to support this statement, but because it has been made by such a prominent Indigenous person, it is now taken as gospel. I say there is no evidence (other than oral statements from elders or former students, who are recalling events from their childhood and who do not account for such numbers in their statements) because we have no records of reports to police of missing students who were not accounted for.

Think about that.

Over the course of more than one hundred years, and 150,000 student attendees, there are no documented cases of missing persons reports by parents about students at Indian Residential Schools, who are not accounted for in the school, hospital, sanatoria, Indian Agent, or death records. The Sinclair comment appears in the Senate testimony related



to trying to find an external, expert organization to help with exhumations and forensic work:

*“We did find one, and that is the Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala, or FAFG. They have been engaged in this work for the past 30 years. They are dealing, essentially, with Indigenous people — the Mayans who were caught up in their internal conflicts. Thus far, they have exhumed, identified and repatriated in excess of 7,000 individuals — and many more to go — of an estimated 40,000 individuals who were disappeared in their internal conflicts.”*

***“You will know from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, from former chief commissioner, Murray Sinclair — your fellow senator at one point — his estimate was something in the nature of 25,000 Indigenous children were lost.”***

The Mayan people of Guatemala were subjected to an actual physical genocide, which is curiously frequently compared to Canadian Indian Residential School experiences in many academic works. On this basis alone, it seems that UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Human Rights, José Francisco Calí Tzay, who is Mayan Kakchiquel, should have recused himself from his investigation, and a more impartial individual should have been engaged. Calí Tzay spent 10 days here in March and based on that short visit and a submission made to him by [Kimberly Murray in January of 2023](#), claimed that Indian Residential Schools had an ‘appalling legacy.’ Ten days seems a fleeting time to make such an assessment of more than one hundred years of history. It is unclear by what right civil servant Kimberly Murray had in sending such documentation to Calí Tzay. Murray also sent a [six page report](#) to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in March of 2023. Her original role was to be a liaison between the self-described residential school survivors and to make recommendations to the Justice Minister. It feels like she far overstepped her mandate by sending these unvetted, unofficial reports to international agencies and she has prejudiced Canada’s case in the international realm, especially when [China has accused Canada of genocide at the UN](#).

I worked on a documentary in the 1980’s on genocide. I read dozens of peer-reviewed papers and historical books. Sadly, I also had to watch hours of horrific archival footage of the many genocides of the 20th century. Ultimately, our finished documentary was so depressing, we decided not to release it.

One of the bizarre ironies of history we found in some of the archival footage is that of the Nazi’s invading Ukraine on their way to attack Moscow. They were stopped in their tracks by the discovery of mass graves of Ukrainian victims of Stalin’s genocidal *Holodomor*. The Nazis being keen on documentation, they photographed and filmed it, thus proving what [brave journalists like Gareth Jones and Malcolm Muggeridge](#) had secretly snuck in to report on. It should be noted that the New York

Times employed a Russian double agent, Walter Duranty, who wrote articles dismissing claims of the intentional starvation of the Ukrainian *kulaks*. The newspaper won a Pulitzer Prize for his disinformation. For LYING to the public. They got a Pulitzer. My point? Genocide means intentional murdering of hundreds of thousands or millions of your own people. Canada never did that.

No surprise that the New York Times was also front and centre, with [headline reporting of a 'mass grave](#) of 215 children's bodies' found at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. All that was found were soil disturbances, tracked by Ground Penetrating Radar. For some bizarre reason, the [RCMP were called off the investigation](#) — which normally would be deemed obstruction of justice. But here we are.

In Canada today, we are no longer under Canadian law, but rather under some uneasy, unidentifiable blend of Indigenous law. Whatever that is. Indigenous law appears to be whatever a particular band or First Nation claim it to be. No one can verify it because Indigenous people did not have any written language until Europeans arrived, and ironically, it was the priests — particularly the Oblates — who made a concerted effort to create syllabics and dictionaries to ensure the languages were preserved. [Indigenous law](#) was oral law. Canadian law is written law, and 'case law' — hundreds of thousands of legal cases documented over centuries, guides decisions of today.

Indigenous law references crop up a number of times in the Senate transcripts. This is due to the Canadian government's adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) for which an "[Action Plan](#)" was issued, just four days after Kimberly Murray's interim report. *[Note: None of the terror bloc countries aligned with China have adopted UNDRIP.]*

Kimberly Murray tells the Senate committee: *"We will be in Toronto next to talk about the importance of Indigenous law and how we incorporate Indigenous law into a new legal framework."*

How many Canadians are aware that a new legal framework is being created based on UNDRIP and claims of genocide, unproven in any court anywhere in the world. A legal framework that may allow Indigenous grave diggers to access your property without a legal warrant, restrict your commercial activity on your own land, declare lands to be sacred 'possible' graveyards and therefore untouchable.

Kimberly Murray tells the Senate: *"We need access to land. This is what keeps me awake many nights, thinking about how some things could escalate. We have landowners that aren't allowing survivors onto properties, even to do ceremony, let alone to search the grounds. My office has had to write letters and have meetings with landowners to try to convince them that this is the right thing to do. We have landowners that have campers*

*on top of the burials of children — known burials. We don't have any law to put a stop to this."*

That is because, at present, we have property laws that prevent trespass. These are being eroded by historical revisionists who, even in the tragic [Colten Boushie case](#), make the argument that Colten was not really trespassing because the land in question was part of Treaty 6. These authors claim the original signatories to Treaty 6 (or other treaties in general) did not know what they were signing or did not understand what ceding rights meant. Extensive work by [Dr. Hugh Dempsey](#) in his books and articles, much of it drawn from interviews with elders, some of whom were of the era of Treaty 7, or who were direct descendants, show that the chiefs of the time were very competent in negotiations and knew what they were signing. The Chiefs also knew that the alternative would be for the murderous Indian Wars from the US to spill over the border without some arrangement for Crown protection for their people.

Probably the biggest surprise (and a great relief) in the Senate testimony by Kimberly Murray, is the fact that anyone wanting to trace their Indigenous relatives can go on Ancestry.com and find out all the details available. (No, this is not a sponsored op-ed.)

Kimberly Murray states: *"I'm going to give you an example. This keeps happening. **The family doesn't know where their loved one is buried.** They were taken to a sanatorium, an Indian residential school. They were just told — and I know Senator Audette knows this all too well in Quebec — that they died. I can get the name of that individual, I can log into the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, find the name of the student, find a record, which will lead me down to another record, which will lead me to [ancestry.com](#). Why are families having to go to my office to find the death certificate of their loved one on [ancestry.com](#) when the provinces and territories won't just provide those records?"*

*"And then those records will lead you to where they're buried, hundreds of miles away from their home community. We are now seeing families going to cemeteries. I get this a lot. **The children aren't missing; they're buried in the cemeteries. They're missing because the families were never told where they're buried.** Every Indigenous family needs to know where their child is buried. When we find that and we know that they're going to have a little bit closure now, they know the truth and they have some answers, that's what keeps us going."*

So, "the children aren't missing; they're buried in cemeteries."

And "They're missing because the families were never told where they're buried."

Wow! What a revelation!

Instead of granting millions of dollars to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, it looks like we could just give one member of an Indigenous family a ~\$50 starter subscription to Ancestry.com and call it a day. No need for empire building of a multi-million dollar Indigenous-equivalent “Holocaust” edifice at the University of Manitoba, the holder of the trust deed for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. No need to bring in the Guatemalan forensic experts on Indigenous-led exhumations. No need for Calí Tzay to further decimate Canada’s reputation on the international stage.

And though the thrust of the entire Special Interlocutor’s mission is said to be to ‘bring the children home’ — in some cases, even close family really are not that keen on the idea. Witness the story of [Jonish Saganash](#) who died of rheumatic fever during his attendance at Bishop Horden School. Through an amazing series of coincidences his sister subsequently found both the cause of his death and his burial site. But his own mother, though she cried, was not interested in repatriating his remains, nor visiting the gravesite.

The Senate testimony is deeply concerning to me, in that it appears this search for bodies and graves is trying to upend Canadian property laws and provincial resource rights laws without the public noticing.

Kimberly Murray tells the Senate: *“Now we have “little brother” — the provincial governments — insisting in Saskatchewan and Alberta, for example, that they have sovereignty over the lands and resources. We have difficulty enough as it is accessing lands where Indigenous children are buried under the presumed sovereignty of the little brother provincial governments. They weren’t party to treaties, yet they are insisting that they will have a piece of this. How do we resist that? I think the federal government has an obligation to step in and acknowledge their obligations and actually prove that this is an important relationship.”*

Indeed, the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan do have sovereignty over lands and resources under federal law. Today. Perhaps the Indigenous gravediggers will overturn those laws, based on unproven claims of genocide, and unmarked graves that can be found on Ancestry.com.

For the most part, Canadians are compassionate people and well aware that many children did suffer at Indian Residential Schools. This is why we are prepared to pay out some [\\$60 billion in compensation](#). (Did you know the tab was that high? I bet you did not.)

On the other hand, Indian Residential Schools were also the social and medical services hubs of the day, taking in what historian [Robert Carney explained](#): “...in some cases well into the twentieth century, took in sick, dying, abandoned, orphaned, physically and mentally handicapped children, from newborns to late adolescents, as well as adults who asked for refuge and other forms of assistance.”

Oh. That significantly changes the story. So, priests and nuns and ministers were not all engaged in nefarious activities but were actually helping the least able of society to survive, by taking them in to Indian Residential Schools out of sheer compassion and charity. No wonder sometimes the food rations were slim — taking in unexpected guests, local medical emergencies, or orphans in need would necessarily water down the food servings, especially when some remote schools had to order in staples only once a year, to be delivered in bulk and based on expected student registrations.

But no one at the Senate or the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation wants to hear this kind of context. That is in their report Recommendation 6. “*That the Government of Canada take every action necessary to combat the rise of residential school denialism.*”

This recommendation was part of Kimberly Murray’s interim report and both Ministers Marc Miller and Minister of Justice and Attorney General Lametti have made public comments in support of considering this. NDP MP Leah Gazan wants ‘residential school denialism’ — like all the facts in this article — to be legislated against as [‘hate speech’](#) with [criminal penalties](#).

It is here that the Senators — supposedly part of the ‘chamber of sober second thought’ could have stepped in and mollified the situation by referring the public to the Charter Right of [Freedom of Expression](#), Sec. 2 b) “(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication.” The Senators could have noted that presenting historical facts is not an act of hatred, but one of enlightenment, and to be encouraged.

But no. The push to create criminal penalties for questioning the unproven claims of residential school genocide has now resulted in number of on-line ‘vigilante historians’ (I guess that is a suitable name) who threaten to follow, intimidate and invade the living rooms of those who ‘target our elders.’

In fact, it was my understanding that common to many Aboriginal groups the “seven traditional values of the Ojibway, or Anishnabe, are wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth.” If this is so, how can anyone threaten another who is

bravely seeking the truth through honest efforts to bring historical facts to light? Why would any Indigenous person want to turn Canada into the gulag archipelago? We must all seek the truth. As Solzhenitsyn warned us [“Live not by lies!”](#)

It is strange to say, but it seems that once the Canadian Human Rights Museum was established in Winnipeg, there has been a copycat desire from Indigenous activists to have an edifice to represent their suffering — their *suffering* — not their history.

Much of the Plains Peoples’ history is already very well represented in Calgary at the [Glenbow Museum](#), in displays that are filled with life and celebration of how the true ‘survivors’ lived on the Plains. Also, at the [Royal Alberta Museum](#).

Or at the extraordinary [Head-Smashed-In-Buffalo-Jump](#) where the tools of ancestors which were used as recently as 200 years ago — which may still be used today in various hunts — can be seen and often live demonstrations can be given of how the tools were used, and how these clever people managed to live and mostly live well on vast expanses of the open prairie. I did documentary work there in the 1980’s before it was declared a UNESCO site and can say it is a powerful, spiritual place. Again. Filled with LIFE.

None of these museum exhibits or edifices are focussed on death.

Most disturbing to me, as a former career and employment counsellor who worked with Aboriginal youth, is Kimberly Murray’s focus in the Senate testimony on training Indigenous people in grave search techniques. *“We do not have the expertise in Canada to keep up with the demand. We need to train Indigenous people. We need to work with our Indigenous technical institutes to get our people trained in this area.”*

Indigenous people are a 1.8 million population in Canada. Many First Nations bands have populations of less than 1,000 people. Do you really want your youth to focus on learning what is effectively grave digging when this is literally a dead-end career? Especially because Ancestry.com seems to have done most of the work?

For all the faults of Indian Residential Schools, they graduated hundreds of empowered, capable, skilled Indigenous people who found career paths in leadership, law, medicine, agriculture, health care, the skilled trades, the arts and entrepreneurship, many of whom became the Indigenous leaders of today, Chief Wilton Littlechild being one obvious example. Those who had positive experiences at Indian Residential Schools but never reached any level of public fame dare not speak up about it today or be subject to cancel culture. Retribution for wrong think on some reserves can be fatal. This means the entire country of Canada is being driven by a dead-end politicization of history and false claims of genocide.

For Canada's Indigenous people to survive, choose life. Not graves and death. Get an Ancestry.com membership; honor your ancestors respectfully. By creating a new and vibrant, healthy Indigenous society. Finding graves will not do that. Finding purpose in life will.

Look to the future. Chief Crowfoot did. Chief Red Crow did.

And, since I have the 'talking stick' — be clear that everyone should have a voice. No one should be silenced by censorship. Uncomfortable truths are often the pathway to freedom. Freedom from misperceptions, like ghostly figures of a smoky campfire, shapeshifting shadows that vanish at sunrise.

I am now an elder. Carrying forward the knowledge I learned from Potai'na — Dr. Hugh Dempsey — and the hundreds of pioneers and historians I interviewed in the 1980s.

Listen to me too.

## What if the Knowledge Keepers are Wrong about Residential School Bodies and Graves?

### **What will happen when prophecy fails?**

Canada has [accused itself of genocide](#) for the most part. Only a handful of dissident 'deniers' like me continue to point out that the claims of children being forcibly torn from their mother's arms is not supported by the thousands of Indian Residential School enrollment forms, signed by parents. On the forms is a spot for designating the child's family's religion — which is typically filled in with Roman Catholic (R.C.) or Anglican. Rarely blank. Meaning, the families had chosen Christianity some time ago and they wanted their children to continue learning in that religious tradition. So, no forcible indoctrination either.

Likewise, the claim that thousands of children died or mysteriously disappeared at Indian Residential Schools, as claimed by Knowledge Keepers, elders or former

residential school students does not jive with documented records from the government, Indian Agents, school records and provincial death certificates.

Following the money is why this trail is tightly documented. Schools were funded by the government based on the child's whereabouts. If at school, the annuity money came to the school. If at home with the family or band, the money went there. If deceased, the money stopped.

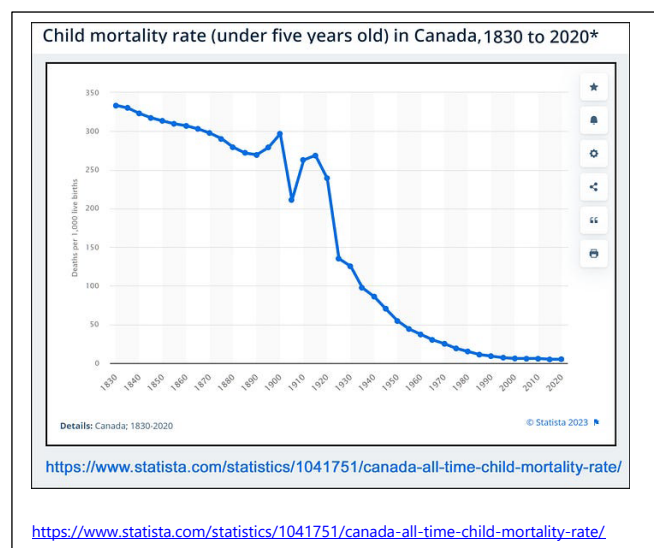
## Digging Up Memories — Detritus and Disappointment

Several digs have taken place where self-described survivors had remembered or 'just knew' there were dozens of people buried in forgotten places. A reported instance is that at the then-named [Charles Camsell Indian Hospital](#) in Edmonton in operation from 1945 to 1996. The facility treated Indigenous Tuberculosis (TB) patients from across northern Canada. The architect in charge of present-day development on the property was deeply moved by the Kamloops Indian Residential School discovery of the claimed 215 unmarked graves. Thus, he paid for excavation services at the Charles Camsell sites that Ground Penetrating Radar had indicated as possible burial grounds. There were 13 digs followed by another 21. Only refuse and detritus was found.

Unfortunately, when no bodies are found, people who strongly believe that Indigenous people were secretly buried in unmarked graves only wonder where else the bodies would be buried, rather than reviewing the documented evidence of death and burial certificates and concluding that there are no missing children. These show where the persons were buried — typically at the person's home reserve or sometimes in a local community graveyard.

## Child Deaths were Common Across Society

Far too many people are shocked at the thought of child deaths at Indian Residential Schools, but life was grim back in the day. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that 423 children died at residential schools: proportionately a small number out of 150,000 students over more than 100 years considering the circumstances of the time.



Most of the former students of residential schools are now very elderly. They were children at the time they claimed to have witnessed nefarious events. In a [CTV interview in 2021](#), one elder recalled that as kids, they used to make up stories about bodies buried in the orchard. It is possible that such stories snowballed into a sacred truth over time.



## Children Did Disappear — Sent on for Care or to the Creator

Like all invisible things, including the monster under the bed, it is hard to argue with the reality of the fear and horror of the unmarked grave, especially when there are many hurts and harms that some children suffered at Indian Residential Schools. And especially when child death rates were extremely high just a few decades ago. Thus, many people are ‘missing’ because, to children in a classroom, they simply vanished overnight. Though diary records of the nuns and fathers tell us that the children were normally informed that a classmate had died, and of what cause, and in some cases, the children attended the funeral. When you think back on your youth, how many death notices or funerals do you remember over the days you spent playing, hiking, engaged in sports or arts?

Some of the vanished children were sick and had been sent on to hospitals. Some had advancing cases of Tuberculosis (TB), which is the forgotten plague of the time, and had been sent on to a sanatorium for treatment. In those cases, prior to the 1950’s, the TB treatment period was long, and methods were painful. (Thus, perhaps the source of claims that people were tortured.) Children lived in isolation at the ‘san’ for months or years. When they returned to their school or community they were as if a stranger to all. The former student had ‘disappeared’ as far as a child was concerned.

However, to date no ‘missing persons’ reports have been found. You would think, if hundreds, or thousands of children were ‘disappearing’ at Indian Residential Schools, that parents would have filed missing persons reports with police or complained to the schools, Indian Agent or Department of Indian Affairs.

Yet we find no such ‘missing persons’ claims out 150,000 students over >100 years.

### Child mortality in Canada, 1830-2020

Published by [Aaron O'Neill](#), Sep 9, 2019

**i** The child mortality rate in Canada, for children under the age of five, was 333 deaths per thousand births in the year 1830. This means that one third of all children born in 1830 did not make it to their fifth birthday. Child mortality remained above 25 percent for the remainder of the nineteenth century, before falling at a much faster rate throughout the 1900s. By the year 2020, Canada's child mortality rate is expected to be just five deaths per thousand births.

## 12.2 Childhood in a Dangerous Time

It has been estimated that a quarter of all infants in 18th century New France failed to make it to their first birthday and that nearly half died before they were 10 years old.<sup>[1]</sup> **Matters were no better a century later: mid-19th century Montreal witnessed infant mortality rates of 250 per thousand live births.** The rate was even higher on the other side of the continent; in Victoria, Kamloops, and Nanaimo near the end of the century the rate was almost 300 per thousand.<sup>[2]</sup> (In comparison, the Canadian rate is now below five per thousand live births.) Conditions varied sharply from place to place but it is likely that childhood mortality (that is, dying between one's first and fifth birthday) was nearly as bad. In short, it is possible – and certainly plausible – that a third to a half of all live births in late 19th century British North America ended in death before the age of five.

<https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/12-2-childhood-in-a-dangerous-time/>

### Low Life Expectancy led to Lack of Emotional Engagement

Historians of childhood have struggled to make sense of how the high rates of death affected families and some have deduced that families maintained an initial emotional reluctance – which would have been rather destructive to the child's sense of self. As we know today, even the early hours of attachment to the mother are crucial for healthy child development.

But some theorize that back in the day:

*Parents resisted making large emotional investments in their children until they demonstrated their ability to survive. The delay in naming infants and the practice of giving the name of a child who had died to a subsequent child are cited as practices which demonstrate this relative lack of attachment. Thus, a situation of high infant mortality is in a sense a vicious circle, with children valued less because they are less likely to survive, and with the lower emotional investment in children reducing their survival chances.<sup>[1]</sup>*

This is quite relevant considering the claims that residential schools were the reason that Indigenous children never 'learned how to parent' because they did not live with their families. Only one sixth of all eligible Indigenous students ever attended residential schools. It is difficult to believe that this small percent of people and their residential school experience could be the culprit of all the many challenges Indigenous people on reserve face today.

In fact, many children taken in by residential schools were orphaned or had been removed from destitute or dysfunctional families or families where Tuberculosis was rife and posed a danger to the child. These facts are difficult to acknowledge if a former residential school student is unaware of the family's historic circumstances and has

decided that the residential school is the cause of all their present-day troubles. Many of these details are in the historical records and notes of Indian Agents, school diaries and government documents.

## **Genocide is a Unifying Narrative for Indigenous Canadians**

Residential school “genocide” has given the disparate 632 First Nations, along with the Inuit, and Metis of Canada some kind of unifying theme that would not otherwise be found between groups that frequently waged murderous, slaughterhouse wars against each other pre-European contact. In fact, it was influential Oblate fathers who convinced Blackfoot and Cree to stop warring against each other in Alberta, as both sides were already facing extinction from disease and whisky traders — why continue to make it worse?

Thus, as in Festinger’s book “When Prophecy Fails,”<sup>[2]</sup> as residential school digs fail to turn up bodies or fail to turn up children’s bodies with forensic evidence of harm or murder, it is likely that Indigenous people who are deeply invested in the genocide narrative will cling even more tightly to the genocide theme, because it has become part of their identity. The search for bodies has given people a sense of purpose, but the desire for closure is likely never to come. Even if there are some bodies found, they may simply be those of passing travelers, other local orphans or citizens who came for food or medical aid but passed away — perhaps travelers unknown as was a common case during the Spanish Flu epidemic.

Though the [jaw-bone of a child](#) was found at the Star Blanket First Nation in Saskatchewan, is deemed to be historical, with the high ratio of child deaths in the early years, it could be a body unrelated to the school or to any nefarious activity, especially as the bone was found in isolation from any other body parts. Meaning that weather may have unearthed a shallow grave on the prairies and wildlife transported the bone, which would have no relation to the former La Brett Residential School, established about that time.

However, if the bones are determined to be those of a non-Indigenous child, such a finding of the ‘bones of others’ would simply further inflame the situation in my opinion. On the other hand, not finding anything may also result in an outburst of rage or violence rooted in a sense of impotent frustration.

I believe this genocide obsessive narrative may pose a significant risk to peace and order in mainstream society because of these unmet expectations, largely driven by media hype and misreporting (i.e. ‘mass grave’ terminology — which implies criminal activity and intent — being used to describe the benign ‘unmarked graves’ where wooden crosses have disintegrated over time in abandoned or untended graveyards).

## **Mystical Belief in the Memory of the Knowledge Keepers**

In part, the dedication to the ‘missing children’ narrative is due to an almost mystical belief in the memory of the Knowledge Keepers and the divergence of Indigenous traditions from Western traditions.

The crux of the matter being the written language.

Western science relies on documented evidence, methodically plotted, where even disparate pieces, when brought together, can form a fairly clear picture of what happened. One piece of information can confirm or reject another. Thus, Kimberly Murray, Special Interlocutor on Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, has testified to the senate that the children have been *deemed to be missing* because families did not know *where they were buried* – but she said Ancestry.com provides that information. Yet, Ms. Murray persists in her desire to set up a University of Manitoba edifice to be the Indigenous Ancestry.com of Canada when the answer is already known. The records are on Ancestry.com.

## **Breaching the Terms of Agreement of Confidential Statements**

However, [CTV reported](#) July 24, 2023, Special Interlocutor Kimberly Murray now wants to go back to the personal, confidential interviews that individuals made in order to qualify for Independent Assessment Payments (residential school compensation) to search for references of children’s names or statements about murders, grave digging and secret burials. The statements, which are only provided in published form to the individual on request, and the records which are due to be destroyed because of their confidential nature, have any stated names of alleged perpetrators blacked out/redacted. The entire process was set up on the premise that former residential school claimants could make their statements privately to the investigator evaluating their claim for compensation, because the entities who might be accused had “waived the rights otherwise afforded in a court to mount a defence and challenge a survivor’s account.”

Normally, if one makes accusations of civil or criminal liability against another person or organization, that party is deemed innocent until proven guilty, and has the right to mount a defence in court, and to demand evidence from the accuser. As such a process was deemed to potentially retraumatize victims of abuse, this simpler method was developed, with nominal scrutiny by an investigator. Thus, the individual presenting a claim was able to freely state the names of alleged perpetrators, but this information was kept confidential and redacted.

Now Murray, a lawyer by training, wants to change the terms and use the personal testimonies in ways that no one originally agreed to. She seems desperate to find missing children and graves that are on Ancestry.com by her own admission. She seems to be desperate to find perpetrators, who may not be guilty at all, but whose names may simply have been used in private testimony as a means to leverage compensation.

That seems a crass and heartless comment, but one should consider that any former student of residential schools was granted a “Common Experience Payment” which was based on the number of years of attendance, and which was \$10,000 for the first year and \$3,000 for each year after. According to the Clifton and DeWolf book “From Truth Comes Reconciliation” the average payment was for 4.5 years attendance, or about \$20,000. This was paid without question. The Independent Assessment Payment (IAP) process was different and did include a confidential probing interview to ascertain an individual’s claim of having suffered significant abuse. The payment was on a sliding scale, depending on what the individual claimed had been done to them. However, there was no cross-examination. The average payout was over \$125,000. So, there was an obvious, inherent incentive to make statements that might win you a larger financial award, knowing there would be no further scrutiny as would be if presented in court.

Yet Kimberly Murray wants to now go back to these private statements and use them as source material for potential criminal investigations when these were not the terms under which this process was agreed to by parties who may end up as the accused.

It could be another gold-mine for lawyers if the whole process is up-ended. Then Canada can look forward to decades of claims and counter claims for heinous crimes, criminal defamation, perjury, fraud, etc. etc.

### **Where is the fundamental problem in all this?**

Much of this missing children and genocide narrative stems from reliance on unverifiable oral claims of Knowledge Keepers, elders and former students. The approach now is “Two-eyed Seeing” instead of verifiable facts and evidence.

Unfortunately, with “Two-Eyed Seeing” and Indigenous ways of knowing, there is typically a reliance on a certain individual, or a few, who have the unique insights or who carries certain sacred traditions forward. These people are held in high regard by their communities, of course. But there is no way to independently verify anything that the individual says, remembers or claims to be true, no matter how venerated they may be within their own community. This is known as [Indigenous science](#) and is part of Canadian government policy now. With the adoption of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) this methodology is slated to become more prevalent and to [affect all laws and processes](#) in Canada.

Thus, regarding allegations of criminal activity related to graves said to be under the floor of the Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Roman Catholic Church on the Minegoziibe Anishinabe (Pine Creek First Nation) reserve, the RCMP issued a statement that they had [not found evidence of criminality](#) associated with the site after a year-long investigation, but that they would continue working with the band as they [begin excavations](#) under the floor of the church on July 24, 2023.

As reported by [Global News](#) on July 21, 2023, “We understand that over time burial sites may be lost to the natural elements,” [Chief Derek Nepinak](#) said in a media release Thursday.

“But to bury remains under a building suggests a dark and sinister intent that cannot be unaddressed as we expose the truth of what happened in our homeland.”

That is a highly charged, speculative comment.

So, this leaves us with a few possibilities.

- The Knowledge Keeper(s) of that band indeed has/have special knowledge in this case, and even though the RCMP have years of experience in criminal investigations they missed something.

- Or, the results that will be reported may be adjusted to reflect community perception, not the facts, in a manner in which honor and face are protected when the final results are known and announced.

- Or, if the site has not been secured, there is a risk that fraudulent tampering has taken place at the site to plant evidence to ensure that results are ‘proven.’ And if such a tampered find (i.e. bones) is deemed to be sacred by the First Nation, then there may not be any further opportunity for forensic examination to discover who the remains belonged to, what happened to the individual to cause the death, what time frame (and thus to correlate with other individuals attending or running the school or church), etc. But such an incomplete assessment would leave the door open for continued claims that this proves that children were murdered and secretly buried all across Canada when this may or may not be the case at all. Only proper investigation could prove it one way or the other — and with the gap of time, results may remain inconclusive, but the public perception of wrongdoing would remain.

- Or the search will prove that there are graves and bodies — but this is only the first step. A grave only indicates a death, not the cause of death nor whether it was due to natural causes or nefarious acts.

Likewise, no matter the outcome, it may be another trigger for more church burnings. Or worse.

I understand from friends in Saskatchewan that one of the churches burnt was a small chapel-like building east of Hafford, northwest of Saskatoon, that was on private property. It was a historic venue and had been left open in good faith so that passersby could see it. Thus bad faith prevailed.

### **Choosing Life or Living in the Valley of the Shadow of Death**

Of course, many Indigenous people chose Christianity decades before residential schools were built, and despite much media coverage to the contrary, there are very strong Christian groups within Canada’s Indigenous people, many of whom find the messages and miracles of the Bible to be life-sustaining and joyful, unlike the present death cult preoccupation with genocide and unmarked graves. The church burners have hurt their

own people (if the perpetrators were Indigenous; they may also have been virtue-signaling, self-righteous white people) and benefitted no one.

Whatever the case, Indigenous youth are now growing up in “in the Valley of the Shadow of Death” – imbued with death cult media messages on a daily basis. Rather than offering these beautiful young people a hand-up, hope, joy, and a vision of the future, the genocide activists are condemning their own youth to depression and a sense of worthlessness and rage. Many Indigenous youth already struggle to escape gangs, drugs like fentanyl, alcohol, and high-risk lives. Layering on the mythology that Canadian priests, nuns, and ministers (most of whom do not even support death by abortion or Medical Assistance in Dying) that somehow *these* people engaged in secret heinous acts and murders that only now people care about, more than 50 to 100 years later, beggars belief. Well, for some of us.

Indigenous youth, who may have dreamt of being in the travel industry, skilled trades, medicine, retail, high-tech, or the arts, are being offered career options by Kimberly Murray like learning to run Ground Penetrating Radar to search for graves of people who likely died about a hundred years ago, who no one knew, and who are probably buried exactly where their death certificate or burial data states. In a graveyard. Often an untended one. On reserve.



*Cowley cemetery, southern Alberta. Photo credit: Clive Shaupmeyer*

[1] Roderic P. Beaujot and Kevin McQuillan, "The Social Effects of Demographic Change, Canada 1851–1981," in *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994), 40.

[2] [https://www.amazon.ca/When-Prophecy-Fails-Psychological-Destruction/dp/1578988527/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?hvadid=229971490056&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=1001907&hvnetw=g&hvqmt=e&hvrnd=5925449809986830537&hvtargid=kwd-299172358206&hydadcr=22433\\_10105321&keywords=when+prophecy+fails&qid=1690152228&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.ca/When-Prophecy-Fails-Psychological-Destruction/dp/1578988527/ref=sr_1_1?hvadid=229971490056&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=1001907&hvnetw=g&hvqmt=e&hvrnd=5925449809986830537&hvtargid=kwd-299172358206&hydadcr=22433_10105321&keywords=when+prophecy+fails&qid=1690152228&sr=8-1)

## Every Living Child Matters Most of All

There were 215 pairs of children's shoes set on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery at the announcement by the Kamloops First Nation that 215 unmarked graves had been found, alleging that these are children's graves of those who went missing at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

The difference is that the shoes in Vancouver were an artistic expression. These were not the shoes of the real children who attended Kamloops Indian Residential School.

Meanwhile on the streets of Vancouver, hundreds of children are dying every year from drug overdoses. Of course, most of these are not little children, they are young adults, and some are older adults – but **every one of them is someone's child. Every living child matters.**

First Nations are many in Canada (~632) but the communities are small in population. These bands range from about 12,000+ people for the Six Nations of the Grand River to small populations of 500 or less.

Surely every living child matters even more when there are so few treasured people to begin with.

Drugs and alcohol are problems for virtually every sector of society in Canada. The B.C. Coroner's Service report states that: *In 2022, there were 2,272 suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths. This is the second largest number of suspected deaths ever recorded in a calendar year, behind 2021 (2,306).*

The pandemic caused a surge in deaths by street drugs.

According to an infographic issued by First Nations Health Authority, *"First Nations people are disproportionately represented in overdose deaths: 16% of all overdose deaths between January and May 2020 are First Nations people. This number was 9.9 per cent in 2019. First Nations represent only 3.3 per cent of the province's population."*



This is just in one province – British Columbia. If we take 16% of the 2022 figure of 2,272 illicit drug toxicity deaths reported by the BC Coroner’s Service, that’s 363 First Nations people – someone’s children – who died. In one year. In BC alone.

There are no shoes at the Vancouver Art Gallery for them.

Hundreds of Indigenous people, each one a child of someone, are dying - often on the streets - while at various churches, cemeteries and public grounds, Indigenous people burn sacred fires and drum for the long-dead. The dead whose passings are well documented in government and Department of Indian Affairs archives. The 423 children who died at Indian Residential Schools are well-documented, most of them dying of the rampant Tuberculosis plague of the time; a plague that took the life of one Canadian every hour of the day, and two Canadians every hour of the night in 1908. A plague that only subsided in the 1950s as vaccines and anti-biotics were successfully developed.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS • 21

**Location of death**

For 1,391 of the 3,201 deaths (43.5%) on the Named and Unnamed registers combined for the period from 1867 to 2000, there is no known location of death. Table 4 reports on the location of the 1,810 deaths for which there is a known location of death.

**Table 4. Location of residential school deaths, 1867–2000.**

| Location         | Named Register | Named and Unnamed Registers Combined |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| School           | 423            | 832                                  |
| Hospital         | 400            | 427                                  |
| Sanatorium       | 43             | 43                                   |
| Home             | 300            | 418                                  |
| Other Non-School | 75             | 90                                   |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>1241</b>    | <b>1,810</b>                         |

Source: Rosenthal, "Statistical Analysis of Deaths."

Source: Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

Based on documents, this author believes the unnamed register to be duplicate names of people already accounted for, but due to name change, spelling, anglicization, the people’s documents may appear to be of a separate individual. There are some earlier records that were reportedly unavailable.

Many of the children who died were deeply loved by those who cared for them as revealed by the [diaries and chronicles](#) kept by nuns and priests.

*Great meeting of the Indians[1] where several chiefs spoke about their children to be put in the residential school. Great banquet for the Indians in the children’s refectory; nearly 200 people had dinner. With the help of the Sisters of the Hospital we had prepared abundant food for the occasion. All were satisfied. (Cardston, Feb. 9, 1898)*<sup>[2]</sup>

*As the weather is quite cold, and it is very inviting to skate and slide, Sister Superior does not wait for the visit of Santa Claus to provide the students with winter amusements. After lunch, the boys are presented with skates and the girls with sleds. (Cardston, Dec. 8, 1919)<sup>[45]</sup>*

*Visit from Dr. McColgan. He advises the Indians who have sick people here to let them finish the year because they will have better care. (Hobbema, May 5, 1919)<sup>[45]</sup>*

*Our dear little Cecile Taylor who had been ill for some time had returned home in the hope of recovering, but the good Lord decided otherwise. It was around 10 o'clock that she gave her beautiful, pure little soul back to God. Her service took place on the 12th. The children went in procession to get the body from her father's house. (Onion Lake, Jun. 10, 1917)<sup>[46]</sup>*

Imagine. 423 children out of 150,000 Indian Residential School attendees died while at school over the course of 113 years...versus 363 First Nations children who died in one year of illicit drug poisoning in the province of British Columbia alone.

When will there be shoes and teddy bears for them?

Each of these deaths will create more ambiguous losses and layer grief upon grief for the Indigenous community.

Please. Ask yourself.

Is the obsession with the past losses of decades ago, is the focus on lonely forgotten graveyards given more attention than devoting love and guidance to young people trying to find their way in life – is that also killing the spirit of the young people of the present?

If every child matters, don't the living children matter most of all? And if the living children don't matter so much, then why do the dead?



*Image licensed from Adobe Stock.*

***Michelle Stirling is a member of the Canadian Association of Journalists. She researched, wrote, and co-produced historical shows about Southern Alberta under the supervision of Dr. Hugh Dempsey, then curator of the Glenbow Museum.***

[www.michellestirling.com](http://www.michellestirling.com)

<https://medium.com/@UndauntedArtz2/about>