

ARTFUL PLACES:  
CREATIVITY AND COLONIALISM  
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA'S INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

Residential schools for Aboriginal children were a primary site of negotiations between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous subjects. These schools, and the records of peoples who occupied them, provide opportunities to better understand colonialism in British Columbia. Residential schools were places created to transform Aboriginal children, through assimilation, into a modernizing and colonial society. They are simultaneously places that offer access to Indigenous articulations of self and Indigeneity, expressions of resistance, and exertions of agency. Cultural products created by children in residential schools, particularly creative art products, allow us to visualize and understand Indigenous response to and evasions of colonial education. When taken together with Aboriginal peoples' testimonies about the residential school experience, and with colonial records of the schools' intents, children's creative materials and expressions allow some access to the complex places that constituted the cultural geography of colonialism in British Columbia.

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## CHAPTER 1: THINKING MATTERS THROUGH

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.* (Mary Oliver c.2000)

*Artful Places* is about Indian<sup>1</sup> residential schools in British Columbia. More precisely, it is about relationships between Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples in the Province and about how those relationships unfolded within and were affected by school-places. I make three principal arguments in this research. My central argument is that residential schools, as physical places, provide unique and grounded insights into more abstract, or discursive, aspects of colonialism in British Columbia. My second argument is that the relationships that unfolded within residential schools, or within the slightly broader confines of colonial education, resulted in transformation not just of Aboriginal children but also of the colonial subjects tasked with implementing schooling. My final argument is that, as much as residential schools in British Columbia were designed to subordinate and transform Aboriginal children, they were also places within which those children actively resisted colonialism while skilfully navigating the demands of impending modernity, by artfully (re)producing aspects of cultural identity and maintaining

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Indian” is problematic. Offensive and highly dated, it legitimizes and formalizes the conflation and homogenization of peoples on the basis of exclusion from the category European and/or White. Some First Nations and Aboriginal communities are deliberately and strategically reclaiming the term. My use is not intended to appropriate or mimic this strategy. I use the term throughout this dissertation to accurately reflect the languages that circulated and continue to circulate with reference to residential schools. I also use the term to highlight the sociocultural assumptions about the peoples the term names and to signal a set of assumptions that circulated and continue to circulate about “Indians”. I suspect the term may be uncomfortable, as it should be given the continuing pain caused by the schools and the colonial practices and mentalities they embodied. I also use the terms First Nations, Aboriginal, and Indigenous to denote Canada’s First Peoples. The terms Aboriginal and Indigenous are used to inclusively denote First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and to reflect the ongoing research and contemporary shifts in colonial languages toward more accurate and respectful descriptors of the territory’s First Peoples. The term First Nations is used with reference to Nations, in the case of this research usually in British Columbia and where possible I use the names of specific First Nations (i.e. Nisga’a or Nu-chah-nulth).

connections to Indigeneity.

Making the arguments that support this research required a complex balancing of methodologies and theories. A fundamental theoretical tenet of this work is that the spatial organization of places is integral to understanding relationships of power:

“without the concepts of space and its production, the framework of power (whether as reality or concept) simply cannot achieve concreteness” (Lefebvre 1991: 281).

Residential schools in British Columbia were eminently concrete places through which frameworks of colonial power were not only enacted, but were also evaded and upended. Decolonizing and (post)colonial theories, while informing my thinking on Indigenous peoples’ strategic response to colonial hegemonies, also elicited in me a concern about the purpose of producing this research. What and how, I asked myself, was I contributing to discussions about the colonial geographies of British Columbia, and for what purpose? Methodologically, I wondered about linking physical environments to discursive constructs, about interpreting texts and objects produced by First Nations children, about bringing archival materials into the contemporary, and about the small scale examples upon which my arguments rest. Ethically and politically, I wondered about the utility and ramifications of my research.

My concerns, I came to learn, were not incommensurate with other geographers’ thoughts on research about colonialism. Jane Jacobs (2001), for instance, worries that the sometimes “post-colonial politics of not speaking for the other” (731) might be just another form of silencing or of actively not listening to subaltern peoples’ speaking (Spivak 1996). Catherine Nash critiques postcolonial geographers’ overriding focus on textual or semiotic expressions of colonialism (2002). This emphasis, she argues, results

in a dearth of knowledge about the spatial and material aspects of colonialism that ultimately circumscribed and contained the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples. Along with Nash, Cole Harris and Dan Clayton have observed a unidimensionality of geographic research about colonial British Columbia. This, they respectively argue, results from an overemphasis either on “the tentacles of Empire and the power of European representations of the Other” (Clayton 2001/2002: 69) or on “the workings of the imperial mind” (Harris 2004: 166). Ultimately the work of these geographers encouraged me to theorize the materiality of residential schooling and its function within the colonial project of British Columbia, to work with objects and records produced by Aboriginal children, and to carefully consider the role of Non-Aboriginal researchers in projects that draw upon the voices and expressions of Aboriginal peoples. On this last point I found myself returning to the words of Indigenous artist and curator Richard William Hill:

[T]hese histories are still playing out in our lives. Every time there is a Wounded Knee, an Ipperwash or an Oka crisis, every time an Aboriginal kid dies on the street, we are seeing the outcome of [these] histories. ...Of course these are white histories as much as they are Aboriginal and should matter to anyone living off the spoils of conquest in the Americas. (2004: 52)

I take very seriously Hill’s observation that histories matter, that they still play out in our lives, and that they should matter to all of us, Aboriginal and not. I grew up in northern British Columbia, in two communities on Haida Gwaii, and subsequently, for my final years of high school, in the small northern town of Terrace on the Skeena River. I spent most of my childhood and adolescence on the edge of Indian reserves. After completing my undergraduate degree, I returned to northern British Columbia as a women’s centre coordinator and worked with Aboriginal peoples and organizations on

traumatic and violent issues with links to the residential school experience. The landscapes of my childhood, youth, and early work life convinced me that much of colonialism's power relied (and continues to rely) on very small and intimate places, on what might be termed the micro and diminutive geographies of colonialism: homes, school buildings, dormitories, classrooms, playgrounds, and children's bodies and minds. I am not alone in this belief. Ann Laura Stoler asserts that hierarchal terrains rely on the domains of the intimate and that it was precisely through the "'tense and tender ties' of empire [that] relations of power were knotted and tightened, loosed and cut, tangled and undone. These ties are not the microcosms of empire, but its marrow" (2006: 6). For me, the most instructive aspect of Stoler's work is the observation that intimate and tender geographies provide the means not only to understand the knotting and tangling of power relations, but also to understand the loosening, cutting, and undoing of those power relations. By scaling down our research, by moving away from large or broad scale inquiries about Aboriginal peoples and the matrixes of power involved in re/de/territorialization of British Columbia, what becomes apparent is the enormity of oppositions against colonialism. In residential schools, these intimate and micro-scale oppositions were, quite literally, embodied by Aboriginal children who, with incredible tenacity and fortitude and amongst many other strategies, spoke their Indigenous languages, reached out to family members, and crafted art objects through which their cultures remained living and by which senses of self and identities as Indigenous peoples were maintained.

Addressing the neglect of Aboriginal peoples in the historical record and the need for innovative, decolonizing research, took me to archival records and holdings (located

primarily in small and locally operated community archives) of children's creative work produced in residential schools. I agree with Victoria Wyatt's (1993) assertion that the formal and official written records, upon which much of British Columbia's history turns, are records that systematically erase First Nations peoples and their perspectives on colonial processes in the province. I hope that the varieties of creative work upon which this dissertation focuses will begin to fulfil Wyatt's call for "more than a shift in focus [but] ... a broadening of methodology to embrace sources outside the written record" (176). My hope is also that, by bringing from the archives into public view the remarkable works produced by children during their times in residential schools, a record is produced of the immense strength of very small bodies faced with the massive infrastructural power of colonial education.

Residential schools were places where Aboriginal peoples and Non-Indigenous colonialists lived and navigated the everydayness of the colonial contest. How school places ordered and arranged the lives of both colonial educators and Aboriginal children is visible in the materiality of residential schools. The spatiality of the schools also provides a seldom read record of colonial practices and counter-practices that are fundamental to British Columbia's history. The places of British Columbia's residential schools were not unidimensional impositions of the colonial project upon Aboriginal peoples. They were lived in and altered by those they contained. First Nations students' experiences, interpretations, interruptions, and disruptions of school-place, in so far as these can be read through the sources available to us, are arguably the most important stories to be told about the places of British Columbian residential schools.

CHAPTER 2:  
“BUT LET US NOT FORGET...”

*Maggie saw that the aspect of British Columbia had changed. [She] opened the map upon her knee. What will it mean, all this country? What a land....Even a map of the country –lines arranged in an arbitrary way on a long rectangular piece of paper– stirs the imagination beyond imagination, as other lines differently arranged in relation to each other have not the power to stir.*

*(Ethel Wilson 1990 edition: 73)*

British Columbia’s colonial geographies have recently received significant attention from geographers and non-geographers alike. Investigations have focused: the creation of reserves; tensions between colonial and Indigenous cartographic imaginings of the province; illness and depopulation amongst Indigenous populations as a function of contact and colonization; missionizing processes and competing ecumenical efforts; competing land, resource, and governance claims between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples; and colonial discursivities that constructed and maintained Indigenous peoples as othered within the province’s landscapes (Brealey 1995; C. Harris 1997/98, 1999, 2002, 2004; D. Harris 2001; Kelm 1998; Morris and Fondahl 2002; Neylan 2003; Sparke 1998; Tennant 1990). While literature grows concerning residential schools in British Columbia (Haig-Brown 1988; Neylan 2000; Raibmon 1996; Redford, 1979–80; Sterling 1992; Woods 1996), geographers have paid little attention to colonialism as it was embedded, embodied, and enacted within these relatively small places. A dearth of inquiries focuses on diminutive geographies as sites where colonialism was imagined, practiced, perpetuated, and (perhaps most importantly) where it was evaded and transformed by those with whom it was chiefly concerned: First Nations peoples. In many ways, the story told so far about colonialism in British Columbia is a story focused on macro-structural geographies and on the records and perspectives of Eurocolonial subjects. It is a story based on colonial governmental

policies, territorial mapping, and population demographics. Perhaps this is not particularly perplexing given that precontact Aboriginal peoples of British Columbia did not produce written textual records and that the postcontact colonial project in British Columbia has been fairly successful in othering and marginalizing, if not entirely expunging, Aboriginal peoples, their presences, and their perspectives from dominant discourses. To change this requires a significant shift in focus.

The intimate and micro-geographies of the province's eighteen residential schools are the focus of this research. The students, teachers, administrators, curricula, pedagogies, policies, texts, and objects that circulated inside and outside the schools' material and experiential confines offer opportunities to understand, in small and detailed ways, how relationships of power and dominance were practiced and resisted in the province. By refocusing the geographic gaze onto small places, I think the potential exists to expand understandings of how colonialism operated. The school geographies offer a possibility to further understand colonial ideologies, the workings of colonial institutions, and the people who staffed them. Furthermore, by focusing on the micro-geographies of British Columbian residential schools, and on the subjects nested within the schools, access may be gained to an immense record of First Nations' responses to the colonial project. A compelling reason to focus on micro-geographies is that records produced by First Nations are underrepresented in histories written by primarily Non-Aboriginal scholars about the province's colonial geographies.

A student in one residential school illustrates how diminutive voices and micro geographies might be called upon to illuminate the broader project of colonialism in British Columbia. During the winter of 1970, a Grade 7 student contributed to *The Lejac*

*Carrier*, a newsletter produced at Lejac Indian Residential School in the Dakelhne (Carrier Sekani) territory approximately 10 kilometres west of Fraser Lake, an isolated resource community in north-central British Columbia.<sup>2</sup> The student was considering a question of significant national interest: “What do you think is the biggest problem that young Indians have today?” (Anonymous 1970). The young writer’s reply underscores the strategic and resilient responses First Nations levelled against colonialism and their efforts at negotiating positions that allowed retention of Indigeneity despite the emergence of a dominating colonial paradigm:

The main problem...is a complex one. It is economical [*sic*] and cultural. Some Indians are poor. Most of them live on reserves where there is no industry. [T]rapping and hunting are not enough to support the average Indian family. Young Indian people need to be educated to be trained for a job. So far very little has been done to help the economical problem facing Indian youth. The cultural problem is greater for the young Indians. We must learn English and learn it well. We must change our ways and learn to accept the ways of the other Canadians. The Federal and Provincial Government can solve the economical problem for us. The cultural problem can be overcome with the co-operation of us Indians. We know we are Canadians and must realize the best way to survive in Canada is to adopt Canadian ways. We must speak English, but let us not forget our beautiful Indian language. (1970)

The student expresses agency within, and resistance to, the colonial project. She does not position herself passively, but struggles to engage colonial expectations in ways that maintain Indigenous cultural sovereignty. Such a position suggests, more broadly, that colonial efforts were under the constant scrutiny of Indigenous peoples upon whose responses the project’s success or failure rested. The student’s response is important in

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<sup>2</sup> To protect the identity of the student, his or her name has been erased. This is not uncommon in archival materials pertaining to British Columbian residential schools. Consequently, the genders, ages, First Nation(s), and other specifics of these students cannot be known.



another way: It represents an Aboriginal perspective on colonial education and presents a possibility of contemplating colonialism in British Columbia by looking to records not authored by Non-Aboriginal colonial subjects.

The Lejac student is responding to a well-documented assimilationist colonial discourse that dominated British Columbian considerations of Indigenous peoples throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries and that formed the ideological foundation of residential schooling in British Columbia and across Canada (Miller 1997; Milloy 1999; Raibmon 2005). Less well documented are Indigenous responses to that assimilationist colonial agenda, particularly those enacted in-place by students within the residential schooling environment. This lack of documentation may be attributed to the ephemeral nature of student-produced materials or to the lack of legitimacy assigned to those materials by colonial educators, who instead prized the linguistic, corporeal, and intellectual transformation of Aboriginal students rather than their educational involvement. Whatever the reason, it is an ongoing task to conceptualize how Aboriginal students asserted and maintained their Indigeneity within places designed explicitly to erase cultural identities. Given the ongoing resiliency and presence of Aboriginal peoples across the British Columbian and Canadian landscapes, it is clear that such resistance to residential schooling did take place (see, for instance, Fontaine 1998). The question then becomes: How does one access, understand, and subsequently theorize, Indigenous students' responses to colonialism as they were enacted in British Columbia's residential schools? My response to this question is to examine creative materials and expressions produced by students within these very places.

Having introduced the terms "creative materials and expressions," "place," and

“colonialism,” it is perhaps useful to clarify what I mean by these concepts. Colonialism, James Frideres (1988) argues, is a structural process (a set of actions) imposed upon Indigenous peoples and involving geographic incursion, destruction of sociocultural structures, and the imposition of external control by one (Non-Aboriginal) group over another (Indigenous) group. Edward Said (1994) and Anne McClintock (1995) add complexity to such a process-driven definition, transforming the “action” of colonization into the more nuanced set of “practices” conceptualized as colonialism and involving ideological and discursive insinuations that non-Eurocolonial peoples are flawed and inherently inferior. Acts of colonization thus rely on the creation of an Other over which colonialists imagine and enforce themselves as dominant and more advanced corporeally, intellectually, and culturally. I am most comfortable understanding colonialism in British Columbia as both a process and a practice infused with ideological imaginings. I also concur with James Scott (1990) that most processes or enactments of domination are not without simultaneous acts of resistance. Thus, it would be impossible to understand residential schooling without considering how that schooling was responded to by those whom the processes and ideological constructs were designed to dominate. Finally, I agree with Nicolas Thomas’s (1994) rejection of simplistic or homogenous characterizations about either those who constructed and enforced colonialism or those who negotiated and resisted colonialism. Within this study, therefore, colonialism is a process and action concerned with geographic, political, and cultural disruption of Indigenous peoples. Colonialism is also a practice and an ideological and discursive framework constructed to cast Indigenous peoples as othered in reference to Eurocolonial norms. Colonialism is understood as a dynamic and heterogeneous endeavour undertaken

by competing and overlapping positions and resisted and navigated by the Indigenous subjects it targeted.

At first glance, place might appear the easiest of the three terms to define. I have found just the opposite to be true. Place is a nuanced and contested concept. It is well considered by Jeff Malpas (1999) and Edward Casey (1997), both of whom are fundamentally concerned with the experiential nature of place. The primacy of place, according to Casey, has ebbed and flowed through ancient, medieval, and modern periods of Western history. Until recently, place has been marginalized in favour of the more encompassing and universalizing possibilities of space. Place, however, is increasingly theorized as infused with dimensionality and depth so that it becomes “an *event* capable of implacing things in many complex manners and to many complex effects” (my emphasis: 337). Place becomes generative. It becomes “an active source of presencing and within its close embrace, things get located and begin to happen” (Casey 1997: 63). Place no longer suggests rigid containment or boundary, but rather, taking its lead from the permeability of the organic body, “extends to the world without end. ...ingresses into the world in its entirety and draws that world back into itself. Thanks to this power, place is to be recognized as an undelimited, detotalised expansiveness, resonating regionally throughout the unknown as well as the known universe” (Casey 1997: 336).

Although this characterization of place holds the potential of conflating place with space, the characterization is useful in suggesting of place an unbounded and expansive possibility. Space and place are no longer separated but are conceived as mutually defining. Place, as theorized by Malpas (1999), is irreducible from human subjectivity and being. Understanding the possibility and nature of place is thus to understand

knowledge, self, and experience. Subjectivity, according to Malpas, is given through and in the structure of place. Summarizing the imbrications between place and subject/subjectivity, Malpas offers the idea of nested events and places. Places are located by and through their location and reference to larger places. To understand human being and experience is to understand place, and to understand place (and by extension human being and experience) is to understand the nested and relational nature of place(s). Throughout this study, therefore, the concept of place is understood as inseparable from experiences that subjects produce and change as they live, memorialize, and negotiate its ever-shifting and eminently permeable contours.

The concept of place has much to offer understandings of colonialism. Cole Harris (2004) draws linkages between place and the colonial contest in British Columbia, as I significantly expanded upon within Chapter 1, and provides a foundation for how I understand and employ the term throughout this study. Harris's position is that

[I]f the aim is to understand colonialism...then it would seem essential to investigate the sites where colonialism was actually practiced. Its effects were displayed there. The strategies and tactics on which it relied were actualized there. There, in the detail of colonial dispossessions and repossessions, the relative weight of different agents of colonial power may begin to be assessed. (166)

The sites to which Harris refers, of course, are inherently placial. Place is central to understanding how colonialism operated in the Province. In addition to the more unbounded and dynamic nature of place, it might also be understood as a highly material and territorial concept. This is another component of the term, as I use it throughout this study. I draw upon John Agnew's (1987) summation of the work of other geographers' (e.g. Tuan 1974) who have understood place as partially congruent with locale or with the physical and material settings in and through which "social relations are constituted"

(Agnew, 26). As Agnew acknowledges, however, to understand place only as synonymous with locale (physical location) is not to comprehend place in its entirety. Place is also generative of ideological paradigms, as a site that actually conducts and creates, as opposed to simply containing, social norms, societal expectations, and cultural hegemonies. Here I draw from Tim Cresswell's (1996) claim that place functions as a site within which subjects enforce particular codes and expectations, thereby establishing bounded limits that contain and constrain activities, thoughts, and behaviours. Place, therefore, denotes a material and environmental locale that is also generative of sociocultural hegemonies, ideologies, and, simultaneously, resistances.

Although theories of place serve as the primary means by which I understand residential schools in British Columbia, I also make use of the concept of spatiality in order to further elucidate colonial education in the province. Spatiality insists upon the power of space in relation to social structures. It denotes the ways that power and knowledge unfold and are instilled as a function of the places in which they occur, and it conveys the ability of space to actively constitute social identities and subject-positions (Gregory 2000). Spatiality, as Gregory has recently demonstrated with regard to colonialism's immense fortitude across history and geography, is vital in understanding colonial places because the concept calls forth proximal performances and relationships between people, ideas, and objects that ultimately conspire to inscribe constellations of power (Gregory 2005; 2006). Spatiality, with reference to residential schools, highlights the intimate relationship between 1) the schools as material and discursive spatial structures and 2) the various colonial social structures, whether ideological or political, within which the schools operated. This configuration has powerful outcomes in terms of

creating and maintaining the Other with which colonial projects are preoccupied. Spatiality, unlike the reductive concept of “space as a container or a setting for ‘race’” instead expands the concept into a “form of human relationship,” which can in turn be “based on a double action of establishing distance and proximity” that, with particular relevance to residential schools, results in “setting the Other at a distance, while setting up a relationship of domination” (Kobayashi 2004). Concepts of spatiality and place do not eclipse each other, particularly when theorized in relation to identity and sense of self. As Entrikin has written, arguments about spatiality insist upon the social construction and social production of place; in turn, place allows embodied subjects and the self to be understood expansively, beyond the “particularistic...here and now,” as more abstract, universal, social or democratic entities (2001: 696)

The final concept to be clarified, “creative materials and expressions,” merits some introduction. Creativity, the generative process behind creative materials and expressions, is one of those nuanced and “contestable” concepts over which no consensus seems to exist (Gallie 1955, quoted in Agnew 1987; Rampley 1998; Bagless 2003). It is not used often by geographers (for notable exceptions, see Quonime 1988 or Bunkse 2004) although they have recently shifted attention to the intersections between geography and the fine arts (for instance see Driver, Nash, Prendergast and Rose 2002 or Tuan 1990). Where creativity is discussed, it is often not explicitly clarified or defined, leaving the reader to infer or assume particular meanings. *The Oxford English Dictionary* offers a circular definition, stipulating that creativity is associated with an “ability to create,” usually through inventive and imaginative means. This definition does not fully capture the essence of the student-produced materials and expressions upon which this

study focuses.

The use of creative materials and expressions in this dissertation much more completely implicates the fine arts than does *The Oxford English Dictionary* definition. Creativity, or a focus on the process of creative production, suggests aesthetics and non-representationality. As Marcia Pointon (1997) points out, however, creativity should not be conflated with high culture and its objects. Nor should it stand solely for spontaneous individualism (Ramplly 1998). Creativity and its results might be more beneficially associated with acts of improvisation, innovation, and with processes different than those employed in the production of formula- or labour-driven outcomes (Ramplly 1998). This is not to suggest that creativity or creative materials do not adhere to processes or sets of rules. Instead, these definitional parameters recognize the possibility of reading subjectivity and experience in creatively produced materials. As Harold Gardner suggests, creativity and its results involve a relationship both between individuals and with a surrounding context or environment that may be characterized by a “lack of fit, an unusual pattern, or [an] irregularity” (Gardner 1993, Gardner quoted in Hall 1999: 11).

I am taken with the interconnectedness between creative materials and expressions and their contexts, particularly when the materials and expressions fit disjunctively into their environment. The creative products of children in residential schools might be read as tensions or ruptures of the demands of the circumstance or environment in which the materials are produced. When I consider creative materials and expressions through this study, I include materials, writings, objects, products, and outcomes that result not from primarily function-driven endeavours, even if expressed to fulfil the demands of an assignment, but which instead capture moments of subjectivity

and experimentation suggestive of, however slightly, discordance and irregularity.

Broadly speaking, this study is a critical cultural historical geography. I engage primarily and qualitatively with texts and objects; I also draw upon site observations and personal interactions with the residential schools and the grounds. Historic texts offer a colonial context to residential schools. The built environments of the schools provide a means to access the places of colonial contest as they (places) and it (colonialism) were experienced by both Indigenous and Non-Aboriginal subjects. Creative materials and expressions produced by Indigenous students in residential schools require specific methodological modes of inquiry, analysis, and theorization. Visual materials, including photographic representations of residential schools and art objects produced in residential schools, are engaged through mindful “ocularization” of surfaces (Stafford 1996). The potential exists, perhaps only in small part, to conceptualize thoughts and experiences associated with the colonial practice in residential schools by *looking* at objects, images, and material produced therein.

Understanding the residential schools and the records of students and colonial subjects produced therein required varied theories and methodological approaches. With respect to the built sites of British Columbian Indian Residential Schools, I drew from Edward Casey’s (1997) conviction that understanding place means theorizing the “exacting demands of just being *there*, with all its finite historicity and special qualities” (338). Place is phenomenological in nature and allows the material and the physical to be theorized as they relate to the senses, a process explored by Gaston Bachelard (1964) in *The Poetics of Space*. British Columbian residential schools become, therefore, more than built physical environments in relation to the senses and experiences of both Indigenous



and Non-Aboriginal people involved in the colonial contest. Postcolonial literatures provided insights into conceptualizing my archival resources. With reference to the textual materials, including documents, legislations, testimonies, and other primary literatures upon which my understanding of the colonial context relies, I employ a mixed methodological approach premised on hermeneutical inquiry and discourse analysis. The hermeneutical inquiry allows me to theorize texts as whole unto themselves and in relation to other texts and socio-cultural contexts (Brenkman 1997). A discourse analysis allows me to theorize both textual and visual materials in relation to ideological constructs, institutional practices, and larger formations of power (Rose 2001). Discourse analysis, particularly for historical inquiries, provides insight into how meanings, ideologies, and knowledges are constructed in relation to social norms. It addresses conversations, narratives, arguments, and policies that are both practices and performances, as they are regulated by and embedded within constellations of power. As an analytical tool it can expose the taken-for-granted assumptions concerning Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia and residential schooling. Hermeneutical inquiry and discourse analysis are well theorized in relation to postcolonial studies and inquiries into text-based cultural materials (Clayton 2000; Brenkman 1997; McClintock 1995; Thomas 1994). Both discourse analysis and hermeneutical inquiry form the foundation of what Donna Haraway (1991) has suggested should be an always critical project of uncovering and recovering, a part of a methodological imperative to “not forget.” Methodologies for the interpretation and theorization of visual, and by extension creative, materials are well considered by Gillian Rose (2001) and Barbara Maria Stafford (1996), both of whom acknowledge the wider social context of creative production as integral to understanding

art objects. To analyze visual and creative materials, suggests Donald Preziosi (1998), is to gain an understanding of sensory versus rational knowledge. I couple Preziosi's conceptualization with Karen Kosasa's (1998) assertion that images, creative expressions, and art objects are socially produced spaces. This understanding provided a framework to conceptualize creative materials and expressions produced in schools by Indigenous students as, in part, an inquiry into the sensory and experiential places of colonialism.

I share the view that research of any kind demands attention to its ethical implications. This is particularly true of research in any way concerning Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples in Canada are the subjects of research that too often removes knowledge or materials from them without due consideration or consent, while perpetuating Indigenous peoples as othered (Castellano 2004; Schnarch 2004; Smith 1999). The acts of looking at archival materials, of looking at the places of residential schools, and of looking at creative materials produced in residential schools by the subjects who inhabited residential school rooms, carry with them an implicit demarcation of boundary, of self (the looker) and of Other (that which is seen) (Walsh 2002). This demarcation is not apolitical. It involves navigating different representations of history because, as some Indigenous writers have argued, Indigenous and Non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada have experienced time and space differently and have different visualizations and memories of history (McMaster *et al.*, cited in Walsh, 2002). Looking at involves interpretation. Acts of interpretation, and the subsequent circulation of those interpretations, are not apolitical. As Anne McClintock (1995) has observed, the "I" is inevitably and problematically implicated. Cole Harris (1991) asks of his research

concerning the colonization of British Columbia; “And I, who write of these matters while [N]ative issues simmer in British Columbia? Are my texts, like those of ethnographers who assumed [N]atives were becoming Europeans, making it harder for [Indigenous] people to be what they are or want to be?” These questions demand careful consideration. I agree also that “those of us who comprise this settler society need to acknowledge not only the remarkable achievement of creating modern British Columbia, but also the destruction that has accompanied it” (Harris 2002: 322). It is to create a greater understanding of colonial British Columbia without contributing, through carelessness or lack of thought, to any project that makes it more difficult for Indigenous people to be who they are or want to be, that I have conducted my research. While I am keenly aware that standards and expectations of the present might be judged problematic in the future, it is my desire to ensure, in part through consistent engagements with the publicized and published perspectives of historic and contemporary Indigenous writers, theorists, and artists, that my research adheres to an understanding that these histories “should matter to anyone living off the spoils of conquest in the Americas” (William, 2004: 52). I hope this research does some small justice to the immense strength and resilience demonstrated by students of British Columbian Indian residential schools, particularly by the Grade 7 student of Lejac Residential School who, in the winter of 1970, insisted that no process of colonial domination should ever be met passively.

I have organized this study as follows. Chapter 1 is an exploration of methodologies used to understand and produce British Columbia’s historical record. It is a broad geotemporal exploration of colonization in British Columbia within which I situate existing considerations of the province’s residential schools in critical dialogue

with larger historical and methodological considerations of colonialism in the province. The final section is a discussion of my research contribution and an exploration of the methodological tenets of my research.

Chapter 2 focuses on the historical shifts of government policies and social/political ideologies concerning Indian residential schooling in Canada. These guided and informed the policies under which Indian education in British Columbia operated. I chart transformations in colonial perceptions about the Indian, about dealing with the Indian, and about Indian education. Like shifts in the *Indian Act*, Indian education and strategies concerning the Indian Problem were not static over time. Understanding these shifts is essential in framing the discussions in proceeding chapters.

Chapter 3 is an investigation of the teachers and staff who enacted colonial education in British Columbia's residential schools. I argue that proximity ultimately resulted in a transformation of their colonial assumptions about Indigenous Others. Within the intimate and diminutive places and classrooms of British Columbia's residential schools, those who implemented the policies and pedagogical imaginings developed at the government and ecumenical levels were altered by those whom the colonial project sought to transform. Of particular interest is Alice Ravenhill, a self-described "educational pioneer" who founded the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Welfare. For Ravenhill, the successful assimilation of Indigenous children was linked with the production of creative materials by children in residential schools. The chapter also examines the work of Reverend George Raley, Principal of the Kitimat Home for Girls. Raley, his wife Maude, and Elizabeth Long (a teacher and matron of the school) together produced exhaustive newsletters and

correspondence pertaining to their experiences. These printed materials provide insight into how a colonial narrative concerning Indigenous assimilation was interpreted and actualized at the community and classroom level by individual teachers and school staff. I also explore some of the experiences and perspectives of Ron Purvis, staff member at St. George's Residential School in Lytton. In the writings produced by all five colonial subjects, what becomes evident is that geographic proximity to First Nations peoples inspired new conceptualizations about Indian, thus demonstrating the unfixed and shifting nature of colonial imaginations about the colonial project of education and civilizing Aboriginal peoples.

My focus in Chapter 4 turns to the places of Indian residential schools in British Columbia. I consider philosophies of place and theorizations of power in order to disentangle the schools' complex geographies. My ultimate goal is connecting the discursivities and social imaginings circulating within the province with the material and concrete manifestations of schools in which Aboriginal children existed. I explore public discussions of the schools and the material elements of the schools, including an exploration of their design and the colonial imaginations embedded in their architectures. I evaluate colonial narratives embedded in national and provincial curriculum imperatives, including a detailed critique of the *Indian School Bulletin* published by the Government of Canada between 1946 and 1954. More specifically, I situate residential school teachings within broader colonial efforts to assimilate and civilize Indigenous peoples; ask how the construction of an Indigenous Other manifested into pedagogical and curricular imaginations that were subsequently enacted in residential school policy and teaching; and consider the symbolic nature of the schools and the disciplinary and

subjugating functions served by various spatial elements of the buildings and their surrounding grounds. My findings are informed with a sense that acts of subjugations are not left unanswered and that places are comprised of the multiple actors who with engage them and create meaning within them.

Chapter 5 is an exploration of Indigenous people's memories of experience in residential school places. These memories are accessed through testimonial literature (both non-fictional and fictional) concerning British Columbian residential schooling and provide intimate insights into the daily lives of Indigenous subjects within the residential school setting. Students' experiences of residential schools offer a framework within which to contemplate their creative and artistic works.

In Chapter 6, I explore creative materials and cultural products produced within residential schools by students for whom the colonial curriculum and assimilative pedagogy was designed. The chapter focuses on a broad range of creative materials, including student-produced newsletters, textiles, drawings and paintings, short stories and poetry, and some three-dimensional carvings and basketry. The chapter is fundamentally concerned with understanding creative materials as expressions of Indigeneity within a colonial system designed to erase Indigeneity in Aboriginal children. The creative materials provide insight into Aboriginal expressions of self, cultural mediation, and autonomy as responses to colonial expectations that Aboriginal children assimilate into Non-Aboriginal Canadian society. The creative materials evaluated in Chapter 6 are read with their context and place in mind; they are also read as expressions of experiences and as strategies of cultural continuity.

Finally, Chapter 7 is a concluding discussion of the research. It also considers

British Columbian Indian residential schools as they exist today. Each of the schools has a particular presence in the contemporary provincial landscape and is perceived in different and contested ways. Tense differences exist between First Nations, many of whom continue to navigate unending relationships with the schools. The material and experiential places of current British Columbian residential schools, then, continue to dialogue and exchange with their historicity. Given this, it is important that any summary of my research, or contemplation of future research into place, creative materials, and colonial geographies associated with residential schools, be anchored in an awareness of the contemporary landscapes of residential school engagement. The potential to leverage creative arts in further understanding of colonial place seems almost limitless. Rather than end the research on a note of closure, I chose instead to conclude with thoughts on potential and possibility. This seems particularly fitting in reference to the urgings of the Lejac Indian Residential School student who counselled her readers not to forget critical components of Indigeneity, particularly when considering and responding to the complexities of colonialism.

### CHAPTER 3:

“MUTUALLY AND INEXORABLY ENTWINED HISTORIES.”<sup>3</sup>

#### VOICES AND DELIBERATIONS OF COLONIAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

*Often I am permitted to return to a meadow  
as if it were a scene made-up by the mind  
that is not mine, but is a made place  
that is mine, it is so near to the heart  
an eternal pasture folded in all thought  
so that there is a hall therein  
that is a made place, created by light  
wherefrom there are shadows that are forms fall.*

*(Robert Duncan 1993: 54)*

Eighteen residential schools, some still standing and others only present in peoples’ memories, provide reminders of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal relationships in British Columbia. These small places were places *made* in part through various writings about them, either specifically or as elements within broader deliberations about colonialism in British Columbia. The schools were material places designed to transform Indigenous children. They were also ideologically infused environments where colonial imaginations were enacted. British Columbia’s residential schools, therefore, may be conceptualized in reference to larger narratives of colonialism and settlement. As physical sites, they illustrate how place can be designed and produced to enforce specific visions of civility, productivity, decency, morality, hygiene, and even gender. When conceptualized as sites of power, domination, and efforts toward imposed transformation, the schools also illustrate that place can serve to transmit conceptualizations of an Other, while simultaneously presenting that constructed Other with a locale and an experience against which to negotiate. The schools may be understood as material locales and as

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<sup>3</sup> Miranda, Louis and Phillip Joe. (1993). “How the Squamish Remember George Vancouver.” In *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*. Eds. Robin Fisher, and Hugh Johnston. Vancouver: UBC Press. 3 – 5.



unbounded interactive places made and experienced by the subjects who occupied and imagined them.

To better understand sites of power and transformation, Foucault argues for a theory of “eventalization” that involves a simultaneous “making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to see only a historical constant” and “rediscovering of the connections, encounters, supports, plays of forces, strategies and so on....in [a] sense...effecting a sort of multiplication or pluralisation of causes” (1991: 76). This eventalization demands analysing places “according to the multiple processes which constitute [them]” (76). By this logic, British Columbia’s residential schools may be best understood in relation to practices and processes that began long before the schools materialized on the Province’s landscapes. These practices and processes are by no means expressly linked, either to each other or to the schools, but, when taken together, they comprise the frameworks and temporal biographies of First Nations and Non-Aboriginal relationships (past and present) in British Columbia. These frameworks and biographies, in turn, inform an understanding of place. Ultimately, the broader relationships between Non-Aboriginal peoples and First Nations were fundamental to the operations of residential schools. Thus, although the schools operated between 1861 and 1984, a much longer history of contact, trade, missionization, European settlement, government policy making, and land negotiations all frame the specific sites and moments of residential schools in the Province. This chapter is concerned with situating British Columbian residential schools within literatures that have contemplated the Province’s historic record. The records of the events and processes that surround, and in some way contextualize, residential schools provide wider theoretical and methodological

considerations by which to understand the specific school places while also situating my own research in relation to existing discussions and debates about the schools and colonial relationships in the Province.

### **3.a From Different Places: The Written Histories that Produce British Columbia**

Cole Harris has produced a sustained and expanding record of British Columbia's cultural-historical geographies and the relationships between First Nations and Europeans that have constituted those geographies. Drawing from Edward Said and Michael Foucault, Harris has consistently conceptualized the relationships as spatialized articulations of power, particularly as imperialist interests sought to secure resources and territory in the Province. Harris, like others (e.g., Fisher 1992), differentiates between a pre-colonial and a colonial British Columbia, stipulating that initial Non-Aboriginal interests in the territory were not focused on land settlement and were thus not colonial. He distinguishes between the maritime and overland fur trades in British Columbia, observing that the land-based fur trade had behind it a fixedness of the fur trade industry to the east while the maritime fur trade was always highly mobile with very little presence in the Province. Nevertheless, Harris argues, precolonial interests in British Columbia still revolved around "imperial geopolitical claims and the spatial momentum of commercial capital" (1997/98: 45). In addition to documenting the commercial practices at work within the territory, Harris notes that contemporary scholarship about those practices, and the records of the practices upon which subsequent scholarships rests, are not distinguishable from the practices themselves. What Harris thus admirably does is implicate the production of knowledge about British Columbia in the territorial

and commercial practices that occurred materially, or on the ground, in the Province.

Producing knowledge about British Columbia has always been about inscribing competing modes of power. As Non-Aboriginal settlement occurred and expanded in British Columbia, the imposition of assumptions about modernity and the necessity of subsuming Aboriginal peoples also grew (Harris 1991). What Harris refers to as the “steering mechanisms” of power (laws about private property, courts, Indian Agents, residential schools, and reserve allocations) all conspired to unsettle First Nations. These visible manifestations of power operated within Eurocolonial cultural assumptions and discursive constructs that were “more pervasive and more powerful than any number of police or Indian Agents – that indeed, created the need for police and Indian agents” (1991: 680). The inscription of Eurocolonialism’s discursive imagination on British Columbia’s lands and Aboriginal peoples is, according to Harris, profoundly visible in the Province’s Indian reserves. These allotments of land were produced first by assuming Crown and provincial right to territorial ownership, then by mapping First Nations out of the Province’s landmass, and finally by deploying land surveyors and commissioners to demarcate lands upon which First Nations were to be contained (Harris 2002). These incursions into and inscriptions upon British Columbia’s landmass, argues Harris, provide evidence of “colonialism’s basic geographic dispossessions of the colonized, [thereby allowing] colonial power to come into focus” (2004: 165). For Harris, then, geopolitical colonial boundaries in British Columbia reflect discourses of power. To focus solely on the discourses, however, is to understand only the workings of imperial minds, whereas to focus on the geographies of reserves is to reposition “studies of colonialism in the actuality and materiality of colonial experience” (2004:167). Harris

makes compelling arguments in terms of shifting away from studying the cultural expressions of imperial subjects to recognizing that historical and contemporary knowledge production about British Columbia continues to be implicated in ongoing expressions of power about the Province.

Much as Harris endeavours to acknowledge Aboriginal resistance to the colonial project in British Columbia, there remain in his work foundational assumptions about colonialism's ultimate command of the Province and about Aboriginal peoples' sublimation within the colonial project. The assumption of Aboriginal peoples' sublimation rests, I think, in Harris's residual depiction of a rather strict binary between colonial modernity and Aboriginal "traditional lifeworlds." Traditional lifeworlds, as Jürgen Habermas developed the concept, and as Harris (1991) understands it, denote

taken-for-granted worlds dominated by custom and tradition, by a set order of things that gives meaning to and imposes close limits on individual lives. Within traditional lifeworlds, people are bound to each other, to artifacts, and to nature, in a seamless web of interrelations from which it is impossible to stand apart. (Harris 1991: 672–673)

What occurred during colonialism's incursions into British Columbia was that "traditional lifeworlds, apparently much as Habermas describes them, and modernity met face to face" (Harris 1991: 681). For Harris (2004), Aboriginal laws were embedded in locality and produced at many local sites. Modernity's Eurocolonists, on the other hand, expanded far beyond the local through transferable technologies of power and surveillance, such as cartography and empirical collection. These technologies expanded the colonial world almost without limit. While Aboriginal thought struggled to account for the presence of colonial subjects and their social constructions of law and power, ultimately the colonial project in British Columbia was experienced by Aboriginal

peoples as a particularly sudden and extreme form of transition between the traditional lifeworld and modernity (Harris 2004: 178).

In Harris's construction of British Columbia's history, then, Aboriginal peoples are positioned in antithesis to modernity, a position from which they cannot escape. The theme of loss and Aboriginal peoples' position outside the contemporary is relatively consistent in Harris work. In his vision of a postcolonial future for British Columbia, he argues: "Native peoples lost almost all their land and, with it, their means of livelihood, to an aggressively colonizing society, and the two societies still confront each other today over the land question" (2002: 293). For Harris, the solution is clear. He advocates a redrawing of boundaries in British Columbia "so that native people in [the] Province can have a reasonable prospect of earning a living within the territories of their ancestors" and a "more generous allocation of land (resources) to Native people" so as to ensure "Native people who are again self-reliant and proud and a larger British Columbian society that appreciates the diversity of its peoples and the many ties among them" (2002:294). Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia remain members of a separate society who await a (future) sense of self-reliance and pride linked primarily to land. The First Peoples of what is now British Columbia are thus positioned somewhat outside its present-day configurations, apparently waiting for something lost.

Aboriginal peoples clearly have been discursively and territorially marginalized within colonial British Columbia, but their relationship to modernity and the colonial project is more complex than Harris allows for. It was a relationship of exchange not entirely or uniformly binary in nature. Although the participants were unequally positioned, the Aboriginal peoples, as politically and culturally sophisticated peoples who

had for thousands of years negotiated with other Indigenous peoples, accounted for the colonial presence and skilfully inserted themselves into a modernity that stood not in complete antithesis to them, but simply as something new.

Michael Harkin (1988) raises questions about the relationship between historical narrative accounts and real history or historical events, problematizing contact narratives as reflections of “real” events that tend to be primarily male European versions and accounts of events. How does one mediate between events themselves and the narrative recounting of the events, particularly if those events are recounted from two or more very conflicting positions? It is Harkin’s position that contact encounters on British Columbia’s central coast were moments of both loss and gain for all participants, but the narratives of loss and gain were constructed and remembered in very different manners. The different stages of relationships between First Nations and Non-Aboriginal peoples have been re-conceptualized (primarily by Non-Aboriginal scholars) as reciprocal in nature, as dialectical, and as embedded within unequal discourses of power. Analysis of encounter moments on British Columbia’s central coast, and the subsequent narration of those moments, must always account for participants’ culturally specific notions “of person, time and space, life and death, the social unit, exchange, and inside versus outside” (102). Furthermore, the event and the narratives associated with the event must be understood as socially constructed and the events themselves must be conceptualized as “dialogical ... [and thus] involving the gradual clearing out of a space of shared meaning” (102). What Harkin most successfully offers is a caveat that the narrations of historical events are not separate from the events themselves. Instead, the *act of recounting* is, unto itself, a production of history, equal in measure to the events that

made up the historic event at its moment of occurrence.

Locating his discussions in the Tsimshian peoples, Daniel Clayton (1992) understands First Nations and Non-Indigenous relationships on the northwest coast of British Columbia as a series of practices and discourses that ordered First Nations according to entangled mobilizations of power, knowledge, and space. Clayton locates his triadic argument in three early settlement communities on the lower Skeena River: Port Simpson, Metlakatla, and Port Essington. In Fort Simpson, a fur trade post, Clayton argues that Coast Tsimshian peoples were fundamentally ordered by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) as economic objects within a discourse not of land colonization but of commercial strategy concerned with profit maximization and cost minimization. The HBC's challenge was controlling the First Nations upon whom fur extraction depended, but around whom a great uncertainty prevailed because of their ability to cut off the fur supply or to trade elsewhere. This uncertainty resulted in the Company's preoccupation with keeping Tsimshian peoples within monitorable distances; as Clayton surmises, Fort Simpson became a trade *site* designed to keep Tsimshian peoples' and the First Nations' world within *sight* (40).

In Port Simpson, First Nations were ordered in the economic gaze, represented physically as fort settings, which facilitated financial control. On the other hand, Metlakatla, the second site of Clayton's triadic argument, was constructed so that control could be exerted over the material and spiritual aspects of Tsimshian lives, thus exerting a more all-encompassing power than that of the HBC in Port Simpson. Anglican missionary William Duncan established the community and planned it as a morally utopian space to rescue the bodies and souls of First Nations peoples. Unlike the

economic structuring imposed by Port Simpson, Clayton argues that Metlakatla ordered First Nations as objects of compassion, in need of moral and spiritual transformation. The planning of the community positioned First Nations within laws that Duncan created to curtail moral infractions he believed rampant in First Nations' life.

The cannery community of Port Essington is the third site of Clayton's inquiry. The town was established during the gold rush in 1870, but was transformed by the establishment of three canneries between 1883 and 1898. Clayton holds that, unlike in Port Simpson and Metlakatla, where one institution positioned First Nations within a singular discourse, no single institution or discourse held sway over the lives of First Nations peoples at Port Essington. Instead the community was conceived "within the purview of government land laws" (49) that operated through multiple institutions (legal, economic, ecumenical) in multi-spaced and multi-scaled ways to position, constrain, separate, and demarcate First Nations peoples. Port Essington was a site in and through which the full spectrum of power, knowledge, and space came to bear on First Nations people, making the community emblematic of the complex relationships that came to define a modern British Columbia.

Clayton's arguments rest primarily on texts and documents produced by Non-Indigenous colonial subjects in the Province. It is a methodology he later problematizes (Clayton 2001/2002), arguing that the result is a preoccupation with the tentacles of empire and the power of European representations of the Other, as opposed to a focus on First Nations presence. Motivations and experiences of First Nations on the north coast are thin in Clayton's work, often obscured within a Non-Aboriginal written record that is interpreted as evidence. Consequently, although Clayton's research is an analysis of



colonial discourses and their spatial materialization in specific sites, his argument perpetuates the methodological conundrum of how to discern First Nations' presence in the B.C. historical record. The absence of the Tsimshian in Clayton's analysis exemplifies Harkin's concern about how to mediate the breaches between historical narratives and historic events, particularly in the realm of First Nations and Non-Aboriginal relationships in British Columbia.

Susan Neylan (2000), Carol Williams (2003), and Paige Raibmon (2005) are more successful in conveying the active presence of First Nations in British Columbia's history. These authors situate First Nations as participants in non-static and semi-collaborative dialogues that constitute relationships between First Nations and Non-Aboriginal peoples in the Province. In each of their works, either implicitly or explicitly stated, there is a resonance of Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) observation that contact zones are sociocultural spaces in which "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4). As participants and collaborators, rather than passive respondents, who grapple and clash in the colonial project of British Columbia, First Nations gain agency and voice. Space in the production of knowledge about the colonial project is thus carved out for First Nations, not simply as subjects upon whom colonialism imposed itself, but also as individuals, groups, and communities whom the colonial project had to meaningfully account for and who, in turn, strategically accounted for the colonial project.

Neylan argues, for instance, that Tsimshian acceptance of Christianity, not unlike their movement into EuroCanadian-styled mission homes, may best be conceptualized as a strategic and veneered performance or a spiritual façade that appeared to acquiesce to

colonial expectations while allowing the maintenance of core cultural interests. Prior to contact, argues Naylen, Tsimshian society had well articulated class systems that corresponded with their Nation's demarcations of power, status, and family. Although "what brought most newcomers into [British Columbia] concerned material, not spiritual matters" (56), over time spiritual matters came to form an integral part of First Nations and Non-Aboriginal relationships in British Columbia. As Christian spiritual considerations expanded in the Province, Tsimshian cultural codes of power began to intersect with missionary efforts, resulting in the self-conscious and often modified acceptance of Christianity by some Tsimshian people to further establish and solidify their positions of status or influence. Far from abandoning history and memory upon meeting with Christian colonial agendas, Tsimshian people strategically embraced aspects of Christianity, particularly Evangelical Christianity, to augment existing Tsimshian social systems. Neylan's work recognizes the space carved out by First Nations' spirituality in the production of the Province.

Mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs allow Carol Williams (2003) to see First Nations' agency in British Columbia's colonial history. Williams holds that a "photographic frontier" offered benign impressions of settlement (5). As early as 1859, British surveyors produced both landscape photographs and portraits of coastal First Nations in British Columbia, and, in 1886, anthropologist Franz Boas photographed First Nations in his effort to capture cultural change. These works focused on a *terra nullius* and constructions of dying Indians. A further corpus of photographs recorded the growth of adventure and exploration activities in the Province and the expansion of missionary conversion activities. Williams argues that Aboriginal peoples

as subjects of much photography also “collected, commissioned, and enlisted photography in opposition to, or conformity with, dominant representation” (25). These photographs capture First Nations returning the colonial gaze, either because they actively collected photographs and circulated them to their own ends or because they produced their own unique representations of what mattered to them. Williams cautions, however, that historical investigation must account for how photographs produce certain discursive “truths” about subjects: photographs must not be considered inherently truthful. She argues that while the photographs captured moments in the relationship between First Nations and Non-Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia, they cannot be interpreted without accounting for the complex context and the multiple meanings embedded in their production as objects.

Paige Raibmon (2005) is concerned with what constitutes an “authentic Indian,” how Aboriginal subjects were and are given legitimacy in a colonial project, and how they insisted the colonial project account for them. Raibmon takes seriously Foucault’s reminder that discourses function as more than “groups of signs...but...[are] practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (1972: 49). She argues that discourses in colonial British Columbia constructed First Nations in constant opposition to Non-Aboriginal settlers, fashioning First Nations based on binaries in which an authentic Indian existed as irrational, traditional, subordinate, uncivilized, and static in relation to the rational, modern, dominant, civilized, and dynamic Non-Aboriginal subject. But First Nations were also non-passive collaborators in the colonial project and in the discursive formations designed to confine them as peoples; however, by participating as such, First Nations were not necessarily participating in their own

subjugation. Instead, by strategically deploying the very binaries that colonial discourse dictated, First Nations navigated the shifting and colonized geographies of British Columbia in order to sustain a modern Aboriginal existence. Aboriginal peoples' collaborative efforts to survive the arrival and proliferation of Eurocolonialists, argues Raibmon, can be witnessed in touristic events involving First Nations from British Columbia. Such events include the 1893 World Fair in Chicago during that unscripted demonstrations by Kwakwaka'wakw performers "ensured their place in the empire could not be overlooked" (60). First Nations' labouring activities as cannery workers and hop pickers also operated on multiple levels, simultaneously drawing Non-Aboriginal peoples to view "vanishing and authentic Indians" and affording First Nations the ability to position themselves as active presences in and members of expanding colonial economies. Furthermore, by working in agriculture and canneries, First Nations secured wages that were, in turn, invested in furthering social status in home communities or used to participate in the colonial economy, thus announcing themselves as non-vanishing presences in British Columbia.

Although a growing recognition is developing that British Columbia's history turns on relationships between First Nations peoples and Non-Aboriginal peoples, few of the Province's written historical records have been authored by Aboriginal peoples themselves. Most of the literature about the Province's colonial history and geography still relies on Non-Aboriginal counter-readings of Eurocolonially produced texts and objects. This (re)production of the Province's history relies on tracing Aboriginal presence either through the silences in texts and colonial utterances about First Nations or in the few Aboriginal ruptures and traces that have made their way into the colonial

record but that are then re-interpreted by Non-Aboriginal peoples in their efforts to relate a history of British Columbia. The Province's history, particularly its written history, remains a predominantly Non-Aboriginal remembrance and record, although some notable exceptions do exist.

The writings of Alert Bay-born Daisy Sewid-Smith, daughter of Kwakwaka'wakw Chief James Sewid, provides one example of a growing, yet still scant, literature produced by First Nations about First Nations perspectives on the history of British Columbia. Sewid-Smith relates the pre- and post-contact history of both the Kwakwaka'wakw territory and the Province at large. Her accounts are markedly different from contemporaneous and subsequent histories told by Non-Aboriginal peoples. First, Sewid-Smith charts her people's history "far back in the silent past" of time immemorial (1991:17) and situates her historiography within a familial context: "Many of my relatives came in contact with Captain George Vancouver in 1792 at what is now known as the Nimpkish River...prior to this meeting we already had a long history in what is now known as British Columbia" (17). Second, she makes no effort to *allocate* a place for a First Nations' presence in the historical record. She simply asserts and embodies such historical space, observing that

We have been fighting for our land since the time of contact...Our history after contact is full of abuses and sorrows. It is no wonder that the history books are silent about our past. If by accident we are mentioned, it is to say we are a primitive people, with no past, no contribution, no land and above all no rights in our own country. (16)

Within this context, Sewid-Smith recounts the origin of her family, the Kwakwaka'wakw people, and their understanding about Europeans settlement on Kwakwaka'wakw territory. She recounts that the Kwakwaka'wakw people arose after a great flood that

claimed all but those whom the Creator favoured. After the waters of the great flood receded, people left their “places of descent” (high places from which people descended after the flood), each of which became sacred grounds to people of the K<sup>w</sup>agut̓ Nation. Sewid-Smith’s family, members of the Q<sup>w</sup>iq<sup>w</sup>asut’inux<sup>w</sup> tribe, descended from Mit’ap, at the bottom of Mt. Reid near Gilford Island.

Pre-contact Kwakwaka’wakw, along with other First Nations across British Columbia, developed intricate social systems, including alliances with other Nations as wars over territory and resources escalated with increasing populations. The social structures, including marriage, determined territory and resource allocations and were often articulated in relation to “places of descent.” Sewid-Smith is clear that First Nations in British Columbia, prior to contact with Europeans, were politically and governmentally sophisticated societies. She observes that First Nations in the west “had no idea” about the Seven Year War between the British and French in Canada’s east or about the resulting 1763 Royal Proclamation that would, according to Sewid-Smith, come to prevent “the complete annihilation of the Native Nation of Canada” (22); and yet the First Nations of British Columbia were autonomous and sovereign self-governing peoples even during the early years of Canada’s confederation. This sovereignty, concludes Sewid-Smith, was not eroded in British Columbia with initial contact between First Nations and Europeans who “came, took a few furs, and did not stay” (22). She identifies the moment relations shifted and territorial sovereignty was undermined:

In 1849 the clan SənX’ə was giving a potlatch at Qaiug<sup>w</sup>is, known today as Turnour Island...It was during this time that a messenger arrived at the potlatch informing the clans that white people were building a house at their place of descent in what was to be later called Beaver Harbour at Fort Rupert, known

today as Port McNeill...Many of the clans did not believe such a thing was happening because these white strangers would come and pick up a few furs but would never stay for any length of time but [after investigating] to their disbelief the messenger was not wrong...These strangers had moved in and [taken First Nations'] land without consent [and] it was not just any land, but land given to them after the flood. (23)

This initial moment of settlement, in Sewid-Smith's telling of British Columbia history, is inextricably linked both with ongoing European claims of ownership over First Nations' territory and lands and with subsequent dispossession of First Nations from those lands. Sewid-Smith suggests that "while Native people were dying of the smallpox all over British Columbia, the government was wasting no time in trying to find ways of taking more land" (27). It was precisely this landscape of devastation that facilitated James Douglas and Joseph William Trutch to enforce boundary constructions and reserve allotments. As a member of a First Nation whose lands were "stolen" and divided under this model, Sewid-Smith provides a unique view of British Columbia's history. She documents a First Nations' view of the history of British Columbia and records a consistent opposition by First Nations to the territorial expansions of settler colonists in the Province. Sewid-Smith's perspective is that the history of British Columbia is rife with colonial actions explicitly designed to dislocate and disrupt First Nations to favour colonial settlement, and, consequently, it is also dominated by a series of episodes in which First Nations responded to colonial efforts.

There is another First Nation's perspective on the Province's history: that it is also a history of relationships *between and among* First Nations, independent of Non-Aboriginals and even prior to contact with Non-Aboriginal peoples. Neil Sterritt, of the Gitksan Nation and a member of the Fireweed clan of Kispiox, observes that while land

incursions by Europeans from the earliest moments of settlement resulted in “the pursuit of recognition of Aboriginal title, commonly known as land claims” First Nations’ laws and historical knowledges played a vital role in land claims prior and during to the colonial period (1998: 4):

Competing claims between First Nations have existed since time immemorial, and indigenous legal systems on the Northwest Coast allow for a number of forms of dispute resolution, most commonly the formation of kinship ties through clan adoption or intermarriage... These competing claims are qualitatively different from those that have resulted from the formal process of land claims resolution initiated by Canada. (7).

Sterrit’s account of the competing and overlapping land claims between the Gitksan, the Nisga’a, the Tsutsaut, and the Tahltan, provides unique insight into events, boundaries, and structures present in British Columbia prior to the Europeans’ arrival.

Sterrit documents the pre-contact legal systems used by the Gitksan and Nisga’a Nations to establish ownership of territory. They were the two First Nations in most fundamental conflict over territorial boundaries in the Nass watershed. The text does not take EuroCanadian law as a starting point from which to understand British Columbia’s land and territorial history; instead, *adaawks* are understood to establish use, ownership, and transfer of territory. The full meaning of *adaawk* is complex, but translates roughly as:

the ancient migrations of a house (or Wilp, which is the matrilineal kin ground and fundamental landowning and socio-political unit in Gitksan society), its acquisition and defence of its territory, and major events in the life of the house, such as natural disasters, epidemics, and war, as well as the arrival of new peoples and events surrounding the establishment of trade alliances and major shifts in power (Sterrit et al 1998: 293).



The adaawk records are often atemporal and non-linear because they measure time and space in meandering connections of both specificity and generality. Some adaawks chart connection to land and territory in miniscule detail, in memories that would elude the confines of maps or land surveys. For instance, Axmanasxw's (Charles Derrick) establishes title in the upper Nass River watershed. His record details a period of time between 1936 and 1943, a time in which all of British Columbia had been parcelled into reserves and allocated by colonial land commissioners:

We went by the Telegraph Trail to the Seventh Cabin. We took horses. Charlie Sampson, Phillip Wilson, George Wilson, and George Sexsmith went to their territory [Miinlaxmihl] at halfway between the Sixth and Seventh Cabins. There is a creek that flows from a lake, and it flows into the creek at Eighth Cabin... We crossed the Xsitxemsem [Muckaboo Creek] between Seventh and Eighth Cabins on a Ganeexsim Duutsxw (a bridge made of telegraph wire) and go half an hour to our main cabin. There are lots of Dolly Vardern in that lake. There are three lakes up there. We had two camps from the lake.... There was twelve feet of snow there (quoted in Sterrit et al 1998: 128–129).

Axmanasxw's narrative makes clear the immense variability in the means of relating and recording historical understandings of territory. Rather than visual or textual representation of land usage and territorial ownership, Axmanasxw's adaawk narrates a relationship to place, based on small perhaps even ephemeral details like the availability of trout in a lake, the sites where creeks converge, or the depth of snow. These details, in turn, form a base from which to navigate the land and make use of its resources. Such understandings, circulating well into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, suggest that multiple understandings of British Columbia were functioning concurrently in the Province. Two very different conceptualizations of the Province existed simultaneously, both of which likely deeply influenced each other. And while postcolonial historical geographical

accounts of settlement in British Columbia account admirably for colonialism's imposition on Aboriginal peoples and the lands of British Columbia, many of these accounts fail to emphasize the profound effect Aboriginal peoples had, and have, on the colonial project and on the Province's history. Unquestionably the colonial project conceptualized, marginalized, and addressed Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples, however, also addressed colonialism and, perhaps somewhat more quietly, lived their lives with the complexities and dynamism they had lived life since they first came to be in the territory; this continued into the present day.

The history of British Columbia is in many ways a story of Aboriginal peoples. From the perspective of the Province's First Peoples, the land is inextricably tied to their presence and they are inextricably tied to the land, descendants of it. In 1992, Chief Philip Joe of the Squamish Nation reiterated this, categorizing the history of the Province as one of relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples: "Our mutual histories since 1792 have been inexorably intertwined, although recalled from different perspectives" (quoted in Fisher and Johnston 1993: 5). It is the gap between those retellings that particularly interests me. As history continues to be told, circulated, constructed, and reconstructed, it seems important to call to mind Chief Joe's words. Certainly, events occurred in British Columbia's past, but those events are equally constituted by the moments and subjects of which they were composed and by their ongoing interpretation. Understanding the events and places of British Columbia's residential schools requires not only conceptualizing the schools, but also critically emplacing considerations of the schools within a broader historical and theoretical context.

### **3.b Places Apart and Separating Places: Considerations of British Columbia's Eighteen 'Indian' Residential Schools**

On October 29<sup>th</sup> 1989, just over five years after the last residential school in British Columbia closed its doors, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) aired a prime-time two-hour film entitled *Where the Spirit Lives*. The fictionalized docudrama about residential schooling in Canada was lauded by *The Vancouver Sun* as a “beautiful, painful film” (Aird 1989: H6). *The Edmonton Journal* considered that it brought residential schooling to the attention of Canadians: “A shameful slice of Canadian history is exposed tonight in a powerful TV movie that ranks as must-see viewing for anybody with a conscience about the way Canada has treated its native people” (Remington 1989: D3). Directed and produced by Paul Stephens and Eric Jordan, *Where the Spirit Lives* “remains the most-watched fictional representation of an issue that haunts both Canada and the United States – the treatment of Aboriginal children in residential schools” (Miller 2001: n.p.). While the film’s showing through the 1990s was part of a “decade [when] many adult Canadians began to recognize that the forced assimilation of children – status, non-status, and Métis alike – had dire social consequence,” its showing in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century still elicited shock in younger viewers over “a history they knew nothing about” (Miller 2001: n.p.).

Many problematic assumptions are embedded in these reviews. The reviews assume that people without interest in Canada’s treatment of Aboriginal people are unlikely to watch the film, that those not watching the film lack a conscience about Canada’s treatment of Aboriginal people, and perhaps, most importantly, that both viewers and non-viewers of the film will be Non-Aboriginal. That the film was

understood to expose a shameful slice of Canada's history presupposes viewers for whom residential schooling is unknown: thus these people are "exposed" to it, possibly for the first time. Given that Aboriginal peoples lived that history, the film cannot be credited with *exposing* them to the issue. We can safely assume that Aboriginal peoples were aware of the relationship between residential schooling and language loss, cultural erosion, and socio-economic marginalization without having to watch *Where the Spirit Lives*. The reviews also relegate problematic treatment of Aboriginal peoples to the past, while taking as a given that Canada exercises a kind of ownership over Aboriginal peoples. This latter point is exemplified in constructions about "its" (Canada's) Native people. To assert that the film awoke in Canadians an awareness about the dire social consequences of assimilative education, is to suggest that to be Aboriginal is to be not fully Canadian. In a roundabout way, Aboriginal people are erased from Canada and from a historical recounting that is expressly about them. The film's production and airing, and the subsequent circulation of reviews about it, capture tensions of positionality.

The erasure was not lost on at least one Aboriginal critic of the film. Anishinabe Ojibway writer and orator Lenore Keeshig-Tobias argued that the movie "is written by a white person who has no right to tell our stories. It portrays native people as being passive, motivated, and manipulated by whites" (Keeshig-Tobias quoted in Vincent 1989: D7). Keeshig-Tobias' critique underscores the tension in positionality and the conceptualization of histories that, although shared, are recalled from very different places. For Keeshig-Tobias, the film's problems stemmed from Non-Aboriginal direction and production, both of which resulted in a misrepresentation of Blackfoot culture. She

did not disagree that Non-Aboriginal peoples are implicated in the history of residential schools and in residential schooling practices; after all, Non-Aboriginal Canadians initially conceived of residential schooling and implemented its pedagogical goals across the country. However, her comments reveal a tension in the (re)tellings of historical events, specifically with regard to residential schools. She insists that the person relating that history cannot be removed from history. Even with the best of intentions, historical retellings of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal relationships in Canada too often perpetuate a narrative of Aboriginal passivity within colonial projects. Her cautions prompt a critical engagement with the production of literature on residential schooling in British Columbia, particularly because that literature is often written by Non-Aboriginal peoples.

Alongside an emergent body of research about residential schools is a growing attention to the complexity and dynamism of the schools, coupled with an increased awareness that Aboriginal students were by no means passive subjects within the educational system designed to assimilate them into Eurocolonial projects (Milloy 1999; Lomawaima and McCarty 2006). There is also an emerging literature critiquing authorship of the research about residential schools and the purposes served in the production of such works: two texts that embody this involve Kamloops Indian Residential School. In 1988 Celia Haig-Brown co-authored, with the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society (SCES), *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School*. In 2000, the SCES independently published *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School*. The tension between the two texts is perhaps nowhere better expressed than by Haig-Brown herself, who writes in the preface of a 1991 reprinting of *Resistance and Renewal* that her text

[h]as had some success. It has been used in university courses...and sells well at the Union of BC Indian Chiefs' bookstore in Vancouver. I meet and talk with First Nations people who have read it, and many acknowledge the similarities of their experiences, whether they attended school in Fraser Lake, the Kootnays, or Port Alberni...*Resistance and Renewal* has also been criticized by some First Nations people who see my work as an unwanted intervention in First Nations business. But it is important to remember that the story of the schools is one in which non-Natives play a central role. (10)

However, despite the success of *Resistance and Renewal* no mention is made of Haig-Brown's work in the subsequent publication of the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society's *Behind Closed Doors*. Wayne Christianson writes in the preface to that text:

We are living in an important time for Indigenous People through the world and specifically for First Nations peoples in Canada. It is clear that the movement to asserting control and jurisdiction over traditional lands and resources are on the minds of all First Nations....The seed for control by First Nations families and communities over all aspects of our lives is a direct result of being oppressed and controlled for many generations by government systems and structures....We are on the threshold of a new beginning where we are in control [of] our own destinies. (10–11)

Explicit in Christianson's preface is the link between cultural sovereignty, self-determination, and control over the telling and circulation of knowledge about residential schooling in Kamloops. The production of historical accounts of the school is envisioned as healing, documenting the past, or even (as Haig-Brown alludes to) raising Non-Aboriginal social consciousness about colonialism's violence in British Columbia. As SCES Special Projects Manager Lori Pilon states, documenting perspectives on residential schooling, and taking ownership of that process of documentation, "encouraged and supported individuals who experienced or witnessed physical and/or

sexual abuse in the Kamloops Indian Residential School to start or continue their healing journeys by providing a safe, culturally appropriate environment and process in which they could tell their stories” (*Behind Closed Doors* 2000: 8). Telling the history of a British Columbian residential school, when undertaken by a First Nations Band, becomes as much an effort in addressing and redressing history as a process of producing an historical account. This is not to say that Non-Aboriginal peoples, as Haig-Brown suggests, do not also have a history to address with respect to the schools. Instead, it is to acknowledge that the production of accounts of the schools can serve very different purposes, based on who is at the helm of the production.

Like the relationship between Haig-Brown’s and the SCES’s texts, Jo-Anne Fiske’s (2005) work highlights the shifting meanings in knowledge produced about residential schools in British Columbia. With a specific focus on Lejac Residential School, Fisk observes that

Within [the] multiple layers of expression and the many quests for personal understanding of a troubled past, no true story of the residential school should be alleged; neither should we seek some fair balance of good and evil, of morality and immorality on a colonial frontier. Rather, we should seek to understand the postcolonial representations of the past and ask what they might offer to those who seek remedy for the harm they have endured. (90)

Fiske points out the ephemeral nature of truth surrounding any consideration of British Columbia’s residential schools. She points out the multiple conceptualizations of truth, both in retroactively producing a history of the schools and in the different ways the schools were envisioned by different occupants during the time the schools were in operation. Such an understanding of the schools, and subsequent literatures about them is a powerful postcolonial articulation, disputing the possibility of a knowable truth about

the schools. In disputing that a specific truth about the schools can exist, Fiske is ultimately challenging the very purpose of those who staffed the schools, nuns who held strong convictions that the purpose of their work was to bring the unwavering truth of Christianity to Aboriginal children. Those “women religious” occupied the front lines of Catholic colonial efforts to transform Aboriginal children in British Columbia, specifically at Lejac Indian Residential School. Encapsulated in religious, both Protestant and Catholic, and cultural autobiographies of self-sacrifice, piety, sanctity, and heroic virtue, they sought both to emulate previously sanctified women and to “imitate Christ [in] a life of sacrifice and extraordinary moral discipline” (95). Teaching in residential schools allowed them the possibility of “heroicity through endurance of suffering that goes beyond the normal expectations of laity” (96). According to Fiske, Catholic residential schooling in British Columbia was far more than an uncomplicated educational effort; instead, it was a practice through which colonial subjects, who taught on the frontier of empire, secured a definition of self.

Fiske argues that female staff in residential schools were “motherless daughters,” a construct involving both the renunciation of their own maternal and familial connections in favour of a new missionary family and the repositioning of themselves as daughters of Christ. The women’s construction of self implicated Aboriginal students with whom they co-inhabited the schools because, on becoming daughters of Christ, the women simultaneously became daughters of the colonial project and, as a consequence, mothers to Aboriginal children. Fiske also argues that the women constructed their suffering and repudiation as valorous and sought to associate themselves with Aboriginal children who had also suffered the loss of family. Fiske documents a peculiar narrative of



forgiveness toward these women by former residential school students who explain away the women's emotional austerity and sometimes cruelty in light of their lives of sacrifice: "Their mothers gave them to us because God asked them to. God knew we needed them" (quoted in Fiske 2005: 97). For female teachers and staff of residential schools in British Columbia, the sites provided locations through which they enacted imaginations of self that would be rewarded in the afterlife.

Fiske's Catholic women religious, and the senses of self they gained in British Columbia's Catholic residential schools, parallel in many respects what Jan Hare and Jean Barman document as "good intentions gone awry" in early non-Catholic schooling and missionary efforts on British Columbia's north coast (2006: 179). In 1874, Emma Crosby, wife of Methodist missionary Thomas Crosby, moved to Fort Simpson in Tsimshian territory between the Nass and Skeena Rivers in northern British Columbia. Emma Crosby arrived, as Hare and Barman document through analyses of her letters, with multiple intentions: She was interested in serving church and country through civilizing Aboriginal peoples; she also wanted to become "not exactly ... a missionary" but as close to one as was possible for a woman of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century (quoted in Hare and Barman: 180). She fulfilled both intentions through the establishment of a school for Tsimshian girls, which was initially operated from her home. Later, after significant financial support was secured from the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada, a separate school was opened. Through both locations, the structure and practice of education served to solidify Crosby's sense of being a selfless and devout servant of high and noble causes. Although Crosby laments that at times she toiled away in a place that was "surely...the wickedest place on earth," she was rewarded in her

efforts by bearing witness to the transformative powers of her educational efforts:

As to civilization these people are, many of them, very ambitious....[W]e see considerable improvement through the village in the keeping of houses, while the children are much better cared for than formerly. The people come to church, almost inevitably neatly dressed, and observe the strictest decorum. The girls are, as a rule, quick to learn, both in school and housework, though of course we find some who naturally lack all idea of order, and can never be thoroughly neat and clean (Crosby quoted in Hare and Barman 2006: 189–190).

Educating Tsimshian girls, it seems, provided a seemingly endless opportunity for the colonial teacher to realize visions of selflessly endured harsh conditions to save or bring salvation to those lacking Christian trainings and sensibilities. Constructing such a tension seems understandable, particularly when understood in relation to Fiske's women religious: as long as there were 'savages' in need of civilizing, colonial educators would never want for opportunities that ultimately satisfied their own imagination of self (and selflessness). It makes sense then, that the job of the colonial educator could never be quite complete, that there would always be "some who...can never be thoroughly neat and clean."

While teachers constructed their senses of self in reference to Aboriginal children, Hare and Barman argue that Tsimshian girls used the colonial schooling process to further the needs of the Tsimshian peoples and to circulate Tsimshian ways and experiences back into the colonial paradigm. If we (re)read Crosby's letters about her school for girls with this in mind, a Tsimshian presence and strategic response to colonial intent becomes apparent. In addition to providing Thomas and Emma Crosby with assistance in language and cultural translations, both of which were much needed in the Crosby's conversion efforts, the Tsimshian girls had a profound impact on the Crosby's

children. That this was occurring can be seen in Emma's references to the close relationships that developed between her children and First Nations children:

The [Tsimshian] girls are very fond of [Jessie, Crosby's daughter] and take charge of her a good deal...Jessie had to be left almost entirely to their care and though, I believe, they did all they could for her still they cannot manage her properly...[but] Jessie seems every day to grow more interesting. She enters everything with keen enjoyment and nothing escapes her...When the [Tsimshian] girls carry in the hay she goes along with a little bundle across her shoulder.  
(Crosby quoted in Hare and Barman 2006: 186–187)

Certainly colonial teachers were engaged in imposing upon Aboriginal children a collection of traits imagined as superior to characteristics that they associated with Aboriginality. This imposition, however, was neither unidirectional nor impervious to modification by Aboriginal students. Like Mary-Louise Pratt's (1992) assertion that zones of contact were messy sites where different cultures clashed and grappled with one another, Crosby's school for Tsimshian girls was a place where Emma Crosby realized a sense of herself in reference to Aboriginal people, and where Tsimshian girls helped to form that sense of self.

Colonial education in British Columbia's residential schools is importantly theorized as a set of practices that were fluid, dynamic, multi-directional, and informed by both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal participants. It remains vital, however, to recognize the pervasive inequalities between peoples in residential schools and the violence of colonialism in places of ostensible education. A discursive momentum, a public rhetoric, and set of enforced policy frameworks marginalized Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia. At base, residential schooling was premised on a Eurocolonial assumption of cultural superiority, associated with a belief that converting Aboriginal

peoples to Christianity would civilize them. According to Sir John Murray in 1830, then Secretary of State for the Colonies in the British Imperial Government:

[R]eclaiming [Aboriginals] from a state of barbarism and introducing amongst them the industrious and peaceful habits of a civilized life [should occur] by encouraging in them every possible manner of progress [and] religious knowledge and education (quoted in Milloy 1999: 11)

Over 125 years later, this sentiment was still prevalent. The Oblate Fathers of Canada Indian and Eskimo Welfare Commission argued

Ever since the first permanent European settlement in Canada in 1604, efforts have been made to school the children of the Aborigines in the ways of the newcomers. Both Church and state felt it was their responsibility to christianize as well as civilize the poor ignorant dwellers of the North American forests. The religious conversion did take place, and quite successfully, as evidenced by the fact that ninety-eight percent of the population, legally considered Indian, belongs to one or the other of the Christian Churches. The Cultural transformation, usually referred to as “education,” is still lagging (Government of Canada 1958: 4).

Such colonial assumptions of European spiritual and intellectual superiority had forceful outcomes in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. Unable to practice their own governance systems, First Nations people in British Columbia were prohibited from voting provincially until 1949 and were not granted the right to vote federally until 1960. Non-Aboriginal assumptions of superiority, although by no means static, particularly as their ideologies shifted focus from economic concerns to religion and settlement, were nevertheless consistently entangled with their beliefs that Aboriginal peoples were an inferior people who needed to be kept in their place (Barmen, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986; Morrisette 1994).

The published historical record reveals a shifting colonial apprehension of the

Aboriginal peoples of British Columbia: from an almost complete silence; to the conviction that they are a dying race and a fully subordinated people; to an increasing awareness of the active and effective resistance of Aboriginal peoples to the colonial project. It is essential to recognize that colonization in British Columbia resulted in ongoing privilege for some, with consequent marginalization of others. This ongoing privileging is reflected in the historical geographies written about the Province. The published histories about the colonial project in British Columbia are imbued with many of the same issues of power as the colonial events that the publications are narrating. Histories of residential schools in the Province are no exception. Furthermore, as Evelyn Peters observes, “the production and dissemination of academic geography [remains] under the control of Non-Aboriginal peoples,” something that may only change if Aboriginal peoples see more of themselves represented in the discipline of geography and in the production of historical geographic knowledge (2000: 52). What then is to be learned both from the existing published history of British Columbia and from materials explicitly concerned with the Province’s residential schools? More specifically, what can be added to a history of British Columbia’s residential schools and what methodological issues must be considered in such an endeavour? In other words, what does my research project learn from and add to the published histories of colonization in British Columbia?

### **3.c A Placed Summary: Locating New Methodologies and Possibilities for Expanding British Columbia’s Colonial Histories**

Producing knowledge about an event, or interpreting an object, is by no means an innocent, passive, or merely epistemological practice that can somehow be separated from what is being narrated or interpreted or what is ontological. A tension exists

between the events, both temporal and spatial, that made up the relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia, as well as the subsequent interpretations and consideration of those events. Indeed, the subsequent conceptualizations of those relationships have resulted in further constructions and reconstructions of the events and subjects involved. If the events with which the historiographies are concerned were predicated on discursive and material iterations of power, and in the case of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal relations in British Columbia there appears to be broad agreement that this was the case, it is no easy task to interpret or narrate those events in a manner that does not simply replicate those power relations. It is not easy to address critically such power relations. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) writes extensively about the tension between the epistemological and the ontological, or the object/event and the subsequent theorization/interpretation of the object/event. He systematically unsettles the acts and practices of interpretation, particularly when such practices rest on a suggestion of distance or separation from what is interpreted. Bourdieu's theory of practice has much to offer work that interprets and theorizes the places of residential schools in British Columbia.

Bourdieu proposes a means of interpretation somewhere beyond, yet inclusive of, interpretive methods predicated either primarily on phenomenological inquiry (principally experiential and subjective) or on structural inquiry (principally distanced and objectivist). Named by Bourdieu "a theory of practice," this third or alternated method, repositions the interpretation of subjects outside either a solely embedded or a solely omniscient position and into an interpretive position that "escape[s] from the ritual either/or choice between objectivism and subjectivism in which the social sciences have

so far allowed themselves to be trapped [and repositions them] into a mode of production and functioning” (4). This repositioning of the interpreter insists that interpretation is as much an active and modifying practice as the events, interactions, or subjects with which the interpreter is concerned. In other words, “one is entitled to undertake an ‘account of accounts’ as long as one does not put forward one’s contribution...as if it were a science [or truth] of the social world” (21). Bourdieu’s insistence that the interpreter is not in any way removed from that which is interpreted is consistent with his rejection of dualistic or binary modes of inquiry, including inquiries or interpretations that extricate time from space.

The further utility of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, particularly for a geographic inquiry, is that the method calls for attention to both the time and the space of events. A theory of practice, then, is in many ways consistent with a fusion of spatiality and temporality, or a “space of time” (6) that insists upon a conceptualization of the spatial as inseparable from aspects of time and as of time always in dialogue with place and the spatial (Massey 1993; 1995). With respect to an historical geographic inquiry and a critical engagement with literatures concerned about the colonial geographic history of British Columbia, Bourdieu’s theory of practice insists on a variety of methodologies and on a range of interpretive practices with regard to existing accounts of histories, including their methodological premises. The theory of practice acknowledges that the interpretation of events, objects, or subjects is an active component of constructing those events, objects, or subjects and, furthermore, that the practice of interpretation is located both in time and in space. In addition to its relevance for geographers, Bourdieu’s theory of practice is also consistent with post-colonial theories that recognize that colonial

practices must be understood as spatial, or as having to do with land and social dispossession, while also having much to do with a temporal and cultural set of constructions (McClintock 1995; Said 1993). For Edward Said, the main battle of colonization concerns land; who owns land, who has the right to settle land, who has the right to work land, and who plans the future of land. The contest over land, however, is often decided through cultural practices. Drawing from Said, Anne McClintock (1995) problematizes any possibility that hermeneutical inquiry can be disentangled from the context in which it occurs. McClintock too holds that “the politics of interpretation” are culpable in, for instance, the production of anachronistic space (the spatialization of the archaic), and panoptical time (representations of temporality that can be instantaneously grasped by viewers who then understand themselves to have a complete “picture” of happenings over time). She argues that both time and space serve to (re)construct an Other in reference to a dominant, usually white, heterosexual, male, referent. Thus, although hermeneutical or interpretive inquiries endeavour to read and conceptualize subjects, objects, and events based on their contextuality, inter-textuality, inter-subjectivity, and the motivations surrounding their production or construction, what such interpretations often fail to account for is that the practice of interpretation is itself a practice of (re)producing what is being interpreted. Bourdieu’s argument insists that epistemological endeavours and acts of interpretations are both cultural practices. It follows that such cultural practices have the potential to perpetuate dominant colonial modes of thought and action, thus highlighting the potential to perpetuate ongoing colonial practices through academic writing about Aboriginal peoples. That some Indigenous peoples reject the published literatures pertaining to both British Columbia’s



history and the history of residential schools supports this contention. For these Indigenous thinkers, the practice of producing such histories is an ontological endeavour with material and physical consequences. For Lenora Keeshig-Tobias, even the making of a “fictional cinema” about residential schooling had the very real outcome of perpetuating notions of Aboriginal passivity toward the colonial project. For the Secwepemc Cultural Society of the Kamloops Indian Band, the production of a text about Kamloops Indian Residential School was part of a practice of cultural and corporeal healing. The practices employed by the SCS stand in contrast to other literatures about the school that, in their method of theorization and production, produce distance from the school and associated schooling practices. The literatures published both about the histories of British Columbia and about the Province’s residential schools are ultimately practices of interpreting events, objects, and subjects and are most often produced by Non-Aboriginal peoples (Furnis 1999; Haig Brown 1988; Woods 1996). As practices, such interpretations need critical evaluation: Do they re-circulate dominant colonial ideologies?

Many of the epistemological practices pertaining to the Province’s colonial history are implicated in the production of colonial discourse. Although notable exceptions certainly exist, authors often do not clearly articulate how, by producing new interpretations that themselves are ontological, the authors might trouble colonial history or ground themselves in referential foundations beyond primarily Non-Aboriginal and colonial considerations of the Province’s histories. Recent works by Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peak (2000) and by Noel Castree (2004) make headway in disrupting a division or distance between what is “real” (e.g., ontological and/or material) and what is

interpreted or thought (e.g., epistemological and/or ideological). With reference to social processes, Kobayashi and Peak note “the material and the ideological...are not separate, nor are they alternative...but [are] rather two dimensions of human action, ontologically inseparable” (393). Cultural practices, including the production of texts and media purportedly representing or reporting on actual events, are actively and materially (re)producing bodies and places inscribed with social constructions of power, particularly of racism. Although Castree locates his argument within a critique of the economy and culture divide in human geography, he nevertheless argues convincingly that “concepts are every bit as real – that is, every bit as ontological – as the things they name” (216). Indeed, and this is particularly relevant to a critical engagement with existing considerations of the historical relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia, Castree notes both that “for [I]ndigenous people, a denial that they had – and might still have – distinct ways of life merely serves to perpetuate their marginalization”(222) and “geographers should take seriously their role in sustaining...the ideas...that help create the realities they purport only to mirror” (224).

Although published geographies and histories of colonialism in British Columbia have shifted over time to account for increasingly decolonizing methodological parameters, more attention must still be paid to the methods of producing historic geographic knowledge and the sources upon which that research relies to make its claims. Since it is clear that the production and dissemination of geographic knowledge is not irreducible from ontological practices of colonialism, there is a risk to interpreting the colonial geographies of the Province’s residential schools. How then does this research project make meaningful use of existing historiographies without contributing to the

project it is critiquing? New conceptualizations of the Province's histories that account for colonial British Columbia as discursively constructed and anchored in matrices of power and that acknowledge First Nations peoples as powerful agents offer some hope. Unfortunately, most existing and emerging literatures about the geographies and histories of British Columbia are still reliant on Non-Aboriginal texts and perspectives with little geographic attention to residential schools in the Province. These gaps call for new research. It is for this reason that I have worked with records produced by First Nations, although I am aware that they were often produced within places designed by Non-Aboriginal peoples, under the surveillance of Non-Aboriginal people. Also, many of the archives are operated primarily by Non-Aboriginal people. The methodology I use here is designed to avoid exclusive reliance on the records of Non-Aboriginal colonial presences in the Province. I focus instead on materials and documents produced by Aboriginal students and children. Such a practice, I think, goes some distance toward addressing Gayatri Spivak's (1993) challenge: Can the subaltern speak? If, as Spivak suggests, the subaltern cannot speak, in great part, because they are not listened to by dominant forces, it is imperative that, should we wish to address Spivak's challenge, we turn and attend carefully to the subalterns' primary utterances and expressions, making every effort to listen to what we might barely hear. If we do not do this, we risk simply (re)researching our own research and perspectives, a self-serving process involving not listening to those we most need to hear. Finally, by interpreting the geographies of residential schools in British Columbia with constant awareness that such interpretation is both ideological and ontological, this research aims to open understanding of colonialism in British Columbia as never fixed, always reinterpretable, a process in which even very small places may be

understood as powerful and unbounded material, social, and cultural agents within and through which practices of colonialism unfold in the Province.

CHAPTER 4:  
“THE INDIAN IN TRANSITION, THE INDIAN TODAY”<sup>4</sup>: SHIFTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN  
INDIAN SCHOOLING POLICIES IN CANADA

*Goodbye, Wild Indian, Goodbye.  
I know it's time  
for you to go.  
It's a good day, too,  
to go.  
I want you to know I always  
rooted for you –  
all those times.  
All those times when  
the cavalry and cowboys  
were kicking your ass  
and shooting you with their silver bullets.  
All those times the history  
books were saying  
you were doomed  
to die, to vanish  
from the face of the earth –  
that meant  
Mom and Dad and me too –  
my whole family, eh –  
And when you died, each time  
you died, up there  
on that silver screen  
and in the paperbacks  
and in the comics  
and on the airwaves,  
little bits of me  
died too.*

*(Lenore Keeshig-Tobais 2005: n.p.)*

In 1969, when Harold Cardinal wrote *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (a book that some have called a “landmark” publication in Canada),<sup>5</sup> he was not particularly concerned with producing a nuanced discussion about relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Instead, he wrote a polemic about the ubiquitous and unambiguous maltreatment of Indigenous peoples by colonial interlopers:

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<sup>4</sup> From a pamphlet of the same title, 1962, published by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the Indian Affairs Branch. Ottawa: Queen's Printer and the Government of Canada

<sup>5</sup> *The Unjust Society* has been characterized as “the first public recording of note to address aboriginal issues in Canada” (Ginsberg 1999) and continues in reprint over 35 years after its first release.

The history of Canada's Indians is a shameful chronicle of the white man's...deliberate trampling of Indian rights and his repeated betrayals of our trust. Generations of Indians have grown up behind a buckskin curtain of indifference, ignorance and, all too often, plain bigotry. (1)

Cardinal viewed Canada as a nation built on deception. He argued that all relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples were predicated on cheating Indians:

The truth of the matter is that Canadian Indians simply got swindled. Our forefathers got taken by slick-talking, fork-tongued cheats. It wasn't their fault. Our forefathers, with possibly a few cynical exceptions, never understood the white man. They had fought battles, known victory and defeat, but treachery was new to them. They were accustomed to trusting another man's word, even an enemy's. (39)

Since Cardinal's publication, other Indigenous theorists have troubled Cardinal's clean dichotomy of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples and have questioned the worth of romanticizing or universalizing Aboriginal worldviews (Borrows 2000). Cardinal's constructions, informed by a political context of the late 1960s and theorists like Franz Fanon (1965), may have been necessary to his principal aim of illustrating the short-shrift Aboriginals received in colonial relationships. Federal Government's Indian education policies were central illustrations of his argument about the duplicitous nature of colonial efforts in Canada:

Indians sometimes think that if the government authorities became convinced they could solve the Indian problem by purchasing gallons of white paint and painting us all white, they would not hesitate to try. In fact, government's education policy almost seems aimed in that direction....the white man apparently believes that education is a tool for the implementation of his design of assimilation. (51)

Notwithstanding his damnation of white man's education, Cardinal did not oppose education per se. This makes sense, as Aboriginal peoples have been educating

themselves and one another since long before the arrival of Non-Aboriginal peoples (Battiste 1995; Greenwood 2005). Cardinal argued that education, indeed all systems of pedagogy and curriculum involving Indigenous peoples in Canada, has to be reworked and reclaimed by Aboriginal peoples to “transfer power from the people responsible for the administration of education to the people whose lives will be determined by it” (51). What Cardinal sought was a shift in educational policy and discursive structuring pertaining to Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Notwithstanding his characterization of the unrelenting violence that has been colonialism in Canada, and his view of contemporary education as fundamentally assimilationist, Cardinal saw the possibility of change. This change could not occur without broad, particularly Non-Aboriginal, recognition of the history of colonial education in Canada.

Residential schooling has a long history in Canada. In 1620, the Récollets established a boarding-type school in Quebec (Carney 1995; Miller 1997). By the 1750s in New France (Quebec), the Jesuits, the Ursulines, the Notre Dame Sisters and Sulpician Fathers, and the Sisters of Charity Montreal (the Grey Nuns) were all working, albeit with differing teaching and educational goals, in Aboriginal education (Carney 1995). Despite a lack of formal or unified government-sanctioned pedagogical goals, early schools were motivated to impart Eurocolonial values, spirituality, and thought to Aboriginal students. Motivated by such concerns, pre-Confederation schools were operated in both New Brunswick and Upper Canada. In New Brunswick, a British philanthropic society established Anglican Indian day schools during the late 1700s. Due to failure in the apprenticeship program and allegations of sexual exploitation of students, the Sussex Vale School project in New Brunswick was closed by 1826. In Upper Canada

from 1819, the Anglican, Protestant, Methodist, and Catholic churches were all involved in schooling, in some cases partnering with Mohawk communities or Aboriginal teachers converted to Christianity. Schools of all denominations were concerned with converting Aboriginal people to Christianity. The result of Christianization would be a state of civilization, something that Aboriginal peoples were fundamentally understood to lack. In efforts to civilize, curriculum focused on manual labour training to prepare pupils for integration into colonial society and, with very few exceptions, instruction took place in English or French, as opposed to Aboriginal languages. Although relatively consistent in curricular intent and language of instruction, the schools of Upper Canada differed in form, especially between day or boarding institutions. For instance, Egerton Ryerson, superintendent of schools for Upper Canada between 1842 and 1876 and a past Methodist minister, argued that schools for Aboriginal students should always be boarding institutions to separate them from their communities and from non-boarding, white students (Carney 1995; Miller 2001). In contrast, the Jesuits who operated Roman Catholic schools for Aboriginal children in Upper Canada from 1843, argued for some integration of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students in day schools. In western Canada, in response to increasing clashes between Aboriginal people, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), missionaries were recruited by the companies to introduce Indian schools that would civilize Aboriginal peoples, through Christianity. By 1820, John West, an Anglican Minister, had established a day school for Aboriginal children to civilize the population (Carney 1995). Throughout much of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Aboriginal schooling progressed in fits and starts across the west and north. Although there were pedagogical difference between schools, usually associated with



denominational differences, assimilation through civilization in the form of Christianity remained a fundamental tenet. In the 1850s, the Roman Catholic Church entered the educational field in the west and assumed a dominant role in residential schooling in British Columbia, administering ten of the eighteen schools in the Province; one of the last residential schools to close in Canada was the Catholic St. Mary's School, which was open until 1984. The other eight schools were operated in partnership arrangements between the Federal Government of Canada and one of the Methodist, United, or Anglican Churches.

Since the publication of *The Unjust Society*, other Indigenous theorists have written about the role of education in colonial projects (Churchill 2004; Fournier and Crey 1997; Battiste and Semaganis 2002). The conclusions are stark. Linda Goulet and Yvonne McLeod (2002) have argued that residential schooling's racist foundations continue to deeply influence the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada today: "Residential schools, with their isolation and imposition of foreign languages, culture, and ideologies were extremely damaging in severing [healthy and inter-generational] connections" (356). According to others, the intergenerational effects of residential schooling continue, with devastating outcomes, to play out in everyday lives of Indigenous peoples'. The outcomes include increased rates of suicide among Aboriginal peoples, high rates of family violence, and elevated rates of substance abuse as compared to Non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Moreissette 1994). Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Indigenous peoples remain alienated and marginalized within school-based education systems, particularly when those programs are not designed, implemented, or operated by Aboriginal peoples. This is reflected in lower levels of high

school completion and post-secondary entrance and completion, and increased rates of school disassociation at all levels and grades. These factors result in, among other things, increased levels of violence, poverty, and interaction with the criminal justice system (Canadian Population Health Initiative 2004). Variability exists in these realities, particularly because there is great variety in the conditions facing Indigenous peoples across Canada (Alfred and Corntassle 2005). In British Columbia, some First Nations demonstrate great socio-cultural capacity, resulting in high levels of school engagement and educational advancement (see for instance Chandler and Lalonde 2003 & forthcoming). However, some Indigenous theorists argue that contemporary schooling structures, like other Non-Aboriginal-government-operated institutions, are consciously or unconsciously designed to divest Indigenous peoples of their cultural identity, thereby producing a passive and easily assimilated population (Alfred 1999 & 2007). These observations are salient when juxtaposed with prior Indian policy in Canada through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, particularly educational policy.

Broadly speaking, Indigenous peoples have a difficult relationship with Non-Aboriginal systems of education. The particular nature of those difficulties has changed with time. Officials at the helm of Indian policy in Canada have differed. The intents of Indian policies have also shifted. This changeability may also have been strategic:

Colonial discourses were effective precisely because they were enormously flexible and adaptable. The tensions and ambiguities of colonial representation speak of a less monolithic but no less problematic colonial project characterized by unequal exchanges and partial understanding. (Nash 2002: 221)

The shifts in Indian policy, and the changing colonial visions of Indigenous peoples, formed the context of residential schools in British Columbia. Although education is a

provincial domain in Canada, Indian education, like Aboriginal peoples and lands, has always been the domain of the Federal Government in British Columbia:

The British North America Act vested in the Government of Canada the jurisdiction to legislate with respect to the Indians and the lands set aside for their use. The logical consequence was the Indian Act...Development of school legislation contained in the Indian Act reversed a consistent pre-Confederation acceptance of responsibility for Indian education by the provincial or local governments rather than the central authority...Despite many changes over the past 100 years the Indians' relationship to the Provincial system of education still remains vague and tenuous. (Weller 1965: 1–9)

In documenting the histories of policies within which British Columbia residential schools operated, I focus predominantly on Federal Government policies, captured in government acts and reports that in some way relate to Indians and Indian education. Federal policies towards Indigenous peoples in Canada were directed toward certain considerations: civilization, conversion, and assimilation of those understood as aberrant to colonial norms. A secondary, often sublimated, outcome of these considerations was the colonial settlement and occupation of Aboriginal lands. These Federal preoccupations are evident in some of the earliest documents addressing the Indian question in Canada.

#### **4.a. “Effectual Means of Ameliorating the Condition of the Indians”: The Bagot Commission and Early Indian Policies in Canada**

In 1845, one of the first documents to address comprehensively the Indian question in what became Canada was presented to the Legislative Assembly of the then Province of Canada. The *Report on the Affairs of Indians in Canada* was a summary of existing British imperial thought and practices about Indians in the Province of Canada. It included reference to most Imperial investigations into the affairs of Indians undertaken

in the colonies, including synopses of the 1670 instructions issued by King Charles II concerning the “spirit of the British Government toward the Aborigines of [the] continent” (2). The report had been commissioned on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1842, by Sir Charles Bagot, Governor General of British North America, who “constituted and appointed” three commissioners (Rawson William Rawson, John Davidson, and William Hepburn) to “inquire into the Affairs of the Indians in Canada and the application of the annual grant of money made by the Imperial Parliament for the benefit of that Race” (Canada, Province of, 1845: 1). Their findings have become known as the Bagot Commission Report, so named to represent the government of the time (Miller 2001). The three commissioners were charged with offering a synopsis of the relations between Canada and Indians and with suggesting any changes for future relationships, particularly as those relationships were to be undertaken by the Department of Indian Affairs. The document provides insight into colonial views of Indigenous peoples following the 1763 Royal Proclamation and leading up to 1867 Confederation and the signing of the 1876 *Indian Act*, particularly as those views pertained to schooling.

Commissionaires Rawson, Davidson, and Hepburn wrote in a manner in keeping with a 19<sup>th</sup> Century imperialist ideal about the character of Aboriginal peoples. The government could neither fully trust nor entirely ignore Indians. Indians embodied the possibility of a noble subject, the threat of unrelenting and uncontrollable violence, and a natural tendency toward laziness and ineptitude. However the commissionaires were quick to point out that, despite the ungrateful Indian characteristics, a moral and paternalistic sentiment pervaded government considerations about them:

The spirit of the British Government...was at an early date characterized by the same forbearance and kindness that still continues to be extended to them

[Aboriginal peoples]....The history of this period afforded abundant evidence of their enterprise and prowess as warriors, with many remarkable instances of heroism and magnanimity, and no less striking examples of bloody revenge, and savage cruelty . . . . (Canada, Province of, 1845: 3–4)

The commissioners went on to note:

To these [negative characteristics] must be added the natural indolence of the Indian temperament, which, in the absence of the excitement of savage life, keeps many of his race in a state of inertness, destructive alike to the energy and health of body and mind. In his native state the Indian is simple-minded, generous, proud and energetic; his craftiness is exhibited chiefly in the chase and in war. He is generally docile, and possesses a lively and happy disposition. (Canada, Province of, 1845: 15)

Although they supported assimilating and civilizing Indigenous peoples, the commissioners were sceptical of colonial projects that might result in a half-civilized Indigenous person. That state, they argued, was worse than the natural state of the uncivilized Aboriginal person: “In his half-civilized state, he is indolent to excess, intemperate, suspicious, cunning, covetous, and addicted to lying and fraud” (15). The commissioners argued that a defining aspect of Indigenous peoples, namely their savagery, was predicated on a close connection with nature: the Indian character and biological makeup were the outcome of an unmediated proximity to wild and unsettled land. Questions of territory and the innate nature of Indigenous peoples were intertwined. Colonial dreams of Indian assimilation, desire for land, and concerns about territorial expansion and security of territory shaped colonial perceptions about the Indian.

The commissioners recognized long-standing tensions between government land policies and Aboriginal acquiescence to those policies. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 “furnished [Aboriginal peoples] with a fresh guarantee for the possession of their

hunting grounds and the protection of the Crown” (4). The commissioners observed such promises were taken seriously by Aboriginal peoples: “This document, the Indians look upon as their Charter. They have preserved a copy of it, to the present time, and have referred to it on several occasions in their representation to the Government” (4). Furthermore, the commissioners were sympathetic with government reluctance about “...dispossess[ing] the Indians of their lands, without entering into an agreement with them and rendering some compensation” (5). The difficulty remained, however, that compensation was costly, and sometimes Indians were loath to leave their lands, even with compensation. Indians took seriously the espoused position that unfair dispossession of lands was not a fundamental goal of the government. Such government statements, and the seriousness with which Indians took them, challenged colonial territorial expansion. Thus, from a governmental position just cause for dispossession of territory was needed. The government anchored such just cause in the character of Indians: “The predatory and revengeful habits of the Indians rendered their removal desirable, [and thus] the British Government made successive agreement with them for the surrender of portions of their lands” (5). The commissioners were still at pains, however, to justify colonial expansion:

[Land] transactions have been made the subject of reproach to the Government, and ground for subsequent claims on behalf of the Indians [so] it may be proper here to offer a few remarks on the subject. It has been alleged that these agreements were unjust, as dispossessing the natives of their ancient territories, and extortionate, as rendering a very inadequate compensation for the lands surrendered. If, however, the Government had not made arrangement for the voluntary surrender of the lands, the white settlers would gradually have taken possession of them, without offering any compensations whatsoever; it would, at

that time, have been impossible to resist the natural laws of society, and to guard the Indian Territory against the encroachment of the whites.... The Government, therefore, adopted the most humane and the most just course, in inducing the Indians, by offers of compensation, to remove quietly to more distant hunting grounds, or to confine themselves within more limited reserves... (5)

In order to explain colonial agendas of territory expansion and the subsequent confinement of Indians onto small parcels of land, the commissioners turned to “the natural laws of society,” according to which the constructed *savage yet childlike Aboriginals* would lose their land to heartless settlers unless government first dispossessed them. The commissioners employed a “for-their-own-good” argument to justify expropriation. For the authors of early Federal Government considerations about Indians, then, discursive constructions of the Indian were intrinsically linked to more material and grounded practices of territorial expansion.

The 1845 Bagot Commission report also contains links between colonial education for Aboriginal people and their dispossession from their lands. The Government, the commissioners argued, had a moral and protectionist duty to ensure Aboriginal peoples become acclimatized to Eurocolonial expectations of civilization, including agricultural proficiency and settlement on delineated, privately owned properties. The commissioners did not deviate from long-standing beliefs that land was a component of transformation, and that education was the most efficient means of inscribing traits of civility upon Indians. The commissioners lauded the logic of an 1828 report that had been prepared by Sir John Kemp for the Government of the Province of Canada:

It appears that the most effectual means of ameliorating the condition of the Indians, of promoting their religious improvement and education, and of

eventually relieving His Majesty's Government from the expense of the Indian Department are: 1<sup>st</sup> to collect the Indians in considerable numbers, and to settle them in villages, with a due portion of land for the cultivation and support. 2<sup>nd</sup>. To make such provision for their religious improvement, education, and instruction in husbandry as circumstances may from time to time require...(Kemp 1828 quoted in *Report of the Affairs...* 1845: 7)

Just a few years prior to the Bagot Commission report, similar sentiments were circulating in British Columbia. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Reverend Tate lauded the efforts of fellow missionaries, particularly when those efforts linked transformation of Indian character with the transformation of landscapes and material environments. For Tate, ideals about transforming Indians within Christian schools were conflated with rebuilding place and rebuilding Aboriginal bodies, cultures, emotions, and souls:

The frame of a large Indian house was bought...[t]his was intended for church and schoolhouse until something better could be built. It was Brother Crosby's privilege to see the wonderful development of this work [in Port Simpson], when *all that belonged to heathenism was uprooted, and the old Indian lodge gave place* to tasty little cottages, with fine streets paved with sand and shells, which the women carried up from the beach as their part in beautifying their surroundings, counting it all joy...consider that in the days of darkness they [sic] were compelled to be the burden bearers – the veritable 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' (my emphasis, Tate, c1830: 6).

Civilizing the Indian, then, was intrinsically linked to a transformation of territory and place. Such a conceptualization ultimately linked colonial education with colonial control over place and land. The Bagot Commission details how religious conversion, through education, led to civilizing that, when complete, led to pacified agriculturally inclined and settled Aboriginal peoples. In missionary publications about British Columbia, published just 15 years prior to the *Bagot Commission Report*, colonial subjects wrote



about the re-construction of old heathen places, and control over those places by colonial peoples, as synonymous with the re-education and Christianization of Aboriginal peoples. Education was linked to the production of an Indian who conformed to a colonial imaginary. This newly produced Indian would, in turn, comply with the more material colonial concerns about territorial control, land ownership, and the governability of Aboriginal bodies.

#### **4.b To “Have Them Constantly in Hand”: Acts that Governed Indians in Canada**

Governing Aboriginal peoples in Canada, as a policy concern, officially became a Federal domain when the *British North America Act* was passed on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1867. Responsibility for affairs relating to Indians fell to the Department of Secretary of State for the Provinces and, consequently, the Secretary of State for Canada was also the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs. The *British North America Act* focused on three issues: Canada’s relationship with and responsibility toward Britain; the relationships between the new nation and the Provinces of which it was composed; and the legislative powers of the Federal Government in relation to Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) and the constitutions of those four Provinces. Exclusive powers of the Federal and Provincial Governments were all specifically spoken to in the *Act*, including agriculture and immigration, the courts, taxation and debt, the railway, and education. However, issues of Indian education, assimilation, and territory were not identified, per se, in the *Act*, with the exception of Schedule 3: Section VI, which clarified the Powers of Parliament and stated “Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians” fell within the Legislative Authority of the Parliament of Canada as opposed to provincial domain. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1871, when the *Act* was

amended to include and account for the Province of British Columbia, Indians and Indian land and territory were identified quite specifically:

The charge of the Indians, and the trusteeship and management of the lands reserved for the use and benefit, shall be assumed by the Dominion Government, and a policy as liberal as that hitherto pursued by the British Columbia Government shall be continued by the Dominion Government after the Union. To carry out such policy, tracts of land of such extent as it has hitherto been the practise of the British Columbia Government to appropriate for that purpose, shall from time to time be conveyed by the Local Government to the Dominion Government in trust for the use and benefit of the Indians on application of the Dominion Government; and in case of disagreement between the two Governments respecting the quantity of such tracts of land to be so granted, the matter shall be referred for the decision of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. (Government of Canada, *British North America Act, The Province of British Columbia – Enactment No. 4*: 1871: n.p.)

The 1871 amendment's curious wording highlights tensions between the Federal Government and British Columbia. While the tensions coalesced around the new Province's refusal to negotiate treaties and reserve lands in the manner dictated by the Federal Government, the wording also underscores more generally a Federal/Provincial rift in the area of Indian policy. Those jurisdictional tensions did not abate over time and, consequently, federally operated residential schools in British Columbia existed in what may be understood as a contested policy environment. Five years after British Columbia joined Confederation, the 1876 *Indian Act* was passed and, although Provincial and Federal Government disagreements remained with reference to Indian questions in British Columbia, residential schools in the Province came for the first time to be governed by a cohesive set of policies.

The 1876 *Indian Act*, building on incarnations from 1868 and 1869, consolidated

preexisting Federal policies about Indians, the concerns of which often focused on Indian identity, on sorting out questions of Indian claim to land, and on managing the financial burden that Indians represented to the Federal Government. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1876, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs David Liard introduced the new Bill that became the 1876 *Indian Act*. Its principal aim was “to consolidate the several laws relating to Indians now on the statute books of the Dominion and the old Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada” (Liard 1876 quoted in Leslie and Maguire 1978: 61). The new Act focused specifically on: defining the Indian; how to recognize, protect, manage, and arrange for sale of reserves and associated lands; payments of monies to support and benefit Indians (including monies to support schools attended primarily by Indians); elections of chiefs and Band Councils; taxation and debt issues surrounding Indians; the control of intoxicants; and ongoing considerations of enfranchising Indians (Armitage 1995: Leslie and Maguire 1978). Clearly embedded within the 1876 *Indian Act* were echoes of its predecessor, the 1869 *Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians*, an Act that itself represented a shift from an earlier focus on the gradual civilization of the Indian to the gradual enfranchisement of the Indian (Daugherty and Madill 1980). The purpose of the *Enfranchisement Act* was to standardize how Aboriginal people could legally possess land and territory, either on or off a reserve, to which they would have full claim and ownership separate from claims granted by Indian reserve lands:

The Governor General of Council may, on the report of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs order the issue of Letters of Patent granting to any Indian who from the degree of civilization to which he has attained, and the character for integrity and sobriety which he bears, appears to be a safe and suitable person to become a proprietor of land, a life estate in the land which has been or may be allotted to him with the Reserved belonging to the tribe, band or

body of which is a member....Every such Indian shall, before the issue of the letters patent mentioned...declare to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, the name and surname by which he wishes to be enfranchised and thereafter known, and on his receiving such letters patent, in such name and surname, he shall be held to be also enfranchised...and from the date of such letters patent, the provision of any Act or law making and distinction between the legal rights and liabilities of Indians and those of Her Majesty's other subjects shall cease to apply to any Indian, his wife or minor children as aforesaid, so declared to be enfranchised, who shall no longer be deemed Indians within the meaning of the laws relating to Indians...(Government of Canada, *Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians*, CAP VI: 1869)

Because the rights of Indigenous peoples to land and territory were linked to Aboriginal identity, defining the Indian was crucial from the perspective of the Federal Government. *The Enfranchisement Act* settled on blood quantum measures, legislating that a person of “one-fourth Indian blood” could claim Indian identity. Unlike later amendments to the *Indian Act*, however, early versions of the *Enfranchisement Act* stipulated that while overcoming Indianness was desirable it was not intrinsically linked with separating Aboriginal peoples from each other, geographically, genealogically, or generationally. Instead, the transformation was envisioned as possible even if Indigenous peoples remained in their own communities:

...Natives living in the older Provinces who have gone to school...who are educated, who associate with white men, who are acquainted with all the principles of civilization, who carry out all the practices of civilization, who have accumulated round themselves property, who have good houses, and well furnished houses, who educate their children, who contribute to the public treasuries in the same way as whites do, should [one day] possess the franchise....They [would] carry out all the obligations of civilized men. (MacDonald 1885 quoted in Leslie and Maguire 1978)

The *Enfranchisement Act* did stipulate, though, that the Dominion could nullify the claim of Aboriginal women and their children to Indianness, thus breaking any matrilineal claims made or held by Aboriginal women:

. . . any Indian woman marrying any other than an Indian, shall cease to be an Indian within the meaning of the Act, nor shall the children issue of such marriage be considered as Indians within the meaning of this Act [and] any Indian woman marrying an Indian of any other tribe, band, or body shall cease to be a member of the tribe, and or body to which she formerly belonged and become a member of the tribe, band or body of which her husband is a member, and the children, issue of this marriage, shall belong to their father's tribe only. (Government of Canada, *Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians*, CAP VI: 1869: n.p.)

Consideration of enfranchisement, as a final marker of full assimilation, and the method of its attainment for Indians, became a significant aspect of most policies concerning Indian education, policies that in turn were predicated on considerations of assimilating and civilizing the savage. The *Enfranchisement Act*'s focus on Indian identity, and corresponding links between character, territory, and claim to land, carried forward into future Federal Government policies, many of which had direct implications for the guiding principals behind colonial education.

In January 1879, three years after the passing of the 1876 *Indian Act* and in part to develop education as a means of assimilating and civilizing Aboriginal peoples, Nicholas Flood Davin, a writer and newspaper journalist, was commissioned by John A MacDonald to investigate schooling methods for Indians. Davin was asked to investigate Indian education south of the border, particularly the merits of day versus boarding schools. That the Federal Government felt the need to commission Davin highlights an increasing frustration about the failure of assimilation. The *Davin Report*, then, offers

insight into the development of 19<sup>th</sup> Century colonial anxieties about Aboriginal peoples, about colonial imaginaries concerning Aboriginal peoples, and about how these anxieties and imaginaries translated into policy imperatives concerning Indian education in Canada. After approximately three months in the United States, Davin was convinced that boarding schools, as opposed to day schools, could best civilize Indigenous peoples. He argued that the primary hindrance to civilization was the “call of the wigwam,” the influence of other Indigenous peoples. Consequently, David recommended that Federal Government promote boarding school as the educational model for Indians, particularly children, who were understood as susceptible to assimilative strategies:

The experience of the United States is the same as our own as far as the adult Indian is concerned. Little can be done with him. He can be taught to do a little farming and at stock-raising and to dress in a more civilized manner but that is all. The child, again, who goes to a day school learns little, and what little he learns is soon forgotten when his tastes are trained at home, and his inherited aversion to toil is in no way combated....If anything is to be done with the Indian we must catch him very young. The children must be kept constantly in the circle of civilized conditions...(Davin 1879: 2)

Davin’s vision of Indian assimilation, not unlike the visions that predated his work, was spatialized. He anchored his rhetoric in place and envisioned a child’s personality as shaped by proximity to adverse forces of family and community. Consequently, he suggested that the only solution was a complete immersion within a new and civilized environment.

Davin envisioned strategies that (re)placed the bodies and roles of Aboriginal mothers with those of colonial and religious educators, which in turn were made material in the form of residential schools. To support his stance, Davin drew on the experience of

an American boarding school principal who observed of his Indian charges that, without colonial schooling quite literally supplanting Aboriginal mothering with civilized mothering, the children were at constant risk of recidivism to savagery:

Hitherto...young men have been boarded and clothed and instructed, but in time they were off to the hunting ground. The plan now is to take young children, give them the care of a mother, and have them constantly in hand. Such care must go *pari passu* with religious training. (12)

By 1879 in Canada, then, the Federal Government had in hand a report calling for the state, through colonial education, to break cultural and biological bonds among Aboriginal peoples. The colonial imagination concerning Indians and prospective educational solutions to the Indian problem was beginning to shift. There was a growing sense that only a full severance of children from their families and communities would result in assimilated Indians. When read against wording in previous government policies, including the *Enfranchisement Act* and the 1876 *Indian Act*, Davin's recommendations represent a conceptual turning point. Whereas past policies and perspectives had certainly promoted the need to civilize and assimilate Indians, there had been a sense this could be done by, for instance, containing them together in communities and encouraging land and agricultural cultivation. Davin argued against existing 19<sup>th</sup> Century rhetoric that allowed for a simple settlement of Indians, on their own lands and often separate from White-colonial society. Instead, he promoted cultural rupture premised on a material and spatialized set of practices that would disaggregate Aboriginal peoples from one another and sever generational and genealogical links to Aboriginality. Residential schools were understood and promoted by Davin as physical interventions into the family and community structures of Indigenous people. Based on his

apprehension of a successful approach to Indigenous issues in the United States, Davin advocated a Canadian education model premised on “aggressive civilization” (Davin 1879: 1). This shift was relatively subtle, particularly as it remained anchored in assumptions about the need to assimilate Aboriginal peoples, the need to settle them onto agricultural lands, and the imperative of correcting what were understood as a plethora of cultural and biological traits that colluded to result in an inferior and problematic race. Davin’s report, and its suggestion of “aggressive civilization” through the spatial and curricular severing of Aboriginal peoples from their families, communities, and cultures, in many ways encapsulates the tone of Indian education policy in Canada from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Despite Davin’s suggestions for aggressive civilizing through education, the Government of Canada continued to experience significant challenges in compelling Aboriginal people to send their children to colonial schools. The Federal Government sought to rectify this challenge by consistently revising the *Indian Act* to strengthen the policies around schooling as an assimilative practice. In 1880, to further standardize Indian policies, and with the hope that streamlining bureaucracy might increase the success of Indian policy, the Indian Branch of the Federal Government was transformed into the stand-alone Department of Indian Affairs. The Department was organized into two broad streams: inside service, comprised of bureaucrats and civil servants; and outside service, including Indian agents and others who worked across Canada to implement and monitor adherence to the *Indian Act* (Titely 1986). That same year, an amendment to the *Indian Act* made Indian schooling a responsibility of the Department of Indian Affairs. In 1881, the *Indian Act* was amended again to bestow upon Indian Agents



the power of justices of the peace, thereby granting legal powers to people enforcing the *Act* in the communities. The powers included forcing children into educational institutions. By 1894, provisions were written into the *Act* that allowed the Governor-General-in-Council to regulate the schooling of Aboriginal children and required them to attend schools as deemed fit by the Federal Government. By 1920, the *Indian Act* had once again been amended, this time to criminalize failing to send a child to school (Armitage 1995; Titley 1986). This policy was specific to Aboriginal peoples – no such criminalization was applied to Non-Aboriginal Canadians. In 1927, the *Act* was once more amended, again tightening the language concerning compulsory attendance at schools, and vesting the Governor-in-Council with the ability to establish schools on Band and Reserve land, even without the approval of the local Chief and Council. By 1927, then, the *Act* stated

Every Indian child between the ages of seven and fifteen who is physically able shall attend such day, industrial or boarding school as may be designated by the Superintendent General for the full periods which such a school is open each year...Any parent, guardian or person with whom an Indian child is residing who fails to cause such child, being between the ages aforesaid, to attend school...[is] liable on summary conviction before a justice of the peace or Indian agent to a fine of not more than two dollars and costs, or imprisonment for a period not exceeding ten days or both, and such a child may be attested without a warrant and conveyed to school by the truant officer....The Governor-in-Council may take the land of an Indian held under location ticket or otherwise, for school purposes, upon payment to such Indian of the compensation agreed upon, or in case of disagreement...in such manner as the Superintendent General may direct. (*Indian Act* 1927, Chapter 98)

In the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and into the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, then, regulations became increasingly stringent with reference to Aboriginal students and

colonial education. Parents were criminalized for failing to send their children to school. Children could be arrested without warrant and returned to the confines of a school. Land and territory could be procured in order to establish educational facilities, a policy that once again underscored linkages between Indian education and land appropriation. The Federal Government's agenda of colonial education reached into every aspect of Indigenous peoples' lives, including their families and communities, their cultures and their lands.

Duncan Campbell Scott's tenure with the Department of Indian Affairs corresponds with the tabling of Nicolas Flood Davin's Report and the substantive amendments to the *Indian Act* made throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century to strengthen the Federal Government's control on Indian education. The ideological shifts in Indian policy from one of civilizing and protecting to one of cultural destruction premised on forced separation and relocation of children are, in many respects, embodied in Duncan Campbell Scott and his ascendancy within the Department of Indian Affairs. Indeed, although Indian Affairs in Canada had struggled for over 150 years to address Indian issues in Canada, Scott's rise to prominence signalled an increased focus on the issue of Indian education. Scott was an employee of DIA for over 50 years, working his way up from an initial posting as clerk in 1879 to the position of Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs by 1923. This position was the highest non-elected position one could hold with the Department, and Scott remained in it until his retirement from government in 1932. Scott represented a mixed and complicated set of characteristics. His rise through the DIA ranks has been attributed to financial prudence, accounting and economic caution, a sympathy for Imperial ideals, an ability to work across Liberal/Conservative divides, and

a well-developed set of connections across the nation's capital, including those associated with his status as a poet and "man of letters" (Berger 1970; Milner 2006; Titley 1986). The malleability that Scott embodied personally and politically, which in many ways allowed him to achieve great success as a civil servant, was not, however, evident in his understanding of Aboriginal peoples. His approach was anchored in stern and unchanging sentiments about the negative biological and cultural character of Indians. His writings demonstrate an unwavering sense that Aboriginals were inevitably dying out and that their remnants ought to be fully assimilated and enfranchised within the Dominion of Canada.<sup>6</sup>

Although Scott worked hard to address the challenge of Indian education in Canada, he was confronted with a series of difficulties. Aboriginal peoples actively avoided sending their children to any and all colonial schools, often citing poor health environments and a lack of opportunities for family contact (Kelm 1995; Titley 1968). The ecumenical organizations that were partnered with the Federal Government in the operations of colonial schools lobbied the government consistently for additional funding, which Scott adamantly opposed. By the mid-1880s, as chief accountant for the DIA, he was influential in arguing that funding to Indian schools should be based on a fixed per capita grant, independent of the expenditures cited by churches regarding the cost of educating students; this plan was conceived specifically to reduce government expenditures. Spurred by a series of reports concerning fiscal mismanagement and overexpenditure by upper-level management in schools, coupled with escalating complaints by Aboriginal people worried about the health and safety of their children,

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<sup>6</sup> For examples of this in Duncan Campbell Scott's writing, his 1926 poem "Indian Place Names" is insightful.

Scott proposed in 1904 that efforts be made to “reconstruct the whole school system” (Scott quoted in Titley, 1986: 82). By 1923, with Scott ensconced in the position of Deputy Superintendent of Education, the terms “boarding” and “industrial” schools were phased out, in preference for the more universal term “residential school.” Scott’s restructuring was not undertaken with the interests of Aboriginal children, or in response to his advisors. Dr. P.H. Bryce, the Secretary of the Ontario Provincial Board of Health in 1903 and the Chief Medical Health Officer for the Government of Canada by 1907, advised Scott that unsanitary health conditions and the prevalence of preventable diseases on reserves and more specifically in Indian schools were unacceptable, and that they could be directly linked to high rates of mortality in Aboriginal children (Milloy 1999: Titley 1986: Trocme and Blackstock 2005). In 1913, concerned by Bryce’s negative reports about the institutions, Scott abolished the position of medical inspector of the schools “for reasons of economy” (quoted in Titley 1986: 87). Furthermore, although he saw the financial merits of day schools and had been made aware of their relative health benefits compared with boarding/industrial/residential schools, Scott remained ideologically committed to the latter. Of such importance was schooling in Scott’s vision of civilizing Aboriginal peoples that, in his final reports prior to retirement in 1932, he made specific mention of his educational efforts, noting that between 1912 and 1932 Indian student enrolment in schools had increased by 51%. These increases were particularly dramatic for students attending residential schools: Residential school enrolment increased from just over 3,000 students to over 8,000, an increase of 110%, during Scott’s final years with the Department of Indian Affairs (Titley 1986: 91).

In the post-war years and after Scott’s retirement, between the late 1940s and the

early 1970s, the Federal Government and the Department of Indian Affairs underwent more shifts with reference to ideas about Indian policies, including schooling, and they undertook a series of reviews about Indian issues. By the late 1940s residential schooling was still proving unsuccessful, despite years of concentrated efforts, which included strengthening the *Indian Act*, enacting increasingly more vigorous measures on the ground to force children into schools, building more schools, enrolling more children in the schools, and expending more Federal dollars. Two other shifts affected the nature of residential schools (Milloy 1999). First, the schools were increasingly places of child welfare. Ideologies about government interventions into the lives of Aboriginal families shifted slightly from arguments of civilizing and assimilating to a rationale of saving. Second, although the Federal Government began to argue the worth of closing Federally operated residential schools, churches and some First Nations Bands were averse to closing them (Milloy 1999). By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the practices of segregated, Federally driven education programs for Indians were being reconsidered. Nevertheless, many of the implicit assumptions about the goal of educating Indians, and the discursive constructions about this goal, remained consistent within the *Indian Act*. In the late 1940s, a Special Joint Committee of the Federal Senate and House of Commons convened to evaluate the *Indian Act* and the general administration of Indian affairs in Canada. Between 1946 and 1948, the Committee heard from Aboriginal organizations, representatives of Indian Bands, and peoples and groups categorized as generally “interested in the welfare of Indians” (Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1971: 1). In 1951, the result of the Committee was a revamping of the *Indian Act*, prior to which “the last complete revision of the *Indian Act* [had been] in 1880” (Indian Affairs

and Northern Development 1971: 1). The 1951 revisions, however, were quickly altered. The Department of Indian Affairs held another commission between 1959 and 1961 resulting in additional modernization of the *Act*. By 1961, the *Act* had been reconfigured so that Indian schooling was no longer situated at the beginning of the legislation. The 1961 Joint Parliamentary Committee also noted that “education is the key to the full realization by Indians of self-determination and self-government” (Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1971: 14). This certainly represents a shift from education understood as primarily a civilizing and assimilating tool, although the committee quickly followed with the observation that “Indians generally, and parents in particular, are recognizing more and more the need for a good education as a basis for economic and social development.” This latter wording retains assimilative perspectives in reference to the goals of education and suggests the fortitude of such ideologies. Furthermore, while the 1961 Joint Parliamentary Committee acknowledged the need for increased integration of Aboriginal students into provincial schools and the possibility of Aboriginal self-determination, the wording in these areas remained cautious:

[A]t present Indian pupils are governed by relevant sections of the Indian Act. However, it has been suggested that in these matters Indian pupils *might* be made subjects of the same rules and procedures as non-Indian pupils. It has also been pointed out that the choice of the school to be attended should rest with parents *to a greater extent* than it does at present (my emphasis, Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1971: 14).

As late as 1961, then, policies continued to reflect the desire of the Canadian government to remain invested in Indian education. Suggested amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1961 did hint at the rights of Aboriginal parents over the schooling of their children and the divestment of the Department of Indian Affairs from education. However Indian

education remained constructed as a means of integrating the Indian through economic and social development.

Other persistent ideologies about Aboriginal people, particularly their identities, stayed embedded in the 1961 suggested revisions to the *Indian Act*. Referring to sections of the *Act* that dealt with Definition and Registration of Indians (Sections 5 through 17), the authors wrote:

It has been suggested also that [those sections of the *Act*] in some instances [are] contrary to the custom of those Indians who follow the matriarchal system, where the child always follows the status of the mother. Accordingly, the suggestion has been made that the illegitimate children of an Indian woman should be eligible for membership [in a Band and thus recognized by the *Indian Act*] regardless of who the father might be. (Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1971: 3).

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century the Department of Indian Affairs recognized that the economic and financial disenfranchisement of Aboriginal peoples was not simply a natural outcome of Indian character. Instead, explanations turned to broader social and spatial constructs. These included, for instance, the recognition that Indians faced economic marginalization not simply because of their Indianness, but because they lived on reserves and, consequently, had limited or no access to credit lines. Indians in Canada were banned from pledging reserve land as collateral for loans to anyone other than a fellow Indian. It thus proved almost impossible to access credit lines, mortgages, and other financial possibilities available to all other Canadians not living under the strictures of the *Indian Act*. Consequently, DIA cautiously proposed new wording of the *Indian Act*, recognizing that:

A system of band and/or government guarantee of loans from lending institutions might be possible, as a substitute for the type of security normally required by the

lender. This and other types of guarantee arrangements would have to be carefully explored to determine if they would be feasible. (Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1971: 8)

Additionally, the Federal Government began to rethink the implications of previous race-based regulations towards Aboriginal peoples. Such reconsiderations are evident in references to Indians and alcohol in the *Act* that recognized, perhaps, that simply being an Indian person was not the sole marker upon which to develop government policies:

In light of present day circumstances, it has been suggested that Indians should have the same off-reserve liquor rights as other residents of the Province where they reside, and their on-reserve privileges should be a matter for decision by the band concerned. It has therefore been suggested that the intoxicant provisions of the Indian Act be amended so that the situation would be as follows: a) off reserves there would be no restrictions in the Indian Act on the possession, consumption, sale, or manufacture of intoxicants by Indians; b) On reserves the present Federal restrictions concerning (1) possession and consumption, (2) sale, or (3) manufacture of intoxicants would still apply until a majority of electors of a band voting at referendum have signified that they wish to have one or more of the privileges on their reserve. The third alternative would be to repeal all the provisions respecting liquor so that the Indians would have the same rights and privileges and operate under the same laws as other residents of the Province. (Indian Affairs and Northern Development 1971: 12)

If amendments to the *Indian Act* are understood as a barometer of the climate in which Aboriginal peoples in Canada were living in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, it is evident that there was an attempt by the Federal Government to position them more equitably with reference to Non-Aboriginal Canadians, and to devise alternative ways and means of addressing Indian issues in Canada. Ideologically, Indian policy was shifting away from biological and character considerations of Indians and onto considerations of their social contexts. Despite the ideological shift, policy remained fundamentally rooted in colonial



constructions of the Indian as opposed to understanding Indians as self-defining. By 1961, the *Indian Act* remained as entrenched in similar discursive constructs as previous legislations and policies upon which it drew. Indians required protection, often from themselves, and although equalization may have been a goal, it was a very circumscribed ideal of equality, infused with historical colonial rhetoric.

#### **4.c “Long Range Objectives”: Constructions of the Indian into the 20th Century**

The persistence of a discourse about abject Indian Others in need of government educational interventions is visible beyond policy discussions and can be found in far more everyday, publicly oriented, mass-produced government publications. The clear presence of such discourses within publications designed for public consumption demonstrates the prevalence of assumptions about Indians and Indian education, highlighting the sociocultural context in which Indian education was unfolding in the mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1962 the Indian Affairs Branch, by then located in the Department of Citizen and Immigration, produced the glossy, image-laden booklet *The Indian in Transition: The Indian Today*. The publication begins discussions about Indians with the observation that “they were once said to be a dying race...” (3). The publication purports, however, that Indian policy in the early 1960s had moved far beyond such an antiquated idea and advocated a more modern view of the Indian question in Canada:

Canadians sometimes talk of “the Indian question,” and many do not look upon the Indian as a full citizen of Canada. What is this so-called “Indian problem?” In essence it is this: the Indian is too often an outsider in our society. His reserve is palisaded with psychological barriers which have prevented close social and economic contact between Indians and non-Indians. It is the policy of the government to help the Indian, caught in an age of transition, to adapt himself to a

large and more complex society, to be able to earn a living within that society if he wishes to do so. But there are many factors which inhibit the Indian in his adaptation to a mid-twentieth century technological world. Most are but dimly understood. (1962: 5)

With these constructions in place, the publication then concentrates on how to facilitate the transition of Indians into broader, modern, Canadian society: “The future of many Indians...[is] in their integration into the industrial economy of Canada” (10). This integration was the goal of the Federal Government:

The long-range objective of the Indian Affairs Branch is the development of Indian communities with adequate standards of housing, hygiene and essential services which will provide a base for the economic, educational, health and welfare aspects of...[the] eventual integration of Indians into the provincial and municipal organization of Canadian society. (1962: 22–23)

Education remained central to the goal of saving the Indians and integrating them into Canadian society, although the Indian Affairs Branch continued to be stymied by “the challenge of education” for Indians (7). This challenge was anchored in what the government argued were inherent differences between Indians and other Canadians:

A great many [Indians] face difficulties not common to other students. Brought up in different cultural traditions, they must adjust in school to a western, non-Indian culture. As language is the essential tool of communication, they must learn either French or English. Usually they have been brought up to speak their own tongues [and]...there are many cases in which the homes are not conducive to good study habits. (8)

The overt Federal Government agenda remained assimilation, although the language had broadened to a more passive, quasi-objective, and paternalistic rhetoric about saving the Indian. According to this logic, the Indian had transformed over three centuries from a savage to be reckoned with into a psychologically, socially, and physically broken entity.

The brokenness of Indians, unlike preceding constructions premised on the innate nature of a bad Indian, was linked to their inability to conform to modern society. The solution always remained intervention and salvation by colonial forces like the Federal Government. The government admitted that modernity and colonization had broken the Indian and consequently it was the job of a compassionate colonial government to save the Indian. If the Indian was no longer dying, it was thanks to the just and moral intervention of government. What continued unabated was the sense that education remained an important tool of salvation. Consequently, Indian assimilative education remained a morally sanctioned aim of the Federal Government. The ideological assumptions driving Federal Government imaginings about Indian education in Canada in 1962, then, were not so tremendously different from those under which Indian Affairs had been operating since the early-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Certain ideologies had shifted, but they remained imbued with echoes of past constructions about Aboriginal Others and the ability of education to save and transform Indians from abject otherness.

Publications other than those produced by the Department of Indian Affairs demonstrate the resilience of discourses about Indians and the possibilities of education as a means to fix and save them. Father André Renaud's publications, given his high ranking position with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Canada and his relations with the Federal Government, are representative of the broad social discourses that demonstrate the persistence and flexibility of certain rhetorics concerning Indian education. In 1958, Father André Renaud authored a long document entitled "Indian Education Today." Renaud was deeply invested in questions of Indian residential schooling. By 1962 he was the Director General of the Indian Eskimo Commission of the

Oblate Fathers and the Vice-President of the Indian Eskimo Association. He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Citizenship Council and had, by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, contributed extensively to the national debate on Indian education. He had written significant amounts of the 1958 document prepared by the Indian and Eskimo Welfare Commission of the Oblate Fathers in Canada entitled *Residential Education for Indian Acculturation*. His writings display a remarkable faithfulness to historic conceptions of Indian education and the need to break Indian cultural identity through modern colonial and Catholic educational practices. Renaud often begins his discussions about Indian education using pseudo-scientific language about individual and community cultures. This language is consistent with a privileging of scientific, objective, and anthropological evidence that had become a dominant paradigm by which to consider sociocultural questions (Fabian 1983). He often used discussions about the human individual, about operative powers, and basic schemes of human activity to introduce questions concerning Indians and the need to re-educate them, for example:

[In] acculturating Indian children, the following prescriptions appear necessary for success and thoroughness: isolate the child as much as possible from his native background, ideally twenty four hours a day and twelve months of the year, to prevent “exposure” to Indian culture; upon graduation, integrate the young trans-cultured Indian in a non-Indian community, following him through till he or she is permanently settled away from his community of origin. The purpose of such prescriptions, particularly of removing the child permanently from his original environment, is to provide him with a unified experience and thus prevent a later disorganization in his personality. (Renaud in *Residential Education for Indian Acculturation* 1958: 34)

Much of Renaud’s thinking about Indian education, particularly residential schooling and dislocating educational practices was located in considerations of nationalism and

citizenship:

Now that Canada is maturing into a nation, her citizens more and more think of themselves as Canadians, first and foremost....This is not true as yet of most Indians. Psychologically as well as historically, they are Indians first and Canadians afterwards. Or to put it differently, their way of being Canadians is to be Indians (Renaud 1958:31).

For Renaud, the ultimate question with regard to Indian education in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century was: “Will they [Indians] keep rearing their children in a truncated cultural tradition or will they eventually give their children basically the same kind of home-background as non-Indians? There is only one way to prevent the former and insure the latter:...education” (Renaud 1958: 45).

The rhetoric of a high-ranking and prolifically publishing member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, like Father André Renaud, illustrates in part that the power of constructions about Indians and Indian education lies in the ability of discourses to shift over time. Renaud’s constructions were retooled to fit within late 20<sup>th</sup> Century ideas about saving, as opposed to simply assimilating, Indians. He also used language of the day about Canada’s maturation into a modern nation and the need for specific kinds of citizens within that state. Finally, to further legitimate his views he moved discussions beyond the religious imperative of colonial schooling and argued that the urgency of educating Indians was not just spiritual but was a scientifically justified imperative concerned with the psychology and biology of Aboriginal peoples.

The language about Indians and Indian education found in government Acts and policies, in publications for broad public distribution, and in the publications of some church representatives, demonstrates the flexible, shifting, yet highly resilient nature of constructions about Indians across long periods of time. Early Federal Government policy

language relied on a protective notion of what was best for the Indian in terms of the innate nature or character of Indianness. Assimilation was certainly understood as key, but the possibility remained of assimilation through settlement rather than the full interruption of community and genealogy. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries these ideas had shifted to a more combative and decisive language preoccupied with aggressively transforming Indians through a full severing of connections between children and family/community. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, language had again softened and government policy seemed vested in recognizing the best interests of Aboriginal peoples, in saving them, and in protecting them, often from themselves. Furthermore, there was some, albeit hesitant, discussion of self-governance and of Aboriginal peoples' limited powers over their own bodies, communities, and affairs. Nonetheless, as much as there was some recognition of Aboriginal peoples' potential autonomy, the Federal Government insisted on the benefits of integration and continued to concern itself with the identity of Indians. In many respects, then, government languages remained infused with notions of civilizing, amalgamating, integrating, and acculturating those peoples and Nations constructed as outside of or beyond Canadian(ness). Furthermore, ideas about transforming Indians were often linked with material and grounded considerations of transforming place or of addressing questions of land and territory. It should come as no surprise that the shifting discursivities circulating about Indians ultimately found material expression through built and institutional places where land and territory were viewed as integral components of a re-education process. These places included residential schools in British Columbia that housed colonial subjects tasked with undertaking the colonial project of schooling Aboriginal children.

## CHAPTER 5:

### “IF WE WANT THE FUTURE OF THE TRIBE TO BE HAPPY, WE MUST SAVE THE CHILDREN”<sup>7</sup>: COLONIAL IMAGININGS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA’S RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

*Life being what it is, one dreams not of revenge. One just dreams.*  
(Miriam Toews 2004: 244)

The perspectives of residential school teachers and administrators, both toward their students and toward their duties and positions as educators, offer insight into how colonialism operated, materialized, and shifted within and because of small-scale places. Arguably those who implemented colonial education, who made material its ideologies, and who conceptualized and experienced the bringing into being of colonialism’s epistemologies, embodied the more discursive nature of the project. Schooling curriculum did not write or deliver itself. Residential school teachers, administrators, and other staffs implemented a vision; they were the people at the helm of the project. Consequently, the practices of residential schooling may be usefully theorized as inseparable from those who enacted them. The people, however, were (in)formed by surrounding social structures. Colonial education and its associated implementers, like all forms of education and educators, might thus be considered to reflect broader socio-cultural contexts and to reproduce and reinforce the norms within which they operate (Apple 1991; Giroux 1981), including the colonial norms of British Columbia (Chalmers 2000). One means of accessing and understanding colonial discourses about First Nations peoples in British Columbia during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries is to access the perspectives and experiences of teachers and school administrators who worked on the

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<sup>7</sup> Raley, George H. (April 1898). “The Kitimat Home.” In *Na-Na-Kwa; or, Dawn on the Northwest Coast. Kitimat, British Columbia*. 2.

front lines of inscribing those colonial discourses upon Aboriginal children within the Province's residential schools. As Mona Gleason (1999) has argued, teachers and others associated with educational practices and institutions perpetuated the official ideals in which schooling work was undertaken. Within a colonial context, the circulation and perpetuation of official ideals was ultimately about inscribing relations of power in order to maintain "children's subordination, to shape their sense of self and to ensure and control their socialization" (Gleason: 114). The colonial geographies of British Columbia may be more fully understood through small-scale investigations of specific individuals who enacted and actualized the tenets of broader social structures within which the education was conducted.

The relationship between non-Aboriginal peoples vested in British Columbian colonial education and First Nations students and communities was not unidirectional: interloping colonial presences did not simply impose themselves upon Aboriginal peoples without incurring damage and undergoing change. Colonial education is better understood as a multi-directional process in which all participants are altered and transformed. This chapter's focus is on attitudes and assumptions of colonial subjects towards First Nations peoples in British Columbia and the attitudes and assumptions that were internalized, practised, and implemented within a context of colonial education. I begin with the assumption that, like colonial and imperial subjects around the world, those most closely associated with colonial education in British Columbia were by no means unchanging, consistent, or uniform (Driver 2002; Pratt 1991). This observation is expanded by an exploration of the effects, arguably possible only because of geographic proximity, that First Nations peoples had on non-Aboriginal colonial subjects invested in



transforming Aboriginal bodies and minds. The effects are apparent in a number of ways, notably in the transformation of colonial attitudes and perspectives toward their wards. Like Alice Ravenhill, colonial subjects came, over time, to gain a deep sense of self in reference to those who initially had been ideologically positioned as inferior Others. Like Reverend George Raley and other colonial subjects working in the Kitimat Home for Girls, colonizers developed irreconcilable rifts within themselves over the ideological frameworks they were charged with enforcing. I am interested, then, in the ways that colonial subjects came to be altered by those Aboriginal peoples whom the colonial project sought to alter. More particularly, I am interested in demonstrating that this altering resulted from small-scale relationships wherein proximity may be understood as an active agent in the transformation of colonial subjects. Although I argue that transformation of colonists occurred in British Columbia, I am not proposing that colonial education was a project of equals wielding equivalent powers. Nor am I suggesting that the transformation and impact was equal between all parties. Arguably the long-term effects of residential schooling have wrought more damage on Indigenous peoples than on non-Aboriginal peoples (see for instance Morrisette 1994). Nevertheless, as I explore in this chapter, there is evidence that all parties were affected and altered by the relationships established within the places of colonial education. By recognizing this, I hope to demonstrate the power that place played in the disruption of colonial imaginations by First Nations.

Teachers and school administrators from British Columbia's residential schools did not leave extensive documentation of their thoughts or experiences of colonial education. The records that do exist are also not evenly representative of all British

Columbian residential schools. Despite the partial nature of the records, however, they are valuable sources that can be read and conceptualized as individualized testimonials and utterances that fit within, or are nested inside of, larger discursive structures concerning Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal colonial relationships. Such a “scaling up,” or a reading up and outward, expands the possibilities of the words beyond their pages or specific confines, allowing them to reveal a variety of facets composing the colonial project in British Columbia (Valentine 2006). Furthermore, by reading the materials and voices together as an assemblage, and thus allowing the perspectives to interact with one another, new possibilities of understanding the personal and social positions of those who implemented the visions of colonial education arise (Crang, 2003).

Questions of interpretation and methodology emerge when working with a record that encompasses a broad temporal and spatial scope. Is there really much to learn about the processes of colonialism in British Columbia through a reading of missionary publications, memoirs, pamphlets, and autobiographies produced by teachers and school administrators associated with the Province’s residential schools? These records are not, after all, evidence of those working in upper levels of government who were formulating legislation and policy to govern the lands and rights of First Nations peoples. Neither do the records document imperial commands originating from the centre of Empire. The texts with which this chapter is concerned are small in content and stature, and they were produced within relatively everyday contexts, by single individuals. Perhaps the best way to categorize both the records and their authors, then, is as diminutive. These diminutive records call to mind the observations of Walter Benjamin (2003): the “chronicler who narrates events without distinguishing major and minor ones acts in accord with the

following truth. [N]othing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost to history” (390). If, as Benjamin posits, nothing should be lost to history or relegated to the margins of historicity, it would seem that one way to understand the colonial project of British Columbia is to investigate precisely the small and actualized expressions of the project through reading the records left by those who implemented and actualized colonialism’s abstracted visions. And there appears to be a consistency, over time and space, in the transformation of colonial subjects when they find themselves in close proximity to First Nations. The records left by Euro-colonialists who were most intimately associated with British Columbia’s residential schools are another way to understand what First Nations children were contending with as they confronted the imposition of colonialism on their bodies and spirits in educational settings.

**5:a “Responsibility for the Advantages Enjoyed and the Paramount Duty of Serving Others”<sup>8</sup>: Alice Ravenhill and the Colonial Project in British Columbia**

Alice Ravenhill was born on 31 March 1859 in Snaresbrook Essex, England. According to her memoirs (which she wrote and published when she was well into her eighties with the intent of offering a “small” glimpse into her life) she was the middle child of “a beautiful, gracious young mother.” Ravenhill’s father was “a well-known naval architect and marine engineer” (Ravenhill 1951:1). The men in Ravenhill’s family were representative “of their public schools (Eton, Winchester, and Marlborough) and of their respective colleges at Oxford and the University of London,” while the women were “refined and accomplished, according to the standards of the time” (2). With the

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<sup>8</sup> Ravenhill, Alice. (1951). *Alice Ravenhill: The Memoirs of an Educational Pioneer*. Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd. 222.

exception of a few insignificant embarrassments over taking too much jam or being unable to maintain proper concentration in the nursery or school room, Ravenhill's childhood and adolescent memories were utopian. Her few early challenges pertain to self-image:

[I was] a sturdy child with a somewhat moonlike face, accentuated by fat curls around [my] head and stout legs in long white stockings. There were no artistic devices in the early sixties of the nineteenth century to disguise physical shortcomings. No doubt I was the plain member of an otherwise good-looking brood; and a tiny, still surviving, gold hippopotamus is the painful reminder of a nickname which caused me great mortification. (17)

Despite ostensible shortcomings in appearance, Ravenhill prided herself on her sense of order, quick wit, and social skills. She considered these characteristics foundational in her later life as a pioneer in British Columbia working with First Nations peoples, particularly in understanding their arts and crafts.

Ravenhill attributed much of her character development to her own boarding school experience at St. John's Wood where, from the age of twelve through seventeen (1871–1876) she “was presided over by two sisters, known to their pupils as Miss Edwards and Miss Esther respectively” (36). These two teaching sisters, in Ravenhill's estimation, were responsible for ending her girlhood and bringing her into womanhood:

The elder sister, I should say the stronger physically and mentally, added direction of all the domestic details to her share of the scholastic work. Miss Esther, obviously some years her junior, concerned herself chiefly with the subjects often grouped as “accomplishments,” including dancing and riding, music, singing, and drawing. . . . Masters [in teaching] attended for French, arithmetic, music, singing, drawing, drilling, science, and elocution. The school catered for the daughters of well-to-do people who wanted their children to enjoy the advantages offered in London by concerts, art galleries, museums, and theatre. (36).

According to Ravenhill, an education at St. John's Wood was linked to social positioning, logic she would draw on later in life. Education, from the young Ravenhill's perspective, led to well-appointed possibilities:

I was swept into a whirl of dances, often chosen as partner by the popular leaders of cotillions at the various balls, which meant to the ladies being the recipients of all sorts of dainty and delightful gifts...It was on one of these more intimate visits that the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) brought with him his second son, then a very shy midshipman in the Royal Navy. The boy was turned over to me for entertainment...neither of us dream[ing] that...the lapse of a little more than a quarter of a century would see that shy lad become the much loved king, George V. (56-57).

The whirlwind of dancing and social engagements, coupled with both a full maturation and realization of character and a desire to "train for self-support" (64), resulted in Ravenhill's self-described pioneering activities within Britain.

At about the age of 30, Ravenhill became one of the first women to achieve a diploma in Public Health from the National Health Society, an endeavour that moved in her a sense of compassion for "the working classes" (64) and brought about a sense of being a "pioneer woman who wished to assume...responsibilities" (66) toward those less fortunate than herself. Between 1894 and 1897, Ravenhill worked as the Secretary to the Royal British Nurses Association, a position that availed her of the ability to travel extensively across the United Kingdom to lecture, teach, and research on public health issues. Very much in keeping with the discourses of hygiene circulating in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Ravenhill believed public health was synonymous with sanitation.

Consequently, she believed that public health was achievable through a burgeoning study of Home Economics that addressed the cleanliness of food, clothing, and shelter. In 1900,

following her passion for home economics, Ravenhill presented a paper at the Annual Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute in Paris; here she came into contact with the “new and innovative pioneering” (137) undertakings of North American Home Economics. The interests in the sanitation advances occurring in the United States spurred Ravenhill’s first visit to North America. This visit, and its consequent contacts, became the foundations for her final and permanent move to British Columbia.

Ravenhill and her sister Edith relocated to British Columbia in 1910 because her brother, who was living in Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island, sent a request for female heads of house. Once settled in B.C., and despite an increasing number of health afflictions that had plagued her since early adolescence, Ravenhill “stoically maintained” an adherence to the practices she had advocated as a lecturer of Home Economics. She ensured that members of her household bathed every day before supper and she worked hard to keep diversity in their diet. She hosted guests from as far away as New Zealand, always maintaining lively conversation, and she became active in the Women’s Institutes of British Columbia. It is difficult from the published materials she left to ascertain precisely what led her, in 1926, to an interest in the arts and creative materials produced by First Nations peoples in British Columbia. In her recollections on a quarter-century (1901–1926) of living in Canada, she makes but one reference to Indigenous peoples. In passing comment about a house visitor from New Zealand, Ravenhill observes that the guest had “wrecked his health by sharing native Esquimaux [Inuit] life for over two years” (181). The almost complete absence of Aboriginal peoples in Ravenhill’s writings up until 1926 is strangely at odds with other aspects of her interests. For instance, during each of her three visits to the United States, Ravenhill emphasised the “sharp line of

demarcation drawn between black and white races,” which she found “perplexing in a country of which the Constitution proclaims all men to be free and equal” (119). In 1926, when she did develop an interest in First Nations art, it was of such intensity that it eclipsed all past interests.

In her late sixties, Ravenhill took up the cause of Indian arts and crafts in British Columbia with a special focus on children and colonial schools. Children and schools were positioned in relation to Ravenhill’s interests in Home Economics, family health, morality, and what she referred to as the need for “visualization” (76) in the presentation of abstract ideas. In 1928, in conjunction with the Women’s Institute of British Columbia, Ravenhill began replicating designs and objects belonging to First Nations from across the Province. She was motivated by two desires: First, Ravenhill was “enthusiastic about the possibility of developing original native designs commercially” (209); second, she wanted to “draw more attention to [a] storehouse of valuable cultural and commercial resources” (209) that were represented in First Nations designs, arts, and creative materials. This link to the commercializing of Aboriginal art informs her later work with colonial education policies. The theme of commercialization of Aboriginal art also resurfaces at two conferences hosted by the society that Ravenhill founded.<sup>9</sup>

As her interest in Aboriginal art expanded, so too did Ravenhill’s public engagement with the topic. By 1936, she was lecturing on Indian arts and crafts. The same year, after having lobbied the Provincial Department of Education about the gaps in

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<sup>9</sup> The extent of Ravenhill’s impact on provincial discourse concerning Indian arts and crafts is, in part, evident in the Proceedings associated with two conferences held in Vancouver in 1948 and 1958. The focus of both conferences was Native arts and crafts. The conclusions reached by participants were that art and creative efforts would provide cultural and economic salvation for an afflicted people. In the both conference Proceedings, Ravenhill’s vision and work was referenced as foundational to lobbying to the provincial and federal governments to support Native art and craft production.

information about Indian arts, she authored *The Native Tribes of British Columbia*.<sup>10</sup> In January 1940 Ravenhill formed the inaugural committee of what became The Society for the Furtherance of B.C. Indian Arts and Crafts (later changed in name to The Society for B.C. Indian Arts and Welfare). The objectives of the society were cultural and economic;

these being based upon adequate evidence of the inherited artistic gifts and mechanical and manual dexterities latent in young Indians, shown in painting, carving, modelling, in drama, dancing, singing, and also in mechanical abilities of a high order. (216)

In 1943, Ravenhill was elected president of the society, and in 1944 she authored and published *A Corner Store of Canadian Culture* on the topics that were of increasing interest to her. The questions become, then: What motivated Ravenhill's focused and sustained interest in British Columbian Aboriginal arts? What might be surmised about the implications of those motivations for First Nations people, and specifically, for First Nations children in British Columbia?

Ravenhill had a particular and sustained interest in children's health and psychology and in the residential schools of British Columbia. The longer she lived in the Province, the closer and more sustained became her interaction with First Nations art. Proximity to people and their work appears to have been one motivating factor in Ravenhill's interest. Prior to her settling in British Columbia, Indians and their work lacked tangibility to Ravenhill; the longer her connection with the Province, and the more exposure she had to things Indian, the greater her interest in them became. Her interest in children's wellbeing was directly tied to her attention to the moral and physical training of mothers, while her interest in residential schooling was linked to children's creativity

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<sup>10</sup> The text was published in 1938 by the Royal British Columbia Museum and the provincial Department of Education.



and the potential to regenerate a vanishing people. Her interests were connected to her dedication to building and maintaining imperial values and morals in British Columbia, a place that Ravenhill came to identify as home. Based on her long-standing belief that the future of humanity, and all possibilities for potential change and alteration of society, lay in children, Ravenhill authored in 1914 *The Care of Young Children* for the Province of British Columbia. In keeping with the eugenics preoccupation typical of her times, Ravenhill observed wrote about the deleterious health factors in children's development. Poor health, and its perpetuation through reproduction between afflicted peoples, was a:

a menace to the progressive existence of civilized nations because, in a quarter of a century, more or less, there will be a deficiency of sturdy, strenuous, middle-aged burden bearers in the population and an excess of those whose capacities as Empire-builders are enfeebled by age or underdevelopment on account of childish immaturity. (5)

She was adamant that the only means to guarantee healthy child development was to ensure the "right rearing of children" (9). This would lead to the "formation of good habits" (25) that would ultimately result in physically robust, morally healthy, and psychologically fit subjects equal to the task of propagating the Empire in the colonies. Ravenhill argued that no "nobler work" existed than that of child-rearing by mothers upon whom "the character and efficiency of a nation hinges" (26). Indeed, Ravenhill believed that British Columbia was ever "needful [of] opportunities for training in the responsible profession of motherhood, [during which] women would cultivate in themselves those qualities and virtues which will equip them to be Empire-builders" (26).

The link between Ravenhill's interests in child development and Indian arts and crafts is not straightforward. To Ravenhill, the consumption of alcohol was a cause of social breakdown. In her earliest efforts in Britain with "the working classes" she

observed that alcohol was responsible for moral and physical depravity (Ravenhill 1951: 65). In her 1913 publication *The Art of Right Living*, Ravenhill referred to the “injurious results of ‘nips’ of alcoholic drinks...a habit bound to bring disaster sooner or later” (18).

She wrote that:

the children of alcoholic parents, not even those necessarily of what are usually called ‘confirmed drunkards’ are more susceptible to all forms of nervous disease [and are] less fit for the battle of life than those of abstainers. (18)

A year later, Ravenhill had honed her perspective on alcohol and child development, noting that:

[t]he disastrous effects of antenatal poisoning with alcohol have been verified past dispute. They appear as children grow up in the form of epilepsy, warped minds and stunted bodies, mental instability which predisposes to crimes of violence, insanity, and, what is almost worse, feeble mindedness...[A]lcohol...even in small amounts has an evil influence. (Ravenhill 1914: 10)

For Ravenhill, alcohol consumption by mothers led to unhealthy children and, consequently, mothers who consumed alcohol disrupted healthy states and nations. Based on her belief that Indians were particularly susceptible to “grave demoralization” through drinking, Ravenhill advocated formal training and education to develop healthy children (Ravenhill 1951: 213). Here, however, her own logic seems to have failed her because she concurrently believed that Indian residential schools in British Columbia did not fulfil their potential and instead were sites of socio-cultural harm to First Nations. She wrote:

The organization in subsequent years by the Federal Government of residential schools for Indian children introduced a further [following alcohol and unfamiliar trading methods] unconsidered disintegrating factor. Instruction was conducted in English [and] the children were – and are – confronted with unknown subjects in an unknown language, a process described out of his wide experience by Sir George Maxwell...as “crippling and destroying a people’s soul; fatal to self-

respect and inducing in the individual contempt for his own race”. (Ravenhill 1951: 213)

Ravenhill faced a conundrum. She believed training and education were the best ways to instruct mothers in noble and alcohol-free practices of producing healthy children; however, the educational institutions available to the First Nations people were not sufficiently fulfilling this task. Instead, she implicated the schools in the cultural breakdown of First Nations resulting in moral depravity, including alcohol consumption.

Instruction in art and creative endeavours, albeit within residential schools, provided the solution to Ravenhill’s conundrum: “Abilities come to the surface among Indian children wherever a sympathetic teacher encourages or even permits their free [artistic] expression” (Ravenhill 1951: 214). Furthermore, she wrote:

[such] methods brought to the surface the children’s inherited ability to devise their own designs in art work. Endowed with keen observation, retentive and accurate memories, and unusual manual dexterity, these children eagerly responded to the daily opportunities for self-expression. They acted out old tribal legends, making clever bird or animal masks to complete the realism of their presentations, and they thus stimulated a revival among their grandparents of well nigh forgotten tribal songs, soon memorized by the children, who then translated them into dance with a grace which has to be seen to be believed. (Ravenhill 1951: 213-14)

Ravenhill was convinced that artist instruction would ensure First Nations’ regeneration and healthy assimilation into colonial society. Under her leadership, the Society for B.C. Indian Arts and Welfare worked with Captain Gerald Barry, the Inspector of Indian Schools in British Columbia, to promote curricula for First Nations children that reflected “the need for illustrations in Indian schools of the arts and crafts of their forbearers” (218). If the educational content of British Columbia’s residential schools would only

acquiesce to Ravenhill's suggestions, she stated that "survivors of a gifted race could contribute to the progress of our national culture and could do much, also, to uplift their own self-respect" (219). For Ravenhill, then, art and the production of creative materials or expressions could save First Nations from themselves and the vices that dominated them. Art became a site of moral possibility, when it was deployed within the confines of institutions designed by colonial subjects who, fortuitously, also possessed the knowledge and abilities to unearth in First Nations children's cultural knowledge forgotten by their Nations, families, and communities.

There appear to be two primary motivators in Ravenhill's interests in First Nations arts and creative products. The first motivation was a deep conviction that both the objects and the peoples responsible for their production were dying out and required saving. The second (tied to the first) was a belief that it was the duty of thoughtful Eurocolonial subjects to provide guidance and salvation to the First Nations of British Columbia. These motivations are apparent in Ravenhill's writings, where she expressed a desire, through the reclaiming and repositioning of First Nations arts, to reconcile and address the

[g]rave demoralization [that] soon followed the introduction of hitherto unknown alcohol, unfamiliar trading methods and diverse factors which left – after a short period of self-defence – a bewildered, humiliated people, faced with the loss of their lands, their familiar methods of self-support, [and] their religion from which sprang the stimulus to their arts, and not least, their self-respect. (213)

Interest in First Nations' art and creativity, then, could lead to the rejuvenation of entire cultures and peoples. Ravenhill's efforts at saving a dying race also provided her a sense self. This sense of self acquired definition and depth through the First Nations subjects she so deeply believed were completely subjugated within the colonial project. By

securing a sense of self in relation to a subjugated Other, Ravenhill produced another almost perfect conundrum for First Nations people. On the one hand she argued that the goal of her work was the salvation of First Nations peoples. On the other hand, the fulfilment of such a goal was in direct opposition to the means through which she gained a sense of self on the edge of empire. As long as First Nations remained a vanishing and fragile people, well-meaning non-Aboriginals could continue their self-sacrificing and altruistic work; however, should First Nations peoples attain a status beyond that of subjugated/vanishing Other, there would cease to be an Other against whom non-Aboriginal colonial subjects could reference themselves. Ultimately, what contributed to non-Aboriginal's sense of self would vanish with the emancipation of First Nations. As much, then, as Ravenhill expressed a "desire to secure wider sympathy for the overlooked abilities of our B.C. tribes" (219), she was simultaneously invested in ensuring First Nations never attained full legitimacy and equality within the national culture of Canada or the colonial culture of British Columbia.

There was something disingenuous about the altruistic Eurocolonial salvation and betterment narratives with reference to First Nations peoples. Examples of such are visible in small moments described in Ravenhill's autobiography. In 1939, for instance, Ravenhill received "unexpected and pleasurable encouragement" (215) during the visit to Canada of Queen Elizabeth. The visit resulted in an opportunity to present a copy of her text *The Native Tribes of British Columbia* to the Queen. Following the presentation, Ravenhill received "a charming expression of the Queen's pleasure in the gift, saying 'she was especially desirous of learning more on the subject of the North West Coast arts and crafts'" (215). Ravenhill's account of her ensuing communication with the Queen is

particularly illustrative of colonial intentions concerning bettering and maintaining colonial supremacy:

In acknowledging Her Majesty's letter, I inquired whether it would be in order for me to offer for her acceptance a typical example of tribal skill reproduced by myself in needlework. By return mail came a delighted acceptance....[and consequently] I choose for reproduction a fine design...of the Mythical Raven, drawn several years before by a Kwa-Kuitl [*sic*] Chief....The Queen's kind appreciation of my gift was accompanied by a delightful framed and signed photograph of Her Majesty as a permanent memento of this pleasant interlude in my life. (215)

Ravenhill frequently condemned "the regrettable and prevalent attitude of many Canadians toward those for whom Canada made herself responsible nearly two centuries ago" (220). Nevertheless, she took power from First Nations peoples by positioning herself as a translator and spokesperson for their art. In 1939, that self-appointed role provided her an opportunity whereby she was able to present Indian art to the ultimate symbol of colonial power: the Queen of England. Ravenhill's own desire for recognition leads her to use "a bewildered and humiliated people" to her own ends. It is by sustaining First Nations as needful and marginalized that colonial subjects, such as Ravenhill, were able to construct and reconstruct their own sense of self and their relationship with Britain. This interconnection between a colonial sense of self and ongoing subordination of First Nations peoples ultimately had ramifications for First Nations children within the classrooms of the Province's residential schools. It was in there that Euro-colonial settlers, such as Ravenhill, who were in positions of influence with regard to education and curriculum, buttressed by their own constructed narratives of salvation and betterment of First Nations, put into practice their beliefs about art and creativity as the

means by which First Nations children would be most successfully assimilated into non-Aboriginal society.

### **5.b Needing “No Apology”<sup>11</sup>: Perspectives of Residential School Teachers and Administrators at The Kitimat Home for Girls**

Not unlike the psychological tensions embodied in Alice Ravenhill, George Henry Raley is emblematic of the complex, multi-dimensional, and contested nature of colonial educators in British Columbia. Raley was born in 1864 to a devout Methodist family in Yorkshire, England. At 18, after completing his education at a grammar school in Britain, he relocated to Ontario to work on one of the province’s many farms. Less than two years later, in 1884, Raley joined a Methodist Mission in the province. In 1890, he married Maude Giles, the daughter of a physician from Brockville, Ontario and, in 1893, he and his new wife relocated to British Columbia to work as Methodist missionaries to First Nations peoples. The Raleys’ first station was in Kitimat on the northwest coast of British Columbia, where, in April 1898, Reverend Raley began to write, publish, and disseminate *Na-Na-Kwa*; or *Dawn on the Northwest Coast*. *Na-Na-Kwa* was a relatively modest publication, although it gained a fairly wide readership, with a peak circulation of 3000 copies. The newsletter presents glimpses of the contested and conflicting positions held by colonial educators and school administrators with regard to their duties, to their pedagogical goals, and to the First Nations people with whom they shared their work and beliefs, and the spaces and experiences of their everyday lives.

The stated aim of the publication was to update those “who contribute, and pray for the success of Indian work, especially that of the Kitimaat Mission [and] to let them

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<sup>11</sup> *Na-Na-Kwa; or Dawn of the Northwest Coast*. (April 1898). No. 2. Compiled by George Henry Raley. Kitimat, British Columbia. 2.

know a little of the good they are doing” (Raley July 1898: 1). In the first issue of *Na-Na-Kwa*, Reverend Raley carefully explained the purpose of residential schooling to his readership:

The Kitimat “Home” needs no apology for its existence. The good already accomplished has demonstrated its necessity and is a strong plea for future support. Perhaps some of our friends would like to ask, what is the specific object of the Home? It is threefold. To save the tribe; 1) Physically, 2) Mentally, and 3) Morally. If we want the future of the tribe to be happy, we must get and save the children” (NNK April 1898: pg 2).

As Kitimat’s sole missionary and as the head administrator of the community’s residential school, the Kitimat Home for Girls, Raley had to explain the importance of the school to secure badly needed operational funding. *Na-Na-Kwa* was circulated to the Methodist Women’s Missionary Society, who supported through donations and financial contributions the colonial education project in Kitimat. *Na-Na-Kwa* was circulated both to non-Aboriginal Canadians across the country and to those in Britain and abroad with an interest in missionary and colonial education work in the colonies. *Na-Na-Kwa* was published between April 1898 and May 1907, when the last issue of the publication notes that the Raleys were relocating from Kitimat north to Port Simpson, where *Na-Na-Kwa* was reduced to an occasional publication. After a brief period in Port Simpson, Reverend Raley relocated to the south coast of British Columbia, this time to take up the position of principal at Coqualeetza Residential School in Chilliwack. He died in British Columbia in 1958, after almost a half-century of ministering in the Province.

Raleys’ writings provide insight into the tension between a desire to civilize First Nations and an awareness that First Nations peoples were rightly resistant, if not entirely impervious, to colonial expectations. For Raley, this realization was coupled with a



conflicted admiration for the people he was supposed to transform, an admiration that ultimately led him to argue against many of the ideologies behind residential schooling. The gradual shift in Raley's perspectives demonstrates the multi-directional nature of colonial relations in British Columbia. Teachers and administrators tasked with implementing colonial education certainly had the support of laws, policies, and infrastructures behind their efforts to civilize First Nations children. In the diminutive geographies of residential schools, isolated First Nations villages, and close interpersonal relationships, however, Aboriginal people had opportunity to impress and alter their colonial interlopers. Within, and perhaps through such proximity the instruments of colonial power were themselves transformed.

Raley's writings reveal that he began his tenure at the Kitimat Home for Girls with a clear and uncompromising vision of his mission. To him, the Haisla, like other British Columbian First Nations, were immoral savages who required saving: Their lives were rife with sin, including cannibalism and demonism, and they suffered accordingly. In line with a late-Victorian Protestant ethic, Raley was convinced of his moral standing with reference to transforming First Nations, a process, he believed, that began with the (re)education of children. Through his writings in *Na-Na-Kwa*, Raley made concerted effort to establish an unequivocal need for missionization work. He followed this establishment of need with arguments about the transformations that would result from the missionary work and, more importantly from Raley's perspective, from the colonial education of Aboriginal children. In his early writings about the Haisla and other northwest coast First Nations, Raley spent considerable time detailing their depraved practices:

I looked into the old Indian houses [and] I found all the members of, two, three, four, and five families, herded together in a miserable bed, a filthy dwelling, a single room where all ages, and both sexes slept, ate, and dwelt together. Fancy what a picture of human life must be formed in the mind of a child who is familiar with vice in all its forms from infancy upwards, and who looks on scenes of sin as the normal condition of humanity. (April 1898: 2)

In October 1898 under the heading “Witchcraft Still Practiced,” Raley writes:

‘About two years ago,’ says the Glenora News, ‘an Indian body was disemboweled near Telegraph Creek, as a sacrifice for having bewitched a member of his tribe.’ Lately, however, the magistrate at Telegraph [a community north of Kitimat] was informed that another sacrifice was in contemplation, a boy, aged 14, was to be slaughtered for bewitching and causing the death of a girl. We have heard the matter was quietly and judiciously investigated by the missionary with the gratifying result, that the boy was saved from a most barbarous death and placed in one of the ‘cities of refuge’ – a home for Indian children. (October 1898: 3)

In January of the following year, Raley announced that “a ‘Potlatch’ is in progress at Fort Rupert on a large scale. According to Raley, the Potlatch was the “bete noire of all people on the North Pacific Coast who have the welfare of the Indians at heart” (January 1899: 5). Three years later, Raley had not wavered in his opinion about the potlatch; writing under the heading “What is Killing the Indians?”, he observed:

[This is] an old question indeed which my only apology is nearly ten years continuous work in an Indian village during which period there has been afforded me an excellent opportunity for closely studying their mode of life....The POTLATCH, as it is called, is responsible for many deaths directly and indirectly....During the potlatch season it is very distressing to see the neglected children and the uncared for old on bitterly cold days left without fire, food, or friend....Closely allied to the potlatch is the WITCHCRAFT which is exercised by the Interior and Coast Indians. A great part of the black art is a direct result of

the potlatch system; and no one can live long in an Indian village without learning something concerning “Indian Poison” as it is termed by the white man.” (April 1902: 1 - 2)

Raley presented a picture of the almost insurmountable odds facing his efforts to civilize the Aboriginal peoples on British Columbia’s northwest coast. As a missionary and colonial educator, he saw himself at war with rampant and unrelenting heathenism. His work with Kitimat First Nations was an ongoing, often gendered, battle wherein the Haisla were constantly under siege. He wrote:

In nearly all the villages of the North West Coast (Kitamaat is by no means an exception) a war is being waged – light against darkness; new against old; knowledge against ignorance; intelligence against superstition; truth against falsehood. Christian workers must not be utterly discouraged if they learn that at times there seems to be the strangest commingling of these antagonist elements. We are in the transition state from superstition to intelligence. The old has frequent battles with the new, sometimes these adverse elements strangely mingle. Eventually truth will rise triumphant and grand and establish herself in the hearts and home of those who for so long erroneously opposed her. Truths are first clouds then rain then harvest and food. (January 1901: 5)

Raley often anchored the justification for his battle in the frailty and vulnerability of First Nations women and children, who he believed were disproportionately affected by the ills of heathenism, particularly as it was enacted by Haisla and other northwest coast First Nations men. As the senior administrator of a residential school for girls, Raley was invested in promoting that a war against savagery be waged with particular focus on girls and women. He argued that the transforming and civilizing of First Nations women was a particularly effective means of transforming and civilizing an entire Nation, and that their treatment of women provided a unique illustration of First Nations men’s barbarism: “In non-christian villages the girls are neglected and often ill-treated and tortured. They

are not considered equals of men [and] when married become literally slaves” (October 1899: 1). The Kitimat Home for Girls, according to Raley, represented the means of actualizing his convictions that transforming First Nations children would lead to fully transformed Aboriginal cultures: if all Haisla children “got double or treble of the means and education of the church which they are now getting, they would not be getting too much. Working with the child is purifying the source” (May 1907: 13). In the case of the Kitimat Home for Girls, Haisla girls were the “source” to be purified. Otherwise, according to Raley, the girls faced torture and enslavement. Colonial schooling and missionization, according to Raley’s early writings, made good headway in freeing Haisla girls from their depraved cultural reality: “Since the advent of the missionary a great change has taken place, and a good step made towards Christian civilization” (October 1899: 1). Such steps, argued Raley, included freeing young girls and women from the immense ills that they would have otherwise faced in their uncivilized, un-Christian communities. Raley’s *Na-Na-Kwa* proclaimed that the education of Haisla girls in Kitimat’s residential schools was a success and “the outcome of much anxious thought, earnest prayer, prolonged manual labour and sacrifice. So to those who originated it, there comes a deep feeling of gratitude that a conception of the human mind has thus materialized to aid in the uplifting of the Kitamaat womanhood...” (October 1902: 1 - 2).

Over time, as Raley’s everyday life unfolded in close proximity to the Haisla, his logic about the need to civilize and transform the First Nations with whom he worked was unsettled. His writings in *Na-Na-Kwa* illustrate tensions between an initially clear vision of his missionary and educational work and the experience of his daily life. Geographic closeness to the Haisla people seemed to impress upon him the humanity and

sophistication of a people whom initially he conceived of as entirely lost without Christianity and colonialism. Despite his declaration that Haisla women were brutalized slaves, Raley also spent time learning about the matrilineal structure of northwest coast First Nations, concluding, quite complementarily, that:

The descent is in the female line...the children always take the totem of their mother and belong to their mothers [sic] family so that they are by totemic law nothing to their father. Should trouble arise between the totem clan of the father and that of the mother, in spite of personal feeling children must enter the field against the father, and champion the mother's side (July 1899: 1 - 2).

Raley was also impressed with the strength, capacity, and skill of individual Haisla women, writing that "[t]he past season lasting about three weeks has been successful; we are informed Joseph Wilson obtained the highest number, killing twelve bears. Sarah Legeah the huntress killed six" (July 1901: 5). He certainly noticed the social power of Haisla women, particularly the Elders: he particularly commented on young Haisla girls' continued reverence for their Elders, documenting the resilience of culture despite residential school education:

The little girls love dearly to play 'old woman'...with their shawls drawn about them after the fashion of the blankets of the old women, their bodies at precisely the same angle, and their handkerchiefs round their heads knitted on the forehead with the corners pointing either way in horn-like fashion, thus they retell to each the gossip of the village using the favourite phrases of their grannies with perfect intonation. (Raley, January 1902: 8)

A type of lament can be read into Raley's contradictory stance concerning both the Haisla girls with whom his missionary school worked and the Haisla women who surrounded him on a daily basis. On the one hand, he portrays non-Christian First Nations women as tortured, subjugated and in desperate need of salvation. On the other hand, he is

sufficiently impressed by the roles of Haisla women that he documents their social power, their hunting prowess, and the mimicry and impersonation of female Elders by young girls.

Raley's writings also offer insights into his own transformation, based on close personal and spatial contact with First Nations. Early in his tenure at Kitimat, Raley developed a keen interest in Haisla arts and creative endeavours. His interest expanded well past the community in which he worked, and he published contemplations of both Tsimshian and Haida art in *Na-Na-Kwa*. His early observations about and collection of northwest coast Aboriginal art may have stemmed from his childhood interests in anthropology and the natural sciences. He writes about himself and his beliefs:

When only a youngster in England I was encouraged by my father to turn my attention to Natural History and under the guidance of one Thomas Lister, poet and naturalist, obtained some workable knowledge of Eutomolgym [sic?]. I became at times on half holidays his companion, chasing butterflies by day and sugaring for moths at night. The love for "bug hunting" never left me...I believe everybody to have an intelligent outlook on Nature, and when he reaches mature years, should take up some branch of Natural History in early years....While the population is small and unobstructive [in isolated places like Kitamaat] it is easy to observe that wild life will recede into more hidden parts and higher ranges. While we look with admiration and wonder at the marvellous advances of civilization, is there not a danger, at any rate in large cities, of losing touch with the world as God made it? The cry in Europe is "Back to the land" should it be for some souls "Back to Nature?" (April 1906:15 -16).

In his advocacy of collection, biological investigation, and a focus on nature, there exist compelling traces of Raley's growing interest in the arts of First Nations peoples. He often refers to First Nations as "nature's children" whose cultural heritage, from his vantage point, was disappearing thanks, in part and paradoxically, to what he both

advocated and practised. By April 1900, Raley was engaged in a concerted and prolonged effort to structure and hone his understanding of Haisla culture. His writings become increasingly long entries about totem poles, the traditional-styled long houses of the Kitimat community, and the canoes and boat-building capacities of the Haisla. He engages in a lay-anthropological cataloguing and recording of the material and natural elements of the culture that he was fervently working to modernize and civilize. As investigations into his natural world grew deeper, Raley wrote:

There is no finer curio collection than one of the Indian spoons, wooded bone, horn, ivory and silver, plain painted or carved. They vary in shape and size. The wooden ones in common use are generally plain but when painted are quite attractive. Those made of the horns of the mountain sheep and goats are often elaborately carved with totemic or heraldic signs. We occasionally find rare old specimens made from the form of the “Allahgim” an animal long since extinct. The silver spoons are beaten out of coins and carved with native symbols, they make most unique souvenirs. In the past, carving has been a profession of great importance and a means of livelihood to many....[t]he carving at Kitimaat is chiefly in wood and metal....[t]he Haidahs [sic] are noted for their skill, especially in stone carving...” (April 1902: 1 - 2)

So great was the level of Raley’s admiration for the skills of Northwest Coast artists that in Kitimat he began to collect objects, and not just the objects of a curio nature that he described to his readership, but objects emblematic of everything savage and uncivilized that he was seeking to expunge from the Haisla people. He described the objects that came to “grace” the walls of his study and to fascinate him:

The secret societies of the tribes of the Northwest Coast are social organizations; some, very complex in their ceremonies, probably were connected with war for purposes of projection and celebration of victory. The regalia used in the ceremonies are masks, whistles or devil blowers, head and neck rings of cedar

bark dyed deep red with the juice of the alder. The above masks [in the photograph appearing with the article], worn by the cannibals, though rather gruesome, grace the walls of the study at the [Raley's] mission house. (October 1902: 1 - 2)

Perhaps working, writing, and thinking under the gaze of Northwest Coast masks motivated in Raley a slow transformation from an assured belief about the need to convert and civilize Aboriginal people to a sensibility that valued the capacities of Aboriginal artists and their creative output. Or perhaps it was a belief that, in Aboriginal artistic practices, one could witness a certain finery, and, he wrote, that it “is not to our credit as forerunners of Christian civilization to see the Indians dying out [...] It behoves us to use all means in our power to prevent it, and save the remnant of a powerful nation....” (April 1901: 9). Whatever the motivation, Raley was a transformed colonialist by the time he moved to southern British Columbia. A type of transference had occurred. Materials and objects that were visually representative of all that Raley initially argued were in need of purification and civilization became re-envisioned. First Nations’ art and culture gained standing and attained legitimacy in one colonial imagination; for one man, the contours of colonialism shifted because of his proximity to the Indian Other. George Raley became a man who, albeit perhaps in an at-times contradictory way, began insisting that First Nations not be understood simply as subjects to constrain and transform. Instead he came to believe that colonialism must recognize and account for the strengths of First Nations.

The insistence that colonialism account for First Nations through a recognition of their worth and capacity is illustrated in what is perhaps George Raley’s most assertive statement about residential school failure, about First Nations art, and about the need for



the colonial project in British Columbia to support some form of Aboriginal autonomy and self-determination. Raley's shift in viewpoint appears in his paper *Canadian Indian Art and Industries: An Economic Problem of To-Day* (1935). Raley insists he is not engaged in a condemnation of the Canadian government's Indian policy. Very carefully, however, he does indeed engage in a sustained criticism of Indian policy in Canada. He begins his discussions gently, observing that "further advancement" may still be possible and that "perfection has not been reached [with reference to Indian status in Canada] even in the most careful and thoughtful legislation and administration" (Raley 1935: 990). The crux of Raley's argument was that within First Nations communities there was a significant economic problem and that, contrary to colonialism's aim to elevate Aboriginal people, the colonial project had done little but worsen Indigenous civilizations. Raley's suggested solutions were threefold. First he argued that "the failures of the past" (992) should not discourage new means of accounting for First Nations people:

We must not entertain the thought of 'thus far and no further,' and erect a mental barrier to the progress of our wards. It is not true that we can find no way out. There is a natural expedient that has not been tried, and conditions are not so hopeless if we, who are partly to blame for the loss of [First Nations'] original industries, would stimulate the native people to revive them. (Raley 1935:992)

Second, he advocated a revival of First Nations "tribal pride" through an elevation of the status of arts, crafts, and creative materials:

Our anxiety is thus not only that this art contribution should not be lost to the world, but also that the possibility of linking up the Indian's primitive crafts with commerce for his benefit should be taken seriously. Supply the stimulus of reward for work and it will be found that the Indians, like other people, will live up to the expectation of those interested in their welfare in this regard. (Raley 1935:993-

Finally, Raley suggested that the solution to the failures of colonialism was to develop a new national respect for First Nations people and culture. The crux of this rejuvenation, from Raley's perspective, would be situated in First Nations production of arts and creative materials, predominantly for sale and distribution, which would spur a national awareness of Indigenous culture and motivate in Indigenous peoples a sense of economic responsibility. The rejuvenation movement would focus on a national education and outreach program about the importance and value of the objects and of the peoples who produced them:

[N]one can doubt the necessity of determined effort to better the economic condition of the Indians; none can doubt the need of restoring morale and self-respect to the Indians; and none can doubt that there is required of the Canadian people a new understanding of things Indian. (Raley 1935:1001)

Raley's coming to a new understanding of things Indian required close association with those who, prior to his arrival in British Columbia, were merely the abstract Others of his colonial imagination, Others in need of salvation and civilization. A relationship between First Nations and non-Aboriginal colonists slowly developed in which geographic proximity overturned the expected order of interchange. Raley was altered by those he initially envisioned himself altering. Within the close confines of the colonial education project in Kitimat, and later in southern British Columbia, Raley developed a sympathy toward and affinity with Indigenous peoples. In his transformation Raley was not alone.

Under Raley's administration, Elizabeth Long was the first teacher and matron at the Kitimat Home for Girls. Apart from Raley, and along with Reverend Raley's wife Maude, Long was the most conscientious contributor to *Na-Na-Kwa*. Her quarterly column, entitled "Miss Long's Letter," provided detailed insights into perspectives and

experiences of day-to-day teaching in a residential school. Elizabeth Long's origin and history are not detailed in *Na-Na-Kwa*, but she was remembered and eulogized by Raley as follows:

A feature of Miss Long's work was the unwearied and conscientious manner in which it was always performed. The simplest duties were done as thoroughly and with as much care as the most difficult, the most important as unobtrusively as the most insignificant. In fact there was nothing small or ordinary in her eyes. It matters not whether in the sewing room or [...]in the kitchen superintending the making of large batches of bread – in the church playing the organ leading the congregation in the service of song she was always the same, earnest and thorough in everything she undertook. In her administration of discipline in the Home she was always calm and deliberate and severity in any form was entirely foreign to her nature. She ruled the girls effectively by the force of her beautiful spiritual character. Her sweet, devoted, consistent life will endure as a fragrant memory not only with the children but with the chiefs and the people of Kitimaat. (May 1907: 3)

Raley characterization of Long suggested a stoic colonial educator who maintained traits of Euro-civility even in remote Kitimat. Long was celebrated as though her adherence to colonial ideals remained unchanging over time, unaltered by the toils of missionizing and education work. Long's own writings, however, suggest that as much as Raley believed she ruled over the First Nations with whom she work, they also had deep impact on her.

When Long began her tenure in Kitimat, as her early writings demonstrated, she held strong convictions about the Haisla people. She believed they were afflicted with traits that only civilization, most notably in the form of her educational intervention, could cure. In an extended description about the death of a former student from the Kitimat Home for Girls, Elizabeth Long's early sentiments about the people whom she was to educate are clear:

Mr. Raley or I took [Eliza, the sick girl] food and medicine three times a day [because] we knew that if one of us did not go, they would not give it to her....Her mother used to annoy us very much by giving her the most unwholesome food it was possible for her to eat [...].One Saturday afternoon Mr. Raley went as usual, [and] he came back and said he thought she was dying [...].I went to the house, saw that Eliza was dying, and found two old women there doing their “cry sing”, I touched one on the shoulder and said “hush”, they stopped for a while then started again, so I gave another tap, and they stopped again, then an old blind woman came in and they gave her a place at the foot of the bed, she had a little talk with them and they all three started, it was dreadful, but I stopped them again. They can start and stop at any minute. All this time poor little Eliza was choked up, gasping for breath, she had been unconscious sometime, and she died shortly after. In a few minutes the room was full of people making a frightful noise, the death wail [...]. The next Sunday Mr. Raley spoke about Eliza, and told the people that they could weep when their hearts were sick if they so desired, but to cry for payment was very wrong. This is what they do.

The friends of the parents get the most pay. (October 1898: 5)

What Long’s early writings make clear is her conviction that even in the intensely emotional moments of their children’s death, Indigenous peoples living without the benefit of civilization would inevitably behave not only inappropriately, but dangerously and against the interest of those in most need. Long also believed strongly in her own ability to intercede into what she felt was inappropriate. Finally, there was a sense of urgency and repetitiveness to Long’s actions, a sort of performance that she suggests, through strength of will, would quell Haisla actions and traits. In Long’s entry then, what is clear is her conviction that the Haisla not only required the intervention of Christian teachers (that is hers) but that without such intervention, Haisla children would perish amidst falsified and inauthentic expressions of mourning.

Perhaps it was the strength of her certainty, her “unwearied, conscientious, calm

and deliberate” conviction that propelled Long to fulfil the duties of a residential school teacher in isolated North West coastal British Columbia. Like Alice Ravenhill and George Raley, though, Elizabeth Long suffered from conflicted understandings about her duties. She also gained some of her sense of self from interactions with those she believed so strongly were in need of transformation. Indeed, Long writes that Haisla girls’ happiness and their expressions of love for her provided a sense of encouragement and repayment for her efforts and sacrifices. Her personal life gained found meaning in her professional work, and she gained personal gratification through professional fulfilment:

After we got home [from a day of showcasing the girls’/students’ baking and sewing] we had a nice time together, three girls led in prayer in English. I was just leaving them, when they called me and said; -- “We love you Miss Long, and do not want to go away,” [for a summer break with their families] (some of them knew they would not come back.) I said, if I had helped them I would be glad I came to Kitimaat, there was quite a chorus half in English and half in Kitimaat “Yexsu have helped nu-gwa.” (You have helped me.) I felt quite encouraged and repaid for anything I had done for them.” (July 1898: 5)

Long’s contempt for and frustration with Haisla peoples, and her personal and professional sense of achievement when loved and valued by Haisla students, are strangely inconsistent. The inconsistency points to tensions between distant visions of the Other and feelings of attachment for those same subjects that come from intimate and proximal relationships with them. For Long, transforming First Nations children involved an almost surrogate parent role, almost a kinship. Furthermore, and again antithetically to writings about the debased and amoral nature of Haisla parents, other writings by Long suggest that the Haisla parental approval of her work was important to her.

Some of Long's submissions to *Na-Na-Kwa* called for parental participation in the school, in the belief and a recognition that their participation would result in a better educational experience for the children: "On Wednesday we had the examination of the girls' industries. They had been equally anxious with me to have a good exhibition and had worked hard. I think we succeeded [because] the parents appeared pleased" (July 1899: 4). The need for approval of those who, in Long's other writings are said to be unable to properly feed or medicate their sick children, seems counter-intuitive: Why would Long and her students have any anxiety about achieving the approval of those with such apparently diminished capacity and civility? One answer is that, contrary to the colonial expectations of her readers, Long was impressed by the Haisla. Over time, and while living in close quarters with them, Long began to search for approval from Haisla parents about the residential schooling she implemented. Like Raley, as Long came to know the Haisla, she harboured contradictory and disjointed perspectives of First Nations. For Long, proximity to the Other seemed to demystify them, reconfiguring her early colonial imagination about Aboriginal savages into people with their own interests and potential.

Long's transformed vision of First Nations, from abstracted savages to peoples with autonomy and potential, is apparent in her writings. She takes an interest in the similarities between First Nations girls (ostensibly savage creatures) and white girls, writing that "we have not been dull [at the school] for we find the girls very much like white girls in that they enjoy a joke, and often relieve monotony by their comical sayings and doings" (April 1901: 8). Well into her tenure in Kitimat, Long lauded the traits of the Haisla girls with whom she worked, writing that "they have truly kind hearts. We are

very glad to have the girls, they are quick to learn, obedient and seem to appreciate the privilege of being here” (October 1901: 3). Long also documented a close working relationship with the Haisla and sense of relief about what they brought to her schooling efforts. She circulated in *Na-Na-Kwa* the following story:

The people gave us the usual good collection of small fish but half of it was lost while hanging up to dry, the shed we used to smoke it caught fire, for a while we were anxious but it was a safe distance from the home so no more damage was done. Soon after the fire happened the women called a meeting and we received a message to go to Chief John Bolton’s house, I took all the girls and we found the women sitting around a large room and the middle was covered with cans of grease, cakes of seaweed, and strings of small fish, everyone had given so liberally, we gained more by the collection than we had lost by the fire. We thanked the women, sang for them and the girls carried the food to the Home.  
(July 1902: 2)

The characteristics that Long comes to ascribe to her Haisla neighbours are certainly a far cry from the immoral, self-involved, heathenish traits that she initially described. Her writings highlight the dynamic and pervious nature of the colonial project in British Columbia and the fragility of colonialist conceptions of First Nations.

The imbricated nature of the relationship between a colonial educator and First Nations children, and the resultant transformation in colonial imaginations, is also apparent in the writings of Maude Raley, wife of Reverend George Raley and intermittent teacher of domestic skills in the Kitimat Home for Girls. In Maude Raley’s almost whimsical and distinctly feminized, domestic contributions to *Na-Na-Kwa*, there are irreconcilably conflicted considerations of First Nations people. The contradictions highlight the gaps between, on the one hand, colonialists’ belief that the betterment and survival of First Nations peoples depended on Eurocolonialist interventions and, on the

other hand, colonialist recognition that those they envisioned as needing the full attention of colonial advancement had much to offer their non-Aboriginal colonialist interlopers. Raley usually began her contributions to *Na-Na-Kwa* with a long list of small household duties and domestic occurrences. Displaying traits of feminine humility consistent with early 20<sup>th</sup> Century expectations about women, she generally prefaced her writings by stating that her readers were likely more interested in the more “important” elements of missionary life in Kitimat; that is, she often noted, the work done by her husband. Despite these caveats, Maude Raley wrote prolific about her work and about the colonial project she undertook in her “isolated home” (M. Raley April 1904: 4). She expressed strong opinions about her students and about First Nations in general. These sentiments included observations about the need to civilize First Nations peoples and the significant challenges associated with that work:

The Natives have made great strides in civilization in the last ten years, but there are simple laws of heredity and hygiene which have not yet penetrated their minds. When the general outlook is rather blue a few moments of retrospect comparing past and present tends to adjust matters and hope revives that while one may not see advancement quite as one wishes, the seed sowing will eventually bring forth fruit” (January 1903: 3)

Despite Raley’s beliefs in the inferior nature of First Nations, which led her to strong convictions about their need for colonial interventions, at a personal level Raley’s certainties about First Nations peoples lost conviction.

In a character description at odds with other writings, Raley offered strong yet conflicted opinions about the Haisla people. While she argued adamantly that the Elders were, problematically, the most resistant to the civilizing advances she worked so hard to achieve, she also described them as thriving people, who provided significant inspiration



to her as a missionary wife and colonial teacher. In *Na-Na-Kwa*, under the heading “My Old Friends,” Raley writes:

You hear much about the girls and boys, something about the middle aged men and women, and very little concerning the old people, but my old friends are not to be set aside. I have just counted them up, and have about thirty. You do not know how interesting they are. My conversations with them usually consist of a few nods or shakes of the head, with prolonged ahs and ohs, but in spite of the difficulties of language, I like going to see them. The old people until laid aside by infirmities are most industrious, but when once they have let go the active duties of life, they are content to spend their days beside the fire. The men make paddles and mend canoes and look after their fishing nets. The women dry a great deal of salmon, and always gather nettles at the proper season to procure material for twine which they spin themselves, then weave in nets. They also walk long distances over rough trails to get suitable bark of which cedar mats and baskets are made. One rarely finds them unemployed. It is a wonder also how many berries they pick and dry....They occasionally bring me some native food when they want matches, a little tea or sugar. From our point of view they have little comfort or ease, but while they have health I believe they are happy. (October 1899: 4)

The descriptions offered by Raley seem strangely incongruous with her observations that she often found herself “blue” when thinking about the impossibility of imparting civility to First Nations people. Instead in her descriptions show deep admiration for those who, according to her other descriptions, are hindered from progression by simple laws of heredity. The thirty Haisla Elders who Raley counted amongst her friends not only inspired her to visit them, thereby increasing her colonist’s proximity to the Indian Other, but they also appear to have embodied industriousness, contentedness, and happiness. She did not try to separate herself from the Haisla Elders, but rather made place in her day-to-day life to spend friendly time visiting with those who she wrote about as being

the most likely to block her colonial goals. In her *Na-Na-Kwa* writings, then, and perhaps even unintentionally, Raley contributed to dismantling a universal vision of First Nations peoples as passive and static subjects upon whom colonial projects were simply imposed. Her writings demonstrate her own shifting perspectives. Close interpersonal relationships developed between Raley and members of the Haisla Nation, the result of geographic proximity between colonist and Indian. The outcome was a shift in her imaginations and visions about First Nations.

Evidence of Raley's shifting perspective about the Haisla is displayed in other of her writings. She extols the virtues of the girls she was ostensibly tasked with transforming in the residential school and offers praise for the other Aboriginal children in Kitimat. In her *Na-Na-Kwa* contribution entitled "A Homely Chat" (January 1902), Raley subverts previous narratives in which she highlighted differences between Euro-colonial, non-Aboriginal peoples and First Nations of British Columbia. Instead she focuses on the positive natures of Haisla children, both in disposition and in physical appearance, and on the similarities between white and Indian children. Beginning from a premise that to non-Aboriginal readers First Nations children are completely foreign and unknown subjects, Raley builds an argument that First Nations children are not so different from any other children:

Doubtless many wonder what the Indian children look like, how they dress, how they play, what they eat, what sort of names they have, and are they happy, etc. They look usually pretty brown, in fact, very much like yourselves when you return from camping, bronzed with the sun, many have fat round faces and all have large dark eyes; many of the girls have fine plaits of black hair; some are nice looking some plain like English children....Big and little wear handkerchiefs and shawls, through most of them have hoods or hats for Sunday; and the boys

have ready made suits. They are [as] fond of play as possible, the boys enjoy the canoes. I am rather alarmed when I see little chaps of no more than three years paddling about, the older lads are rarely without bows and arrows in the spring, the girls skip and play they are old women, and they also know a number of games....The older girls remind me of white girls in this way, two will get very chummy for a time and then there will be a cooling off and new friendships will be formed. On the whole, they are happy and their parents are fond of them.”

(NNK January 1902 No. 17 pg. 5)

Raley’s careful detailing of Haisla children shows the teacher’s desire to undercut a sense of First Nations children as Other, as incomprehensible, and as alien to non-Aboriginal colonialists. The teacher blurs the markers of difference and highlights the commonalities between colonists and the Aboriginal Other constructed in the colonial mind. Her writings offer a potential entry point for other colonial subjects of her day to understand First Nations in a manner that did not frame them as separate and/or different from non-Aboriginal peoples. Raley’s shift away from abstracted ideologic-driven characterizations about the Haisla to a more complex and robust conceptualization of Aboriginal peoples, may have opened particular possibilities for First Nations peoples. To Raley, Haisla children became not just, or simply, unidimensional entities upon which to inscribe colonial civility. Instead they assumed a position of complex, happy beings of whom their parents were fond, and who, even without the benefit of colonial education, had much in common with non-Aboriginal children. Within the close geographic terrains of a residential school and an isolated First Nations village, then, Aboriginal peoples were humanized in the mind of a colonial educator.

### 5.c “The Pupils Patiently Trained Me”<sup>12</sup>: Experiences and Views from St. George’s Indian Residential School

Ron Purvis’s memoir *T’shama*, about his time in Lytton, British Columbia as the boy’s supervisor at St. George’s School, provides insight into the memories and experiences of a residential school staff member. It must be read with caution or even scepticism. The book was self-published in 1994, a time of growing awareness by non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada about the harms of residential schooling. Purvis was aware of the climate in which he published his book. He reminds his readers that the 1990s were a changing time for “Indians in Canada” (64). He also attests knowledge about abuses in residential schools in British Columbia and across Canada and provides hints throughout the book about his self-interest in exonerating himself from potential charges that he behaved wrongly as a staff member of a residential school. Much of Purvis’s distancing from potential accusations relies on him self-defining as sympathetic to the plight of Indians and as a rogue outcast of the school system. He spends significant time elaborating the unique connections he forged with First Nations students, and, using rough-hewn and often self-deprecating language, always manages to position himself as the heroic outsider to colonial processes. The text, laced with assertions of masculinity and latent hostility toward government and church authority, begins with his strange third-person description of his discharge from the Canadian Army: “he didn’t mention, however, that as a Commando he compiled a distinguished record that included serving in North Africa and taking part in the disastrous Dieppe raid” (n.p). Read carefully, with awareness that Purvis knew of the increased First Nations’ legal actions pertaining to residential

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<sup>12</sup> Purvis, Ron. (1994). *T’shama is an Indian Word Loosely Meaning “White Man, Staff, or Authority”: At St. Georges Indian Residential School at Lytton the Author was all Three...*Surrey, B.C.: Heritage House Publishing Company Ltd. 7

schooling, *T'shama* nevertheless provides insight into St. George's, particularly as the school was experienced by the boys' supervisor between 1945 and 1959. Staff, teachers, and administrators of British Columbia's residential schools have not written much about their times in the schools. Purvis's text is the only book-length published account by a St. George's staff member and thus, despite the self-promotional nature of its publication, it provides an important insight into St. George's.

Like others involved in the Province's residential schools, close proximity to First Nations children appears to have transformed Purvis's views on Aboriginal peoples. At the end of World War II, Purvis returned to Winnipeg, only to quickly leave for Vancouver. In Vancouver Purvis quickly secured a job that few wanted. He was hired by St. George's Indian Residential School as the boys' supervisor. When he arrived at St. George's, he was most concerned with asserting control and dominance over the boys he was to supervise. He described his new wards as untamed and rebellious, observing that the supervisor he replaced dared not enter the boys' dormitories: "Wild horses couldn't pull him into the darkened dormitories as he'd received several mild mauplings from his charges" (6). According to Purvis the previous supervisor "emphasized that he couldn't wait to get back to his former relatively quiet job as an orderly in a mental hospital" (6). Purvis's initial understanding of First Nations boys as given to assault and predatory behaviour elicited violence in him. He picked a series of physical fights with the boys to "establish respect":

I was lucky enough to possess a knowledge of boxing, fencing, and unarmed combat, in addition to having been a physical training instructor in the army. As soon as the boys were satisfied that I was undoubtedly the Toughest [boy in the school], I announced that the [previous] pecking order [which saw staff "mauled"]

was forthwith disbanded. (7)

Although Purvis eventually began to learn from the First Nations children he supervised, he did so only after establishing an uncompromising hierarchy of dominance over them. In his early relationship with First Nations people is the assumption that perhaps for their own good, they must be controlled and contained by non-Aboriginals, who know what is best for them.

Purvis's does not write overtly about the importance of place at St. George's Indian Residential School. However, place is a constant theme, particularly as an active agent that ordered his relationship with First Nations students in the school. Although there is little doubt that Purvis was imbued with the colonial discourses through which he lived and worked, his memoir about St. George's Indian Residential School demonstrates that the place-based and intimate nature of his work with First Nations children disrupted and troubled his assumptions and imagination. Because his role ensured constant proximity to First Nations children, Purvis developed an affinity for the students whose opposition to the goals of residential schooling he once had fought violently:

The older boys went to bed later and my routine varied in that instead of a bedtime story [told to the younger boys], we'd usually have a half hour talk session before lights out. During these evenings we'd discuss almost every imaginable topic. I recall that I was particularly impressed by the boys [sic] fondness for their parents and by their loyalties to their respective villages. It occurred to me with a jolt one night that they were making their way as best they could in an alien environment. They were often homesick, and I was astonished to learn that they were not even allowed to talk to one another in their native tongue. Insofar as the school was concerned...English was not only the language of the classroom but also was to be spoken at all times. Any deviation was considered a backwards step and frowned upon. I eventually obtained permission for the boys

to speak Indian during the half hour at bedtime....Contrary to some dire opinions prevalent among some elderly staff members, St. George's did not become a babble of strange tongues because almost everyone reverted to English if they wanted to be understood. It was still the only common language. (Purvis 1994: 40–41)

The diminutive confines of the boys' dormitory at St. George's, and the intimate half hour before bed, were principal factors in Purvis's shifting perspectives on the demands of residential schooling for the students. Within a place-based proximity to the stereotyped Other, Purvis could maintain neither his assumptions about the wild and uncivilized characters of First Nations children nor the need to violently dominate them. Given the litigious climate in which Purvis published his work, he was likely vested in distancing himself from the cultural damage wrought within residential schools. Within this climate, Purvis could have exonerated himself in a number of ways. He chose, though, to anchor explanations about his sympathetic nature in discussions about his students. Given the self-serving nature of Purvis's memoirs, there is no way to be certain that he ever did entirely renounce his early predilections toward violent engagements with the students. Nevertheless, he attributes his transformations, to whatever degree those may have occurred, to close engagement with First Nations students. Purvis's memoir suggests that boys at St. George's were aware of the powerful possibilities afforded by proximity to their colonial subjugators. The students made full use of brief moments and intimate places to convey their realities. According to Purvis, as he developed empathy and connection with the students, he lobbied for change in their circumstances. Thus, although it is impossible to extricate Purvis's words from the climate and times in which he wrote, thus necessitating an understanding that his memoir served self-serving goals, what can be said is that when Purvis does document change in

his perspectives he does so entirely in relation to the First Nations students with whom he closely interacted in the colonial education project.

Other transformations occurred in Purvis's thinking about First Nations students. Given his initial and violent disciplinary strategies, some of the subsequent shifts represent significant change. Staff and teachers at St. George's, like other residential schools in the Province, were consistently challenged by students who escaped the confines of the school. Purvis claims that prior to his arrival at St. George's "about six boys a month ran away" (42). Given that the student population of St. George's was just over 200 students, the absconding of six boys per month must have represented an ongoing and significant undermining of school regulations and disciplinary structures. Student runaways were something Purvis was concerned to thwart. Accordingly, when David Phillips and Morgan Sam (both about 15 years old) ran away from St. George's, Purvis found the two hitchhiking on the Merritt road and brought them back to the residential school (43). Purvis's initial disciplinary strategy involved public humiliation. He made them stand in front of their peers and face invasive interrogation. As the punishment unfolded, however, Purvis remembers:

I was feeling sorry for the unhappy pair when a simple but splendid solution popped into my mind. It would allow the retrieved runaways to save face, do penance, regain their self-respect and return to my good graces. I explained my plan. 'David and Morgan, you are both going to carve a totem pole at least 10 feet tall. I'll provide the cedar poles and the tools. Some of the boys from the north will help you design each of your poles. You can have as much help as you can scrounge and both of you will work in your own free time until the poles are completed. We'll then set them in cement bases and, in the years ahead what you two have just done will be forgotten. The totems, though, will stand at St. George's for many years and so your names will be remembered.' (43)



The face-saving punishment regime was adopted. According to Purvis, the boys took ownership of the making of the poles, demonstrating that when the colonial authorities relaxed their grip, First Nations students found ways to refocus education through the modification of place and the use of time. According to Purvis, the success of this experiment encouraged him to further revise his perspectives about discipline in residential schools. Certainly Purvis had self-serving motivations for presenting himself as a sympathetic and innovative school disciplinarian. Notwithstanding his motivations, however, place and Aboriginal children's resiliency continued as primary themes in Purvis exploration of what was important to him in his work; both themes elicited in him a connection with the school over a long period of time:

All through that year the two cedar poles rested on sawhorses. Every evening the boys were busy around each pole....The Interior Salish Indian had never carved totems in the past but the boys from the north coast of BC had a long background. Because totems were a part of their culture they had a wealth of experience in cedar carving, with talented artisans among them. The totems each had six authentic figures, and David and Morgan and their helpers were very proud when the carvings were finally completed. The totems were then set in concrete and prominently displayed. There were no more runaways during my stay at St. George's. I revisited the school a few years ago [likely in the latter years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century]....and the two totems were as firmly in place as they were when installed those many years ago. (43–44)

Certainly there were grave inequalities in the exchanges between students and staff within British Columbian residential schools. Ron Purvis had the power of colonial authority that could be brought to bear on First Nations students at any time. He also had a motivation to produce a memoir exonerating himself from accusations of abuse by former students. Notwithstanding the self-serving nature of *T'shama*, what can be said is

that whatever his motivation, Purvis maintains his transformation of ideology was based on a close proximal relationship with Aboriginal students. Whatever the change in Purvis may have been, and whenever that change transpired, he attributes it to working with Aboriginal people. As an agent of colonialism, Purvis worked at a residential school to control the unruly behaviour of First Nations boys, yet the behaviours of those same boys very much altered him. In the smallest of ways and through the smallest of places, First Nations students sought to explore, articulate, and express aspects of their identity. As much as residential schools in British Columbia were apparatuses through which were enacted discourses about Indigenous inferiority, and the need for Eurocolonialists to civilize First Nations peoples, the schools were also places where First Nations children actively navigated colonial discourses. As Purvis concludes, “[a]lthough St. George’s School undoubtedly influenced the lives of its students, the exchange wasn’t one sided. The Indian boys and girls have considerably influenced me since that night...when I had to demonstrate who was ‘The Toughest Boy in the School’” (64). Purvis, and his transformation, embody this study’s argument that a much deeper understanding of British Columbia’s colonial geographies can be found in diminutive places, between peoples, and at multiple and micro-scales.

Refocusing inquiries about colonial British Columbia onto diminutive and intimate geographies opens a number of possibilities, particularly when those geographies include individuals closely associated with the Province’s residential schools. The focus on micro-geographies reveals the immense complexities, tensions, and fallibilities embodied by colonial agents. Furthermore, attention to the transformation of colonial agents highlights the powerful resistance of First Nations children. Only by

looking at intimate, everyday, and diminutive geographies can we understand the much broader trajectories and momentums of colonialism, these include colonialism's occasional failures and fallibilities, of which Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia made every effort to avail themselves. Although it is widely accepted that colonialism was by no means a homogenous project (Thomas 1994) and that assertions of domination, including colonialism, instigate corresponding acts of resistance (Scott 1990), it is often difficult to find concrete examples of resistance within large scale, macro-geographic, inquiries. Examples of the capricious and conflicted nature of colonialism become much more apparent when the scale of inquiry tightens to individuals or specific sites.

## CHAPTER 6:

### “SCHOOL DISCIPLINE IS THOUGHT OF AS AN OVER-ALL PLAN”<sup>13</sup>: THE MATERIAL AND EXPERIENTIAL PLACES OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

“...for they...transformed that which was not into that which was, diabolically.”

(Gaeton Soucey 2004: 245)

St. Eugene’s Residential School left an indelible physical mark on the body of Lloyd Baptiste, a member of the Osoyoos Nation in southern British Columbia, who attended the institution between 1956 and 1957 and again from 1964 to 1965. So powerfully affecting were the material spaces of St. Eugene’s that Baptiste walks with a permanent limp, and when he speaks of his time at the school, his childhood recollections of place nearly bring him to tears. Some of his recollections of the school are recorded in the documentary *Survivors of the Red Brick School*, produced in 1999 by the Osoyoos Indian Band. Baptiste’s voice narrates images of long hallways in the deteriorating red brick school.<sup>14</sup> As the crumbling architecture of the schools pans in and out of focus, Baptiste’s voice breaks as he recalls how, at the age of eight, for an infraction of school regulations, he was made to scrub the floors of St. Eugene’s long corridors. On the day of his punishment, and as his scrubbing brought him closer to the stairs at the far right-hand end of the building, Baptiste recalls an Oblate teaching Brother walking down the corridor to conduct an inspection of the work. What happened next is permanently etched into Baptiste’s memory and body.

The Brother found fault in the way the floor was washed and, according to Baptiste, lost his temper, lashing out at the child with fists and feet and sending the eight-

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<sup>13</sup> From the *Indian School Bulletin* 1948.

<sup>14</sup> As I discuss in the conclusion to this research, St. Eugene’s has been fully refurbished and transformed. It now conforms to very different meanings on the contemporary landscape of British Columbia.

year-old hurtling down the school stairs: “When I hit the floor something in my leg cracked. I never received medical treatment, so I crippled up and now it is getting worse. My right leg is two-and-a-half inches shorter than the other” (quoted in Johnson 2002: 1). Lloyd Baptiste and the fourteen other members of the Osoyoos Band who attended the school and who took part in *Survivors of the Red Brick School* are adamant that the school building itself, its surfaces, layout, and concrete presence, is an integral part of their memories about colonial education. They speak less of the pedagogical and curricular lessons they endured within the school than the built environment of St. Eugene’s: the walls in the schools, the feel of the bricks against their hands, the desk alignment in the classrooms, the ordering of the beds in the dorm rooms. They focus on the way that they navigated and negotiated the physical spaces of St. Eugene’s.

Notwithstanding the tactile reality of St. Eugene’s for Lloyd Baptiste, the school was as much a symbolic space as it was a lived and material space. According to the film’s director, Virg Baptiste, the school building can also be understood on a representational level, as a constructed articulation of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century, British Columbian, colonial ideologies, according to which First Nations people were a savage and perishing people in need of acculturation and assimilation into Non-Aboriginal society. The film maker interprets Lloyd Baptiste’s recollections according to the symbolic power of the structure that somehow extends beyond the materiality of the institution: “The Kootenay kids had to see the building every day, they were never able to get away from it,” noted Baptiste. “I think this contributed to the high incidence of early deaths and suicides due to accidents, drinking and drug abuse and other factors....We didn’t need to be saved” (quoted in Johnson 1999:2). Baptiste is quoted as believing “the fact that 90 per cent of

[our] classmates lie in the graveyard nearby is mute confirmation of the far-reaching impact the mission school had on the native children who attended” (quoted in Johnson 1999: 2). That graveyard is still there, a reminder that the schools were (and are) spatialized expressions of colonial intent in British Columbia; they were also places imbued with social constructions about Indians. Consequently, reading and analyzing the schools as material places that also embody social conceptions can illuminate the diminutive and everyday expressions of colonialism with which First Nations peoples contended.

As Lorretta Lees (2001) observes, built environments can be thought of in either semiotic or materialist terms. The first perspective recognizes architecture and built geographies as sociocultural products that represent, legitimate, and underlie social and cultural relations; the second acknowledges them as structures through which social processes and interactions are constructed and constituted, in part, by their inhabitants. With reference to residential schools in British Columbia, these two conceptualizations need not be positioned antithetically but may be employed simultaneously to shed light on the colonial project. Such an understanding most fully acknowledges the complex ways that colonialism gained and maintained power by operating simultaneously at levels of discursivity, territoriality, materiality, and the imaginary (Said 1978; 1993). These conceptualizations were, in many ways, self-evident to Lloyd and Virg Baptiste, whose lived reality at St. Eugene’s was one of the most immediate and intimate expressions of colonial geography in British Columbia, a reality with which Aboriginal children interacted directly and daily. The schools were sites that stood, both symbolically and materially, as enclaves where colonial education policy interfaced with First Nations

bodies, where children experienced and negotiated such policies, and where colonial ideologies concerning Aboriginal Others took *concrete* shape.

This chapter is concerned with understanding British Columbia's residential schools as both semiotic and material geographies. Residential schools, including their landscapes, grounds, and classrooms, were designed as spatial articulations and expressions of colonial pedagogies, premised on discursive constructions concerning Indigenous peoples. This argument is based on close readings of pedagogical and curricular materials produced in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, materials that, even as they may appear to ignore space and place, are unrelentingly invested in place as a means of transforming, assimilating, and ultimately producing Indigenous peoples. By exploring the discursive rhetoric about Indigenous peoples found in the curricular and pedagogical publications produced by Indian Affairs, I am able to juxtapose the agency's ideas about Indians with discussions of place-based educational solutions found in the same literatures. The juxtaposition highlights a relationship between discourse and material environments, which then leads me to a close detailing and reading of the physical and symbolic places of residential schools. Specifically, after detailing when the schools operated, where the schools were located, and who oversaw their management and operations (Table 6.a and Figure 6.a), I discuss residential school structure and design, including the school buildings, the rooms inside the schools, and the outbuildings and grounds that surrounded the schools. I also undertake a semiotic reading of British

<u>NAME AND LOCATION OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL</u>	<u>YEARS OPERATED</u>
Ahousat Indian Residential School – Clayoquot Sound	1904 – 1939
Kitimat Indian Residential School/Elizabeth Long Memorial School – Kitimat	1922 – 1941
Alberni Residential School – Port Alberni	1891 – 1973
Fort Simpson School – Port Simpson	1874 – 1948
Coqualeetza Residential School – Sardis/Chilliwack	1888 – 1940
St. Michael’s Indian Residential School – Alert Bay	1929 – 1975
St. George’s Residential School – Lytton	1901 – 1979
Metlakatla School – Metlakatla	1873 –1908
All Hallows School for Girls – Yale	1884 – 1920
Kuper Island Residential School – Kuper Island/Chemainus	1890 – 1975(78)*
St. Eugene’s / Kootenay Mission Residential School – Cranbrook	1898 – 1970
Lejac Indian Residential School – Fort St. James/Fraser Lake	1910 – 1976
Kamloops Indian Residential School – Kamloops	1890 – 1978
St. Mary’s Mission Residential School – Mission	1861 – 1984
St. Francis/Squamish Residential School – North Vancouver	1898 – 1959
St. Augustine’s Indian Residential School – Sechelt	1912 – 1975
Christie/Kakawis School – Tofino	1900 – 1983
St. Joseph’s/Cariboo Indian Residential School	1890 – 1981

**Table 6.a: Residential Schools in British Columbia. Names, Locations, and Years of Operation. \*In some cases there are conflicting records for the precise date of the school’s closure.**



# Residential Schools in British Columbia

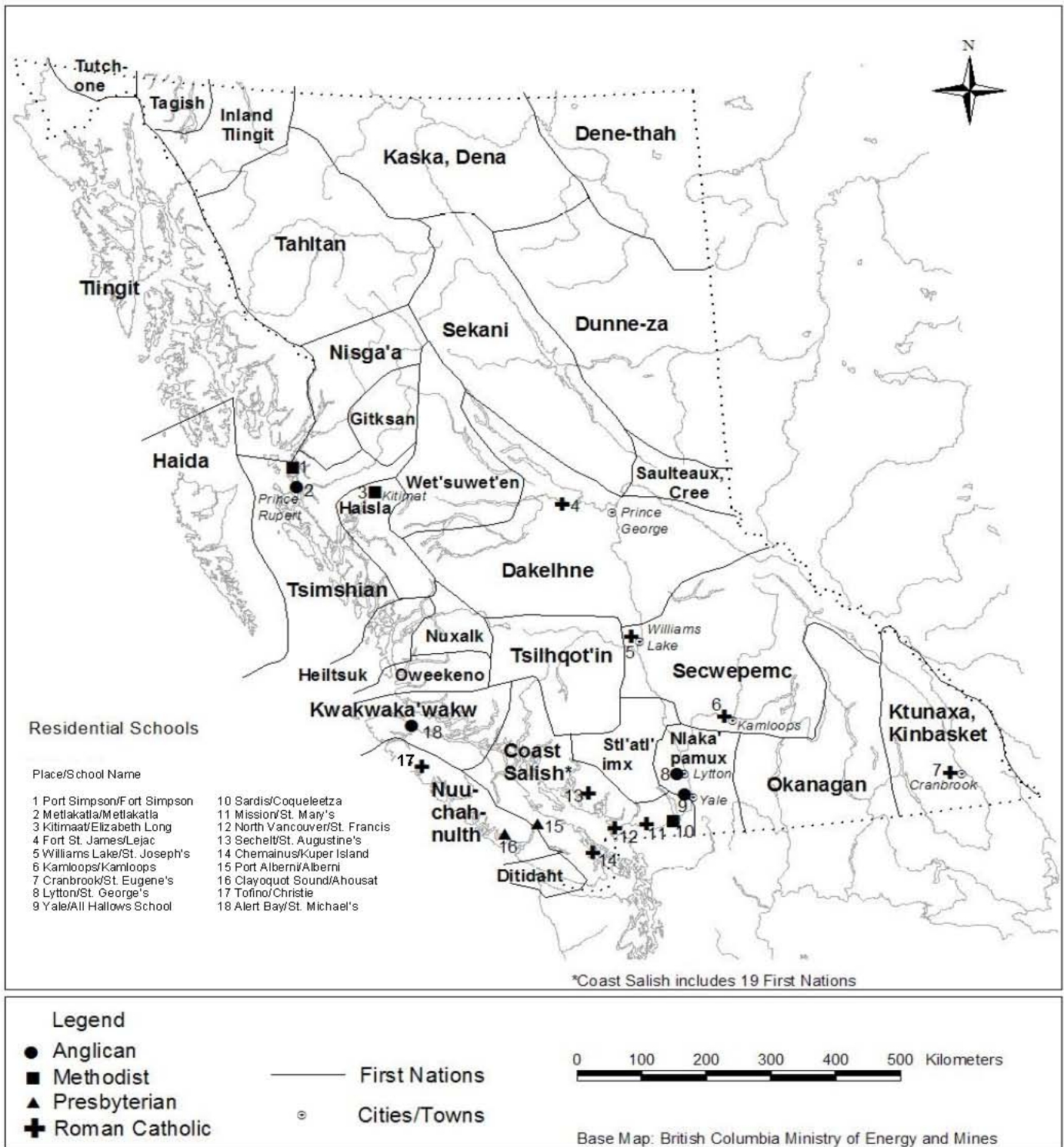


Figure 6.a Map of British Columbia's Residential Schools and the denominational affiliation of each school

Columbia's residential school geographies, arguing that even the public press contributed to an understanding of the sites as material interventions that would save aberrant and othered First Nations children. I am not, however, satisfied with a unidirectional understanding of residential schooling; instead, I consider residential schooling as a set of spatialized relationships and experiences where all those involved were affected and no one was left unaltered.

#### **6.a “To Produce Indians”: Educational Design and the Pedagogical Imperatives of Residential School Places**

Colonial education, which transpired within residential schools and through the pedagogies delivered in the schools, was motivated by a highly embodied goal: the production of Indians. On February 10<sup>th</sup> 1947, the Honourable J. A. Glen, Federal Minister of Mines and Resources, circulated his departmental objectives concerning Indian education in Canada through the *Indian School Bulletin* (I.S.B.). The I.S.B. was the only nationally circulated publication of its type in the country. It focused on the pedagogy and the curricular mandates of Indian schools and was developed specifically for educators, administrators, and staffs of those schools. Minister Glen's was of the opinion that:

The objective we must constantly keep in mind . . . should be first of all the establishment of the Indian population of this country on a self-supporting basis, and the development of an Indian citizen proud of his origin and cultural heritage, adjusted to modern life, capable of meeting the exacting demands of modern society with all its complexities, progressive, resourceful and self-reliant. *To produce Indians* of such capacity is not an easy task. It may mean 100 or 200 years of the keenest kind of insight and understanding. Education of every type must be utilized. This should include schools, community groups, the press, the

radio and all available forces, both positive and negative. (*Indian School Bulletin* February 1947: n.p. *my emphasis*)

What is not explicitly stated in these departmental objectives, but what is necessarily implied, is location. The objectives, of course, had to be carried out *somewhere*; they required a geography to be fulfilled. Place and spatiality, particularly if understood as active and compelling agents of social undertakings (Massey 2005), might thus be added to the list of “forces” required to “produce Indians.” Colonial pedagogical imperatives, then, were heavily vested in spatial forces. And spatial forces (schools) within the rhetoric of the Indian Affairs Branch were positioned to function in two ways. The first way was constitutively: schools would reflect pedagogical goals, and pedagogical goals would define and reinforce the schools as places. The second way was generatively: the place of schools would function as an active agent in the production of Indians. As other geographers have highlighted, places constructed at the behest of those who hold social power are often concretized realizations of that power (Park and Radford 1997; Philo 1997; Ploszajska 1994). Furthermore, built places, particularly if they have institutional connotations or affiliations, are often deployed through impositions of order, delimitation, and constraint to transform marginalized subjects, positioned by the social elite in antithesis to that social elite.

If the goal of residential schooling was the production of Indians through pedagogical and spatialized means, it is worthwhile to review some considerations about the concept of children and childhood, a topic of increasing interest to geographers (Ansell and Smith: 2006; Kraftl: 2006). Although, at first glance, childhood is an unproblematic marker of human development preceding adulthood, an increasing number of geographers realize that (like gender, race, sexuality and other markers of humanity

that are often taken for granted as naturalized) childhood is socially constructed with spatialized and historicized roots (Holloway and Valentine: 2000; Prout 2000).

Childhood is infused with aspects of invention that historically considered the child either as “devil-like” and in need of subordination or as “angel-like,” the archetype of social innocence in need of protection and sanction. Furthermore, children tended to be (and still are) seen as “human becomings rather than human beings” (Holloway and Valentine 2000: 5). Historically, however, Aboriginal peoples of all ages were constructed as children with reference to Non-Aboriginal peoples (Raibmon 2005). The *Indian Act*, even in its more recent late 20<sup>th</sup> Century incarnations, insisted that “Indians were like children to a very great extent...and required a great deal more protection than white men” and that “[Indians] must either be treated as minors or as white men” (Leslie and Maguire 1975: 61). Residential schooling policy was informed by a belief that “the [Indian] race is in its childhood...There is in the adult [Indian] the helplessness of a child; there is too a child’s want of perspective...” (Davin 1879: n.p.). With reference to Aboriginal children, then, the discussion becomes somewhat more complex. Aboriginal children within the purview of colonial educational imperatives were not quite human in their Indigenusness. They needed to become fully human (i.e. Non-Aboriginal/preferably White) by the forces of the Indian Affairs Branch of the Government of Canada.

The social construction of Aboriginal children by Non-Aboriginal powers was markedly different from the social construction of (their own) White children. Certainly White children, consistent with conceptualizing children as requiring shaping and development by adults in order to become adults, would have been schooled, tutored, and shaped in both the family setting and within institutions, including schools (Gagen 2004;

Gleason 1999). The process of White children becoming White adults, however, was premised on the possibility of developing an extant set of characteristics, including whiteness, which necessarily led to a White adulthood. Aboriginal children within residential schools were not schooled by people who recognized in the children basic qualities of their White colonial selves, qualities that simply required appropriate nurturing in order to mature. Instead, childness in the Aboriginal person could be understood as having been viewed, by White educators and policy makers in the context of Indian schools, as much more particularly *Indian childness*; thus it was not something merely to shape into adulthood, because that would assume Indian adulthood, but rather something to do away with entirely, thus preventing the child from maturing into an Indigenous adult (see for instance Churchill 2004).

For both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal children, the sociocultural moulting out of childhood and into adulthood has spatial aspects. The contribution of geography to studies of childhood can serve to illustrate the importance of place and to add detail and texture to broad-brush analyses of childhood construction (Holloway and Valentine: 2000). When considering children and childhood geographically, normalized assumptions about place might fruitfully be troubled in order to demonstrate that the locations where children's lives unfold are, unto themselves, nuanced places imbued with particular assumptions and demands. Furthermore, when everyday places of childhood (the home, the school, and the community) are accounted for as influential agents in the production of children and childhood, the sites themselves can serve to illustrate social attitudes towards the children who occupy them. Unfortunately, much of the existing literature does not theorize childhood constructions in which the child is doubly othered, both as

child and racialized child, with reference to the adult who is tasked with the child's construction. There are gaps with reference to Aboriginal children and childhood, particularly in an historic context. More than just children, students in residential school were *Aboriginal* children, fundamentally othered within a context of residential schools created, operated, and directed by Non-Aboriginal adults. The places where efforts were made to transform Aboriginal children into adults, or, more specifically into Non-Aboriginal adults, were also not the everyday spaces of Aboriginal peoples. Instead the schools were of White colonial design. Consequently, when considering the spatialized aspects of Aboriginal childhood within the confines of residential schools, the compounding factor of children's Indigeneity must be accounted for in terms of how Non-Aboriginal structures and subjects understood and positioned Aboriginal peoples.

The particularities of Aboriginal childness rested on certain constructions that residential school policy makers and teachers worked at articulating and maintaining. Such constructions were often built through comparisons to the Non-Aboriginal educators tasked with educating Indians and were often articulated spatially. The *Indian School Bulletin* (I.S.B.) offers insight into the ways these constructions operated:

The object of this publication is to place before Indian Agents, Inspectors of Schools, teachers, missionaries of the various denominations engaged in Indian work and all others interested, a clear picture of our [the Indian Affairs Branch of the Federal Government of Canada] aims and educational objectives. (1946: 1)

In order to provide a clear picture of their educational objectives, Indian Affairs described for colonial educators the characteristics of Indians, particularly children. The descriptions illuminate their assumptions about Indigenous peoples, which, in turn, motivated the educational places of residential schools and their transformative

potentials:

There are few more challenging tasks confronting the people of Canada than the education and advancement of the Indian population, which at this date, exceeds 130,000. This is a task that demands devotion and self-sacrifice on the part of Indian Agents, teachers, and missionaries, and the exercise of patience and a sympathetic understanding on the part of the general public....There is no place for a pessimist in the Indian service. It is a service that should be made up of men and women who will look upon the so-called problems that confront them from day to day as a challenge to develop and give freely in a spirit of self-abandonment the best that is in them. (I.S.B. October 1946: 1)

Aboriginal peoples, including their children, were understood as problems requiring confrontation; they were positioned unsympathetically as obstacles to the good intentions of colonial educators. Antithetical to Indian character, characteristics of optimism, dedication, and selflessness were sought in Non-Aboriginal educators for whom challenge and overwhelming opposition must prove no obstacle. Individuals practising in the classroom were expected to embody the objectives of transforming Aboriginal children. Such characteristics were personified by Hildegard Thompson, an Indian-service teacher, who wrote in the I.S.B. of herself and other Indian teachers that:

There is no person quite like the Indian service teacher. She goes about her duties uncomplainingly, working long hours, and rendering a service that has permanent and immeasurable influence on Indian progress. She accepts low pay in comparison to other professions and yet in the face of all adversities she remains in the service and continues to teach Indian children. She lives in isolated communities from her home and relatives. Often she must travel miles over unimproved roads to the nearest town for the mere essentials of living. She endures the most primitive living conditions. Their [Indian] problems are her problems. She stands beside them always in big things and little things. She explains the complexities of a modern world to them [Indians]. She stands as a

helper between the uneducated and the literate world with which they [Indians] must deal. She instructs their children. (Thompson in *The Indian School Bulletin* September 1954: 1)

Thompson's vision is eminently place-based and anchored in a sense of the colonial project unfolding materially. Indian school teachers were self-sacrificing helpers, bridges who physically stood between primitivism and modernity. They endured savage places and lifestyle demands of self-sacrificing work while simultaneously, and corporeally, maintaining the elements of civility they were tasked with imparting to those they instructed. In her characterization of the Indian service teacher, Thompson constructs Aboriginal children as synonymous with harsh, unimproved, and primitive conditions and places. Indian children, in Thompson's writings, represent adversity and demand the investment of long hours from those who have, selflessly, nothing but the best interests at heart for Aboriginal peoples. The teachers and administrators of Indian schools reading the *Indian School Bulletin* were informed about their Aboriginal subjects through a perpetuation of ideal characteristics about themselves.

More directly, Indian Affairs constructed Indians by carefully detailing the pedagogical challenges associated with educating in residential schools and by setting forth what Indian educators would encounter in their jobs of producing Indians. It was precisely the characteristics of Indians that made the practice of Indian education markedly different from educating Non-Aboriginal children in Canada. Even the act of teaching reading to Indian children rested on the teachers' understanding the inherently flawed character of the Indian child, which was linked to their Indigeneity and connections with their family and cultures:

White and Indian children have a very different background of reading readiness.



The day to day experiences of White children unconsciously impress them with the importance of reading....It is an unusually poor White home that does not receive either a daily or weekly newspaper...few White families in this country, of whatever racial origin, are completely without reading matter. White children from the earliest moment that they are conscious of their environment become increasingly aware of the powerful force exerted by written symbols upon the life about them. What Canadian parent has not had to answer the question, “what does that say?” almost continuously from his child’s fourth birthday....[T]oday, thousands of our Indian children are being raised in homes in which the written word is almost as unknown as before the coming of the White. This is particularly true in the North West Territories but presents a real problem throughout the whole of Canada. Youngsters raised in homes where reading is unknown come to school almost completely lack in readiness for reading. Those who suffer from the additional handicap of coming from homes in which English is unknown and native language alone is spoken, complicate the teacher’s problem still further. (I.S.B. October 1946: 10–11)

Infused within the language about curriculum and pedagogy, then, is a multiple set of explanations about Aboriginal children, their families, and their broader communities. Teachers and readers of the I.S.B. were presented with a vision of a child who, at the familial, intellectual, and behavioural levels was fundamentally antithetical to White colonial norms and destined to be problematic. The construction of Aboriginal children as aberrant to the norms valued by the Indian Affairs Branch provided rationale for colonial education and explanation of the teacher’s purpose in reference to Aboriginal children.

Highlighting the inherent aberrance of Aboriginal children was not the only discursive strategy evident in Indian Affairs’ publications. Through the I.S.B., Indian Affairs also presented Aboriginal children as geographically and economically peripheral

to other Canadians. The Branch suggested that education was the solution to this marginalization and that the need to overcome such marginalization was the defining characteristic of Indian schooling. There was a distinctly spatial underpinning to the Branch's logic, including a sense that Indian lands (reserves) were no longer suitable places for transforming Indians:

The primary aim of our service is the improvement of Indian Education. The publication of the bulletin...[will] assist in achieving this objective. It is felt that too little attention is usually given to preparing teachers to meet the problems which should be faced by rural schools. The schools of the Indian Affairs Branch are primarily rural and their most important job is to prepare young Indians to earn a successful living through the use of their own resources. As these resources are not sufficient to provide subsistence for all the Indians now living on Indian lands, a fair proportion of young Indian men and women must be trained for other occupations....Thus the goals of our Indian Education are much more clearly defined than those of the average Canadian school. The administrative problem in the Indian Service is therefore one of acquainting its teaching and administrative staff with these objectives and guiding them in their applications...this problem is not a simple one. However, in future issues of this bulletin you will learn how our Service intends to meet it. (I.S.B. October 1946: 1)

Over the ten years during which it was published, a principal aim of the *Indian School Bulletin* was to reinforce an understanding about Aboriginal peoples and children that fulfilled a colonial logic of a need to transform Indians and produce them anew. Teachers were encouraged to implement extra-curricular activities based on the particularly flawed character traits of Aboriginal children:

These extra curricular activities [cadet corps, the school newspaper, girl guides, etc.] provide the best opportunities for the Indian child to experience accepted social practices and to associate with the White child on a common ground. Here he learns to give and to take, to respect the rights of others, to be a member of

society, to see how others do and to “learn to do by doing”. Here he learns the habits of reflection, self-direction and *initiative within reason*. Here he learns to conduct himself according to the practice of the society in which he lives. A properly developed system of extra-curricular activities enables him to develop the habit of getting along with people as a member of a democratic society. (I.S.B. February 1947: 4 *my emphasis*)

Embedded with the pedagogical imperative promoted by Indian Affairs, then, was a self-fulfilling logic concerning those they were to transform and re-produce. The students were envisioned as lacking in abilities to respect others or to get along with others. These putative traits justified a belief that the potential for advancement of Aboriginal children was limited. In spite of years of educational investment, Aboriginal children never seemed fully transformable, so the hegemonic system of colonial superiority was justified with an associated requirement of constant schooling. The pedagogical goal was simultaneously one of transforming the children into non-Indians, while also ensuring they were not schooled to pose any threat to colonial power: the children were to be “almost white, but not quite” (Bhabha 1994).

Other feature articles in the *Indian School Bulletin* focused on scientific findings about Indian children and peoples more generally in order to establish the aberrance of students who Indian service teachers were tasked with transforming. These features, prefaced with statements such as “here is an article which may help to give our field officials and teachers a new ‘slant’ on the early history of this continent,” were touted as articles that would keep readers up-to-date with the most advanced knowledge about Indians (I.S.B. November 1949: 9). In 1952 the I.S.B. reproduced research published in *The Canadian Journal of Psychology*:

In this report teachers will find guidance in the use of tests and the interpretation

of results. Included in the article is a discussion of such factors as: (a) Language; (b) The school system; (c) Lack of tradition in education; (d) Reduced attendance; (e) Test motivation; (f) Lower Socio-economic level of the Indian people; (g) Lack of confidence in their ability to compete with non-Indians in occupations requiring higher levels of education and responsibility. After meditating on this report most teachers will resolve to increase their attention to counselling and guidance...and to emphasize curriculum-content and other procedures by which the self-esteem of the boy or girl may be heightened (I.S.B. May 1952: 15)

As teachers and Indian school officials were coached on the methods appropriate to instruction, they were also tutored on the deficiencies of their pupils. These two innstructions required each other since, according to Indian Affairs, the premise of Indian education between 1946 and 1956 in Canada was the production of a new kind of Indian ready for 20<sup>th</sup> Century colonial paradigms. The teaching guidance about that production had necessarily to be anchored in a logic that the Indian was unfit and damaged. Once that construction was established, the pedagogical logic of transformation became reasonable, if not inevitable.

How and where was this transformation to occur? The most obvious answer, furnished clearly within the pages of the *Indian School Bulletin*, was that it was to occur within Indian schools. In a feature article on school inspections in British Columbia, readers of the *Indian School Bulletin* in May 1952 were coached to consider the spatial relationship involved in student instruction. Residential schools were judged and ranked according to six categories: the classroom, organization and management, the learning situation, educational growth of students, and special activities. The physical space of classrooms was judged for “neatness, attractiveness, size, cleanliness, lighting...[and] seating arrangements.” These aspects would, in turn, structure the elements of the

classroom such as “grouping of students, character of control/teacher pupil relations, prevention and correction of pupil maladjustments [and], pupil participation in classroom duties.” The publication went on to assert that layout and organization of classrooms shaped educational organization and management, thus forming the foundation of learning in Indian schools, including the “thoroughness of instruction, character of assignments, [and] pupil interest and effort.” Each of these school characteristics, opined the publication, shaped the ultimate goal of Indian Affairs: “the educational growth of [Indian] students.” This growth was thus envisioned as an outcome of the organization and management of the classroom as a place-based learning situation. Ultimately, effectiveness of educational space was evaluated based on students’ “mastery of subject matter; development of skills; gain[s] in power of self-expression; emotional stability; socialization, courtesy and manners [and]; development of desirable attitudes, interests, habits, and appreciation” (I.S.B. May 1952: 13–14).

The link between place as an active agent in Indian schools and the production of modern Indians is apparent elsewhere in the Branch’s pedagogical publications. In January 1952, the *Indian School Bulletin* printed a long feature entitled “School Discipline”:

In the “traditional school”...submission to control is stressed and children are regimented into a common pattern of behaviour, and obedience is a cardinal virtue...Those children who do not conform are problems requiring punishment. But in the “modern” school discipline is thought of as an over-all plan – the arranging of conditions for learning. In the modern school rules are still necessary, as they are in any society. But the rules are derived by the groups and accepted as necessary, sensible, reasonable restrictions and requirements. What we are trying to do in modern schools is to make self-discipline possible and

adequate and to make learning more thrilling, meaningful and efficient. [We should] think in terms of: finding out what the present needs of children are; guiding discoveries and experiences which help the child towards maturity, developing interests; stimulating self-discipline; an interest in the “whole” child (I.S.B. January 1952: 10–11).

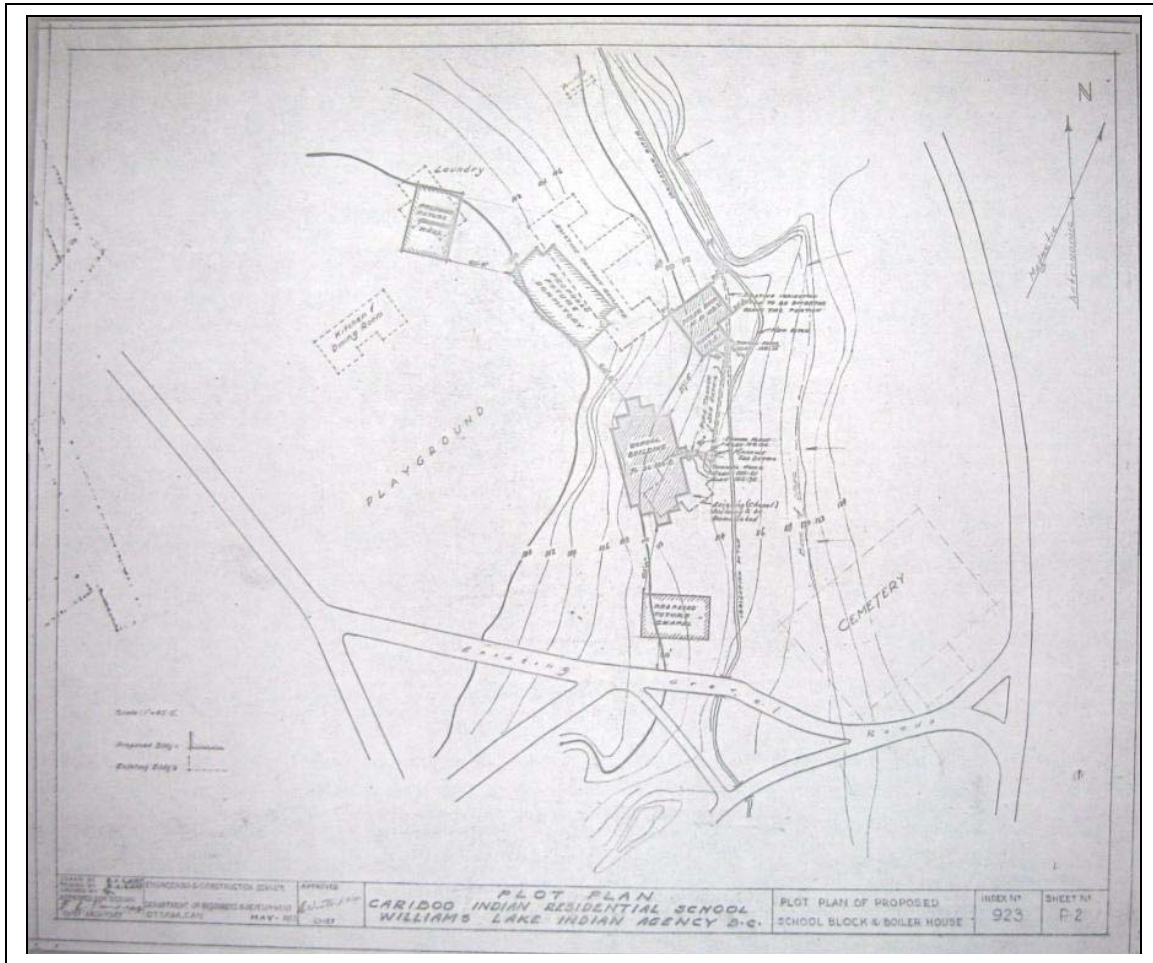
Here, learning conditions are anchored in spatial considerations. The arrangement of learning conditions was fundamentally linked to discipline. The disciplinary possibilities of schools, then, rested in the place of the school, or put another way, the place of Indian schools, like other colonial schools, was itself disciplinary (Mitchell 1991). If the aim of Indian school spatiality was to ensure that students internalized discipline, thus restricting and sanctioning themselves in accordance with common modes of behaviour or rules set forth by their fellow students and, if the only rules and behaviours understood as acceptable within structures of colonial education were those of Non-Aboriginal (White) culture, then the place of residential schools must be understood as designed to produce Indians who were so entirely inculcated into a state of being non-Indian that they monitored themselves as such. In this way, the classrooms of residential schools were, intentionally or unintentionally on the part of their colonial designers, realizations of the panopticon, a place in which subjects became induced to self-monitor based on the hegemonic ideals of a dominating context intent on subjugation of aberrant others (Foucault cited in Mitchell 1991). The transformation of Indians relied on the material and place-based surroundings in which education was to occur. Residential schools were disciplinary structures fashioned to produce Indians who understood themselves aberrantly and constantly monitored themselves and one another as non-Indians. These ideals took concrete shape in the material geographies of the eighteen Indian residential schools scattered across British Columbia.

## **6. b From Plot Plans to Brick Buildings: Sketching Residential Schools on the British Columbian Landscape**

Maps provide insight into the link between imagination and on-the-ground practice.

Maps, as many geographers have argued, are interpretive representations of place: much more than simply representing hypothetically objective characteristics of physical or sociocultural landscapes, maps function both to project value-laden perspectives about places and to reinforce those perspectives for future users (Wood 1992, Godlewska 1995). Maps and visual representations of place guide material usages of landscapes, direct the lived experiences of those landscapes, and shape the sociocultural interactions that occur on/within the landscapes (Kurtz 2006). Indeed, with reference to colonial mapping projects, and as Anne McClintock (1995) has argued about Henry Rider Haggard's map in the novel *King Solomon's Mines*, maps are records of how spaces designated for colonial incursion were first *imagined to be* and then *made to be* by colonial subjects. Maps, according to McClintock and others, are rich texts displaying the gendered and racialized urges and assumptions felt by colonial subjects toward othered lands and people. Embedded in maps, then, are a series of ideologies and imaginations about what was being represented. Maps of residential school sites thus offer an entry point into discussions about the school spaces that would eventually materialize, after the mapping was complete, on the landscapes of British Columbia.

The establishment of St. Joseph's as a residential school, and the continual growth of the school's student population in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, shaped the built environments of the school, including the need for additional buildings that, in turn, required mapping of the area. These representations illustrate certain colonial



**Figure 6.b: 1938 Plot Plan of Cariboo (St. Joseph's) Indian Residential School in William's Lake, B.C. (Personal collections, courtesy of the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, Kamloops British Columbia).**

understandings of the landscapes intended for transformation by educational institutions.

In May 1930, the Engineering and Construction Services of the Federal Department of Resources and Development proposed a plot plan (Figure 6.b) for the Cariboo (St. Joseph's) Indian Residential School in Williams Lake, run in partnership between the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.) and the Federal Government of Canada between

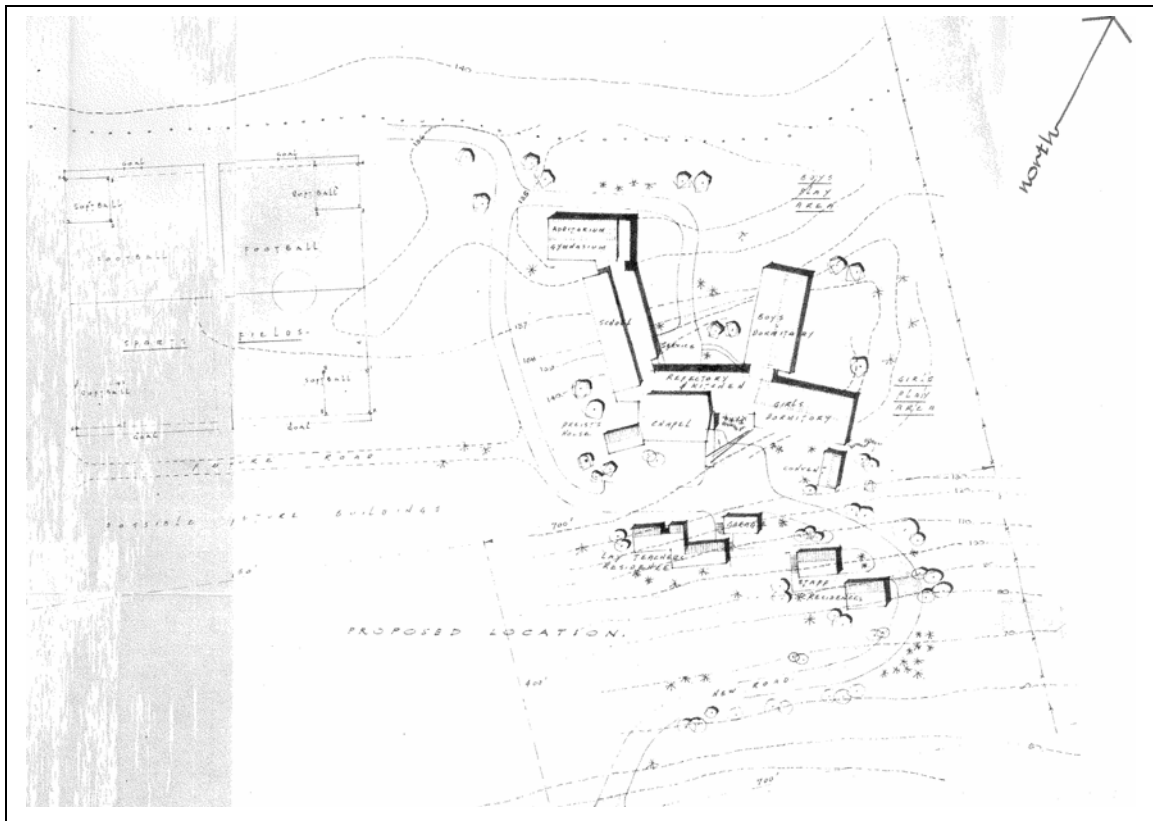


1890 and 1981 (Lascelles, 1990). The location that was captured in the 1930 plot plan was not new to the purview of the Catholic Church, having first been missionized by the Oblates in 1842 when Father Modeste Demers arrived from Quebec with a fur brigade travelling into the interior of British Columbia near Kamloops (Morice 1971; Sanderson, n.d.). Although Demers stayed in the Williams Lake for only sixteen days, a small church was built on the location that St. Joseph's came to occupy. Between 1844 and 1848 Demers was followed by the Jesuit Father John Nobili who was, in 1866, followed by O.M.I. Fathers Chas Grandidier and James McGuckin, both sent to secure a permanent Catholic mission in the northern interior of British Columbia. According to McGukin's diary, he officially opened a school in 1872 with eleven First Nations boys in attendance, four of whom were permanent boarders (Brown, 1971). Four years later, in 1876, the O.M.I. secured the services of three sisters to staff the small school, thus allowing girls to attend the school (Sanderson, n.d.). That same year the *Indian Act* was established, solidifying the legal authority of the Federal Government to manage the lives of First Nations including their education. By 1878, 42 boys and 33 girls, a combination of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students, were enrolled in the Mission School in William's Lake. By the 1880s, the Federal Government was moving away from day schools, showing a preference for residential schools that served only First Nations children and, in 1890, St. Joseph's was officially recognized by the Government of Canada as a residential school ministering only to First Nations children (Furniss 1992; 1999). In 1896, and after significant challenges in the recruitment of staff, the school secured the services of three sisters from the Sisters of the Child Jesus Order in France, which allowed an increase in student enrolment. The school drew from First Nations

throughout north central British Columbia, including the Secwepemc, Carrier, and Tsihqot'in Nations, and it increased in enrolment throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Furniss 1999). By 1954, the main dormitory and administration building could house 179 resident students, and by 1967, the school had a student population of over 300 students and occupied 10.5 acres of land (*Williams Lake Tribune*, February 3, 1981; *William's Lake Tribune Centennial Edition*, 1967). Although illustrating a much smaller scale, the St. Joseph's plot plan produced by the Department of Resources and Development illustrates what others have argued was an active erasure of First Nations from land: it depicts no First Nations presence near or on the site (Brealey 1995). The majority of the plan suggests empty space, curtailed and divided on three sides by roads that encompass a tight semi-circle of buildings. Both the cemetery and the children's playground spaces were situated on the edge of the property. The playground was situated downhill from and in front of the school buildings, which looked over the playground space. Not unlike the spatial constructions of almost all schools, including non-residential schools, this location situated students within the gaze of educators and adults, diminishing them to the educational imperatives of the built environment. The cemetery, an aspect of the Cariboo school yard that was certainly not a component of non-residential, Non-Aboriginal, schools in British Columbia, was perched at the highest elevation of the site, rendering it visible to the entire school and lending a suggestion of finality, an ultimate ascent, and thus a constant reminder that, for some, St. Joseph's Residential School was a place of permanent habitation.

Another map of residential school space in British Columbia, this one of St. Mary's School in Mission and created in 1958, offers insight into links between land

planning, building construction and design, and educational ideologies at play about First Nations in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. On September 24<sup>th</sup> 1958, just three years shy of St. Mary's Mission Residential School centennial year, a site plan (Figure 6.c) for a re-positioning of the school was drawn up by Gardiner, Thornton, Gathe and Associates of Vancouver. Like the 1930 plan of St. Joseph's, the new plan of St. Mary's proposed relocation site illustrates how preliminary imagining and organizing reflect the



**Figure 6.c: 1958 Proposed Plan for Relocation of St. Mary's Indian Residential School in British Columbia. (Archives Deschatelets: Fonds of St. Peter's: PC 101. M67C 18a)**

ideological urges and assumptions held by the colonial planners. The 1958 plan was rendered at a turning point in St. Mary's operations. It was the precursor to the 1960/61 relocation of the school that, until then, had occupied the same plot of land upon which the first school and church buildings had been built. Although St. Mary's School had

been expanded in 1928 when two new classrooms were built, and again in 1933 when another new building was erected. In the last years of the 1950s a full relocation of the school took place, and subsequently in 1965, the old school buildings, some of which had existed for one hundred years, were demolished (Lacelles 1990). In the 1958 plans, marked spatial division is vividly apparent: Places associated with St. Mary's, including the school buildings themselves, the school yards, the playgrounds, and the living quarters of the students, staff, teachers, and ecumenical officials, are all separated from each other in a series of binaries. Even though the administrators of St. Mary's espoused integration, the spatial organization of the school displays an non-assimilative agenda very much predicated on the separation of First Nations from others, and of girls from boys in the proposed play areas and in the planned dormitory spaces. Students are also separated from educators with a sharp division between the lived places of First Nations students and those of the educators. The planned school spaces of St. Mary's represent a social distance, a divide; despite that, the space's central feature is the chapel. Religious space is the focal point of St. Mary's and residential education, around which all other buildings and subjects congregate. The priests' house is the only building allocated a place in the forefront of the chapel, although it is still *attached* to the chapel, thus embedding the intimate yet hierarchical relation of O.M.I. priests not only to the school chapel, but also to all the surrounding components of the residential school.

With the proposed layout of the new road in the 1958 map, a distinct distancing of First Nations children from the sights of those entering the school space is achieved. Unlike the contours and directions of the two roads that had served St. Mary's prior to 1958, both of which ran parallel to and afforded almost full visibility of the school, the

meandering newly proposed road directed subjects first alongside the staff and teachers' residences and then to a view of the school buildings from only one side. This layout of the school buildings and the road entry ensures that the playgrounds are not first sights to be seen when entering the school property, although they are positioned in a way to insure they are in sight of the school and those who monitor the schools. The spatial layout of the school thus secures a twofold achievement: to a viewer, the materiality of the colonial school is afforded primacy over First Nations children while, simultaneously, the organization of the schoolscape does not allow pupils to leave the view of the school and its associated educators. Renderings of the buildings constructed at St. Mary's and St. Joseph's suggest the ways colonial planners imagined educational imperatives spatially. The questions then arise: if the plans – arguably preliminary imaginings – of residential school places illustrate ideologies and assumptions about educational imperatives in colonial British Columbia, what might the schools themselves reveal about social constructions and relationships between First Nations and Non-Indigenous peoples in the Province? What might be learned about the relationships between First Nations and colonial subjects through an investigation of small and material places in which those relations unfolded? To answer these questions, the analytic focus must move to the built school structures and grounds.

#### **6.c “As to the Ways and Means”<sup>15</sup>: Material Place and Residential Schools in British Columbia**

That four of British Columbia's Indian residential schools remain standing, although

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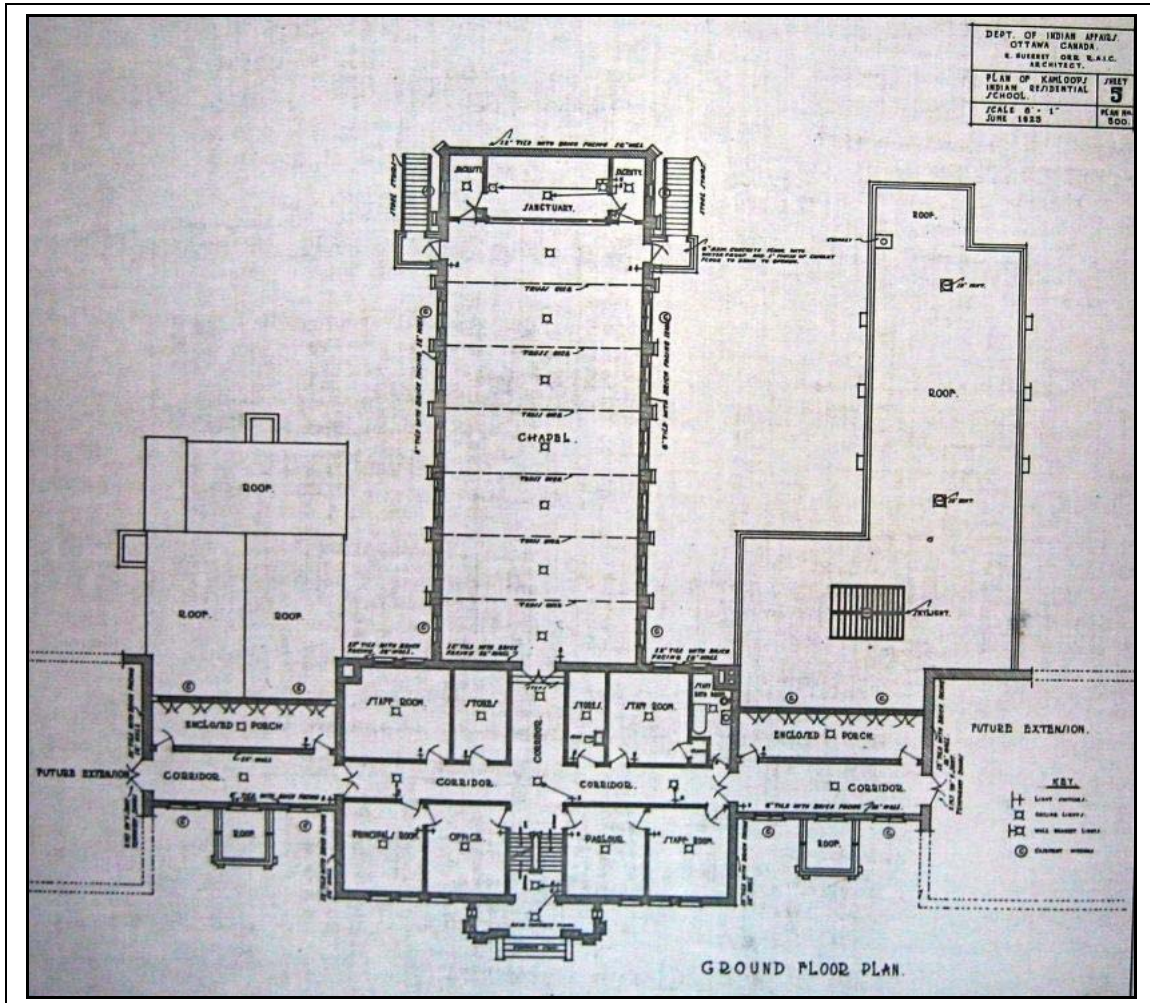
<sup>15</sup> Brown, O. G., G. J. Buck and B. O. Filteau. (July 1956). *Report of the Educational Survey Commission on the Educational Facilities and Requirements of the Indians of Canada*. Ottawa: Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Government of Canada. No pagination.

without some of their outbuildings, is perhaps testament to the immense power of the institutions. Even among the 21<sup>st</sup> Century landscapes of the Province, they are imposing architectures. Three are multi-storied, duo-winged, brick or cement-block buildings with façades dominated by a steep staircase leading up to tall double doors. Kamloops Residential School still stands against sage hills, overlooking a large vista from a natural high spot in the landscape. The building, spanning more than 35 meters, was experienced by First Nations students as overwhelming and disorienting:

When I got to the residential school [Kamloops], it looked huge. I remember thinking, how am I ever going to find my way around here, everything's so big. When Father was talking to me, it seemed to be hollow and echoing. It seemed strange, you could smell the polish of the floors, it seemed so different. When I got upstairs the lights were out and it was dark in there. When I finally knelt down [to pray], I disappeared under the bed, it was so high...I remember laying there and crying and crying. (quoted in Secwepemc, 2000; 182)

Once inside the doors, a wide corridor spans to the right and left and, on the perpendicular, a hall leads directly forward to the former chapel. In the case of both Kamloops Indian Residential School and St. Eugene's Residential School in Cranbrook, the rooms around the entry stairway were the domain of educators and school staff (Figure 6.d), and included the school office, staff rooms and, in the case of Kamloops, a parlour. The wings of the school, which in Kamloops were extensions, held classrooms that added subsequent to the construction of the main centre-block. The basement was devoted to domestic activities, including dining halls, laundry facilities, kitchen and the heating facilities of the school, and a series of storage rooms. The boys and girls infirmaries were on the first floor, above the main entrance, and on the top floor under the eaves were the boys' and girls' dormitories. The dormitory area was punctuated with staff

rooms that were simultaneously enclosed and separated rooms that opened into the students' space, thus ensuring surveillance while maintaining distinction between supervisor and student quarters. The blueprints for Kamloops and St. Eugene's residential



**Figure 6.d: Blueprint Ground Floor Plan of Kamloops Indian Residential School. (Personal collections, courtesy of the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, Kamloops British Columbia).**

schools have survived. For other schools, where there are no blueprints or where the structures no longer exist, analysis is more challenging. Student testimonies, documentary evidences, including writings and videos about the schools, and school photographs still support the argument that there was an explicit relationship between the spatial organization of residential schools and the purposes of colonial education. The

organization and use of place, and the users' experiences of that place, offer insight into colonial education in the Province. I propose, therefore, to link the materiality of B.C.'s residential schools to the ideological and policy imperatives governing the schools that, in turn, informs considerations of colonial geographies in British Columbia.

Canada is a nation in which royal or governmental commissions have long provided the means of investigating or reporting on complex social issues (Barman and Sutherland 1995). Reports produced under the auspices of such commissions can be understood both as reflecting a social climate in which the topic under consideration has attained a certain public notice and as an effort to closely document the parameters of the topic that has attracted public concern. Although some other reports of residential schools in the Province do exist, most of them do not cross denominational boundaries and do not focus specifically on the materiality of the schools.<sup>16</sup> The most comprehensive and unified spatial data on all Indian residential schools in British Columbia, independent of location or denominational affiliation, is found in a commission report, which offers detailed documentation of the physical and material attributes of all residential schools in the Province. The purpose of the report, written through the mid-1950s and entitled the *Report of the Educational Survey Commission on the Educational Facilities and Requirements of the Indians of Canada*, was "to make recommendations as to the ways and means of accelerating through education the integration of our fellow Indian citizens into the Canadian nation" (Brown 1956: n.p.). The report was authored by O. G. Brown (the former Municipal Inspector of Schools for Burnaby, British Columbia), G. J. Buck (The Director of Correspondence Education in Saskatchewan), and B. O. Filteau (the

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<sup>16</sup> Examples of other reports include T.A. Lascelles 1990 report entitled *Roman Catholic Indian Residential Schools in British Columbia*.



former French Secretary and Deputy Minister of Education in Québec) and was presented to the Honourable J. W. Pickersgill, of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration in July 1956. The report detailed all Indian schools across Canada, including British Columbia, and is comprehensive in its summary of the schools' physical and pedagogical attributes, including construction dates, number of students served, classroom grade breakdowns, and school amenities. After detailing these, the authors then offer a series of recommendations. The section of the report relating to British Columbia's Indian schools is organized around the 15 provincial Indian Agencies. Surveying of all British Columbia's Indian schools took 24 days and occurred between October 1955 and October 1956. The majority of the work occurred in April and May 1956, when 12 Indian Agencies were reviewed, each taking between one and three days. Discussions of the schools clearly linked material place with educational imperatives, often concluding that the built structures of British Columbia's residential schools were deficient in that they were insufficient to the pedagogical imperative of assimilating the Province's First Nations. Most of the proposed solutions offered in the report are focused on reordering and reconfiguring the schools' rooms, buildings, dormitories, houses, and structures, thus again illustrating the entanglement of spatial arrangement and ordering with the educational goals of transforming First Nations children.

Kamloops Indian Residential School had almost twice the student population (413 students attending at the time of the survey) of any other residential school in British Columbia. According to a "Souvenir Edition" of the school's newspaper, produced in 1977, the school buildings of the 1920s were "magnificent" compared with the "appalling conditions" of the previous buildings, all of which lacked "modern amenities" (Liah

1977: 12). According to the publication, the school buildings of the 1920s corresponded to the vision and imagination of Father James McGuire who, although he had “no experience with the Indians, [which] was a handicap, [he was] a brilliant university professor and founder of a college” and was responsible for the modernization of the school (Liam: 12).

Despite the lauding in the school’s publications of the institute’s modernity and magnificence, other records indicate Kamloops faced some significant challenges at pedagogical and material levels. According to the *Department of Citizenship and Immigration Annual Age Grade Report* for Grades 4 and 5 kept by teachers between 1953 and 1954, there were significant unmet academic needs in the student population.<sup>17</sup> Between 1953 and 1954, all of the Grade 4 boys were over 13 years old, seven were 15 or 16, and one was recorded in the “19 Years and Over” category. Of the nineteen girls in Grade 4, eleven were between 16 and 17, while six were 15. The records for Grade 5 are similar: even of the 8 boys, 7 were 15, 16, or 17 and one boy fell into the “19 Years and Over” category. Of the nine girls in Grade 5, two were 19 years or older, and the remainder were all 14 and 17. Furthermore, *The Daily Registers for Recording Attendance* at the school between 1947 and 1948 and between 1933 and 1935 captures a remarkable degree of ill-health in the student population. For the school quarter ending September 1947, six students in Grades 2 – 6 missed 36 days of class due to mumps and chicken pox. By the second quarter of the same year, only five of the 33 Grade 2 students were not afflicted with mumps or chicken pox. Of the eleven Grade 6 students, only 2 did not suffer from the mumps. One Grade 2 child missed 32 of the possible 55 school days

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<sup>17</sup> Data cited and compiled is based on the author’s personal collections, provided by Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, 2004.

due to Chicken Pox. Eight of her peers missed between 15 and 30 days while nineteen Grade 2 children missed between five and fourteen days of instruction due to the Mumps or Chicken Pox. The Grade 1 class of the same year, again for the quarter ending December 1947, fared equally poorly. Of the 38 total students, only ten children did not suffer from mumps or chicken pox. Again out of a total of 55 possible school days, one child was so sick that she missed 41 days of classes. Other students missed between three and 28 days of classes with the average time away from class due to illness just over ten days. The frequency, duration and severity of outbreaks of illness in the years before the 1956 publication of the *Report of the Educational Survey Commission on the Educational Facilities and Requirements of the Indians of Canada* was reflected in other school records. School records for September 1935 indicate that teachers had simply ceased taking classroom attendance: there were no children in class due to a Scarlet Fever Epidemic. Between March and December 1935, two children died in Kamloops Indian Residential School; due to illness, two children “left school,” another three were “discharged,” and fifteen were placed in isolation.

Significant discrepancy existed between, on the one hand, the ways officials from Kamloops Indian Residential School imagined and promoted their institution and, on the other hand, the stark curricular and physical realities of the school as captured in teachers’ records. These discrepancies are also apparent when Federal Government expectations of Indian schooling are compared with Federal Government findings about the schools. For instance, an Indian Affairs Branch publication entitled “Programme of Studies for Indian Schools,” instructed teachers to:

Instil [in Indian students] the qualities of obedience, respect, order, neatness and cleanliness [while] great care must be exercised by the teacher to see that the

schoolroom is kept thoroughly clean...the Department will expect its teachers to carry out...sanitary precautions (Government of Canada; n.d.)<sup>18</sup>

That same year (1954–1955), however, when Kamloops Indian Residential School was surveyed by Commissionaires of the Educational Survey Commission, the space of the school was deemed anything but satisfactory to the learning objectives outlined by the Government of Canada. The school included a home economics room, a science laboratory combined with a typing room, and, in another separate building, a general industrial arts shop. A total of eleven classrooms were used for instruction at Kamloops: six were located within an outbuilding, and five, located in the main residence of the school, were deemed “not very suitable,” “poorly spaced,” and “overcrowded” by the Commissioners (Brown 1956: B.C. 11). The Grade 2 class, comprised of 27 students, was located in what had previously been a storage closet (12’ x 28’), and was considered unacceptable by the surveyors. The five girls’ dormitories of varying sizes were scattered throughout the school complex, all of which were served by washroom, bathing, and lavatory facilities that were deemed “inadequate” for the tasks the places were designed to fulfil. Of two boys’ dormitories, one was an L-shaped room in the attic of the school that slept 140 boys or more. In the opinion of the Commissioners, “there was a considerable element of risk in sleeping such a large number of pupils in these remote attic quarters” (Brown 1956: B.C. 11).

At Kamloops I. R. S. recreational places, like those at other residential schools, were divided according to gender. The girls’ areas included “two playrooms about 40’ x 40’...for the junior and intermediate girls...and a half section [of the sewing room] for a

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<sup>18</sup> Although this publication is undated, it was found affixed in a 1954/1955 Teachers’ Daily Register for Recording the Attendance of Indian School Pupils at Kamloops School: I have thus assumed the publication corresponded to that year.

senior girls' common room" (B.C. 11–12), while playrooms were in the basement and were described as having "coarse concrete floors" and as "depressing". Other rooms in the basement evinced equal disapproval from the Commissioners. The washroom and lavatory facilities with "an antiquated type of metal troughs...[for] toilet facilities [and] floors wet from leaky installations" were critiqued for not encouraging or developing "sanitary habits [or] desirable standards of cleanliness" in students (12). The dining room facilities also were deemed inadequate, primarily because thirteen tables and benches, measuring 8' x 30', allowed less than "one foot seating space for each child" (12). The litany of material and physical space limitations at Kamloops Indian Residential School prompted the Commissioners to conclude that "the quota assigned to this school should not be more than 300 pupils" (13). Despite the significant challenges with overcrowding and the governmental commission's negative assessment that the physicality of the school was not fulfilling educational imperatives, the materiality of the schools continued to function, for the Oblates who ran the school, as a backdrop and marker of educational success at Kamloops. The façade of the main building was featured in photographs of the pupils and staff who lived and worked at the school. These photographs showed ordered and behaved subjects, well aligned and symmetrical in front of the school: the students appear part of the school building, not at odds with it at all. They fit with the school as if the school had somehow produced them, had made them, as opposed to accommodating them or unmaking them.

In spite of the survey's stern findings and its associated recommendations, student enrolment continued to expand at the school. The class of 1958, probably including students present during the April 1956 Kamloops survey, was lauded as exemplary by

Father Dunlop in his 1977 “reminiscences” about the school (Dunlop, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1977: 10). He was appointed principal in 1958 and writes of that year that the students were “young, vibrant, colourful, intelligent and relaxed...[They] worked hard, studied hard, played hard, and did everything with great gusto” (10). With reference to the years leading up to his appointment, Father Dunlop wrote that “the school is gaining quite the reputation in educational circles [in 1954]” and that “the students of K. I. R. S. continue [in 1955] to bring honour to the success of the school and prove how capable Indian people are of taking their places in the academic field” (10). Although Dunlop’s enthusiastic reminiscences about Kamloops between 1954 and 1958 suggest the school was an ideal place of living and learning, the student population of the school had by 1957, against the Commissioners’ recommendations of 1956, expanded to a “registration [of] 424: 218 girls and 208 boys” (Dunlop, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1977: 10). These numbers exceeded by over 120 the maximum number of students thought by the Educational Survey Commission to be reasonably accommodatable in Kamloops Residential School. Indeed, in the years after the Commission, the numbers continued to exceed the Commissionaires’ recommendations: 425 pupils in 1955, approximately 400 in 1961, a high of 452 in 1963, and 402 in 1966 (Lascelles 1990: 70). Notwithstanding, Father Dunlop’s enthusiastic portrayal of Kamloops I. R. S. in the mid- to late-1950s, the institution continued to operate far beyond capacities deemed safe by the Educational Survey Commission. Indeed, the school space was in violation of even the earliest regulations for residential schools in Canada (1910), regulations that stated:

The number of children to be accommodated in each school was capped. The cap ‘was fixed by consideration of air space and ventilating systems, and the floor space in class-rooms. In the dormitories the air space must be at least 500 cubic

feet for each child. In the class-rooms the limit is to be fixed by floor space for seats and the air space for pupils, the latter to be not less than 250 cubic feet for each pupil, and the former 16 square feet for each pupil' (quoted in Milloy 1999: 94).

Other residential schools in British Columbia also embodied tensions between material and pedagogical disrepair and staff visions about the sites' prosperity and symbolic representation as modern places fit to transform Indians. In 1956, St. Michael's (Alert Bay) School served the second largest (after Kamloops) student population of the residential schools in British Columbia. The school's mid-century population was recorded at 318 students, spanning Grades 1 through Grade 8, and included 21 students categorized as High School students (Brown 1956: B.C. 16). The school was geographically located within the Anglican Dioceses of Colombia. From the perspective of the Federal Government, the school was situated within the Kwakwaka'wakw Agency of northern Vancouver Island, in the community of Alert Bay, on Cormorant Island. Anglican missionization began in Alert Bay with the settlement of Reverend Alfred J. Hall in 1879. According to materials printed by the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (M.S.C.E.C), the presence of the Anglican Church was a "vital force in the life and welfare, both spiritual and material, of the some two thousand Indians of the Kwagiutl [sic] Nation" (Anfield, c1934).<sup>19</sup> Much of this success was attributed to Reverend Hall's almost immediate establishment of a school for boys (built in 1882, less than for years after Hall's settlement) and the subsequent 1912 erection of a girl's school and home. In describing his school's students, first principal F. Earl Anfield, Esq., wrote:

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<sup>19</sup> Beyond information from the *Report of the Educational Survey Commission on the Educational Facilities and Requirements of the Indians of Canada*, much of the data compiled for discussions about St. Michael's Indian Residential School are from personal collections attained through the Alert Bay Community Archives.

In the past fifty years [prior to 1934] some 450 boys and 200 girls have passed through the Alert Bay Residential School, and some of these are to be found in almost every village of the Coast north of Vancouver Island, where good homes, clean villages, home arts and crafts, industry and interest plainly speak to those with eyes to see the foundations soundly laid in school days, and then when graduation came, nurtured and carried on at home, aided and encouraged by the devotion and interest of village missions.” (Anfield, c1934: 10)

Notwithstanding Principal Anfield’s and the M.S.C.E.C’s characterization of the 1882 boys’ and 1912 girls’ buildings as ‘residential,’ the school only officially began operations as a residential school in November of 1929, with the opening of a four-story brick structure that remains to this day the largest building on Cormorant Island. The new school building was built just to the east of the original school for girls, a three-story (two main floors and an attic space) wooden structure commonly referred to as the “School Block.” The school block operated as the main section of classrooms for the residential school until it was torn down in 1957. Located approximately 50 meters from the beach, St. Michael’s Residential School was surrounded on three sides by a working farm, including pastures to accommodate a herd of dairy cows, an orchard, several gardens, and barn outbuildings. The space directly in front of the school entrance, replete with a circular drive before the school’s front steps, served as a site for displays and performances for boys, including them “standing on parade” (Anfield c1934: 15), for the posing of residential school brass bands, and for school photographs and pictures of teachers and their students.

Like the other residential schools where the buildings and material spaces were deployed as stages for displaying the power of educational institutions to produce civilized Indians, St. Michael’s had some significant shortcomings. The 1956 Report of



the Educational Survey Commission found that while the residence provided living accommodations for 218 children, there were “a number of deficiencies, partly because of inadequate planning and partly due to a lack of supervisory staff” (Brown 1956: B.C. 16). The toilet and bathing facilities located directly “off the basement playroom areas” were “deficient,” while other bathroom facilities located elsewhere in the school were described as follows:

These [other washroom and lavatory facilities] consist of 14 wash basins, 4 bathtubs, and 7 toilets in the girls’ basement with some of the units out of order. On the boys side are 14 basins, 8 of which had taps disconnected. The few toilet bowls were very unclean and the shower room, a crudely constructed affair, [was] in deplorable condition. (B.C. 17)

Other places in the school fared equally poorly in the survey. The children’s dining room, while deemed “large enough” was described as “poorly designed for serving;” flooring in the dormitories was described as “badly slivered” and thought to “require linoleum covering;” the beds in the boys’ dormitories were “in poor condition and should be re-enamelled and have gliders placed on the legs” (B.C. 17). If the living spaces of the school were poor, the educational spaces of the institution were no better. Indeed, the survey commissioners considered that the school could not operate as a suitable study space: “The classroom situation is of a temporary nature and better facilities should be provided;” and “There are no study rooms or evening recreational rooms and the presence of high school boys with the elementary children presents disciplinary problems” (B.C. 17–18).

There seemed to be significant disagreement about the quality and function of place at St. Michael’s Residential School. On the one hand there is the assessment by the Educational Survey Commission of Canada that the school did not, in a very material and

physical manner, meet the educational needs of students attending the school. On the other hand, “favourable reports [about the school] were received from the principal and staff” (B.C. 18). Indeed, even in 1961, the school’s first principal, Earl Anfield who went on to become the Indian Commissioner of British Columbia was quoted in a local newspaper as saying that education would be the “salvation” of First Nations people in the Province as it constituted “the key to what lies ahead. You need trained leaders with educated minds” (Anfield quoted in *The North Island Gazette*, 12 January 1961: n.p.). Anfield’s viewpoint was consistent with his early assessment concerning the symbolic and material power of residential schools, namely that days spent inside the school plainly established foundations that permanently alter First Nations children, thus setting in motion transformation of First Nations communities beyond the direct environments of the school. The power of St. Michael’s came not only from its direct and everyday management of First Nation’s children’s lives, but, from Anfield’s perspective, in its power to produce vector-like Indian subjects who would reproduce the transformations engendered by the school-place within their home communities. The difficulty, however, was that the places that were ostensibly tasked with training leaders with educated minds were not really up to the job. They were slivered places, including micro-locations of deplorable conditions, which provided neither appropriate learning environments nor sanitary and safe residency requirements. And yet the school places, in the case of St. Michael’s in Alert Bay, were defended and in fact lauded by school administrators as sites that would produce leaders for First Nations peoples living in a landscape of radical social change.

The symbolic nature of residential schools’ physicality in British Columbia,

including their dimensions and layout, was a topic of interest to other educators who worked inside the institutions. In her 1916 correspondence, Margaret Butcher of the Kitimat (Elizabeth Long) Indian Residential School detailed each dimension of the school and residence, which she described as keeping her “jolly and warm” and “well looked after and...happy” during her time as a teacher there.<sup>20</sup> So important was the physicality of the school that, in Butcher’s communications, school-place is constantly celebrated. The sitting room produced a “jolly fire” while, overall, the school was “well-furnished” and boasted “glorious cupboards and storerooms.” The physicality of the buildings is conceptualized as particularly wonderful by comparing it to its stark, depopulated surroundings: “It is astounding to find so well equipped and well built a house so far from everywhere.” The building stood as a place not only in which to educate Haisla children, but as emblematic of the incursion of civilization into untamed wilds. The vision of the school as a material intervention into uncivilized wilds had a long history, including descriptions by the home’s first Matron that the school-place and school-site were responsible for “bringing the light to Kitimat” (Long n.d.). In her lengthy writings for the Women’s Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada about missionary processes in Kitimat, Elizabeth Long focused on the construction and maintenance of ‘new’ buildings (i.e., not Haisla in design or structure) as synonymous with bringing spiritual enlightenment to the community of Kitimat. According to Long, when Reverend Crosby first attempted missionary work in Kitimat during the late 1800s he was forced to preach and teach within “old houses” built of cedar with “cedar roofs.” The ills of these old houses exposed Crosby and made him vulnerable to wild dancing

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<sup>20</sup> The fonds of Margaret Butcher, from which these discussions draw, are found at the Kitimat Centennial Museum and Kitimat Centennial Museum Archives, Kitimat, British Columbia.

men, some of whom were described by Long as “man-eaters.” The construction of roving and contaminating First Nations, who could only be kept at bay through the construction of civilized colonial buildings, illustrates the deep connection between built material place and the Christianizing, civilizing, ideologies circulated by missionaries about Aboriginal peoples. Indeed, according to Long’s writings for the Women’s Missionary Society, the story of Christianization and transformation at Kitimat, which led finally to the establishment of the residential school that MargaretButcher came to occupy years later, is ultimately a story of converting physical and material place.

The site upon which Kitimat’s residential school was built began as contested territory. Long’s account of the site stipulates that, in 1877, after much hardship and sacrifice and with the assistance and support of Reverends Crosby and Duncan from other north-coast missions, a Haisla man (Wahuksqumalayu/Charlie Amos) who had converted to Christianity erected a small log church, “partially built from cedar slab” (8). In the case of those who attended the “infant” church, the first year was a “season the Christians were persecuted” in which “their faith was sorely tested” and it included the infiltration into the church by those “who ate dead bodies” (9–10). In Long’s writing there is a sense that the conversion of souls and bodies paralleled the conversion of buildings. For Long, disruptions of the Christian endeavour began to abate only with the material transformation (by Non-Aboriginal peoples) of buildings designed for missionary purposes:

[T]he work went on, sometimes amidst great opposition...[and then the] young people who joined the mission gave of their poverty to help build a new church in Kitamaat village. Mr. Crosby, with a white carpenter, and a schooner load of lumber and material to begin building, proceeded to Kitamaat. Some of the

lumber had also to be taken in canoes 140 miles. The foundation was laid on the ground where Wahuksqumalayu's log church had stood. The first building served as church and school house for many years. (11)

From Long's perspective, the transformation of First Nations peoples required the construction of place by Non-Aboriginal peoples with materials not native to the area. It was only through these buildings and constructed places that the colonial and Christian presence could be established and permanently maintained.

According to Long, the first students at Kitimat Residential Home for Girls preferred living away from their families, in part because of the material comforts offered by the new school. This preference did not shift until "all the old houses [had] given place to nicely built frame ones" (17). The church built by Reverend Crosby on the foundations of the "infant church" established by Wahuksqumalayu/Charlie Amos remained in use as a schoolhouse until, under the principalship of Reverend Raley in 1893, it became the site of the school that Margaret Butcher came to occupy and detailed in her 1916 correspondence. The first home was opened in January 1894, and, by 1896, the school was "a building of four rooms, girls' living room, storeroom, and room for the full-time teacher" (Beck 1983: 16). With the injection of additional funding from the Women's Missionary Society of Toronto in 1897, more construction began and the school expanded to include "a teacher's room, sewing room, a large dormitory that slept 30 girls, a kitchen and storeroom...The building is entirely wood with the exception of four chimneys which are terra cotta pipe. There are 34 windows and two fire escapes leading from the dormitory" (Beck 1983: 17). This school, perched on the cliffs overlooking the Haisla community below it, was valued by its principal, Reverend Raley, who boasted: "a civil engineer, a cannery manager, and a sawmill manager...all

estimated the building in its present position worth, at a low figure, between \$2,000.00 and \$2,500.00” (quoted in Beck: 17). Following from Elizabeth Long’s descriptions of building transformations in Haisla territory, then, Raley’s synopsis also suggests that there was worth, both moral and economic, accumulated in the material structures erected by missionaries in Kitimat.

In May 1906, the residential school burned to the ground. Through lobbying of the Women’s Missionary Society, Reverend Raley was once again successful in raising the funds needed to erect a new building. It was this building that MargaretButcher described in 1916. It was a “plain square house” with “ a door on to [the] balcony which is in front of the hospital room, [which] has two beds, three just now, but only two as a rule.” The three-story, clapboard-sided buildings contained two dining rooms (one for students and one for the children), a sewing room, four rooms or “domains” for teachers and matrons (one of whom claimed the attic space), a den “where visitors are put,” a boys’ dorm, a girls’ dorm, a sitting room for the teachers and matrons, a reception area, and a series of storage and utility rooms. As Butcher notes, the school was built onto a steep incline: it was “150 ft. above sea level.” It was unique in British Columbia, with the exception of Kakwais/Christie Island Residential School, in that it was not attached to farm land nor did it have industrial or agricultural lands upon which it drew. Instead, the school relied in part on the Haisla in Kitimat for resources, including fish. Above the school, but connected by wooden stairs and walkways, was the nurses’ residence and Kitimat Infirmary, all of which completed a small cluster of buildings operated primarily by Non-Aboriginal settlers occupying space that looked down on the village below.

Despite the powerful symbolic position of Kitimat’s residential school, and not

unlike the realities of other schools in the Province, the Educational Survey Commission found the place inadequate for its intended purpose. By the middle of the 1950s, the school buildings that Margaret Butcher had so carefully and proudly described, were criticized by the commissionaires as “old two-story building containing two classrooms and living quarters for two teachers,” one of which was “not a good unit [as] [t]here is no running water, no indoor toilets and no playground” (B.C. 6). However, the 1906-building still served 50 children in Grades 1 through 3 (29 students in Grade 1 and 21 students in Grade 2/3). From the perspective of the commissionaires, the deterioration of the old residential school was mitigated by the presence of a new school building catering solely to students in Grades 4 through 6. The new school building, which contained two classrooms, meant there were four classrooms in the Village of Kitimat, serving a total student enrolment of 104 pupils in 1956. Although the new two-room school house, which also contained “a fine residence for a married couple” (B.C. 6), was more positively reviewed than the old schoolhouse, the place was far from ideal:

Unfortunately it is located on low land and the basement, as usual, has been sunk so deep that its floor is under tide level water part of the year. This causes, not only seepage, but once and a while, a real flooding which makes it impossible to keep the furnaces operating. There have been, also, complaints regarding the drinking water. The school grounds, although of sufficient size, are unkempt and in poor condition for any sports' activity. (B.C. 6)

The places of schooling for Haisla children in Kitimat, although linked with the children's transformation and betterment in the minds of missionaries and teachers intent on Christianizing them, posed significant challenges. Notwithstanding the comparative difficulties faced by other rural schools in British Columbia (see for instance Barman and Sutherland 1995), the Kitimat buildings in and through which First Nations children were

schooled were in disrepair. Although the school was imbued by colonial and missionary educators with symbolic power to bring light into the dark and to transform individual children and, by extension Indigenous Haisla people more broadly, the school was a deficient living and learning environment, which affected the school's educational potential:

Attendance [of students in high school] is not too satisfactory, particularly with the senior girls, and their achievement, though improving, is not of a high standard. Explanation given for this situation was the low standard of achievement before reaching high school. (Brown: B.C. 6)

Ultimately, according to the commissionaires, the failure of the school place to adequately house students was linked to a failure in the school's pedagogical purpose.

When Reverend George Raley, one of Elizabeth Long's Residential School's longest-serving principals (1894–1907), left Kitimat he relocated to Sardis, British Columbia, in order to become the principal of Coqualeetza Residential School, one of the Province's longest-operating schools. Not unlike the school he had left, Coqualeetza occupied a site imbued with missionary and colonial potential, a landscape that by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century was storied as existing solely to educate and “cleanse” Aboriginal peoples so as to transform them from the old into the new. *The Coqualeetza Story: 1886–1956*, which celebrated the school's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, narrates the historic imperative of the site as hallowed education ground:

Like most old stories, this one began ‘Long, long ago’. [B]efore the white man came to the Fraser Valley,...the Indians knew Coqualeetza as the ‘place of cleansing’ [where blanket washing occurred]. It was symbolic of discarding the old and beginning anew. This idea of exchanging old ideas for new has been developed through the story of Coqualeetza. When the white man came, bringing with him, we must admit, much that was bad, but also more that was good,



gradually the superstitions were replaced by education. (in Edmeston, Editor: c1956)

This story, predestining the landscape upon which Coqualeetza came to be built as an educational and transformative site, provides historical and spatial legitimization for the residential school. Similar to Elizabeth Long's writings for the Women's Missionary Society of Canada about Kitimaat Residential School, the Coqualeetza story also conflates the transformation of place with the transformation of First Nations children.

The history of Coqualeetza School, at least in the minds of those who operated it, unfolded from the story about the transformative potential of education. The school operated between 1888 and 1940, in a partnership between the Federal Government and the United Church of Canada. Although Thomas Crosby had preached, taught, and vaccinated amongst the First Nationd in the Fraser Valley since 1861, it was Charles Montgomery Tate and his wife who, in 1886, opened the first school for First Nations children. In 1888/1889, with contributions from the Federal Government, the Tates opened the Coqualeetza Home that, according to photographic records, was a smallish two story wood-sided home. The first building was destroyed by fire less than five years later. At a much greater cost than the original home, a second school was erected. When the second school opened in April 1894, it was described by the local press:

The building is of brick, and has been erected at a cost of \$35,000.00, including furnishings, etc. It contains a lavatory, playroom, laundry, sewing room, store room, two sitting rooms, five bedrooms, six dormitories, school room, dining room and office. At the time of opening there were 63 pupils on the roll, with a staff of five officers and teachers. There is accommodation for 120 pupils and a staff of eight. The common school branches of education are being taught, as well as farming, fruit culture, carpentry, sewing, cooking, dairy work, and house-keeping (*Vancouver Daily World*, found in Edmeston c1956: 5).

The school, in keeping with the spatial narratives circulated about it, operated under the school motto “Vestigia Nulla Resrorsium” (No Step Backwards). The building was surrounded by cleared ground, a visual reminder of the transformative possibility of educational space. It was situated within

20 acres of meadows and cultivated ground, an impressive if somewhat sombre brick-built structure of three above ground storeys and a basement. Except for the unusual squat spire projecting from the roof, it could almost have been taken for a mansion in an old country park. It was some 110 feet long by 62 feet wide...(Davis, October 13, 1976: n.p.)

By the 1920s, the second school building was no longer large enough to serve its student population. The construction of a new school building was then undertaken, this time with the capacity to house and educate 200 pupils.

The buildings of Coqualeetza were personified as a living spirit, modifiable like a student under educational alteration. In his 1924 writings about the construction of the third building (on the same site, to replace and expand upon the 1894 complex), principal Raley wrote:

[T]he old building [will] fit into the main part of the new building, leaving the new wings projecting on the sides. The old school will soon be demolished, probably during the holidays. There will be many ways in which Old Coqualeetza will live – its influence will be felt and its spirit will be reflected from one generation to another and so on until, ultimately the Old and New Coqualeetza become blended into the ideals for which the Institute stands. (Raley, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1924: n.p.)

The 1894 school building was fully replaced in 1924 by “a monument to the advancing policy of the Department of Indian Affairs” (Raley 1924: n.p.). Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs Canada at the time, laid the first brick

at “an imposing ceremony,” thereby materially marking, and spatially demarcating, discursive imperatives of the educational project:

[That first brick marked] an epoch in the education of the Indian of British Columbia. Every effort will be made to impress the native mind that the occasion [of the school building’s completion] is one when the standard of ideas is raised to a higher plane than ever before. (Raley 1924: n.p.)

A focus on the materiality of British Columbia’s residential schools, and the ability of that materiality to impose a civilizing, assimilating, and transformative colonial education on First Nations students, was not unique to Coqualeetza.

By the mid-1940s in British Columbia, a sense of residential schools as transformative places had reached public attention. In a two-page feature story entitled “Education Buries Tomahawk: Typical Indian Schools” that appeared in 1944 in *The Vancouver Sun*, Mildred Valley Thorton focused attention on the built and physical components of residential schools in the Province. In reference to Kuper Island Indian Residential School (opened in 1890), an institution operated by the Catholic Church and located off the east coast of Vancouver Island on a small island accessible only by boat, Thorton paid a great deal of attention to the “lovely trees, flowers and gardens [that] make Kuper Island [School] one of the most attractive in B.C.” (7). The landscaping and presence of the school, according to Thorton’s newspaper coverage, was integral to the pedagogical intent of residential schooling:

At lovely Kuper Island, the school occupies a dominating position in a community which was entirely Indian. Well-cared for flower beds, shrubs, and colourful arbutus trees add to the natural beauty of its surroundings. It looks out over a wide stretch of water to Chemainus, while on the other side of the island the remains of an old Indian village with a number of huge log houses crowd down to the water’s edge. This is one of the oldest Indian schools in Canada, and

one of the best. Some far-seeing soul planted many nut and fig trees there in the early days which provide many a treat for the youngsters who gather them now. For children who come from undesirable surroundings at home, and for those living in isolated areas, the residential school provides a haven...(Thorton 1944:7)

Like conceptualizations about both Kitimat and Coqualeetza Residential Schools, the materiality of Kuper Island Residential School was synonymous with colonial ideals of progress and civililization, not to mention the Christianizing of First Nations. The school's landscaping, as it was presented to British Columbia's public, suggested the Garden of Eden, where children gathered figs and nuts in the Province's isolated wilds, while being afforded a vista of what they had left behind, what they had surmounted. The school, its grounds, and built environment, stood supremely over a crowded sort of chaos that the Aboriginal children, safely enveloped within an educational space, were expected to gaze back upon. In writings designed to reach a wide audience, the residential school building was positioned, spatially and symbolically, in antithesis to the dwellings and homes of First Nations. Progress was embodied in the materiality of Kuper Island Residential School.

Kuper Island Residential School had a particularly powerful landscape that embodied civilizing ideals. Indeed, it is not outside the realm of possibility that the "far-seeing soul" to whom Thorton refers in her article was one of Kuper Island School's early teachers or administrators, perhaps even one of the schools first principals, Mr. McKinnon (who only stayed a few weeks) or Reverend G. Donckele (who replaced McKinnon and stayed on with the school for seventeen years) (Lascelles 1990; Down 1966). The school opened in 1890 with 17 students. There are some contradictions about the precise date of the school's closing, but it was not operating by the late 1970s and was

entirely demolished sometime in 1980.<sup>21</sup> The school building that so inspired Thorton's journalistic musings was built between 1914 and 1916. Consistent with other residential school architecture across the Province, it was a four-storey, red-brick structure, with a steep staircase in the central façade and peaked roof that was topped with a rounded spire affixed with a cross. Visually, the school was symmetrically divided. Two matching wings on each side of the school were bridged by rooms inset slightly from a central section that extended just beyond the frontage of the building. The symmetry and division of the Kuper Island School building extended into its surrounding landscapes. Leading down from the front staircase, in perfect alignment, was a path that aligned with the school's dock. In photographs of the school, the impression is of a clearly delineated, highly ordered place connecting the beachfront to the front doors of the school. The grounds in front of the school were, in comparison to other schools in the Province, highly ornamented and landscaped, again in an ordered and symmetrical way. In 1956, when the school was surveyed by the Educational Survey Commission, the facilities, particularly the new three-class building constructed in the early 1950s, were reviewed very favourably:

It is a fine modern school with covered play areas and well appointed ancillary units accompanying the three classrooms. There is evidence of very good work being done in this school. There are two basement playrooms about 30' x 40' in area. There are sufficient lavatory and toilet facilities off these playrooms. The girls' dining room is rather small but is made fairly attractive. The dormitories are suitable as to size and have adequate washroom facilities....The grounds, particularly in front of the residence, were nicely landscaped and lent an attractive

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<sup>21</sup> Some records suggest that Kuper Island closed in 1975 (see for instance Lacselles 1990), whereas other records of the school's history, including most of the local newspaper coverage, put the closing date of the school at 1978 (see for instance Olsen, Morris and Sam 2001).

appearance to the place. (B.C. 8)

The only significant limitations noted for the school pertained to the gymnasium and the classroom where primary children were taught: “There is one classroom in the residence used for the primary children. This does not contribute to an appropriate classroom environment for young children. The gymnasium is an old barn-like structure condemned for use” (B.C. 8).

Other residential schools in British Columbia embody a complicated fusion of discourses about the Indian, symbolism, and material structure. St. Eugene’s Mission Residential School in Cranbrook was, like Kuper Island Residential School, operated by the government in partnership with the Catholic Church. Like Kuper Island. Unlike most other schools in the Province, the school’s frontage was also uniquely landscaped, this time with a long tree-lined driveway leading to a circular drive in front of the building’s main entrance and stairway. The ordered design of the landscape, with large wrought iron gates supported by tall white posts opening to the tree-lined drive, was offset slightly by a certain lack of order to the buildings and landscapes behind the school. The back of St. Eugene’s was the domain of farming and agricultural labour. A large barn and at least three outbuildings (for tending livestock, conducting manual and shop training for boys, and storing farm machinery) lay at the edges of pastures, an orchard, and gardens. Located on the far of edge of the school’s working farm, but still within full view of the school and the children’s playground was St. Eugene’s cemetery, where children and staff who died on site were buried.

The school was opened in 1890 under Principal Father Nicholas Coccola with a student population of twelve boys and fifteen girls and it grew over time both in size and student population. The primary school building, built in 1914, was a four-storey

structure composed of formed and shaped concrete blocks. This building, which continues to stand in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, was on a large tract of land (276 acres) owned by The Sisters of Providence. The school building, again like other schools in the Province, was divided into two wings by, in the front, a large entry way and staircase and, in the back, the protruding chapel that served the school. The peaked roof sported a large bell tower topped with a tall cross that was mirrored, in both the front and the back of the building, with small spires also topped with crosses. The basement of the school, like Kamloops Indian Resident School, housed the staff and children's dining halls, the kitchen and laundry facilities, lavatory and washing facilities, and some recreation and play rooms. The first and second floors of the school were dominated by a long corridor with steep stairwells on either end and were the domains of staff rooms, staff's private living quarters, and the classrooms. The boys' and girls' dormitories were located on the top floor directly under the roof, the boys' dormitory on the left-hand side of the building, the girls' on the right. With some fluctuations, the student population of St. Eugene's increased over time, starting at 50 students in 1894 and reaching 120 students in 1962 (Lascelles 1990). When St. Eugene's was surveyed by the Educational Survey Commission in 1956, the student population was recorded at 142 students between Grades 1 and 8, with the majority (70 students) attending Grades 1 through 3. According to a synopsis of the school's student population published by the Oblates the per capita grant allocated to fund the school did not reflect the growing enrolment.

According to the Educational Survey Commission, the built environments of St. Eugene's were sufficient to meet the needs of the student population:

This is an old building constructed in 1914, but well maintained and still in good condition. The classrooms are of adequate size, well lighted, with good seating

accommodations, and there is evidence of a good instructional program. The dormitories are well kept [although] there is some congestion in the girls' dormitory and a lack of locker space. The dormitories are rather overcrowded. The most noticeable deficiency was the lack of playing and recreational space. The boys' and girls' playrooms are very small, each about 25' x 25' to accommodate 74 pupils in each case. (B.C. 15)

Despite the commissionaires' defence of the overall suitability of St. Eugene's school, there are some contradictions in their documentations. The number of students recorded as the school's population do not match the number of students using the play space area (142 students are listed as attending the school, 148 students are listed as using the play areas). The report captures another discrepancy regarding who was using the school space. The building was used as a residence for students not attending classes at St. Eugene's but who actually attended Cranbrook High School 10 miles away. If their numbers were accounted for, the ratio of students to space would have increased. Although the school was deemed satisfactory by the Commission, the Oblates who operated the school noted significant discrepancies, which resulted in inadequate funding, between the operating grants given to the school and the number of students the school actually served (Lascelles 1990).

Two other residential schools, Lejac and Christie/Kakawis, further illustrate tensions between the materiality of educational institutions, the pedagogical intents of the practices enforced in the schools, and the visions of the schools held by those who operated them. Built ten years after the main building of St. Eugene's and opened in 1922, Lejac Indian Residential School was described in October 1955 as

[O]ne of the oldest residential schools in the Province, a brick structure erected in 1921 [to which] is attached a newly built three-room school with an industrial arts



shop and a home-economics room in its basement. The residence contains 4 classrooms, one of which is used as a sewing room. The school accommodates 177 boarding pupils and about 40 day pupils from the Fraser Lake Reserve and from Stellaqua. (Brown: B.C. 35)

Aerial photographs of Lejac and at least one artistic rendition of the school, both produced after the 1954/55 construction of the small three-room school capture a sprawling school site replete with a farm, barn outbuildings, pastures, outdoor play areas (including a seasonal hockey rink for boys), a large school cemetery in front of and below the structure, and several conglomerations of staff residences, all sloping down from the region's largest highway (Highway 16) toward the shore of Fraser Lake.<sup>22</sup> The 1921 building is a large three-storey structure shaped like a squat and elongated "H" with the chapel jutting from the back of the building. The most sustained critique of the school concerned the too "small" and/or "cramped" structures for the 177 pupils who attended it (Brown 1956). That this was the case in 1955, a year in that enrolment was not particularly high, suggests that the school facilities may indeed have been inadequate. By 1969, just seven years before Lejac was closed, the student population had reached an all-time high of 226 students, comprising 185 residents and 41 day students (see Lacselles 1990: 72). In keeping with the conviction that material conditions and spatial layout functioned as an integral component of residential schooling for First Nations, the Educational Survey Commission found that, due to overcrowding, the architecture of the school did not function well as an educational tool:

The two lunch rooms are much too small (18' x 30') to serve over 60 pupils in each. They are dull drab places, poorly lighted and ventilated and not well designed to cultivate good eating habits or social attitudes. Some more adequate

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<sup>22</sup> Photographic records of Lejac are in personal collections compiled courtesy of the Archives of the Diocese of Prince George.

and attractive facilities should be provided (Brown 1956: B.C. 35).

The commissionaires did not stop there but characterized the school overall as deficient:

The boys' playroom, about 30' x 40' [that also functions as a lunch room]...is too small for any games or activities. The toilets are inadequate, 2 only, with five foot trough urinals. A crude pan with water tap above serves as a wash basin. The place does not appear to be very clean or sanitary. The whole interior of the basement, is dull and dingy with dark brown wainscoting and with walls and ceiling badly in need of redecoration. The dormitories, three for the boys, and three for the girls, are not large enough for the numbers using them. The beds are an assortment of kinds, including double-deckers. The mattresses and springs are not very comfortable or of good quality. The washrooms and accompanying facilities in each dormitory are unattractive and the equipment is very old. All dormitories and lavatories, through the building, lack proper ventilation (B.C. 36).

Other schools than Lejac Indian Residential School failed to achieve the

Commission's ideal goals of transforming the 'old' and uncivilized lifestyles of First

Nations lifestyles into the 'new' and civilized standards of Euro-colonial settler society.

Christie/Kakawis Indian Residential School, on 175 acres of "heavily timbered property"

(Lascelles: 71) on Meares Island off the west coast of Vancouver Island, was found, in

1956, to be in such poor and antiquated condition that members of the Commission

suggested it should simply be closed down. The main school building was two-and-a-half

stories (with a basement) and totalled just less than 7,500 square feet. The site was

considered unsuitable for a school because it allowed no agricultural training and

produced inhospitable working conditions for both staff and students (Brown 1956;

Lascelles 1990). In 1944, when residential schools were given provincial press coverage

in *The Vancouver Sun*, the setting of Christie School was mentioned as an impetus for

curricular innovation:

The exception [to residential schools with attached farms] is found up the west coast of Vancouver Island at rock bound Kakawis where all supplies have to be taken in by boat. With no ground available for farming purposes, special attention has to be given to boat building, and here the boys work on real boats which go down the ways into active service on the Pacific Ocean. (Thornton 1944: 6)

Early photographs of the school show an imposing built structure in a largely unaltered, wilderness-dominated environment (Image 6.a). By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, however, it was clear that the school had not stood the test of time:

The main [school] building, itself, is not a safe structure. It is a wooden building, old and in a deteriorating condition. The floors sag in some of the rooms. A number of boys occupy an attic dormitory which is not considered too safe...[and] in general, the dormitories are deficient in washroom, bathing and



**Image 6.a: Christie/Kakawis Indian Residential School on Mears Island c 1904. Personal Collections: courtesy of the Port Alberni Community Archives, PN2247.**

lavatory facilities. The lighting system throughout the building is of an old type, usually drop lights, and the wiring is devoid of insulated safety devices. The basement quarters are dismal. The chimney has developed a crack which makes it

defective. The toilet facilities of the basement are very antiquated. (B.C. 39) Not only were the living quarters of Christie Residential School found wanting and contrary to modern standards, but the places of classroom instruction at the school were also deemed inadequate and regressive: “[the four classrooms] in use [at the school]...are of a poor type with low ceilings, windows at the back and stoves at the front of each room. The seating equipment of one room is very poor, containing a number of homemade units” (B.C. 40). So problematic were the facilities of Christie Residential School that the commissioners’ final recommendations, following from suggestions concerning the slow phasing out of the school, recommended closing it:

It is recommended that Christie School be discontinued and that the children requiring institutional care be transferred to the Kuper Island Residential Schools or to some other acceptable residential school where the necessary extension should be made to meet the new requirement. (B.C. 40).

In their publications about Christie School, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate blame much of the school’s disrepair on the disparity between the number of students registered at the school and the number of students recognized by Federal Government grants and funding. For instance, during the 1956 school survey by the Educational Survey Commission, the Oblates argued that that the school was only funded for 130 students, despite the commissioners’ findings that 144 pupils were enrolled. Similarly, in 1960, the school received quota funding for only 140 students when O.M.I. records suggest an enrolment of 148, a trend with roots back to 1905 when the school was funded for 50 students, although O.M.I. records show the student population at 68 (Lascelles 1990: 71). Perhaps the Oblates were right: many of the structural challenges documented by the 1956 Educational Survey Commission were attributable to consistently inadequate Federal funds for the school. The Oblates left the school in 1971, and the entire building

burned to the ground on July 10 1983.

Alberni Residential School, Christie's closest neighbour, was the focus of much public press, much of it detailing the material and structural importance of the school in the efforts to transform First Nations children. The school began as a wood-sided, three-storey building, opened in 1893 by the Presbyterian Missionary Society. This initial structure was replaced in 1920 after a fire on June 3 1917 destroyed the original school. The 1920 replacement building was a much larger three-and-a-half storey structure, also wood-sided and on a stone foundation. The top floor served as the school's infirmary, the second floor as dormitories and living quarters for both students and staff, and the main floor and basement were devoted to classrooms and cooking/dining facilities, respectively. The 1920 school was featured in local newspapers and lauded as "a fine building set on capricious grounds with its own farmlands, dairy herd, etc" (*West Coast Advocate* February 25, 1937: n.p.). The grounds directly adjacent to the school building were dominated by play areas, separated according to gender, with the girls playing on the building's right-hand side and the boys on the left-hand side of the structure. The building's façade, with the requisite steep and wide frontal stair case approximately 7 feet wide, was also often used for photographing both students and staff. On 21 February 1937, after just under seventeen years in operations, the second Alberni Residential School structure burned down. In 1939, and with a commitment of \$115,000.00 from the Federal Government (*West Coast Advocate* June 4 1939: n.p), the United Church of Canada erected Alberni Residential School for the third time. This building, touted as the "largest school of its type [operated by the United Church] in the Dominion of Canada" (*West Coast Advocate* November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939: n.p) was built according to plans developed

by the Department of Indian Affairs. The local press described the new building as “four storeys of stone and brick, and fully modern in every detail. It will accommodate about 175 pupils who will attend from the various coastal points and also local Indian children” (*West Coast Advocate* November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939: n.p). In 1948, an additional four-room instructional building was erected adjacent to the main building, and in 1953, a similar four-room instructional building was completed on the site. The modernity of the buildings, as an integral component of the educational possibilities that would be enacted within the site, drew the attention of the popular press:

Manual training rooms set away from the main building are being provided...and the school will have its own farm and dairy. In addition to other subjects, training will be given in fishing and in marine engineering. Pupils will range from six to 16 [years of age]. (*West Coast Advocate* November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939: n.p)

The materiality of the new buildings was constructed and understood by the media as the catalyst for innovative curricular programming. By 1966, the Alberni Residential School was achieving provincial media coverage because of the modern aspects of its architecture and the sheer size of its structures:

British Columbia is leading the way in Indian education and at Alberni on Vancouver Island is the finest and one of the largest Indian Schools in Canada....[a]ccording to Principal A. E. Caldwell they have ‘better living conditions in the school than in any other private or residential school I know of in Canada...This is a home for these Indian children.’ [C]hildren in the elementary and primary grades live in dormitories in the main brick building and attend classes in roomy, well-lighted buildings adjacent to the main building. A barn on the grounds has been converted to a fully equipped gymnasium and there are several playing fields for most kinds of sport. *Colonist* reporters who visited the school were impressed with the cleanliness. Dormitories were spotlessly clean...and washrooms were thoroughly scrubbed. The high school girls do their

own housekeeping and their rooms are models of comfort and tidiness. Girls and boys share the dining room and sitting and study room and the girls help out in the kitchen. The boys live in one big dormitory with double decker beds. The school has well equipped manual training and domestic science rooms. Much of the school's furniture was made by the boys....(Merriman 1966: 8–9)

Places, and to some extent material objects, came to stand for children's transformation.

The successful education of First Nations children, according to Merriman, could be read and interpreted through the places in and through which the children lived and were educated. Furthermore, to lead the way in Indian education was inherently about designing and building leading places that would circumscribe First Nation's children's lives. This conflation of place and materiality with children's transformation, as captured by the popular press, also pervaded the report of the Educational Survey Commission.

In May 1956, when Alberni Residential School was surveyed, it was lauded as “a well designed building,” “ably administered,” and resulting in “pupils [who] are nicely costumed and are quite responsive” (Brown 1956: B.C. 41). The commissioners further noted that “an unused barn has been converted into a gym...[and a] good type of industrial arts program is being carried out and many practical projects are underway” (B.C. 41). The brevity of the entry on Alberni School is striking when compared to the lengthy and detailed entries for all the other residential schools in British Columbia, and this suggests that the facilities were relatively acceptable. With a student population of 195, the school was the fourth largest in British Columbia. Although the Commission concluded that Alberni School was preparing First Nations students well for an integrated school program elsewhere, the commissioners identified some design flaws that diminished the educational possibilities of the school: “It is regrettable that an expandable type of school had not been designed so that the present school could have been a single

unit. It would have been much more efficient from an organizational and supervisory point of view” (B.C. 41). Architecture and design, that is the material spaces that students inhabited and through which they were educated, were integral to the goal of assimilating First Nations children. The physical geographies in which students lived mattered. Consequently they were constructed according to the ideals of those directing the colonial education project in British Columbia. Of course, those geographies also mattered to, and were formed by, the children who occupied them.



CHAPTER 7:  
“A LONG WAY FROM HERE”<sup>23</sup>: RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL PLACES AS LIVED AND  
EXPERIENCED BY FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS

*Alice! a childish story take  
And, with a gentle hand,  
Lay it where Childhood's dreams are twined  
In Memory's mystic band,  
Like pilgrim's wither'd wreath of flowers  
Pluck'd in a far-off land.*

*(Lewis Carroll 1865 reprinted 1978: 4)*

Despite some of the inadequacies of work on children's geographies, a powerful message from the growing literature is a reminder that children have agency, that they effect change in their surroundings, that children influence as well as reflect their environments (Katz 2004). When this premise is coupled with nuanced understandings of place, including ideas of nested place (Malpas 1999), that insist that place is narrated by subjects who occupy and make sense of it, thereby constructing it, what becomes possible is an idea that children too can actively produce place, through their experience and narration of it. Following from this, then, is the possibility that children can re-narrate place by experiencing it, and can alter the contours of place by living it. As much as Indian Residential Schools were imagined and designed by colonial minds, they were also lived and experienced by those whom the schools were structured to transform and produce: Aboriginal children. Accessing the experiences of First Nations children who lived, were schooled in, and occupied residential schools in British Columbia is not a simple task. Formal records of students' experiences produced *in situ* are virtually non-

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<sup>23</sup> From Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. 1996. *Indian Residential Schools: The Nuu-chah-nulth Experience*. Printed in Canada.

existent. Arguably, one might interview past students of the schools to gain insight into the experience of place. Given the warnings of Indigenous scholars concerning the potentially damaging nature of even well-meaning research by outsiders, particularly when they touch upon traumatic experiences and elicit painful memories, I am loathe to employ this methodology (Castellano 2004; Schnarch 2004; Smith 1999). Instead I turn to published First Nations' testimonial literatures, which are often Band produced, to explore their experiences of residential schools in British Columbia. Employing these records, however, is not without complication.

Most contemporary published records of the residential school experience are produced from memory of times spent there, thus presenting challenges associated with accessing memories of place as opposed to directly accessing students' experiences of place. Implicitly, to access a memory of place is to access something distanced from the *in situ* or contemporaneous event itself. Additionally, late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century testimonials about residential schools have, for the most part, been produced within a context of increased public attention to the abuses that occurred in residential schools and more of them are prefaced with writings that emphasize students' traumatic memory of residential schools. Neither the context of the writings, nor the students' prefacing of the testimonials with traumatic narrative, is reason to approach the testimonials with scepticism. For the most part, residential schools were very unpleasant places for the students who experienced them, which is not to say that for some students there were not positive memories. Most testimonial literatures about residential schools in British Columbia do not dispute this, nor do the literatures make effort to subordinate or question the voices of former students for whom residential schooling was a positive thing.

Another challenge of accessing experience of place through testimonial literatures is that published testimonial records simply do not exist in reference to many schools. The experiences of some students, in some schools, must then be read carefully as not, implicitly, speaking for the experiences in all eighteen schools. Nevertheless, given some of the similarities between schools, both architecturally and pedagogical ally, it is not impossible to draw some broad conclusions about students' experience of place. The Secwepemc Cultural Education Society of the Kamloops Indian Band, The Mission Indian Friendship Centre, the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, and the Cariboo Tribal Council in Williams Lake have all published or produced texts about their peoples' residential school experience, encapsulating eight of the Province's residential schools (St. Mary's, Cariboo/St. Joseph's, Ahousaht, St. Michael's, Coqualeetza, Kamloops, Alberni, and Christie). A recent text about Kuper Island Residential School, although described as 'fictionalized, has been "recreated from stories collected from former students of Kuper Island Residential School" (Olsen, Morris, and Sam 2001: n.p); it was read and approved of by six former students of the school. This text provides a unique reference of students' experiences at the school. As well, Dorothy Matheson McIvor self-published a monograph focused solely on her experiences at Coqualeetza Residential School and Bridget Moran, with an invitation from her subject's family, authored *Life at Lejac: The Story of Mary John*. It is possible to draw on these literatures in order to capture experiences of students at ten of the eighteen residential schools in British Columbia.

## **7.a “A Very Traumatic Time”: Imagining and Arriving at the Schools**

The experience of residential schools places, for some First Nations children in British Columbia, began prior to their arrival at the school. The schools were components of transformation processes occurring for First Nations on multiple levels and were, as Ron Hamilton remembers, even incorporated into aspects of First Nations’ daily life, including the familial procedures of parenting children:

As a young boy of pre-school age, and later as an elementary school student, I was threatened by my mother with the possibility of being sent to the “boarding school”. When I was particularly mischievous or poorly behaved Mama, and at times my older brothers and sisters would scold, “behave or I’ll send you to the boarding school!” Boarding School was what we called the Alberni Indian Residential School. We thought of it as the ultimate punishment, often threatened, but never realized. Before I had ever set eyes on the daunting red brick Main building, I had imagined it prison-like. Boarding school was scary (quoted in Nuu-chah-nulth 1996: xxi).

In this respect, the schools functioned as social symbols and students arrived there with some sense, realistic or otherwise, of the places in which they were to be educated. The educational places of colonial residential schools were not simply blanks for First Nations children, but were imbued with prior visions and narratives. The disciplinary nature of the schools was used by First Nations parents wanting better behaviour from their children, even if the children had neither set foot in a residential school nor were ever sent to one. These impressions and the associated massive cultural shifts must have informed some students’ immediate experience of the schools. It makes sense that their experience of schools began prior to their arrival at them: the schools were, after all, built on the homescapes of the First Nations and, according to the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation, were designed specifically to dominate their environments and convey a sense of

supremacy:

[Schools were] often laid out on or near the top of a hill, giving them an imposing, looming, even scary appearance in the eyes of young Nuu-chah-nulth children new to such places. The comparatively huge residential school buildings implied an importance above and beyond that of any local traditional authority, including that of the highest ranked Chief. On their first day at Indian Residential Schools, along with the trauma of being separated from their parents, Nuu-chah-nulth students new to the schools faced the realization that physical conditions, at those institutions, were very different than those they were used to in their home villages. (27–28)

From a First Nations' perspective, the schools represented rapidly shifting ways of life in British Columbia. The buildings embodied separations from families, communities, cultural norms and existing governance structures.

When students experienced the place of residential school, or even when they viewed the school from afar, they saw the material manifestations of colonial interlopers' intentions toward altering Aboriginal landscapes and ways of life – and ultimately themselves as Aboriginal children. In her account of schooling at Coqualeetza, Dorothy Matheson McIvor links her experiential testimonies of the school with a climate of colonial change in the Province:

It was inevitable that the natives would have to deal with the consequences of the European take over of the country....To the Europeans the native customs were considered crude and they called them savages....It did not matter to the intruders that the native culture that existed was founded on ancient beliefs which were embedded in their being and from which they did not waiver until Christianity was introduced to them. (2001: 1–3)

To experience life within a residential school in British Columbia was to experience a material expression of change in the Province. Living in places imagined, designed, and

constructed by people intent on transforming First Nations meant, quite literally, living a materialized expression of colonial intention. It involved experiencing at a micro-scale the ideological changes upon which the colonial educational project was premised:

At first the new sights [of Coqualeetza] were amazing...It was a strange new era when [First Nations students of residential schools] began to lose their identity as most of them could not speak or understand English. They were forbidden to speak their own language. It certainly must have been a very traumatic time in their lives. When this new project [of schooling] began, the staff and students went through great hardship. The children were taken from a free and easy going lifestyle and put into a very strict and totally strange atmosphere. (Matheson McIvor 2001: 13)

Students' discussions of first encounters with residential schools in British Columbia tend to emphasize feelings of alienation, disruption, overwhelmedness, and anxiety. These experiences are often directly related to the materiality of the schools, which in turn is inextricable from students' feelings of loss and loneliness. The direct link between the schools' materiality and students' emotions of loss and loneliness is not always a link fully elucidated in testimonial literatures, but the testimonials suggest a sense that the school places were symbolic of severing children from the familiar, including family, home, community, and culture. The journey to these places seems to have been particularly memorable:

I remember my parents drove us up to the corner of Highway 97 on Westside Road and a truck came to pick us up. It was a pick up point and we were taken away in a big truck. It was flatbed truck and they had already picked up other children so I don't know where the starting point was. I don't remember exactly where, but they picked up others and took us all to Kamloops. It was a long trip. The year was 1948 and I was six years old. We rode all bunched up sitting on wooden benches. It was a long, tedious, and tiring journey for a six-year-old.

(Anderson quoted in Secwepemc 2000: 47)

Two students who attended Christie Residential School on Meares Island recall their first interactions with the schools space as follows: “And when we got to Christie, it seems like we got locked on an Island, and that was it. I was totally lost!” (Ehattesaht quoted in Nuu-chah-nulth 1996: 22) and

Christie is a long ways from here. It takes 3.5 hours, inside way. I remember the day we went down, and there was no float. You just anchored off the beach, and rowed ashore in a canoe, and walked up. But, certainly a lonely feeling that first day, when you see your mother and father row back out, pull up the anchor, and take off. (Steve Charleson quoted in Nuu-chah-nulth 1996: 24–25)

Consistent with the design, residential schools operated as far more than mere containers through which colonial narratives were delivered. The residential school buildings and grounds were colonial geographies in which First Nations students were enveloped. From the moment they set eyes upon the places of their education, First Nations students were disoriented among buildings that had been designed to exclude and expunge Indigeneity. The materiality of the schools (re)produced, *in situ*, the power and supremacy of a Euro-colonial presence in British Columbia. First Nations students were not only dwarfed within colonially built environments, they were materially reminded in their every movement that their lives and cultures were subordinated to a more imposing and powerful force seeking to overtake and transform them as Indigenous peoples.

### **7.b “They Stripped Us of Everything”: Intimate and Interior Experiences of Residential Schools**

The interior places of British Columbia’s residential schools were no less imposing than the external architecture and built environments of the schools. Many students

experienced the school interiors as material articulations both of colonialism's assimilationist violence and its agenda of eliminating Indigeneity from the Province's landscape. For Mary Anne Roberts, who attended St. Mary's Indian Residential School from 1946 to 1957, the shower stalls in the bathrooms of the schools were places through which whiteness, as an unattainable superiority, was imposed. Roberts remembers:

There were five showers, but there was no curtain dividing one from another, and when I was in lower grades we would have a senior girl in the shower and they would put us in and the senior would scrub us down. Then the nun was standing at the door...and she would check to see if we were clean, and with me, I am naturally dark, so I would always get sent back. I always got sent back because to her I was, not that I was dirty, it is just because I was naturally dark. So I would get sent back and they would scrub the heck out of me and that had a really, really bad effect on me, and through the years, even up to now, I would feel myself washing and washing and never feeling clean. It had a lifelong effect on me (quoted in Glavin 2002: 47).

Robert's experience of intimate interior school spaces as disciplinary and transformative was not unique. Based on interviews with members of their Band who had attended residential schools, the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council concluded:

[S]trange sleeping quarters [were repeatedly mentioned] as among the physical conditions found prevailing and troublesome at the residential schools...The comparative huge size of the dorms, and their high ceilings, produced echoes when children spoke, something no Nuu-chah-nulth child had ever heard in their own sleeping quarters, at home. The pungent odour of disinfectant filled the dorms where the children were to sleep with an atmosphere that was another reminder, they were in a foreign place. (37).

Speaking directly to the disciplinary nature of sleeping quarters at St. Michael's Indian Residential School in Alert Bay, a past student recalls:

And, at night time, they would lock the dorms, lock you in the dorms. But they'd



do a bed check in the middle of the night. If somebody wet the bed, they would get everybody up, and we would have to stand for the rest of the night at the foot of our beds. But when they lock the doors, there would be no way to get out to go to the bathrooms, if you really needed to go. (Nuu-chah-nulth 1996: 40)

From the perspective of a First Nations student, confinement in place was a strategy designed to elicit a bodily action that would in turn result in punishment. The interiority of sleeping quarters served both to contain and restrain children and, when as a result of that containment they broke with school regulations, the place and the forced alignment of sleeping students served both to reinforce the dominance of colonial authority and as a form of punishment. Bodies became punishable, in and through place. The rigid structuring of dormitory place was rescaled down to the structuring of children's sleeping bodies within the dormitory: colonial desires to organize and structure space, disciplinarily, ultimately came to bear on individual bodies. Students' experience of the places of sleep, generally places of vulnerability and intimate privacy, and the intimate places of their bodies and bodily control, became conflated with their fear of discipline and reprisal. Within the confines of residential schools, even bed-space became a space of potential discipline. Charlie Thompson, a student of Alberni Residential School in 1955, testifies about his experiences of dorm and sleeping places: "Sometimes, it would be in the middle of the night, and we'd have to stand there a good long time. Being wakened up in the middle of the night, and stand at the foot of bed, and just stand there. At attention" (quoted in Nuu-chah-nulth 1996: 40).

Ordering of bodies within spatial confines was a disciplinary strategy that extended beyond the sleeping quarters of residential schools. It pervaded eating rooms and class rooms of the schools. In these rooms, students experienced a regimentation

designed to recast them according to colonial imaginaries of manners, efficiency, etiquette, learnedness, and studiousness. Furthermore, First Nations experienced their own bodies as sites upon which colonial agendas would be imposed. The diets imposed at residential schools were also part of colonial efforts whereby food was used either to emotionally subordinate First Nations students or as means by which the colonial project inserted itself into their bodies. William Brewer, who was a student at Kamloops Indian Residential School, recalls that his first experience of the school was through the cafeteria room: that same room figures prominently in his recollection of schooling and the efforts made to crush his Indigeneity:

I remember going to residential school. When we first landed there, they took us to the dining room and they gave us a couple of slices of bread and some jam and some milk....you can't feed 400 kids with bacon and eggs or anything like that. You got to cook big potfulls...in order to feed them [the kids]. I was a kid, but a lot of kids didn't realize that. They figured, oh jeez, they're feeding us like pigs and stuff like that....[In the dining room] the priest and the staff had their table right in front of us, and they all that good stuff to eat. I thought that was terrible. We could see what they had. I thought that was cruel for them do that (quoted in Secwepemc 2000: 40–42).

Former students of both St. Mary's Indian Residential School and Kamloops Indian Residential School recall with revulsion their school diets (Glavin 2003; Secwepemc 2000). Students were forbidden to eat traditional foods (including wild meat, bannock, berries, or roots) and a substandard Eurocolonial diet was imposed. Ben David, a member of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation, recalls that food constituted both physical and emotional abuse:

In all the years I spent there, [I] never liked the food...[but] we had to eat it. That's part of the physical part too. I guess the emotional part of that too was we

knew, there were times when we worked in the kitchen...we'd see all the good food going to the staff, and they ate really well, you know. (Nuu-chah-nulth 1996: 37).

Sandra Victor, a former St. Mary's student, recalls: "The food, well, I will talk about the worst part. First was Fridays. We would have scrambled eggs and fish and it was terrible, and there was another meal [oatmeal] that they had and it was awful and they would make us eat everything on our plate and we would have to try and hide it so that we didn't have to eat it" (quoted in Glavin, 2003: 70).

If diet was a focus of attack, so too were the even more intimate realms of character and emotion. Barbara Stewart recalls her time at St. Mary's Indian Residential School: "There was [one nun who] would say that I would be a drunk and a bum on skid row when I left St. Mary's and she told me that everyday that I was there...They took your whole personality and changed it" (Glavin 2002: 48). Eurocolonial educators were convinced that if Aboriginal children were allowed outside the contained colonial places of residential schools, they would regress. This insistence constructed First Nations children as naturally aberrant subjects in need of colonial infrastructures to correct what the colonial narrative insisted were traits of savagery and incivility in Aboriginal peoples. This construction of First Nations children as deviant by virtue of adherence to their own cultures and communities is clear in the testimony of a former Kamloops Indian Residential School student, who states:

They took away my belongings, they took everything from me. Everything that's important to me, mother, father, culture....They stripped us of everything. Gave us brown uniforms and a number. And they *put what they wanted in us*, made us ashamed of who we are. Even right to this day, it still affects me. Like I really want to get into Indian things and I just can't because of them telling us it was the

devil. Every time I try, something blocks me. (my emphasis, Secwepemc 2000: 29)

Both the students from Kamloops and St. Mary's articulate the colonial strategy of using the places of residential schooling to impose on bodies and personalities. Ultimately, then, the colonial project and those who enacted it in British Columbia conceived First Nations children's bodies as bounded but permeable places into which, with proper force and structure, Eurocolonial sensibilities could be implanted.

If one strategy was to colonize the bodies, character, and emotions of First Nations children, another was to colonize thoughts, perspectives, and memories. This component of residential schooling was primarily undertaken through curricula and teaching process, the goal of which was to transform thought and spirit. The effective use of nested places, from the built environments to the body places to the minds of children, and then to attack the nested nature of place-based identity common to human experience, is well understood by former residential school students. Robert Simon, of the Skeetchestn Indian Band, a former student of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, summarizes the relationship succinctly: "You apply a system to children five, six and seven years old. You can be certain those minds and emotions are vulnerable...you add in the violence, the sexual abuse, then you add in the focus solely on the church or religion. You are no longer a full human being. You've been modified" (Secwepemc 2000: 111). In other words, modification of Aboriginal students, while certainly focused on children's physicality, was also very much concerned with emotion, value and, in the broadest sense, with subjectivity and imagination. Irma Bos, a Tsisha-aksup member of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation observes of residential schooling curricula at Alberni Indian Residential School that it "killed the spirit. They killed your spirit...I guess you'd

say...[l]ike, your own self-expression. You weren't allowed to be self expressive....it was an experience, really" (Nuu-chah-nulth 1996: 111). From the experiential perspective of students attending residential schools, the spatial organization and arrangement of classrooms reflected pedagogical intents of maintaining First Nations students in positions of educational inferiority, while simultaneously removing aspects of their character associated with Indianness, including familial linkages. For instance, a student of Kamloops Indian Residential School recalls:

I don't remember much about the class except that we had tiny little desks, the boys on one side and girls on the other. You weren't allowed to look at them [the boys], even if it was your own brother. I remember seeing my brother in the back of the class. I went to talk to him and he was really nervous. He said "don't come over and talk to me." I asked, "Why, I want to talk to you?" and he was saying you are not supposed to." I told him, "Why, you are my brother?" And right away I was taken to the front of the class and I was given the ruler on the palms of my hands. They asked, "Who were you talking to?" and I told them that I was talking to my brother. And they said "Yeah, right your brother." They must have known he was my brother, but they made it seem ugly (quoted in Secwepemc 2000: 185). The places of classrooms were used to break students, to reconfigure their bodies and their relationships as much as their minds, with an emphasis not necessarily on an academic pedagogical goal but instead on positioning students within the classrooms in ways that would constantly undermine their connection to aspects of their Indigenous selves.

Other students experienced residential schools as places in which potentials for discipline masqueraded as educational imperatives. Students recall that their genuine interests in academic topics were transformed by teachers into opportunities to deliver punishment. Students' academic interest and pursuit of academic success often became

efforts of avoiding or navigating punishment. Such memories, in many respects, mirror the students' recollections about the organizational aspect of classrooms being designed to reconfigure cultural identity. For instance, another former student of Kamloops School, Allan Mitchell, recalls:

I don't remember a whole lot of the schoolwork. About the only one I really remember is in math class. I love math. I hated English, I always did. Social studies I could take it or leave it. But math is something that really interests me....I remember, I don't know what subject it was, I think it was math class, but this one nun, you had to sit straight up in her class. This one guy didn't like sitting straight up, he like going down in his chair. He was big guy for his age, I remember, and the nun would just harass the poor guy about sitting up straight. One day she put a yard stick down the back of his shirt to try and make him sit up straight...The only thing that this did though is he never heard anything else that went on in the class cause all he was concentrating on was breaking that yardstick. And we all knew he was trying to do it. (Secwepemc 2000: 97)

Experiencing curriculum in residential schools, then, was for some students synonymous in their minds and bodies with experiencing discipline and punishment. Students were corporeally positioned within the pedagogical framework of the schools and within the material places of the schools, right down to the desks, in order for colonial interests to subjugate them. What is also evident in Mitchell's recollection of his math class, however, is that Aboriginal students actively utilized the material confines they found themselves in, including their desks and classrooms, in order to fight against colonial education.

Evidence of First Nations students' rejection of residential schooling is attainable, in part, both through school records of student infractions and through stories articulated by former residential school students. At Coqualeetza Residential School in Chilliwack,

students' place-based struggles against colonial schooling resulted in an exhaustive list of punishable offences. The list suggests just what lengths First Nations children would go to combat their assimilative education and to actively transform their schooling environments. Everything from "breaking bounds" to "setting fire to the boy's dorm" and from "pulling carrots" to "breaking plaster" were listed as punishable offences along with a spectrum of punishments from "public reprimands" to "lashes" and "confinement/humiliation" (Woods 1996). Clearly First Nations students were active in responding to the materialized Eurocolonial parameters in which they were confined. They broke physical bounds meant to contain them and they burnt the buildings and rooms built to subordinate them as Aboriginal children. Students used the places built by the colonial project in order to disrupt the material articulations of colonialism. They also bodily resisted colonial education through offences listed by Coqualeetza as "talking Indian," "playing in school," "Indian dancing," and "insolence" (quoted in Woods). When First Nations students spoke their native tongues, when they danced in manners deemed in violation of the regulations of a residential school, they were deploying their bodies in physical defiance of colonialism's project in British Columbia.

Former British Columbian residential school students recall the very corporeal nature of their struggle against colonial education. Of her time at Alberni Residential School, Irma Bos remembers the school as "a sad place to have gone, cause kids used to cry, cry at night...and I remember that...sometimes another girl would get into bed with whoever was cryin' just to, to comfort them. And ahh, the supervisor used to come in and...they'd [the comforters] get strapped or hit" (Nuu-chah-nulth 1996: 19). Despite potential punishment for breaking separation and segregation regulations, students

comforted one another in the face of isolation and loneliness. The very places (bodies) where Eurocolonial values were being most severely enforced were the same places First Nations students deployed to ward off the seclusion and solitude that their colonial environment constructed. Physical connection between bodies was an assertion of personhood and a rejection of a system that imagined First Nations children's bodies as places permeable to the force of colonialism. The tension between colonial values that reduced and dehumanized First Nations children, and their subsequent use of body places to disrupt those values, is evident in Clifford Atleo's memories of his first day at Alberni Indian Residential School:

I remember coming up here, the first day. Oh my, I remember the building, the fear knowing I was going to be left there...the hollowness of the hallway, walking down to the office. I remember almost wanting to cry...and receiving this number 486, forever to be my identification. 486. And the only thing that kept me from crying was [a friend] Edgar Charlie...I could see him down in the playground, sitting on a flower bed...all by himself. And he was crying and I couldn't wait to get out there and, well that's my friend. That's the only thing that kept me from crying, was my friend needed comfort. (Nuu-chah-nulth, 1996: 22).

Not only did First Nations children comfort each other and recognize one another's humanity and need, they also used their bodies to fight against those who hurt or assaulted them. Robert Cootes recalls a galvanizing mobilization of First Nations students at Alberni Indian Residential School:

All they did was discipline and beat kids, basically. [But] I learned that it's organized violence that could do it [stop student punishment]. Cause after that, everybody got organized, we had our riot, and you know. [Students] smashed every window in the school, beat on supervisors, and generally created havoc all around the place...Half a day I guess...It was the middle of winter, hey, when they eventually had their riot...the school wouldn't repair it. It was cold, but none



of the kids complained, everybody just hung tight. It was about two weeks, and they wouldn't put windows in the buildings, middle of winter...But nobody complained....None of the kids cried, everybody just hung together and they finally fixed it and things changed after that. (Nuu-chah-nulth, 1996: 157)

The bodies of First Nations students, bodies that colonial education policies so matter-of-factly asserted would be transformed with the injection of civilization, were by no means passive or receptive to the Eurocolonial agenda. Furthermore, First Nations students employed place to enact and perform their opposition to and defiance of colonial efforts. In effect, albeit at a much smaller scale, the actions of First Nations students in residential schools might be theorized as a fight against the colonial project in British Columbia. After all, residential schools were designed, imagined, and built to represent colonial ideas. What students were thus raging against were the physical articulations of the project.

In addition to actively opposing the bounded material constraints of residential schools in British Columbia, First Nations students also used the sites to assert both themselves and the attributes of their Indigeneity that residential schooling was intent on eradicating. Language became a critical site of contestation between First Nations students and colonial educators, while the fine arts became one medium through which students could express aspects of themselves that the schools were otherwise intent on eliminating. Throughout literatures about residential schools, numerous references are made to the constant struggles between colonial educators who insisted Aboriginal students speak only English and Aboriginal students who were constantly engaged in efforts to speak their own languages (Fournier and Crey 1997; Llewellyn 2002; Sangster 2002; Smith 2001; Sterling 1992). Leslie Andrew, a student of St. Mary's Indian

Residential School between 1939 and 1952, recalls: “I spoke some English when I arrived there, but didn’t know very much at that time. We were not allowed to speak our native language, and if we did, we would be hit...One of our friends there used to translate for us because most of us didn’t know or understand what they were talking about” (Glavin 2002: 37). Strategic adaptation to colonial demands were thus in place from the start of some students residential schooling experience, high-lighting the ability of First Nations children to construct hybridized responses to their needs. Another former student of St. Mary’s, Rose Julian, who attended between 1940 and 1949, testifies that “[a]t St. Mary’s, some of the kids, especially the ones from Skookumchuck and Chemainus and Lillooet, spoke their own language. They spoke it, but they would get screamed at and stuff. You would have to speak English, then everyone knows what you are saying” (Glavin 2002: 56). Finally, Roland Lester of St. Mary’s remembers that he did speak his language while in the school, a practice that could result in severe punishment: “They told us not to use our language anymore, only English, all the time. If you got caught speaking your own language you would either get a strapping or not be given anything to eat for a while, and they had to stay up in a certain room where they were kept an eye on and could not [talk] to anyone” (Glavin 2002: 58). What these testimonies underscore is the concerted efforts made by students, independent of the repercussions, to use and defend their languages. Although Indigenous languages were on the whole lost, a phenomenon many Aboriginal peoples attribute to the residential schooling processes, there is evidence that students fought hard to retain them, even within the places of residential schools.

### **7.c “I just Accepted the Rules”: Experiencing Residential Schooling Positively in British Columbia**

Despite the general pedagogical and spatial climate of residential schools in British Columbia, some students found ways of interacting positively with their schooling and of leaving the residential schooling with positive memories of their experiences. Dorothy Matheson McIvor, who delivered the Valedictory Address of the 1929 graduating class at Coqualeetza Residential School, states that the school represented a “venerable house of learning [in which] most of the former students appreciate the opportunity of getting an education” (2001: n.p.). She felt students lucky enough to attend Coqualeetza were instilled with knowledge through the patient instruction of the Principal and teachers. McIvor’s school days were defined by “joys and sorrows and happy associations [that were] the very best part of our lives” (McIvor 1929 reprinted in McIvor 2001: i–ii). Steve Charelson, a member of the Nun-chah-nulth Nation, recalls finding relief even in hard manual labour, testifying: “I remember good times there...even getting wood. If you weren’t bad that week, [then] you were allowed to go, privileged to go and get wood. Things like that. And if you were lucky, good boy, you got to go out and get freight on Friday” (quoted in Nun-chah-nulth 1996: 118). Indeed, some of the students found the material and physical places of residential schools in British Columbia comforting. Marie Ganzeveld, who was raised between 1946 and 1958, from the age of 4 onwards, at St. Mary’s Indian Residential School, has clear and positive memories of the school place and those with whom she lived:

A year after my mom died I arrived at St. Mary’s School in Mission. It was 1946. I was only four years old. I don’t recall my first day. I was too young to understand. But I do remember how happy I was to be with my sister Grace...I lived in the Sister’s quarters during my first year. Sometimes I slept with the

Sister Superior. The sisters were very good to me. I remember spending a Christmas with them and I received a beautiful doll with ringlets. They suggested I call her “Noel”, backwards for “Leon”. Father Fleury was a favourite of mine. He used to always put flowers in my hair. One time he went away and it seemed so long for a four year old. When he got back he picked me up in his arms and gave me a big hug and put a flower in my hair. I looked at him and asked ‘Where was you, when I forgot you?’ (quoted in Glavin 2002: 45).

Pauline Anderson, who attended Kamloops Indian Residential School for “a good eleven years” (Secwepemc 2000: 121), testifies similarly that she was

treated fairly. I don’t remember being abused, like how others have been mistreated, physically or sexually. I got along with the priests, nuns, and everyone at the school. I took some Home Ec in high school. I remember making a blouse and an outfit. Sewing to this day remains my hobby. I do custom sewing orders for various people. I sew graduation dresses, brides and bridesmaid dresses and so on. I guess I enjoyed my schooling there (Secwepemc 2000: 122).

Albert Chester Douglas’s testimony concerning his time at St. Mary’s, which he attended from 1958 to 1960, mirrors that of Anderson. Douglas recalls:

I just accepted the rules and didn’t find them out of the ordinary or anything. The discipline was always different depending on the kid, but the rules seemed to be the same for everyone. Some of the rules were necessary and I don’t know if they [residential schools] had any more rules than other places. (quoted in Glavin 2002: 63)

Finally, some students credit residential schools with instilling in them a spirituality for which they remain thankful. They enjoyed interactions with the religious aspects of residential school place and easily reconciled Indigenous spirituality with religious education provided in school. In many respects the enjoyment of religion came from its place-based expression. In students’ testimonies they discuss how religion *surrounded* them, was built into to the spaces of the educational institutions, during their

times at the residential school:

The Roman Catholicism I connected with, and I must have enjoyed it because I have thought of those times, being in with that priest and travelling to communities for Mass. I really enjoyed that part. I felt being a part of it made me connected with it. This was something that I did at that time...[and] I still highly respect it. I believe in all of the spiritual parallels, so whether it was through the church, the dance, sweat lodge, or fasting, I enjoy all of those parallels, and feel a connection in all of them. (Tusilum – Robert George – quoted in Glavin 2002: 73)

Thus students attending residential schools in British Columbia did not always experience the educational places in which they found themselves as either at odds with their sense of themselves as Aboriginal peoples or as disciplinary and punitive. Indeed, some enjoyed the options available to them within the schools and retain positive memories of their experiences.

Perhaps it is the memories, both negative and positive, of former students of residential schools in British Columbia that most succinctly summarize the place-based and spatial importance of the colonial education project in the Province. Certainly education for Indians in British Columbia was meant to produce Indians who were consistent with a set of Non-Aboriginal, Eurocolonial ideals and standards. Ultimately, the production of these transformed Indians required a place through which to unfold. More profoundly, however, the places of the school were by no means simply neutral space through which education transpired. Instead, symbolic, semiotic, and material places were active agents in the (re)production of Indians. Furthermore, residential schools in British Columbia were, for some students, places of positive experiences and were, for other students, redeployed as complex and highly orchestrated means of resisting the colonial project. Place did matter, including micro-geographic scales of it at

levels of school buildings, landscaped yards, classrooms, and even children's bodies.

Place was meaningful within the contests between Eurocolonial visions of Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal peoples' desires and needs to maintain senses of self and cultural continuity.

## CHAPTER 8:

“WHEN...THE LAST SCHOOL DAY IS DONE...I SHALL TEAR UP MY BOOKS AND PAPERS...”<sup>24</sup>: THE ARTS OF EVADING RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

*These images are peculiar. The children here do not see reality in the same way we do, nor even their own drawings, for that matter. The truth, their truth, lies neither in the real landscape, nor on paper. It is in their minds. They alone know what they wanted to express, [but] we can get...a glimpse of it, through their artwork and through our...vision.* (Jean-Christophe Grangé 2003: 256)

*In among all the fiction there may well be quite a number of...convincing truths. Which was of course the intention.* (Henning Mankell, 2000: 407)

On April 14 1989, after over a year of sustained public outcry from across Canada and belatedly responding to past residents' complaints lodged since the early 1970s, retired Ontario Supreme Court Judge Samuel Hughes was appointed to head a public inquiry regarding allegations of abuse at Mt. Cashel Orphanage in Newfoundland. The inquiry ultimately concluded that children in the orphanage had suffered physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the Christian Brothers who staffed the institution (Harris, M. 1990). The settlement against the Christian Brothers and Newfoundland's provincial government totalled \$11 million (O'Hara 2000). Eighteen months after the establishment of the public inquiry, Phil Fontaine (then Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations) disclosed to the *Globe and Mail* that he had suffered sexual and physical abuse in the 1950s and '60s at Fort Alexander Residential School in Winnipeg (Roberts 1990). Fontaine's disclosure is often referred to as the moment after which Indigenous peoples across Canada "felt safe" to disclose and make public their own stories of abuse within

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<sup>24</sup> From St. Joseph's/ Cariboo Indian School. (1965). *My Heart is Glad Book II*. Williams Lake, British Columbia. Williams Lake Community Archives. No accession number.

residential school institutions.

The Mt. Cashel case is credited with sparking a much larger discussion in (Non-Aboriginal) Canada concerning abuse of Indigenous children in residential schools across the country. Some (often Indigenous peoples) have questioned the relationship between these two ‘moments,’ pointing out that, even into the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Aboriginal peoples’ claims for legitimacy and recognition tended either to be ignored or to require authentication by Non-Aboriginal sources and processes. Why did it take so long for the maltreatment of Aboriginal children, particularly in residential schools, to surface? Others further charge that conflating the Mt. Cashel case with abuses in residential schools has taken the focus off the particular problem of the residential schooling project (Annett 2005; Hall 2007). There were vast differences between compulsory, state-run and ecumenically operated, educational institutions for Non-Aboriginal and for Indigenous peoples. Some (particularly Non-Aboriginal) people in Canada are wont to point out that all industrial, boarding, and educational institutions across Canada during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, were often places of extreme loneliness, harsh conditions, and disciplinary punishment, which deteriorated even further into full blown abuse and assault. The difference, often articulated most forcefully by Aboriginal peoples and past students of residential schools, resides in the principal educational function of the institutions and schools. The principal aim of Indian residential schools was the suppression of Indigeneity, or the eradication of any identities and characteristics deemed not Canadian, through the transformation of Indigenous personhood, character, and being. Boarding schools for Non-Aboriginal children could be places of great violence but they were not constructed to absorb children into a system bent on cultural



annihilation.

Despite some downfalls, Fontaine's decision to disclose his abuse at a residential school in conjunction with the Mt. Cashel case resulted in a broadened Canadian awareness about Indigenous peoples' realities in residential schools. Fontaine's actions may thus offer insight into a well-honed Aboriginal strategy: seize any opportunity, any place, no matter how small, amidst the crowding of colonial paradigms, to assert a presence and the resilience of Indigeneity. In other words, it is precisely when Non-Aboriginal peoples seek to re-examine colonial assumptions, even if that re-examination is undertaken in order to further legitimate the logic of the assumptions, that Aboriginal peoples have sought to assert and insert Indigeneity into dominant landscapes of thought, rhetoric, and discourse. The 1990s in British Columbia, for instance, was the decade when the Nisga'a Nation galvanized and focused their century-long struggle for a land claims treaty. The timing corresponded with government change in the Province and a moment when Non-Aboriginal British Columbians shifted toward at least some understanding that First Nations were peoples dispossessed from their lands (Blomley 1996; de Leeuw forthcoming). The timing of Fontaine's disclosure was far from naïve or happenstance. To advance Aboriginal rights in Canada, he capitalized on a slight shift in popular perceptions about church- and state-run institutions. Fontaine's clarity of political purpose does not detract from the courage of his statement. On the contrary. Understanding Fontaine's timing as highly strategic supports the contention that the systematically disenfranchised are immensely thoughtful and resourceful in their constant struggles to maintain identity and culture.

This reading of Fontaine's disclosure informs my approach to Aboriginal

children's production of arts and creative materials inside British Columbia's residential schools as strategic articulations of Indigeneity. It is also this interpretation of Fontaine's disclosure that makes another of his statements even more interesting. Almost eight years (to the day) after his disclosure of abuse within Fort Alexander Residential School, Fontaine made another statement about colonialism, residential schooling, and government apologies concerning colonial education in Canada:

The days of First Nations citizens as victims are over. We are a strong, resilient people and we are confident that we can move forward and forge a new future for ourselves....Our lands were taken, our children brutalized, and our languages, governments, religions, and ways of living stifled. *But miraculously, we survived and here we are today*, standing before you, strong and determined to reclaim our birthright in the Canadian Confederation....While today we are celebrating a new beginning, it is appropriate to remember those who were victims of the colonization experience, in particular, the many survivors of the residential school system...We as First Nations, say, 'Let us go forward together. (Fontaine 1998: 1–2, my emphasis)

This statement raises several intriguing questions, particularly in reference to the assimilative aim of residential schooling and the consequent victimization of Indigenous peoples within institutions of colonial education. For this research, Fontaine's focus on strength, resilience, and survival is compelling because it suggests that even First Nations children, who lived through the abuses, stood up to and fought the colonial curriculum. In doing so, they secured the survival of First Nations peoples. That survival has everything to do with the strength and resilience of Aboriginal peoples, and especially of Aboriginal children. How did Indigenous peoples survive a project so clearly designed to assimilate them? How did students wield survival strategies against residential schools and what were these strategies? How did children "evade" the colonial project of residential

schooling to survive?

These questions are the focus of this chapter, which argues that, despite the relatively thin record of Indigenous students' voices within the residential schooling project in British Columbia, creative materials produced by students are a rich source by which to visualize and conceptualize students' responses to residential school education. Such works cannot simply be taken at face value. These children did not live in a vacuum. While young students were struggling to assert their identity, Aboriginal people in British Columbia were struggling to retain their cultural sovereignty while simultaneously adapting to the demands of colonialism and modernity in the Province. In this chapter I explore the theoretical implications of working with student-generated work and the potential consequences of such interpretive efforts. I want to understand the relationship between Indigenous survival within residential schools and the production of children's creative materials in those schools. I begin this chapter by explaining how I collected materials produced by children during their time at the schools and the collections and archives upon which I drew. I follow with an exploration of existing research into meanings and purposes of particular Indigenous works of art in Canada, and the value these offer for further interpretation of the children's creative materials. Fundamentally, although residential schools were constructed to subordinate and transform Indigenous peoples according to the often shifting and heterogeneous ideals of Non-Aboriginals, the schools were also places in which Indigenous children actively negotiated the expectations of their rapidly changing circumstances.

### **8.a Alternate Archives and the Politics of Interpretation: Searching Out and Speaking On Student-produced Materials from British Columbia's Residential Schools**

The National Library and Archives hold no works or materials produced by Aboriginal children during their times in British Columbian residential schools. The works of individuals, perhaps especially children and especially Aboriginal children, are unlikely to fall within the purview of a national body vested primarily with collecting and archiving materials from government and institutional entities. Nor is the staff of the National Library and Archives aware of collections anywhere else in the country of Aboriginal children's materials produced within residential schools. Some government and ecumenical records mention such work, as do late 20<sup>th</sup> Century and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century records and documents produced by national Aboriginal organizations (e.g., the Assembly of First Nations or the National Healing Foundation) that have dealt with the issue of residential schooling in Canada. None of those written documents can equal the power of creative works produced by Aboriginal children during their time within residential schools, works that might record the strategies they and other students employed to *survive* the residential schooling process.

Locating such materials was a major undertaking involving contact with very small, alternative, and often more informal, archives. I contacted forty-one archives, libraries, and private collectors or researchers to locate small collections of Aboriginal student-artist-produced materials. I contacted the libraries, archives, or community collections in any community in which there had been a residential school and asked for student-produced materials. I also contacted the archives associated with the ecumenical organization that operated the schools, as well as the libraries or archives of the local

dioceses. Finally, I contacted the British Columbia branch of the National Archives of Canada, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, and the Royal British Columbia Museum and British Columbia Archives. Twenty primarily very small and community-based archives and collections, spanning First Nations' Band archives, church archives, rare book collections, and community museum or local historic society collections had material of interest. Many of the collections had no formal archiving or accession system, nor were they concerned with blacking out the names of students or schools, as is the case with materials pertaining to residential schools in ecumenical and government archives. Because the names, ages, and thoughts of children were often recorded, my work was both sensitive and intimate. I photographed over 150 art objects, including: drawings, textiles, basketry, wood sculpting, painting, and metal work. I accessed approximately 35 written and creative texts or monographs representing ten residential schools and encompassing well over 400 pages of student-written materials. Although the materials spanned the decades from the mid-1880s to the late 1970s, the majority were produced from the 1930s to the 1970s. To more fully explore the relationship of the children and their artistic expression to the places of the schools, I collected, copied, or photographed over 200 representations of residential schools in British Columbia, including: architectural blueprints; maps and plot plans; coverage in both popular and specialized media; aerial photographs; and photographs taken for private and institutional purposes. Through careful readings of children's creative expressions and materials, I found emerging a sense of the efforts that children undertook in order to articulate aspects of their Indigenous cultures and identities. It is this emergence with which I am most interested in this chapter, primarily because it represents precisely the history that is so

often marginalized or overlooked through practices such as formal cataloguing, collecting, and archiving of the historic record.

Efforts to de-Indigenize the Canadian landscape (Razack 2002; Spears 2005) have long been met with resistance by Indigenous peoples, who use the medium of creative art, including dance, song, performance, music, and visual medias, to express sovereign and living identity (Buddle 2004). These expressions, which often integrate materials and expectations of Eurocolonial peoples, are neither passive adoption of colonial norms nor clumsy or haphazard hybridized graftings of unequal cultures (Buddle 2004, Pratt 1991). Instead, Indigenous creative expressions and artistic materials might be seen as highly considered, self-conscious, aware, and nuanced efforts to *synchronize* the different and competing cultural expectations that are part of coming to terms with one another. They are the strategic efforts of subaltern peoples both to announce themselves within a system designed to expunge them and to undertake cross-cultural translations that make sense of a changing world, both for themselves and for their colonial companions (Phillips 1998). In creative expressions produced by Indigenous peoples living within the confines of colonial expectations and places, we may witness a kind of intercession, or a “situated strategy for mediated Indigeneity across cultures” (Buddle 2004: 30), that emphasizes the agency of Aboriginal peoples and their engagement of dominant historicities. These works also address a current concern of some Indigenous theorists. Indigenous Cree scholar Willie Ermine has criticized Non-Aboriginal narration of histories involving Aboriginal peoples, asserting that ongoing othering of Indigenous peoples occurs through a patronizing positioning of them as victims:

The emphasis in research has been on negative social issues [and] a ‘pathologizing lens’...which has focused on a social disarray and

pathos...whereby Native peoples and their lives are pathologized. These skewed representations are taken for truth and disseminated as the true history and social conditions of Native peoples. (Ermine *et Al.* 2004: 12–13)

My considering the creative expressions of Aboriginal students in residential schools makes an effort to de-pathologize Aboriginal peoples when trying to understand those schools. I argue that the creative works of children represent some insight into Aboriginal peoples' engagement of dominant historicities, paradigms, and places designed by the Western imagination to subvert Indigeneity

Aboriginal children living and working within the places and constructs of colonial schooling were by no means excluded from broader efforts by Indigenous adults to translate and mediate between Eurocolonial and Indigenous cultures. Aboriginal peoples themselves have argued that the children involved in making art in the Inkameep Indian Day School in Oliver, British Columbia, were dynamic social agents, with active political perspectives, who were interested in using their art to circulate children's interpretations of the rapidly changing world of modernizing, colonial British Columbia (*The Leading Edge* 2004). As one former Inkameep student observes, the art she and others produced simultaneously reflected, and constituted, the world they lived in: "I think everyone here that was in the classroom, were artists...[w]e lived it as you can see out here." For many Aboriginal peoples, art is a fundamental mechanism for making sense of the world and, thus, in the modern context, of addressing the changes wrought by colonialism. For members of the Sle7esht (Ashcroft) Indian Reserve, of the Lkaka'pmux (Thompson) First Nation, the function of art was (and is) to explain the world, the existence of peoples within it, and how all elements of the world fit together (Kirkpatrick 2000). So fundamental was the concept of "art" to the Lkaka'pmux First

Nation that there was no word to distinguish art from any other form of creation: instead, everything “was made beautiful,” made “from the heart,” and made to express and receive cultural heritages anchored in understandings of interconnectivities between all aspects of the world (Kirkpatrick 2000: 47). The Lkaka’pmux understanding of art imbues it with teleological, spiritual, and purposeful possibility; it suggests that art is no accidental aesthetic but contributes to the wants and needs of Aboriginal people and their communities, including their relationships to other First Nations and to surrounding resources and landscapes. Whereas some critics of primarily Non-Aboriginal art argue its function is to illicit response, or to “engender...aesthetic experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and so forth” (Carroll 2001: 5; see also Cothey 1990), such a conceptualization may not do justice to the function of First Nations art. Although beauty and “considerations of the heart” play a part in the art works, for Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia art was (and is) more than a catalyst to provoke responses based on aesthetics of an object. Artistic expression function pragmatically and structurally to explain and to order all aspects of life, including colonial incursions. This interpretation of Indigenous art and creative work, although by no means meant as a totalizing theoretical construct to understand all Indigenous art, which clearly is as diverse and variant as Aboriginal peoples themselves, nevertheless suggests that the creative texts and objects produced by Indigenous children within residential schools can be read and understood as more than aesthetic or decorative efforts (Belmore 2003, Mattes, 2007; Thomas 2004). Instead, the works might better be understood and theorized as clear articulations of cultural mediation, in which the children maintain Indigenous explanations of the world(s) around them while translating, for themselves and their colonial educators, the roles and



functions of Indigeneity and Indigenous worldviews within the shifting geographies of British Columbia.

**8.b “Indian Usefulness to Canadian Society”<sup>25</sup>: Non-Aboriginal Views on the Function of Indian Arts and Crafts within the Contours of Colonial Education**

By the early 1940s in British Columbia, criticism by professionals about Indian education had entered the public record, as had a sense that creative arts may be one solution to the Indian problem. In January 1942, *The B.C. Teacher*, the “Official Organ of the B.C. Teachers’ Federation,” ran a special editorial. The Editorial, entitled “Indian Arts and Crafts,” was a tribute to Alice Ravenhill, who was being celebrated as an educational pioneer in the Province. It was also a critique of residential schooling in the British Columbia, suggesting that Indian education was not attaining its goals, and that it was premised on flawed conceptions of Indigenous people antithetical to principals of educating children:

Prevalent unconsciousness of the degree to which the ‘progressive’ habits of our own racial kith and kin and the ‘unprogressive’ habits of our Indians are products of environmental influences [that] no doubt has helped to make too many of us contemptuous of the aboriginal and indifferent to our own moral obligations in their regard....The crude fact is that policies as we have adopted them for the amelioration of the conditions among the Indians have, in the main, proved disconcertingly unsuccessful....The herding of Indian children in barracks and the perpetuation of curricula irrelevant to their needs and instincts cannot but result in much subsequent rebellion and retrogression and in the abandonment of imposed restraints, even if such restraints would have been advantageous to Indians

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<sup>25</sup> “Editorial.” (January 1942). *The B.C. Teacher: Official Organ of the B.C. Teachers’ Federation*. Vancouver, B.C. 206 – 208.

themselves. (1942: 207)

A possible solution to the failures of Indian education in British Columbia, argued the

B.C. Teacher's Federation, lay in the realm of creative arts:

In November, we published a review by Miss Mary Elizabeth Colman of *The Tale of the Nativity* as re-told, in Indian terms, by the children of Inkameep Indian School. Some readers will remember that we particularly recommended this truly remarkable little book as a Christmas gift, but it will arouse interest and give pleasure any month in the year. The illustrations provided by Sis-ku-lk are charming, and give promise of greater things, and the transfer of the story of the Christ Child from Palestine to the Okanogan is artistically convincing....The commercial utilization of Indian designs and crafts and the resurgence of Indian creative ability may yet restore to our Indian fellow Canadians a gleam of hope for the future. In Indian hearts hope is a light all but extinguished generations ago. Upon the restoration of Indian self-respect depends the possibility not only of a fair modicum of Indian happiness but of Indian usefulness to Canadian society at large. Perhaps if both the reader and writer of this article do a little more to further this generous dream, we shall be somewhat less uncomfortable in the region of our self-respect the next time we face the coldly adjudging eyes of...the earliest Canadians. (1942: 208)

Despite its espoused function of modernizing Indian children, residential schooling was having just the opposite effect. According to the Federation, understanding that failure, along with understanding the plight of Aboriginal children in the Province, implicated Non-Aboriginal onlookers to the colonial project. Should Non-Aboriginal onlookers want to effect change, the editorial suggested, they should look to creative arts produced by students, wherein lay a gleam of hope for the future. Here, if only tacitly, we find a link between the failure of residential schooling to appropriately educate Indigenous children and a vision of creative arts produced by those children as key to Aboriginal cultural resurgence and assuagement of colonial guilt. The sentiments expressed in *The B.C.*

*Teacher* did not, however, consider the possibility that the images produced by Indian children, and child artists like Sis-ku-lk, might be sophisticated and political expressions of Indigeneity. That possibility, it seemed, was simply outside the realm of consideration: the art was produced by peoples so despondent that their hearts held virtually no hope for the future. Thus, although by 1942 *The B.C. Teacher* was critical of Indian education and while the creative arts were seen as important to redirecting it, the artistic endeavours of students were still considered by Non-Aboriginal educators and teachers either as innocent expressions or as non-self-directed consequences of good intentions and interventions (Hare and Barman 2006). These understandings of the children's art, as innocent, passive, and devoid of political possibility for Aboriginal peoples, may have provided for Indigenous students an opening, or possibility, within the confines of colonial education: artistic expressions were safe; they were non-threatening to Non-Aboriginal peoples. If, however, the art was understood even slightly differently by its producers, Aboriginal children's art and creativity might be (re)read as functioning with immense complexity and political sophistication in 20<sup>th</sup> Century colonial British Columbia.

Before the B.C. teacher's federation drew conclusions about the innocence, yet potential, of Indian-produced art, similar constructions were already circulating. For almost a decade, between 1902 and 1911, staff and Sisters at All Hallows Indian Residential School published a semi-annual bulletin entitled *All Hallows in the West*. The school in Yale, on the edge of the Fraser Canyon, was operated by the Anglican Church between 1884 and 1920. The text, widely circulated both to the Women's Auxiliary in eastern Canada and to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in England,

detailed the “worthy,” “needed,” and “pleasurable” work involved in Indian education in British Columbia (*Hallows West* 1906: 504). The publication was intended to maintain regular communication with potential donors who could augment the minimal funding provided by the Dominion of Canada: “a frugal maintenance for 35 pupils, which is paid under an annuity allowance of \$5.00 per month for each child” (anon. *Hallows West* 1906: 504). Sisters teaching at All Hallows sought to engage readers by impressing upon them the vital importance of their work and by engaging them in the minutiae of the project. As a result, frequent references were made to the role played by the decorative and performing arts in the education of young Aboriginal women: the girls’ “sweet voices” in the choir, their aptitude for handiwork, and their dedication to beautifying school rooms with few or no resources.<sup>26</sup> Given the publication’s focus of the publication on the creative aptitude of Aboriginal children, it is not surprising that, as early as 1906, a connection was made between creative arts (poetry), which were still understood as innocent expressions, and the best interests of Aboriginal children within 20<sup>th</sup> Century British Columbia.

A recurring feature, entitled “Indian School Prize Day,” described an annual event sponsored by the school and attended by government and church officials and parents, at which students were recognized for excellence in scripture, housework, writing, bread making, and needlework. The program always included dancing, performances, stage enactments, and choir recitals by the students. It was within this “creative climate” that

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<sup>26</sup> The pervasiveness of creative handiwork at All Hallow School for Girls, and the significance it played within the curriculum undertaken there, has been well documented. See for instance Jennifer Iredale’s (2004) *Enduring Threads: Ecclesiastical Textile of the St. John the Divine Church, Yale, British Columbia* or Jean Barman’s “Separate and Unequal: Indian and White Girls at All Hallows School 1884 – 1920” (1986) and “Lost Opportunity: All Hallows School for Indian and White Girls” (1989). I am most interested in articulations that link creative work at the school with the possibility of securing Indigenous identity, a notion absent in other considerations of the creative curriculum at the school.

the Anglican Archdeacon of British Columbia chose to discuss the purpose of Indian Education, the students upon which the project focused, and the example set by a well-known First Nations poet:

Archdeacon Pentreath's words to the children [that day] were very striking. He commended them for what they had already done, and encouraged them to great efforts, not in imitation of the white race, but for the honor of their own race. 'You should be proud of being Indians, members of a great and brave nation and you should use all your endeavours, all your talents, all your education, to better the condition of your people, to make a name and a place for them in the world.' He spoke to them of Pauline Johnston (Teka-nion-wake), the poetess, whose little poems are so widely read and so greatly admired... "What other Indian men and women have done, you can do too, dear girls, if you use aright the educational and religious advantages you are receiving here in your old school." (anon. *Hallows West* 1906: 542)

While allowing for the potential power of the arts to rejuvenate Aboriginal culture and identity, Penreath nevertheless maintained that Indian creative expression was innocent: Johnston's poetry remained, whatever else, "little." But the Archdeacon did recognize the complex and competing demands facing Aboriginal children at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He encouraged them to maintain Indigeneity, despite years of colonial efforts to eradicate it, and to embody all aspect of a modern Christian education. Student at All Hallows were living the contested expectations of colonialism in British Columbia. In small moments, such as Pentreath's presentation, they were informed that creative expressions were understood passively, if not somewhat dismissively, by colonial subjects, while simultaneously hearing that the arts provided an opportunity through which to maintain and circulate aspects of their Indigenous culture.

There was a resiliency to the colonial notion that creative expressions and the fine

arts provided for Aboriginal children ideal but benign opportunities by which they could express acceptable expressions of Indigeneity, while also displaying traits seen as necessary to modernity. Between May 30<sup>th</sup> and June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1938, the Knights of Columbus in British Columbia, who by that time had established an Indian Arts and Handicrafts Committee, mounted an exhibit entitled *Display of Indian Arts and Handicrafts* in the Hudson Bay Company Store in Vancouver. According to the Director of Indian Affairs, the exhibit was particularly special because it included arts produced by students from most of the Province's Indian residential and day schools, notably two young Aboriginal student artists from schools in the Province's interior. The exhibit sparked public attention in British Columbia. At least one newspaper ran a story with detailed descriptions of the children's art:

At Kamloops Indian residential School today the staff is cataloguing and preparing for shipment an exhibition of the handiwork of the Indian pupils. The attractive display is going to Vancouver, where it will be part of an exhibition of Indian children's handicrafts being obtained from all Indian schools in the Province. The event is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus [and]...[i]ncluded in the display from the Kamloops school are many outstanding examples of handicrafts taught the children....There are knitted articles, sweaters, etc. made by the girls aged up to 16 years old....There are some outstanding examples of beaded work, particularly a pair of buckskin gloves...and several realistic butterflies made of beads. In the work of the boys there are some cleverly carved articles, including a pair of Indian figures more than two feet high, cleanly and systematically carved. (from newspaper clippings, personal collections, no date or title)

The Knights' goals included developing a society in which "Catholics...could offer social advantages, heightened by a background of practical religion...;" they were focused on "the broad spirit of fraternity" and "work...as a welfare agency" (*Display*,

*Indian Arts* c. 1938). A sense of this brotherly philanthropy pervades the tenor of the exhibit's accompanying catalogue. There is frequent reference to the utility of creative work in the worthwhile project of producing self-sustaining, modernized Indians:

This huge display of Indian Art and Industries organized and sponsored by the Knights of Columbus is in harmony with the expressed desire of both the church and government for economic betterment of the Indians of British Columbia, and will create an atmosphere and develop what might be termed Indian-mindedness favourable to Indian crafts. (*Display, Indian Arts* c. 1938)

In an entry about the customs of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia, contributing author Professor Hill-Tout notes that the “sole purpose of this exhibit is to display to prospective purchasers samples of work done by our Indians, so as to promote a better market for their wares and assist them to become more self-supporting.” The exhibit was lauded by the Reverend W. Mark Duke, the Archbishop of the Catholic Diocese of Vancouver, as “the largest and most comprehensive exhibit ever shown in Western Canada,” and it was extolled by the Reverend A. U. de Pencier, Lord Archbishop of New Westminster, as “the most outstanding display of Indian made articles ever exhibited in Western Canada, if not all of Canada” (*Display, Indian Arts* c. 1938).

Those who wrote in support of the exhibit, including Director of Indian Affairs Harold W. McGill, celebrated it for its “outstanding” qualities and “pleasing features.” Others offered hearty approval about the cooperative, cross-jurisdictional, and cross-racial manner in which the exhibit was executed:

The splendid co-operation given [to the Knights of Columbus] by the Department of Indian Affairs, both Ottawa and British Columbia, clergy of the different denominations, have from the onset spurred the committee on this splendid work of our government wards, the Indians. They themselves through their chief and agents expressed their hearty support and thankfulness for the opportunity to

place before the public their Indian-made wares. Expectant we all are that this display will assist in making a greater market for their wares, and help them to become more self-supporting. (*Display, Indian Arts* c. 1938: n.p.)

From a Non-Aboriginal perspective, art was a means by which Indigenous peoples in British Columbia could economically assimilate into a colonial environment. The arts and crafts offered clear material evidences that suggested the potential success of colonial efforts to enfold Aboriginal peoples into modernity. In wares made by Indians, Catholic philanthropists and officials from Indian Affairs alike could see the positive outcomes of working together to solve the Indian problem. The objects were imbued with colonial values of assimilating Aboriginal peoples. In the overwhelming attention paid to the arts' assimilative values, little or no notice was paid to the possibility that students were realizing very different goals when producing "Indian-wares." Aboriginal children's arts remained, from a Non-Aboriginal perspective, innocent of anything other than expressing the potential for future assimilation. This understanding assumed the function of Aboriginal art had no purpose for Indigenous peoples beyond providing them some economic viability within a rapidly modernizing society.

For Non-Aboriginal peoples who viewed Indian arts and handicrafts as a means of economically assimilating Indigenous peoples into British Columbian colonial society, the production of the creative materials and the objects themselves had to adhere to expectations of the Non-Aboriginal gaze. After decades of hearing about vanishing Indians, authenticity was a critical component of the expectation. With no intended irony apparent, the exhibit's catalogue goes so far as to state that, for Indigenous art to have any *real* value, it could not be tainted by precisely the modernizing places, structures, and practices that Aboriginal peoples were thought to require and that their art was



understood as potentially making available to them. Viewers and potential buyers of the arts on display at the 1938 *Display of Indian Arts and Handicrafts* were thus guaranteed they would experience something genuinely 'Indian' if they partook of the exhibit. This experience, readers were assured, would occur because organizers were physically gathering Indian peoples, including children, from around the Province and were staging performances of Indians producing Indian arts and crafts during the exhibit. Their performance, the exhibit's curators promised, would provide Non-Aboriginal viewers the unique opportunity of unmediated insight into British Columbia's Aboriginal people. The production of arts and creative materials, as much as the objects themselves, thus became the very sights/sites through which Non-Aboriginal British Columbians could connect with those they were intent on assimilating:

From a number of reserves Indian Chiefs will bring in workers to demonstrate the carding of their wool, basket making, in reed and root, totem pole and other carving and many other crafts....[M]oving pictures will be shown of the Indian at his native home, as well as Indian bands from different reserves.

By witnessing art in production, by authentic Indians, visitors of the exhibit could be certain they were seeing authentic Indian art. Additionally, viewers were promised that, by bearing witness to the production of authentic Indian art, they were also witnessing a revival of the past:

Their *genuine* artifacts have a commercial value and are souvenirs sought after by tourists....Nothing could be more timely than this anniversary to awaken the Indian to a return of the crafts and art done by their forefathers, which otherwise would become a lost art....During the time of the display it will be possible to see these Indians at the *actual* work of the different tribal crafts. Arrangements are being made to bring in workers from the various tribes, as the *actual* manner of production may be seen. (my emphasis)

Although viewers and consumers of the exhibit were instructed to understand their presence as taking part in a philanthropic project dedicated to the betterment of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia, they were simultaneously assured of the distinction between themselves and the Aboriginal peoples. This distance was maintained not only through a juxtaposition of viewer/consumer and viewed/consumable but also through the reiteration that Non-Aboriginal participants were safely engaging with a people of the past, a dying race. Non-Aboriginal participants in the *Display of Indian Arts and Handicrafts* were able to see themselves as rescuing Aboriginal culture, while also retaining a sense of security that their position in colonial British Columbia remained fundamentally unthreatened by Indigenous presences. Through the exhibit, then, colonial viewers would maintain that what they were witnessing in the art was not a strategic or political threat to their imagined supremacy over Indians.

This may have posed a dilemma for Aboriginal peoples, including the students from residential schools taking part in the exhibit. On the one hand, Indian peoples were expected to become self-supporting through an adaptation to colonial expectations, an adaptation that was purportedly possible through the production of Indian arts and crafts. On the other hand, the arts and crafts that would provide Aboriginal peoples the opportunity of economic self-sufficiency were, according to the demands of Non-Aboriginal colonial consumers, to be produced by a people both uninfluenced by colonialism and constantly positioned as dying and of the past. Indigenous peoples were asked simultaneously to integrate into a Non-Indigenous society and to remain authentically distinct from it. While such a demand illustrates well the capricious and contradictory nature of the colonial project in British Columbia, particularly in relation to

Aboriginal peoples and their children, it also suggests some frailties in the colonial imagination. So uniformly were Aboriginal creative arts constructed as potentials for assimilation that little consideration was afforded to them as serving other functions for Aboriginal peoples themselves. For residential school students, expressing Indigenous identity, including speaking First Nations languages or engaging in a set of practices ingrained in the colonial imagination as representing Indianness, was a dangerous business, often met with violent repercussions. In the context of creative arts, however, students from residential schools were informed that authentic expressions of their Indigenous identities were safe and rewardable, primarily because the colonial imagination was insistent that such expressions were purely for economic assimilation. Artistic expressions, it seemed, while potentially posing a dilemma, may have also offered artful opportunities to the Aboriginal students in residential schools.

By the early 1940s, a growing public discourse was developing in British Columbia that identified arts and handicrafts in the residential schools as important tools for the development of self-sufficiency and assimilation. Throughout 1941, a series of articles focusing on Indian children's art and creativity ran in *The Vancouver Sun* (Thornton July 9, 1941: 17), *The Vancouver Daily Province* (Palette December 18, 1941: 12), *The Daily Colonist* (n.a. July 15, 1941: 3) and *The Victoria Daily Times* (n.a. May 26, 1941: 18). The stories covered the gamut of children's artistic expressions, from their theatrical enactments of 'Indian legends' in the windows of the Hudson Bay Company in downtown Vancouver, through to illustrations in children's texts, and the dancing and performances by Indian children at the opening of a park in Victoria. Creative and artistic endeavours by children were constructed consistently as providing unique insight into the

perishing cultures with which the children were seen as faltering, but still authentically, linked. This discursive construct is also in evidence in public media in 1942. On May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1942, the Saturday edition of *The Victoria Daily Times* ran a long feature entitled “Young Indians’ Art on Display”:

Creative art work done by B.C. Indian children, depicting the ancient lore of their race is on exhibition until May 10<sup>th</sup> in the Provincial Museum at the Parliament Building. Schools represented in the fascinating display, which received acclaim at Vancouver Art Gallery last week, are Songhees Indian Day School, Admirals Road (Miss K. Keeble Teacher); St Catherine’s School, Duncan; Christie Indian School, Kakawis, west coast Vancouver Island; Tsartip Indian School, Brentwood Bay (Mrs Mary Ormod, teacher), Kootnay Indian Residential School, Cranbrook; Seton Lake School, Shalath; Inkameep School, Oliver (Anthony Walsh, teacher). It is the first exhibit in B.C. of illustrations of entirely original paintings by Indian children of the Province. They chose their own subjects and had neither models nor copies. ‘Bearing in mind that the schools represented come from widely separated areas in the Province, the diversity of subject selected, of color, activity of imagination, are interesting and illustrative of the forgotten fact that in olden days each tribe in B.C. had its own particular form of art,’ says Miss Ravenhill. (Victoria Daily Times 1942: 9).

Two days later, *The Victoria Daily Times* ran another story on the importance of Indian children’s art and its position in colonial British Columbia:

Eloquent of the promise for the future is the fine exhibition of original paintings and other fine works of art executed by Indian children of British Columbia and now displayed for the edification of the public at the Provincial Museum. This represents convincing proof of the value of the encouragement which in recent months has been extended to these youngsters to employ their creative talents to record in visible form the more fascinating and informative history and folklore of their ancient race. These are reflected in intriguing interpretations of tribal stories which take form in totem poles, drawings and embroidery. No reference to this

exhibition would be complete, however, without a compliment to the teachers in the Indian schools of the Province who have patiently coached their young charges. (*Victoria Daily Times* 1942: 4)

It was precisely the ancient and historic that gave Aboriginal children's arts and creative works the socio-cultural currency that afforded them the attention of British Columbia's Non-Aboriginal population. Also, educators were presented as magicians who could produce de-Indigenized students, yet elicit from them authentic Indigenous cultures in the form of creative work. Colonial discourses managed to maintain an explanation of controlling the creative expressions of Aboriginal students. Indigenous students were still envisioned as blank corporeal places *upon* which colonial culture could inscribe its fondest fantasies. The arts produced by the students were then understood as safely controllable.

By 1958, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.), then responsible for directing, operating, and overseeing the majority of residential schools in British Columbia, had also adopted arts and handicrafts as a means to encourage Aboriginal children's assimilation into Eurocolonial society. From the perspective of the Catholic Church, the curricular function of Indian arts and crafts remained assimilation and acculturation. At a convention on the future direction of Indian education, the Indian and Eskimo Commission of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate discussed the role of arts and handicrafts in colonial education. The participants established the functions, successes, and failures of residential schooling to date, sketching out the pedagogical possibilities of the schooling within which they later positioned creative arts and handicrafts:

Little by little, a genuine professional movement is shaping up which aims at appraising more scientifically the true educational needs of present day Indians and at selecting the most appropriate pedagogical techniques, materials and

situations for meeting those needs....[R]esidential schools still play a major role in the field of native education...[they are] facilities...restricted to children whose parents either still live a more or less modified native way of life, or have failed to develop, individually or collectively, the socio-economic patterns essential to successful day-school attendance, [so] the residential school still carries the heavier load in the transculturation process which constitutes native education in Canada. (O.M.I 1958: 5)

Creative arts and handicrafts were believed to serve important functions within these places where the most innovative and cutting-edge pedagogical al practices were exercised for cultural transformation were understood to unfold. The Oblates envisioned arts and handicraft production as combining with other enculturation strategies focused on the financial security of Aboriginal peoples. This vision for economic self-sufficiency was approached tentatively and was premised on careful scrutiny of the creative works to ensure the outcomes were both safe and marketable:

At the present time, there is an evident heightening of interest in Indian Handicraft, and a general feeling that preparation of these crafts should be encouraged....[M]any efforts have been made along these lines in the past with more or less success. Reconsideration of the present situation should be undertaken with the help of various groups...[and]...if you were to make a study of the problems involved, you would achieve something beneficial to a great number of Indian craftsmen. Any programme which would provide a source of income for skilled craft-workers would appear to be worthwhile, and any effort expended well justified in view of the growing demand for Indian souvenir items. However, craftsmen must be careful in producing items that can be labelled “Traditional Indian Craft,” and which when put for sale, will not retail at prohibitive prices. (O.M.I 1958: 77)

In other words, inexpensive First Nations’ souvenir items were to be encouraged, but the production of art that reflected a dynamic and vibrant culture, fully responsive to the

world it encountered and able to retail at top prices, was not desirable. In British Columbian residential schools, then, Aboriginal arts that did not comply with a colonial construct of a “dying or vanishing Indian,” or that did not serve to support a Non-Aboriginal aesthetic ideal, were likely to be read as dangerous. Student creative expression had to navigate a geography of the acceptable in a sea of complex colonial prejudices.

Such attitudes to Indigenous children’s art were not limited to the arena of church officials or the public media. Teachers in British Columbia’s residential school system published and circulated almost identical perspectives in remote regions of the Province far from the Provincial Museum or from conferences held by government and church policy makers. The 1953 writings of Gwen Pharis Ringwood, penned while she was a teacher at St. Joseph’s Residential School in Williams Lake, were emblematic of such perspectives.<sup>27</sup> Like others, Ringwood understood Indigenous children’s creative works as embodying two quite distinct colonial expectations about Indians. First, Ringwood saw creative expressions by children as offering a potential means by which to bring Aboriginal peoples into better life-positions within a modernizing British Columbia. Second, she believed the arts and creative expressions displayed an authentic record of Aboriginal children’s connection with a dying race from which they arose and needed to escape. In her introductory notes to the 1964 publication of *My Heart is Glad*, Ringwood

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<sup>27</sup> In 1953, Gwen Pharis Ringwood, who was born in Washington U.S.A. and received a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Alberta, moved with her physician husband to Williams Lake, British Columbia, in the Province’s interior. One of her plays, *Still Stands the House* (1938) established her as “one of the most significant Canadian playwrights of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century...[and remains] one of the most-often produced and anthologized Canadian plays of its period” (Day 2004). In total, Ringwood wrote and had published or staged 33 plays: eight of which were written and first produced in Williams Lake. Out of those eight, three were first produced within the Cariboo Indian Residential School. *The Sleeping Beauty: A Play with an Indian Setting*, was printed in its entirety in a small, school-published monograph entitled *My Heart Is Glad*. The other two, *Lion and Mouse* and *The Golden Goose*, were staged at the school, likely with Aboriginal performers as they were children’s plays.

wrote of the students' creative works:

This booklet consists of a selection from the writing done by Grade VII and VIII Students at the Cariboo Indian School for an experimental program in Speech Arts. The program consisted of exercises in Voice and Speech, Dramatic Improvisations, and Written Assignments. Our aims were: 1) To increase competence and ease in the use of written and spoken English, 2) To encourage the expression of each individual's experience and creativity, 3) To promote understanding and enjoyment of the Speech Arts....The illustrations were done by Grade VII and VIII students who draw well. (Ringwood 1964: n.p.)

From Ringwood's perspective, then, the encouragement of Aboriginal students' creativity was linked with the aim of colonial education: to reconfigure Indians so they reflected colonialism's expectations of abject yet assimilated peoples. However Ringwood also believed that students' creative works would assist in Aboriginal cultural rejuvenation although the rejuvenation conformed to colonial exceptions:

We hope each student will read the legends and stories aloud at home, and bring back to school next fall many new stories. Our Cariboo heritage of song, story and legend can easily be lost unless this generation makes an effort to conserve it. To each student in Grade VII and VIII I wish joy and achievement in the future. This booklet is a 'sharing'...our gift to one another. (Ringwood 1964: n.p.)

Creative expressions provided a perfect venue in which colonial educators could witness, with a certain moral assuredness premised on ideas of sharing and helping, Aboriginal children's ascendance into modernity. Explained in such an albeit contradictory manner by teachers in residential schools, children's cultural expressions were pacified.

However disjointed, Ringwood's vision sold. In 1965, the Cariboo Indian Residential School produced a more expansive second edition of *My Heart Is Glad*. It retailed for a dollar more than the initial edition and included words from the school's principal. Reverend Father O'Conner's opening remarks underscore the divided colonial



educational expectations under which Aboriginal children were functioning within British Columbia's residential schools:

While we realize that this volume is no masterpiece...we greatly appreciate the noble effort at self-expression. For the many authors [children], it is the first attempt to put into the English language tribal folklore and superstitions hitherto expressed only in their respective native tongues. Without such efforts many of the tales of yesteryear along with the native language will be lost in the process of modern day education. 'When all my exams are over and the last school day is done' writes a poet in this book, 'I shall tear up my books and papers, Goodbye, my classmates, everyone! Back to my free country.' We trust that native lore will never suffer the fate of this author's books after school, but rather it should strengthen and gracefully grow with the passage of time. (O'Conner 1965: n.p.)

O'Conner's words underscore the efforts made by colonial educators to diminish the power of Aboriginal children's creative expressions. As charming as the results might be, they remained far from masterpieces. Furthermore, they stemmed from folklore and superstitions and remained referenced against constructions of Indians as noble peoples of the yesteryear. Such descriptions enabled educators in residential schools to understand their wards as in need of transformation and as othered with reference to modern Non-Aboriginal settler society. This, in turn, diminished the artistic expressions of children. Even when confronted with an Aboriginal student's express rejection, in poetic form, of colonial education, and her desire to return to her own "free country," O'Conner minimizes the rebuff, trusting instead that such slights are something to be outgrown by Aboriginal children, a normal part of education. Gwen Ringwood held similar views and offered similar explanations about the students' creative work in *My Heart Is Glad*:

My Heart is Glad (Book II) presents some of this year's writings by students in

Grade VII and Grade VIII in the experimental program in Oral and Written Language at the Cariboo Indian School. Each student has contributed a story and in many cases illustrated his or her own work. We have encouraged students to write about things they know... We hope this book, along with the 1964 Book I, may be a start toward the collection of fragments of India lore, custom and history, pertaining to the Shuswap, Carrier and Chilcotin tribes. This heritage, belonging not only to our students, but to Canada, will be lost unless the young Indian treasures it.... We extend our affectionate good wishes to you the students. You may well be proud of the ingenuity and courage of your ancestors who learned the ways of the land and how to live in the land. May you find similar strength to meet the difficulties of 20<sup>th</sup> Century living. 'Nu nes Tean'. (Ringwood and Germain 1965)

Like her contemporaries and her predecessors, Ringwood argued the worth and potential of the expressions by rendering inert the students who produced the work. She also credits colonial education and educators – herself included – with engendering in Aboriginal students the 'newfound' interest in their culture(s). By constructing the children and their expressions as such, threats to colonial education are minimized, from the perspective of those invested in upholding a colonial British Columbia.

As late into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as 1973, those at the helm of residential and Indian schooling in British Columbia continued to conceptualize and construct Aboriginal children and their creative products as evidence of an authentic connection to a static past. To be valuable, creative work produced by Aboriginal students had to access an ancient and primitive authenticity dormant in the children. So pervasive was this ideal that, in a creative writing and story-collection project, judges rejected student's initial creative responses on the grounds of "inauthentic" portrayal of Indianness:

A number of years ago the members of the B.C. Indian Arts and Welfare Society decided to conduct an essay contest among Indian School children on Vancouver

Island. It was agreed that many of the legends and much of the folklore of the Indians might disappear with the passing of the older generation, if steps were not taken before it was too late, to preserve both. The first results of the contest were disappointing. The Indians the children wrote of were those that they had seen on television or in the 'movies'. There was scarcely a mention made of Longhouses, dug-out canoes, the sea or whales, seals or salmon. All of which are an integral part of the life of the West Coast Indian. In time, however, and after persuasion, the essays began to change. It was obvious that the children were going to the elders for information and they were being told some of the almost forgotten stories, customs and beliefs....[T]he present book is the result. It is a form of verbal archaeology. As the palaeontologist and the archaeologist uses bits of bone and pottery to build up a picture of former civilizations, it is hoped that future students will find here bits of information that will help to build a more complete picture of Indian life on this coast. (Tate 1973: vi)

Although students' initial responses were failures from a Non-Aboriginal perspective, efforts by Aboriginal children to write about television, movies, and "modern" life suggest that the children were very much in tune with what the project of modernity expected of them. That Indian children could return to Elders and community members in order to draw on other aspects of their cultural identities offers two other insights into their activities within colonial education. First, there is evidence that, despite the best efforts of colonial education to eradicate Indigeneity from the British Columbian landscape, many aspects of it remained and were available to children. Second, the children's responses suggest a comfort in navigating multiple worlds and a fluency in drawing upon them all, depending on which ones offered the potential for greatest reward. Aboriginal children, within the confines of Indian schools, were actively negotiating the demands of colonialism and possibly subverting it for their own purposes, even if those purposes included quietly ensuring their voices became part of a record

about residential schooling.

For over three decades in British Columbia, then, there is evidence of capricious and conflicted colonial interests with regard to Aboriginal children's creative expressions. On the one hand, Aboriginal children were expected to assimilate and conform to the ideals of colonial modernity. On the other, they were expected to undertake this conformity by retaining authentic aspects of identity that colonial modernity had, quite expressly, made effort to eradicate. These interests framed the ways children's artistic expressions were interpreted, ultimately pacifying them and making them palatable for Non-Aboriginal peoples. Whether lauding the revival of authentic Indianness or arguing for Indigenous self-sufficiency within modernity, colonial discourses perpetually and consistently codified Aboriginal peoples and cultures as primitive and surpassed. Even though colonial discourse followed certain logic in reference to Aboriginal children's art and creative materials, that logic should not be understood as uncontested. Instead, the concerted effort made by colonial peoples to justify and pacify children's creative work may suggest the power of such expressions. Further, that the work was ultimately constructed as innocent may have meant that children had more flexibility within the contours of creativity to express resistance. As I shall show below, a number of often competing and contesting expectations intersected in children's art works and in subsequent explanations about them. As Gill Valentine (2007) has observed, sites of intersection are often the very places that offer the best array of libratory possibilities for the marginalized. In other words, it is precisely in the somewhat conflicted, yet carefully rationalized, artistic and creative materials produced by Aboriginal children within residential schools that alternative and anti-colonial narratives

may be found.

**8.c “I Will...Fight for the Indian Rights”<sup>28</sup>: Art, Creativity, and the Inventiveness of Aboriginal Children Within B.C.’s Residential Schools**

Although there is certainly evidence that Aboriginal students “survived,” in Grand Chief Phil Fontaine’s terms, the residential schooling project, and while the contradictions of colonialism may have afforded possibilities for Aboriginal peoples to re-deploy the arts for purposes other than those envisioned by the colonists, there is a risk of over-interpreting the work unless clear evidence can be found that Aboriginal children in British Columbian residential schools were themselves aware of subverting colonial education through art. Fortunately, although it is scant, there is such evidence. And it reveals the intent and consciousness of Aboriginal children’s art and creative productions within the confines of residential schools, in student-produced materials, in interviews with students in school newspapers, and in testimonial literatures published by First Nations Band Councils to document the perspectives of former British Columbian residential school students. Deliberate subversion is also present in Aboriginal people’s writings about the purposes of their art, including about that art in relation to residential schooling. In the cases of two former Alberni Residential School students, art is directly referenced as a means of combating colonial institutions. The political possibilities of creative expressions were certainly on the minds of Indigenous peoples, including artists, who, by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, were arguing that Indian art was a vehicle to (re)acculturate Aboriginal children into their Indigenous communities and cultures: “Indian art is fast becoming the important and major force of Indian culture it once was

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<sup>28</sup> From *The Lejac Carrier*, 1970.

years ago....Many concerned Indian people feel Indian art should be part of any program designed to instil self-pride and awareness in Indian children” (Pinay 1974: n.p.). Indeed, Indian art was seen, by some Aboriginal artists as having the potential to generate a re-birth of Indigenous peoples on the Canadian landscape:

*Art is us*, with our frustration and hopes, with all our good and bad feelings. Through arts we can make ourselves clearly understood beyond the barriers of time and space, beyond the limitations of language. *Our art is us* as the Indian people and its rebirth will be one of the major forces for our people’s rebirth. (Stump quoted in Pinay 1974: n.p, my emphasis)

Far from distinguishing authentic from inauthentic expressions, and definitely not arguing that Aboriginal artistic expressions reflected a dying and subordinated peoples, art was thus understood by the artists themselves as embodying immense political possibility for the rebirth of a people. Furthermore, art was understood as a force that would traverse the most fundamental of divides, suggesting that it embodied the possibility of allowing Aboriginal peoples to live cohesively within multiple worlds, times, and places. It seems, then, that from an Indigenous perspective, Aboriginal art was far from innocent but embodied instead immense political power and possibility.

As an adult and former student of Alberni Residential School, Dorothy Francis (Maquabeak) spoke passionately about the power of art for Indigenous political purposes. Maquabeak was born of the Saulteaux Nation in 1912 on the Waywayseecappo Reserve in Manitoba and described herself as of “the prairie people.” She was adopted by the Non-Aboriginal Pitts family at the age of seven, the age she began residential schooling (Whitehouse 1969: 12). Francis (Maquabeak) later described residential schooling as synonyms with incarceration: “I was a frightened, unhappy, little girl. To be in one of those institutions is like being in jail: (quoted in van Eldik 1978; 17). In 1927, at about

the age of 15, Maquabeak moved to British Columbia with her adoptive family, the head of which (Reverend F. E. Pitts) had taken the position of principal at Port Alberni Residential School. She was schooled there from about the age 15 to 18. Many years later, in 1978, several years after she had once again left the prairies and returned to New Westminster British Columbia, Maquabeak was awarded the Order of Canada in recognition of her years as an Aboriginal educator, a cultural activist and advocate of Indigenous rights, and an artist (*Vancouver Sun* 1978). For Maquabeak, the fine arts were radical cultural articulations of Indigeneity and ought to be used to transform in all forms of Indian education, including residential schools, and other institutions (including penitentiaries), that she saw as detrimental to Indigenous identities and cultural worth. In interviews with the public press, Maquabeak linked Aboriginal peoples' production of arts and creative materials to the retention of cultural identity and self-worth (Whitehouse 1969: 12; Bernard 1978: 1; van Eldik 1978: 17). One interviewer credited her with "bringing Indian cultural dancing, arts and handicrafts to public attention and acclaim," and another believed she gave "Indians back their heritage" (Whitehouse 1969: 12; Bernard 1978: 1). Non-Aboriginal interviewers always mentioned her "Indian regalia." She is universally quoted as insisting that retention of cultural identity by Indigenous peoples was never an accidental or innocent endeavour but instead something carefully and consciously striven towards. Maquabeak believed in a connection between the creative arts, the rights of Aboriginal peoples to maintain cultural sovereignty, and the need to recognize Aboriginal people's identity as uniquely "Indian," across British Columbia:

One of my most prized possessions...is a bone breast plate which has been in my family for over a hundred years...I was born on reserve and have never been

ashamed of it. The unrest among Indian youth [today] arises from a growing need to be recognized and identified and having equal rights with all other Canadians...Indians have been treated as second class citizens for so long that unfortunately many of our people have come to believe it. It takes a very brave Indian to keep his Native identity and to be proud of it. (quoted in Whitehouse 1969: 12)

Although Maquabeak does not speak about producing art, or advocating it as a political tool that she deployed during her time at Alberni Residential School, she is adamant that critical aspects of Indigenous identity lay in Aboriginal creative expressions. She was also adamant that residential schools, like other colonial institutions, were designed to eradicate Indigenous identity, and that against such imposing colonial structures the arts could function as highly politicized expressions of Indigenous identity, thus allowing peoples a means of cultural survival. Indeed, in one interview, and in reference to her work as an educator in the fine arts, Maquabeak observed that “the Indian people are entitled to try to do all they can to get what once belonged to them. This country has been taken over by the non-Indian race through various methods....You have to be an Indian to understand how [we] feel” (quoted in van Eldik 1978: 17). Aboriginal artistic expressions were conceptualized as one means of getting back what belonged to Indians, and the production of arts and creative expressions were actions designed both to reclaim sovereignty and negotiate new places within colonialism’s project.

Aboriginal arts and creative expressions were constructed by Non-Aboriginal imaginations as potential assimilative tools and pacified through explanations of them as representing a dying, abject race; however, Aboriginal peoples, including artists, conceived of arts and creative expressions as directly embodying living, fighting, and politicized cultures. In at least one case, these divergent perspectives played out in direct



reference to each other, in close proximity, and within one residential school. George Clutesi, born in 1905 of the Tse-Shaht band, attended Alberni Residential School in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when Reverend Pitts was principal of the school. Clutesi went on to achieve national recognition as an artist and creative writer. He accepted a commissioned to paint a mural on the first Aboriginal pavilion at the 1967 Montreal Expo and he published two works of fiction: the memoir and reflective fiction *Potlatch* (1969) and the children's book *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Tales of the Tseshah People* (1967). When Reverend Pitts died in 1949, George Clutesi was invited to eulogize the former residential school principal. The invitation was extended in part because by that time Clutesi had achieved the status of a "well-known Indian artist" (*Westcoast Advocate* 1949). Clutesi's eulogy offers early suggestions of the artist's sense that residential schools were places where multiple cultures and perspectives converged, and where the only way Aboriginal peoples would value or recognize colonial education was if that education accounted for their perspectives, often through creative and artistic means. In his eulogy, Clutesi also politicizes the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and residential school educators, emphasising the agency of Aboriginal peoples in relation to the schooling at Alberni Indian Residential School:

In 1927 there came into our midst a man who was destined to play a vital part in influencing our every day life on the Indian reservation. Influence that was to a large extent responsible for our ultimate and favourable step towards the grasping and better mutual harmony with our white brethren....He came to us as another principal whose job it was to oversee and to superintend our local Indian boarding school but it was not long before we understood that he also had definite interest and sympathy with the parents and all Indians....During the festive seasons of Easter, Victoria Day, and especially Christmas, Native Indians from near and far

flocked to his beautiful concerts (performed entirely by his own pupils...)...they came to see their children perform. They also came because they felt welcome... Seemingly trivial things, perhaps, but his Native friends will never forget those gestures because they were given in the right spirit. One of the most difficult things for a white man to do is gain the confidence of an aboriginal race. Not only did he accomplish this in his chosen work as a missionary among the Native Indians of Alberni, but he also won respect, love, faith and trust that will live on and on into a memory of eternity. Perhaps the Native Indian is slow to comprehend. He is also slow to forget. (Clutesi 1949)

Clutesi voices scepticism about the colonial project, but there is also the sense that Indians were carefully scrutinizing what aspects of the colonial project could be beneficially utilized by First Nations, and a sense of Aboriginal effort against subordination to Non-Aboriginal peoples and towards “better mutual harmony with white brethren.” There is also an albeit understated sense of Aboriginal intervention into the colonial education project and a perspective that residential schools and creative expressions (concerts) within the schools were multiply interpreted and used for different purposes. Indian parents understood concerts and the festive times around colonial holidays as moments to visit their children. Interactions with the principal of the residential school were opportunities to evaluate Reverend Pitts and decide if he was trustworthy. And there was adamance about the resiliency of Aboriginal peoples, a resolve that they are “slow to forget.”

Clutesi’s slowness to forget, and his sense that Alberni Residential School was a place where Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal cultures would grapple with and account for each other, proved difficult for him as an adult who maintained connections with Alberni Residential School. Over the years, as he gained national recognition as an artist, Clutesi retained an interest in the school as a place within which Aboriginal children could

express their Indigeneity through arts and creative expressions. In 1963, Clutesi designed two 5' x 5' tiled mosaics depicting Whale and Thunderbird and then oversaw students install them in the main hallway floors of Alberni Indian Residential School (*Twin City Time* 1963: n.p.). That same year, he directed and drummed a play *The Paddle Song* as it was performed by the kindergarten class of the residential school. In 1966 and 1968, he directed residential school students in dance performances at the annual Friendship Centre gala and at a local community fashion show (*Twin City Times* 1963, 1966, 1968) (see Images 8.a and 8.b). He undertook each of these events while working as a manual labourer within the school and within a climate of increasing Non-Aboriginal interest in controlling Aboriginal artistic expression within the school. By the end of the 1960s, Clutesi had spent half a decade working with Aboriginal students and creative arts, including dance and the visual arts, and it was yet the school's Non-Aboriginal Principal, John Andrews, who was profiled in 1969 in the local press as helping Indians to retain identity through creativity. This retention of Aboriginal identity, from Andrew's perspective, remained anchored in a construction of dying cultures that Non-Aboriginal peoples would save:

Many of the native arts, dances, folklore, and crafts are becoming lost arts and are in danger of being assimilated by the rest of society.... 'My chief concern,' continued the administrator, 'is to encourage the Indian to discover the value he



**Image 8.a: George Clutesi and Alberni Residential School Kindergarten Class performing The Paddle Song, 1963. From the *Twin City Times*: Courtesy of the Port Alberni Historical Society Archives.**



**Image 8.b: Alberni Indian Residential School Dancers, under the direction of George Clutesi, performing at the Alberni Valley Arts Festival, 1966. From the *Twin City Times*: Courtesy of the Port Alberni Historical Society Archives.**

has in the greatness of this country.’ ‘It was not until recently that I realized the danger of possible assimilation,’ he said. (*Alberni Valley Times* 1969)

To Andrews, children’s creativity was a means of saving Aboriginal peoples from themselves, in part by enfoldng them into Canada. Marjorie Cantran, a former eleven-year student of Alberni Indian Residential School who became president of the B.C. Association of Friendship Centres, argued that the desire by colonial administrators to culturally subordinate Aboriginal peoples materialized in the system’s subordination of Clutesi and his artistic vision:

I regret that we were not allowed to maintain our culture and speak our own language [in Alberni Residential School]....The Indian people should have been given responsibly at the residence. There were some good people working in the laundry, for example, who could have been trained...and they could have utilized Clutesi’s talents. (quoted in Geisbrecht 1973: 5)

Other former students of Alberni School reflected similarly on Clutesi’s position within the school, arguing that colonial education was insistent on conceptualizing Indigenous art and artists as subordinate, second-class subjects. The same interview that featured Cantran also included the perspectives of a former Aboriginal childcare worker at the school:

Mrs. Ursel [a former child care worker in the school] said bringing in a white man [Andrews] to teach art at the residence while Indian artist (and later author) George Clutesi was on staff was a great insult to Clutesi. ‘We [in the community] fought for Clutesi,’ she said. ‘He wanted to teach folklore, to be part of them [school staff] but he just got a job as a handyman and night watchman. He couldn’t even get a room for a studio. He was painting the barn while the other man taught art.’ Mrs. Ursel said Clutesi was working on his book *Son of Raven*, *Son of Deer*, during his stint at AIRS. (quoted in Geisbrecht 1973: 5)

Artistic expressions within residential schools, despite Non-Aboriginal administrators’

efforts to construct them as controllable and emblematic of an essentially extinguished peoples were, from the perspective of Aboriginal peoples, extant, living, and politicized expressions of culture and identity. As such, the arts and those who produced them were politicized subjects that Aboriginal peoples worked hard to insert into the colonial place of residential schools. The small places opened by the fine arts and creative expression were contested and challenged, particularly by Non-Aboriginal people who had a desire for power and control over Aboriginal artistic expressions. Despite this Clutesi remained steadfast in making a place for Indigenous creative expressions at Alberni Residential School. By making every effort to ensure that cultures were not forgotten, even within a residential school, it appears Clutesi was committed to living his 1949 statement about the slowness of Indians to forget.

Clutesi's penchant for rejecting colonial expectations through a deployment of the arts was demonstrated in statements made in his creative writing and, ultimately, was recognized when it came time for his community to commemorate him. His first book *Son of Raven Son of Deer*, published as a children's text, contained express reference to creative arts as means to strategically, and without colonial approval, maintain Indigenous cultural knowledges and thwart colonialism's dominance over the constructed Indian Other:

This series of Indian folklore tales will not be just another attempt to portray the past and the sometimes romantic aspects of a nearly forgotten culture of a once carefree, happy, singing people. Instead, it will be an attempt to approach from the backdoor, as it were...an apparently rich and cultured society. The series will endeavour to reach the more sensitive, the more sympathetic and the more reasoning segment of the non-Indians, who may have some willingness to study and understand the culture of the true Indian, whose mind was imaginative,

romantic, and resourceful....What can be done to really help the Indian at this time? One way would be to look for his better qualities. He has some. Meet him halfway. You cannot fool an Indian with the gushing displays of hypocritical prying of a would-be do-gooder. (Clutesi 1967: 9–13)

Clutesi was clear that art and creative expression are back-door means by which Aboriginal peoples could make themselves understood to colonial subjects. He was unapologetic in linking imaginative qualities with resourcefulness. Furthermore, creativity was a means of balancing the expectations of multiple worlds, a means of retaining identity while (re)educating Non-Aboriginal peoples willing to listen. Far from passive or innocent, then, Clutesi believed the arts served highly political functions, including subverting any self-serving efforts of Non-Aboriginal peoples to lead the efforts of making place for Indigenous peoples in the colonial project. His second book *Potlatch* reinforced this view. It was promoted by its publisher as an anthropological account of northwest coast Aboriginal peoples. In the text, however, Clutesi gently subverted Non-Aboriginal categorizations of his art and creative writing. He rejected anthropological classification of his work and the associated suggestion that it represented something inert or museum-like to be salvaged by Non-Aboriginal peoples: “This narrative is not meant to be a documentary. In fact it is meant to *evade* documents. It is meant...to say I was there and indeed I saw” (Clutesi 1969: n.p, my emphasis). For Clutesi, creative arts were effective means of evading colonial expectations. They embodied the possibilities of intercession, of synchronistically navigating different worlds, and the complex means by which to make colonialists pay attention to othered Aboriginal voices while maintaining the integrity of those voices. Creative practices enabled Aboriginal peoples to say that they existed *within* the colonial project and that

they bore witness to it while attempting to circumnavigate its expectations. Clutesi's persistent efforts ultimately resulted, from the perspective of his Nation, in a revival of Aboriginal culture. He is remembered by the Tseshah Nation, in their memorialization of "influential people," as a "teacher of Tseshah values, beliefs, traditions, and culture," and as an artist who

[as] a janitor at the Alberni Indian Residential School began to teach Tseshah song and dance to the students. He then taught Tseshah children and youth their songs and dance. This was not always easy in a time when our traditions were being promoted as 'primitive' and undesirable. But, George persisted and eventually the songs and dances became more acceptable....A revival had begun. (Tseshah Nation, 1999–2007)

In some ways, Clutesi's concept of "evading" is a powerfully accurate characterization of Aboriginal children's strategies within the confining colonial places of British Columbia's Indian residential schools. Residential schools were designed to break the bonds of Aboriginal children with their families and communities, thereby removing characteristics of Indigeneity and transforming the children into subjects deemed acceptable for a modern colonial British Columbia. One of the most powerful ways for children to evade the residential schooling project, then, was to retain connections with community and to refuse to relinquish cultural traits. Like Clutesi, it seems children were not unaware of undertaking evasion or a "back-door" approach when attempting to survive residential schools. Maintaining cultural links was not an innocent or unconscious effort.

Such self-aware evasion tactics are recorded in *The Lejac Carrier*, a school newsletter produced at Lejac Indian Residential School. The newsletter contains poetry, creative writings, and drawings made by students. An early section entitled "Smoke



Signals,” was one in which students responded to questions posed by other students in an interview-like format. Although not representative of creative expressions per se, the section offers insights in Aboriginal students’ perspectives on everyday issues with which they were grappling. In December 1970, students asked each other “When you leave school, what do you think is the most important thing you can do with your education?” One student responded that “[f]or me the most important thing is to help the Indian by becoming someone who will do a lot for the Indian like a nurse, or a member of parliament and helping fight for the Indians.” Another student stated:

The most important thing I will do [with my education] is to become someone useful and fight for Indian rights. Like become a nurse or a secretary or a doctor or something that will bring up the Indian reputation to show the white people that the Indians are not all stupid drunks and other such things that the white people say about the Indians. I will do what I think is best for my Indian race and for my family just to bring up the reputations of our Indian people of today. (*Lejac Carrier* 1970)

Aboriginal children attending Lejac were intent on evading absorption into white society. Contrary to the colonial vision of residential schooling, children viewed their schooling as a way to fight for Indian rights and to debunk Non-Aboriginal (White) stereotypes about Aboriginal people. They voiced a commitment to retaining connections with their communities and Indigenous identity while fighting for broader understandings about their culture and “race.” Children were not interested in passively accepting subordinate roles in colonial society or solely in working within the labouring or agricultural realms, as they had been prepared by residential schools. In articulating a goal of deploying their residential school education to fight for Indian rights, students were evading, if not upending, the expectations of colonial education.

Student-authored and-produced school newsletters from six residential schools (Lejac, Lytton, Sechelt, Williams Lake, Alert Bay, and Fraser Lake), spanning almost 50 years (1928–1973), suggest that Aboriginal children used creative expression to systematically evade, circumvent, or subvert the aims of residential schooling across British Columbia. In a concentrated display of poetic expression, children at Lejac produced three pages of short poems about “Indian life.” The poems, published in October 1970, were authored by students in Grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 and generally followed poetic protocols one would expect to find in elementary school language arts productions. The poems tend to rhyme, tend to be short (no more than two or three stanzas in length) and tend to use natural landscape imagery as their primary metaphor. The poems are remarkable, though, because they represent children’s self-conscious expressions about maintaining Indigeneity within residential schools. They speak of children retaining their cultural identity and offer no suggestion of them giving up their “Indianness.” The poems also suggest that children believed retention of Indianness was not necessarily at odds with adjusting to the demands of a new Eurocolonial milieu, but, instead, that children saw creative expression as a means by which to negotiate two worlds. It is as if, through the medium of poetic expression, Aboriginal children in Lejac Indian Residential School had found a way to respond to the material and discursive constructs within which they were confined while simultaneously holding on to their Indianness. As one student wrote:

I am an Indian  
I love to walk in the woods  
As I walk I sing,  
When I finish,  
The birds begin to sing  
The squirrels chatter

The trees begin to sway,  
The wind whispers into my ear;  
'You are an Indian..'

(Anonymous Grade 6 Student October 1970)

In this poem, identity is drawn from places far beyond the residential school, and it is embraced. The poem's "I" is expressly linked to a landscape unencumbered with colonialism, a landscape that through poetry, is conjured within the classroom of a residential school and then functions to reinforce Indian identity. In a way, then, the poem becomes a place of respite that defends an Aboriginal child's sense of self, within the confining colonial places of Lejac Indian Residential School.

The effort to recover place, to produce new poetic places that provided solace and respite and offered connection to a sense of place beyond colonial institutions and the colonial gaze, was undertaken in other poems written by Lejac students, in one case through a student (re)producing a poem authored by a non-Aboriginal early 20<sup>th</sup> Century poet. The poem, originally written by Annette Wynne, is attributed in *The Lejac Carrier* to an Aboriginal student, thus adding new and additional meaning to the images. The poem, entitled "Indian Children," seems to lose its sense of colonial lament when (re)produced by an Aboriginal student within the confines of colonial education. By reclaiming the piece, there is a sense of a student conjuring a place outside the time and place of the residential school:

Where we walk to school each day,  
Indian children used to play,  
All about our native land,  
Where the shape and houses stand.  
Where the trees were very tall,  
There were no streets at all,

Not a church, not a steeple  
Only woods and Indian people.

(Anonymous Grade 4 Student October 1970)<sup>29</sup>

An alternate, and colonialism-free, landscape is imagined. In the hands of a young Aboriginal student, poetic landscape appears to remember Indigenous land ownership (“our native land”) and a place free of both Christian intrusion and colonial presence. The landscape (re)created in the poem stood in stark contrast to the architectural and material reality of the student’s school-world, one in which church and steeples dominated deforested and cleared lands developed for agricultural and farm-training purposes.

A conjuring of landscapes free of Non-Aboriginal people and structures was not the only strategy undertaken by students at Lejac Residential School. Clearly, for some students, White presence required a more direct response. It was not sufficient to evoke landscapes free of the ever-present colonialism. Instead, some students carefully introduced a colonial presence into their creative expression and, then within the place of the poem, responded to it. One Grade 7 student deployed Daniel Boone, with humour and satire, in the production of an alternate story in which Aboriginal peoples were not subservient to colonial power:

In the days of Daniel Boone  
There was always a fight  
from morning till night,  
You would hear the sounds  
    of Indian hounds  
from near and far,  
you did not know there was a bar.

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<sup>29</sup> The original poem has a final stanza left off by the Lejac Student: “Only wigwams on the ground/ And at night bears prowling round/ What a different place to-day/Where we live and work and play!”. Also, in Wyatt’s version of the poem, the fourth line reads “Where the shops and houses stand” as opposed to “Where the shapes and houses stand.”

When Daniel Boone came back from a fight  
he went to eat,  
but found no meat,  
then waited for Indian signs  
across the lines.  
Daniel Boone with his huge gun  
would chase the Indians away,  
with a run,  
but the Indians were back at night  
and Daniel Boone would turn on the light.

(Anonymous Grade 7 Student October 1970: n.p.)

A diminishment of colonial power occurs in the student's multi-stanzaed poem. The iconic Daniel Boone is reduced to a frightened child-like character, forced to turn on his light in the face of Indians who are consistently tricking and toying with his colonial needs and expectations. The cacophony of Indian hounds emanate from a bar, a distinctly modern place that thwarts popular colonial stereotypes about Indians in pre-modern savage wilderness. Even the mighty power of Boone's huge gun is rendered into a quasi-comical tool that cannot displace Indian peoples. Colonial power becomes nothing but an ineffectual display that masks clumsy confusion and ineptness, all of which Indian children are able to poke fun at and see through.

Students at St. George's Indian Residential School also used creative expressions in school newsletters and yearbooks to express their perspectives on negotiating colonial expectations. In the late 1920s and early 1930s (c.1928–c.1931), St. George's School published *The Crusader*, a thin volume in which school staff offered perspectives on the successes of the schooling and students summarized everyday activities, generally highlighting times of festivity and happiness. Students illustrated famous British poems,

including “A Boy’s Song” by James Hogg, and made careful records of what they were learning in school, including the rules of basketball, various first aid practices, songs, and stories. Many of the entries in *The Crusader* emphasize the pressures Aboriginal students at St. George felt about existing between two worlds. Although some of the entries read rather programmatically, they nevertheless offer hints about student strategies for balancing conflicting demands and for evading a strict adherence to colonial expectations about full assimilation of Aboriginal peoples. In the mid-summer 1930 issue of *The Crusader*, Grade 8 student Carrie Kelly wrote a creative essay about life at St. George’s: “Fellow Students, pause for a moment with me and let us together turn back the pages of the book: 1929–1930.” Kelly then detailed her year, locating her memories both in and out of residential school. Early September saw all the children returning to the school, which, according to Kelly, made them happy, primarily because they were once again among their friends who they had missed. She observed that “when school started all [students] were anxious to do their very best” and that “as the days passed by, the children improved greatly in their lessons and work.” Notwithstanding her conviction that she and her peers were successful within the residential schooling environment, she noted that the day “the children enjoy best of all,” even compared with exciting days like Christmas, Halloween, and Easter, was the day prior to leaving the school for a brief reunification with family and community. So anticipated was the short leave from residential schooling that students were unable to sleep the night before: “When bedtime comes the children are too happy to go to sleep. They get up very early the next morning and put on their best clothes. After breakfast all the goodbyes are said and soon the school becomes quiet once more.” Kelly’s essay displays a sense that within the confines

of residential schools Aboriginal children remained committed to friendships among themselves, and they were heavily invested in memories of their families and communities that kept them afloat throughout their different times in the school. She suggested that despite the strong desire to leave school, Aboriginal children made the effort to succeed, suggesting a strategy of balancing expectations of connections with Indigenous culture, of home, family, and the colonial project.

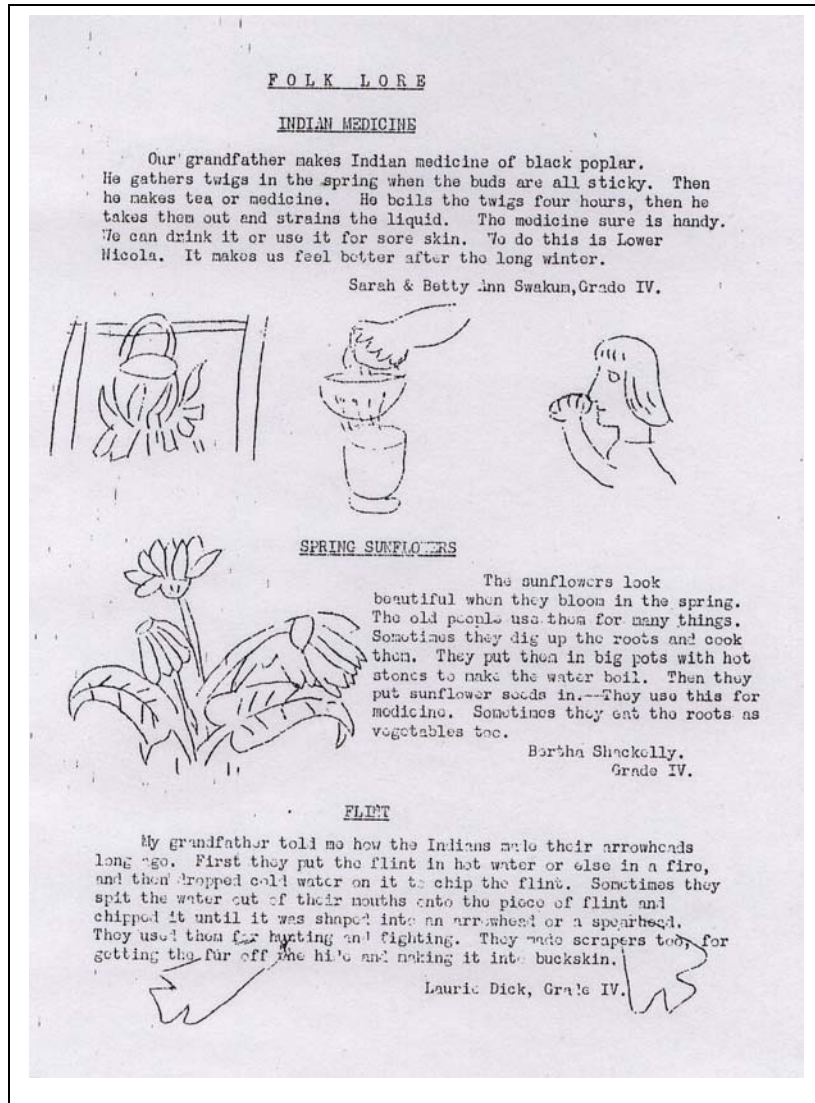
Other hints of Aboriginal children carefully negotiating multiple worlds appear in *The Dragon*, St. George's student-authored newsletter published subsequent to *The Crusader*. In 1954, for instance, a Grade 5 student published a short paragraph on his grandmother's teachings. Mac Phillips brings his grandmother's words into a residential school publication and represents Indigenous peoples' desire to synchronize and perhaps equalize colonial Christianity and Indigenous landscapes and environments:

One evening after supper my grandmother told me a story about a crossbill [bird]. She said when Jesus was crucified it flew to the cross. It tried to pull the nails out of His hands. It tried so hard that its beak went crossways. The other part of the legend tells how the crossbill got its red feathers. When it was trying to pull the nails out, the blood of Jesus poured over its head and breast. That is how the little bird got its crossed beak and red feathers. (St. George's 1954: n.p.)

A balancing between Christianity and aspects of spiritual landscapes and teachings familiar to Indigenous peoples is produced within Christian colonial contexts. Ultimately, Grade 5 student Mac Phillips is both explaining Indigenous perspectives on British Columbian relationships to Jesus Christ and is carving out a place for his cultural identity (both in the form of his grandmother's telling and in the presence of the crossbill) within Christian narratives. By circulating his grandmother's words, Phillips, at an extremely young age and inside the colonial confines of residential school, offers narratives that

explain relationships between (some) Aboriginal and (some) Non-Aboriginal worldviews.

*The Dragon* captures other efforts to inject Aboriginal identity and navigate



**Image 8.c:** Page from *The Dragon*, a school annual and yearbook produced by students at St. George Indian Residential School, Lytton British Columbia, 1950. Courtesy of the Lytton Museum and Archives

between two worlds,  
including a page  
devoted to “folklore,”  
where Grade 4 students  
wrote and illustrated  
aspects of their cultures  
(see Image 8.d).

Although “folklore”  
may have relegated the  
children’s’ words and  
expressions to an  
obsolete and frivolous  
past, the students  
express their stories in  
the present tense. For  
instance, Sarah and  
Betty-Anne Swakum  
write that their

grandfather “makes Indian medicine” from black poplar trees and that the medicine “sure  
is handy” and “makes us feel better after the long winter.” Bertha Shackelly writes of



medicinal uses of sunflowers, noting that the “old people use them for many things” and still sometimes “eat the roots as vegetables too.” There is the sense in these writings that Indigenous cultures, including skills and knowledges, are very much alive, are in use, and are not being relinquished. In the small places of possibility provided by residential school newsletters and through short pieces of creative writing, Aboriginal children actively announce Indigenous survival and resilience.

*My Heart is Glad*, a monograph published in 1964 and 1965 through St. Joseph’s Indian Residential School, offers further evidence of Aboriginal children’s use of creative expressions to question colonialism and to maintain cultural knowledges, even inside places designed to extinguish them. As discussed earlier, the second edition of *My Heart is Glad* was prefaced with words from the school principal in which he reduced the children’s work to imperfect expressions emblematic of a dying culture. Despite such characterizations, however, there is something distinctly alive in the children’s publications, including two tri-lingual dictionaries, that included words and common phrases in Shuswap, Chilcotin, and Carrier, followed by their English translations. This work showed the children’s ability to translate concepts and ideas among their Indigenous cultures and languages and to adapt to a world of English. The dictionaries are suggestive of the linguistic balancing that transpired within St. Joseph’s; they also provide testament that Aboriginal children attending the school were not passively relinquishing their languages to assimilative imperatives. *My Heart is Glad* is also full of children’s creative writings and of illustrations depicting important aspects of their diverse cultures. The children document stories told and retold by Elders and offer how-to descriptions about a variety of activities undertaken by Aboriginal peoples, including

drying salmon, locating good fishing grounds, carving totem poles, and preparing skins. One student poet ultimately questions the powers of Eurocolonialists seemingly self-established right to control Aboriginal peoples. In her innovative and metaphorically sophisticated poem, Rose David takes direct aim at the disruptive presences of White (“pale-faced”) people in the ‘systems’ of her peoples:

I saw in many green hills,  
Swift foot, jumping and skipping,  
Trying to get away from the sharp,  
Sticks, which were aimed.  
Aimed to try and stop their terrified hearts.  
These, my friends, are deer  
Deer, who have long been here with me,  
Who have yet not left me chilled,  
And filled me when I hungered.  
Why, now is it, that pale face, let me –  
Not feast on it, on the sixth day?  
I know not of this, is it that bad,  
Spirit of bad swift foot, disturb my system?  
(*My Heart is Glad* 1965: 20)

Lamenting colonial disruption of Indigenous systems, be they individual or collective depending on Rose David’s use of the word, is a theme touched upon in a story written by another St. Joseph’s student. Olive Haines also offers a sense of children’s anger and frustration about colonial dominance expressing itself at the expense of Indigenesness:

I remember, when I was a little girl, the old people used to take out their beads and pray in our language, before receiving Holy Communion. Sometimes they would only say ‘I believe in God’ while everybody was going out. They also used to confess in Indian. On Easter they usually sang in our language. Now that is forgotten. All those old people I remember are gone and there’s hardly any left.

Instead the Sisters came and took their places at the service. Now the prayers and humns [sic] are said in English. (*My Heart is Glad* 1965: 24)

The erasure and loss that she has witnessed are frustrating and tragic to Haines. She alludes to Aboriginal resistance, noting that Elders “would only say” a small component of Christian services and would often adhere to their Native tongues within churches. She concedes, however, that such resistance was insufficient.

If students understood that some resistances to colonialism were futile, if they were making efforts to translate Aboriginal words and concepts into English, and if they were clearly frustrated with the colonial project, there is a possibility that, transpiring within residential schools, was the development by children of new strategies for maintaining aspects of Indigenous culture and identity. A poem by another St. Joseph’s student suggests that the purpose of such a strategy was so that Aboriginal students could steadfastly maintain a primary connection with home and community, while performing according to the demands of residential schooling. The balancing of a performed compliance to colonial education and retention of cultural memories was not the goal of assimilationist education models. Nevertheless, Lillian Paul was able to express such a strategy in a poem that juxtaposes just how little attachment a student could feel toward colonial education with a sense of deep connection to Indigenous home and community:

When all my exams are over  
And the last schoolday is done,  
I shall tear up my books and papers;  
‘Good-by, my classmates, everyone!’  
Back to my free country.

The dusty road will not seem long  
Nor twilight lonely, nor forlorn,  
The everlasting road

That leads me back where I was born,  
Back to my free country.  
And there beside the open door,  
In a peaceful reserve, green and cool  
Mother's waiting smile shall hear at last,  
'Mother! I have come from school.  
To you dearest mother, to you.'

The work is a highly charged decree of self-determination. Colonial education is a fleeting intervention that students can leave behind with ease; on the last school day children will simply tear up the symbols of an assimilationist project. True connection and meaning, those feelings arrived at by travelling an "everlasting road," can only be found in family and community, both of which are integral to the free country and peaceful place—ironically, a reserve—Paul imagines herself returning to, once she has escaped the confinement of colonial education.

Students at St. Michael's Indian Residential School in Alert Bay similarly used poetic expressions as a means to document their dissatisfaction with colonial education and to express the challenge of maintaining cultural memory while living within the confines of a residential school. In the 1949/1950 publication *The Thunderbird*, the school's annual magazine, a Grade 7 student published a poem (distinctly epic in tone) that, first, questioned the demands of residential schooling that students forget their connections with a life beyond the school, and, second, reinforced a commitment by children to do just the opposite. Titled "Life at St. Michael's," the poem reads:

Although we get lonesome  
Watching ships sailing;  
Although we get tired  
Of hearing their wails,

We often gaze yonder  
At mountains out yonder  
But forget in no time  
How lonely we've been;  
Forget how the boat sails  
And their wild sounding wails  
But still we oft gaze yonder  
At mountains out yonder.

(1949–1950: n.p.)

The poem suggests strongly that much of a student's "life at St. Michael's" was consumed with contemplating life outside the school: the repetition of "yonder" functions to repeatedly take the reader, and perhaps the writer, beyond the bounded limits of the residential school. Furthermore, the places from which "yonder" is contemplated (presumably St. Michael's) are lonesome and wail-full. Even as the author passes over these descriptions with pacifying platitudes ("we...forget in no time"), readers understand that "yonder" is a place representing respite and solace in comparison to residential school life. Such poetry suggests strongly that, in their private thoughts, students were actively evading schooling; they were disconnecting from the structures designed explicitly to fully connect with Aboriginal children in efforts to transform them into new people. Evading colonial education, it seems, could transpire even in the act of looking out a window and dreaming about alternate worlds.

Evasion of colonial education and a passionate desire for reconnection with family and community is captured in the writings of another student at St. Michael's. Also published in 1968, a 10-year-old's short story titled simply "St. Michael's" juxtaposes the profound loneliness of residential schooling against an alternative vision of connectedness to family and community. The student's story is prefaced with a few

words from the editor of *The Thunderbird*, who notes: “I have reproduced the story below from one of the young ladies because it says so many things about St. Mike’s. On the one hand she loves her life here, BUT she still appreciates and loves her family”:

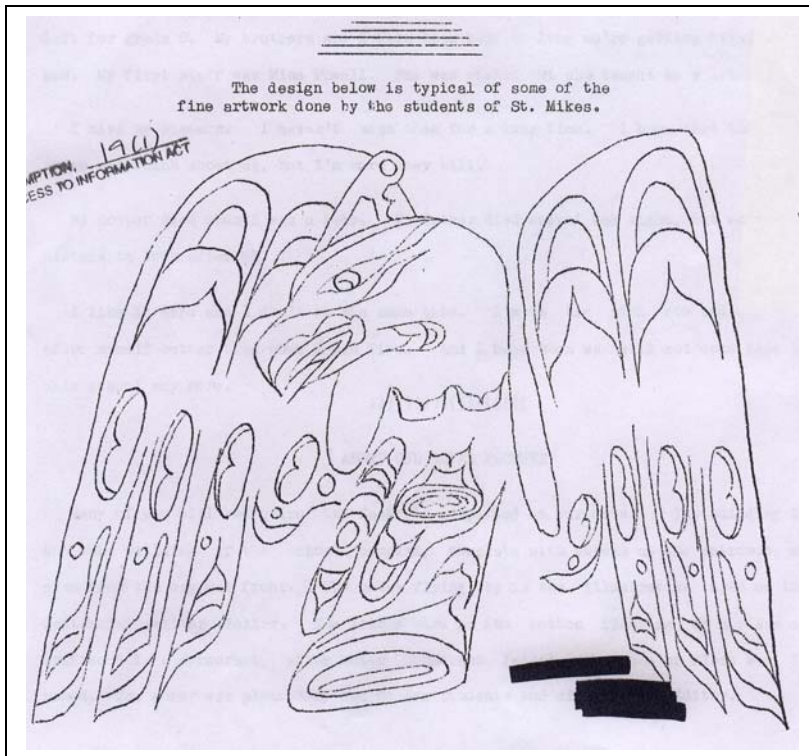
I am ten now. I have been here ever since I was five. I have lots of friends. I didn’t think I would meet so many friends before when my sisters were here, but they left for grade 8. My brother and I have been here so long we’re getting tired now. My first staff was Mrs. Powell. She was strict but taught me a lot. I miss my sisters. I haven’t seen them for a long time. I hope they will write and think about us, but I am sure they will. My mother died when I was a baby. My father died when I was eight, but we’ve got sisters to look after us. I like it here and I don’t at the same time. I’m a big girl now and can look after myself better than when I was five. And I hope soon we will not come back [to] this school any more.

(1968: 14)

Despite acknowledging that residential schooling taught her a lot, the student suggests that education was not her primary concern at the school. Instead, her story implies that maintaining connection with family and dreaming of a time when the schooling could end, was of chief concern. Although the publication’s editor conceptualizes the story as a record of a child’s love of residential school, the few positive experiences identified by the young writer focus primarily on interactions not with teachers or the education itself, but instead with her fellow students and members of her family. The sense she conveys is of a person in constant conflict with the educational system designed to assimilate her.

Expressing preferences for connections with their communities over those with their educators and articulating a longing for the “yonder” that was not residential schooling were conveyed by students not only in written form. The visual arts also proved a powerful means for some students to express aspects of their lives and cultures. Unlike the action of speaking Indigenous languages, the production of visual arts as an

important cultural expression seems to have escaped colonial scrutiny. For instance, in the 1968 edition of St. Michael's *The Thunderbird*, a student's stylized line drawing appeared under the description: "The design below is *typical* of some of the fine artwork done by students of St. Mike's" (St. Michael's 1968: 14, my emphasis) (Image 8.d). The image, representative of west-coast First Nations style and expression, is an unadorned



**Image 8.d: Eagle drawing produced by student at St. Michael's Indian Residential School and published in *The Thunderbird*, 1968. National Archives, B.C. Branch, Box 25-1-875-1950 - 70. Education-Alert Bay-Residential. Accession V1984-85/356**

and sparse line drawing of an open winged eagle peering down and to the right. Given the image's accompanying caption, it is clear that students within St. Michael's Indian Residential School were producing, seeking to circulate, and having published, visual motifs specific to their First Nations.

Particularly as such art work was understood as "typical" within the school, it is likely that children were producing a lot of such art, which would have meant other children were exposed to it. It would have formed a consistent visual presence in the school, arguably allowing students to retain a connection to and familiarity with aspects of their cultures.

The child's eagle is a tiny example of the art produced by Aboriginal students on site at St. Michael's. Many of the artists skilfully deploy Indigenous visual cultures to address the demands of modernization and colonialism while adapting new artistic methods in the production of their arts. Student-produced art objects from St. Michael's might be conceptualized as part of the material record of adaptable Indigenous resilience, a characteristic that allowed for the navigation of two worlds; the art also allowed for the forging of new places within the contours of colonial British Columbia that allowed students to remain connected to their Indigenous communities and lineages. The works of Ernest Willie and Bobby Wenneck, pupils in Alert Bay in 1953, offer intriguing examples of this. The British Columbia Anti-Tuberculosis Society, founded in 1906, was engaged for over 70 years in activities focused on preventing tuberculosis, which they termed the Province's "number one killer." Much of the Society's work focused exclusively on efforts to curb rates of tuberculosis in British Columbia's First Nations peoples, who were understood and constructed in health literatures of the time as particularly susceptible to the disease because of a lack of sanitation that was, in turn, linked to their adherence to 'heathen' health standards (Kelm 1998). In the area of First Nations health, one of the B.C. Anti-Tuberculosis Society's many activities included an annual poster production contest open to First Nations students in Indian residential and day schools. Winners of the contest received significant recognition and prizes, such as bikes, trophies, and plaques. Aboriginal children in B.C.'s residential schools were actively involved in the contests: discussion of their attempts and entries appear in the 1940s in the newsletters produced at St. Augustine's Residential School in Sechelt, and mention of the contest and winners even garnered some provincial newspaper attention.



Examples of the children's posters depict stylized and cartoon-like Indians, with feathered headdresses or loin cloths, duelling or boxing with unhealthy bodies imprinted



**Image 8.e: Ernest Willie and his winning poster entry: Alert Bay, 1953. Courtesy of the Alert Bay Community Archives, Files I.R.S. 1049.049 and I.R.S. 050**

with the lettering “T.B.” or with some other marker of illness. The general theme of the poster appears to be people somehow winning against a personified depiction of illness, with captions such as “Never Joke with T.B.,” “Fight T.B.” and “Don’t Let T.B. stay with You!”<sup>30</sup> In 1953, Ernest Willie won first prize in the contest, for his poster entitled “T.B. Thrives on Superstition” (Image 8.e). The poster, with clean-lined block printing framing an ornate drawing of the Thunderbird, may, upon first reading, suggest Willie’s submission to the dominant discourse conflating Indigeneity, Aboriginal lifestyles, and disease. However, the fact that other examples of students’ poster entries relied on slapstick-inspired cartoons and simple line imagery suggests that Willie likely took the contest quite seriously. If so, then perhaps Willie was seeking to win a bike and secure

<sup>30</sup> These images can be found in the 1954 Issue of *The Dragon*, published by St. George’s Indian Residential School in Lytton, British Columbia.

for himself a degree of social recognition from his peers and the education system. In this interpretation, Willie's juxtaposition of the Thunderbird with texts on superstition might be seen less as a symptom of acculturation than as an example of an Aboriginal student navigating colonial expectations to achieve his own ends while managing to (re)produce Aboriginal images. Such a (re)reading is not without precedent for, as Andrea Walsh has demonstrated, and as the First Nations artists with whom she has worked have testified, children in colonial education frameworks were particularly interested in "transforming" and re-interpreting the Non-Aboriginal colonial expectations placed upon them, right down to expectations concerning their health and health rules (Walsh 2003). Willie's poster might be read as a thoughtful expression of an Aboriginal child who, within the confines of a colonial education system, still managed to generate acceptance and approval of Indigenous iconography, while simultaneously succeeding in winning the endorsement of those with the power to award him a valued prize.

Willie was by no means alone in producing Aboriginal visual and material arts that balanced expectations of a modernizing, colonial British Columbia with a desire to produce and circulate images reflective of Indigenous cultures and knowledge. A robust example of objects that do the work of balancing the two worlds was displayed at an exhibit of children's art produced within St. Michael's and mounted at British Columbia's Pacific National Exhibition (the P.N.E.) in Vancouver circa 1940 (Image 8:f). The objects created for the exhibit were displayed with a placard reading: "This work is all done by Indian children under the age of 16 in the Manual Arts Division of the School." According to photographic records of the display, there were hundreds of objects in the exhibit. Such a volume of work suggests that, despite the efforts of colonial

education, a depth of cultural knowledge was likely still circulating amongst students at St. Michael's Indian Residential school. Although art collectors of the time ostensibly valued only what they viewed as “authentic,” (that is, their conception of the traditional and primitive), there is significant evidence in the children's art of negotiation between



**Image 8.f: St. Michael's Student Art on Display at the Pacific National Exhibit, in Vancouver, c1940. Image courtesy of the Alert Bay Community Archives.**

traditional motifs and modern forms and function. In addition to the more “traditional” northwest coast totems, screens, and paddles, many works also take forms introduced by Eurocolonial settler society. Several electric lamp bases are carved as small totem poles, a wastepaper bin is carefully screened with a Killer Whale, and a number of tissue paper boxes have become the canvases for northwest coast imagery. A washbasin stand is inset with images of Killer Whale in his monumental fight with Thunderbird. Two Haida girls

stitched representations of Mountain Goat and Bear on sofa-cushion covers. Even when the children's art took the traditional form of chests, their constructions mirrored shifts in carpentry techniques. One chest is constructed in dovetailed and interlocking woods of contrasting colours, over which Thunderbird is painted, while three other chests feature inlay and moulding work, probably done with the band- or table-saw that were in active use by students in "shop" classes at residential schools. The objects displayed in the 1940s exhibition tell the story of Aboriginal children trying to maintain their Indigeneity while negotiating a colonial context. The objects are material reminders that Aboriginal children were not simply disappearing through assimilation, but instead were carving out for themselves new and innovative places within the shifting landscapes of British Columbia.

Nestled at the very centre of the art displayed at the P.N.E. exhibit are two small framed photographs depicting two totem poles. The two photographs flank a picture of St. Michael's, a positioning that indicates the locational relationship with the poles and the actual school building. The two poles were refurbished during "manual labour" classes at St. Michael's and were later erected on either side of the school's driveway, during the principalship of Frank Anfield (1927 – 1943). The refurbishment of the two poles, like the production of other Indigenous artistic endeavours, was framed by Anfield as an important step toward freeing Aboriginal children by civilizing and Christianizing them:

Provision must be made for teaching boat building, carpentry, and engineering for the boys; and general provision for teaching...native arts and crafts to the girls....These are fundamental needs in any programme that aims, as does that of this school, at the emancipation of the Indian children to Christian citizenship in

this great country, and of which they form no unimportant part. (c1932)

Notwithstanding Anfield's vision, the children who worked on the totem poles may have conceptualized their work less as contributing to Christian emancipation than as an opportunity to introduce important cultural expressions within a place of colonial education. When the school gained possession of the dilapidated totems, the wings of the Thunderbirds topping the poles were missing entirely, the beak of one of the birds was broken off, the poles were both jaggedly snapped at their bases, and the bodies of both the birds and the wolves, comprising the mid-section of the poles' design, were badly eroded (Image 8.g). By the time the student artists at St. Michael's were finished,



**Image 8.g: Totem poles arriving at St. Michael's Indian Residential School, Alert Bay, c1930s. Original Image held by the Alert Bay Community Archives, Accession #IRS 046**

including having constructed detailed and colourful wing expanses that were almost the same length as the bodies to which they were attached, the poles were entirely restored. The commitment required by such a complex restoration project suggests that the

students were dedicated to re-instating aspects of their cultures in places claimed by colonial authority. The totem poles were fully repainted and erected in blocks of concrete on either side of St. Michael's driveway. This placement, whether the students secured this honour or not, meant that all persons entering the school had to pass beneath Thunderbird's outstretched wings. The two poles may have served Anfield's vision of Christian emancipation through native art but, far from erasing Aboriginal culture, they gave prominence to First Nations cultural expression, realized in large part by the students themselves. The presence of the two totems must have been visible to students looking out the windows of the school. The poles are likely to have expressed that Indigenous values, thus ensuring those values were not merely to be subsumed within the colonial landscape but instead remain rooted, even in a residential school designed to enforce colonial power and control.

If, as Indigenous artists have asserted, Indigenous arts are more than *expressions* of cultures, but *are* living, dynamic and adapting cultures themselves, then the production and re-production of First Nations art forms within residential school is profoundly important. Such artful activities might then be linked to Aboriginal children's refusal to abandon their identities in the face of severe punishment, their transgressions of rules and boundaries established by colonial education, and their determination to maintain senses of self, family, and community despite the repercussions of doing so. That their artistic record is as prolific as it is, asserts that Indigenous children were active and inventive in asserting their cultures through, and within, the places of the schools. In 1959, former residential school principal George Henry Raley transferred to the Provincial Archives of British Columbia his collection of largely undated and unnamed images comprising 25



works on paper produced by students in either the Elizabeth Long Memorial School or Coqualeetza Residential School.<sup>31</sup> Notations on the back of some of the images state the artists' names and occasionally at what grade level the work was carried out. The majority of the objects reflect the design and style of the northwest coast First Nations. The pieces are remarkably intricate, colourful, and expressive, ranging in subject matter but all rendered in ink, pencil (graphite), or watercolour. Some combine drawing and painting with an assemblage technique of paper cut-outs glued onto contrasting backgrounds. The majority of the images are of a single being or a single object; a killer whale, an eagle, a crab (perhaps), a Thunderbird, a totem pole, a paddle, a cedar box, a bowl, or (in one case) a canoe-shaped dish. In some cases, the artist has taken an innovative approach to the subject matter. In one watercolour triptych, dominated by a blue sky and clear blue water in the forefront, the student has produced a repetitive landscape image in which a canoe with three paddlers moves through a stylized setting of mountain ranges and longhouses, watched over solemnly by a being with hands clasped below his mouth (Image 8.h). In another image, rendered in black and yellow watercolour, by reproducing a totem pole four times, the artist has managed to form a highly geometric secondary image suggestive of a four-pointed star (Image 8.i). In order to achieve the effect produced by contrasting white space with the poles, the artist pasted four identically painted poles diagonally at each corner of the page representing, from bottom to top, a frog, a bear, and two Thunderbirds. The wings of each Thunderbird are outstretched and touch at the tips, producing a kind of Mobius Strip effect, transforming the poles into much more than representations of objects. In another work, a large, brightly coloured and intricately cut-out painting of an eagle, posed with wings

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<sup>31</sup> These objects are now held by the Royal British Columbia Museum.

outstretched, feet towards the left, and looking outward to the right, has lightly etched between its legs: “Your Legs, Yeah!” (Image 8.j). The wording captures a young person’s humour, but also personifies the eagle in a way that entices a viewer to enter the image, become one with it, and be embodied by and through it. The textual imperative makes the legs of the eagle the legs of the viewer and visa versa. The image calls out to the viewer, whether Aboriginal or not, and asserts the *aliveness* of the eagle and, perhaps even unconsciously, of Indigenous cultures.

There is no way to know the precise meanings these images had for the children who produced them, nor what were their intentions. What can be said, though, is that Ravens, Eagles, Frogs, Thunderbirds, and Bears, in both living and representational form (along with multiple other beings and depictions) held/hold powerful meanings for First Nations peoples across British Columbia. The forms and images produced by students represented fundamental aspects of sociocultural structuring of (some) First Nations, including their governance systems, lineages and genealogical knowledges, connections with lands and resources, and senses of self, family, and community. The symbols have been produced for a very long time – since time immemorial according to some Aboriginal peoples – and have always been part of the production of a social group, used to express notions of self and other, of Creator and community: symbols are “cultural performances” and as such they “reflect certain values and characteristics of particular cultures” (McMaster and Martin 1992: 14). Symbols of Indigeneity are “animated and infused with spirit,” according to some Aboriginal artists (Nicholson 2004: 246). In a way, the social group is lived through the production of these beings and symbols of them. Depictions of Raven, a trickster and the bearer of light, or Eagle, who carried



messages to Creators and embodied the strength and knowledge of generations, or Frog, the representative of complex transformations and great wealth, were all integral components of First Nations understanding of the world and their positions within it (Cole 1985; Macnair *et al.* 1984; Steltzer and Bringham 1991). Artistic representations of these (and other beings) made material and visible a predominantly invisible, alternate/other, and a spiritual world that informed all aspects of life for Indigenous peoples in British Columbia (Macnair *et al.* 1984). The images produced by children and later collected and archived by Reverend Raley depicted potent and powerful aspects of Indigenous identities and cultures. That the images were produced within colonial environments, and took new and innovative forms such as ‘Mobius Strip’ totem poles, suggests that Aboriginal children were making efforts to adapt aspects of their Indigeneity to a shifting world by adopting new forms and artistic conventions. Furthermore, the innovation and creativity evident in the images may be read as children’s assertion that Indigeneity is dynamic and changing. The student artists took the opportunity to create art that highlighted their cultures while evading static, catalogue-like images reflective of anthropological renderings of the “vanishing” Indian. From the depths of the residential schools, these works depict the dynamism and liveliness of Indigenous children’s worlds.

Further evidence of children’s efforts towards maintaining connections with powerful symbols of culture and identity while in residential schools exists in another small collection held by the Royal British Columbia Museum.<sup>32</sup> Like other collections of

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<sup>32</sup> This collection of children’s art objects was assembled by Dorothy Lucas, a teacher at St. Michael’s Indian Residential School between 1931 and 1937, and again between 1951 and 1954, and also at St. George’s Indian Residential School between 1937 and 1941. The collection was gifted to the Royal British Columbia Museum on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1977 (Royal British Columbia, BCPM Ethnology Collections:

student-produced art, there is no way to know precisely when most of the objects were produced, or by whom, nor the exact origin of the designs. According to records that accompanied the works, the objects are northwest coast or central interior in origin. The records also confirm that all the objects were “original designs” that were “drawn and executed” entirely by the students. That students were able to create, with incredible precision and detail, renderings of cultural symbols suggests a strong retention of Indigenous cultural knowledges, reinforcing a reading of the final work as representing living cultural utterances. The livingness and dynamism of the cultural symbols is reinforced further because of the students’ sophisticated execution of them through modern materials. Although the meanings of the symbols depicted in the art may have been understood from a child’s perspective, the production of the objects and the objects themselves suggest the efforts undertaken by Aboriginal children in order to maintain some connection with culture and community. A Seagram’s Whiskey bottle covered in dried and dyed grasses woven on a foundation of cedar bark provides one example of the cultural balancing efforts undertaken by Aboriginal children. On each side of the bottle is a pair of sea serpents, woven in purple, complementary to the deep-purple plastic screwtop of the whiskey bottle. Between and on either side of the sea-serpents, which with wings outstretched, is a green eagle and brown eagle. Two possibilities transpire through the object. First, Indigenous visual culture envelopes and encases a highly symbolic marker of Non-Aboriginal intervention into Indigenous lands and lives – the

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Accession # 1977–20). The collection contains over thirty objects described as having been produced by students (predominantly girls where there is record of the artist) at the two residential schools. It is comprised primarily of textiles and basketry, although there is one carved and painted wooden spoon and one painted and shellacked wooden plaque strung with a braided leather thong. The textiles include a wide range of formats, from large linen cushion covers, coarsely woven cotton long table runners, and small place mats, to more traditional square table cloths. Similarly, the basketry and weaving include small round mats and serving trays made of split cedar, abalone shells, whiskey bottles, and porcelain vases that have been intricately encased in woven and dyed reeds, grasses, and cedar.

whiskey bottle. Secondly, the whiskey bottle, as such, is not only encased within markers of Indigeneity, it is quite literally transformed into the mould upon which a scene of eagles and sea-serpents unfolds. The whiskey bottle and its royal purple top are referenced in the artist's choice of colour and positioning of images and, consequently, the bottle loses individual significance (as a whiskey bottle) and gains meaning only in relation to the artistic intervention within which it has been incorporated. In other words, upon the small surfaces of the highly symbolic whiskey bottle, a student in a British Columbian Indian residential school has expressed and produced Indigenous visual culture. This expression simultaneously suggests an immense resilience and ability to incorporate and transform that which encroaches into Aboriginal well-being. The object also asserts an ability of Aboriginal children to adapt and creatively balance Indigenous culture with elements of Eurocolonial intervention.

A similar narrative plays out through a small, highly varnished, juniper plaque attributed to student artist Reynold Smith, age 12, from the 1940 Senior Boy's class at St. George's Indian Residential School in Lytton. Painted in thick black is an intricate scene of Coyote (Image 8. k). "Mr." Coyote is portrayed as an adult or teacher wearing a feathered headband with an open text in his hand, standing and conducting a lecture or meeting with four junior Coyotes. The group of four junior Coyotes, three boys and girl, each dressed in feathered headbands, are seated around their teacher on blankets and mats. Two of the junior Coyotes are depicted in profile, facing Mr. Coyote from each side, while the other two are seated with their backs to the viewer, directly facing the adult in their midst. Framing the scene are two tall trees, filled with eight singing birds around whose heads are fluttering various musical notes. On a small bit of paper pasted

on the back of the plaque appears the following description of the scene:

Mr. Coyote conducting his weekly prayer meeting. His choir of eight golden birds from heaven were in attendance. The birds were taught to sing in heaven and helped Mr. Coyote to instruct the Animal People. After each weekly prayer meeting the choir birds returned to heaven.

Produced within a schooling environment designed and dictated by colonial imaginations and aims, the plaque presents an alternate depiction of a learning environment, one in which characters crucial to Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and understanding the world figure prominently in a depiction of mutual learning and instruction. Not unlike the scene that unfolds across the space of the whiskey bottle previously described, the Coyote scene evokes the possibility of retelling and reconfiguring colonial and Christian constructs such as education or heaven. The teacher is Mr. Coyote, whose position with a circle of learners, necessarily troubles an accepted authoritarian role. The pupils, Animal Peoples, are permitted, in Smith's visual and written narratives, to interact directly with beings sent from Heaven, a disruption to the discursive separation in Christianity between animals and humans and angels. Finally, at the level of practice, the small wooden plaque, produced as it was within St. George's Indian Residential School, documents a young Aboriginal child's intent to retain aspects of his Indigeneity. By (re)producing, in however small a form, a component of Aboriginal visual and narrative culture, and by carefully documenting the specifics of that narrative, Reynold Smith, at the age 12, was not only ensuring that his story not be erased by the impositions of colonial infrastructures, but also was reproducing it for others to hold on to and to learn from.

That Aboriginal children within residential schools harboured intentions of evading, if not altogether disrupting, the purposes of colonial residential schooling is

clear from the precision and effort taken in the production of these works. Many of the objects bespeak immense concentration and care, an investment that suggests that students were holding fast to aspects of their visual cultures, were keen to have them admired, and were not shy about taking time to (re)produce them within the confines of residential schools. Three other objects are symbolic of the immense investment of time and effort on the part of Aboriginal students within British Columbia's residential schools.<sup>33</sup> They suggest the resilience of Aboriginal cultures even within a colonial context intent on modernity's triumph over Indigeneity. In approximately 1936, girls in the sewing room at St. Michael's Indian Residential School designed, drew, and completed two works of embroidery, both of Haida figures (BCPM Ethnography: Accession #1977-20:B, Catalogue # 15472). The two large cushion-covers, over two feet in diameter, feature frontal views of a bear and a mountain goat, both rendered in a bright array of colours (Image 8.1). There is nothing elementary about the designs. The faces of Bear and Mountain Goat are expressive and their depiction is detailed, including animated eyes, precise noses, and well-defined paws and hooves. The proportions of the figures are even and exact in their symmetry, and the needlework itself is virtually flawless, conveying depth and richness within the two-dimensionality of the textiles. Bear is presented in bright blue, red, and green, and fully outlined (with the exception of his chest) in black. Mountain Goat is slightly less colourful, but has very prominent horns that reach high above the head, and legs that feature detailed cross-hatching. The needleworked renderings of Bear and Mountain Goat are sophisticated renditions of the Haida figures and underscore that children in St. Michael's Indian Residential School

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<sup>33</sup> Two objects are from the Dorothy Lucas collection and one is an individually catalogued object not affiliated with any collection but donated in the 1970s by the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.

retained a fluency in the visual cultures of their Indigenous communities that they were able to reproduce vividly and in the new(er) medium of needlework. That the textiles were envisioned by the students as cushion covers suggests the possibility that Haida figures may be incorporated into home environments, transcending the division between Indigenous visual cultures and the Eurocolonial couch and also division between Indigeneity and the everyday. The needle-worked renditions of Bear and Mountain Goat announce a vision by Aboriginal children of Indigenous cultures as very much alive, highly adaptable yet resilient, and very far from vanishing or from being forgotten, by Aboriginal children or anyone else.

Students at Kuper Island Residential School displayed an equally profound investment of time and creativity in the production of an object catalogued simply as “Fish Net Ball of Glass Decorated with Beads” (Image 8.m) (RBCM Accession #13696). In 1971, two 12-year-old Nuu-chah-nulth students, Tanya Michael and Lena Amos, at Kuper Island Indian Residential School, produced for presentation to the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia an outstanding beaded glass ball, replete with Nuu-chah-nulth iconography, the name of the school, and the name of the Lieutenant Governor (Black 1999). The object, a large work over 30 cm in diameter, originated as a beaded glass fish-net ball of the sort that would have originated in Japan and then, over time, travelled on Pacific Ocean currents to the west coast of British Columbia. The float was transformed by the bead work imposed over it by the two student artists. While the glass float certainly retains its integrity and identity as a component of the work (hinting toward a multinational mediation of cultures between colonial British Columbia, First Nations, and Japan), it has been fully encased in a webbing of intricately connected and

colourful beads (red, yellow, blue, white, and brown-gold). They were woven in a symmetrical pattern, joined in cross-sections by a flower motif and culminate at the top and bottom of the sphere in a matched flowering patterning. The circumference of the float is surrounded by a thick, white-beaded band in which the name “Lt. Gov. Nicholson” has been woven. That lettering is flanked by two wolf figure faces, mouths open, each of whom is facing a double-ended, or bi-directional, arrow. Read cyclically, Lieutenant Governor Nicholson’s name is framed by two wolves who appear, as suggested by the bi-directional arrow symbol, to be in dialogue with each other, yet simultaneously communicating in a back and forth manner with Lieutenant Governor Nicholson. At the base of the beaded glass float, Michael and Amos constructed a thick round stand upon which the entire object rests: the stand is beaded with a large in-flight eagle and the wording “Christie,” the name of the residential school in which the object was produced. The object reads as a call for an equalizing and two-way relationship between Indigenous cultures and Non-Aboriginal Eurocolonial British Columbia. Presented to Lieutenant Governor Nicholson during his visit to Kuper Island Residential School, the object was passed from the hands of Aboriginal children to those of the man who, as the Province’s representative to the Queen of England, embodied colonial British Columbia. The message is an implicit disruption of colonialism’s presumed ability, articulated through residential schooling, to assimilate Aboriginal peoples by removing markers of their Indigeneity and instead producing Non-Indigenous characteristics ostensibly in line with a White British Columbia. The object also disrupts the momentum of colonial ideologies that demanded a subordination of Indigenous cultures (or their vanishing) within the transformative momentum of modernity and colonialism. In

essence, the two 12-year-old Nuu-chah-nulth children placed in the hands of Lieutenant Governor Nicholson a highly symbolic, yet eminently material utterance of perseverance and resilience – not only of their Indigenous culture, but also of their Indigenous state of childhood.





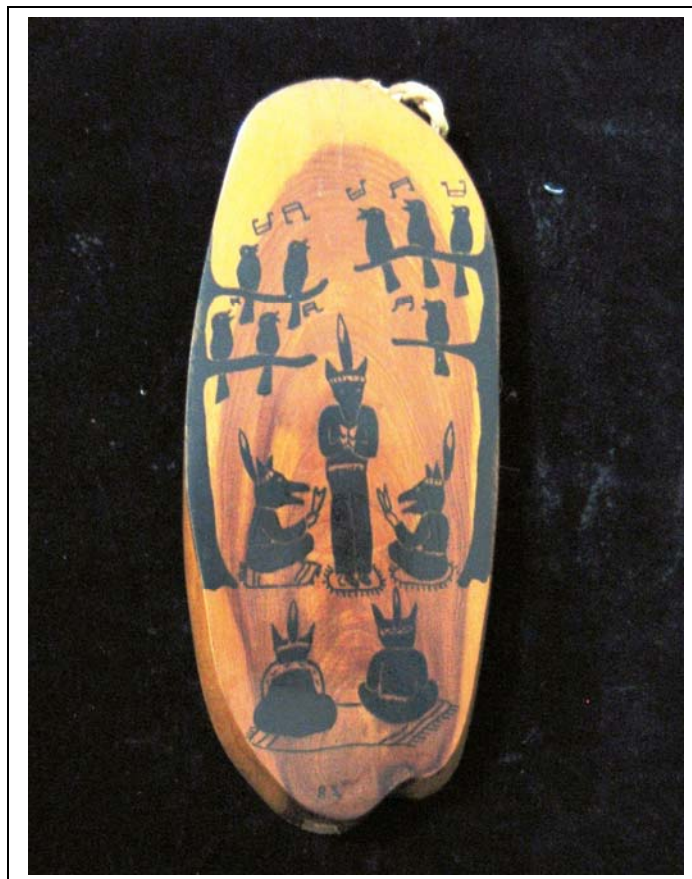
**Image 8.h: Student-produced triptych landscape of canoe journey, part of the Reverend George Raley donation. RBCM Ethnography, Accession #1999.86.09, Catalogue #19688**



**Image 8.i: Student-produced design of totem poles, part of the Reverend George Raley donation. RBCM Ethnography, Accession #1999.86.10, Catalogue #19691**



**Image 8.j: Student-produced Eagle, part of the Reverend George Raley donation. RBCM Ethnography, Accession #1999.86.02, Catalogue #19681**



**Image 8.k: Juniper carved plaque of Coyote scene, produced by 12-year-old student at St. George's Indian Residential School, 1940. RBCM Ethnography collection, Accession # 1977 – 20: AM, Catalogue # 15491.**





**Image 8.l: Needleworked pillow cases, produced by Haida students at St. Michael's Indian Residential School, c. 1931 – 1937. From the Dora White Collection, Accession 1977–20: A & B, Catalogue #15471 & 15472**



**Image 8.m: Fish-net glass ball ,decorated by Grade 7 students at Christie Island Indian Residential School. RBCM, Accession # 13696**

According to Anishinaabe artist and performer Shandra Spears (2005), the stories people tell themselves and one another are possibly the most fundamental component of understanding the world and our relationship to it. Such stories, narrations, and biographies transform and/or gain meaning as they are transferred and translated among individuals and communities. Sometimes though, paradoxically, there is a resultant loss to some of the storytellers, whose narrations are disinvested of authority or authenticity within systems of power, such as those perpetuated by colonialism. Such transformations, Spears argues, do not diminish or reduce the number of stories that need to be told for there are and have always been, “so many stories to tell” (Spears 2005: 3). The multiple stories of residential school children evading colonial assimilation and erasure of Indigeneity can be seen in part in the art and creative projects they produced within the schools. Those creative projects in turn merge with other expressions of culture and cultural identity uttered in opposition to an acquiescent acceptance of colonial education. These utterances tell a story of Indigenous survival against great odds. Although contemporary references in Aboriginal testimonial literatures to resistance to the aims of residential schooling are numerous (as explored in Chapter 2), there is only scant reference to the role played by arts and creative expression in that struggle. This chapter has argued that the production of such artistic expression was voluminous and urgent in Aboriginal students’ efforts to mediate between multiple and colliding worldviews. There is, however minimal, a contemporary memory and testimony of art as part of the resistance struggles and survival strategies within residential schools of British Columbia. As revealed by a former student of Kamloops Indian Residential School, art production provided not only comfort and refuge, but a means of maintaining cultural links:

I cried a lot of times, crying alone, alone [but] I used to do a lot of art when I was in Indian school, I did a lot carvings...My carving work, I did have it shown in a Gallery in town. I had my own show, which was really neat. I used to like reading a lot then, you know I'd get into the books, go to the library and get ideas from there. It was different Native works from around B.C. Back then there was not too many books on it and it was really hard to come by. (Secwepemc 2000: 92)

The reclamation of imaginative place through the production of art was thus an assertion of Aboriginal identity in the face of colonial education. Moreover, and consistent with decades of other Aboriginal student-produced arts within residential schools, what is recalled here is that art served to mediate between worlds, to retain cultural identity, and to solidify happiness and sense of self, even against the loneliness and isolation imposed by the places of British Columbia's residential schools. That is the story told by the art objects and creative expressions produced by Aboriginal children in residential schools. It is a story of agency, however small. It is a story of resilience, a story of mediation and translation between competing world views, and a story, ultimately, of survival.

## CHAPTER 9:

“SINCE IT WAS WITHIN THE ST. EUGENE MISSION SCHOOL THAT THE CULTURE OF THE KOOTENAY INDIAN WAS TAKEN AWAY, IT SHOULD BE WITHIN THE BUILDING THAT IT IS RETURNED”<sup>34</sup>:

### A CONCLUSION WITHOUT ENDING

*Each of us stands at one unique spot in the universe, at one moment in the expanse of time, holding a blank sheet of paper. This is where we begin.*  
(Peter Turchi 2004: 236)

The Ktunaxa-Kinbasket people of south-eastern British Columbia were, quite literally, born through the transformation of landscape and place. The history of the First Nation's origins, as related in their creation story, begins in a place and time before humans inhabited the earth, a period the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket call the Animal World. During this age, the spirits gave all creatures instructions to care for and respect each other and all things on the earth, but the large water creature Yawu'nik brought grief to all those with whom he shared the earth. For the grief he inflicted, Yawu'nik was to be killed, and a war party was formed for that purpose. The two rivers that today make up the primary watersheds of the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket territory (the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers) were at the time of the Animal World joined together in one cyclical water system. For many months, Yawu'nik avoided capture by travelling the connected waterways, and with time the war party sent to kill Yawu'nik became exhausted and discouraged. It was at this time that Naḫmuq̓in, a huge land creature, received advice from the spirits. Split the waterway in two, they said, and you will be able to capture and kill Yawu'nik. Upon receiving the advice, Naḫmuq̓in broke off a great piece of mountain and used it to separate the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers. True to the spirits' word, Yawu'nik was

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<sup>34</sup> As attributed to Elder Mary Paul of the T'unazxa Kinbasket Nation on a plaque inside the main foyer of the St. Eugene's Mission Golf Resort and Hotel

quickly captured and killed. His body and flesh were then distributed across the land. Naḫmuq̓in released Yawu'nik's innards to the wind and, when they settled, the places on the ground they touched became the colours of humankind. Where the blood of Yawu'nik spread at the site of his killing, the red people emerged. Naḫmuq̓in was so surprised when the red people arose from Yawu'nik's blood that he rose to his full height and hit his head on the sky, killing himself instantly. His huge fallen body, close as it was to the blood of Yawu'nik from which the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket people arose, became the Rocky Mountains. Finally, the spirits spoke directly to the red people, instructing them to always care for their land and everything that inhabited that land; in turn, the land would care and provide for them. The Ktunaxa-Kinbasket people have been caring for their land ever since.

If the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket people chart their beginnings to the splitting of waterways and the blood of a fallen villain, it should come as no surprise that the Nation recently decided to reclaim and transform a more recently villainous entity: the residential school. It is with the transformation of residential school geographies, in the closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup>, that I will conclude this research.

This dissertation opened with some weighty questions, linked to a wide and varied foundation of theory and methodologies. At the broadest level, my questions concerned the colonial project in British Columbia. More specifically, I was curious to understand what might be learned about that project by looking at intimate and diminutive geographies. My focus was on the province's residential schools, eighteen relatively small sites, and the bodies, minds and creative expressions of the schools'

students. The schools were not empty red-brick buildings perched on bits of farmland. They were lived, navigated, and experienced places that held and made meaning for their occupants, all those who worked, lived, were confined to, and passed through them. The body spaces of my focus were never just abstract constructions; they were, of course, people: Aboriginal children. Exploring the colonial project in British Columbia through its micro-geographies took me to its sharpest edge: the small and vulnerable bodies, minds, emotions, and lives of children. These were places in which colonialism and its propagators were intensely interested and invested. As most people who think about children know, however, they are not well served by explanations that construct them as passive blank slates upon which various agendas play out. Aboriginal children in British Columbia were, and are, dynamic, strong, and radical, just as were other members of their families and communities who actively fought colonialism in British Columbia from the moment it became clear that Non-Aboriginal settlers had arrived in the province and planned to stay. How, then, does one document and understand the agency and power of Aboriginal children in British Columbia's colonial project? My response was to scale down, to narrow my focus on geographies even smaller than the children who lived the already relatively small geographies of residential schools. And so my research focused upon the even smaller scales of creative works produced by Aboriginal children during their times in British Columbia's residential schools.

The artistic and creative expressions produced by Aboriginal students within British Columbia's residential schools, the focus of my study, tell a series of stories about resistance and survival in colonial places. Aboriginal children were conceptualized by colonial agents as requiring transformation. Despite aggressive colonial attempts to make



this transformation a reality, children in residential schools actively and artfully (re)narrated expectations of the project bearing down upon them. They prolifically and steadfastly produced expressions that allowed them to retain aspects of their Indigeneity, even when retaining it meant adapting it in new and creative fashions so as to meet the expectations of colonial modernity and evade punishment. The experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal students about their residential schooling are attainable, in part, through the discovery, analysis, and investigation of materials they produced during their times in the schools. Aboriginal children's (re)narration of colonial expectations has left tangible and material evidence in the form of creative and artistic expressions that in turn, allow for new, creative, and innovative methodological approaches to understanding colonial contests in British Columbia.

Aboriginal children were not the only occupants of residential schools in British Columbia. The school places were co-inhabited by teachers and school administrators. Also the schools were "occupied" by the many government policies under which they operated. These policies constituted the discursive constructions driving educational imperatives within the schools' spaces; they shaped the social and cultural conditions that crept into all aspects of school operations. Colonial teachers and administrators, along with various discursivities, policies, and ideologies, formed another significant component of this research project. I was interested in the more intimate, individualized, and everyday perceptions and experiences of Non-Aboriginal educators within the province's residential school. How, for instance, were the contours of colonialism navigated and understood by those working the front lines of colonial education? Did proximity to Indigenous peoples alter Non-Aboriginal colonial mindsets? When historical

geography focuses on small-scale, individual, and diminutive geographies of colonialism, the immense complexity and contradictions of the colonial project are revealed. Only by looking at intimate, everyday, and diminutive geographies can we understand the much broader trajectories and momentum of colonialism, including its failures and fallibilities. More importantly, only then can we fully discern the very important agency and power of Aboriginal children of British Columbia.

My focus on the embodied, individualized, and discursive geographies of colonial British Columbia demanded that I examine the physical and built expressions of colonialism as materialized in the residential schools themselves. Geographies of built environments must be read and theorized as carefully as texts. As much as discursivities form subjects, those subjects are, at a very tangible and concrete level, governed and contained within physical sites. In colonial British Columbia, this finds tangible expression in the bricks, mortar, and landscapes of the Province's residential schools. The immense importance of the physicality and materiality of the schools, as built expressions of colonial policies and imaginings about Aboriginal children, is why the buildings continue to resonate in the landscapes of British Columbia and why many First Nations have elected to (re)deploy the places in new, distinctly anti-colonial, ways. As the point of this research was to demonstrate the importance of intimate geographies to colonialism and colonial practices, it seems appropriate to end with an exploration of the current geography of these schools. The (re)construction and immense transformations of the schools is a testament to historic Aboriginal resistance to colonial universalism, a testament to their creative and dynamic resistance and empowerment.

That British Columbia's residential schools play a variety of roles in the

contemporary provincial landscape speaks to the diverse nature of First Nations Bands' decisions about and relationship to the school places, and offers some insight into the differences between their ongoing relationships with the schools. In the case of Kuper Island School just east of Chemainus, the school was demolished by the Penelakut First Nations' Band upon whose land the building was. In some cases, most of the school was destroyed by fire and no effort was made to rebuild it. For example, only the stone chapel component of Lytton's St. George's is left standing; it is now a small brick structure surrounded by late 20<sup>th</sup> Century homes, tall pine trees, and the Lytton Band's local Indian Reserve gas station. In other cases, as with Lejac School outside Fraser Lake, decisions were made by the ecumenical organization that oversaw the site to remove the school. Although these strategies resulted in the material erasure of school buildings, the affective nature of the places resonate on the landscape in a palimpsest of memory, symbolism, and meaning that extends beyond bricks and mortar. While nothing remains architecturally of the Lejac Indian Residential School buildings, the field it once occupied on the edge of Highway 16 in northern British Columbia retains the cemetery of staff and students who died there. Rose Prince, a member of the Dakelh Nation and a one-time student of the school, is buried in that cemetery, and the old school grounds are the focus of the annual Rose Prince Pilgrimage, designed to promote Prince's beatification. Places, imbued with meaning and experience, transcend the materiality of place and resonate through processes of ongoing interpretation and negotiation. The place of Lejac Indian Residential School continues to transform the landscape upon which its meaning and story resonate. The school, now gone, continues to act because its meaning and memory are circulated and augmented by those who relate to the school symbolically or through

the memories and stories of others.

While place can be both transformative and transformed beyond materiality, the surviving buildings are also undergoing transformation, sometimes in radical ways. Kamloops Indian Residential School accommodates the administration offices of the Kamloops First Nations Band and the Secwepemc Cultural Centre, which houses language-revitalization projects, First Nations operated early childcare programs, and a standing exhibit on Aboriginal cultural genocide and colonial education in Canada. The buildings that served as the fulcrum for Catholic-managed curriculum dedicated to eradicating Indigeneity have been transformed into sites through which Kamloops First Nations people are asserting their identity. Similarly, in Alert Bay, the Kwakwaka'waka First Nation has elected not to demolish St. Michael's Indian Residential School but rather to transform it from a site of colonial education and significant cultural trauma to a building housing Band administration offices and youth counselling and employment services. What were once classrooms for young children are now classrooms used to teach college and high school equivalency. The same building houses the U'mista Cultural Centre, which has preserved an impressive collection of repatriated objects from the Potlatch Collection, objects originally lost to the Kwakwaka'waka First Nation during one of British Columbia's most aggressive deployments of Section 149 of the 1884 *Indian Act* banning potlatching.

The potlatch collection at the U'mista Cultural Centre, like so many cultural representations produced by Aboriginal peoples, resists clear or sole categorizing as art, ethnographic artefact, or cultural and political expression (see for instance Townsend-Gault and Duffek 2004). They are all of these and more. For the Kwakwaka'waka, the

objects are “treasures” and, given their connection with the Potlatch, represent “the intactness of an Indian culture” (U’mista Cultural Society 2007). Displaying the objects within the reclaimed places of St. Michael’s School is an ongoing national (re)enactment and (re)positioning of Indigeneity in modern British Columbia. The Kwákwaka’waka Nation is not the only Nation, nor the only Aboriginal community, to employ gallery-place to resist historic and contemporary colonialism in Canada (Nakamura 2007). Like the creative materials and expressions produced by students in British Columbia’s residential schools, the Potlatch treasures of the Kwákwaka’waka Nation reach far back into history, while simultaneously positioning Indigenous culture and identity in the present-day. Like the work of First Nation artist Jeff Thomas, the objects “assert an Aboriginal presence in the very *place* where “Indians” were not supposed to exist” (my emphasis, Francis 2004: 40). Contemporary Indigenous art, and Indigenous art in contemporary places, are infused with the complexity of colonialism for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and are often wielded to decolonize colonial places and relationships:

It is extremely important to fool people into looking at [tragic, violent, and colonial] issues again. [laughter] Things change slowly in our lives as First Nations people and the struggle is constant. The government is always trying to take away our land. It is really amazing how Aboriginal rights are continually being whittled away. I think as an artist I have the time, the space and the opportunity to address these issues. I think artists have a responsibility and an opportunity to help their communities (Belmore 2005: 31).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Indigenous art continues to function to “fool” those who might otherwise prefer to look away from the historic and contemporary issues of colonialism in Canada. Creative expressions function powerfully as social expressions, as the means

through which Aboriginal peoples maintain cultural continuity and identity and disrupt, decolonize, and reclaim places within colonial contexts.

If St. Michael's represents radical place transformation, the conversion of St. Eugene's Indian Residential School by the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket First Nation is as Herculean an endeavour as the splitting of two river systems and the slaying of Yawu'nik. In 1994, almost a quarter-century after St. Eugene's ceased its operations as a residential school, Elder Mary Paul of the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Nation stated that "since it was within the St. Eugene's Mission that the culture of the Kootenay Indian was taken away, it should be within that building that it's returned." Her vision laid the foundation for the Nation's transformation of a building that had stood derelict and vandalized for almost 25 years into a \$40.8 million international four-season Delta Hotels resort in B.C.'s Rocky Mountains. Based on Band strategizing and business plan development, through private and public sponsorships, and by capitalizing on both environmental and historical currency, the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket First Nation transformed a colonial apparatus operated by the Roman Catholic Church into a source of revenue and cultural rehabilitation for their Nation. By 2003, fewer than ten years after Elder Mary Paul articulated her vision, St. Eugene's Residential School had become St. Eugene's Mission Resort, including a 125-room hotel, all-inclusive conference facilities, an on-site casino, and an 18-hole golf course. Even though the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket First Nation stripped the school building down to its structural bones prior to the rebuilding, the site's materiality as a residential school remains. Viewed from the outside, the resort is almost identical to the original school structure and retains a powerful resonance and connection with the site's initial function. With the exception of a small addition, the 125 hotel rooms

primarily occupy the main school building. The school's outbuildings are now venues for local arts and crafts sales. The barn has been transformed into a golf clubhouse and store, and a rolling golf course has taken the place of the school's agricultural lands and fields where Aboriginal children once laboured toward assimilation. The school's basement, once the site of children's eating halls and recreational rooms, is now the home of the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Cultural Interpretive Centre that is open to the public and to all guests of St. Eugene's Resort. The Centre houses comprehensive displays and exhibits about the cultural damage wrought on First Nations peoples through colonial processes, about the trauma of residential schooling, and about First Nations efforts towards self-government and cultural autonomy. The Centre also houses a language revitalization project that focuses on the integration of Ktunaxa-Kinbasket language into children's education. While the materiality of St. Eugene's Residential School is visible throughout the resort environment, the structures' meaning has been transformed from displacement and erasure to empowerment and pride. As Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Chief Sophie Pierre stated in 2004, with reference to residential schooling's legacy of inflicting cultural genocide, family breakdown, poverty, and economic alienation: "We must come to the realization that we need to accept the history and take control... We, as persons who endured the Residential School experience, must be part of the solution." For the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket then, a solution to historical and cultural devastation is enacted through mnemonic and material place transformation.

Painful memories are not erased within the newly reconstructed architecture of St. Eugene's. As with the ground-level inclusion of the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Cultural Interpretive Centre, references to residential schooling are visible throughout the Resort.

Hanging on the walls of all Resort thoroughfares are sepia photographs depicting Indigenous children solemnly standing in front of the school flanked by Roman Catholic mission educators, standing before farming equipment in poses suggestive of the children's transformation into productive agricultural citizens, or engaging in activities such as Christmas pageants or the school band. The children are captured enacting Eurocolonial dreams and delusions. These photographs, along with a portrait of Elder Mary Paul in the Resort's main lobby, paintings of other Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Elders and leaders hung throughout the Resort, and the displays in the Cultural Interpretive Centre in the Resort's basement, demand that the Resort be read and participated in as a First Nations response to colonial efforts. The transformed places of St. Eugene's Mission Resort maintain a dialogue with the physical and non-physical elements of the residential school, while simultaneously projecting that past onto the present day, thereby ensuring a constant (re)presencing and reminding of the Eurocolonial contest in British Columbia.

Nowhere is this (re)presencing and reminding made more explicit than on the 18-hole golf course that surrounds the school/hotel buildings. The greens encircle three sides of St. Eugene's Mission Resort and provide the vista for the conference rooms and the resort's restaurant, pool, and spa. The bucolic and majestic landscape of the golf course is powerfully qualified by a graveyard that rests on the western edge of the golf course and on the periphery of the Resort's landscaped grounds.<sup>35</sup> The vital and commercial present stands in marked relief from a colonial past. In an expanse of carefully mowed and tended greens, the graveyard is overgrown and untended. In a landscape of carefully maintained edges and ornamentation, the graveyard's crosses are unpainted and slowly

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<sup>35</sup> The resort was featured in a 2001 issue of *Golf Digest* that focused on the remote, pastoral, and serene qualities of St. Eugene's Resort and Spa.



disintegrating. In contrast to the formalized and regulated protocols governing the golf course, the graveyard has no discernible entrance or exit and is strewn with old bed frames, bits of machinery and piles of lumber. The Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Nation has made no effort to camouflage, contain, or mask the graveyard, populated with the graves and markers of children and staff who died while at St. Eugene's Residential School. The agony of British Columbia's Euro-colonial agenda is visually and physically asserted through the graveyard. Colonized place has been reclaimed and transformed by the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Nation but past wrongs cannot be righted. The graveyard insists that those primarily Non-Indigenous guests who partake in the reclaimed and transformed St. Eugene's Mission Resort be constantly unsettled in their leisure; their vistas and gazes are necessarily focused on the palpable legacies of British Columbia's colonial education history. The transformation of St. Eugene's Residential School into St. Eugene's Mission Resort refuses to allow a severing of the present from the past. To golf against graves is to take part in the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Nation's ongoing slaying of a colonial monster and its transformation into an opportunity for cultural reclamation and political reckoning with colonial British Columbia. The slaying of such monsters is a project worthy of sustained investigation, at all scales, and in all places.

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