

Christianity, The State, and Canada's Residential Schools — The Disconnect

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Abstract

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This thesis delineates the definition of physical genocide as well as cultural genocide and outlines the methods and tactics that the Canadian government used to implement their physically, socially, and culturally destructive Aboriginal policy — levied against the Indigenous population of Canada. Most importantly, because Indigenous Residential Schools were administered by various Christian churches the motivation for writing this thesis is how to reconcile this "genocide" with Christianity, which is based upon the teachings of Jesus Christ whose teachings oppose the very genocide inflicted upon the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. This motivation includes exposing and criticizing the un-Christian like behaviour of the clergy, from the various Christian churches who administered the Indigenous Residential Schools, who were supposed to uphold and practice the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Keywords: Aboriginal; Anglican Church; Assimilation; Biological Genocide; Catholic Church; Christian Churches; Christianity; Colonization; Cultural Genocide; Doctrine of Discovery; Dysfunctional Theology; Eurocentric Christian Worldview; European Culture; First Nations; Forced Sterilization; Genocide; Indian Act; Indian Agents; Indigenous Peoples; Indigenous Residential Schools; Land Treaties; Mounted Police; Physical Genocide; Presbyterian Church; Psychological Impact; Racial Integration; Racial Superiority; Reconciliation; Theological Distortions; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; United Church of Canada.

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In the face of institutional darkness, may our pursuit of truth, hope, and knowledge continue to shine.

— *Kenneth John Woffenden*

Dedication

For my mother Christina Gilligan, my maternal grandmother and grandfather, my father Bernard George Woffenden, my paternal grandmother and grandfather, my brothers and sisters (both Woffendens and Gilligans), my nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, and cousins I dedicate this to all of you.

May the Light of God shine upon the world, so that truth, hope, and knowledge are revealed and darkness (ignorance and despair) is blotted out. This work is dedicated to the survivors of Canada's residential schools, whose courage in speaking truth has illuminated a shameful history — long buried in silence. This work is also dedicated to all of those people around the world who have suffered under the weight of hypocrisy — masked as faith — your voices are the light.

— *Kenneth John Woffenden*

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Introduction

Statement of the Question

Un-Christian like behaviour, what I call Christian hypocrisy, has always been an interest of mine. The Webster Dictionary defines Hypocrisy as: "[...] a deception as to real character and feeling, especially in regard to morals and religion."¹ The same dictionary defines Christianity as: "2. The Christian religion; doctrines taught by Jesus Christ. 5. Christian character, practices, etc."² To be a Christian therefore means to practice what Jesus preached, and what it is that Jesus preached, or taught, was to have love, compassion, and empathy for all people regardless of their ethnicity, race, creed, nationality, age, gender, or sex.³ Jesus defended the oppressed, the rejected, the outcast, the less privileged, and he rejected intolerance, and the subjugation of other people. Given this, how can we reconcile the overt un-Christian like behaviour of some members of the various Christian denominations that administered the Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada — and the Christians within the Government of Canada?

An example of Christian hypocrisy can be found in the sixteenth century when the Catholic priests and scholars tried to determine if Indigenous Peoples should be considered as infidels, natural slaves, or humans on the discovery that the Holy Bible did not mention the American continents or its people.⁴ However, the Holy Bible, Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament), also do not mention the peoples of Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden — the settler nations of the Americas. Yet the Catholic Church did not seek to determine their humanity given that they are not mentioned in the Holy Bible. The Catholic Church did not use the Holy Scriptures to hold European colonial settlers to the same standard of judgment as they did the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. It must be noted that the terms Indigenous Peoples and Aborigines are more all-encompassing terms than the term First Nations, which refers to every Indigenous group in Canada except Inuit and Métis.⁵ As the term Indigenous

¹ Noah Webster, s.v. "Hypocrisy," Webster's New 20th Century Dictionary of The English Language, Unabridged, ed. Jean L. McKechnie, 2nd ed. (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1962), 896.

² Webster, s.v. *Christianity*, 321.

³ In the New Testament, Jesus is attributed to making statements that appear contradictory, which causes difficulties for exegetes and followers of Jesus. Whilst I acknowledge this complexity in the New Testament, in my thesis I focus on Jesus' teachings found in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:11–12 and Luke 6:22–23), as well as Paul's letters to the Philippians and Galatians, and I also follow the letters of James and Peter. All quotes from the Bible are from *The Holy Bible, The New Revised Standard Version with Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

⁴ Sandra Beardsall, Sa'ke'j Henderson, and Don Schweitzer, "Introduction," in *Honouring the Declaration: Church Commitments to Reconciliation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Don Schweitzer and Paul L. Gareau (Regina, SK: University of Regina Press, 2021), xx.

⁵ Bob Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality* (Port Coquitlam, BC: Indigenous Relations Press, 2018), 10–12.

Peoples is the contemporary term used to refer to all Aboriginal people in Canada,⁶ I will use the term Indigenous Peoples throughout most of my thesis, but I will use the terms Aboriginal or First Nations when I either quote, or paraphrase, an author who uses those terms.

I chose this topic because of my interest in the teachings of Jesus and the lack of Christian like behaviour amongst some Christians — particularly the Christian clergy of Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada. Would Jesus condone the behaviour of those who are supposed to represent his faith? Are all Christians true representatives of the Christian community that Jesus wanted his followers to establish? It seems doubtful because of the oppressive and manipulative subjugation towards the Indigenous population of Canada by Christian churches and Governments. I am distraught at the physical and sexual abuse of Indigenous children that occurred at Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada's history at the hands of Christian clergy especially when Canada, at the time of this genocide (a term correctly used by Pope Francis on his flight home after his 2022 penitential pilgrimage to Canada),⁷ was a country that was supposed to be based on Christian values and morals.⁸ The genocide of the Indigenous population of Canada was part of an attempt to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into Caucasian Euro-Canadian society — beginning when Indigenous Peoples were children — to erase, or "wash," the Indigenous out of them. As I researched more about this topic, I discovered that Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada were part of a greater system whose goal was to colonize the entire continent of North America.

Christine Mitchell mentions the existence of biblical texts, for example Deuteronomy 20:10–18, that command colonization and extermination in the name of Holy Wars.⁹ She concludes, on moral and ethical grounds, that such texts should not be used to justify colonization and genocide. In fact, Mitchell argues that other texts in the Holy Bible should be sought for models of reparation.¹⁰ The prescriptions for us to live in a peaceful world can be found in the passages of both the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Bible. Therefore, I will not state or argue that the Greek Bible supplants the Hebrew Bible as that opens up the debate of supersessionism. However, Christine Mitchell fails to mention that the aforementioned texts that commands Holy Wars as justification for colonizing the land of others is contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Thus, I will look for passages in the Greek Bible where Jesus opposed violence, hatred, and promoted love of all. For Jesus revealed to the world that God is for everyone and not just the people of Israel. More specifically, as Adrian Jacobs points out, Jesus is for people who are oppressed, rejected, marginalized, dispossessed, and because of this Jesus is an Indigenous person

⁶ Joseph, *21 Things You May*, 10–12.

⁷ Vatican News, "Pope Francis: It Was a Genocide Against Indigenous Peoples," Vatican news, July 30, 2022, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-07/pope-francis-apostolic-journey-inflight-press-conference-canada.html>.

⁸ Raymond C. Aldred, "An Alternative Starting Place for an Indigenous Theology" (PhD diss., Wycliffe College of the Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto, 2002), 15.

⁹ Christine Mitchell, "What To Do With All These Canaanites? A Settler-Canadian Reading of Biblical Conquest Stories," in *Honouring the Declaration: Church Commitments to Reconciliation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Don Schweitzer and Paul L. Gareau (Regina, SK: University of Regina Press, 2021), 38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

or what Jacob calls an "Indigenous Jesus."¹¹ Given this, Jesus is neither an imperialists nor exterminator but instead is a person who forgives and liberates. Jacob contends Jesus is the liberator of slaves, heals people that have broken hearts, and is a friend of sinners, strangers, people whose reputations have been ruined, and is therefore an Indigenous Jesus.¹² To improve our relations with each other, William C. Spohn believes that we should act and behave with the same moral conviction and moral conduct as Jesus did, and supports his contention with Philippians 1:27.¹³ Philippians 2:4 and Philippians 2:5 can also be used as a prescription for Christian living. The implications for humanity, is that we should treat each other as Jesus treats other people, and that we — at all times — should behave as Jesus did to live in a peaceful and just communal society. Spohn states that the basic command of "Go and do likewise" in Luke 10:37 is that Christians should be faithful to the narrative of Jesus and creative when using that mandate in their own lives.¹⁴ For it is this way of living that defines the true Christian.

This thesis is not a criticism or a rebuke of Christianity — as Bertrand Russell did — but a call to Christians to become conscientious of the evil acts that have been committed in the name of Christianity by some Christians, and by some of the representatives of the various Christian churches. This by no means delegitimizes, or negates, the teachings of Jesus (as Bertrand Russell believed it did). This thesis has been written for Christians and non-Christians to stir them to reflect and realize that even we, as Christians, cannot cast the first stone, and that many of us over the centuries have done just that. Theological distortions by Christianity, particularly the Catholic Church, have led to the demonizing of other religions and spiritualities, and even an atheist like Richard Dawkins has publicly stated that Islam is not a peaceful religion. However, given the atrocities committed by the various Christian churches in the genocide of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, can we truly say that Christianity is a peaceful religion? These are some of the things to consider and keep in the forefront of your mind (and not in the back) whilst reading this thesis.

Method and Overview

I will be using both the inductive method and the deductive method to explore how the negative events that occurred at Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada and the reneged upon legally binding agreements, go against Christianity and subsequently the teachings of Jesus Christ. I will use the deductive method — which aims to arrive at specific conclusions from the analysis of specific facts — to analyze the specific behaviour of the Christian administrators of Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada, and how that compares to the teachings of Jesus Christ. I will utilize the inductive method to draw general conclusions of the Canadian government's motivation

¹¹ Adrian Jacobs, "The Declaration and The Indigenous Ministries of The United Church of Canada," in *Honouring the Declaration: Church Commitments to Reconciliation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Don Schweitzer and Paul L. Gareau (Regina, SK: University of Regina Press, 2021), 97.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1999), 10.

¹⁴ Ibid., 4.

for renegeing upon various acts, treaties, policies, etc., based upon their specific actions. To do this, I will draw upon the opinions, reasoning, and understanding of several Indigenous scholars and one Indigenous politician here in Canada. Given that I do use the opinions, reasoning, and understanding of several Indigenous scholars and one Indigenous Canadian politician to defend my thesis — my research is qualitative. However, that does not negate the use of quantitative research, which I also use in writing my thesis.

I do use quantitative data when listing the percentages of residential schools that were administered by each of the various Christian churches, and how many Indigenous people continue to speak Indigenous languages today. Qualitative data includes empirical data from the Bible about the teachings of Jesus Christ to demonstrate that subjugating people on their own land goes against his teachings as stipulated in John 13:34, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8, and Romans 12:18. Qualitative research also includes listing the factual events that occurred at Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada and not just opinions, reasoning, and understanding. In conclusion, I use both qualitative and quantitative research in my thesis to analyze biblical moral and ethical teachings, government and church behaviour, and the road to reconciliation and healing in the context of the events that occurred at Indigenous Residential Schools.

The thesis will be divided into three chapters. **Chapter 1**, which is titled *The History of Colonization, Assimilation, and the Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada*, will delineate an in-depth report about what Indigenous Residential Schools were in Canada, their purpose, who established the schools and administered them, how Indigenous children were treated and the tragic ramifications of their negative experiences. These ramifications were experienced not only by survivors of residential schools, but also by their families. Although not every Indigenous student endured only negative experiences, it is important to focus on such experiences because the causes of such negative experiences contravene the stated goals of Christianity. To wit, physical and sexual abuse by anyone — clergy or otherwise — is inconsistent with Christian ideals and morality, and is not based on moral law or the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2, which is titled *Christianity, Residential Schools, and Theology — The Disconnect*, will deal with the disconnect between, on the one hand, Christianity, the residential schools and the Canadian government's dealings with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, and, on the other, Judeo-Christian Theology. It is important to discuss this disconnect with passages from both the Hebrew and Greek Bibles as academic exploration rather than theological preaching. It is important to demonstrate that the genocidal acts committed against the Indigenous Peoples of Canada violate specific passages from both the Hebrew Bible and Greek Bible. Thus, I will weave passages from both scriptures into Chapter 2 to strengthen my arguments in this chapter — as well as my overall thesis.

Chapter 3, which is titled *The Road to Reconciliation and Healing — Church and State — and the Politics of Distraction*, analyzes the different ways to achieve true reconciliation and healing from the perspective of Indigenous scholars who represent the interests of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. It is important to hear from members of the various Indigenous communities because they are the only ones that truly know and understand what is best for their communities and Nations. Historically, European colonialists, and their descendants, have told Indigenous Peoples what is best for them. However, the actions of such European colonialists and their descendants have belied such recommendations and mandates. Contradictory actions have led to genocide, both physical and cultural, viz. subjugation, inadequate or zero support for Indigenous

demands such as economic development, respect for treaties, land and language rights, and respect for the environment.

Chapter 1

The History of Colonization, Assimilation, and the Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada

Introduction

Not every Indigenous child who attended the Indigenous Residential School system experienced the physical or sexual abuse — *physical genocide* — committed by the administrators and staff of such schools in Canada. Physical genocide also includes, "the mass killing of the members of a targeted group, and *biological genocide* is the destruction of the group's reproductive capacity."¹⁵ Under the topic of physical genocide, includes poor nutritional standards and unsanitary conditions such as the ones that existed at many Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada.¹⁶ Physical genocide against Indigenous Peoples was, according to Alex Ross, propounded by American politician Thomas Jefferson who "spoke of the need to 'eliminate' or 'extirpate' Native Americans."¹⁷

Although not every Indigenous child experienced physical genocide at Indigenous Residential Schools, every student did experience the assimilation process of colonization and cultural extermination that robbed them of their language, spirituality, customs, and culture—adding up to what is called *cultural genocide*. This cultural genocide combined with the physical genocide that some Indigenous children experienced at said schools, is collectively referred to as the genocide of Indigenous Peoples. On Pope Francis' flight home after his 2022 penitential pilgrimage to Canada, he used the term genocide to describe what happened to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.¹⁸

What is not categorized under this encompassing term of genocide is what is called *psychological impact*, which is defined as the psychological consequences that any group of people would endure after experiencing genocide. Many of the Indigenous children experienced the psychological impact of the genocide. *Prima facie*, when one thinks of the effects of psychological impact, one thinks of post-traumatic stress disorder. However, in the case of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, the psychological impact goes much deeper than that. The psychological impact which the Indigenous Peoples of Canada have endured includes: the refusal to want to speak their own Indigenous language with their parents when they returned home from the residential schools; refusal to practice their traditional religion; hatred of their culture and even their own parents; the inability to report physical and/or sexual abuse to their parents; and high rates of suicide in

¹⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67–84.

¹⁷ Alex Ross, "How American Racism Influenced Hitler," *New Yorker*, April 30, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/04/30/how-american-racism-influenced-hitler>

¹⁸ Vatican News, *Pope Francis: It Was*, July 30, 2022.

Indigenous communities because of the erosion of their culture, family life, and loss of connection to Indigenous land. In addition, some Indigenous people have taken up substance abuse, such as alcohol, as a coping mechanism to deal with their fractured community and family life.¹⁹

It is important to discuss the genocide — cultural and physical — and the psychological impact experienced by the Indigenous population of Canada in the context of the Christian religion because Raymond C. Aldred states that at the time of the establishment of Indigenous Residential Schools, "the Church wanted to ensure that Canada was a nation that reflected Christian ideals and morality."²⁰ Aldred goes on to state that these ideals and morals, "could be found not only in (the) Western evangelical Methodist religion but in (the) Catholic religion as well."²¹ Thus, the pressure to educate Indigenous children came from the Catholic Church (who ran 45.07% of schools) and the Protestant churches (who ran 45.7% of schools), both mainline and evangelicals, such as the Methodist Church.²² The Methodists (who ran 1.40% of schools) were a conservative evangelical group that played a significant role in forming the identity of Canadian Anglophone society from the 1820s to the 1870s.²³ Mainline Protestant churches in Canada that were involved in administering Indigenous Residential Schools included the Anglican Church of Canada (24.64%), the United Church of Canada (11.26%), the Presbyterian Church in Canada (5.63%), the Baptist Church (0.70%), and the Mennonite Church (2.1%).²⁴ Some Indigenous Residential Schools were also administered by non-denominational churches (14.78%).²⁵ It is important to clarify the percentages of the 142 Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada that were administered by various Christian churches because media reports give the impression that one hundred percent of Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada were administered by the Catholic Church.

Although the schools were administered by Christian churches, we see that those Christian ideals of morality such as love, compassion, empathy, and generosity as taught by Jesus, were not reflected in the behaviour of some of the Christian administrators and staff of said schools, or in the goals set out by the Canadian government's assimilation policy. Christian ideals such as love, compassion, empathy, and generosity, as we will see in Chapter 2, are not only characteristic of Christianity but other religions as well — including Indigenous spirituality. If Canada had been a nation that truly embodied Christian ideals and morality, as the Christian churches believed Canada did, then such genocidal acts would not have occurred. For example, Alex Ross recounts an

¹⁹ Joseph, *21 Things You May*, 47.

²⁰ Aldred, *An Alternative Starting Place*, 15.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, xiii–xvi.

²⁵ Ibid. Out of the 142 Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada, 64 were administered by the Roman Catholic Church, 21 by non-denominational churches, and 65 by Protestant churches — both mainline and evangelicals — such as the Methodist Church. The breakdown of Protestant churches are as follows: 35 by the Anglican Church; 16 by the United Church of Canada; 8 by the Presbyterian Church in Canada (one of which was administered by the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian); 3 by the Mennonite Church; 2 by the Methodist Church; and 1 by the Baptist Church. When you add up all those churches you get a sum of 150 churches, and that is because there were 5 Indigenous Residential Schools administered by more than one church in different school years.

Oregonian settler who, in 1856, remarked that extermination (physical genocide) was "un-Christian like." As Ross states, "In 1856 an Oregonian settler wrote, 'Extermination, however unchristian like it may appear, seems to be the only resort left for the protection of life and property.'"²⁶ Notice that the idea of "life and property" for this Oregonian settler is the "life and property" of people only of Euro-Caucasian descent and not that of Indigenous Peoples, thus, reflecting the Euro-Caucasian "hegemony or survival" worldview of European Imperialism. The un-Christian like behaviour of "some" Christians has not gone unnoticed by Pope Francis who, in 2017, stated that Christians who commit acts contrary to Christianity are hypocrites who may as well be atheists.²⁷

The Indigenous Residential Schools Take Root

Prior to the establishment of the nation of Canada residential schooling was administered by churches of various Christian denominations. The first boarding school for Indigenous students prior to Confederation, in what is now Canada, was established and administered by the Roman Catholic Church in the early seventeenth century at the future site of Québec City near a French trading post.²⁸ Catholic missionaries hoped to both "civilize" and "Christianize" young Aboriginal boys.²⁹ Parents were reluctant to send their children to the schools, and students would run away to return home.³⁰ Thus, the efforts to establish boarding schools in New France — were considered a failure.³¹

After those failures, it was not until the early nineteenth century when the idea of residential schools returned. A British-based missionary society called the New England Company funded a boarding school operation in Sussex Vale, New Brunswick in the first decade of the nineteenth

²⁶ Ross, *How American Racism Influenced Hitler*, April 30, 2018.

²⁷ Julie Zauzmer, "Pope Francis Suggests It's Better to Be an Atheist Than a Hypocritical Catholic," *Washington Post*, February 23rd, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/02/23/pope-francis-praises-the-torah-and-suggests-its-better-to-be-an-atheist-than-a-bad-catholic/>.

²⁸ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 24.

²⁹ Cornelius J. Jaenen, "Education for Francization: The Case of New France in the Seventeenth Century," in *Indian Education in Canada*, vol. 1, *The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and McCaskill (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986); Marcel Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France: 1524–1663* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973).

³⁰ Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

³¹ Roger Magnuson, *Education in New France* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 47–50; Marcel Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France: 1524–1663* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 231. James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): 56–58; Cornelius J. Jaenen, "Education for Francization: The Case of New France in the Seventeenth Century," in *Indian Education in Canada*, vol. 1, *The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and McCaskill (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986); Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

century.³² The goals, of that boarding school operation, were to teach young Mi'kmaq and Maliseet children trades and to convert them to the Protestant faith.³³ An Anglican missionary from England by the name of John West opened a boarding school for Aboriginal students at Red River, Rupertsland (present-day Manitoba) in the 1820's.³⁴ This boarding school along with the New England Company funded boarding school also failed to last.³⁵ The Mohawk Institute — a mission school on the Grand River in Upper Canada (near present-day Brantford, Ontario) — started to take in boarding students in 1834,³⁶ and would remain operational until 1970.³⁷

The amended Indian Act of 1894, under Prime Minister Mackenzie Bowell, authorized the Government of Canada to make attendance at Indigenous Residential Schools compulsory if their parents or guardians were not providing the proper education for their children.³⁸ Thus, under government regulations adopted that year, attendance at Indigenous Residential Schools was on a voluntary basis if their parents did provide for their children's proper education by sending them to school.³⁹ However, attendance was not on a voluntary basis if parents "did not" provide for their children's proper education. The *Regulations Relating to the Education of Indian Children* gave "Indian agents" and "justices of the peace" the power to authorize the apprehension and placement of Indigenous children into industrial or boarding schools if such agents were satisfied that Indigenous parents, or guardians, "could not" properly, or were unwilling to, provide for their child's education.⁴⁰ Indian agents were authorized to appoint truant officers with "police powers."⁴¹ Parents who did not return truants to school were subject to prosecution.⁴² Indigenous children could also be apprehended by the Mounted Police or a parish priest.⁴³ Often Mounted

³² TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 24–25.

³³ W. D. Hamilton, *The Federal Indian Day Schools of the Maritimes* (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Micmac and Maliseet Institute, University of New Brunswick, 1986), 4–5; Judith Fingard, "The New England Company and the New Brunswick Indians, 1786–1826: A Comment on Colonial Perversion of British Benevolence," *Acadiensis* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1972): 30–32.

³⁴ Winona Stevenson, "The Red River Indian Mission School and John West's 'Little Charges' 1820–1833," *Native Studies Review* 4, nos. 1 and 2 (1988): 141.

³⁵ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 25.

³⁶ Elizabeth Graham, *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Waterloo: Heffel Publishing, 1997), 7.

³⁷ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Acc. 1984–85/112, box 47, file 451/25–1, Newspaper article, "Mohawk Institute May Close after 139 years," no date; [TAY-001133] TRC, NRA, Diocese of Huron Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Huron University College, London, ON, Luxton Papers, box 27, Indian Reserves, Richard Isaac, Six Nations Council To Whom It May Concern, 13 March 1970; [TAY-001432] TRC, NRA, INAC-Resolution Sector-IRS Historical Files Collection-Ottawa, file 479/25–13–001, volume 3, G. D. Cromb to Deputy Minister, 20 March 1970. [TAY-003053–0001]

³⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Vol. 5, Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 13.

³⁹ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35–36; and TRC, *vol. 5, Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy*, 13.

⁴¹ TRC, *vol. 5, Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy*, 13.

⁴² TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 111.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.

Police officers were brought in to force parents to send their children to the residential schools.⁴⁴ In 1895, the acting Superintendent General of Indian Affairs asked the Department of Justice to develop a standard warrant to remove Indigenous children from their families if adequate educational provisions were not, and would not be, made by their parents or guardians.⁴⁵ Nineteen years later, in 1914, the apprehension of Indigenous children for the purpose of assimilation, or perceived neglect, became a routine and common occurrence.⁴⁶ Indian agents responsible for apprehending Indigenous children were told that preference should be given to "orphaned children" and "children neglected by their parents."⁴⁷

Parents often surrendered their children under the threat of prosecution.⁴⁸ However, in Québec, mandatory school attendance for all Indigenous children did not begin until 1943.⁴⁹ Even after the 1920 amendment to the Indian Act, which gave the Government of Canada the power to compel any Indigenous children to attend residential school, compulsory attendance was not required for all Indigenous children.⁵⁰ According to the TRC, in most years there were more Indigenous children "attending Indian Affairs day schools than residential schools."⁵¹ In the 1944–45 school year that pattern was reversed.⁵² Out of the 28,429 school-aged Indigenous children, 7,573 students attended Indian Affairs day schools and 8,865 students attended residential schools, which meant that 31.1 percent of Indigenous students attended the residential schools that school year.⁵³

Some children, who attended residential schools, were kept away from their families for years. An Indigenous man by the name of Daniel Big George was taken away to a residential school (along with his sister) at the age of five, and did not see his family for over two years.⁵⁴ Indigenous Residential Schools were deliberately built long-distances away from Indigenous

⁴⁴ For examples of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police being used to return students to school, see: TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6330, file 660–10, part 1, R. W. Greatwood to Indian Affairs, 11 April 1930; [PLD-003278–0001] TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6330, file 660–10, part 2, H. E. P. Mann to Commissioner, RCMP, 6 February 1934; [PLD-003316–0001] TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6193, file 462–10, part 1, page 1/1, "Royal Canadian Mounted Police Report," 11 February 1935, C. Graham; [CRS-001237–0001] TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6275, file 583–10, part 1, "Royal Canadian Mounted Police Report, Re: Frank Puckina or Edwards," 15 September 1939; [PLP-000374] TRC, NRA, Library And Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6304, file 651–10, part 1, Constable G. J. Mitchell, 9 September 1931. [MRS-045402–0001]

⁴⁵ TRC, vol. 5, *Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy*, 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, volume 10410, Shannon box 36, 1918–1920, Untitled Circular, Duncan Campbell Scott, 9 November 1914. [AEMR-200902]

⁴⁸ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 9.

⁴⁹ Anne-Marie Reynaud, *Emotions, Remembering and Feeling Better: Dealing with the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in Canada* (Bielefeld, GER: Transcript Verlag, 2017), 138.

⁵⁰ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 37.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ TRC, vol. 5, *Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy*, 12.

reserves to discourage Indigenous parents from visiting their children.⁵⁵ In contrast, non-Aboriginal children were not mandated to go to schools that were not conveniently located close to where they lived, and where they could not return to their families each day.⁵⁶

The Indigenous Residential Schools were not modeled after the best non-Indigenous schools such as the private boarding schools for the children of the economic elite of Great Britain and Canada.⁵⁷ Instead, the residential schools for Indigenous children, in both Canada and the United States, were modeled after the reformatories and industrial schools that were being built for the children of the urban poor in Europe and North America — the lowest socioeconomic class from those parts of the world.⁵⁸ The Government of Canada was inspired by the United States to build Indigenous Residential Schools from the series of large-scale, government-operated, boarding schools for Indigenous Peoples that the American government opened in a former army barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 1879.⁵⁹ Regarding American influence, a politico who drew inspiration from the United States for his goal of genocide was, according to James Q. Whitman — Adolf Hitler.⁶⁰ Alex Ross states that "Whitman methodically explores how the Nazis took inspiration from American racism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."⁶¹ According to Ross, Whitman notes that in Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler "praises America as the one state that has made progress toward a primarily racial conception of citizenship, by 'excluding certain races from naturalization.'"⁶²

The Central Goal of Indigenous Residential Schools

The central goal of the Indigenous Residential School system in Canada, was to Christianize and civilize the Indigenous population and Indigenous cultures *via* a cultural assimilation process to integrate Indigenous Peoples into Euro-Canadian cultural society. Education was perceived, by the Government of Canada, as the optimal and most effective method of achieving such integration. This integration was deemed necessary by Canada to achieve the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy, which were to eliminate Aboriginal governments, ignore Aboriginal Rights, and terminate the Treaties that the Canadian government established with the Indigenous Peoples prior to Confederation. The Government of Canada believed that if they achieved this cultural and political extermination — part of cultural genocide — then they would be able to gain control over Indigenous land and resources.⁶³ The interest in acquiring

⁵⁵ TRC, vol. 5, *Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy*, 13.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 31.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2007), 186; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 123–133.

⁶⁰ James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

⁶¹ Ross, *How American Racism Influenced Hitler*, April 30, 2018.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 5.

Indigenous land began before the Confederate year of 1867 — by the British government after the war of 1812 — because Great Britain's economic focus began to move away from the Fur Trade toward an agriculturally-based economy.⁶⁴

The Government of Canada pursued their cultural assimilation policy to also "divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Aboriginal people."⁶⁵ Ergo, assimilation was a tactic of colonization to cause the extinction of Indigenous Peoples as distinct legal, self-governing, self determining, and as cultural, social, religious, and racial entities in Canada without having to kill the Indigenous population. This way, European colonizers could acquire new territory to inhabit because they were running out of land and natural resources in their own countries in Europe. This is exemplified by the fact that Canada would, sometimes, force Indigenous Peoples to relocate their reserves onto remote and economically marginal reserves from their "own" agriculturally valuable or resource rich land.⁶⁶ To gain control of Indigenous land, European colonists negotiated treaties, engaged in wars, committed genocide, eliminated traditional landholding practices, disrupted families, and imposed a political and spiritual order with new values and cultural practices.⁶⁷ In other instances, Indigenous land was simply occupied or seized.⁶⁸ The most significant aspects in the Treaties, from the perspective of the Government of Canada, were the written provisions where the First Nations agreed to "cede, release, surrender, and yield" their land to the crown.⁶⁹ *Prima facie* the negotiation of Treaties appeared to be honourable and legal; however, they often took place fraudulently⁷⁰ and coercively.⁷¹ Ultimately, the Canadian government either failed to implement those Treaties or, in the case of today, Canada is slow in implementing the provisions and intent of those Treaties.⁷²

The Canadian government's goal of ending Indian status and terminating the Treaties that it negotiated with First Nations was expounded in the federal government's *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* in 1969.⁷³ This 1969 government statement — often referred to as the "White Paper" — reiterated the government policy to eliminate Indigenous

⁶⁴ L. F. S. Upton, "The Origins of Canadian Indian Policy," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 8, no. 4 (November 1973): 51.

⁶⁵ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 5.

⁶⁶ J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: The History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 222; Blair Stonechild, "The Indian View of the 1885 Uprising," in *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada*, ed. J.R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 263.

⁶⁷ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388, 391, and 399.

⁶⁸ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992).

⁶⁹ J. R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 164–165.

⁷⁰ For fraud in treaty negotiations see — Upton, "The Origins of Canadian Indian," 56.

⁷¹ For coercive treaty negotiations see — Arthur J. Ray, *An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People: I Have Lived Here Since the World Began* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2010), 151–152.

⁷² D. N. Sprague, *Canada Treaties with Aboriginal People* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law, Canadian Legal History Project, 1991).

⁷³ Canada, "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy" (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969), 20.

Peoples as a distinct group of people and to assimilate them into Canadian "mainstream society" — *against their will*. The goals of that government policy were outlined by Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott in his 1920 address to a Canadian Parliamentary committee when he stated that: "our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, [...]"⁷⁴ This is in stark contrast to the isolationism and anti-assimilation policy the Canadian government sought in the 1880s, which was to confine Indigenous Peoples to their reserves using a "pass system" which was used to restrict their movement.⁷⁵

Even in the United States, the U.S. government did not honour even one of the more than one thousand treaties that were signed with the various Indigenous cultural groups according to U.S. Military General William Tecumseh Sherman.⁷⁶ Regarding the fact that the U.S. Government has never fulfilled any treaties, C. C. Painter, a critic of American Indian policy, opined in 1886 that the U.S. Government never intended to keep the signed treaties, but instead used them to serve a greater purpose — as a means to an end. Painter propounded that treaties with the Indigenous population were to serve a present purpose, which was to acquire a desired good with the least possible compensation and to settle difficulties in the easiest way possible.⁷⁷ Painter also argued that as soon as the original purpose became fulfilled or tainted, the treaties were to be disregarded; and when the United States became strong enough, the U.S. Government would enforce a new and more profitable arrangement for themselves.⁷⁸

Although the Indigenous Residential Schools of Canada (i.e., post-Confederate schools) were established by the Government of Canada, the schools were run by various Christian denominations to achieve a process of Christian civilization and language integration. As Geneviève Crytes propounds, "moral, religious and language education was more important in residential school than academic and technical training."⁷⁹ These residential schools "were part of a process that brought European states and Christian churches together in a complex and powerful manner."⁸⁰ The reason churches were chosen to operate the residential schools was because a central element of such schools was to oversee the destruction of Indigenous spirituality and replace it with what Euro-Canadians believed was a "better one" (Christianity) given that all

⁷⁴ Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6810, file 470–2–3, volume 7, Evidence of D. C. Scott to the Special Committee of the House of Commons Investigating the Indian Act amendments of 1920, (L-2) (N-3).

⁷⁵ Laurie F. Barron, "The Indian Pass System in the Canadian West, 1882–1935," *Prairie Forum* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 25–42.

⁷⁶ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 18.

⁷⁷ C. C. Painter, "Proceedings of the Lake Mohonk Conference," Eighteenth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners (1886): 61, 62.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Geneviève Crytes, "Le Modèle D'Enseignement Euro-Canadien dans le Pensionnat Autochtone de Saint-Marc-de-Figuery: Une Étude Historique" (master's thesis in Education, University of Ottawa, 2013), 18.

⁸⁰ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 17.

civilizations were based on religion.⁸¹ Thus, one of the goals of the schools was that "'savages' were to emerge as Christian 'white men,'"⁸² according to the Federal Government of Canada.

This integration was, therefore, seen as necessary by Euro-Canadians who believed Indigenous Peoples were savages and heathens who engaged in primitive pagan superstitious Indigenous spirituality. John Milloy stated that federal assimilation policy since Confederation was designed to "move Aboriginal communities from their 'savage' state to that of 'civilization' and thus to make in Canada but one community — a non-Aboriginal one."⁸³ This racist idea that the Indigenous Peoples of Canada were subhuman in comparison to Canadians of European descent was expressed in 1908 by Canadian Minister of Indian Affairs, Frank Oliver, when he declared that education would "elevate the Indian from his condition of savagery" and make "him a self-supporting member of the State, and eventually a citizen in good standing."⁸⁴ Thus, the residential school system functioned as an instrument of colonial power, in which the Government of Canada partnered with Christian churches to pursue policies of cultural assimilation and destruction. Ergo, state actors instrumentalized Christian institutions for colonial objectives, mobilizing religious authority to legitimize coercive practices. To wit, the atrocities committed under the banner of Christianity reflect the dynamics of settler colonialism, rather than the theological teachings of Christianity *per se*. Thus, such actions represent a distortion of Christian ethics and morals rather than an expression of them, demonstrating that the use of Christianity, and Christian churches and schools as a vehicle, served settler colonial purposes rather than religious ones.

Cultural Genocide

Canada's first Prime Minister — Sir John A. Macdonald — stated to Parliament that a national goal was "to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit to change."⁸⁵ John Milloy also opined that the goal of Canada was to essentially turn Indigenous Peoples into Canada's working-class population and into faithful Christians, and turn them away from their nomadic way of life. As Milloy declares, "With the assistance of the Church and state, wandering hunters would take up a settled life, agriculture, useful trades and, of course, the Christian religion."⁸⁶ This ideology of Christian hegemony reverberated well into the twentieth century when, in 1947, a Roman Catholic official by the name of J. O. Plourde told a Canadian Federal Parliamentary committee, that since Canada was a Christian nation that was committed to having "all its citizens belonging to one or other of the Christian churches," he saw no reason why Indigenous Residential Schools

⁸¹ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 30.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸³ John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 3.

⁸⁴ NAC, RG 10, Vol. 6039, File 160-1, MR C 8152, F. Oliver to Joint Church Delegation.

⁸⁵ As quoted in M. Montgomery, "The Six Nations and the Macdonald Franchise," *Ontario History* 57 (March 1965): 13.

⁸⁶ Milloy, *A National Crime*, 6.

in Canada "should foster aboriginal beliefs."⁸⁷ This is in stark contrast to today, where the Government of Canada promotes a secular society that encourages "freedom of conscience and religion" in the context that the government remains neutral and does not favour one religion over another.⁸⁸

Education was central to the assimilation view of Indian Affairs Deputy Minister Lawrence Vankoughnet who expounded, in his 1887 memo to Sir John A. Macdonald, that the only way to elevate the Indian to a status equal to his white brother was through his intellectual emancipation, which can only be achieved by educating him.⁸⁹ This ideology of racial superiority and racial integration was also espoused in 1953 by J. E. Andrews (the principal of the Presbyterian school in Kenora, Ontario) in the form of taking pity on Indigenous Peoples when he stated: "we must face realistically the fact that the only hope for the Canadian Indian is eventual assimilation into the white race."⁹⁰ The racist belief that Indigenous Peoples needed their minds to be emancipated by aligning their minds with the minds of white people was also espoused by Albert Southard — the school principal of the Gordon's Reserve School in Saskatchewan. Southard wrote, in 1957, that he believed the goal of Indigenous residential education was to "change the philosophy of the Indian child. In other words, since they must work and live with 'whites' then they must begin to think as 'whites.'"⁹¹

Both the Government of Canada and the various Christian churches believed that Aboriginal parents could not raise their children as proper Canadians because they were inferior in raising children.⁹² A central objective of the residential schools, therefore, was to separate Aboriginal children from their parents and communities to optimize the civilization and Christianization process.⁹³ Ergo, the architects and administrators of the residential school system believed that Indigenous children would be better off away from their parents.⁹⁴ This view was echoed by Nicholas Flood Davin, who wrote, in his now famous 1879 report on residential schools, known as the Davin Report, that: "The children should be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions."⁹⁵ Catholic Bishop Vital Grandin of St. Albert (in the present day province of Alberta), led the campaign for residential schooling and, like Davin, believed Indigenous children should be kept away from their parents (however, with parental consent), so, that the children can

⁸⁷ Canada, Parliament, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons Appointed to Examine and Consider *The Indian Act, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* (Ottawa, 1946–1949), 1474.

⁸⁸ For an excellent analysis about secularism in Canada please see — Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

⁸⁹ INAC File1/25–1. Vol. 15, L. Vankoughnet to Sir John A. Macdonald, 26 August 1887.

⁹⁰ TRC, NRA, The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Toronto, ON, Acc. 1988–7004, box 46, file 1, "Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School," J. C. E. Andrews, 1953, 36. [NCA-009046]

⁹¹ TRC, NRA, INAC-Resolution Sector-IRS Historical Files Collection-Ottawa, GRS Files, box 1 A, file 43, Albert Southard, 8 March 1957. [IRC-040039]

⁹² TRC, vol. 5, *Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy*, 11.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁵ Nicholas Flood Davin, *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* (Ottawa: n.p., 1879), 12.

be made "to lead a life different from their parents and cause them to forget the customs, habits & language of their ancestors."⁹⁶ Canada's First Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, reiterated the view of white racial superiority, and the belief in the inability of Indigenous parents to properly rear their children, in his address to the House of Commons in 1883 — justifying the Government of Canada's residential school policy:

When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, his training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.⁹⁷

Over three decades later, in the year 1915, the school principal of the Kuper Island Indigenous School in British Columbia, wrote that he believed the only way to educate Indigenous children "is to bring them to an industrial school,⁹⁸ where they are completely under the control of their teachers, and separated from the evil influences of most of their homes."⁹⁹ Thus, the establishment of Indigenous Residential Schools as the "noble" goal of educating Indigenous children existed nominally, for the establishment of such schools was actually under the deep austerity of forced assimilation and cultural extermination. It was believed that students having contact with their parents would interfere in the students' assimilation process. Ergo, sending Indigenous children to residential schools far away from their parents and community was not done to educate them but to sever their connection to their culture, language, spirituality, and consequently their Indigenous identity, which, by definition, is cultural genocide. When visits were allowed, they were carried out under the "conditions normally associated with a penile institute."¹⁰⁰ The highest number of Indigenous children in the residential school system was in the year 1953, with over 11,000.¹⁰¹ A survey that year, suggested 4,313 Indigenous students were believed to be suffering from neglect at home.¹⁰² Hence, the justification the state used to send the children to residential schools.

⁹⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, vol. 1, Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 159.

⁹⁷ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*, 5th Parliament, 1st Session, 9 May 1883 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer), 1107–1108.

⁹⁸ Industrial schools, or boarding schools, were the terms used prior to the term Indigenous Residential Schools.

⁹⁹ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, volume 1347, red C-13916, W. Lemmens to W. R. Robertson, 10 February 1915.

¹⁰⁰ TRC, *vol. 1, Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939*, 605.

¹⁰¹ TRC, *vol. 5, Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy*, 11.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

The goal of assimilation *via* Indigenous Residential Schools was, thus, to wash, or erase, the Indigenous out of the children before they could get a chance to be inculcated by their traditional way of life. Separating children long distances from their families at residential schools, is a systematic way of disrupting families to prevent cultural conditioning and to destroy the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. This abject form of cultural genocide and pre-emptive conditioning as the real purpose of Indigenous Residential Schools was propounded by senior Oblate André Renaud in a 1958 article. In that article, Renaud expounded that the benefit of residential schools as an all-encompassing systematic enculturation is confirmed by the fact that a residential school could: "surround its pupils almost twenty-four hours a day with non-Indian Canadian culture radio, television, public address system, movies, books, newspapers, group activities, etc."¹⁰³ It is this systematic method of cultural, family, and community destruction that enables one society to achieve the goal of cultural genocide against another. Although today, the Indigenous Residential School system no longer exists, Indigenous children are still being separated from their families *via* child welfare services at numbers greater than the number of Indigenous children who attended the Indigenous Residential Schools in any given year,¹⁰⁴ another consequence of the Euro-Caucasian/Euro-Canadian hegemonic worldview.

In addition to disrupting families, appropriating land, destroying political and social institutions, forcibly transferring populations and restricting their movement, languages were also banned, spiritual leaders were persecuted, spiritual practices were forbidden, and objects of spiritual value were taken by force and destroyed. In fact, Canada went as far as outlawing Indigenous spiritual practices and throwing Indigenous spiritual leaders in jail.¹⁰⁵ Indigenous Peoples who refused to abandon their Indigenous identity, had their right to participate in Canadian social, economic, and political life denied to them by the Canadian government.¹⁰⁶

Canada destroyed existing forms of Indigenous government by replacing them with band councils that were essentially powerless, because the Canadian government had given themselves the power to override band council decisions and the legal authority to dispose of their leaders.¹⁰⁷ Long before European colonialists contacted Indigenous Peoples, "Indigenous nations had effectively and sustainably governed themselves. Each nation had its own distinctive political institution, traditions, leadership system, economy, and culture, and had autonomous control over its territories and resources within."¹⁰⁸ The consequences of Canadian hegemony resulted in the

¹⁰³ André Renaud, "Indian Education Today," *Anthropologica* (1958): 1–49.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Sharon H. Venne, ed., *Indian Acts and Amendments 1868–1975, An Indexed Collection* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Native Law Center, 1981), 93.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know*, 16.

disempowerment of Indigenous women who, traditionally, held powerful political roles¹⁰⁹ and economic influence¹¹⁰ in many First Nations such as the Tlingit, Mohawks, and Carrier nations.

Physical Genocide

The irresponsibility of some school administrators endangered both the health and well-being of some of the students that attended Indigenous Residential Schools. Some children succumbed to infectious diseases — particularly tuberculosis — in far greater rates than the children of non-aboriginal descent.¹¹¹ The poor nutritional standards and unsanitary conditions of most residential schools resulted in some of the children, who attended the schools, to become susceptible to a variety of health problems as adults.¹¹² Many of the students would contract tuberculosis later on in life resulting in terminal illness.¹¹³ Some students were forced to participate in biomedical experiments at residential schools.¹¹⁴

According to Enos Montour who attended Mount Elgin School in southern Ontario, hunger was always a problem for the boys at the school.¹¹⁵ Eleanor Brass recounted that at the Indigenous Residential School in File Hills, Saskatchewan the dinners consisted "of watery soup with no flavour, and never any meat."¹¹⁶ According to her they did not eat a balanced diet and at times it seemed that they were eating fish every day.¹¹⁷ Brass goes on to say that the boys at the school would supplement their meagre diets by trapping gophers and squirrels and roasting them on open fires, and that sometimes they would share the food with the girls at the school.¹¹⁸ According to Mary John, who attended the Indigenous Residential School in Fraser Lake, British Columbia, weeks would go by without eating any meat or fish and that the meals were dull and

¹⁰⁹ Laura Klein, "Mother as Clanswoman: Rank and Gender in Tlingit Society," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura Klein and Lillian Ackerman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 28–45.

¹¹⁰ Judith Brown, "Economic Organization and the Position of Women among the Iroquois," *Ethnohistory* 17 (1970): 151–167; Jo-Anne Fiske, "Fishing Is Women's Business: Changing Economic Roles of Carrier Women and Men," in *Native Peoples, Native Lands: Canadian Indians, Inuit, and Métis*, ed. Bruce Cox (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987), 186–198.

¹¹¹ Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 3957, file 140754–1, P. H. Bryce to F. Pedley, 5 November 1909.

¹¹² TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 136.

¹¹³ For the long-term tuberculosis death rates in Canada between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population please see: George Jasper Wherrett, *The Miracle of the Empty Beds: A History of Tuberculosis in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 251–253.

¹¹⁴ Ian Mosby, "Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 46, no. 91 (2013): 145–172.

¹¹⁵ Enos Montour, *Brown Tom's Schooldays*, ed. Elizabeth Graham (Waterloo, Ontario: The Author, 1985), 26.

¹¹⁶ Eleanor Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1987), 25.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25–26.

monotonous.¹¹⁹ Their regular diet consisted of bread covered with lard, and porridge with boiled barley and beans.

A government inspector report in 1895 confirmed student reports of insufficient food. As one agent put it, "The 'bill of fare' is plain. I believed it to be barely sufficient for the older pupils, who have now, at fifteen to eighteen years of age, larger appetites than they will have when older."¹²⁰ After the indigenous school in Kamloops, British Columbia was inspected by Indian agent John Smith in 1918 he reported his suspicion "that the vitality of the children is not sufficiently sustained from a lack of nutritious food, or enough of the same for vigorous growing children."¹²¹ A local doctor agreed with this assessment, "for some months past the food supplied has been inadequate for the needs of the children."¹²² In 1897, an Indian Affairs official by the name of Martin Benson questioned the accuracy of positive assessments at Indigenous schools and in his opinion, "The bill of fare is decidedly monotonous and makes no allowance for particularities of taste or constitution."¹²³ Milk was also not adequately provided to the students.¹²⁴ In 1947, the head of the federal government's nutrition division — Dr. L. B. Pett — had concluded, after his staff had done inspections at Indigenous Residential Schools, that "no school was doing a good feeding job."¹²⁵

Biological genocide is the destruction of a group's reproductive capacity, with the first documented case occurring in Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada (and the U.S.) during the 1930s.¹²⁶ Infirmaries and Indian hospitals were built in the 1890s to control epidemics and to segregate Indigenous people from the European settler population.¹²⁷ In 1928, the Alberta's *Sexual Sterilization Act* was first passed into law in Canada, which was a law that enforced sexual sterilization on the Indigenous population.¹²⁸ A few years later, British Columbia passed its own sexual sterilization law and did not repeal that law until 1979.¹²⁹ The first sterilization program documented in northern Canada took place in 1966 with at least 1100 documented sterilization cases.¹³⁰ It was not until 1972 that the Alberta government repealed its Sexual Sterilization Act,

¹¹⁹ Bridget Moran, *Stoney Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 53–54.

¹²⁰ Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1895*, 114.

¹²¹ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 3918, file 116659–1, John F. Smith to Assistant Deputy and Secretary, Indian Affairs, 29 March 1918. [AEMR-255360]

¹²² TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, FA 10–13, volume 3918, Microfilm reel C-10161, file 116659–1, 1892–1920, Spec. Claims Kamloops Agency: General Correspondence Pertaining to Kamloops Industrial School, F. V. Agnew to Indian Affairs, 4 June 1918. [KAM-009763]

¹²³ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6039, file 160–1, part 1, Martin Benson, to J. D. McLean, 15 July 1897. [100.00109]

¹²⁴ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 68.

¹²⁵ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6306, file 652–5, part 6, L. B. Pett to P. E. Moore, 8 December 1947. [SMD-001897–0000]

¹²⁶ Survivor Circle for Reproductive Justice, History of Forced/Coerced Sterilization, <https://www.reproductivejusticesurvivors.ca/history-of-forced-sterilization>

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

which took place three years after the legalization of birth control and abortion in Canada in 1969.¹³¹ In 2024, The Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice launched a public education drive, healing support system, and a national archive.¹³² The organization is launching a membership registry to serve as the official record of forced sterilization of Indigenous people in Canada that will include the stories and records of Indigenous women, men, Two Spirit, and transgender people,¹³³ as well as for those who experienced reproductive and obstetric violence.¹³⁴ The mandate of the organization is to provide support to survivors and to advocate for reproductive justice for all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis across the provinces and territories.¹³⁵

Students at the Indigenous Residential Schools were often severely punished for speaking their own languages. Michael Sillett who is a former student at the North West River Indigenous Residential School in Newfoundland and Labrador, told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada that he recalls several times when other children were slapped or had their mouths washed out for speaking their mother tongue, whether that language was Inuktitut or Innuaimun.¹³⁶ This is an example where physical genocide coincides with the cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, both the Government of Canada and the churches were well aware of the potential and significant risk of sexual abuse posed to students from the staff at the Indigenous Residential Schools.¹³⁷ In 1886, school officials recognized the inappropriate actions of Indian affairs translator and recruiter for Roman Catholic schools in Alberta by the name of Jean L'Heureux who sexually abused boys in his care. However, despite this recognition there is no record of a criminal investigation as having taken place.¹³⁸ Then in 1891 when new allegations were made against L'Heureux he was allowed to resign.¹³⁹ According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the Indian Affairs Department of Canada, along with the Churches, placed their own interests ahead of the children in their care when it came to taking action on the abuse of Aboriginal children by covering up the victimization.¹⁴⁰

Complaints often went ignored, and in some cases where an allegation was made against a school principal all the Indian Affairs Department did was contact the school principal directly.¹⁴¹ In at least one abuse case, Indian affairs officials actually worked in collaboration with school

¹³¹ Survivor Circle for Reproductive Justice, History of Forced/Coerced Sterilization, <https://www.reproductivejusticesurvivors.ca/history-of-forced-sterilization>

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., <https://www.reproductivejusticesurvivors.ca/about-the-registry>

¹³⁴ Survivor Circle for Reproductive Justice, *History of Forced/Coerced Sterilization*, <https://www.reproductivejusticesurvivors.ca>

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ TRC, AVS, Michael Sillett, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 27 October 2011, Statement Number: 2011–2870.

¹³⁷ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 91.

¹³⁸ Library and Archives Canada, Hayter Reed Papers MG29, E 106, volume 18, Personnel H-L, J. W. Tims to Indian Commissioner, October 27, 1891.

¹³⁹ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 91.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 91–92.

officials to prevent a police investigation into the abuse at that school.¹⁴² In one case, Provincial Police in British Columbia discovered cases of sexual abuse at the Kuper Island Residential School in 1939, and when Indian Affairs officials from the Government of Canada concluded, after careful investigation, that the allegations had merit, the local Indian Affairs official from the Canadian government advised the suspected abusers to leave the province, enabling the abusers to avoid prosecution from the police.¹⁴³ Nothing was done for the victimized students or their parents.¹⁴⁴

Dismissing Aboriginal reports of abuse continued into the late twentieth century.¹⁴⁵ In some cases, members of school staff, who were convicted of assaulting a student, were not even fired from their jobs.¹⁴⁶ Sometimes complaints of sexual impropriety were not even properly investigated, such as being investigated by a school staff member, rather than government or police officials, as was done at the Gordon's school in 1956.¹⁴⁷ Prosecutions were rare because both churches and the government were often reluctant to take cases of abuse to the police.¹⁴⁸ In other situations, officials from a church would fail to report cases of abuse to the Indian Affairs Department, and when they were made aware Indian Affairs failed to report the cases to their families.¹⁴⁹

Physical and sexual abuses were often intertwined.¹⁵⁰ In addition, both male and female students reported assaults from perpetrators who were of the opposite sex and of the same sex.¹⁵¹

¹⁴² TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 92.

¹⁴³ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 13356, "Investigation-Kuper Island School 1939," G. H. Barry to major D. M. Mackay, 17 January 1939; [IRC-040014] TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 13356, "Investigation-Kuper Island School 1939," Harold McGill to major D. M. Mackay, 27 January 1939. [IRC-040021]

¹⁴⁴ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 92.

¹⁴⁵ TRC, NRA, INAC-Archival Unit-Ottawa, file 772/3-1, volume 2, 10/11-05/66, C. Pant Schmidt to Harold McGill, 17 August 1944; [IRC-047003] T. R. L. MacInnis to Director, Indian Affairs, 25 August 1944; [IRC-047005] Sarah Elizabeth Brown, "Ex-residential School Student Files Suit," *Whitehorse Star*, 21 April 2003; Elizabeth Asp, Jackie McLaren, Jim Sheldon, Michelle Tochacek, and Ruby Van Bibber, "Bishop's comments invalidated any apology," Letter to the Editor, *Whitehorse Star*, 11 August 1999.

¹⁴⁶ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6309, file 645-1, part 3, R. S. Davis, excerpt from Quarterly Report Ending March, 1945, on Touchwood Agency. [IRC-047128]

¹⁴⁷ TRC, NRA, INAC-Resolution Sector-IRS Historical Files Collection-Ottawa, GRS Files, box 1A, file 22, Head Teacher [Illegible] to My Lord Bishop, 10 January 1956. [IRC-040120]

¹⁴⁸ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 92.

¹⁴⁹ TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, 709/25-1-001, 1951-1961, part 2, L. C. Hunter to R. F. Davey, 30 November 1960; [IRC-040054] TRC, NRA, United Church of Canada/Victoria University Archives, Acc. No. 8 [Illegible]. 050C, box 112, file 17, Edmonton IRS-Correspondence 1958-60/UCC Docs Toronto, Dwight Powell to E. E. M. Joblin, 25 November 1960.

¹⁵⁰ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 94.

¹⁵¹ TRC, AVS, [Name redacted], Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 18 June 2010, Statement Number: 02-MB-18JU10-055; TRC, AVS, Myrna Kaminawaish, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Thunder Bay, Ontario, 7 January 2011, Statement Number: 01-ON-06JA11-004; TRC, AVS, Percy Tuesday, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 18 June 2010, Statement Number: 02-MB-18JU10-083; TRC, AVS, Isaac Daniels, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 22 June 2012, statement number: 2011-1779.

Many students reported being raped at school.¹⁵² Josephine Sutherland was cornered by one of the lay brothers in the garage at the Fort Albany School in Ontario,¹⁵³ and other students remembered being assaulted in the church confessional.¹⁵⁴ Some students were actually told they would face internal damnation for speaking out against what had been done to them.¹⁵⁵ Sometimes older students would protect the younger ones, whilst at other times students would abuse other students, which leads to the next section on the psychological impact that abuse at the schools had on the student population.¹⁵⁶

Psychological Impact

According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "Staff abuse of children created conditions for the student abuse of other students."¹⁵⁷ Thus, the psychological impact of abuse triggered victims to become perpetrators themselves. Bigger or older students used the threat of force, or actual force, to "establish their dominance over younger students."¹⁵⁸ Sometimes, "this dominance was used to coerce younger or smaller students to participate in sexual acts."¹⁵⁹ The violence between students also occurred amongst girls. Clara Quisess confessed that at the Fort Albany School in Ontario, younger girls were threatened by older girls with knives.¹⁶⁰ At a hostel in northern Canada, Agnes Moses recalled, "being molested by older girls."¹⁶¹ Family members of the children often could not accept their own children's reports of abuse, which intensified the

¹⁵² TRC, AVS, [Name redacted], Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 18 June 2010, Statement Number: 02-MB-18JU10-055; TRC, AVS, Leona Bird, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 21 June 2012, Statement Number: 2011-4415; TRC, AVS, Barbara Ann Pahpasay Skead, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 17 June 2010, Statement Number: 02-MB-16JU10-159.

¹⁵³ TRC, AVS, Josephine Sutherland, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Timmins, Ontario, 8 November 2010, Statement Number: 01-ON4-6NOV10-013.

¹⁵⁴ TRC, AVS, Marie Therese Kistabish, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Val d'Or, Québec, 6 February 2012, statement number:

¹⁵⁵ TRC, AVS, Larry Roger Listener, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Hobbema, Alberta, 25 July 2013, Statement Number: SP125; TRC, AVS, Mary Vivier, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 18 June 2010, Statement Number: SC110.

¹⁵⁶ TRC, AVS, Hazel Mary Anderson, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 18 June 2010, Statement Number: 02-MB-18JU10-034; TRC, AVS, Peter Ross, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Tsiigehtchic, Northwest Territories, 8 September 2011, Statement Number: 2011-0340.

¹⁵⁷ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 95.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ TRC, AVS, Clara Quisess, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 17 June 2010, Statement Number: 02-MB-17JU10-032.

¹⁶¹ TRC, AVS, Agnes Moses, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Inuvik, Northwest Territories, 29 June 2011, Statement Number: SC090.

children's sense of isolation and pain.¹⁶² This was especially true in Indigenous families that had adopted Christianity as they could not believe that the people of God — who were taking care of their children — could do such things.¹⁶³

The psychological impact of abuse was immediate and long-lasting.¹⁶⁴ Many students turned to self-destructive behaviours because of the abuse, and the abuse also destroyed the student's ability to function in the schools.¹⁶⁵ Not only did the psychological impact of the abuse lead to immediate self-destructive behaviours, such as students abusing other students, but the abuse had long-lasting psychological effects on the students as they got older as well as on their families.

Bob Joseph propounds that the reason why some Indigenous Peoples today have problems with alcoholism is because of the breakdown of individual, community and family values, from one generation to the next.¹⁶⁶ Joseph contends that some Indigenous Peoples have turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism for feeling abandoned by their parents when they were forced to go to Indigenous Residential Schools, and some parents have turned to alcohol because of the trauma they felt after losing their children to the schools.¹⁶⁷ The consequence of the trauma that students felt from their experiences at the residential schools was that they succumbed to addiction, and found themselves disproportionately in conflict with the law.¹⁶⁸

Canadian and American studies suggest that 15 to 20 percent of prisoners from the Aboriginal community have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).¹⁶⁹ FASD is a permanent brain injury that affects the fetus and is caused when a woman consumes alcohol during pregnancy.¹⁷⁰ The disabilities that result from FASD include poor adaptive functioning, problems with judgement and abstract reasoning, and memory impairments.¹⁷¹ A Canadian study found that criminal offenders who had FASD had much higher rates of criminal involvement, including

¹⁶² TRC, AVS, Ivan George, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Mission, British Columbia, 18 May 2011, Statement Number: 2011-3472; TRC, AVS, Dorothy Jane Beaulieu, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Fort Resolution, Northwest Territories, 28 April 2011, Statement Number: 2011-0379; TRC, AVS, Lorna Morgan, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 17 June 2010, Statement Number: 02-MB-16JU10-041.

¹⁶³ Abraham Ruben, "Abraham Ruben," in *We Were so Far Away: The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools*, edited by Heather L. Igloliorte (Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2010), 136.

¹⁶⁴ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 95.

¹⁶⁵ TRC, AVS, Stella Marie Tookate, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Timmins, Ontario, 9 November 2010, Statement Number: 01-ON-8-10NOV-003; TRC, AVS, Richard Hall, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Vancouver, British Columbia, 18 September 2013, Statement Number: 2011-1852.

¹⁶⁶ Joseph, *21 Things You May*, 47.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁶⁸ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 139.

¹⁶⁹ Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)*, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/prog-ini/fasd-etcaf/index-eng.php>; Ospina and Dennett, *Review on the Prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder*, iii.

¹⁷⁰ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 140.

¹⁷¹ Canada, Public Safety Canada, *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder*, 5, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/ftl-lchl-spctrm/ftl-lchl-spctrm-eng.pdf>.

juvenile and adult convictions, than criminal offenders without FASD.¹⁷² Apart from the high cost and lengthy process of diagnosing FASD, the lack of diagnostic confirmation of FASD results in Aboriginal people who are imprisoned for having a medical disability which is what FASD is.¹⁷³ Thus, the traumas of residential schools lead to alcohol consumption in the adults who attended residential schools as children, with the result that they literally pass down those traumas to the next generation *via* alcohol consumption.¹⁷⁴

Many students experienced lasting psychological trauma from being separated from their families and communities, and from the physical and sexual abuse that they endured.¹⁷⁵ Students also experienced psychological abuse as Daniel Andre, who attended Grollier Hall in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, did. Daniel recounts physical beatings in residential school and that he had been humiliated and ridiculed.¹⁷⁶ He was told that he was a piece of garbage and that he was not good enough. At the Indigenous Residential Schools children lived in frightening custodial institutions that felt like prisons.¹⁷⁷ At such schools, the children were often treated as if they were offenders, even though they were the ones at risk of being physically and sexually abused.¹⁷⁸ A woman by the name of Katherine Copenace, who attended the Roman Catholic residential school in Kenora, Ontario, told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada about her psychological struggles: "When I got older, I had thoughts of suicide, inflicting pain on myself which I did. I used to slash my arms, pierce my arms, my body, and I destroyed myself with alcohol which the government introduced of course."¹⁷⁹ In many psychological cases, there were no alternatives to self-destruction for former students of the residential school system.¹⁸⁰ Not only were the psychological effects of the trauma experienced by former students, but the psychological trauma was often passed on to their children and sometimes even to their grandchildren.¹⁸¹

The "overall suicide rate among First Nation communities is about twice that of the total Canadian population."¹⁸² The overall suicide rate for the Inuit community is six to eleven times the suicide rate for the general population.¹⁸³ Aboriginals — between the ages of ten and twenty-nine — living on reserves, are five to six times more likely to die by suicide than non-Aboriginal

¹⁷² Canada, Correctional Service of Canada, *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)*, iv, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/lbrr/archives/cn21451-eng.pdf>.

¹⁷³ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 140.

¹⁷⁴ A study done for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation drew links among the intergenerational trauma of residential schools, alcohol addictions, and the prevalence of FASD in Aboriginal communities. Caroline L. Tait, *Fetal Alcohol Syndrome among Aboriginal People in Canada: Review and Analysis of the Intergenerational Links to Residential Schools* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation), 2003.

¹⁷⁵ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 137.

¹⁷⁶ TRC, AVS, Daniel Andre, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Whitehorse, Yukon, 23 May 2011, Statement Number: 2011-0202.

¹⁷⁷ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 138.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ TRC, AVS, Katherine Copenace, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 June 2010, Statement Number: 02-MB-16JU10-129.

¹⁸⁰ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 137.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

youth.¹⁸⁴ Such large health disparities (in suicide rates) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities have social roots.¹⁸⁵ Such health disparities are evidence of federal policies that separated Aboriginal people from both their livelihoods and traditional lands.¹⁸⁶ Housing on reserves, lacked basic sanitary services and, were both cramped and inadequate.¹⁸⁷ It was from these inadequate communities, on government reserves, where students were recruited to attend Indigenous Residential Schools. After attending residential schools, students returned to these government reservations where their families lived but now the children were in poorer health than before they left.¹⁸⁸

One of the worst consequences of the psychological impact of the residential school experience resulted in a wedge being driven between the children and their own parents when students were belittled about their Aboriginal culture.¹⁸⁹ A former residential school student by the name of Mary Courchene became so ashamed of being Aboriginal that when she returned home one summer she concluded that she hated her parents.¹⁹⁰ She hated her parents because they were Indigenous and because of their brown faces.¹⁹¹ Mary even told her parents that for now on they are to only speak English in their home.¹⁹² Given the residential school experiences of their children, some parents decided to speak only English in front of their children.¹⁹³ The psychological impact affected future generations of Indigenous Peoples, as former students did not wish to teach their children Aboriginal languages and cultural customs anymore.¹⁹⁴

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 37% of Canada's aboriginal languages are critically endangered, 19% are severely endangered, and 16% are definitely endangered.¹⁹⁵ UNESCO has concluded that the remaining languages are all vulnerable.¹⁹⁶ A critically endangered language is when only the oldest speakers remain (of the great-grandparental generation) and usage is rare.¹⁹⁷ A severely endangered language is only when the grandparents, or older generations, speak the language, and a definitely endangered language is when the adults speak the language, but the children don't.¹⁹⁸ In the 2016 Statistics Canada Census, 15.6 percent of the Aboriginal population reported the ability to conduct

¹⁸⁴ Kirmayer et al., *Suicide Among Aboriginal People in Canada* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007), xv, 22.

¹⁸⁵ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 138.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 135.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² TRC, AVS, Mary Courchene, Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Pine Creek First Nation, Manitoba, 28 November 2011, Statement Number: 2011-2515.

¹⁹³ Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds*, 13.

¹⁹⁴ TRC, *A Knock on the Door*, 136.

¹⁹⁵ Christopher Moseley, ed., *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, 3rd ed. (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2010), 117.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

a conversation in an Aboriginal language compared to 21.4 percent in 2006.¹⁹⁹ In the 2016 census, 12.5% of the Aboriginal population reported having an Aboriginal mother tongue (either alone or in combination with another language, such as English or French).²⁰⁰ There are variations among Aboriginal Peoples such as Inuit, First Nations, and Métis people. For example, in the 2016 Statistics Canada Census approximately 64 percent of Inuit people speak their Indigenous language well enough to conduct a conversation, in comparison to 21.3 percent of First Nations people, whilst only 1.7 percent of Métis people speak their Indigenous language well enough to hold a conversation in that language.²⁰¹

The fact that 15.6 percent of the Aboriginal population reported being able to conduct a conversation in an Aboriginal language, whilst only 12.5 percent of the Aboriginal population reported an Aboriginal mother tongue indicates that (Aboriginal) people are learning Aboriginal languages as second languages.²⁰² Although, learning an Aboriginal language at home in childhood as a first language is an important element for maintaining the long-term viability of Aboriginal languages,²⁰³ "second-language learning can be an important part of language revitalization."²⁰⁴ Learning Aboriginal languages as a second language is underway across Canada and represents the efforts to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages.²⁰⁵ Efforts to preserve and revitalize Aboriginal languages include incorporating Aboriginal language instruction in classrooms, creating standard orthographies, and developing language immersion programs.²⁰⁶ These efforts represent an important part of the reconciliation process in Canada.

Historically, both the Government of Canada and the Christian churches have labelled Indigenous rituals as malicious, heretical, and even as superstitious.²⁰⁷ Indigenous rights activist Cree Chief Harold Cardinal, who was a leader in the fight against the 1969 White Paper policy proposal (proposed by Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jean Chrétien and Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Elliott Trudeau), which sought to do away with treaty rights and Indigenous status, once declared that "the things that we hold sacred, the things that we believe in have been repudiated by the federal government" as well as the church.²⁰⁸ Many Christian missionaries perceived Indigenous people as "empty vessels," who would never contest "the loss of their lands, would never organize against them (European colonizers), and would easily take to

¹⁹⁹ Canada, Statistics Canada, *The Aboriginal Languages of First Nations People, Métis and Inuit*, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016022/98-200-x2016022-eng.pdf>, 3.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 4–8.

²⁰² Canada, Statistics Canada, *The Aboriginal Languages of*, 4.

²⁰³ Mary Jane Norris, "Aboriginal Languages in Canada: Emerging Trends and Perspectives on Second-Language Acquisition," *Canadian Social Trends* no. 83 (May 2007): 20.

²⁰⁴ Canada, Statistics Canada, *The Aboriginal Languages of*, 4.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Don Schweitzer and Paul L. Gareau, eds., *Honouring the Declaration: Church Commitments to Reconciliation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Regina, SK: University of Regina Press, 2021), 165.

²⁰⁸ Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*, rev. ed. (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1999), 138.

Christianity."²⁰⁹ The mentality of Indigenous people, who converted to the Presbyterian denomination was that you had to choose to live either in the world of Indigenous people or in the world of white people. In this option of choosing the white man's worldview versus the Indigenous worldview made the "assumption" that being Christian meant following the Anglo-European ways of living.²¹⁰ This assumption was so deeply ingrained in the mentality of many members of the Indigenous population, that the assumption pressured many Indigenous people to give up their Indigenous way of life and spiritual practices.²¹¹

The assumption that being Christian is identical to following Anglo European ways of life, fed into the notion that the Anglo-European Christian way of life was "superior, and that any intelligent Indigenous person would therefore choose to become Christian and abandon their Indigenous way of life."²¹² Reverend Peter Jones, a Chippewa, born in Burlington Heights, Ontario not only incorporated the dominant religion (Christianity) into his writings but also incorporated Christian cultural superiority by completely detaching himself from his tribal past when referencing tribal culture.²¹³ Jones even went on to write that, "Native religious ways were without merit and did not render peace or benefits."²¹⁴ Irene Vernon comments that, "Swayed by Christian teachings, Jones and many other Natives denied all that is Native to be a Christian."²¹⁵

According to Bob Joseph, settlers and policymakers who were of the Christian faith were generally dismissive of Indigenous spirituality and creation beliefs.²¹⁶ Indigenous peoples were considered to be heathens who needed to be raised up from their lives of savagery by being shown the light of Christianity.²¹⁷ When Indigenous children came home from the Indigenous Residential Schools, they often felt disconnected from their family and culture because of the many years of being told that their Indigenous way of life was invalid, and that their spirituality and beliefs were primitive and pagan.²¹⁸ This systemic racism, not only had a devastating impact within Indigenous Christian circles but also with how Indigenous people felt about non-Indigenous people. The genocide of Indigenous Peoples, thus, created a warped perception of themselves and others — leading to distrust their own Indigenous culture — and people of European descent. Whereas some Indigenous people adopted, or embodied, the colonialist way of life, others — on the extreme polar opposite — chose to reject it. Some Indigenous people, regarded their traditional spiritual practices as the acts of the devil, whilst other Indigenous people refused to associate with Christians because of the abuse that they experienced at the hands of Christians.²¹⁹

²⁰⁹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 59.

²¹⁰ Schweitzer and Gareau, *Honouring the Declaration*, 167.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Irene S. Vernon, "The Claiming of Christ: Native American Postcolonial Discourses," *Melus* 24, No. 2 (Summer 1999): 78.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 79.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 80.

²¹⁶ Joseph, *21 Things You May*, 78.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Schweitzer and Gareau, *Honouring the Declaration*, 167.

Eventually, Reverend Peter Jones, and other Indigenous Christian scholars, began to feel psychologically uncomfortable with the idea of — rejecting their culture as a requirement for conversion to Christianity — as postcolonial narratives continued to move into the twentieth century.²²⁰ Some Indigenous people, in not wanting to abandon their ancestors wisdom and traditional ways, refused interculturalization,²²¹ which by definition is the process of interaction and exchange between different cultures, based on dialogue, respect, and preservation of cultural identity. Other Indigenous people shied away from hybridity,²²² which is when a person is a product of the blending of two diverse cultures and traditions. Many other former Indigenous Residential School students simply do not know where they belong. As Bob Joseph points out, "many generations of residential school survivors have struggled with the very real sense that they do not belong to either their community or the world beyond their community."²²³

The United Church of Canada (UCC) recognized the psychological damage that religious colonial enculturation has done to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada in its 1986 apology:

We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the gospel. We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be.²²⁴

Most importantly, the United Church of Canada (UCC) acknowledged their own ignorance of Christian doctrine, in the sense that they confused Western ways of life and culture with the teachings of Jesus Christ. As the UCC apology states: "We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ."²²⁵ By this apology, the United Church of Canada acknowledged the negative psychological impact that their cultural genocide had on the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. This conflation, of Western culture with the gospel of Christ, was also echoed by Professor of Theology George Tinker — an Indigenous theologian — who argued that, "the missionaries of European churches in all denominations confused the gospel with European culture."²²⁶ Tinker goes on to state that the consequences were psychologically and spiritually destructive for Indigenous Peoples, for he opines that "the gospel was not liberating for Indian people but was a form of bondage."²²⁷ Given the inherent spiritual character of religion, we can thus conceive of this bondage as a spiritual bondage, where many

²²⁰ Vernon, *The Claiming of Christ*, 81.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Joseph, *21 Things You May*, 78.

²²⁴ United Church of Canada, "1986 Apology to Indigenous Peoples," accessed February 10, 2025, <https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/apologies-response-crest.pdf>.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Vernon, *The Claiming of Christ*, 86.

²²⁷ George E. Tinker, "With Drum and Cup," *Sojourners* 20 (1991): 16.

Indigenous Peoples became slaves ideologically, socially, psychologically, spiritually, culturally, religiously, mentally, and even physically to the European hegemonic and systemic assimilation program.

Theological Distortions

In the past, one of the Catholic Church's prejudicial views was the perception that Indigenous spirituality was a spirituality of heathens. This negative view of Indigenous spirituality "may" be explained by "ideological distortions" that were integrated into Catholic discourse and practice. These "ideological distortions" functioned as a social structure, shaping the consciousness of Catholic believers causing damage to, and the suffering of, innocent people. Gregory Baum expounds this view as follows:

Over the last half-century, Catholics have come to recognize that in the Church's long history, an ideological distortion of the Gospel has at times legitimated oppressive structures, blessed the practice of violence, fostered the subjugation of women, promoted contempt for Protestants, produced hostility towards the Jews, and blinded Catholics to the truth and holiness found in the world religions.²²⁸

Baum also contends that "these ideological distortions may have been consciously introduced by certain powerful individuals."²²⁹ Whether these distortions were consciously introduced or not, they functioned as structures that may explain Christian hostility towards Indigenous spirituality. The distortions, also account for the suffering that Indigenous Peoples have endured because of this hostility. An example of theological distortions is exemplified by the Doctrine of Discovery whose political and legal role can be defined, from a theological perspective, as a "dysfunctional theological imagination" that shaped the worldview of the European colonialists — motivating them to spread their Imperial agenda across the globe — which leads to the next chapter.

²²⁸ Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 80.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2

Christianity, Residential Schools, and Theology — The Disconnect

Introduction

In Edmonton, Alberta on July 25, 2022, on his only visit to a designated Indigenous Church in Canada, Pope Francis diagnosed the evils committed by the residential school system in religious terms; in the sense that genocide is not the way to draw people toward God.²³⁰ The conflating of Western culture with the gospel of Christ, which was psychologically and spiritually destructive for Indigenous Peoples trapping them in a spiritual bondage rather than liberating them spiritually, is the most likely explanation for this tragic genocide. This conflation is most exemplified in the so-called *Doctrine of Discovery* which was used to justify the possession and exploitation of Indigenous land and their people. Confusing the gospel with European culture can be defined as a "dysfunctional theology" rooted within the Doctrine of Discovery, which is a set of legal principles that govern the colonizing powers of European states in regard to the administration of Indigenous land.²³¹

Doctrine of Discovery

The political and legal role of the Doctrine of Discovery can be defined, from a theological perspective, as a "dysfunctional theological imagination that shaped the European colonial settler worldview."²³² The Doctrine was developed from a series of papal bulls in the 15th century.²³³ Papal bulls are official decrees from the Pope that, wield the full influence of the Pope's ecclesial office.²³⁴ The first set of documents composing the Doctrine of Discovery was called *Dum Diversas*, a papal bull issued by Pope Nicholas V on June 18, 1452.²³⁵ This official decree by Pope Nicholas V gave permission to King Alfonso V of Portugal to:

Invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens (Muslims) and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and

²³⁰ Chico Harlan and Amanda Coletta, "Pope Apologizes for 'Evil Committed by so Many Christians' in Canada's Residential Schools," Washington Post, July 25, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/25/pope-francis-apology-canada-residential-homes>.

²³¹ Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 15.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.²³⁶

Dum Diversas would identify Muslims and pagans as those groups of people that could be targeted for perpetual slavery.²³⁷ The papal bull intentionally used language that "othered" non-Europeans — enforcing the Western theological imagination — and to identify non-Christians who were not part of the European Christian world.²³⁸ Portugal used the papal bulls to justify the African slave trade, and to bring Black Africans to Europe and the continent of America. Given that the King of Portugal was a Christian ruler, he was endowed with the power of the church to take possession of Black Africans — the other — as slave labour. Charles and Rah state that the pagan African body, "was just another commodity to be taken for the pleasure and profit of the European Christian body," and it is the European Christian body which the church believed was made most fully in the image of God.²³⁹

Pope Nicholas V authored the papal bull *Romanus Pontifex* in January 1454, which was also directed towards the Kingdom of Portugal. *Romanus Pontifex* allows the Catholic nations of Europe to expand their dominion over the land that they discovered.²⁴⁰ This papal bull allowed the justification of Catholic nations to take possession of non-Christian lands, and to enslave the native population in those lands that were considered non-Christian such as Africa and the so-called "New World," which is North and South America. The Doctrine of Discovery not only justified the abusive system of the transcontinental slave trade, which was initiated by Portugal, but the Doctrine also deemed the slave trade as just and lawful.²⁴¹ The church actually made the claim that what would benefit the colonial powers of Europe would also benefit the church. Charles and Rah thus conclude that, "the warped Western social imagination that saw slavery as a just and legal institution would be rooted in the dysfunctional assertions of this papal bull."²⁴² The Doctrine of Discovery, because it was deemed as just and lawful, affirmed the privilege of European Christians to determine what is right and just.

Given that the European body was considered to be made in the image of God, whilst the African body and non-European bodies were not, it was the pure European body that was considered to have inherent spiritual worth, thus, justifying the actions of European Christians such as colonization and enslavement. Colonized people, and those that were enslaved, would have no agency before God in the light of the Doctrine of Discovery. Thus, the Doctrine of Discovery

²³⁶ Dum Diversas, Doctrine of Discovery, Indigenous Values, July 23, 2018, www.doctrineofdiscovery.org/dum-diversas/.

²³⁷ Charles and Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing*, 15.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., 16.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

enabled significant harm to come upon human beings who were outside the privileged position of European descent. Ergo, the "slave trade would become the fulfilment and material expression of the dysfunctional theology offered by the church."²⁴³ The papal bull would actually cite, "spiritual and theological motivation for the acts of atrocity that followed the Doctrine of Discovery."²⁴⁴

European rulers would elevate themselves by diminishing non-Europeans, by demonizing them and believing that Europeans had the right to vanquish non-Europeans using the Doctrine of Discovery as their justification.²⁴⁵ European powers, and the Kingdom of Portugal, also used the Doctrine of Discovery to initiate and expand the slave trade from Africa using the theological justification of the papal bulls of the mid-fifteenth century.²⁴⁶ The Pope even declared that Prince Henry of Portugal, who furthered the establishment of the African slave trade, was an agent of God.²⁴⁷ Prince Henry's charges such as his ships' crews embraced Henry's role (as an agent of God), and the Prince's turning of Africans into slaves was considered to be "deeply Christian."²⁴⁸ Charles and Rah go on to state that the slave trade, "becomes an act of worship in the diseased imagination of the European explorers engaged in it."²⁴⁹ On May 4, 1493, which was one year after Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic, Pope Alexander VI issued the papal bull called *Inter Caetera* in which Columbus was singled out and honoured for his efforts to expand the Christian empire.²⁵⁰

Not only did the Doctrine of Discovery further justify the African slave trade in the minds of the Portuguese, the Doctrine also justified and legitimized the so-called "discovery" of America by Christopher Columbus, condoned the French and British colonization of Canada, and justified the "discovery" of the Americas by Spain,²⁵¹ and New Zealand and Australia by the British.²⁵² The concept of "othering" people stands in direct opposition to the teachings of Jesus which does not allow for the identification and exclusion of the other.²⁵³ According to Charles and Rah, God had "originally intended unity and community for humanity."²⁵⁴ To elevate one group of people over another and to use that elevation: "as the standard and authority by which all others should be judged undermines the human community that reflects the image of God."²⁵⁵ The "I-thou relationship between one human with another reflects the image of God and the relationship found in the Trinity."²⁵⁶ However, to "other" people as asserted in the Doctrine of Discovery fractures the

²⁴³ Charles and Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing*, 17.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 18.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 17.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 18.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 19.

²⁵¹ I put the term "discovery" in quotation marks because America was not actually discovered by Christopher Columbus, or Spain, because there was an Indigenous population living there, before and, at the time of the arrival of these European colonists.

²⁵² Sarah Augustine, *The Land is not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2021), 27.

²⁵³ Ibid., 22.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 117.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

community that God had intended for humanity.²⁵⁷ According to Charles and Rah, God's desire was for relationship between humans, and between humans and God, and God expressed that desire by sending his only son Jesus Christ into the world to foster that relationship.²⁵⁸

A partial list of the unspeakable crimes and sins that have been perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples in the name of Jesus Christ have been massacres, the development of boarding schools, stolen lands, broken treaties, forced assimilation, and the creation of Indigenous reservations.²⁵⁹ What also must be included in this list are forced sterilization and the separation of children from their parents — which continues to this day in the form of child welfare programs. According to Charles and Rah, it is unfortunate but "dysfunctional narratives adversely shape the story of the United States as well as the Christian church."²⁶⁰ However, we must also be cognizant and honest with ourselves, and admit that dysfunctional narratives have adversely shaped the nation of Canada as well. Not only was the history of the European conquest of the American continent a chance to obtain land, wealth, and power but also for worldly greatness.²⁶¹ These imperial ambitions, and systems of dominance, were fuelled by a dysfunctional theological narrative because Europe needed a theological justification for their unjustifiable actions. Charles and Rah opine that an examination of Scripture reveals that God's intention for creation was not about one group wielding destructive power over another, but that God had intended for the church to be "an expression of his ongoing desire for a relationship with his creation."²⁶²

Unfortunately, we live in a world where the idea of communal relationship as intended by God is absent in some segments of society, undermining and fracturing the human community that reflects the image of God. Whether that segment of society is reflected in Indigenous Peoples, people of colour, women, religious minorities, or simply people of other faiths and worldviews, the communal relationship as intended by God as he wanted for the world — is fractured. Jesus was for the persecuted, the rejected, the insulted — the so-called "othered" — and he taught that those who suffered such fate are blessed because they will be rewarded in the afterlife — Luke 6:22–23. In Matthew 5:11–12, the Beatitudes given on the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus also propounds this in his teaching:

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In this passage, Jesus is stating that not only is it his destiny that lies with persecution, suffering, and death but that is the same fate for anyone that follows him. As Charles and Rah state the

²⁵⁷ Augustine, *The Land is not Empty*, 117.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 39.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid., 40.

discipleship of Jesus' followers is not to be gauged by their "wealth, their power, or their prosperity here on earth," and that they will know that they are following Jesus correctly when they are "rejected, insulted, and even persecuted — just like Jesus and the prophets who were before them."²⁶³ However, Jesus' disciples "did not want to accept this new barometer."²⁶⁴ Persecution and death for Jesus was inevitable because his message about the Kingdom of God was so offensive to the power of Empire²⁶⁵ — specifically the Roman Empire and the religious establishment at the time — but most importantly it was offensive to the "concept" of Imperial Power. Ironically, the European colonial powers of the sixteenth century and later, did not find Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God offensive to the power of Empire. Instead, they embraced it, but refused to practice it by simply ignoring it and reimagining the Christian message for their own Euro-Caucasian hegemonic worldview in the Doctrine of Discovery.

"Jesus had no intention of creating an earthly Christian empire,"²⁶⁶ because as he stated in John 18:36 "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders." Jesus never sought power, and this is demonstrated when Jesus did not turn around and command Saul (who persecuted people for following Jesus) to conquer enemies of the church. Instead, Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting him (Jesus). In Acts 9:16, Jesus states to Saul what he must endure to follow him. Charles and Rah state that in this passage, "God was not punishing Saul; rather this message revealed to Saul that to follow Jesus was to suffer."²⁶⁷ Charles and Rah opine that when Saul sees Jesus crawling along the ground carrying the cross, Paul then understands the pending and unavoidable persecution and that such suffering produces perseverance, character, and ultimately hope. Charles and Rah cite Romans 5:3–4 to support their argument, where Paul states: "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Given that Jesus essentially taught that persecution and suffering produces perseverance, character, which leads to hope, Charles and Rah thus conclude, "Central to the call to be prophetic is the call to suffer and to endure persecution."²⁶⁸ Ergo, our restored relationship to God is through the suffering of Jesus.²⁶⁹ Charles and Rah go on to state that the gift of that relationship with God "is not meant to be hoarded or used as a source of misappropriated and misapplied power." However, we do see misappropriated and misapplied power directed to Indigenous Peoples throughout the world, not only in the Americas but also in Africa and elsewhere. We also see this misappropriated and misapplied power directed towards Indigenous Peoples by the Christian administrators of the Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada.

Given the contradictions, inconsistencies, and the incoherence between the Doctrine of Discovery and teachings of Jesus Christ, I echo the call made by Christine Mitchell that "All biblical scholars in Canada, whether employed in public or church-related schools, have a responsibility to lead the efforts to dismantle the biblical bases of the Doctrine of Discovery, *terra*

²⁶³ Charles and Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing*, 48.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 49.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 50.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

nullius, and genocide."²⁷⁰ Charles and Rah opine that Biblical reconciliation for all nations, all tribes, and all people arises from the restoration of creation back to God,²⁷¹ and thus *a fortiori* this reconciliation and restoration can not happen *via* an un-Christian like or un-Godly like Empire. Charles and Rah go on to state that, "the God of the Bible is not only the God of Abraham, the God of the Bible is — Jesus."²⁷² Suffering, persecution, which ultimately produces perseverance, character, and hope indicates that Jesus is an Indigenous Jesus which is an interpretation held by Indigenous Christian scholar Adrian Jacobs and theologian Achiel Peelman.

Jesus as Indigenous

Adrian Jacobs implies that Jesus is not for oppressors, colonizers, or the proud but stood by the disadvantaged and those persecuted and because of this he was for "the oppressed, of the rejected, of the norm-busting, of the marginalized, of the dispossessed, [...]" and because of this Jesus "[...] is an Indigenous Jesus."²⁷³ Ergo, Jesus is neither a colonizer nor an exterminator but is a forgiver and liberator. As Jacobs goes on to state, Jesus is "the slave liberator; healer of the broken heart; friend of sinners, strangers, sullied, and all stationed — this Jesus is an Indigenous Jesus."²⁷⁴ Achiel Peelman's overarching thesis is that the values of Jesus Christ are the values of the Aboriginal people of Canada, and because of this, it is clear that Jesus Christ would oppose Canada's maltreatment of the Indigenous population of this country. For example, Jesus teaches love, sharing, and solidarity.²⁷⁵ Jesus worked to liberate his people.²⁷⁶ Jesus showed us that we will be judged according to what we do to the weak and the oppressed, or what Peelman refers to as "the most little ones among us."²⁷⁷ Jesus practiced everything that he preached²⁷⁸ and therefore was a model for humanity. Jesus can be thought of as Amerindian because as a healer his role is similar to medicine persons in Indigenous communities and "because the Amerindian religions themselves are often referred to as 'medicine.'²⁷⁹ Jesus' attitude toward those who suffer and seek his help is similar to an Indigenous medicine person. According to Peelman, Jesus was a real therapist;²⁸⁰ "He is seen by many as the medicine man *par excellence* and as the most effective of all medicines."²⁸¹ Jesus' basic purpose was always to make a person a "better" person, from all points of view,²⁸² which requires us to behave and act like him. However, making someone a better person did not always happen at the Indigenous Residential Schools, for one of the psychological

²⁷⁰ Mitchell, *What To Do With*, 37.

²⁷¹ Charles and Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing*, 50.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Jacobs, *The Declaration and The*, 97.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Achiel Peelman, *Christ is a Native American* (Toronto, ON: Novalis, 1995), 105.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 106.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

impacts on students was that staff abuse of some students led to some students abusing other students. We have also seen that the abuse at the schools also resulted in some students abusing drugs and alcohol as adults, resulting in some of the students turning to a life of crime.

The Loving, Compassionate, and Empathetic Character of Jesus

Jesus Christ showed us the way, and was the perfect model for compassion, empathy, unconditional love, a non-judgmental attitude, fairness, goodness, and equality; qualities that have not always been shown by the Church toward some Indigenous Peoples. Christ was a community builder, and the Church, the Government of Canada, and Western cultures have at times been the opposite in their relations to some Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Had the teachings of Jesus Christ been the guiding light of all church administrators at the schools, then there would have been zero incidences of physical and cultural genocide resulting in zero negative psychological impact, and only a positive psychological impact. The policies of the Church and the Canadian government, along with Western culture has led to brokenness and suffering for a segment of the Indigenous population of Canada, which would have never occurred in a truly Christian society.

Jesus prayed and fasted, and his central message was love — not hatred, discrimination, xenophobia, or racism. According to Peelman, Christ is a very real person who was himself an abused person.²⁸³ He is in the homes of broken families, he is in the prison system, and he travels with those who have no home.²⁸⁴ Most importantly Jesus is with all the victims of violence.²⁸⁵ Jesus came to save everybody who opens their heart to him.²⁸⁶ Jesus had ideals of charity, justice, and love which have helped humanity to change its behaviour.²⁸⁷ He is present during our difficult times and joyful ones.²⁸⁸ Jesus is a universal friend who abolishes all frontiers, and meets Aboriginals at the level of their heart, and because of this Indigenous people view Jesus as an Indigenous person.²⁸⁹

Jesus' commandment of universal love, and his compassion and empathy for the oppressed, the rejected, the marginalized, and the dispossessed makes Jesus, from the Indigenous point of view, an Indigenous Jesus. For it has been some of the so-called Christians — particularly some white Christian males of European descent — that have oppressed, rejected, marginalized, and dispossessed non-white Christians not of European descent. Thus, some white Christian males of European descent have "not" practiced what Jesus preached, and in fact have practiced the exact opposite — behaviour associated with evil rather than with Jesus Christ. Jesus does not make distinctions between people, and he even loves sinful people such as thieves and other criminals as Jesus demonstrates in John 8:1–11 (the woman caught in adultery), Mark 2:17, Luke 19:1–10, and Luke 23:39–43. Jesus' moral and ethical philosophy of not standing in judgement of others,

²⁸³ Peelman, *Christ is a Native*, 108.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 108–109.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

regardless of their immoral and unethical propensity is exemplified in Mark 2:16–17 when in response to why he is eating with sinners and tax collectors Jesus says, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." In John 8:1–11, Jesus teaches the Pharisees humility and restraint and to not judge people in everyday life. Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in condemning the woman caught in adultery and elevates compassion to demonstrate that mercy transforms more powerfully than condemnation exposing peoples hypocrisy in that condemnation — a moral and ethical illustration standing at the intersection of justice and mercy. Thus, the behaviour of some Christian clergy administrators of the Indigenous Residential Schools contravenes the behavior of Jesus, exposing their own hypocrisy in the light of the teachings of Jesus, especially in the condemnation of moral superiority as they would sometimes punish those that they perceived as sinful whether they were or not. The priority for Jesus, therefore, would be the inner healing of the thousands of Indigenous people and not their persecution. However, Jesus would also not condemn the Christian clergy who perpetrated the atrocities but instead would seek to elevate them through forgiveness, compassion, and redemption.

To improve our relations with each other, William C. Spohn believes that we should act and behave with the same moral conviction and conduct that Jesus Christ did. Spohn supports his argument with Philippians 1:27, which calls for Philippians to live their life worthy of the gospel of Jesus.²⁹⁰ In Philippians 2:4, Paul tells the Philippians to put the interest of others ahead of their own, and in Philippians 2:5 Paul tells the Philippians that they should be of the same mind as Jesus Christ. The implications for humanity, is that we should act and behave towards each other as Jesus does with other people, and that we — at all times — should be in the same mental and moral state as Jesus Christ. Spohn states that the basic command of "Go and do likewise" in Luke 10:37 at the end of the Good Samaritan, is a mandate that implies Christians should be faithful to the story of Jesus and creative in implying that mandate to their context.²⁹¹ Spohn uses passages from the Bible to support his argument that we should behave with the same moral conviction and conduct that Jesus Christ did in our dealings with our fellow human beings. Thus, it is important to discuss the disconnect between Christianity, the residential schools, and the Canadian government's dealings with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada to demonstrate that the genocidal acts violate specific passages from both the Greek Bible and the Hebrew Bible which are the spiritual and scriptural guides of Christianity.

The Disconnect between the Bible and the Maltreatment of Indigenous Peoples

The genocide of Indigenous Peoples as a violation of the moral and ethical prescription by the God of Leviticus can be found in Leviticus — a Book in the Hebrew Bible — some of which is consistent with the teachings of morality as espoused by Jesus Christ. For example, the violation of treaty obligations, genocide — both physical and cultural — ignoring Aboriginal rights, and working towards their extinction are all clear violations of Leviticus 19:11 "you shall not deal

²⁹⁰ Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*, 10.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

falsely," Leviticus 19:15 "with justice you shall judge your neighbour," and Leviticus 19:13 where God commands that, "You shall not defraud your neighbour." Followers of Jesus are supposed to heed the words of Peter 1:15–16, "as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" The false dealings committed by the Government of Canada, and the abuses by various Christian denominations are the exact opposite of these teachings found in the Hebrew Bible, and contrary to the teachings of Jesus found in the Greek Bible. The actions of both the Canadian government and various church denominations are not the acts of love that God commanded in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another," and Galatians 5:14, Matthew 22:39, and James 2:8 which state, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

Given that the actions of some of the Christian administrators and faculty of Indigenous schools, and the actions of the Canadian government, are inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus, it is important to demonstrate the disconnect between these horrible acts and Christianity. It is also important to note the contradiction between Christianity and the dishonesty of colonization and assimilation, which was forced upon the Indigenous Peoples of Canada initially *via* British colonization and later by the assimilation policies of the Government of Canada which was conducted by various Christian denominations. Ironically, the Christian churches (at the time of the establishment of residential schools) considered Indigenous spirituality as that of heathens but have never labelled the heinous acts of some of the Christian clergy that administered the residential schools as that of heathens. In the Pope's 2022 penitential pilgrimage to Canada, the Pope apologized for the genocide committed against the Indigenous Peoples of Canada by the Catholic Church, and stated that the abuses suffered by the Indigenous Peoples of Canada was contrary to, and incompatible with, the gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁹²

The Different Symbolic Attributes and Abstract Ideas of Jesus Christ and Christianity

Hans Küng states that there are as many images of Christ as there are minds.²⁹³ Essentially, Jesus represents different things to different people. Thus, there are diverse answers to the question, "Which Christ? What does he mean for me?"²⁹⁴ Küng states some people think of Jesus as friend, elder brother, champion, instigator of unrest, and represents enthusiasm and true humanity.²⁹⁵ He states that for other people Jesus signifies love, meaning, support, the ground in life, and "is the embodiment of happiness, calm and consolation even in disappointments, in despair and suffering."²⁹⁶ To behave contrary to such characteristics — considered to be Christian values by Christians — is to behave in an un-Christian like manner. Nuns, priests, and brothers who engage in physical or sexual abuse are clearly behaving contrary to the words and deeds of Jesus and what

²⁹² Stephen J. McKinney, "'... and yet there's still no peace' Catholic Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada," *Journal of Religious Education* (29 October 2022): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-022-00182-w>.

²⁹³ Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 129.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

he represents. Given that some representatives of the Christian church committed actions contrary to what Jesus represents some Christians have become disillusioned with Christianity, and as Küng points out, some people now view Jesus as someone who means "little, cannot help, are irritated, avoid the issue, and are simply at a loss."²⁹⁷ Küng points out that for others Jesus challenges them to reflect, meditate, and adore contemplation.²⁹⁸

Küng states that Christianity does not mean "everything" that is true, good, beautiful, and humane because such values also exist outside of Christianity, and the same goes for genuine conviction, sincere faith, good will, commitment, action, meditation, a decent life and salvation.²⁹⁹ He points out the fact that, "It is a simple truth that inhumanity is opposed and humanity realized also outside Christianity — among Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, among post-Christian humanists and outspoken atheists."³⁰⁰ What must be made cognizant is that a form of Christianity "does" sometimes exist where inhumanity exists, and humanity is not realized. We have seen examples of inhumanity in the maltreatment of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the United States when these countries were considered Christian and whose populations were primarily of the Christian faith.

Küng states that Christianity, as with post-Christian humanism (either evolutionary or revolutionary), stands for "all that is true, good and beautiful," and Christianity "upholds all human values and fraternity together with freedom and equality, and often intervenes more effectively for the development of the whole man and of all men."³⁰¹ However, we see that in what were considered Christian countries this was not the case for all of their citizens. Canada and the United States have clearly not intervened for the development of the whole Indigenous man or woman in their effort to drive the "Indian out of them." Also, in the history of the United States, the American government has not always intervened effectively for the development of African American women and men — most infamously by the Jim Crow laws of the past. Ergo, both Canada and the United States have not always upheld the human values espoused by Jesus Christ, particularly in regard to their maltreatment of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population in relation to their freedom and equality.

The Inequality of Man-Made Social Structures

Writing in the early part of the twentieth century, Charles S. Gardner analyzes how man-made social structures and processes have led to unjust, unfair, and forced inequality on certain groups in society. Gardner states that there are both natural forces and unnatural ones, i.e., social forces such as politics and economics, which shape society. Gardner propounds that the unnatural man-made ones keep interfering with the operation of the natural laws of human variation which are God made, such as, a changing environment and spontaneous variation. Gardner believes that Jesus' teachings on this issue run parallel with natural laws, for he claims that Jesus believes that

²⁹⁷ Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 129.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 125.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 123.

inequality is "rooted in the divine purpose which is working itself out in the evolution of society."³⁰² Gardner contends that Jesus viewed a society made of inequalities as unjust and perverse, and that he condemned such society made differences. According to Gardner, Jesus "aimed at their absolute elimination by transforming society so that all its activities should be carried on according to the will of God."³⁰³

For Gardner, corrupt social systems that exist not only lead to unfair distribution of material advantages and personal opportunities, but also leads to perverted faculties and degraded personalities. He believes that the present (his book was published in 1914) socio-economic structure of society, and people's perception of superiority in society as "divine predestination," implies a "hyper-Calvinistic fatalism which has no foundation in the teaching of Jesus."³⁰⁴ Our past and current socio-economic and political structure of the Western world negatively affects the Indigenous population of Canada (acknowledging that it also negatively affects other populations in Canada and throughout the world), and is inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus. Thus, the question is what can Canada as a country, Canadians as a people, and Christian churches do to achieve true reconciliation and healing for the Indigenous population of Canada, and is such a thing possible in the light of the Euro-Caucasian/Euro-Canadian "hegemony or survival" worldview of the past and present?

³⁰² Charles S. Gardner, *The Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1914), 139.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

Chapter 3

The Road to Reconciliation and Healing — Church and State — and the Politics of Distraction

Introduction

I believe that the way to achieve true reconciliation and healing is by first acknowledging what happened, followed by apologies, education, help with the mental health of survivors and their families, and finally listening to what Indigenous Peoples need such as economic prosperity, respect for treaties, land and language rights, and respect for the environment. Thus, the Government of Canada and the churches that ran the Indigenous Residential Schools must first acknowledge the wrongs that they committed against Indigenous Peoples and then follow with apologies. The goal of educating the Canadian public about the genocide of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, is to get the general population on the side of the Indigenous communities to force the government of Canada to live up to their legally binding treaty agreements. Mental health professionals, are seen as key allies who, can help in the healing process not only for the survivors of the Indigenous Residential Schools but also for their families including their descendants. Indigenous Peoples must play a major part in the process of reconciliation because they are the only ones who can understand and know what they need to achieve full and true reconciliation within Canada, and to become strong and prosperous people that can flourish now and into the future.

Acknowledgment and Apologies

One of the most important acknowledgments and apologies has come from Pope Francis. During his penitential pilgrimage to Canada in the summer of 2022, Pope Francis explicitly stated — publicly — that he was sorry for the deplorable acts committed by some Christians in charge of administering Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada.³⁰⁵ The most recent apology along the road to reconciliation and healing took place in Rome on March 30, 2023 with the Vatican formally repudiating the "Doctrine of Discovery," by officially declaring that the doctrine is "not part of the teaching of the Catholic Church."³⁰⁶

According to McKinney the apologies by Christian churches were for their collusion with the assimilation policies of colonialism and for the role churches played in Indigenous Residential

³⁰⁵ Sanya Mansoor, "The 'Deplorable' History Behind the Pope's Apology to Canada's Indigenous Communities," Time magazine, July 26, 2022, <https://time.com/6200213/pope-apology-canada-history-indigenous-communities>.

³⁰⁶ Christopher White, "Vatican Formally Repudiates 'Doctrine of Discovery' Used to Justify Colonization," National Catholic Reporter, March 30, 2023, <https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/vatican-news/vatican-formally-repudiates-doctrine-discovery-used-justify-colonial>.

Schools (which was part of this assimilation process).³⁰⁷ He mentions that in 1986 the United Church of Canada apologized for being an agent of colonialism but noted that there was no "explicit apology" for the collusion with the Residential School system.³⁰⁸ Later apologies from the United Church of Canada included contrition for involvement in the Residential Schools.³⁰⁹ Two Anglican bishops apologized in 1991 and 1993.³¹⁰ Then an apology came in 1994 from the Presbyterian Church.³¹¹ Apologies were issued by the Catholic Church on July 24, 1991 by Father Doug Crosby president of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and he apologized on three occasions.³¹² Eventually there was an apology from the Prime Minister of Canada — Stephen Harper — on June 11, 2008 for the role of the Indigenous Residential Schools in the policy of assimilation.³¹³ McKinney mentions the fact that in Pope Francis' address to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada at Maskwacis, Canada on July 25, 2022, he apologized for the Church's role in devastating Indigenous families and their culture.³¹⁴ Most importantly, the Pope made it clear that the abuse was incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ,³¹⁵ as the Pope did when he met with representatives of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada in Rome in April, 2022.³¹⁶

Churches can play an important role in the process of reconciliation, which is necessary for the healing process of survivors and their families. Apologies help to restore human dignity and empower victims "to decide whether they will accept an apology or forgive a perpetrator."³¹⁷ The official apologies from Canada and the Churches, sent an important message to all Canadians that Indigenous people of Canada suffered tremendously at the hands of both the Canadian government and the Church, and that both institutions accepted their measure of responsibility. The contradictory behaviour of Christian clergy at the Indigenous Residential Schools is evident by some Staff members who used spiritual violence to demonize, punish, and terrorize Indigenous students into accepting Christian beliefs.³¹⁸ The apologies are a necessary first step in the process of reconciliation.

At the Vatican, on April 29, 2009, Pope Benedict met with the Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada Phil Fontaine, and the most Rev. James Weisberger President of the Canadian Conference of Bishops.³¹⁹ During these meetings, Pope Benedict made a statement of regret but no official apology,³²⁰ even though an official apology is one of the 94 Calls to Action

³⁰⁷ McKinney, "' . . . and yet there's still no peace,' 334.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 335.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 335–336.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 327.

³¹⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "From Apology to Action: Canada and the Churches," in *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Canada's Residential Schools, Vol. 6: Reconciliation* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2015), 81.

³¹⁸ Joseph, *21 Things You May*, 77–79.

³¹⁹ McKinney, "' . . . and yet there's still no peace,' 335.

³²⁰ Ibid.

by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which was released in their summary report on June 2, 2015. In that report, there are 9 Calls to Action involving the Church — numbers 48, 49, 58, 59, 60, 61, 73, 74, and 75.³²¹ One way to achieve healing, is honouring Indigenous spirituality and reconnecting Indigenous Peoples with their traditional Indigenous spiritual teachings and practices. An inseparable part of Indigenous spirituality is land, language, culture, and identity which are all necessary elements of a whole way of being and of living on the land as Indigenous Peoples.³²²

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls for all governments, faith institutions, and social justice groups in Canada to adopt and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP or simply "the Declaration") as the framework for reconciliation.³²³ Sa'ke'j Henderson states that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada established that the minimum standards of the Declaration are the "appropriate framework for a holistic vision of reconciliation that provides the necessary principles, norms, and standards for reconciliation to flourish in twenty first century Canada, and that reconciliation is about translating hope into insight, and about transforming insight into action."³²⁴ Accordingly, reconciliation is manifested in many ways and requires not only reconciliation from the churches but also from the government. In fact, in some if not most cases, "true reconciliation" can only be achieved by reconciliation involving the Canadian government, and not simply the churches, especially regarding treaty, land, and language rights. However, Henderson states that "seminaries should be mindful of the essential role that they can play in improving the broad socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal people in contrast to other Canadians (as outlined in articles 20–4 of the Declaration)."³²⁵

Many of the essential needs that the Indigenous communities are asking for are outside of the financial capabilities of Church denominations but fall squarely into the domain of governments both federally and provincially. However, the essential needs required by Indigenous communities have not been met. Given the inequality that Indigenous communities have faced, and continue to face, it is important to educate both the public and members of the Indigenous communities about the issues that they face. The reason for this, is because many people in the non-Indigenous communities — and unfortunately, Indigenous communities as well — do not realize that the plight of Indigenous Peoples in Canada are due to genocide and not to their culture, race, mental state, or laziness. The best example of this is Indigenous scholar Erica Jurgens who — because of her lack of knowledge of the history of her people — believed that their plight was due to themselves as a people.³²⁶ Part of this education requires informing people about the Indian

³²¹ Joseph, *21 Things You May*, 130–161.

³²² TRC, *From Apology to Action*, 102–103.

³²³ Sa'ke'j Henderson, "The Indigenous Imperative: The Role of Seminaries in the Realization and Indigenizing," in *Honouring the Declaration: Church Commitments to Reconciliation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Don Schweitzer and Paul L. Gareau (Regina, SK: University of Regina Press, 2021), 2.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid., 21.

³²⁶ Erica Jurgens, "Teaching Truth Before Reconciliation," in *Pathways of Reconciliation: Indigenous and Settler Approaches to Implementing the TRC's Calls to Action*, ed. Aimée Craft and Paulette Regan (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 119–120.

Act and the 94 Calls to Action as delineated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

With the proper education about the injustices committed against the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, the hope is to get the Canadian general public on the side of the Indigenous communities to force the Government of Canada to live up to their legally binding agreements. Another important aspect of trying to achieve true and meaningful reconciliation, is by getting Indigenous Peoples involved in the political arena as federal or provincial politicians. It is important to ask whether there has been substantial improvement in the lives of the Indigenous community since the apologies. The answer to this question is *prima facie* no, not even copacetic, because the Government of Canada continues to deny Aboriginal rights, title, and land claims in the court system, and to underfund Indigenous communities.³²⁷ Economic inequality is a major problem in Indigenous communities, such as barriers to employment. Aboriginal rights, title, and land claims along with economic development are some of the issues that must be addressed to achieve true reconciliation according to Bob and Cynthia Joseph.³²⁸

Education

Jurgens confides that she did not know what Indigenous Residential Schools were or why they existed, even though her grandparents attended such schools.³²⁹ Jurgens did not even know of the Indian Act and consequently the history of her own people which explains their plight today.³³⁰ Instead, Jurgens judged and blamed her community for their social despairs,³³¹ not realizing that colonization, exploitation, theft, and oppression by European-Canadians was to blame. After reading the report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples,³³² Jurgens realized that she had been unconsciously influenced by a settler colonial historical narrative filled with misinformation, resulting in Jurgens developing historical amnesia about her people and their identity, what Canada did to them, and how Indigenous Peoples got to where they are in Canadian contemporary society.³³³ Thus, the unacceptable, fragile, and deplorable plight of contemporary Indigenous society is not due to Indigenous culture, laziness, spiritual worldviews, innate or inherent immorality, alcoholism, or to their genetic makeup but instead to European colonization.

³²⁷ Bob Joseph and Cynthia F. Joseph, *Indigenous Relations: Insights, Tips and Suggestions to Make Reconciliation a Reality* (Comox, BC: Indigenous Relations Press, 2019), 2.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1–6.

³²⁹ Jurgens, *Teaching Truth Before Reconciliation*, 119.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was a Canadian government public inquiry, established in 1991 to investigate the history and contemporary challenges of Indigenous-settler relations and propose solutions for a more just and equitable future. It was established in response to growing tensions between Canada, non-Indigenous people, and Indigenous Peoples and long-standing issues of Indigenous rights, land claims, and governance. See Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 5 vols., (Ottawa: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

³³³ Jurgens, *Teaching Truth Before Reconciliation*, 120.

It is this lack of awareness of the effects that European colonization has had on the Indigenous population that Jurgens believes that people in general (both Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people) need to be educated to understand the "true history" of Canada.

One of the major contributing factors to the distressing state of Indigenous Peoples in Canada is the Indian Act, which had a tremendous negative impact on the socioeconomic and political life of many generations of First Nations people in Canada.³³⁴ Bob Joseph has stated that one of the negative impacts of the Indian Act is that it is the basis for many of today's stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples.³³⁵ His book — which began as a blog — delineates the 21 most aggressive, destructive, and frequently contradictory statute and policies of the Indian Act that are not common knowledge to the public.³³⁶ Joseph wrote this list because he believes that for true reconciliation to happen, both Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people need to be informed, and made aware of, how deeply the Indian Act — was and continues to be — an instrument of oppression that, as Joseph states: "penetrated, controlled, and continues to control, most aspects of the lives of First Nations."³³⁷ Joseph opines that First Nations are better off getting rid of the Indian Act, so, that they can become self-determining, self-governing, and self-reliant people as the Nisga'a Nation in northwestern British Columbia have done.³³⁸

In addition, to delineating the negative effects of the Indian Act, Joseph lists all 94 calls to action as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.³³⁹ Joseph defines such terms as Aboriginal rights as determined by section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982,³⁴⁰ some of which has not been respected by the government of Canada, such as land treaties. He also defines Aboriginal title as it is defined by the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia* court case,³⁴¹ which is something that needs to be respected to achieve true reconciliation, and the general Canadian public must understand this if Indigenous people want them to help in their plight against the Government of Canada. To better inform the general public, Joseph expounds other terms important to reconciliation such as Inherent rights, Land claim agreement, Treaty, Treaty rights, and Treaty settlement land,³⁴² as these terms are important so that the public understands that these are some of the agreements that the Canadian government has not lived up to.³⁴³

³³⁴ Bob Joseph, *21 Things You May*, 3.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 130–161.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 107–108.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

³⁴² For the glossary of terms see Appendix III in Joseph and Joseph, *Indigenous Relations: Insights, Tips*, 167–175.

³⁴³ For Joseph's comprehensive discussion of the land rights and treaties owed to Indigenous Peoples, see Joseph and Joseph, *Indigenous Relations: Insights, Tips*, 104–108.

Mental Health Needs

Tracy Carr and Brian Chartier aim to comprehend what Indigenous students and their families need in order to heal from Indigenous Residential School experiences. Their project also examines the role that mental health professionals can play in the healing process. The authors describe a research project in Saskatchewan with former Indigenous Residential School students and their families because the suffering endured by Indigenous Residential School students spans across generations to include their families.³⁴⁴ Carr and Chartier interviewed support workers and Elders in the Resolution Health Support Program (RHSP) in the fall months of 2015 in the province of Saskatchewan.³⁴⁵ The program supports workers by providing emotional and cultural support to former Indigenous Residential School students and their families, and co-ordinates other support services, to help to build larger networks of relationships, and attend Independent Assessment Process hearings.³⁴⁶ A benefit of the Resolution Health Support Program is that typically, support workers attended Indigenous Residential Schools as students themselves.³⁴⁷ Given support workers applied experiences, Carr and Chartier considered them, along with Elders who also attended Indigenous Residential Schools, as key informants for their study as they are well situated to provide information on the healing needs of former Indigenous Residential School students.³⁴⁸

Studies have found that emotional and cultural support, the development of larger social networks, support workers, and Elders are essential to the healing process of both victims and their families.³⁴⁹ Connecting survivors and their families with Indigenous Culture is a dominant theme in how the participants of the study described healing.³⁵⁰ One participant stated that he could not find healing by attending churches.³⁵¹ Instead, he found healing by going back to his Indigenous cultural heritage by doing a lot of research, and participating in Indigenous ceremonies to actively relearn his culture.³⁵² Another necessary part of Indigenous healing requires support programs such as self-help groups, sharing circles with a commitment to confidentiality, and family circles.³⁵³ For example, group settings either with family, other former students, or other people with similar problems may contribute to healing among former Indigenous Residential School students and their families.³⁵⁴ Carr and Chartier have determined that another part of the healing process is — Forgiveness.³⁵⁵ However, before forgiveness can take place, survivors have to *first* acknowledge

³⁴⁴ Tracey Carr and Brian Chartier, "Healing From Residential School Experiences: Support Workers and Elders on Healing and the Role of Mental Health Professionals," in *Pathways of Reconciliation: Indigenous and Settler Approaches to Implementing the TRC's Calls to Action*, ed. Aimée Craft and Paulette Regan (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 189–191.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 191–193.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 194.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

what happened to them and the pain that they suffered, and then with this pain in mind, they have to learn to forgive themselves then to forgive their perpetrators, and to do so without forgetting what happened.³⁵⁶

The first step that mental health professionals must take along the road to helping Indigenous Residential School survivors, is to both know and understand victims as people and not just as survivors.³⁵⁷ Getting to know Indigenous Peoples as people, requires mental health professionals to understand Indigenous culture and personal history.³⁵⁸ Carr and Chartier concluded, that the best way to achieve healing is by getting both Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people to know each other on a personal level because transformation and reconciliation can only be achieved through personal contact.³⁵⁹ Thus, a comprehensive and analytical description of the path to healing and reconciliation from a mental health perspective must include the input of Indigenous Peoples, which is integral to their psychological well-being to achieve proper healing.

What Indigenous Peoples Need

True reconciliation cannot take place without input from Indigenous Peoples about what their community needs economically, spiritually, culturally, linguistically, educationally, territorially, and politically. David B. MacDonald equates Liberal Reconciliation to Sheryl Lightfoot's "*soft rights*," and MacDonald states that seeking soft rights and economic equality is crucial to the well-being of Indigenous Peoples as individuals and communities, and is part of the process of opening the reconciliation door, a door that MacDonald opines — is at best — half opened.³⁶⁰ Sheryl Lightfoot defines soft rights as cultural, linguistic, and economic rights that do not challenge state sovereignty such as territorial integrity or political authority.³⁶¹ Liberal reconciliation aligns with soft rights because they are achievable within Canada's political framework.³⁶² Soft rights and economic equality improve Indigenous well-being, strengthen communities, and serve as the first step toward deeper reconciliation.³⁶³ Ergo, David B. MacDonald equates *liberal reconciliation* with Sheryl Lightfoot's concept of soft rights because both emphasize incremental, non-threatening forms of recognition — such as cultural rights, language protections, and economic equality — rather than full sovereignty or hard political autonomy. Thus, MacDonald opines that pursuing these soft rights and economic equality is crucial for Indigenous well-being because they provide tangible improvements in daily life, strengthen

³⁵⁶ Carr and Chartier, *Healing From Residential School*, 194–195.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 195–196.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁶⁰ David B. MacDonald, "Paved With Comfortable Intentions: Moving Beyond Liberal Multiculturalism and Civil Rights Frames on the Road to Transformative Reconciliation," in *Pathways of Reconciliation: Indigenous and Settler Approaches to Implementing the TRC's Calls to Action*, ed. Aimée Craft and Paulette Regan (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 8.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 7–10.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

communities, and create the conditions for deeper reconciliation. MacDonald sees soft rights as part of a gradual process — opening the “door” to reconciliation by building trust and improving material conditions. Essentially, he emphasizes that economic equality and soft rights are crucial to Indigenous well-being because they build the capacity for future claims. For example, once basic equality is achieved, Indigenous peoples are in a stronger position to pursue harder rights like sovereignty or land restitution. Soft rights can thus be seen as an entry point for harder rights not just sovereignty and land restitution but also, self-determination and/or political independence, which directly challenge the authority of settler states.

MacDonald concludes that to achieve true reconciliation for the Indigenous Peoples of Canada requires meaningful societal change, such as "new political arrangements where Indigenous Peoples self-determine their own futures either inside or outside of Canada, or some combination of both."³⁶⁴ MacDonald states that soft rights are collective rights to language, culture, spiritual beliefs and practices, their own educational systems, and other forms of identity.³⁶⁵ These are some of the real problems facing the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, and for true reconciliation to occur requires the right to self-determination and land rights, with or without statehood, as well as outlining why they have not received this to date. Outlining "why" Indigenous Peoples have not received this to date will enable them to understand "how" they can achieve it.

From the Point of View of a Politician on What Indigenous People Need

An excellent politician on the debate of true reconciliation specifically in regard to what the Indigenous Peoples of Canada need, and what the Government of Canada needs to do to achieve true reconciliation is Jody Wilson-Raybould — an Indigenous person — who is also a federal politician. Wilson-Raybould, who is the former Justice Minister of Canada and former Attorney General of Canada, opines that part of true reconciliation is about building better relationships and finding connections between and among people who are in conflict.³⁶⁶ This also includes recognizing the interconnections amongst each other (Indigenous and non-Indigenous people) and having relations with each other that are kind, constructive, and respectful.³⁶⁷

We as people must, according to Wilson-Raybould, always strive to improve our interpersonal skills and build better interpersonal dynamics through empathy, respect, and trust whilst working together.³⁶⁸ Wilson-Raybould, however, opines that relationships are not enough to solve the problems of Indigenous Peoples that have been a result of colonialism.³⁶⁹ Ergo, relationships, although necessary, are "not sufficient" to achieve true reconciliation. However, she asserts that "in addition to new relationships," between Indigenous Peoples and Canada, true

³⁶⁴ MacDonald, *Paved With Comfortable Intentions*, 8.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁶⁶ Jody Wilson-Raybould, *True Reconciliation: How To Be A Force For Change* (McClelland and Stewart, 2022), 185.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

reconciliation requires changes to how society is structured and organized.³⁷⁰ She contends that true reconciliation also requires a change in how we live together collectively, the way we make decisions about governance and economics, culture, and the environment.³⁷¹ Wilson-Raybould also declares that to be an "agent" of true reconciliation requires understanding how we all need to contribute and support these large shifts in society both in our conduct and choices in our daily lives.³⁷² She expounds what needs to be done to rebuild Indigenous communities across Canada, and discusses the problems with colonial legislation such as the Indian Act, the lack of respect for Indigenous rights such as treaty rights, the lack of using legal instruments such as Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to address and overcome the denial of Indigenous rights.³⁷³

Wilson-Raybould discusses the fact that Justin Trudeau's talk about building new mechanisms to recognize Indigenous governments and to ensure complete rigorous and meaningful implementation of treaties and other agreements moved her, and after the speech Carolyn Bennett "began rolling out her engagement efforts across the country."³⁷⁴ According to Wilson-Raybould, The Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNA) produced materials without the input of Indigenous leaders, and considers this insulting to the Indigenous community of Canada.³⁷⁵ According to her, the "federal government never even speaks of the framework (as set out by CIRNA) anymore," and they don't even talk about the "bold legislative change or their core platform commitments."³⁷⁶ She admits that the change that Indigenous people need and have known for decades is not being pursued (by the Canadian government), and instead, what Indigenous people continue to have are endless negotiations on the same subject matters that are lacking a rights recognition framework and clear mandates.³⁷⁷ Thus, Wilson-Raybould demonstrates the "inaction" on the part of the Canadian government to carry out "true reconciliation" is prevalent and the non-Indigenous Canadian public should know about this to help Indigenous people out with their needs. Being a politician and author gives Wilson-Raybould the platform to let the world know what has not been done, is not being done, and what the Indigenous population of Canada demands — to get the job done — to achieve "true reconciliation."

Rebuilding Indigenous Nations will, according to Jody Wilson-Raybould, "result in a stronger, better Canada, one that will enrich all Canadians."³⁷⁸ I contend that rebuilding Indigenous Nations will not only help to make Canada stronger but it will enable Canada to truly live up to its claim as being an open, fair, compassionate, multicultural, multiethnic, multireligious, and just society. Wilson-Raybould asserts that the Indian Act is truly colonial legislation which imposed

³⁷⁰ Wilson-Raybould, *True Reconciliation: How To*, 185.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 186.

³⁷³ Jody Wilson-Raybould, *From Where I Stand: Rebuilding Indigenous Nations for a Stronger Canada*. (Vancouver, BC: Purich Books, 2019), 11.

³⁷⁴ Jody Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in The Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power* (Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 2021), 171–172.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ Wilson-Raybould, *From Where I Stand*, 14.

and structured a form of race-based oppression within our "own country."³⁷⁹ Wilson-Raybould compares colonialism in Canada to the colonial experiences of other countries, and argues that reconciliation in Canada "involves rising through our own unique challenges to move through the postcolonial door."³⁸⁰ The requirement, in Canada, is again the understanding and honouring of the Canadian Constitution, which includes recognition and protection for Indigenous rights — including treaty rights.³⁸¹ These rights, however, have been denied and have not been upheld and implemented despite the fact that Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) are legal instruments to address and overcome this denial.³⁸² Crown governments still require Indigenous Peoples to "prove" their rights and the denial of Indigenous rights has been used to justify doing little, or nothing, to help Indigenous Peoples to move beyond the legacy of colonization.³⁸³

Wilson-Raybould's speeches on reconciliation and Indigenous rights address what needs to be done to recognize and implement Indigenous rights according to UNDRIP and she contends it is workable domestically.³⁸⁴ Wilson-Raybould claims that Canada needs a comprehensive recognition of rights, and a framework to implement and help create foundations for governance in a post-Indian Act world.³⁸⁵ Wilson-Raybould stipulates that the "Indian Act" tree must be toppled before Indigenous people can concentrate on the hard work of Nation rebuilding.³⁸⁶ Once the Indian Act is toppled, Indigenous people can rebuild their governments and Nations by developing the mechanisms to enable strong and appropriate institutions, structures, and procedures of governance to grow in the place of the Indian Act.³⁸⁷ This is how true reconciliation should and can be done according to the first Indigenous Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada — Jody Wilson-Raybould.

Politics of Distraction

Rachel George explores how states address and pacify reconciliation demands of Indigenous people by relying on *transitional justice* mechanisms to engage in acts of performative morality,³⁸⁸ such as truth commissions which are a much more recent phenomenon in North America.³⁸⁹ A politics of indifference is employed applying morality only to pacify the immediate

³⁷⁹ Wilson-Raybould, *From Where I Stand*, 10.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ Rachel George, "A Move to Distract: Mobilizing Truth and Reconciliation in Settler Colonial States," in *Pathways of Reconciliation: Indigenous and Settler Approaches to Implementing the TRC's Calls to Action*, ed. Aimée Craft and Paulette Regan, (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 87.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

demands for redress and justice.³⁹⁰ This is done by states superimposing their own form of democracy over existing Indigenous democracies and Democratic futures by attempting to balance Indigenous demands for justice with "their" international humanitarian reputations.³⁹¹ Western states such as Canada and the United States attempt to facilitate justice with apologies, compensation payments, revisions of national histories, commemoration, and truth and reconciliation commissions.³⁹² Note that Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are government bodies, and they are commissioned by the government and not by objective third parties.

Indigenous Peoples have traditionally found Western states' facilitated justice appealing, given that the Western states have been advocating for respect of Indigenous self-determination.³⁹³ However, settler states have often manipulated the idea of justice by not relinquishing their own power, and not challenging their own imposed and presumed authority simply to quell Indigenous demands.³⁹⁴ According to George, truth commissions "were ultimately constrained by limited mandates that reduced injustice and harm to a single colonial policy, which silenced the experiences of ongoing colonialism, continued displacement from our territories, and the disruption of our relationships."³⁹⁵ One of the most important ways to reconcile the horrors of the residential school experience is to empower Indigenous people by accepting their land claims and issuing decolonial policies. Instead, settler states respond to Indigenous requests for decolonization by using transitional justice mechanisms to simultaneously reframe Indigenous experiences in the politics of distraction to pacify demands. Thus, the government's way of reconciling the horrors of Residential Schools and colonization is simply what I call — "distractive cosmetics." However, real change requires *transformative justice*.³⁹⁶

Reconciliation in Canada has often been framed through apologies, commemorations, and truth commissions. These are important steps, but they belong to what is called transitional justice — mechanisms designed to acknowledge harm and provide symbolic redress. Transitional justice helps societies confront painful pasts, but by itself, it risks becoming a politics of distraction: "gestures without change." Transitional justice has given us apologies from churches and government, compensation payments to survivors, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. These measures validate survivors' experiences and educate the public; however, they remain limited, as the measures do not dismantle colonial laws, restore land, or ensure Indigenous self-determination, which is what *transformative justice* calls for. In contrast to transitional justice, *transformative justice* asks us to go deeper, as it demands structural change such as respecting treaties, recognizing land rights, implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and supporting Indigenous led governance.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁰ George, *A Move to Distract*, 87.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 88.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ See Rosemary Nagy, "Transformative Justice in a Settler Colonial Transition: Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 26, no. 2 (2022): 196–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2021.1910809>

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

Transformative justice is not about pacifying demands (as transitional justice does) — it is about rebuilding Indigenous nations so they can flourish politically, culturally, spiritually, and economically. For non-Indigenous Canadians, both the government and the general public, this shift requires courage. It means moving beyond comfort zones, acknowledging genocide, and accepting that true reconciliation is not charity but justice — to wit, transformative justice.

Conclusion

The history of the Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada, reveals a profound contradiction between the Christian ideals professed by the churches that administered these institutions and the un-Christian like behaviour of their administrators and staff. As Pope Francis acknowledged in 2022, the policies and practices enacted within these schools amounted to genocide — both physical and cultural. Physical genocide manifested in widespread abuse, including physical violence and sexual assault, whilst cultural genocide sought to eradicate Indigenous languages, spiritual traditions, cultural practices, and livelihoods. These acts were not isolated incidents, but systemic strategies designed to sever Indigenous children from their families, communities, and ancestral lands, thereby advancing the Canadian government’s colonial project of assimilation and dispossession.

The psychological scars left by this genocide are immeasurable. Survivors often returned home unable or unwilling to speak their own languages, estranged from their spiritual traditions, and alienated from their parents and communities. The inability to report abuse, coupled with the internalized shame and hatred of one’s own culture, has contributed to intergenerational trauma, high rates of suicide, and widespread substance abuse. These outcomes underscore the devastating erosion of Indigenous identity, family life, and communal bonds — an erosion deliberately engineered to facilitate the seizure of Indigenous lands and resources.

It is essential to situate this genocide within the context of Christianity itself. The Catholic Church, alongside Protestant denominations such as the Anglican Church, the United Church of Canada, Presbyterian, Baptist, Mennonite, Methodist, and non-denominational churches, played a central role in administering schools that betrayed the very teachings of Jesus Christ. The Christian virtues of love, compassion, empathy, and generosity were supplanted by policies of domination, assimilation, and exploitation — the anti-thesis of Christianity. This distortion of the gospel into a tool of colonization reflects what can be described as a “dysfunctional theology,” rooted in the Doctrine of Discovery. By conflating European culture with divine mandate, church leaders justified the possession of Indigenous lands and the subjugation of Indigenous Peoples because the Americas and its people are not mentioned in the Bible. However, leaders of the Catholic Church ignored the fact that the Bible itself makes no mention of the European nations that became the settler powers in the Americas.

The consequences of this theological and political distortion have been catastrophic. Crimes committed in the name of Christ — massacres, stolen lands, broken treaties, forced assimilation, and the establishment of reservations — fractured the divine intent for human community. Instead of fostering unity and mutual respect, the churches and the Canadian state perpetuated destruction, exploitation, racism, and oppression. In doing so, they undermined the very image of God reflected in humanity. The Doctrine of Discovery, far from being a sacred principle, became a mechanism of division and domination, contradicting the mission of Jesus Christ, who came to heal a fractured world and restore relationships grounded in justice, compassion, and love.

The Indigenous Residential Schools stand as a stark reminder of how Christian institutions, when entangled with colonial ambitions, can betray their own foundational values. The genocide perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples in Canada was not only a violation of human rights but also a profound theological failure. To confront this history honestly is, to acknowledge the sins committed in the name of Christ, to repudiate the doctrines that enabled them, and to commit to a

future in which the gospel is disentangled from colonial power and restored to its true purpose: the flourishing of all humanity in unity, dignity, and peace.

The legacy of the Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada is not only a history of genocide — both physical and cultural — but also a continuing struggle for reconciliation and justice. The schools, administered by Catholic, Protestant, evangelical, and non-denominational churches in partnership with the Government of Canada, sought to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian society by erasing their languages, spiritual traditions, and cultural practices. This assimilation was part of a broader colonial project to dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their lands, undermine their governments, and sever their ties to community and identity. The result was profound trauma: estrangement from family, loss of cultural pride, inability to report abuse, high rates of suicide, and substance abuse as coping mechanisms. These outcomes reveal the devastating impact of policies that contradicted the very Christian ideals of love, compassion, and justice that administrators claimed to uphold.

Reconciliation has been hindered by what can be described as the politics of distraction — gestures that pacify immediate demands without addressing the structural inequalities that persist. Apologies, whilst necessary, are only the beginning. From the United Church's apology in 1986, to those of the Anglican and Presbyterian churches in the early 1990s, to Stephen Harper's 2008 apology on behalf of the Government of Canada, and most significantly Pope Francis's 2022 acknowledgment of genocide, these statements represent important steps to truth and reconciliation and, hopefully, one day, restorative justice as transformative justice. The Vatican's 2023 repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery further dismantled a theological justification for colonization. Yet, apologies alone cannot heal the fractures caused by centuries of dispossession and assimilation. Survivors and their communities continue to face systemic barriers to land rights, treaty recognition, economic development, and cultural revitalization.

True reconciliation requires more than symbolic gestures. It demands education about the genocide, robust mental health support for survivors and their families, and above all, listening to Indigenous voices. Indigenous Peoples must be central to the process, for only they can articulate the needs of their communities — whether it is economic prosperity, respect for treaties, land and language rights, or environmental stewardship. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called for the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a framework, but reconciliation will remain incomplete until Canada embraces Indigenous self-determination and implements treaties rigorously and meaningfully. Rebuilding Indigenous nations is not simply a moral obligation; it is the path toward Canada fulfilling its claim to be an open, fair, compassionate, multicultural, and just society.

Ultimately, reconciliation is about repairing relationships fractured by colonialism and spiritual violence. It is about dismantling dysfunctional theologies rooted in the Doctrine of Discovery and restoring the gospel to its true purpose: fostering unity, dignity, and flourishing for all humanity. Only when Indigenous Peoples are empowered to self-determine their futures — economically, spiritually, culturally, linguistically, territorially, and politically — will Canada move beyond the politics of distraction and achieve genuine healing. Reconciliation, then, is not a destination but an ongoing commitment to justice, truth, and the restoration of community in the image of God. True reconciliation will not come from transitional justice alone. It will come when Canada embraces transformative justice — when Indigenous Peoples are empowered to define their futures, when treaties are honoured, when land is respected, and when prosperity is shared. Only then can Canada live up to its promise of being an open, fair, and just society.

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Primary Source

RG 10 Indian Affairs [held by the National Archives of Canada – N.A.C.]

INAC-DIAND Files [stored at the Department of Indian Affairs' Headquarters in Hull, Québec], which come under the Privacy Act restrictions.

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission Databases

National Research and Analysis (NRA) Database: The National Research and Analysis database contains records collected by the National Research and Analysis Directorate, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, formally Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC). The records in the database were originally collected for the purpose of research into a variety of allegations, such as abuse in residential schools, and primarily resulted from court processes such as civil and criminal litigation, and later the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), as well as from out-of-court processes such as Alternative Dispute Resolution. The majority of the records were collected from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The collection also contains records from other federal departments and religious entities. In the case of some records in the database that were provided by outside entities, the information in the database is incomplete. In those instances, the endnote in the report reads, "No document location, no document file source."

2. INDIAN AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORTS, 1864 – 1997

Within this report, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs* denotes the published annual reports created by the government of Canada, and relating to Indian Affairs over the period from 1864 to 1997.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was created in 1966. In 2011, it was renamed Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Before 1966, different departments were responsible for the portfolios of Indian Affairs and Northern Affairs.

The departments responsible for Indian Affairs were (in chronological order):

- The Department of the Secretary of State of Canada (1864 to 1869)
- The Department of the Secretary of State for the Provinces (1869 to 1873)
- The Department of the Interior (1873 to 1880)
- The Department of Indian Affairs (1880 to 1936)
- The Department of Mines and Resources (1936 to 1950)
- The Department of Citizenship and Immigration (1950 to 1965)
- The Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (1966)

- The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (1966 to 2019)
- Split into two: Department of Indigenous Services, and the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (2019 to present)

The exact titles of Indian Affairs annual reports changed over time, and were named for the department.

3. Library and Archives Canada

RG 10 (Indian Affairs Records Group) The records of RG10 at Library and Archives Canada are currently part of the R216, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development fonds. For clarity and brevity, in endnotes throughout this report, records belonging to the RG10 record group have been identified simply with their RG10 information. Where a copy of an RG10 document held in a TRC database was used, the TRC database holding that copy is clearly identified, along with the RG10 information connected with the original document.

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