

Settler Historians Need More Education, Less Ideology

Rebutting Sean Carleton on Senator Beyak and Indian Residential Schools

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Abstract

Canada, once honored worldwide as a nation of peacemakers, is presently accused of genocide by China; condemned as a colonialist purveyor of genocide by a bevy of self-described ‘settler historians’ within Canada. The focus of the alleged ‘genocide’ is the establishment of Indian Residential Schools and the outcomes thereof for some 150,000 Indigenous students over the course of ~100 years. The evidence of this alleged heinous crime is said to be in recollections published in the reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, which, contrary to Carleton’s abstract, only claimed the schools constituted ‘cultural genocide’ – nothing more. Carleton (2021) assesses the instance of Canadian Senator Lynn Beyak attempting to provide diverse perspectives (typically positive) on Indian Residential Schools as a case of ‘residential school denialism.’ This work will provide historical evidence rebutting Carleton (2021) which presented theories of ‘denialism’ but little actual historical evidence to support his case.

Keywords: residential schools, denialism, settler colonialism, truth and reconciliation, history

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Rebutting Sean Carleton on Senator Beyak and Indian Residential Schools

“So on the call for gratitude, I just want to express my own personal gratitude to all of you for the, what is it? Six hundred and twelve years you’ve dedicated to us. ‘Cause I’ve said many times that for me, I probably would have been found on skid row somewhere dead years ago had it not been for, had it not been for residential school.”

“And we’ve always said at the beginning that we need a balanced story. Sometimes those who have had a good experience in residential school stay back, because they’re intimidated by the level of negative stories.”¹

-Chief Wilton Littlechild, Commissioner, Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Indian Residential School history has become a topic of extreme contention in Canada ever since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee reports in 2015. These reports are widely touted as ‘the Truth’ by supporters and mainstream commentators and settler historians, however the recollections recorded in the reports are simply that – recollections – of aging adults who were between the ages of 4 and 15 at the time of their attendance at diverse Indian Residential Schools in Canada. The statements represent perhaps 4% of the number of attendees at Indian Residential Schools (approximately 150,000 students over ~100 years). Those 150,000 students attending these schools were only 1/6th of all Indigenous students, or 1/3rd of all eligible ‘Status Indians.’

¹ At the TRC hearing with the Oblates in Saint Mary, Alberta, 2011: https://archives.nctr.ca/uploads/r/National-Centre-for-Truth-and-Reconciliation-NCTR/b/d/b/bdb5ce8cf4e0d796702a1c4977255bba6b5dd6cd8eb5434889014710682dc051/SC012T_01.pdf

For outsiders, this delineation is confusing, but due to the fact that Canada made “numbered treaties” with diverse aboriginal bands across much of Canada (though not all), *prior* to inviting settlement, those Indigenous people who are registered under one of the numbered treaties are deemed to be ‘Status Indians’ with special rights afforded by the treaty. There are also other Indigenous groups in Canada – the Metis (an identifiable group of citizens who are part Indian, part Immigrant), and the Inuit, a separately identified group of Indigenous people who live in the high Arctic and who were never part of the numbered treaties.

The point is that unlike many bombastic claims, not ‘all’ Indigenous students attended Indian Residential Schools, thus it is curious that all the ills of present-day Indigenous society is directly attributed to these schools when most Indigenous children never set foot inside one of them; those who did attend were there on average for 4.5 years and went home to spend summers with family.

Regarding the numbered treaties, a key element of the treaties are passages wherein the Crown offered the option of education to Indigenous tribes; in reciprocal fashion, at treaty signings, or shortly thereafter, the tribal chief and council typically requested that there be an educational facility established for their children, so as to learn how to operate in the new and rapidly changing world. Early chiefs like Chief Crowfoot and Chief Red Crow were taken by train to Eastern Canada and shown the industrialized world there and given presentations by students who attended the Mohawk Institute, an industrial skills training centre, so they were well-aware of what the future held and embraced it. (Dempsey 2015; Smith 2017²)

² <https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/first-nations-inuit-metis/chiefs-journey>

Contemporary geopolitics has a role in this story. Layered upon the misinformation and historical distortions of the ‘settler historians’ is the fact that a further potentially devastating geopolitical element has arisen. China has taken the opportunity to accuse Canada of conducting genocide against Indigenous people.³ Ostensibly this accusation is in retaliation for Canada and allies calling for an UN-led investigation into allegations of a Chinese genocide against the Uighur people of officially the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Canadian ‘settler historian’ narratives are thus aiding and abetting an aggressive foreign power play against their own country.

Method

The absence of historical context in Carleton (2021) allows the uninformed reader to reach the wrong conclusions about why any person, especially a Canadian Senator, would argue that Indian Residential Schools have been beneficial to many, albeit harmful to some. This paper provides that historical context. Senator Lynn Beyak was a Canadian Senator who disputed the predominantly dark claims and the official government line⁴ of the Truth and Reconciliation Reports (TRC), which were published in 2015 after a 6-year cross-country process, gathering recollections of former students, typically self-described as ‘residential school survivors.’ Beyak posted letters of support and testimonies of Canadians who also disputed the TRC narrative on her Senate website, some of which were deemed to be racist and insensitive. Beyak refused to

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/china-canada-un-calls-investigation-crimes-indigenous-uyghurs-1.6075025>

⁴ “In December 2015, the TRC released its entire 6-volume final report. All Canadians are encouraged to read the summary or the final report to learn more about the terrible history of Indian Residential Schools and its sad legacy.”

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>

take Senate-mandated anti-racism training and following two suspensions, she was ultimately removed from the Canadian Senate. Beyak has an adopted Indigenous sister.

Carleton simplistically presents Senator Beyak's arguments and those of her supporters as a heartless case of 'denialism' in the face of countless personal stories of anguish as retold in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports. Carleton employs the work of several social scientists to claim that 'deniers' use discursive methods to avoid dealing with the unpleasant, and in some cases, revolting treatment that some residential school students suffered, as a means of propping and legitimizing the 'material power, privilege, and profit' of the colonizers. This paper will set important historical context and provide countervailing evidence about the historical context of residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's biases, and evidence of misleading the public in the recently released "*Sacred Responsibility: Missing Children and Unmarked Graves*" by Kimberly Murray, former executive director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The evidence shows that Carleton (2021) is factually and logically flawed – a non-sequitur meant for the scrap-heap of academic study.

Historical Context

Carleton (2021) fails to set any historical context, which is crucial for understanding the reason for the development of Indian Residential Schools and for determining if the intent was 'genocidal' or 'beneficent' or simply a matter of practicality.

US Civil War 1861-1865; US Indian Wars 1622-1924

Canada was confederated as a country in 1867. The roots of Canada lay in economic and trade interests of Britain and France with the regional aboriginal people dating back to explorers

John Cabot (1497), Jacques Cartier, Samuel de Champlain, and others. Both Britain and France were naval powers, a fact which greatly impressed Indigenous people (Miller 2012). Both countries were keenly interested in the fur trade, the pelts for which were provided by various Indigenous groups across Canada. Likewise, as early as 1832 Indigenous people like Chief Shingawauk were impressed with the new technologies of the Europeans and wanted to establish a “Teaching Wigwam” where Indigenous people could be taught equivalent skills, so as to become conversant with the language (for trade) and to be as technologically advanced as the newcomers. (Miller 2012)

These Indigenous groups were interested in the modern technologies and products offered in trade by the British and French ‘*courier de bois.*’ Along with trade came the Roman Catholic and Anglican (Church of England) missionaries (and later Methodist and United Church), eager to spread the word of Christ.

Some Indigenous people found commonalities between their own spiritual expression and that of the church (particularly the cross, which would relate to the native spirituality of the ‘four directions’).

In general, the newcomer Canadians had successful trade relations with Indigenous people; Metis were frequently the middlemen, guides, and translators.

However, at Confederation in 1867, Canada as a nation was just a handful of eastern provinces, the lower slices of modern-day Ontario and Quebec and a couple of maritime provinces – Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. West of Ontario lay Rupert’s Land and north beyond that were the North West Territories and further yet beyond the Rocky Mountains was British Columbia.

Canada's existence was flimsy, especially because the US Civil War had not only violently rocked the southern neighbour, but it had also created a million-man standing army. Along with that enormous US military force (barely exceeded today with the contemporary 1.4-million-person US military) was the ongoing military conflict with the Native Americans resident there – the conflict known as the Indian Wars – the subject of countless Hollywood “Cowboys and Indians” movies and novels for decades. These Indian Wars had begun in 1622 (before the US declared itself independent of England on July 4, 1776) and continued on until 1924.

Sir John A. Macdonald was prime minister of Canada at Confederation, and he had a vision of the country as a great nation from ‘sea to sea.’ Thus, the US Indian Wars and the contingent US military might pose an existential threat to Canada, should those conflicts spill over the border.

US Indian Wars essentially sprang from the US settlers ‘staking a claim’ on land and then battling it out with any Native American who came by upon whose territory they had randomly settled. Gunning down an Indian incurred the wrath of the tribal brothers; gunning down a settler brought in the US Cavalry, and in this fashion, Indian Wars in the US slowly snaked their way across the country, always with the risk that the conflict might spill over the undefended northern border, or “Medicine Line” as it was known by Indigenous people. North of the line in Canada, good medicine – trade and commerce; South of it in the US, bad medicine – the cavalry, whisky traders, and smallpox.

Another economic consideration was crucial. The US was spending ~\$18 million/year on Indian Wars. That was Canada's entire operating budget.

The Buffalo

The Plains Indians relied almost entirely on the buffalo for all their needs – food, clothing, hand tools, shelter. With the advance of railways in the US, buffalo were seen as an impediment to industrial progress. These enormous animals were said to run in herds of thousands that could run for days on end without stopping. Trains had to stop and wait, often for days. Likewise, the US Cavalry and military recognized that Plains Indians would be disempowered if the buffalo were to be diminished – so they began a campaign of mass slaughter of the buffalo, effectively creating a form of food siege against the nomadic warriors.

Buffalo tongue was a highly prized delicacy among Europeans, the hides were used to make warm fur coats and the leather of the hides were in demand for belts for the pulleys and gears of the burgeoning industrial revolution in Europe.

With all these factors combined, from herds of some 60 – 100 million, through aggressive hunting of the buffalo, mostly in the US, the buffalo rapidly diminished over the course of two decades to perhaps 1,000 remaining animals by 1880. The Plains people faced starvation.

Rapacious Traders

By the mid-1870's, in the south of what is today's province of Alberta, rapacious whisky traders had infiltrated from the US. This region of the plains had been jealously guarded by the Blackfoot Nation who were described with awe by authors at the time – “They were all highly intelligent, good hunters and fierce fighters.” (Haydon 1900s)

French and British traders had conducted convivial and civil trade with diverse Indigenous tribes across much of Canada for nearly 300 years. Trading sessions typically began with ceremonial peace pipes and whisky, which was watered down according to the Chief's preference – meaning that these were not drunken exploitative sessions but a woodlands version

of today's diplomatic cocktail event at a trade conference. By contrast, the whisky traders who infiltrated southern Alberta (modern day), were men who were typically battle-hardened former Confederate soldiers. Their world had been shredded by the US Civil War; they were just in the trade for the money. Their *modus operandi*, operating from Fort Whoop-up, was to proffer a tin cup with a rounded bottom, filled with a mix of whisky, strychnine, old tea, and turpentine to any Indigenous brave wanting to trade furs. The cup could not be set down between sips as it would spill, so the deadly mixture was consumed quickly. Rapacious trade ensued where furs, horses and even women were absconded with by the whiskey traders. Drunk, dying, and half-crazed bodies of braves littered the land.

To get a glimpse of the view of such traders at the time, this horrific quote is telling:

“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, former whisky trader who became a Southern Alberta rancher.

In 1873, the Benton Gang of Montana crossed the border into the Cypress Hills (southeastern region of modern-day Alberta), allegedly in pursuit of stolen horses. They left a barrel of whisky as a trap for the Assiniboine tribe camping there, and once the tribe was sufficiently numbed, they enacted a massacre of brutal proportions. News of this reached Ottawa and triggered the formation of the North West Mounted Police who came West the next year, a force of 300 men outfitted in bright scarlet red to differentiate them from a distance from the blue-coated US cavalry. Their mission was to get rid of the whisky traders, make treaties with

the Plains people, to defend the border, and to prevent hostilities from spilling over the Medicine Line in either direction. In the US, settlement was progressing quickly across the country. It was inevitable that the same would happen in Canada – the intention was to avoid a situation of Indian Wars in Canada.

Custer's Last Stand

On June 26, 1876, the US federal troops, led by General Custer, attacked a large Indian encampment at the Bighorn River in Montana, just 600 miles south of present-day Calgary, then the NWMP outpost of Fort Calgary. Custer and all of the men directly under his command were killed. In shock at the loss to a perceived inferior fighting force, the Americans poured more forces into the region, forcing many Lakota fighters to surrender.

In May of 1877, the victorious leader of the Indigenous fighters, Chief Sitting Bull, led his people north to cross the Medicine Line for asylum, presenting King George medals to the Mounties, claiming allegiance to the Queen.

This was an extremely risky situation. Many braves on the Canadian side wanted to join forces and cross the border going south to engage with the US Cavalry; Sitting Bull's presence on Canadian soil was certainly a tempting target for the US Cavalry to cross the border north and thus instigate the very Indian Wars that Macdonald and Macleod were attempting to avoid. The US saw Indians as hostile forces to be subdued by force first, negotiation second. By contrast, Canada saw Indigenous people as long-term trade and economic partners and indeed, in the early days of Canada as a British colony, various Indigenous tribes had even gone to war with the fledgling British-Canadians against the US, resulting in the famous mythology of the burning of the White House in the war of 1812.

Chief Crowfoot could clearly see the outcome of any such engagement south of the border would simply wipe out more of his people. Thus, by September 22, 1877, he was ready and willing to sign Treaty 7.

Effectively, the numbered treaties made Indigenous people wards of the state. Today, this is decried by settler historians and their ilk as a colonial impediment to full realization of Indigenous potential over the years. However, in the context of the time, and considering the very real possibility that other Indian War conflicts in the US might lead to the US Cavalry making an incursion into Canada, this status would have offered further legal protection to those Indigenous people who were signatory to the numbered treaties.⁵

The Numbered Treaties

“The Mounties” (North West Mounted Police (NWMP), today known as Royal Canadian Mounted Police – (RCMP)) had run the whisky traders out of Southern Alberta and stopped the merciless trade, establishing law and order. They had been preceded by various Roman Catholic fathers who had set up missions across the plains. Many Indigenous people had already chosen Christianity, impressed as they were by these courageous Oblate fathers who had great personal stamina and charisma, who travelled alone with perhaps one or two Metis guides, and who were endlessly curious about Indigenous ways. It was these early missionaries who developed syllabic ‘alphabets’ to transcribe the hither-to-only-oral Indigenous languages; it was they who created dictionaries to preserve the spoken word for all time. It was also they who convinced the Blackfoot and Cree nations, traditional enemies, to stop warring against each other.

⁵ [Author comment: Ironically, this is directly in contrast to how Hitler operated his genocide against the Jews. Jews were specifically transported to work and concentration or death camps across Europe, far from their nations, so that they would not have any civil rights nor any sovereign body or institution that they could call upon to protect them.]

Smallpox had devastated the Native American tribes and it had shown no mercy as it swept into Canada.

Chief Crowfoot and others could see the future for their people would be bleak or non-existent without some means of support and some method to ensure that young people could learn skills for the changing world. Contrary to narratives by settler historians and others, who infantilize early chiefs and claim the Indigenous leaders who negotiated treaties ‘didn’t know’ what they were signing, those chiefs were very experienced negotiators and their tribes had vigorously defended their own territories against other tribes for thousands of years.

Some insights from “The Great Blackfoot Treaties” by Hugh Dempsey. (2015)

Excerpt from the Forward:

"This book had its beginnings at an Indian Association of Alberta meeting in 1951 when, as a reporter for the Edmonton Bulletin, I was left wondering why all the speakers placed such an emphasis on Treaties. Obviously, they were important, as they were associated with Queen Victoria, but that was almost seventy-five years ago. Surely, they were of no particular importance in 1951. Yet, as I listened, I came to realize that the Treaties were more than just pieces of paper. They were promises upon which the whole future of the Native people ultimately depended. The Natives gave up their rights to their hunting grounds, and in exchange the government took on the responsibility for their future. Buffalo hunters had to be taught how to become farmers or ranchers, and education was needed if their children were to survive under the new order."

Settlement

With the treaties signed, Canada was able to begin construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, to thus arrange for British Columbia (BC) to come into Confederation (BC had demanded that a wagon track be built as its price for entry), to reach the mineral resources and timber of the west, and to bring farmers to the now empty plains which the buffalo once ruled and the nomadic tribes had freely roamed.

During the early settlement period on the Canadian prairies, many American farmers made their way north, bringing their Indian-as-enemy world view with them. At one point the Mounties were asked by a settler that if an Indian stole cattle, could the settler just shoot him? Of course the answer was 'no' and to his surprise, the American settler was told he would be charged with murder in such a case. Thus, the case for separation on reserves also had some merit from a personal security perspective for Indigenous people.

Treaty Chiefs Travel East to See the New World

In 1886, Sir John A. Macdonald invited chiefs of Saskatchewan and Alberta who had remained loyal during the North West Rebellion to tour the east.⁶ The conflict of 1885, centered on the Saskatchewan Rivers, was called the "North West Rebellion" and that is the uprising that the Blackfoot Chiefs chose not to support, as it was a Treaty promise that they had made in 1877. Chief Crowfoot [**Isapo-Muxika** / ᓴᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ] and Chief Red Crow [**Mi'k ai'stoowa**] were among those promised a trip east by train to see the new world. There they were shown the cities, towns, farms and industry of the east. They were given a tour of the Mohawk Institute, a residential school.⁷

⁶ North West Rebellion – corrected from previous versions which mistakenly referred to the Red River Rebellion

⁷ "Chief's Journey" in Canada's History by Donald B. Smith. (Sept 5, 2017)

"The Plain's visitors learned that two recent female graduates had begun their careers as schoolteachers, and two male graduates had obtained work, one as a carpenter, the other as a blacksmith."

"Each of the chiefs was presented with a pair of mittens made by the pupils...and Red Crow was so delighted with them that he wore his on the way home."

"The Mohawk Institute impressed the Plains visitors...Red Crow returned convinced that education could help solve his community's problems."

Chief Red Crow freely chose to send his son Shot Close (renamed with the anglicized name: Frank Red Crow) to the St. Joseph's/Dunbow Industrial School in 1894, 10 years after it had opened. By doing so he bypassed local boarding schools established on his Reserve...St. Mary's (Catholic) in 1888, and St. Paul's (Anglican) in 1889. Both offered an academic course of studies. Frank consented to his father's wishes thereby retaining his dignity, identity and freedom. He agreed to receive a Catholic education at Dunbow.

Frank Red Crow learned to speak English but not at the expense of his Native tongue. He was fluently bilingual and could communicate efficiently in two worlds.

The clever Chief even provided a convincing rationale for the segregation of students...but for a short time only! Red Crow likened sending youth away from home for an education to warriors and hunters leaving their base camp to form war parties and hunting forays out on the prairies...a time that would mature them with wisdom and confidence. The goal, of course, always being to arrive safely back at home with good things to share. What a metaphor!

As Hugh Dempsey passes on the thinking of Red Crow, let us ponder his words,
*"...but just as warriors spent months away from home, gaining the prestige and knowledge needed to sustain them in later years, so did his son need the white man's education."*⁸

“Learn to Code”⁹

If framed in today’s terms, Indigenous people were facing a massive transition – a Great Reset of their world. They were being forced to ‘learn to code.’ Indian Residential Schools – often industrial schools – were created to teach practical academic and income-earning skills to students. It was an enormous leap for many because of the associated cultural changes, the transition from living in a strictly oral culture as hunter-gatherers living off the land, to one which is sedentary, agro-industrialized, and which relies heavily on the written word and math. Students were required to learn the English or French language, and possibly also learn the written form of one’s own oral language, previously unavailable to Indigenous people. Living patterns at Indian Residential Schools also included the teaching of the complexities of social norms in Anglo-Saxon or Francophone societies, along with new methods of personal hygiene and medical treatments further challenged students. Harsh physical discipline for small offences was foreign to most tribal societies but common to Western society and there are ample records showing that some residential school employees or administrators were predatory or sado-masochistic. However, such terrible abuses of a child’s trust were not unique to Indian

⁸ "Red Crow: Warrior Chief" by Hugh Dempsey. (1980).

⁹ <https://www.newsweek.com/joe-biden-new-hampshire-campaign-code-1479913>

Residential Schools in the context of the time (Carney 1998). The Western view of children at the time was that they were simply small versions of adults, and thus were typically bluntly treated as such.

Many graduates of Indian Residential Schools went on to have rewarding careers, with some becoming teachers on reserve. Thus the Indian Residential Schools created a crop of Indigenous people skilled in the ways of the future world, who could pass that information on to the thousands who did not attend such schools. However, many Indian Residential School attendees only went there for an average of 3-4 years. Many former students foundered, caught between the new world they had experienced and the old world back home, feeling that they had no place in either.

Settler historians and many public figures like Murray Sinclair, former judge and Canadian senator and chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have falsely claimed or intimated that ALL Indigenous children were 'forced' to go to Indian Residential Schools, and suggest that all were there for years, as if in 'jail.' However, only 1/6th of all Indigenous children ever attended Indian Residential Schools. Children had to be voluntarily enrolled by their parents. The minimum age was 7 years unless the child was an orphan, from a destitute or dysfunctional family, in which case the minimum age was waived in favor of providing immediate assistance to the child. Children were given a medical examination prior to entry; those with TB or suspected symptoms resided in make-shift separation at the schools. At some Indian Residential Schools there was a floor reserved for those children with TB symptoms.

Children were often allowed to speak their own languages on the playground or between classes, but in some cases the children were punished for not speaking English. Policies appeared to have varied widely from school to school. While part of this may simply have been

due to the strict disciplinary measures, in other cases the policy was meant to prevent secret conversations, rude remarks, or antagonism between students of different Indigenous tribes, especially those who were formerly at war. Generally speaking, in polite post-Victorian society, it was (and still is) considered rude to conduct a conversation in a different language in front of those who cannot understand what you are saying (unless doing live translation), so it was also a matter of social practice and job-placement preparation.

Since some residential schools were located on reserve, children frequently saw their families. For those who lived far away, they were given government paid transportation home for the summer months. Thus, the claims of a ‘cultural genocide’ over the alleged loss of culture and language is not supported by the evidence. Indeed, Carney (1998) reported that children who attended the Fort Chipewyan school were fluent in four languages, English, French, Cree and Slavey.

Tuberculosis – the Forgotten Plague

Much has been made of the death toll at Indian Residential Schools as being due to the schools themselves being crowded, poorly ventilated, with substandard food rations and poor hygiene, leading to a spread of Tuberculosis (TB). According to Carney (1998)¹⁰ when compared to death rates from TB for children on reserve, where such records were kept the children at Indian Residential Schools fared much better in terms of survival: *“for the attendance area of Sacred Heart Residential School at Fort Providence around the same time, the evidence is that deaths of children from tuberculosis were higher at the community level than at the school. Sacred Heart, like many of its counterparts, was the sole medical facility in the region*

¹⁰ https://michellestirling.files.wordpress.com/2023/03/review-article_-canada_-royal-commission-on-aboriginal-peoples.pdf

where in-patient health care was available. The above accounts of the schools' many-faceted roles were corroborated in pupil records throughout the system's history.”

In fact, tuberculosis was ‘captain of all these men of death’ throughout the world until about the 1950s and the advent of vaccines and streptomycin and related treatments. Prior to that, the best-case scenario was to be admitted to a sanatorium where long months or years of strict inactivity, painful treatments like collapsing of a lung, force feeding of a highly nutritious diet, and monotonous social isolation from loved ones may have saved the physical life of the patient, but often destroyed the psyche and social networks.

In Canada in 1908, one Canadian died of TB every hour of the day, and two every hour of the night. (Wherrett 1977). Estimated population of Canada in 1908 was 6,625,000¹¹ so about 13,140 people were dying annually of TB. Consider these numbers in context of COVID-19 deaths in 2021 in Canada of 53,147 in a population of some 37 million¹² with access to modern healthcare, good nutrition, and good hygienic practices/modern sanitation.

Indigenous communities were seriously affected by TB, as they are today. During Captain John Palliser’s survey of the US-Canada border in 1869, he had noted that scrofula was present amongst aboriginal tribes, which is a precursor to TB. Buffalo is known to be carriers of bovine tuberculosis. The transition from a largely meat-based ‘keto’ diet, nomadic life and living in open air tents to a sedentary camp life or communal living in cramped housing exacerbated the rate of TB among Indigenous people. According to Bryce (1907) no child admitted to the schools was free of TB however, orphans and children from destitute or dysfunctional homes

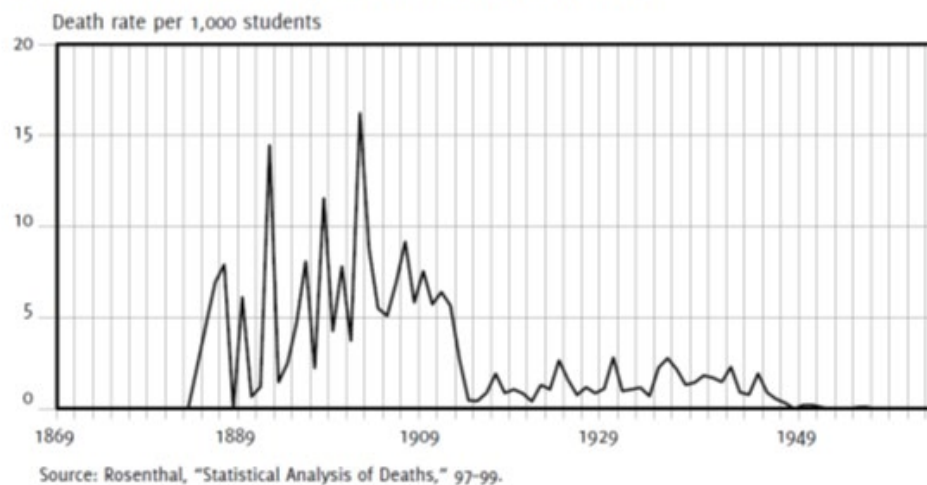
¹¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/98-187-x/4151287-eng.htm>

¹² <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/>

could not be refused entry as they had no other place to go; many young children who appeared to be free of the disease likely had latent TB if they came from an infected home.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report acknowledges that over 60% of the deaths at Indian Residential Schools were due to Tuberculosis; the next highest cause of death was influenza.

Graph 5
Residential school tuberculosis death rates per 1,000 population,
Named and Unnamed registers combined, 1869-1965



Source: Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports

There was no public health system in Canada until well into the 1960's, by which time Indian Residential Schools were closing and children were being integrated in common public schools. Also by this time the threat of TB was greatly reduced in all sectors of society except Inuit communities in the high Arctic where it remains high to this day.

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
Total	1241	1,810

Source: Rosenthal, "Statistical Analysis of Deaths."

Source: Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report – note that only 423 students are confirmed to have died while at the schools. The 'unnamed' register is thought to contain many duplicate names due to errors in transcription. These numbers apply to the 150,000 attendees over the course of 113 years.

Context of the Times

Life was precarious in the early days of Canada. One of Canada's most famous characters is the fictional orphan, Anne of Green Gables. It was common for children to be orphaned, whether born to rich or poor parents, no matter the race. In Anne of Green Gables case, the fictional parents died of typhoid fever and the housekeeper took in Anne, then a baby of 3 months. However, when the housekeeper's husband died, she was unable to care for her own children and Anne was sent on to an orphanage.

As noted in "The Indian Today"¹³ published in the 1960's "Residential Schools - these are boarding schools for homeless children, orphans, children whose parents are in hospitals, who are unable to care for them."

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

¹³ [R32-764-1969-eng.pdf \(publications.gc.ca\)](https://publications.gc.ca/R32-764-1969-eng.pdf)

*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.*¹⁴

This type of family devastation and loss of life was common from the inception of Indian Residential Schools, which became the social services hub of the day. This example also gives an inkling of why many Indigenous people are filled with a sense of missing people due to these ‘ambiguous losses.’ In the vignette above, five people disappeared from that Indigenous community that day. Two of them, the parents, died. It is unknown where they were buried or by whom. The two-month-old baby was unofficially adopted relatives while the 16-year-old joined another group of relatives on a hunt. Overall, the only story going forward in the collective mind of these Indigenous people would be that the baby’s three little siblings vanished into an Indian Residential School and did not return. The public archive records show that many Indigenous children were orphaned and rescued by residential schools – a lifeboat in a stormy sea of life.

That discipline at Indian Residential Schools was strict may have been reflective of the times as recorded in Rothman’s “Shadow of Death” wherein, referring to diaries and letters, the author traces the life of a mother suffering from TB. The woman was a strict disciplinarian and forced her children to do household tasks, intent on instilling self-discipline, polite manners, and useful skills in her children. She was hoping that if she died of TB, then as orphans, her children might be taken in by family member or friend as useful domestics. Indeed, in the days prior to

¹⁴ <https://michellestirling.com/2023/07/28/ambiguous-losses-epidemics-orphans-and-unmarked-graves/>

modern TB treatments, people's lives were often planned around or ruled by fear of contracting TB or by the challenges of living with TB – either in themselves or in family members.

Canada's Indian Residential Schools-as-orphanages at least maintained cultural and family ties where possible. By contrast, in the Anglo-Saxon world of Britain, between 1945 and 1974, orphaned or impoverished British children were scooped up by the Bernardo orphanage operations and over 150,000 were shipped off to British colonies like Canada to work as domestics or farm labourers. Most of these children never saw any family members again and few ever returned to Britain. Though some found suitable work placements and welcoming families, many were abused and beaten, neglected or abandoned.

During the Spanish Flu epidemic (1918-1920), vast numbers of children were orphaned as the disease hit young adults – parents - hardest of all. During the 3 deadliest months of 1918, for example, New York City reported 21 000 new orphans² and Pennsylvania reported 45 000.⁴

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From this time period, there are records of mass graves for victims of Spanish Flu at Indian Residential Schools, simply because in those cases, there were too many bodies and not enough gravediggers. However, there was no nefarious intent, and these matters are diarized and documented accordingly by people at the time.

Settler Historians Rewriting History with an Agenda

A clear example of settler historians rewriting history occurred on National Indigenous People's Day, June 26, 2023. One settler historian was tweeting about well-known Indigenous people and their personal stories. Two of the people were Chief Dan George and Richard

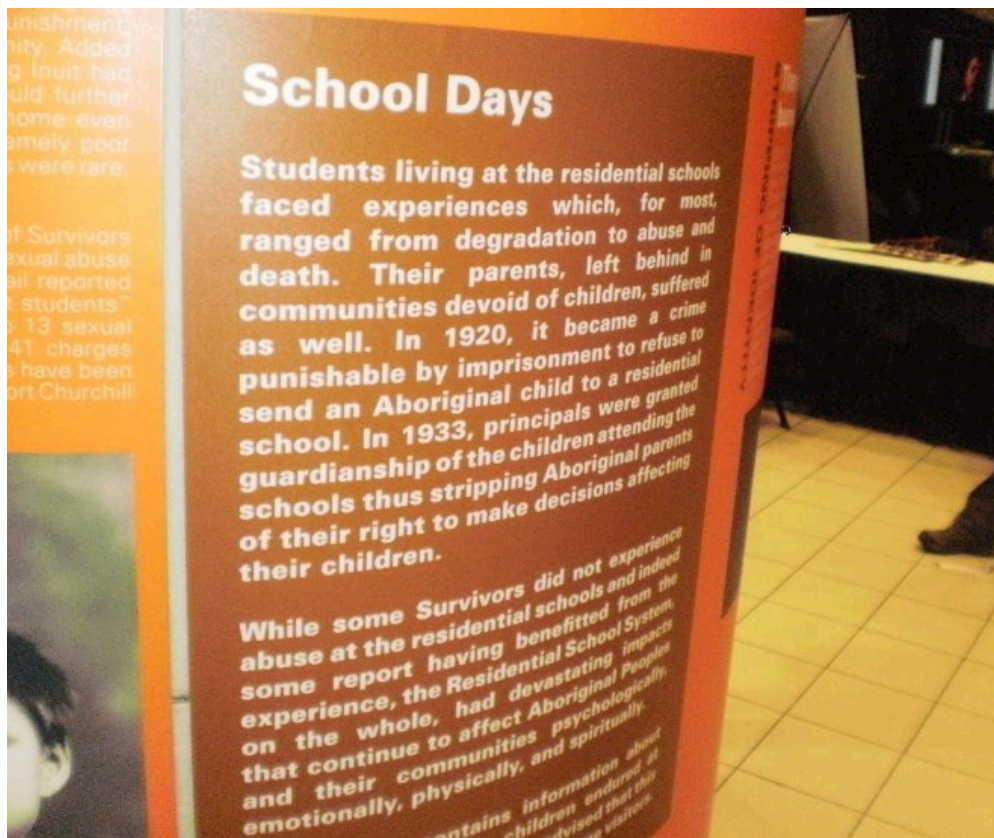
¹⁵ <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-abstract/151/2/e2021054525/190462/Caring-for-Pandemic-Orphans-The-Spanish-Flu?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

Wagamese. The settler historian claimed in both places that they were ‘forced to go to residential school.’ In fact, Chief Dan George was enrolled at too-young an age because, according to his story, he and his older brother were inseparable, so the father enrolled the two of them together. While Chief Dan George related that he was at first terrified of the nuns and fathers in their sweeping gowns, he soon came to love learning and he actually cried when, at age 16, he was forced to leave Indian Residential School (due to this being the cut-off age for government funding at the time) because he knew he needed more education. During his schooling, George and his brother went home every two weeks to spend the weekend with family.

Regarding Richard Wagamese, the sad story is that his mother and extended communal family left him, a toddler barely 3 years of age, with a group of other older children at their tent campsite in winter while the adults all went drinking in a town about 50 miles away. The children quickly ran out of food and wood for the fire, so they made their way to a small town where, freezing and starving, the local police picked them up and rescued them. Thus, Richard was ‘forced’ to go to (or rescued by?) foster homes...by his parent’s negligence, not by the Canadian government. Sadly, some of his foster homes were abusive. He did not reconnect with his biological mother until he was about 21. She had been a student at an Indian Residential School, but Wagamese reported she had nothing but praise for what the school had taught her, that she was strong in her faith and that her house was spotless, her yard well-kept, being the only one in that condition on her reserve. Despite the difficulties and abuse that Wagamese suffered at many of the foster homes he was bounced into over the years, he was ever grateful for having learned how to write and made a career of telling his own and other Indigenous stories and perspectives, both as an author of books and as a journalist.

Truth and Reconciliation Bias

The name of the “Truth” and Reconciliation Commission leads one to believe everything published is the truth and without bias. However, the kiosk at the entryway to these events had this opening statement: “Students living at the residential schools faced experiences which, for most, ranged from degradation to abuse and death.”



Source: Photo of kiosk at one of the TRC events illustrating the inherent bias and distortion of historical fact of the proceedings in the opening statement. Many children enjoyed and benefitted from their residential school experience and no community was devoid of children. Aboriginal parents did have agency and there are records of some parents summarily removing students from school due to poor food or treatment. Parents had to voluntarily enroll and apply for admission for their children to attend the schools; there was often a waiting list. The 1920 laws regarding truancy were instituted to align

with off-reserve, non-indigenous truancy laws. The mandate was rarely enforced. Likewise, all schools then and now become 'locus parentis' for children. (Image contributed by a former residential school student and used with permission.)

However, to have the 'truth' one must have the whole truth. According to J. R. Miller's "Residential Schools and Reconciliation" which was published by University of Toronto Press in 2017, concerning the Truth and Reconciliation Process: (pg. 230)

"Although the commissioners frequently said they wanted to hear from school staff and other non-Native peoples as well as former students, the oral record that the commission collected was composed overwhelmingly of survivors' statements.

"Indeed, the professional historian on the TRC staff [Helen Harrison] said that the commissioners' actions 'were not consistent with its claims to wish to include non-Aboriginal voices on the record.'

"Indeed, her budget for the project on school staff was cut from \$100,000 to \$10,000 and she was told that the Commission would not transcribe the interviews she had conducted. Thus, very few former staff came forward to speak publicly."

Indeed, many of the Sisters and Brothers who worked at the Indian Residential Schools were too frail to testify; many had passed on, but those still living recounted tales of positive experiences and expressed a great love for their former students, one which was often mutual.¹⁶

The Mystery of Unmarked Graves and Claims of Genocide

¹⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20230224000538/https://www.wcr.ab.ca/This-Week/Stories/entryid/899>

On April 22, 2013, Western Catholic Reporter published an article in which Marie Wilson, commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission claimed that thousands of children who died at Indian Residential Schools were buried in unmarked graves across Canada.¹⁷ No substantiating evidence was offered for this statement. Other influential Indigenous leaders, include former Senator and judge Murray Sinclair have made similar claims, making estimates of 10,000 to 25,000 ‘missing children’ in unmarked graves. Again, no evidence has been offered to support this claim. Raymond Frogner, archivist for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation says: “He also anticipates the number of children on the death register will increase at "least by five-fold."¹⁸ Statistically, based on the number of children attending residential schools, this would be an impossibility.

If we examine the number of claimants for the “Common Experience Payment” (CEP - a compensation of ~\$20,000 paid to any party verified as having attended a residential school, there were 103,203 applicants for the CEP.

In addition, there was a separate compensation program for those who also claimed significant abuse which is called the “Individual Assessment Payment” for which some 31,103 former students claimed abuse of some sort.

Therefore, 30% of those who attended Indian Residential Schools claimed abuse. Only some of that abuse would have been sexual. Perhaps only a fraction; this is unknown as the private testimonies are sealed. People may have claimed unduly harsh or revolting punishments.

¹⁷ <https://web.archive.org/web/20221202184751/https://www.wcr.ab.ca/This-Week/Stories/entryid/3966>

¹⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/residential-school-children-deaths-numbers-1.6182456>

Therefore, of the 150,000 Indian Residential School students (as estimated by the government), 103,203 of them were still alive in 2007.

This means 69% of the students who attended an IRS institution over a period 113 years, were still alive 124 years after the first government-funded schools were established.

Thus the claim of ‘genocide’ is false.

Likewise, there are no historical documents such as missing persons reports that would substantiate such claims of genocide.

In May of 2021, the Kamloops band announced that Ground Penetrating Radar had discovered 215 unmarked graves in the orchard. International media quickly picked up on this shocking story and soon it had morphed from ‘unmarked graves’ (quite common in abandoned historic cemeteries) into ‘mass graves’ – the icon of genocidal murder. Suddenly, in sequence, a number of other First Nations bands across Canada discovered unmarked graves, usually in old community cemeteries where one would expect to find graves; unmarked after a century as wooden crosses and headboards disintegrated.

None-the-less, based on such claims, an outraged ‘*No pride in genocide*’ movement has grown in Canada. The federal government has granted some \$340 million to First Nations for graveyard analysis and presumably digging. So, many are engaged in Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) analysis, typically directed by elders and Knowledge Keepers. This is a boon to Canada’s archeology industry¹⁹ as described by the Globe and Mail:

“Beginning in the early 2000s, meanwhile, a series of court decisions reaffirmed the Crown's duty to consult with and accommodate Indigenous peoples in the course of

¹⁹ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/excavating-canadas-past-with-a-newly-critical-eye/article37682921/>

development, leading to a boom in archeological consulting, with professionals such as Mr. Racher increasingly called on to establish the heritage value of sites across the country.

That produced a bumper crop of contracts – Mr. Racher, who used to be a part-time Volkswagen mechanic and furnace installer, now has a staff of dozens – but it also created a sea change in the way archeologists thought about their relationship with Indigenous people.

Most of the claims of unmarked graves rely on the recollections of elders and Knowledge Keepers, some of whom claim to have witnessed midnight burials of children nefariously murdered by priests and nuns. Most of these accusations appear to stem from a popular ‘underground’ movie by defrocked United Church minister Kevin Annett, along with his self-established Potemkin organizations doing international human rights investigations. Likewise the written works of American author/activist Ward Churchill such as “Kill the Indian, Save the Man,” “Struggle for the Land,” and “A Little Matter of Genocide” along with various academic scholars (whose works are devoid of historical context presented herein) have been conflating the Jewish Holocaust under the Nazis as equivalent to attendance at Indian Residential School. These ‘settler historians’ have created their own cottage industry and have fueled a kind of death cult in Canada, one that is difficult to reason with; as a corollary the Indigenous community has adopted a ‘street theatre’ version of Jewish Holocaust victims, calling residential school students ‘survivors,’ using pairs of shoes as street art to depict the missing children (echoing the Auschwitz display of thousands of shoes of Holocaust victims) and demanding compensation. In fact, to date it appears that financial compensation for Indian Residential School students is

topping that offered to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. It appears that the fascination with the theme of ‘genocide’ is related to an ardent wish for the ‘land back’ of all of Canada.

Fundamentally, the tragedy of this situation can be found in opposing world views where Western society relies on evidence-based documentation and rule of law which requires an accuser to name the alleged perpetrator and then face them in court while Indigenous society relies on the oral history of Knowledge Keepers and elders and Indigenous law – which is not consistent across the 630 tribes of Canada. While these elders are undoubtedly the storehouse of traditional Indigenous culture, due to the ‘telephone game’ effect of unfounded rumors and suspicions expanding into nightmare scenarios of nefarious priests and nuns, it is difficult for a traditional culture to rely on Western societal documentation, and equally difficult, in an honor-based society, to confront an elder with the possibility that their memory is false or distorted. Widdowson (2021) addresses this conflict between the Western Scientific Method and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge in her work on “Indigenizing the University.” Armstrong and Green (2022) discuss the scientific method as a means for finding useful knowledge. This is the anti-thesis of community storytelling.

These competing world-views are creating a psychological, social, emotional and practical gridlock in Canada on Indian Residential Schools and unmarked graves where one party is tied to the culturally defined norm of deferring to elders and their oral histories, and the other party relies upon centuries old development of the Scientific Method based on evidence, repeatable experiment, and in the case of legal matters, centuries of case law and precedents.

As this author has written elsewhere regarding the English River First Nation press conference about GPR findings at the Beauval Indian Residential School:

“Blatant, blanket accusations against Catholic priests and nuns of murder and rape because a seismic device has found signs of graves in a community graveyard is on par with a hate crime. It is incitement. And sadly, it is likely more churches will be vandalized because of these irrational statements which are based only on oral histories of elders, elders who were then children, who perhaps conflated their residential school experiences with aspects of the Martensville Satanic panic which swept Saskatchewan in the 1990s. As American psychologist David Riskin testified in that case, all it takes is a little prompting and repeated leading interviews and people can remarkably remember all kinds of things that never happened.”

Sadly, these conflicting world views may not be reconcilable.

Genocide Puts Winnipeg on the Map

In the year 2000, Winnipeg entrepreneur and philanthropist Israel Asper (aka “Izzy”)²⁰ had a vision of creating a world-class human rights centre in his home town:

“the longitudinal centre of Canada and the heart of the continent, would play home to the new Museum. ...The location at The Forks, where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers meet, also serves a deeper significance. For thousands of years, Indigenous people followed its waterways for peacemaking, dialogue and trade. Today this ancestral land stands as a National Historic Site and the home to the Museum.”²¹

The Canadian Human Rights Museum opened on Sept. 14, 2014.

Just two months prior, Winnipeg had hosted the Eleventh Conference of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, July 16-19, 2014, titled: *“Time, Movement, and Space:*

²⁰ <https://asperfoundation.com/israelasper/>

²¹ <https://humanrights.ca/about/our-history>

Genocide Studies and Indigenous Peoples.” A paper by Woolford (2015) opens with some remarkable commentary, expressing resentment that Winnipeg has always been the “butt of too many jokes” thus it seems the concept of being the centre of Indigenous genocide research will somehow elevate the city’s status within Canada and put Winnipeg ‘on the map.’ Woolford writes:

*“When Winnipeg was selected as host for the Eleventh Conference of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, it was an opportunity to showcase the intellectual vibrancy of the city and region to our visiting delegates. In Canada, Winnipeg is the butt of too many jokes. Depending on the season, it is portrayed as a land of unbearable cold (“Colder than Mars,” read one recent headline), floods, and mosquitoes. Depending on the season, it is derided as Winterpeg or Waterpeg. To this extent, Winnipeg may seem the less-exotic conference option when bookended by meetings in Siena and Yerevan. But Winnipeg is also at the geographic centre of North America. It sits at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, at the crossroads of the Anishinaabe, Métis, Cree, Dakota and Oji-Cree Nations. It is a historic meeting place of Indigenous peoples, and a most fitting site for our conference theme: **Time, Movement, and Space: Genocide Studies and Indigenous Peoples.** It is a space long marked by movements and interactions among peoples, including the destructive momentum of settler colonialism.”*

However, it appears that the ‘intellectual vibrancy’ of the settler historian academic community in Canada does not include nor endorse the historical context provided within this paper.

The genocide conference and growing Indigenous claims of residential schools as genocide have certainly put Canada and soon Winnipeg on the map. Where once Canada was revered as a nation of peacekeepers²² and the Aerodrome of Democracy,²³ it is now reviled as a nation of genocidal murderers, filled with “priest and nuns who are rapists and murderers walking around free”²⁴ – despite there not being evidence to support such bombastic statements.

Not content with Izzy Asper’s beautiful Canadian Museum of Human Rights, the settler historians and residential school genocide activists have extended the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in an exceptional example of empire building, to where the University of Manitoba will soon be home to a separate edifice, the National Truth and Reconciliation Centre,²⁵ with funding of \$60 million from the federal government^{26 27} The press release states:

“With this funding, the NCTR will build an international learning centre where Survivors, their families and people from across Canada and around the world can come to learn the truth about residential schools.”

Ironically and sadly, as shown within this document, the NCTR will be teaching historical distortions of fact without context.

²² <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/peacekeeping>

²³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/official-military-history-lineages/general/book-1983-aerodrome-democracy.html>

²⁴ Chief Bobby Cameron – English River First Nations news conference https://youtu.be/_tqD-jmmd-I

²⁵ <https://nctr.ca/nctr-welcomes-funding-and-a-new-home-in-federal-budget-2022/>

²⁶ Provincial, territorial, municipal and community archives and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation are responsible for the response to Call to Action 77.

The Government of Canada continues to support the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation with \$60 million from Budget 2022 in funding towards the overall cost of the Centre’s new facility, in addition to support for community-led efforts to locate, identify, memorialize and commemorate missing children and unmarked burials, and the full disclosure of federal documents related to residential schools. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524505153967/1557512946537>

²⁷ <https://nctr.ca/national-centre-for-truth-and-reconciliation-welcomes-funding-for-centres-new-permanent-home-and-long-term-work/>

As briefly argued in the Winnipeg Free Press at the time of the 2014 genocide conference, and mentioned in Woolford (2015), a fundamental element defining genocide is that of intent to destroy a people.

Education was offered in the treaties and requested by chiefs and band councils. Saskatchewan and Alberta Chiefs were taken east to tour the Mohawk Institute, an example of the residential/industrial school model and to see how society was changing. They were well aware of the type of institution the government was planning.

Children had to be voluntarily enrolled and were not summarily taken from homes, which is a contrived mantra developed by the 'residential school genocide complex' to meet the second criteria of genocide – that of 'forced separation.' The genocide reference refers to eternal separation; residential schools accepted students in the fall, returned them to family for festive occasions like Christmas and Easter (if distances permitted for the short holiday time) and paid for transport for the children to go home to their parents for the summer months. Thus, this claim by the NCTR is a fundamental distortion of historical fact. Of course the resident orphans had nowhere to go home to, so they remained at the schools with the devoted attention of the Sisters and Brothers who were thus, due to their dedication to their charges, denied holiday time, and did not complain or revolt. Hardly genocidal behavior.

The claim that religion was imposed is also false as most families had already chosen a Christian faith. In some circumstances a child of an Anglican faith might have been sent to a school of another denomination, typically Roman Catholic as their school network was in the majority, but this would have been due to distance to other options and was only done with consent of the parent.

The claim that thousands of children are missing and buried in secret graves, dead due to nefarious and murderous activities of priests and nuns also has no supporting evidence. There are no unresolved missing persons reports filed over the 113 years and 150,000 students who were educated at Indian Residential Schools. Though many elders and Knowledge Keepers, as well as senior officials like Murray Sinclair have repeatedly claimed thousands of children are missing, the names of any of these missing children have yet to be presented by anyone. The ever-growing list of names on the NCTR memorial banner includes thousands of loved ones who passed away who have *no relation whatsoever to residential school attendance*.

Since Indian Residential Schools and Indian First Nations Bands were funded by allocations of annuities assigned to the student, the record-keeping was quite specific in tracking whether the child was on reserve, in residential school, at a sanatorium or hospital, or, sadly, deceased. If a child died of injury while at school, an inquest was held. Death certificates were executed by a doctor or medical officer and filed with provincial vital statistics.²⁸

A common complaint, one which Raymond Frogner of the NCTR has raised, is that some children's names were incorrectly recorded, the child was renamed with an anglicized name (in one case he claims 13 such errors for one student).²⁹ However, in a time when administrators of schools or bands were working in English or French, working with sometimes complicated aboriginal names, and dealing with handwritten notes, some of which are difficult to understand today, such errors did occur. But as in the case of Marieyvonne Alaka Ukaliannuk, the "Eskimo number" (or in other cases, the student number) was a unifying tracking number which allows the careful archival researcher to identify what records belong to whom. (Note: unlike the

²⁸ Apparently in some provinces these records are only held for 70 years. However, there are reports that Ancestry.com has most of these records.

²⁹ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-residential-school-denialism-doesnt-stand-up-to-reality/>

Holocaust where numbers were tattooed on the arms of victims, children at residential schools were assigned numbers for sorting laundry and personal effects, something which was especially important in the early days of contagious diseases like TB).

Ironically, after claiming the NCTR will teach people ‘the truth’ about residential schools, anyone who questions their ‘truth’ with evidence such as that within this document is labelled a ‘residential school denier’ and there are demands by the “*No pride in genocide*” activists to criminalize academic research or public commentaries such as this.

Meanwhile in Winnipeg at the Canadian Human Rights Museum, a highlight of that institution is the Royal Blessing, inherent in which is a dedication to freedom of speech, a ‘colonial’ concept since 1215.

2010: The Royal blessing

On July 3, 2010, the Museum cornerstone is unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She had personally selected a stone from Runnymede, the English meadow where the Magna Carta, a landmark human rights charter, was sealed in 1215. This stone, inscribed with a message from the Queen, is encased in Manitoba Tyndall stone.³⁰

Glaring Example of Errors in “Sacred Responsibility...” Kimberly Murray’s Report

Historical distortions by the NCTR and genocide activists are many and are now endemic.

On June 16, 2023, Kimberly Murray, Special Interlocutor on Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian

³⁰ <https://humanrights.ca/about/our-history>

Residential Schools, released her interim report titled: “*Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials.*”³¹

The report is fraught with errors of fact.

Consider the first case study of a reputed missing child. The report reads “*In the early 1960s, Marieyvonne Alaka Ukaliannuk was only four years old when she was taken from her hometown of Igloodik and sent on a floater plane to the Sir Joseph Bernier Federal Day School located in Chesterfield Inlet, Nunavut.*”

There was no mandate for Marieyvonne to attend any residential school because she was an Inuit child. Mandatory attendance at school only applied to ‘status Indians’ in the numbered treaty regions of Canada and was in keeping with public school truancy regulations (though it was rarely enforced). But had she been required to attend, the minimum enrollment age was **seven**, unless the child was deemed to be in a destitute or dysfunctional family or was an orphan. In the CBC article footnoted to this passage in the “Sacred Responsibility...” report, Marieyvonne’s mother states ““The last time I saw her was when I was going on the plane for TB [tuberculosis],” said Marieyvonne's mother, Therese Ukaliannuk, in Inuktitut.”

Thus, Marieyvonne’s mother was going south for TB treatment – which often took months or years. It may be that her father asked for help to care for her, or that regional authorities stepped in to protect the child, either as an orphan or due to family dysfunction,³² because she was accepted to the hostel at age four.

³¹ https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/OSI_InterimReport_FINDINGS_June-2023_web.pdf

³² <https://www.ottawahospital.on.ca/en/healthy-tomorrows/grateful-inuk-patient-shares-his-life-story/>

Marieyvonne's story is sad as she had an accident that resulted in a head injury, and during treatment TB manifested itself. Since her mother had been sent south for TB treatment, it is likely the child had latent TB.

The "Sacred Responsibility..." report intimates that Marieyvonne was heartlessly 'taken' away and states that the family was not kept informed of her whereabouts or her tragic death at age 8, as a quadriplegic in a charitable care home in Quebec.

In the context of the time, it was common that people gave up guardianship of children or family members who were extremely ill to the state or charitable organizations. There were social norms and a lack of present day social and physical supports that made it uncomfortable for families to keep developmentally handicapped or disabled children at home. Likewise, in the context of the time, being infected with TB was a 'kiss of social death' – not only for the individual but also for the entire family, as it is today in Canada's north. Thus, the family may have formally or informally rescinded their right to know, possibly to their own social benefit.³³ Even today, TB screenings can result in societal rejection... "*people are afraid to come near us.*"³⁴ Marieyvonne became a quadriplegic due to TB meningitis. Certainly in the 1960s, it would have been impossible to care for a quadriplegic child, at home in Igloolik (population 2022 1,682). To this day, complex health care needs for Igloolik residents is provided by The Ottawa Hospital, a 5-hour flight south.³⁵ Consequently the "Sacred Responsibility..." telling of

³³ <https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/tuberculosis-among-first-nations-inuit-and-metis-children-and-youth>

³⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/tb-clinic-qikiqtarjuaq-stigma-1.4554194>

³⁵ <https://www.ottawahospital.on.ca/en/uncategorized/far-from-home-patients-from-nunavut-travel-thousands-of-kilometres-for-care-at-the-ottawa-hospital/>

little Marieyvonne's sad story distorts historical fact, context, and the practical realities of life in the north, then and now.

Crucially, Theresa Ukaliannuk was afforded a preferential meeting with the Pope, despite her child's story not being a case of any violation of human rights of the time or related to improper care at an Indian Residential School.³⁶ This author is not aware of any record showing that Theresa herself ever attended residential school.

Senator Beyak – Destroyer of the Genocide Narrative Must be Destroyed.

According to the NCTR website, the project and potentially an edifice was developed toward the end of the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (i.e. sometime between 2014 and 2015 one would imagine).

Senator Beyak was appointed to the Canadian Senate in 2013. By 2017 she had created controversy in a Senate session for asking Indigenous participants about whether or not they supported financial accountability on reserves. CBC reports:

"Beyak subsequently grilled residential school survivors about their time at the schools during a Senate committee meeting, asking them if they endorsed her plan to audit all First Nations for financial irregularities."

"The speech that caused so much hurt and distress was actually a speech about taxes," Beyak said at the time.

Beyak continued her stance on Indian Residential Schools as having benefitted many with controversial speeches and the posting of commentaries by ordinary Canadians on her Senate website.³⁷ By 2019, her refusal to comply with anti-racism re-education camp (eerily similar to

³⁶ <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/mixed-emotions-in-crowd-as-pope-delivers-iqaluit-speech/>

³⁷ Full disclosure, this author submitted a letter to Senator Beyak. See appendix for a copy.

the situation that Dr. Jordan Peterson now finds himself in) resulted in so much ‘brand damage’ to the Conservatives that they kicked her out of the Senate.

Based on the evidence in this document, it is clear that Beyak’s presentation of a non-genocidal narrative – in fact a beneficial narrative about Indian Residential Schools – threatened to topple the settler historian cottage industry and their castle-building exercise, the building of a new edifice at the University of Manitoba for the NCTR which will, they say, decolonize history.

“By incorporating Indigenous perspectives, values, laws and protocols, we are creating something new — we are working on decolonizing the archive, to be built on principles of respect, honesty, wisdom, courage, humility, love and truth.”³⁸

Based on the evidence presented herein, it is clear that the NCTR and the residential-school-as-genocide activists are not doing anything more than rewriting history to get more grants and destabilize Canada. To keep this dirty secret, those with dissenting views, whether Senator Lynn Beyak, this author or others, must be silenced, slandered with labels of ‘residential school denier’ and their reputations destroyed.

Conclusion

Canadian taxpayers are paying millions of dollars for Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) searches of known graveyard for missing children which do not exist. Canada’s international reputation has been blackened by this campaign; indeed China has exploited the discovery of the alleged unmarked graves at the Kamloops Indian Residential School to join together with several terror states and accuse Canada of genocide. On October 27, 2022, the entire House of Commons, at the urging of NDP MP Leah Gazan voted unanimously, without discussion or

³⁸ <https://nctr.ca/about/>

evidence, to describe Indian Residential Schools as genocide. Clearly the message delivered to Senator Beyak was loud and clear to all MPs, thus not even a peep of a challenge was raised. As this paper is being written, all Canadian laws are about to be rewritten to align with the United Nations Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act³⁹ and we await the results of an investigation by Francisco Jose Cali-Tzay, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, into Canadian Indian Residential Schools. We can hardly expect a fair hearing as Kimberly Murray sent him a 21-page unauthorized, unvetted report, filled with unsupported allegations of murders and nefarious midnight burials along with other outrageous claims. Ms. Murray is a civil servant appointed by an Order-in-Council whose mandate was to simply create dialogue with former residential school students (self-described as survivors), review legislation and to report to the Justice Minister. Her mandate expressly forbade her to do anything to interfere with investigations.

“Carry out this mandate in a manner that does not interfere with criminal investigations, prosecutions or civil proceedings.”⁴⁰

Kimberly Murray is also supposed to act impartially. Instead she is advocating that scholarly works like this, or any dissenting view be subject to criminalization, similar to the treatment reserved for Holocaust denial.⁴¹

There is no doubt that many children suffered at Indian Residential Schools, and this is why the compensation program was established. Though it cannot rewrite the past, it does recognize those who suffered and provides some form of recompense.

³⁹ <https://justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/ap-pa/ah/pdf/unda-action-plan-digital-eng.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://medium.com/@UndauntedArtz2/special-interlocutor-has-no-authority-to-demand-criminalization-of-residential-school-factualism-98ad5466f268>

⁴¹ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-special-interlocutor-hopeful-new-justice-minister-will-act-to-address/>

At the same time, many children benefitted from Indian Residential Schools. If we are to have truth and reconciliation, this must also be part of the evidence. As Senator Beyak said:

“Telling the truth is sometimes controversial but never racist. The Senate’s reputation has been enriched by my stand, as clearly stated in thousands of letters from Canadians that I submitted to the Senate ethics officer,” Beyak said in a May 2019 speech.

Sadly, based on the extreme violence that broke out in terms of the vandalizing over some 83 churches in Canada, based on the unsubstantiated claims that unmarked/mass graves of children had been found in the orchard at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, it appears that the genocide narrative will tear Canada apart.⁴² That, along with the application of UNDRIP will Balkanize this country and pit Indigenous people against any perceived ‘settler’ – whether of the WASPY colonial variety, whether Roman Catholic or Hindi. Unless the gas lighting stops there is a risk the country may descend into violence and anarchy. Canadians already experienced this in the first two months of “Shut Down Canada” in 2020 where all road and rail lines crossing Indigenous reserves were violently blockaded.

Canadian taxpayers are paying billions to fortify lies and unsupported allegations against our ancestors; residential ‘factualists’ like this author may be jailed for telling the inconvenient truth that Indian Residential Schools did not commit genocide against Indigenous people. While people are eager to rewrite Canada’s laws to meet UNDRIP guidelines, they are not so keen to abide by the UN Charter of Human Rights, Article 19.

⁴² <https://tnc.news/2023/07/04/a-map-of-every-church-burnt-or-vandalized-since-the-residential-school-announcements1/#:~:text=83%20Christian%20churches%20in%20Canada,located%20near%20former%20residential%20schools.>

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Clearly people have forgotten the words of “Dief the Chief” –

"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) ⁴³

⁴³ <https://diefenbaker.usask.ca/exhibits/online-exhibits-content/the-canadian-bill-of-rights.php#IamaCanadianafreeCanadian>

Appendix I

Freedom of Speech and Historical facts are essential to reconciliation

Yahoo/Sent

Michelle Stirling < >

To:lynn.beyak@sen.parl.gc.ca,lillian.dyck@sen.parl.gc.ca

Thu, Apr 6, 2017 at 12:50 p.m.

Senator Beyak and Senator Dyck,

I believe Senator Beyak is wrongfully pilloried by the press and the historical context of the times of residential schools is not even being considered. Please see my short article below.

I agree that horrible things happened to many people in residential schools. I grew up in Ponoka beside Maskwacis (formerly Hobbema) and also worked in Ponoka for 5 years with some 30% of my clients were aboriginal people. Serious issues abound - but not recognizing the historical facts and context of residential schools distorts the story.

My own father (a white British boy) went to a boarding school and was abused there - this has gone on in boarding schools to this very day. It is a "Lord of the Flies" environment. My father was left-handed. At the time this was considered to be literally Satanic. His hand was caned black and blue and he was made to stand in the corner with a dunce cap on. However, his father had died as an aviation pioneer; his mother had no means to keep herself and returned to her father's farm as a worker. They were difficult times for everyone.

On the maternal side, my mother's baby sister was *given* away to neighbours who had no children when my grandmother died after giving birth to her. Then my own mother was sent to England at age 13 to care for her elderly grandmother. Children were small servants at the time across the board, with no rights, and if they were lucky enough to eat and have shelter, they were lucky.

I strongly believe we must discuss the history of this country and we must face injustices of the past - but we do not right any wrongs by creating MORE injustices by asking people to step down or shut up, and by failing to set the context of history.

I hope you will consider my comments. An op-ed below based on over a decade of research in the Glenbow Museum under the supervision of Dr. Hugh Dempsey.

Thank you,
Michelle Stirling

Freedom of Speech for Senator Beyak and Historical Facts on Residential Schools

By Michelle Stirling

It is a tragedy that Senator Beyak's Charter Right of freedom of speech and attempts to bring balance to the story on residential schools are being stifled. Worse? The media are not doing any homework.

People are ignorant of Canadian history. Canada protected First Nations people overall and did not stage Indian Wars as in the US. In fact, Canada was a sanctuary state for American native people fleeing the US Cavalry, after they had defeated General Custer and annihilated five companies of the 7th Cavalry.

Imagine a similar scenario today – that refuge in Canada would be provided to hundreds of murderous renegades with the US Cavalry hot on their heels. Canada was the sheltering “White Grandmother” for Sitting Bull and his people.

A sea change occurred in the lives of nomadic aboriginal people in the 1800's. 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 aboriginal children as they had been orphaned by smallpox. The missionaries, constantly denounced in the press today, created a written form for many aboriginal oral languages, and created dictionaries to preserve the wisdom and knowledge of the people.

As the nomadic aboriginal way of life vanished and treaty obligations kicked in, residential schools offered a means of rapidly educating, integrating and feeding the geographically scattered numbers of children living on the verge of starvation.

Residential schools were planned with graveyards, graves remained unmarked and bodies were not returned home for good reasons. Death was common across Canada with tuberculosis (TB) the greatest killer up until the 1950's. TB was often considered a shameful thing within families, never to be mentioned. Bodies of people who died of contagion were forbidden by law to be transported anywhere except to the graveyard. Death rates from TB in First Nations people in Saskatchewan were ten times higher than among whites due to “drastic changes in lifestyle, poverty and overcrowding.”

TB was not imported by Europeans. TB bacterium has been found in 9,000-year-old bison.

In 1918, the Spanish Flu swept across Canada. Records in Saskatchewan show that those who died were buried as soon as possible to avoid further contamination. At least 20 First Nations children are recorded as dying in one residential school alone at that time.

Children's rights were not a thing in those days. Children were often given up to orphanages or given away to relatives or childless couples when poor families could not support their needs.

But what of cultural genocide? E. Pauline Johnson, *Tekahionwake*, (1816-1884) 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 (1862-1947) who was also a poet and who likely felt this type of 'foot-in-both-cultures' person would be the outcome of his department's residential school policy. 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...*"

Pauline Johnson, a single woman, poet, child of literate parents, herself with only three years of Indian day school education, a mixed-race aboriginal woman, managed to stand alone and became an international literary star.

Schooling for anyone in the early days of Canada was considered a luxury. Prior to 1880 in England most children aged four and up were working! 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; brutal disciplinary methods, like caning, were the norm in British society right up to the 1990's.

It is only fair to set this historic context first when discussing truth and reconciliation and to speak freely on this topic.

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Michelle Stirling is a Calgary writer/researcher who spent about 10 years in the Glenbow Museum archives engaged in film/television research projects on early Western Canadian history.

Disclosure

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Notes on the Author

Michelle Stirling is a former 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. Stirling interviewed several hundred Albertans including descendants of Colonel Macleod and Treaty 7 signatories, as well as pioneers, academic historians and popular historians like Grant McEwan (who was born in 1902).

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