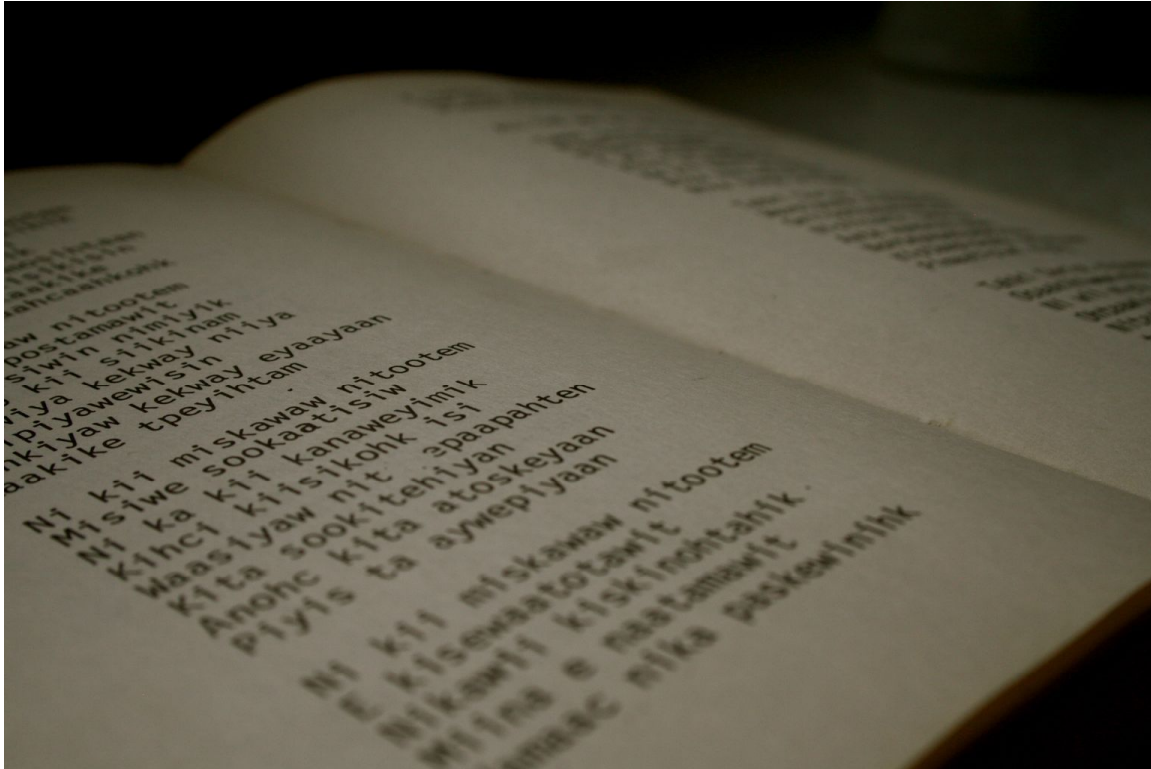


## **The History of Aboriginal Education in Ontario**

**Hypothesis:** European ideologies have plagued traditional Aboriginal education structures and continue to manifest themselves in the current Ontario curriculum.



**Discussion of Sources:** This paper examines a variety of primary and secondary source documents. In the sections that follow, the primary and secondary sources are discussed in detail by explaining their significance and use for this paper's argument.

**Primary Sources:** Meagan Hamilton – a contributor of this report, took many of the photos included throughout the paper at Stirland Lake and Crystal Lake Residential schools. At the Queen's Education Library, and various online sources, we looked at a number of primary documents including:

- The Canadian Broadcasting Company produced a segment with *The Fifth Estate* in 2011 entitled Stories from the River's Edge. This documentary highlights the struggles remote First Nations communities face with regards to education. Focusing on the seven deaths of students at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in Thunderbay, this film sheds light on the injustices plaguing modern education structures. The film can be found at <http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/2011-2012/storiesfromtheriversedge/>.
- Nicholas Flood Davin wrote The Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds, otherwise known as The Davin Report, in 1879. This Report included that recommendation that the most effective means of “civilizing” the Aboriginal population was to establish residential schools. The Report was commissioned by John A. Macdonald and the Federal Government, and guided the civilization of Aboriginal children across Canada. This primary source informed our discussion of the recommendations that were put forth to implement a skills-based curriculum in the Residential Schools. The Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds can be found at <http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.03651/1?r=0&s=1>
- The documentary entitled The Fallen Feather: Indian Industrial Residential Schools and Canadian Confederation was produced, directed, filmed and researched by Randy N. Bezeau, and hosted, coproduced and researched by Jannica Hoskins. Through interviews with Residential School survivors, the documentary explores first hand accounts of Aboriginal peoples’ experience with the curriculum that was taught in Residential Schools in Ontario and across the Nation. For our report we focused on these first-hand account interviews to gather information about the industrialized educational approach in Residential Schools.

#### Ontario Curriculum Documents:

- The Ontario Curriculum Document for Social Studies Grades 1-6, History and Geography Grades 7 and 8, last modified 2004, was found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/sstudies18curr.pdf>. The latter part of this curriculum document covers the Social Studies curriculum for grades seven and eight. In the last two years of elementary school students study the early years of Canadian history. Students may come into contact with the topic of Residential Schools in grade eight, but in grade seven it is unlikely.
- The Ontario Curriculum Document for Grades 9 and 10 Canadian and World Studies, last modified 2005, was found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/canworld910curr.pdf>. This curriculum document was useful in outlining the specific expectations for the grade ten history courses. Through reading the expectations very few of the expectations include Aboriginal history.

- The Ontario Curriculum Documents for Grades 11 and 12 Canadian and World Studies, last modified 2005, was found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/canworld1112curr.pdf>. All of the courses in this curriculum document are optional. More coverage of Residential Schools is included in a grade twelve Canadian history course.
- The Ontario Curriculum Document for Grades 9 and 10 Native Studies, last modified 1999, was found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/nativestudies910curr.pdf>. There are two optional courses outlined in this curriculum document, both are open. The grade ten course covers more history than the grade nine course.
- The Ontario Curriculum Document for Grade 11 and 12 Native Studies, last modified 2000, was found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/nativestudies1112curr.pdf>. There are several courses outlined in this curriculum document. All the courses are optional for high school students. Courses offered cover literature, art, history, and law.

#### Ontario Textbooks:

- Paul W. Bennet is the senior editor and author of Canada: A North American Nation (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1989), a Canadian History textbook used for teaching in Ontario high school. There as no mention of Residential Schools in this textbook.
- Elspeth Deir and John Fielding are the co-editors of Canada: The Story of a Developing Nation (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 2000), a textbook used for studying Canadian History in Ontario high school. Residential Schools were mentioned very briefly in a single paragraph.
- Dennis DesRivieres and Colin M. Bain are the co-editors of Experience History: Canada Since World War I (Toronto: Oxford Canada, 2006), a textbook used for studying Canadian History in Ontario high school. In this text there is one page on Residential Schools, which includes a before and after picture of Thomas Moore.
- Diane Eaton and Garfield Newman co-edited Canada: A Nation Unfolding (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1994), a textbook used for studying Canadian History in Ontario high school. There as no mention of Residential Schools in this textbook.
- Allen S. Evans and I.L. Martinello are the co-editors of Canada's Century (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1988), a textbook used for studying Canadian History in Ontario high school. There is no mention of Residential Schools in this textbook.

- Ian M. Hundey and Michael L. Magarrey are the co-editors of Canadian History: 1900-2000 (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 2000), a textbook used for studying Canadian History in Ontario high school. In this textbook there is only one paragraph on Residential Schools under a sub-heading titled “Intolerance and Racism”.
- Jill Colyer and Jack Cecillon co-edited Creating Canada (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2010), a textbook used for studying Canadian History in Ontario high school. This text includes two and a half pages on Residential Schools. There are testimonials from individuals involved (a survivor of the Residential School System and a man from the time of the creation of the schools in Canada).
- Peter Flaherty edited the Teacher’s Resource Creating Canada: Teacher’s Resource (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson 2010). This accompanies the Textbook *Creating Canada*. In this teacher’s resource there is one lesson template for teaching students about the topic of Residential Schools. The lesson is titled “Introduction to Chapter 7: Postwar Government Actions”. The lesson’s focus is not Residential Schools, however, it does play a large role in the lesson. Along with the lesson there is a list of additional resources, most of which can be found online.

**Secondary Sources:** This paper explores a variety of secondary source documents found at Stauffer Library, Queen’s Education Library, Douglas Library, Four Directions Student Aboriginal Centre, and online.

- Drew Bednasek, and Anne Godlewska from *Queen’s University* wrote a captivating article called Cultivating ignorance of Aboriginal Realities which was published in *The Canadian Geographer* in 2010. This article provides massive insight into the statistics of Aboriginal content within Ontario curricula. It takes these statistics one step further to illustrate how the lack of Aboriginal content in Ontario primary and secondary schools is affecting the knowledge of university and college students across Canada.
- Yatta Kanu wrote Teachers’ Perceptions of the Integration of Aboriginal Culture Into the High School Curriculum, which was published in the *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* in 2005. In this article, Kanu depicts the attitudes and opinions of surveyed teachers with regard to their perception of their Aboriginal students and colleagues. This source has proven to be very helpful for the purpose of illustrating the systemic racism that continues to permeate its way through education structures in Canada.
- Ben Levin wrote an article in the journal *In Canada* entitled Aboriginal Education Still Needs Work, which was published in 2009. This journal article highlights

some of the struggles teachers and students face with regards to education of Aboriginal histories and cultures. This article points out the systemic and logistical concerns that affect the Canadian education system, and the negative effects that result for Aboriginal education.

- Ken Osborne, author of Teaching history in schools: a Canadian debate, published his article in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* in 2003. In this article, Osborne discusses the lack of Aboriginal content within the Ontario curricula. He narrows in on the statistically low percentage of content of Aboriginal histories and cultures within primary and secondary schools across Canada.
- John Richards wrote a fascinating article entitled Closing the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal Education Gaps, which was published with *C.D. Howe Backgrounder: Social Policy* in 2008. This article depicts the inequities within Canadian education structures and gives suggestions for ways to mediate these issues and close the educational “gaps”.
- The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples from the Indian and Northern Affairs Government of Canada Online Archive informed our discussion of curricula in Residential Schools in Ontario and across Canada. Chapter 10 in Part One, Volume Two of the Report consists of the research into the physical conditions and academic approach that was used in Residential Schools. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples issued the report in 1996.  
[http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055641/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg28\\_e.html#100](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055641/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg28_e.html#100),
- The online source Where Are The Children? <http://www.wherethechildren.ca/>, included first hand accounts of survivor’s exposure to and engagement with the Residential School Curriculum in Ontario. This online source informed our discussion of the curricula in Residential Schools both through narrative accounts and photographs.
- Ray Barnhardt and Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley cover topics on Alaskan Aboriginal peoples experiences with education in their 2011 compilation of essays by different authors entitled Sharing Our Pathways: Native perspectives on education in Alaska. This source proved quite useful in gaining an overall perspective on traditional education. One essay was specifically used by Paul Ongtooguk, which gave us perspective in terms of experiential education. These we linked to Anishinaubae notions regarding hunting and spirituality, as similar ideas and beliefs were described. While it is acknowledged that each Aboriginal nation is unique and holds its own culture and traditions, it was observed that some beliefs and practices shared similar purposes and were thus incorporated in to our study of Nations around Ontario.
- David DeJong has compiled a very comprehensive chapter on traditional Aboriginal people’s education in Promises of the Past (1993). While it mostly

details groups outside the realm of Ontario, there are some mentions of groups affiliated with the region in the numerous excerpts, which span from writings by Aboriginal people detailing their experiences in their culture to original writings of authors from the early days of contact who describe daily lives and customs of Aboriginal peoples they observed. The only downside to this chapter is that it is quite short, and there is little context to explain the selections DeJong chooses.

- George E. Ellis has compiled from numerous sources (travelers, tourists, hunters, explorers, scientific commissions, military officers, missionaries, traders, and those who lived among Aboriginal peoples) a very detailed account of the different groups of aboriginal peoples in North America in his 1882 book The Red Man and the White Man in North America. It is a window into the past; his often racist remarks give a good depiction of how people perceived Aboriginal peoples during his time and how the purposes and importance of certain cultural customs were often overlooked through a Eurocentric lens. The hard data, however, does provide some context with which to work, though must be taken with a grain of salt.
- Charles Hamilton's Cry of the Thunderbird: The American Indian's Own Story is an excellent source for learning about the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples. While it may initially be alarming due to the fact that it was published in 1952 and thus could contain many biases and misrepresentations, the collection of stories and essays written by Aboriginal people of different groups proves otherwise. It is an attempt to gain perspective into Aboriginal people's culture, and thus takes the approach that the only way to do so is through Aboriginal people's own stories. While all of them are from the United States, many of the groups themselves would have been cross-border in their traditional lands since these did not necessarily comply with national borders.
- A missionary among the Delaware nation, John Heckelwelder's 1819 Account of the History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States is an account of his journeys and observations. It contains a detailed account of all aspects of the Delaware, painting them in a surprisingly relativistic light considering the time period and that Heckelwelder was a missionary. Indeed, he can be contrasted to Ellis, who explicitly states the need to place Aboriginal peoples in Residential Schools. Heckelwelder, on the other hand, recognizes the worth of Delaware culture and the first hand accounts he provides give the reader a sense of insight quite rare for writings of the time – especially from those of Jesuits seeking to convert those they lived amongst.
- Basil Johnson's 1995 book entitled The Manitou: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway is an excellently written book that takes the reader on a journey into the spiritual world of the Anishinaubae, or Ojibwa, people and their societal make-up. Part of the Ojibway nation himself, he does this first by providing a thorough introduction into their spirituality in the Introduction. This proved especially

useful for the reader who is unfamiliar with the topic, and allows the following series of engrossing historical and cultural narratives regarding Ojibway spiritual beliefs to have more meaning.

- Zabe MacEachren's 2006 journal article in the Canadian Journal of Native Education entitled The Educational Paths of Art and Craft Experiences details her extensive knowledge regarding the nature of crafting and how it can be incorporated into education today as a means for personal development and growth. Much of the knowledge we have surrounding experiential education, most notably in the outdoor setting, comes from Aboriginal people's historical traditions. A professor at Queens University for the Outdoor Experiential Education program, Zabe has years of experience in this field and so proved an invaluable experience in the discussion regarding experiential education in traditional Aboriginal people's education.
- In Kip Ingraham William's 1873 compilation entitled The Early Jesuit Missions in North America, Father Sebastian Rasles describes in his journal his experiences among the Abanakis in the years leading up to 1723. While proving incredibly interesting in their own right through quite comprehensive description of Abanaki culture, the readings were mostly not very useful for our purposes on the topic of education. We did, however, manage to find a couple pieces of information that we were able to use, most notably on the topic of boyhood training in hunting.
- In our report we use two books by Rupert Ross. The first is the 1992 Dancing With a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality. It has an Introduction by Basil Johnson, who is mentioned above as a well-known Anishinaubae writer. This serves as an excellent segue into Ross's exploration of Native philosophies with the help and guidance of Native leaders across Canada. He seeks to understand how these philosophies can be incorporated into court processes and other aspects of mainstream society. Ross expands on this in his second book, Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice (1996). Ross details his travels across Canada as he examined and experienced the suffering experienced by so many Aboriginal peoples and the promise of healing that culture can bring. He incorporates many topics on traditional Ojibwa culture as well to relate to how today's issues are being tackled. These resources proved quite useful as they provided a comprehensive and well-researched insight into Anishinaubae culture through the eyes of someone of European descent.
- Sheila Watt-Cloutier's 2000 essay Honouring Our Past, Creating Our Future: Education in Northern and Remote Communities is included in the essay compilation Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise by Marlene Brant Castellano, Lynne Davis, and Louise Lahache. A prolific Inuit writer, she gives an outline of past experiences Inuit have had with residential schools, present issues, and how these might be tackled for the future using traditional ways.

## **Introduction:**

Education in Canada has continued to evolve over time to meet the needs of a growing and changing population. An important question we must ask is whether or not these changes have been beneficial for all of Canada's citizens. This paper will examine how education structures in Canada have historically undermined the cultural identity of Aboriginal peoples and continue to manifest themselves in new forms of colonial control. Generalized traditional First Nations education practices will be used as a framework for comparison with the Residential School System. This comparison will be used to argue that Residential Schools disrupted cultural teachings and have created lasting negative impacts on First Nations cultures and communities.

Traditional First Nations education will be examined first by discussing the historical role of community, oral traditions, and the types of disciplines taught. Ecological and holistic approaches to education lay the foundation for most forms of traditional teachings in Aboriginal communities. This section seeks to give a very broad overview of the many diverse and unique Aboriginal groups within Canada by highlighting key components and similarities of these varying cultures.

The essence of the Residential School System in Canada will be examined next. This segment seeks to compare how volatile and drastic these educational reforms were to traditional Aboriginal culture and identity. The Residential School System sought to re-socialize and reshape children into the European agricultural, linguistic, and religious mold. The primary goal was radical cultural change by turning the "savage child" into a "civilized adult". The negative effects of Residential Schools are a tragic part of Canadian history, but are not relegated to the past. Their impacts are still greatly

felt across Aboriginal communities today, yet the history of the Residential School System seems to be forgotten in Ontario classrooms.

The third section of the paper will examine the current Ontario curriculum in terms of the content of the Canadian Residential School System. By examining the evolution of course texts between 1988 and 2010, teacher resources, and the content in courses, this section will point out the minimal efforts made to educate Canadian citizens on an instrumental part of our history.

Finally, this paper will discuss how the ideologies of the Residential School System - assimilation, domination and oppression - have manifested themselves in modern education structures. Eurocentric views continue to dominate education structures resulting in a whitewashing of the Ontario curriculum and a general lack of funding for reserve schools. This has resulted in students being forced to leave their homes to attain secondary school education - a startlingly similar process to the Residential Schools themselves.

### **Methods of “Traditional” First Nations Education**

This section discusses the methods Aboriginal peoples in the Ontario region used to educate their youth before the advent of Residential Schools. As David DeJong points out in a brief chapter about general forms of traditional education in his book Promises of the Past: A History of Indian Education in the United States, different “subjects” were taught in these times. These were comprised of:

“History, including origin and great deeds; physical science, as seen in the Indian’s love and care of the natural world; physical education and athletic ability; etiquette, including respect for elders; hunting or learning to provide

for one's family; religious training and fasting, which connotes self-discipline; and diet and health care. In short, traditional Indian education provided the skills needed for any society to function"<sup>1</sup>.

Although these subjects may not have been clearly separated or distinguishable through a formal education system, they were indeed effective forms of education in their own right. Education was built around three main foundations: spirituality, community, and experiential education. These were inherently intertwined – the community being the school faculty and nature being the facility in which religious and experiential education took place.

John Heckelwelder covers the role of spirituality in Aboriginal education through his accounts of his extensive missionary travels among the Delaware in History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States. With unusual relativism for his time, he painted Aboriginal peoples in a much more favourable light than most who then wrote on the subject (for example, George Ellis' 1882 study entitled The Red Man and White Man in North America from its Discovery to Present Time in which he noted "nothing answering to our ideas of instruction or even of training was recognized among the Indians"<sup>2</sup>). He observed one of the first things parents did was impress into the minds of their children a habitual devotion to the Creator, and a strong feeling of gratitude for the benefits bestowed upon them by the Creator.<sup>3</sup>

For the Anishinaubae, a group of Aboriginal peoples part of the Ojibwa nation whose traditional territory encapsulated the Great Lakes region, the name given to the Creator was Kitchi-Manitou. "Kitchi", meaning immense and preeminent, and "manitou", meaning mystery, spiritual, mystical, supernatural, god-like or spirit-like,

essence, etc. Basil Johnson, an Ojibwa writer, explains their spirituality in his thorough compilation of Anishinaubae spiritual beliefs and legends entitled The Manitous: the spiritual world of the Ojibway. Kitchi-Manitou had appointed guardians – referred to as “manitous” – over different wards and infused them into all beings and objects. Some dwelled among the stars, others among the four cardinal points – North, East, South, and West – and presided over human destinies, well-being, youth, and old age. Others cohabited the Earth with humans, presiding over plant and animal species. The manitous were welcomed and solicited by the Anishinaubae for favours and advice – all except for the evil man-eating Weendigoes, the threat of whom was usually enough to bring about compliance with perceived laws and customs<sup>4</sup>. For the Anishinaubae hunter, it was important to give thanks and treat prey with respect, lest the manitous prevent success. The manitous could withhold from hunters’ permission or opportunity to kill, exact revenge if one of their flock was maltreated<sup>5</sup>, or give an animal to them depending on how that hunter conducted himself.

Paul Ongtooguk relates the teaching of these beliefs in his essay entitled Aspects of Traditional Inupiat Education. He gives the example of how there were times, in spite of careful planning, preparation, cautious stalking, and quiet approaches, that no animal would allow a hunter to approach even remotely close. On the other hand, a person might be setting up camp and a moose would walk right into it and wait patiently for the hunter to take advantage of their good fortune. While the notion that animals would give themselves to hunters might not make sense to outsiders unfamiliar with Aboriginal peoples’ beliefs, Ongtooguk notes that “It is difficult to imagine anything else if a person has hunted for very long”<sup>6</sup>. Such beliefs in manitous and a spiritual realm surrounding

hunting stimulated respect for the animal being hunted and prevented the hunter from becoming overly confident or prideful – traits which could stifle learning and observation.

When exploring the Anishinaubae culture, healing, and justice in Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice, Rupert Ross notes that children were first shown that they were involved in ongoing relationships within a “whole” – not just with each other, but also with things around them, including the manitous and their community. By observing connections and relationships, children learned over a lifetime of study how they worked together and how to accommodate the self into these rather than try and dominate them.<sup>7</sup> According to an Ojibwa friend of his, Ross reiterates that you would not compare the worth of any of the elements of a forest against another – the different trees, bushes, grasses, insects, birds and animals – they all played necessary roles for the health of a place and were thus all sacred.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing these processes was crucial to obtaining the knowledge and skills required to aid the community in survival. For sustainable survival to be possible, one had to respect nature rather than try to dominate it. In order to respect nature, one had to recognize that everything was connected and had a role - including humans.

In this sense, the basis of education was religion, and was for practicality as much as spirituality. If an Anishinaubae child desired to become an admired trapper, hunter, warrior, or leader – or even just provider, he had to learn how to properly respect the manitous and understand how nature was connected in order to be successful. Such knowledge could only come from elders, and so the child learned to revere elders for their knowledge and wisdom. In the Introduction to Rupert Ross’s book Dancing With a

Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality, Basil Johnson describes the important role of oral histories and narratives for education as told by elders to the youth. Following the labours of summer, Anishinaubae elders would traditionally orally recount cultural histories at family and community gatherings during the winter months. They would tell of former accomplishments; describe and explain the origin and nature of things and the meaning of customs, rituals, and ceremonies; and narrate accounts of half-human manitous such as Nana'b'oozoo, who represented what they understood of human nature<sup>9</sup>.

In Charles Hamilton's compilation of essays written by Aboriginal peoples about different aspects of their culture, entitled Cry of the Thunderbird: The American Indian's Own Story, the Sioux writer Ohiyesa relates how a typical lesson was formatted. He describes how "every evening a myth, or a true story of some deed done in the past, was narrated by one of the parents or grandparents...on the following evening, [the child] was usually required to repeat it."<sup>10</sup> Along with producing an excellent memory and continuing the historic narrative into successive generations, this was so the message would be ingrained within the learner. Thus, contrary to popular belief, such gatherings were not simply for storytelling; these instructional lessons were typically rooted in the natural and spiritual world and taught educational lessons on social practices, practical life, morality, and spirituality. With the Anishinaubae, special training programs were conducted during the year for those considered especially gifted and caring of the cultural and spiritual heritage. In time, these youth would themselves become accredited elders, give their own lessons to curious children, and be treated in the same manner.<sup>11</sup>

This sort of teaching stimulated ambition. Children saw how wise, knowledgeable, and skillful their elders and parents were and strived to achieve such

levels. In this way, overtly controlling discipline was not necessary, and the child was instead afforded much freedom. Heckelwelder goes into detail on the subject of discipline among the Delaware – or lack thereof – and how the authority of the parent was not

“Supported by compulsory methods and violent punishments, but by persuasions, and appeals to the pride and ambition of the child. Parents [were] assisted in maintaining their control over their children, and in instilling into them just sentiments, by the whole community, who for this purpose [took] every occasion to commend the good and censure the bad.”<sup>12</sup>

The community was indulgent to the child and allowed them much freedom to play and explore, encouraging them to aspire after adults who regularly provided for the community and who were thusly praised and respected.

For example, male children would have been given the opportunity to learn their future role as a provider by being taken under the wing of a mentor, often the matrilineal uncle. Formal training would commonly begin through encouraging careful observation while the child was out playing. In the case of Ohiyesa, who was trained by his uncle – widely regarded as one of the best hunters around – this was a constant process in order to encourage skills necessary to be successful in a real life situation:

“When I left the teepee in the morning, [my uncle] would say, ‘look closely to everything you see;’ and at evening, on my return, he used to often catechize me for an hour or so...’On which side of the trees is the lighter-coloured bark? On which side do they have most irregular branches?...How do you know that there are fish in yonder lake?...What do you think of the little pebbles grouped together under the shallow water? And what made the pretty curved marks in the sandy bottom and the little sand-banks?”<sup>13</sup>

Initially, the young hunter’s responsibility was to complete such tasks to demonstrate, hone, and encourage their abilities: a missionary among the Abanakis, Father Sebastian

Rasles noted in Kip Ingraham's 1873 compilation entitled The Early Jesuit Missions in North America, "no sooner have the children begun to walk, then they exercise them in using the bow, and in this they become so skillful that at ten or twelve years of age they scarcely even fail to kill the bird at which they aim."<sup>14</sup> In order to instill pride in the child and encourage further behaviour that would result in a proficient hunter and provider, these kills would be eaten by the family as any other game meat.

In this way, Heckelwelder notes "the whole of the Indian plan of education tends to elevate rather than depress the mind, and by that means to make determined hunters and fearless warriors."<sup>15</sup> Despite this statement's generalizations, there is truth to its message: only by affording children plenty of freedom could they develop as full, confident adults. In today's outdoor experiential education philosophy – much of which is derived from Aboriginal peoples' practices – there is a significant emphasis on developing leadership in youth through mentorship from older leaders. This system is useful for facilitating self-confidence and worth.

Leadership was a desired characteristic and sought after by children. It brought elevated status and a sense of satisfaction to youth who contributed to the community. For the Anishinaubae, men and women were instilled from childhood with a sense of obligation to the community that required them to give something back as per their abilities for all the benefits they received. Even notions of individuality were still tied to community: the Anishinaubae people "championed and upheld the importance of...personal independence on the promise that the more self-reliant and free the individual, the stronger and better the well being of the community."<sup>16</sup>

Thus by aspiring to contribute to the community, children inevitably began learning and applying skills pertinent to their projected future roles; in “doing”, children became better able to make connections and become aware of the “whole” mentioned earlier in regard to spirituality. When a young man was taught to hunt and be on the land, the technical skills of making and handling a weapon were taught at the same time as the character skills of courage, respect, determination, persistence, and patience present in a successful provider. When a young woman was taught to prepare and sew skins and materials for clothing, she was also taught the appropriate character skills to go along with her creativity and the important role she would play as a future mother and wife<sup>17</sup>.

Making tools, clothing, and any other items encouraged learning – not just for motor skills development or for the sake of simply “doing”, but for a better understanding of their world. According to Zabe MaCeachern in her paper The Educational Paths of Art and Craft Experiences, for both males and females,

“Craftmaking experiences involve demonstrating a body-based knowledge that is dependent on interacting through multiple senses with material from the land. Actually using the craft reengages the user with the land in a practical manner that extends beyond only mental involvement with ideas and concepts.”<sup>18</sup>

In this way, “doing” in traditional Aboriginal peoples education lead the child back to a spiritual realm that connected them to nature. This completed the cycle of spirituality, community, and experience that would be constantly repeated throughout their lifetime as they grew and learned new skills pertinent to their societal roles. These educational processes represented the ultimate in experiential education – not only by encouraging the development of hard skills, but by developing the person as well.

The key components of traditional education— spirituality, community, and experiential education – were stripped away under the guise of benevolence inside the confines of regimented, racist, and radical curriculum practices that guided a national mandate to “civilize” the Aboriginal Child. Below, we investigate in an Ontario context how this occurred by analysing the curriculum that was used in these schools.

### **Curriculum Practices in Residential Schools in Ontario**

When the first Residential School opened in Brantford, Ontario in 1831, the curriculum reflected what Indian and Northern Affairs Canada records describe as “a precise pedagogy for re-socializing children in the schools.”<sup>19</sup> Residential School curriculum was comprised of varying levels of academic work and practical training in life skills. Each area of study was approached with the overall goal to re-shape the Aboriginal child in respect to his or her traditional beliefs and practices in agriculture, language, and religion. All curriculum, whether definably academic or not, was meant to enforce “radical cultural change” whereby the “savage child would be remade into the civilized adult.”<sup>20</sup>

From 1831 until just after World War II with the introduction of Integration, half of the Residential School day was framed in the context of the provincial curriculum. In Ontario Residential Schools, Aboriginal children engaged in provincially guided curriculum in social studies, sciences, math, art, and home economics, and the remaining half of the day was devoted to skills-based training. Shirley Williams, a woman who attended St. Joseph's Residential School in Spanish River, Ontario, recounts her time in

Residential School and provides insight into the daily schedule and distribution of provincially mandated curricula amidst the time devoted to practical skills training:

"In school we learned many different subjects such as English, science, math, writing, geography, history and home economics. The home economics consisted of knitting, cooking and sewing. [...] Every month we were assigned to new jobs. We called them 'jobs' and every month we changed jobs within the school. We had 'vocational jobs', such as sweeping the floors in the dorms, recreation, and refectory. Halls, stairs and the Sister's dining room areas were also part of our 'jobs', which also included cleaning the washrooms. The heaviest jobs were the laundry, dairy and kitchen. Many times in the afternoon we would be taken out of class to go and work."<sup>21</sup>

For many Residential Schools across Canada, the life skills component of the curriculum, what Williams refers to as “jobs”, was formally introduced after the publication of The Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds<sup>22</sup>. More commonly known as The Davin Report of 1879, Nicholas Flood Davin formally recommended the incorporation of practical training in the Residential School curriculum after he toured U.S Residential Schools and consulted with the United States Commissioner of Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>23</sup> These recommendations were often obsolete. Many Ontario Residential Schools had already implemented such a skills-training approach to the curriculum to ensure upkeep and maintenance of the educational and residential facilities.

Students were enrolled in specific skills-training courses based on gender. The separation of boys from girls was a strategy meant to teach Aboriginal children the gender-specific roles they would be expected to fill once they became active, civilized members of Canadian society. While boys engaged in courses pertaining to agriculture, carpentry, shoe making, blacksmithing, and tinsmith work, girls were enrolled in sewing,

shirt making, knitting, cooking, laundry, dairying, and ironing.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the designation of classroom time for the teaching and learning of skills in various trades and household economics, the students learned these skills by doing chores around the school grounds. The purpose of these chores was two-fold: that they integrate and civilize the Aboriginal child so that they could one day be competitive in the Canadian economy, and that in doing the chores, the child contribute to the operations and the physical maintenance of the Residential School.<sup>25</sup>



**Children at work in a sewing class in Residential School<sup>26</sup>**

In many cases, the survival of the Residential School was dependant on the students' contribution to operational and physical maintenance. Funded on a per-capita basis, schools began to suffer financially because of under and over attendance.<sup>27</sup> There was no middle ground: Residential Schools either struggled to retain students which led to a lack in Government funding, or there were too many students in the schools which led to high operational costs.<sup>28</sup> The financial burden to Residential Schools had a direct impact on the curriculum. As discussed in the documentary The Fallen Feather, many schools

began to run farms for profit<sup>29</sup>. The result was that in “the guise of industrial education, children would labour, tending to crops and livestock for half of the school day”.<sup>30</sup> As financial burdens thickened, the academic curriculum in many Residential Schools was overrun by more skills-training work, general chores, and farmhand labour.



**Student at Residential School milking a cow, an example of the industrialized curriculum at Residential Schools and the engendered approach to education<sup>31</sup>**

Despite the prevalence of skills training curriculum, there was no shortage of academic curriculum that contributed to the aggressive assimilation of Aboriginal students into Canadian-European culture. In 1896, The Department of Indian Affairs introduced mandatory ethics courses as a component of the academic curriculum for each grade level in Residential Schools.<sup>32</sup> In their first year, Aboriginal students were required to take a course entitled “The Practice of Cleanliness, Obedience, Respect, Order and Neatness”.<sup>33</sup> In line with the concepts taught in this course, students were required to cut their hair short and dress according to European school fashion, for example the pinafore.



**Residential School girls dressed in the European-style pinafore.**

Subsequent courses were entitled “Right and Wrong”, “Independence, Self Respect”, “Industry, Honesty, Thrift”, “Patriotism in Self- Maintenance Charity”, with the culmination of “The Evils of Indian Isolation”, “Labor: The Law of Life,” and “Home and Public Duties” in the final years of study.<sup>34</sup> Social values and moral codes were explicitly taught in these ethics courses; however, these ideologies were not confined to the specific courses and were in fact very much intrinsic to the overall curriculum in Residential Schools. Aboriginal children were indoctrinated with European ideologies of societal rights and wrongs through language courses, social studies, home economics courses, and most predominantly, religious studies.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, despite the best assimilative efforts of the courses in ethics, the most aggressive tactic of assimilation was

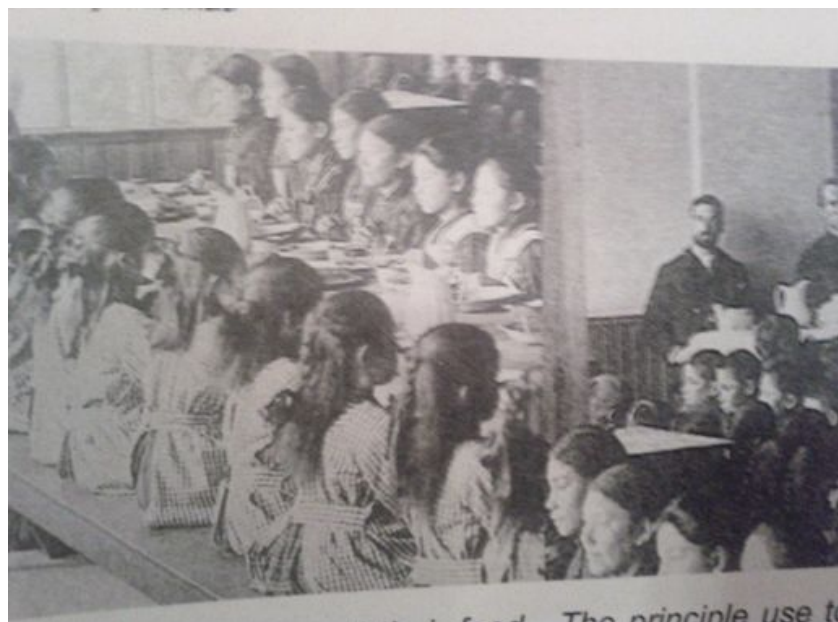
the constant reinforcement of Eurocentric ideologies by way of their incorporation into each and every academic subject. These ideologies were not only expected to be learned, but were required to be lived by each student every waking moment of the day<sup>36</sup>.

In addition to the incorporation of Eurocentric ideologies in the context of the provincially mandated curriculum, aggressive assimilation into European culture was predominantly framed within the context and mandate of the Church. From the opening of the first Residential School, school day routines were built around Catholic or Protestant rituals.<sup>37</sup> The Report of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples describes the lifestyle in the Residential School as one that was “ordered by the hourly precision of clocks and bells and an annual calendar of rituals and festivals of church and state – Christmas, Victoria Day, Dominion Day and St. Jean. Baptiste Day.”<sup>38</sup> The partnership between Church and State resulted in curriculum practices that were both religious and patriotic in nature, and the mandate upon which Residential Schools operated was that of “Selfless Christian Duty.”<sup>39</sup>

The Residential School curriculum ridiculed Aboriginal faith and eradicated Aboriginal ontology through aggressive practices in Christian indoctrination.<sup>40</sup> In an interview with journalist and researcher Jannica R. Hoskins, Christopher Devlin, a Residential School survivor, recalls the prevalence with which religious indoctrination was felt within the walls of the Residential School. Devlin recalls how children were beaten if they were caught observing any traditional spiritual practices, and then “rewarded if they became altar boys in the dominant religion.”<sup>41</sup> In another interview with Hoskins in the documentary The Fallen Feather, Dr. Mary Thomas, another Residential School survivor, describes that each morning she had to be in chapel by

seven: “We would go to the chapel and there we would be interrogated about how evil our parents and our grandparents were. They were evil people; their way of living was the work of the devil.”<sup>42</sup> In addition to attending daily mass, each student was required to confess his or her sins at the beginning of each week, a routine that actively condemned the traditional Aboriginal lifestyle. Prior to the confession of sins, Aboriginal students were reminded to “forget about all of the spirituality and all of the teachings of [their] grandparents...and listen to what was taught about God and the sins they had committed.”<sup>43</sup> As is evidence from these accounts, prayer and religion were the foundation upon which the Residential School ideologies were built and assimilation took place. Just as Eurocentric ethics and moral rule were crucial to the assimilation of the Aboriginal child, so too was the stripping of the Aboriginal child of traditional spirituality and rituals. The image below depicts Aboriginal children at prayer before a meal in a Residential School, and provides further insight into the incorporation of religion into the daily routine:

**Children at prayer  
before mealtime in a  
Residential School<sup>44</sup>**





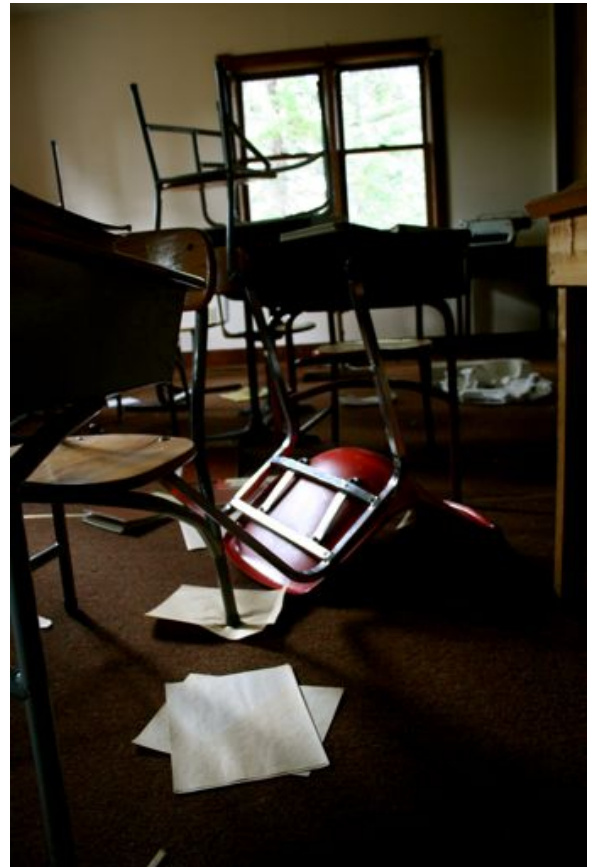
**Images captured from Stirland Lake and Crystal Lake Residential Schools. From left to right: Cree hymn book, Christian hymn translated into Cree, a yearbook message from the school Principal at Crystal Lake Residential School.**

From the outset of the creation of the Residential School system, Government and Church were of mutual understanding that the overturning of Aboriginal languages would be at the crux of the Residential School curriculum.<sup>45</sup> It was understood by both parties that without traditional language, Aboriginal children would never be able to go back to their traditional lifestyles and engage with the stories of their elders – the desired outcome of aggressive assimilation. In 1895, the Department of Indian Affairs wrote in the Annual Report that “so long as he keeps his native tongue, so long as he remains a community apart.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, to advance the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples,

students were required to speak English at all times, and were beaten when caught speaking their traditional languages. The rigidity with which this practice was exercised in the Residential School curriculum disabled the Aboriginal child from reintegration with his or her own people upon graduation from school<sup>47</sup>. Overall, the cultural and spiritual alienation of Aboriginal peoples in Residential Schools was meant to accelerate their assimilation into Canadian society.

Residential School curriculum in Ontario was built upon the aggressive tactics of assimilation brought forward by the Europeans, in partnership with the Church and State. When the last Residential School closed in 1996, many of the stories of drastic reform through education were closed along with it. The industrialized approach to the Residential School curriculum was gone, and the provincial education system in the school boards across Canada was all that remained. This paper will now shift from an intensive look at the Residential School Curriculum in Ontario and in Canada, to a discussion of how the history of Residential Schools is portrayed and studied in the Ontario Curriculum today.

**Primary Source: Cristal Lake and Stirland Lake Residential Schools**  
**Photographs taken by Meagan Hamilton**



**How the Topic of Residential Schools is Covered in the Ontario Curriculum**

The Residential School System in Canada is a sensitive topic and one that is not adequately covered in Ontario education. Over the past ten to fifteen years there has been more coverage of Aboriginal issues in Ontario curriculum, even still, there is not enough. One can only hope that this coverage will continue to increase due to its importance in lending explanation on the status (economic, social) of Canadian Aboriginal peoples today.

The goal of Social Studies in grades seven and eight is to have students look at various perspectives in order to gain a balanced understanding of Canadian history.<sup>48</sup> The

focuses in grade seven are: New France; British North America; and conflict and change. Within these topics students look at early interactions between settlers and First Nations peoples. When studying New France students are introduced to issues (mostly cultural and religious) between French settlers and First Nations peoples. After studying New France students will then move into studying British North America. Students will study the involvement of First Nations peoples in the War of 1812 as well as their relationship with British North Americans.<sup>49</sup> The curriculum documents do not go into a lot of detail; topics covered in the curriculum are in list form. Although Aboriginal history is mentioned in the curriculum, coverage is not required within the course. Ontario teachers are not given much, if any, true guideline of how to approach the topic of Residential Schools. The hope is that students will gain enough knowledge and understanding of early Canadian history to move onto the topics covered in the grade eight curriculum.

In grade eight Canadian history the focuses are: Confederation; Development of Western Canada; and Canada: a Changing Society.<sup>50</sup> If students in grades seven and eight are going to cover the topic of Residential Schools in Social Studies at all, it is more likely that they will do so in grade eight. When studying Confederation, students will “look at reasons for exclusion of certain groups from the political process”.<sup>51</sup> Through this students will see that Aboriginal peoples were viewed as different and not what was considered to be “Canadian” at the time of Confederation. After Confederation students will look at the development of Western Canada. Within this section is the everyday life of Aboriginal Canadians. Students will be able to get a glimpse into the cultures of Aboriginal peoples before Residential Schools began in Canada. The way Aboriginal

history is approached in the curriculum documents makes the cultures appear to be extinct.

In the Ontario curriculum students study Social Studies—which includes early Canadian history—up to grade eight.<sup>52</sup> There is no Canadian history course in grade nine; it is not until grade ten that Ontario students resume the study of Canadian history.<sup>53</sup> Grade ten Canadian history is a mandatory course in Ontario; it is offered in both Academic (CHC2D) and Applied (CHC2P). The study of Canada’s history in grade ten picks up where it left off in grade eight—at the beginning of the First World War. Grade ten Canadian history focuses on how Canada operated on an international level during the twentieth century. There is a large focus on international relations and conflicts (WWI and II, the Cold War) as well as how Canada presented itself to the world during the twentieth century.<sup>54</sup>

The Ontario Curriculum documents for Canadian and World Studies: Grades 9 and 10 state that a main goal is for students to “develop the knowledge and values they need to become responsible, active, and informed Canadian citizens in the twenty-first century.”<sup>55</sup> To further this, “through the narrative of history we hear and see the people, events, emotions, struggles, and challenges that produced the present and will shape the future.”<sup>56</sup> The expectations laid out in the Ontario curriculum documents for Canadian and World Studies are for students to become informed citizens and through the study of history, more specifically, they are to make connections from the past to the future. The Residential School System played a seminal role in the history of Canada, especially the history of Aboriginal Canadians. The question is: if Residential Schools are extremely

important to a wide-spread group of Canadians, why is it not taught more thoroughly or even at all in Ontario public schools?

In grade ten academic “Canadian History Since WWI” (CHC2D) students are to learn about the local, national, and global forces that have shaped Canada’s identity after WWI as well as explore the contributions of individuals and groups to Canadian culture.<sup>57</sup> A few of the specific expectations listed in the curriculum documents do involve Aboriginal peoples, but are not specific to this group. Under the specific expectations students are to “identify contributions to Canada’s multicultural society by regional, linguistic, ethnocultural, and religious communities (Aboriginal, Franco-Ontarians, Métis, Black Canadians, Doukhobors, Mennonites, local immigrants).”<sup>58</sup> That said, teachers are not required to follow that specific expectation for all groups mentioned, they may choose to only discuss Black Canadians or Franco-Ontarians and completely bypass Aboriginal peoples.

Teachers are following the expectations within the curriculum as long as they address one of the groups mentioned within the expectation. Even though Aboriginal peoples are mentioned throughout the Ontario curriculum for Canadian history they are often not adequately represented in a Canadian history course; this may be due to the teacher’s comfort level with the subject or limited resources. In CHC2D under the specific expectation for “Change and Continuity” (Demographic Patterns and the Effects on Society) Aboriginal peoples are directly mentioned: “evaluate the impact of social and democratic change on Aboriginal communities (relocation, urbanization, education, pressures to assimilate).”<sup>59</sup> Even when Aboriginal peoples are directly mentioned only part of their history is expected to be covered in the course. The teacher may choose to

discuss urbanization rather than education; in doing so the course would completely bypass the topic of Residential Schools.

An overall expectation for “Canadian History Since WWI” (grade ten, applied, CHC2P) is that “by examining...how individuals and groups have contributed to Canadian culture and society...students will develop their ability to make connections between historical and current events.”<sup>60</sup> Aboriginal peoples are only mentioned in the curriculum a few times. Under the sub-heading “Communities” students are expected to:

“Identify the contributions made by selected regional, provincial, linguistic, ethnic, and/or religious communities to Canadian multicultural society (e.g., Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Franco-Ontarians, Aboriginal nations, Métis, Inuit, Black Canadians, local immigrant groups, Doukhobours, Hutterites, Mennonites)”.<sup>61</sup>

As in CHC2D, Aboriginal peoples are only mentioned in parenthesis as one choice among several groups to represent the specific expectation. Teachers may choose to discuss a group other than Aboriginal peoples.

Later on in the curriculum document for Canadian and World Studies (Grades 9 and 10) Aboriginal peoples are listed more precisely under “Citizenship and Heritage”; students are to:

“Describe some of the factors shaping the experience of Aboriginal peoples in Canada since 1914 (e.g., relocation, urbanization, education, pressures to assimilate) and ways in which Aboriginal people have worked to achieve recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights.”<sup>62</sup>

Again, even though students are discussing Aboriginal events it does not mean that they are covering the topic of Residential Schools. From this it is necessary to take away the fact that Aboriginal history is not adequately represented in the compulsory Canadian

history courses and there is no direct expectation that students should know about Residential Schools.

There are a few courses in the Ontario curriculum that go further in depth on Aboriginal history, but these courses are electives (optional). In terms of Canadian history, it is not until grade twelve in Canada: History, Identity, and Culture (CH14U) that Residential Schools for Aboriginal children are mentioned.<sup>63</sup> Residential Schools are listed as examples for the following specific expectations:

“Analyze the causes and effects of prejudice and discrimination throughout Canadian history. ... evaluate efforts on the part of individuals, groups, and government to promote human rights in Canada. ... assess the extent to which education and health care have shaped regional, provincial, and national identities.”<sup>64</sup>

Once again, it is not necessary for teachers to cover Residential Schools in the course—it is an option, not a requirement.

Over the past fifteen years the coverage of Residential Schools in Ontario textbooks has improved slightly. In 1988, 1989, and 1994 there was no mention of Residential Schools in McGraw-Hill Ryerson’s Canada’s Century,<sup>65</sup> Canada: A North American Nation,<sup>66</sup> or Canada: A Nation Unfolding,<sup>67</sup> respectively. It was not until the year 2000 that McGraw-Hill Ryerson published a textbook that included the topic of Residential Schools.<sup>68</sup> In the year 2000 Irwin Publishing published Canadian History: 1900-2000. In this textbook there is only one paragraph on Residential Schools under a sub-heading titled “Intolerance and Racism”.<sup>69</sup> Another textbook that briefly mentions Residential Schools is Oxford Canada’s Experience History: Canada Since World War I, published in 2006. In Oxford’s text there is one page on Residential Schools, which includes a before and after picture of Thomas Moore.<sup>70</sup> In 2010 McGraw-Hill Ryerson

published Creating Canada, a textbook that includes two and a half pages on Residential Schools.<sup>71</sup> Over the past two decades representation of the history of Residential Schools has increased from nothing at all to a paragraph to two-and-a-half pages. Hopefully, over time, there will be more content available to students and teachers on the subject of Canadian Residential Schools.

In the Teacher's Resource for the textbook Creating Canada there is one lesson template titled "Introduction to Chapter 7: Postwar Government Actions".<sup>72</sup> The lesson's focus is not Residential Schools, however, it does play a large role in the lesson. Students examine a few issues involving Aboriginal Canadians during the time period. Along with the lesson there is a list of additional resources, most of which can be found online.

When examining the information provided in Ontario's Canadian history textbooks as well as teacher resource books to accompany texts, it has become apparent that there is a limited amount of information available for educators. If a teacher has decided to include the topic of Residential Schools in a Canadian history course they are then forced to take it upon themselves to look for additional resources. Residential Schools has been relegated to "Indigenous" history rather than being looked at as combined history of Canada. Residential Schools need to be taught along with the rest of Canadian history so it is recognized and then steps can be made to move forward. It is crucial that the Eurocentric nature of Ontario's curriculum is remodeled to depict the true history of Canada.

## **The Impact of Residential Schools on Modern Education Structures**

The historical legacy of First Peoples in Canada is a complex story of domination, Eurocentrism and oppression. It is a dark history, which seeks to silence the voices of those that oppose it. Unfortunately this history continues to permeate its way through education structures in Canada today by manifesting itself in new forms of colonial control. Anne Godlewska, Head of the Geography Department at Queen's University writes in her article Cultivating Ignorance of Aboriginal Realities, "...curricular documents are important public statements about what those negotiating the curriculum believe young people must learn in order to become responsible citizens".<sup>73</sup> Ken Osborne writes in his article Teaching history in schools: a Canadian debate, of the influence British imperialism has had on the Canadian history curriculum.<sup>74</sup> He writes, "...those who control the present control the past, and thereby shape the future".<sup>75</sup> The pillars of the Canadian Residential School System were assimilation, colonial domination and oppression. These attitudes underlie current education structures and have laid the foundation for a whitewashing of learning that teaches students a biased story of Canada's history and paints a completely false and stereotypical image of "the Indian". The Ontario provincial curriculum has denied Aboriginal peoples of Canada the right to discuss and dispel their histories, further perpetuating systemic racism in Canada.

The lack of Aboriginal content within the current Ontario curriculum speaks volumes to the messages being conveyed to students. The Eurocentric view of Canada's history continues to recreate this culture of oppression and marginalize Aboriginal cultures. On average, coverage of any Aboriginal matters in the Social Studies and

Canadian and World Studies curriculum is about 1.9%.<sup>76</sup> The grade twelve university-stream history course contains a 5.8% high for Aboriginal topics covered, but overall history courses require only 2.7% coverage.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, Aboriginal content is commonly placed in parentheses throughout the curriculum, thereby making it optional for teachers to include. In a survey that tested first year Canadian university students' knowledge of Aboriginal content, 52% of respondents could not identify a single Aboriginal artist, musician, actor, or writer (even though several are mentioned repeatedly in parentheses throughout the Ontario curriculum).<sup>78</sup> This illustrates that although content may be included in the curriculum, it is often not taught or referenced by teachers.

The 1969 White Paper under the Trudeau and Chrétien government sought to 'solve the Indian problem'.<sup>79</sup> It was argued at the time as "a real breakthrough that will bring our Indian people finally into the mainstream of Canadian life".<sup>80</sup> In this document, 'The British North America Act would be amended, the Indian Act abolished, the Department of Indian Affairs phased out and by implication, Aboriginal rights would disappear'.<sup>81</sup> This was met with a strong wall of resistance and was finally termed 'extermination through assimilation and cultural genocide', and was retracted in 1971.<sup>82</sup> The White Paper is crucial in understanding the formation of historical relationship dynamics between Aboriginal peoples of Canada and the Canadian government, yet it is nowhere mentioned in the mainstream Ontario curriculum.<sup>83</sup>

Yet another example of the deliberate omission of Aboriginal content in the Ontario curriculum can be seen through the Indian Act. The Indian Act has been described as "The most important, deliberate, cultivated and sustained act of prejudice

and ignorance in Canadian colonial rule...”<sup>84</sup> It established a separate and distinct system of governance for First Nations as it defined and restricted Indian status.<sup>85</sup> This fundamental agreement is only discussed once in a grade eight history course (relegating it to the past), and twice parenthetically.<sup>86</sup> In the grade eleven curriculum, it is parenthetically referenced only as the 1985 reform of the Act. In this version, Aboriginal women were the object of attack of the Indian Act - losing their status with marriage, education etc. The Indian Act is a crucial part of Canadian history as it illustrates the continued attempts by the government at assimilation of First Nations cultures, yet it gets no recognition in the curriculum.

Not only is there a lack of Aboriginal content within the Ontario curriculum, but on the occasion where it is mentioned, the material is stereotypical. This reinforces the notions of colonial domination that underpinned the Canadian Residential School System. For example, Aboriginal peoples are often described in schoolbooks and elsewhere as “savages”.<sup>87</sup> The Grade Three Heritage and Citizenship course depicts Aboriginal peoples as helpers or opponents in a highly Eurocentric view of the settlement process.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, of the very few history courses that deal with Aboriginal peoples, the content is generally positioned at the beginning of the text, if only by placement, suggesting that Aboriginal peoples are a “feature of the past”.<sup>89</sup>

The effects of the Eurocentric Ontario curriculum are far-reaching. The Canadian Association for American Studies (CAAS) surveyed 519 first year university and college students in 2004 to assess their knowledge with basic Aboriginal issues.<sup>90</sup> This study revealed that the vast majority surveyed had little or no knowledge of any of these matters.<sup>91</sup> On questions of basic fact, 10% of students passed, while 72% could not name

a single Aboriginal group and its traditional territory.<sup>92</sup> More than 97% of respondents could not say approximately how many indigenous languages there were in Canada at the time of contact or how many still exist today, and 98% were unaware of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples.<sup>93</sup> In a study conducted by Yatta Kanu entitled Teachers' Perceptions of the Integration of Aboriginal Culture Into the High School Curriculum through the *Journal of Educational Research*, surveyed teachers were unanimous in saying that the 'social studies curriculum was assimilating Aboriginal students through omission or token additions of Aboriginal perspectives'.<sup>94</sup>

Inequities continue to plague Ontario education structures, marginalizing Aboriginal peoples to the boundaries of civilization. These systemic barriers have made it extremely difficult for Aboriginal students to succeed in the current Eurocentric education system. In 2006, more than 40% of Aboriginal peoples had not completed secondary school in Canada compared with just over 20% of the total population.<sup>95</sup> Teachers identified racist, stereotypical images of Aboriginal peoples held by their non-Aboriginal colleagues and students as being a very difficult challenge.<sup>96</sup> One teacher in Kanu's study expresses this concern saying, "Aboriginal students are the only cultural group in my class who hide their identity".<sup>97</sup>

Funding and daily school structures also prove to be hurdles for Aboriginal students. It is impossible to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal communities with the current funding structures. Ben Levin writes in his article Aboriginal Education Still Needs Work, "Schools on reserves are funded at per-students levels well below what most provinces pay to support their schools, even though the needs and costs on reserves are significantly higher."<sup>98</sup> This lack of funding has resulted in very few secondary

schools on reserves, and has forced students to leave their families and communities in order to attain a high school education.<sup>99</sup> There are extremely high trauma and suicide rates in northern Ontario communities, and students do not have the coping skills to deal with these issues.<sup>100</sup> In the last ten years, seven First Nations students have died in Thunder Bay while attending high school at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, many students have not had much teaching when they arrive.<sup>102</sup> One grade nine English teacher from the Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in Thunder Bay argues that students in her class sometimes have reading and writing levels as low as grades three and four when they arrive.<sup>103</sup> The Principal of Dennis Franklin Cromarty School argues,

“There’s a place for the school in Thunder Bay, but it’s the situation where parents need to send their kids out that’s wrong. There has to be a better way to deliver a fundamental right for Canadian Secondary Education to the First Nations peoples of Canada. Something’s wrong!”<sup>104</sup>

Assimilation, oppression and colonial domination continue to pave the way for Canadian education structures. Through the lack of Aboriginal content covered in the Ontario curriculum, to the racial stereotypes portrayed in texts, to the lack of funding and assimilation of students away from their families and communities, it appears that the Residential School System persists in frighteningly similar ways. In order to break the shackles of Eurocentrism, we must incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into the Ontario curriculum and encourage collaboration for the benefit of Aboriginal students.

### **Conclusion:**

This paper has examined how education structures in Canada have historically

undermined the cultural identity of Aboriginal peoples, and how the Eurocentric ideologies of domination and colonial control still present themselves in the Ontario curriculum today.

The examination of traditional education in Aboriginal communities across Ontario looked at the historical significance of cultural influence on education. Oral teachings, forms of discipline, and the ecological and spiritual methods of Aboriginal education defined a community that was ultimately stripped of its' identity in the wake of the Residential School system and its' Eurocentric curriculum.

Residential Schools, which from the outset were meant to incorporate and practice provincial curriculum standards, slowly shifted away from this structure and instead focused on teachings of agriculture, language, and religion. This drastic system, meant to reshape and re-socialize Aboriginal children, has continued to dispossess Aboriginal communities from the ability to teach and parent future generations.

In looking at the Ontario Curriculum today, it is evident that minimal efforts have been made to teach the history of the Canadian Residential School System to a new generation of citizens. Texts for students and resources for teachers lack the appropriate content to educate Canadians on an issue that so deeply defines the social and educational experiences of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The final section of this paper examined the prevalence with which ideologies of the Residential School System continue to manifest themselves in our modern education system. The presence of assimilation, domination and oppression continue to have severe consequences for Aboriginal communities within Ontario and across Canada. As

future educators in the social studies curriculum, it is important that we ask ourselves, “How can we amend the current education structure in Ontario and stop the undermining of Aboriginal cultural identities through our own teachings?”

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<sup>1</sup> DeJong, David. Promises of the Past. (Golden, Colorado: North American Press: 1993), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ellis, George E. The Red Man and the White Man in North America. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1882), 205.

<sup>3</sup> Heckelwelder, John G.E. Account of the History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States Volume I of Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia. (The North-American Review and Miscellaneous Journal, Vol. 9, No. 24 (Jun., 1819), pp. 155-178), 171.

<sup>4</sup> Basil Johnson, The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), xxii.

<sup>5</sup> Basil Johnson, The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), xx.

<sup>6</sup> Ongtooguk, in Ray Barnhardt and Angayuqaq O. Kawagley. Sharing Our Pathways: Native perspectives on education in Alaska. (Alaska: Alaska Native Knowledge Network, Fairbanks, 2011), 97.

<sup>7</sup> Ross, Rupert. Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice. (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1996), 66.

<sup>8</sup> Ross, Rupert. Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice. (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1996), 52.

<sup>9</sup> Basil Johnson in Ross, Rupert. Dancing With a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality. (Markham, Ontario: Octopus Publishing Group, 1992), xii.

<sup>10</sup> Ohiyesa, in Charles Hamilton, Cry of the Thunderbird: The American Indian's Own Story. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 21.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, Basil. The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway. (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1995), xx.

<sup>12</sup> Heckelwelder, John G.E. Account of the History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States Volume I of Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia. (The North-American Review and Miscellaneous Journal, Vol. 9, No. 24 (Jun., 1819), pp. 155-178), 171.

<sup>13</sup> Ohiyesa, in Hamilton, Charles. Cry of the Thunderbird: The American Indian's Own Story. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 20-25, 35- 37.

<sup>14</sup> Rasles, Father Sebastian, 12 Oct, 1723. Reproduced on microfiche in Ingraham, Kip William. The Early Jesuit Missions in North America, (Albany, N.Y.:1873), 26.

<sup>15</sup> Heckelwelder, in DeJong, David. Promises of the Past. (Golden, Colorado: North American Press: 1993), 14.

<sup>16</sup> Basil Johnson, The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), xix.

<sup>17</sup> Sheila Watt-Cloutier, in Castellano, Marlene Brant, Lynne Davis, and Louise Lahache. Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise (Toronto: UBC Press, 2000), 118.

<sup>18</sup> MacEachren, Zabe. The Educational Paths of Art and Craft Experiences. (Canadian Journal of Native Education, 29 (2): 2006), 221.

<sup>19</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. *Indian and Northern Affairs Government of Canada Online Archive*. (1996).  
<[http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055641/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg28\\_e.html#100](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055641/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg28_e.html#100)>

<sup>20</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Ibid*. (1996).

<sup>21</sup> Where Are the Children?

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- <sup>22</sup> Davin, Nicholas Flood. "The Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds." (1879).  
<<http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.03651/1?r=0&s=1>>
- <sup>23</sup> The Davin Report, *Ibid.* (1879).
- <sup>24</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Ibid.* (1996).
- <sup>25</sup> The Davin Report, *Ibid.* (1879)
- <sup>26</sup> Bezeau, Randy and Hoskins, Jannica. "The Fallen Feather: Indian Industrial Residential Schools and Canadian Confederation." (2007).
- <sup>27</sup> Bezeau, *Ibid.* (2007).
- <sup>28</sup> Bezeau, *Ibid.* (2007).
- <sup>29</sup> Bezeau, *Ibid.* (2007).
- <sup>30</sup> Bezeau, *Ibid.* (2007).
- <sup>31</sup> Bezeau, *Ibid.* (2007).
- <sup>32</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Ibid.* (1996).
- <sup>33</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Ibid.* (1996).
- <sup>34</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Ibid.* (1996).
- <sup>35</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Ibid.* (1996).
- <sup>36</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Ibid.* (1996).
- <sup>37</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Ibid.* (1996).
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