

A Historiography of Recent Publications On Catholic Native Residential Schools

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In 1984 the *Canadian Historical Review* began to catalogue publications on aboriginal topics. Since then the quantity of the publications on Native peoples has noticeably increased. This essay will look at recent publications on Native residential schools with a particular emphasis on residential schools under Catholic direction, mainly in Ontario and western Canada. From 1860 to 1960, out of a total of 101 schools in Canada, Catholic residential schools numbered fifty-seven, representing nearly sixty per cent of the Native schools.¹ As a non-aboriginal Christian scholar with an interest in Native residential schools, I think that it is important to grasp some of the major interpretations and themes identified by educators and historians studying residential schools.

Much has been written about Native residential schools over the last few years. The Native residential school came into existence during the nineteenth century as an altruistic enterprise of the different churches. In the seventeenth century the Jesuits and Ursulines had established such schools in New France but were not successful with them, and they were soon abandoned.² The Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Catholics with fresh mission enthusiasm in the nineteenth century founded residential schools as a way to foster spirituality among the Native people, many of whom were already Christian. Evangelization of those who had not encountered Christ was also part of the program.³ The curriculum employed

¹ National Library of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Citizenship and immigration, 1950s; National Steering Committee for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Some Observations on the Residential School Experience and Its Implications for the Church in Canada" (September 1992), pp. 9 and 14.

² Cornelius J. Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976), pp. 10-11, 25-26, 97-99.

³ Many would contend that residential schools were a direct effort at cultural replacement or cultural imperialism; see David A. Nock, *A Victorian Missionary and Canadian Indian Policy: Cultural Synthesis vs Cultural Replacement* (Waterloo,

in the residential schools was primarily of Euro-Canadian design. Like other Canadian schools of the period, instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion formed the basis of the curriculum. The courses were generally simplified to open them to Native students unfamiliar with the English language.

The Euro-Canadian school system was part of the objective universe of western civilization during the nineteenth century. As necessary components of the school system, this historical paradigm included a set curriculum, regular attendance, numerous rules, assiduous study and certain language skills. Such knowledge and Christian lifestyle, it was believed, prepared a Native person for life in Canadian society. The values of this objective universe structured into the nineteenth century school were considered to be unchanging. The values were to be transmitted to the student so that they could be assimilated and imitated.⁴ For over one hundred years, Native residential schools in Canada existed in this western world of objectivity.

Since the 1960s a paradigm shift has moved schools from being part of an objective universe of unchangeable institutions and values to a subjective universe of personal growth and cultural roots. Values are only values for a person if they are chosen to be part of one's life. The principal concern for me as a student is to appropriate my gifts, to engage the universe, and to move in the direction of self-transcendence. Fitting into a classical school for me is no longer a concern. I must enter into serious dialogue with life around me to learn where I stand in the universe, to strive for authenticity, and to appropriate my cultural identity.⁵

Our attitude towards the Native residential school has been caught in this paradigm shift. The school that was laudable to Native people, church workers, and government officials for over one hundred years,⁶ has become

Ontario: Published for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1988); M. Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: David McKay, 1974). I find this contention does not explain the lack of effect of Native residential schools. In theory cultural replacement may seem reasonable, but in reality it breaks down as Ken S. Coates found in *Best Left Indians*.

⁴ Margaret Whitehead, ed., *They Call Me Father: Memoirs of Father Nicolas Coccoia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), pp. 58-59.

⁵ Julien Harvey, "The Church in Canada Twenty Years After Vatican II," *Lumen Vitae* 41: 3 (1986), 283-84; Bernard J.F. Lonergan, "The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical-Mindedness," *Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan*, eds. W.F.J. Ryan and B.J. Tyrrell (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), pp. 1-9.

⁶ In *Moon in Wintertime* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), John Webster Grant concludes that "despite its shortcomings, the residential school evidently met a need" (p. 183). In *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), the main protagonist sought to build at Munceytown two residential

unacceptable, a liability, and has been condemned variously by all three groups. Some schools had improved. However, as the significance of cultural identity and the self-expression of that identity became overwhelming values in our society, the residential schools, now associated with the objective universe, were repudiated. It was considered crucial for the education of all ethnic groups, and especially for the education of Native people, to have the right to guide their youth in the pursuit of their own cultural values, which included language and culture.

Government interest in residential schools was slight until the 1880s when federal government began to fund already existing religious schools for Native youths as industrial schools and thus demanded that the schools be English-speaking. By the end of the century the government had taken over funding and demanded English-only in the schools; its goal of assimilation of the Native people into Euro-Canadian society became clear. In 1910 a revised education policy for Native students cut school expenses and simplified the curriculum, while an expanded policy enriched the curriculum for Euro-Canadian children.⁷ School attendance for Native children became compulsory only in 1920.

It must be said that the goals of the government, particularly in the north, were never those of the church. For many Catholic schools, conversion was a reasonable goal but assimilation was not necessarily an objective at all.⁸ Church people lived with the Native people in the rural areas and were interdependent on many levels with the community. They were in constant touch with the people through working out problems in the school and through the regularity of the sacramental life of the church and thus had more opportunity to understand what Native people were saying. Many of the Catholic missionaries were French-speaking and had mixed feelings and less enthusiasm for the spread of English language, empire and culture.

Duncan Campbell Scott led the government's effort to take "measures to render the system [for the education of Native children] more efficient." E. Brian Titley provides a persuasive and scholarly exposition of Scott's administration of Indian Affairs in Canada from 1909 to 1932. "The education of the Native children in day and residential schools was one of the key

schools, one for boys and another for girls. Jones sought funding from band annuities and from his own fund-raising tour of Britain in 1845 (pp. 192-96).

⁷ Jean Barman, "Separate and Unequal: Indian and White Girls at All Hallows School, 1884-1920," *Indian Education in Canada I* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 9 and 120.

⁸ Robert J. Carney, "The Hawthorn Survey Report, 1966-1967, Indians and Oblates and Integrated Schooling," *Historical Studies* 50, II (1983), pp. 614-15; J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, Revised ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 198; *They Call Me Father*, pp. 56-57.

elements in Canada's Indian policy from its inception."⁹ To initiate this program, it seemed wise to the government, in Titley's view, to build on the existing ecclesiastical institutions and to use the persuasive powers of the missionaries to guarantee their success.¹⁰ Interestingly, Titley points out the judgments of departmental officials noted "the particular success of the Catholics as administrators The children were reported to be clean, well-fed, and healthy."¹¹

Ironically, Titley's examination of the government's relationship with the church and Native people is itself narrow in focus. His use of Native and church sources is inadequate because of the absence of research in the archives of religious congregations, especially those of the Oblate Fathers. He presumes the French-Canadian missionaries were similar to English evangelicals and thus part of English cultural imperialism.¹² At least one Native residential school, St. Peter Claver at Spanish, Ontario, does not fit into his industrial school categories. St. Peter Claver did not follow the standard plan for locating schools far from the reserve and close to white settlements, or establishing them on land leased from the government.¹³ As a result, Titley's study is limited in its insights.

Perhaps the most interesting volume in recent years on Native residential schools has been David Nock's study on the use of residential schools by government and church as a replacement for Native culture. According to Nock, the government and the church used the schools to indoctrinate Native children into Euro-Canadian ways and eventually to assimilate them into Canadian urban life. Nock argues that this cultural replacement is a historical fact, supported by the data as well as by many of his colleagues.¹⁴ Some scholars, however, disagree with his thesis. Nock's general conclusions break down in the light of historical case studies of individual residential schools. These researchers favour a modified cultural synthesis rather than the hypothesis of cultural replacement. At least some Native people, they argue, blended Euro-Canadian culture and Native culture at the pace

⁹ E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 75.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹³ Archives of the Society of Jesus of Upper Canada (ASJUC), Regis College, Toronto, Synopsis of the History of Wikwemikong by William Maurice SJ, based on the Wikwemikong Diary, pp. 17-18; *A Narrow Vision*, pp. 77-78.

¹⁴ David A. Nock, *A Victorian Missionary and Canadian Indian Policy, Cultural Synthesis vs Cultural Replacement* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1988), pp. 151-53.

manageable to them.

A pioneer in research on St. Mary's Mission School, Chilliwack, British Columbia and Qu'Appelle Industrial School in Saskatchewan is historian Jacqueline Gresko of Douglas College, New Westminster. In a number of perceptive articles on the functional nature of Catholic schools, she contends for the most part that the "systems and ideologies [of Native residential schools] ... were often inconsistent and haphazard in their application of forced acculturation" and that Western Canadian Native people "survived with their aboriginal rites intact."¹⁵ For Gresko, the integration promoted by Native residential schools was not extreme assimilation; rather, it allowed for a "high degree of resistance to change in indigenous cultural patterns." Loopholes in a comprehensive school system allowed Native culture to be communicated at the schools themselves, and when aboriginal people travelled to the various schools they disseminated an enthusiasm for pan-Native nationalism. Native resistance was revealed in poor school attendance and in the celebration of Native social, religious, and educational traditions. The fact that leaders of pan-Native nationalism, such as Andrew Paul in British Columbia and Harold Cardinal in Alberta, emerged from these schools indicated there were many cracks in the residential school system which made it possible for many Natives to preserve their cultural identity.¹⁶

Gresko believes that "over the long run, industrial schools like Qu'Appelle and St. Mary's aided the preservation of Indian cultural patterns, stimulated resistance to missionary and government assimilative efforts, spread a pan-Indian identity, and eventually brought about the generation of modern Indian rights movements and cultural/educational activities."¹⁷ At Native festivals, students, former students, and friends of St. Mary's Mission School brought together two thousand people to use the Native languages throughout the day, putting on a passion play or a canoe race. Such festivities, Gresko observed, suited the goals of the missionaries but not the government's policy of assimilation.¹⁸ In later years, some Native students remained positive and nostalgic about the school.¹⁹

In a more recent article presented at the Western Oblate Studies Confer-

¹⁵ Jacqueline Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites': Indian Education and Native Responses in the West, 1870-1910," *Western Canada Past and Present*, ed. Anthony W. Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975), p. 180.

¹⁶ "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites'," pp. 173-74 and 179-81.

¹⁷ Jacqueline Gresko, "Creating Little Dominions within the Dominion: Early Catholic Indian Schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia," *Indian Education in Canada I* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 102.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

ence in Edmonton in 1991, Gresko examined the tenure of Fr. Joseph Hugonnard, the principal of Qu'Appelle Industrial School, and the interplay between the school and its Native community. She concludes that the school "was part of community education and community history rather than a strict imposition on the Native population."²⁰

Hugonnard preferred a "bilingual and bicultural harmony" but had to deal with an unilingual Canadian society committed to Anglo-Protestant values. He accepted Métis children into the school in the hope that they would be eligible for government funding, advocated higher education for Native youngsters, and made arrangements for their free admission into eastern colleges. While the government policy ignored the Native families, he fed the families when they arrived. Hugonnard made them welcome to visit their children at the school "by building a porch and then a special room to receive them."²¹ To avoid defections from the student ranks, he promoted a good relationship with the students, elders and community. At community gatherings Hugonnard had students sing Native songs. He also published a Cree-English primer.

The school at Qu'Appelle was used as a social and education centre for Native communities. It included among its events religious ceremonies at an Indian congress. Children and parents sang hymns in Native languages and chiefs spoke on their difficulties with the Euro-Canadian culture. Gresko recognized that Native residential schools were a mixed blessing which left Native children with mixed memories: "on the one hand, sports, music and friendships and, and the other, studying, homesickness, and discipline."²²

Robert Carney of the University of Alberta is another pioneer researcher in his studies on Oblate missions and residential schools in the Northwest Territories. In a 1981 article, he contended that "the traditional missionary point of view [in the north] was that native people should have at least three choices: life in the wilderness, life in the non-wilderness North, or some combination of both."²³ In contrast to the Oblate missionaries, the government advocated that the Native people confine their activities to the life of hunting and trapping. Only in the 1950s did the government reverse itself and encourage Native people to participate in the industrial development of the area. According to Carney, the Catholic point of view in the Northwest Territories had always been that "education was necessary not

²⁰ Jacqueline Gresko, "Everyday Life at Qu'Appelle Industrial School," *Western Oblate Studies* 2, ed. Raymond Huel (Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), p. 94.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 79, 83-84, 87

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92

²³ Robert J. Carney, "The Native-Wilderness Equation: Catholic and Other School Orientations in the Western Arctic," *Historical Studies* 48 (1981), p. 62.

only for life in the wilderness, but also for other chances that existed or that would eventually present themselves.”²⁴

During this period the government provided the non-Native students of Yellowknife Public School District with seventy per cent more funding than it did for Native students; clearly the government was not interested in funding the “native-wilderness equation” for Native children. But it must also be admitted, as Carney argues, that the Oblates failed to criticize the government’s limited vision on education. When the St. Laurent government (1948-1957) reversed its policy in the 1950s, it did not accept responsibility for its own narrow policy of the past but blamed its own feeble efforts to educate Native children on “the Catholic Church and its system of schooling.”²⁵

In March 1955 the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Jean Lesage, announced a new policy of Native participation in northern industrial development and “effectively brought an end to the church’s educational role.”²⁶ Twenty years later, Carney points out, the Berger Commission of 1974-1977 committed the same error and advocated solutions that failed to appreciate the options offered by the traditional Catholic view of trapline, industry, or a combination of the two.²⁷

In a subsequent article two years later Carney, reviewing the Hawthorn Survey commissioned by the government in 1966-1967, pointed out the

constant tension between the Oblates and the federal government over Indian conditions. The government held to the goal of enfranchisement [of the Native people], but did not provide the resources to effect its achievement. The Oblates sought greater funding for educational as well as other projects, but did not seek an end to Indianness.²⁸

Despite radical differences between the Oblates and the government, the mutual advantages forced them to bury their differences over Native residential schools in favour of cooperation. In 1948, however, the government unilaterally decided that Native children should be sent to provincial schools wherever possible and confirmed that decision in 1959.²⁹

²⁴ Ibid., p. 65.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 67-69.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁸ Robert J. Carney, “the Hawthorn Survey (1966-1967): Indians and Oblates and Integrated Schooling,” *Historical Studies* 50 (1983), Part II, p. 615.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 617-18.

According to Carney, the government recruited H. B. Hawthorn³⁰ to direct forty social scientists in a study of Native people and Native schooling. Published in 1966-1967, the survey contended that Catholic residential schools impeded the government's new policy of integration. It recommended the closure of these schools and the transfer of Native children into provincial schools.³¹

Before the adoption of integration into provincial schools, the Oblates, who maintained the need for both Indian day and residential schools, argued that the Native children be suitably prepared. The Oblates also came out in favour that the Indians should be "given control over their own affairs."³²

At the end of the World War II the Native people had asked for changes to the system of Native education. Many wanted schools on the reserve. Native Catholics requested schools with both "Indian and Catholic" characteristics.³³ Predictably, the Hawthorn Report affirmed the current government policy of sending Native children to provincial schools. According to Carney, the Hawthorn research team, enjoying good rapport with the Indian Affairs Branch, offered their scholarly conclusions to confirm the Branch policy.³⁴

In 1970 Native chiefs asked that in future the schools be operated by Native people. In the early 1970s the Catholic community of Dogribs took over schools in their area. The Catholic bands around St. Paul, Alberta, assumed responsibility for Blue Quills school. In the judgment of Robert Carney, "the Oblate position on Indian schooling more closely approximated Indian preferences for Band operated, on-reserve schools than did the strategy proposed in the Hawthorn Survey." In fact, Carney argues, the Oblate educational policies revealed a respect for native religious and moral education.³⁵

In a recent article, "Residential Schooling at Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution, 1874-1974," Carney finds that the residential schools "functioned in a manner which encouraged the relatively small number of school-age Métis and Indian children who attended them to follow their parents' Christian beliefs and practices and their livelihood as hunters and trap-

³⁰ Professor Harry B. Hawthorn was a member of the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia from 1947 until 1976. He was chair of the Department from 1956 until 1968.

³¹ *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada*, ed. H.B. Hawthorn (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, 1966-1967), 2 vols.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 625-26.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 627.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 619 and 22.

³⁵ "The Hawthorn Survey (1966-1967," pp. 629-30.

pers.”³⁶ The Native-wilderness equation, worked out for these schools by missionaries, traders and police, provided for use of the Native language in catechism and in the school yard, and for English language in the classroom instruction of reading, writing, arithmetic, and wilderness skills. According to Carney, the Native-wilderness equation was wiped out by government insistence that Native children attend integrated provincial or territorial schools. The Rae-Edzo Dogribs revived the concept in the 1970s when it became the model for “a system of Native-controlled divisional boards in the Territories and for Northland School Division in Alberta.”³⁷ Thus the Native-wilderness equation used in many of the Oblate schools in the Northwest Territories proved over a century to be enduring and served well the interests of the Native people.

In attempting a more comprehensive approach to Native schools in the middle 1980s, Jean Barman, Y. Hébert, and D. McCaskill edited two volumes of essays, *Indian Education in Canada*. When researching the thorny issue of Native residential schools, the authors found the schools were a mixed blessing for Native youths. In volume one, Ken S. Coates described Native residential schools in the Yukon Territory as much more effective than day schools but with a more devastating impact on the students.³⁸ In a lengthier study on Native life, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*, Coates examines the changes undergone by the Native people as they adjusted to the arrival of fur traders, miners, missionaries, and government officials. The Native people, in Coates’ view, found Christianity compatible with their own spirituality. Generally, Coates’ presentation has little specifically to say about Native residential schools. Yet, in reference to the system of education at Carcross School, he writes, “These teachings [of rigid discipline, social control, Christian teaching and moral guidance], however, set the students on a collision course with the values and customs of their Indian villages.” He concluded that the Carcross School “failed to provide the native students with an obvious route into either native or white society.”³⁹

Another contributor to *Indian Education in Canada*, Diane Persson discovered at Blue Quills School the use of Native languages “facilitated by

³⁶ Robert J. Carney, “Residential Schooling at Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution, 1874-1974,” *Western Oblate Studies* 2 (1992), pp. 115-38.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 116,135-36.

³⁸ Ken Coates, “A Very Imperfect Means of Education: Indian Day Schools in the Yukon Territory, 1890-1955,” *Indian Education in Canada* 1, pp. 146-47.

³⁹ Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), pp. 133-34; “‘Betwixt and Between’: The Anglican Church and the Children of the Carcross (Chooutla) Residential School, 1911-1954,” *British Columbia Studies* 64 (Winter 1984-85), pp. 46-47.

teaching catechism in Cree and by special programmes through which priests came to learn Cree at the school.” In religious activities the Cree or Chipewyan languages were spoken as a regular practice. Blue Quills was the first school to be handed over to the Native people and to be administered by them. After the school changed hands, the Cree language from the old curriculum was maintained in the new.⁴⁰

According to Jean Barman, Native-run schools which succeeded the residential schools were also difficult to initiate and to operate. The Native education was “incomplete both in substance and degree” and “subject to the priorities, guidelines, and funding set by external agencies.” However, in Barman’s view, the good news is “Indians are staying in school longer. In 1984-85, almost twice as many Indian students were enrolled in grades 10 through 12 than had been the case in 1971-72.”⁴¹

One of the most provocative articles in *Indian Education in Canada* is of Richard King’s analysis the difficulties in the planning and operation of Native schools. In the post-residential school period, he describes the founding of a Native school run by the First Nations in which the staff, students, parents and school board suffered severe trauma. The Native community had established a school with an open curriculum that could be adjusted as the term progressed. There were few directions or traditions to be followed. Soon after the school year began, the students and parents started complaining, the teachers became confused, and the principal was asked to leave. By the end of the year the staff and school board resigned. They discovered that establishing a new school and forming a new school curriculum was not easily done. To resolve this traumatic situation in the community, a traditional school format was adopted from the provincial schools to restart the Native school.⁴²

Many essays, however, are extremely critical of residential schools. J. Donald Wilson refers to the graduates of Singwauk and Wawanosh as “marginalized beings.”⁴³ Other articles are concerned principally with educational methods. For example, Alvin McKay and Bert McKay deprecate one hundred years of Canadian education as “miseducation.” They are

⁴⁰ Diane Persson, “The Changing Experience of Indian Residential Schooling: Blue Quills,” *Indian Education in Canada I*, pp. 159 and 166.

⁴¹ Jean Barman et al., eds., “The Challenge of Indian Education: An Overview,” *Indian Education in Canada II* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), p. 17.

⁴² Richard King, “Role Shock in Local Community Control of Indian Education,” *Indian Education in Canada II*, pp. 53-61.

⁴³ J. Donald Wilson, “‘No Blanket to be Worn in School’: the Education of Indians in Nineteenth Century Ontario,” *Indian Education in Canada I*, pp. 82-83.

optimistic about the immediate successes of Native education.⁴⁴ Lucy Bashford and Hans Heinzerling seem impressed with the importation of a non-Canadian, non-Native education program from California called “Life Values.” It featured a “holistic youth development program” which includes outdoor classes, much physical education, and a community effort.⁴⁵

J.R. Miller, a historian at the University of Saskatchewan, has completed a contextual study of Indian-White relations in Canada. His work provides a suitable historical context for understanding Native residential schools. These schools, in his view, were “ineffective, harsh, unsafe, and interfered with the development of the Indian child.” Native residential schools failed “dismally.” This failure, for Miller, was “attributable to government parsimony and Indian resistance.”⁴⁶ However, in a previous article, “The Irony of Residential Schooling,” he points to the interesting fact that the leaders of the First Nations today are the former students of the Native residential schools. At the residential schools the Native people achieved their goals of adapting from the Euro-Canadian culture the skills enabling them to cope with contemporary Canadian society. Thus a new generation of Native leaders emerged, Miller argues, to conserve Native culture, language and institutions for future generations.⁴⁷

The basis for better understanding of Catholic Native residential schools is the documentation compiled by Fr. Thomas A. Lascelles. He prepared a three-volume *Native Residential Schools: Survey of Documents at Dechâtelets Archives, Finding-Aid*, and also published *Roman Catholic Indian Residential Schools in British Columbia*.⁴⁸ His inventory of the documents about Oblate residential schools across Canada lists them by topic, reference number, description, and often includes key quotations. An index accompanies each volume. This work is a collection of documentary material on Native residential schools. It illuminates the various aspects of the Native and non-Native dialogue about residential schools, and is essential reading for any serious researcher of Native residential schools.

⁴⁴ Alvin McKay and Bert McKay, “Education as a Total Way of Life: The Nisga’s Experience,” *Indian Education in Canada II*, pp. 84-85.

⁴⁵ Lucy Bashford and Hans Heinzerling, “Blue Quills Native Education Centre: A Case Study,” *Indian Education in Canada II*, pp. 126-41.

⁴⁶ J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 198-99.

⁴⁷ J.R. Miller, “The Irony of Residential Schooling,” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 14: 2 (1987), pp. 10-11.

⁴⁸ Thomas A. Lascelles, OMI, *Indian Residential Schools: Survey of Documents at Deschâtelets Archives, Finding-Aid*. (1991); and *Roman Catholic Indian Residential Schools in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Order of OMI in B.C., 1990).

Roman Catholic Indian Residential Schools in British Columbia emphasizes the unwillingness of the government to fund Native schools adequately. For an example of this parsimony one might look in the Indian Affairs Branch Annual Report 1924. “Residential school expenditures totalled \$1,583,310.52 nationally” for seventy-three boarding schools. In fact, each school received a paltry \$21,689.18. Nevertheless, the dedicated religious persons who staffed the Native residential schools willingly accepted the isolation, hardship, and meagre salaries.⁴⁹ With slim staffs and few resources, the missions took a large share of the responsibility. Quoting Diamond Jenness, and agreeing with J.R. Miller, Lascelles writes, “it was not the missions that shirked their responsibility, but the federal government.”⁵⁰

It was the principals of residential schools, not the government, Lascelles asserts, who saw the need to establish Native high schools. They urged Native students to attend them or provincial high schools.⁵¹ On the other hand, Lascelles stresses the importance of the affective ties linking members of Native families as “stronger than those experienced by Canadians in general.” Lascelles is critical of the early missionaries for failure to recognize these bonds or show Indian students the special consideration due them. “Had they been able to do so collectively, [it] would have helped the children immensely, for native people still fondly remember priests and sisters who treated them with extra kindness.”⁵²

Lascelles makes three pertinent observations on Catholic Native residential schools in British Columbia:

First of all, that a flexible approach to native languages and culture would have been a much wiser, more humane course. Secondly, the residential schools were neither the sole nor the main reason for the decline in native languages. Thirdly, it may be of some comfort for native people to recall the benefits that learning English affords them in terms of being able to communicate with other linguistic groups of native people and with the Canadian society at large.⁵³

The two volumes of *Western Oblate Studies* published in 1990 and 1992 contribute further insights to the field of Native residential schools. Much like Jean Barman’s *Indian Education in Canada*, some articles have more significance for residential schools than others. The first volume provides much information on the Oblate missions and schools in the west and

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁵² Ibid., p. 19.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

explores the Oblate relationship with the Native people, the Catholic bishops, the Church Missionary Society, and the Hudson's Bay Company. In assessing these volumes, a reviewer commented that "the numerous lexicons, grammars and dictionaries compiled by missionaries among the Arctic First Nations" reveal the Oblate concern for Native culture and are "a source for Natives to renew themselves in their language, legends, traditions, and world-view."⁵⁴ Author Yvon Levaque, according to the reviewer, stressed the attempt of the Oblates "to educate Native men and women at a time when the Federal Government was unwilling to live up to treaty obligations and Native people were threatened by the massive onslaught of Euro-Canadian cultural mores."⁵⁵

Some of the current negative generalization about native residential schools are questioned by certain articles in the second volume of *Western Oblate Studies*. Jacqueline Gresko challenges the view of the Qu'Appelle Industrial School as an instrument of assimilation. In her opinion these schools served as a vehicle of cultural continuity and part of community history. Robert Carney contends that Native residential schools in the Northwest Territories, such as Holy Angels and St. Joseph's, encouraged students "to follow their parents' Christian beliefs and practices and their livelihoods as hunters and trappers."⁵⁶ Vincent McNally's exploration of the negative attitudes of the missionaries towards the Native populations demonstrates the beginnings of a mutual reconciliation between the two communities.⁵⁷

Western Oblate Studies 2 concludes with an apology to the First Nations of Canada from the Oblate Conference of Canada: "We offer to collaborate in any way we can so that the full story of the Indian residential schools may be written, that their positive and negative features may be recognized, and that an effective healing process might take place."⁵⁸ This apology is an effort by the Oblates to initiate dialogue and healing with the First Nations.

In recent years two personal accounts of Native residential schools provide examples of both the positive and the negative viewpoints on these institutions. *Indian School Days* by Basil Johnston reveals a school experience tolerable enough and generally beneficial for the student. *Out of the*

⁵⁴ Mark G. McGowan, "Reviews," Native History Study Group *Newsletter*, October 1992, p. 15.

⁵⁵ McGowan, p. 15.

⁵⁶ "Residential Schooling at Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution, 1874-1974," *Western Oblate Studies 2* (Lewiston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), p. 116.

⁵⁷ V.J. McNally, "A Lost Opportunity? A Study of Relations between the Native People and the Diocese of Victoria," *Western Oblate Studies 2*, pp. 159-78.

⁵⁸ *Western Oblate Studies 2*, pp. 260-62.

Depths by Isabelle Knockwood reveals a human cry for justice.⁵⁹ Both volumes are autobiographical.

As a young teenager, Johnston dropped out of the residential primary school at Spanish, Ontario, to go to work. Following the addition of a high school to the primary school in 1946, he returned to enroll in the upper grades “to escape a life of cutting wood.” Johnston relates the high jinks of students trying to make the academic routine bearable. The students, for example, believing that the draft horses at the school farm could be used for something other than ploughing, organized several late-night horse races to counter the boredom of the daily routine. Otherwise, students attended classes, studied over their books, and worked on the farm. Recreations consisted mainly of playing sports and taking long walks. The book is a perceptive story of the clash between two cultures trying to understand and respect one another. When asked, “Is there a place for residential schools in the educational system?” Johnston gave the Spanish high school “a qualified yes.”

On the other side, Isabelle Knockwood's assessment of the residential school at Shubenacadie is understandably negative. Her experiences of hardship and abuse are corroborated by some of her peers and some archival sources.⁶⁰ It is difficult to assess the events related, but if half of the memories are accurate, the account is a powerful indictment of the religious and civil officials who were responsible for the school. Too much responsibility and effort were expected from children at an early age.

A number of articles published in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* make significant contributions to the literature on Native residential schools. Cree scholar, Linda Bull, consulted government, Catholic and Methodist archives and interviewed twelve students who attended the Blue Quills Indian Residential School and the Edmonton Indian Industrial School between 1900 and 1940. Of particular interest are her comparisons between the gentle Native way of educating children and the severity of that of Euro-Canadians. In Native residential schools, she maintains, there were no solid academic programs, the parents had little say in student attendance, and the children did not have the opportunity to speak either their own language or English.⁶¹

Bull's summary of the discontinuities suffered by young students in a

⁵⁹ Basil H. Johnston, *Indian School Days* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1988); Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia* (Lockeport, Nova Scotia: Roseway Publishing, 1992).

⁶⁰ Margaret Henry, a review article, “The College on the Hill,” *Canadian Oral History Association Journal* 12 (1992), pp. 44-45.

⁶¹ Linda Bull, “Indian Residential Schooling: The Native Perspective,” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 18: Supplement (1991), 5.

strange environment include:

learning to speak a foreign language, food, rules, a whole new pattern to adopt and adapt to in terms of life in an institutional setting. Serious academic problems resulting from linguistic complications. Despite the fact that conversational English was grasped fairly quickly, difficulties were encountered in reading, comprehension, and more subtle areas of word meaning.⁶²

Students lost command of the Cree language for ten or eleven months, and they had little opportunity to speak English outside of the classroom. The demands of silence, obedience, and school regimentation weighed heavily on these free-spirited youths.

Bull believes that the missionaries preached Christianity to control the Native people and to reduce them to servitude.⁶³ She espouses a “holistic approach”⁶⁴ to life for Native people, and yet uses political terms like “genocide, extermination, ... economic exploitation” to describe the role of government and church in the schools.⁶⁵ At the same time, ironically, Bull acknowledges improvements in health, population, and the professional status of the Native people.⁶⁶

Bull is an advocate for the Native people in their struggle for a decent education. She directs her anger against the nineteenth century paternalistic objectives of the Native residential schools. Bull’s work is a cry of the oppressed. It must be respected as an authentic voice. Indeed, the article offers the beginning of a Native perspective and makes a contribution to the understanding of the impact of the residential school on a Native community. A second article written from a Native perspective is by N. Rosalyn Ing. A Cree speaker, she constructed a database from three interviews, one interview was in her Native tongue. She is of the opinion that the Native residential schools extinguished many Native languages and, along with this loss, changed “a vital part of family life.” She blames the residential school for the loss among the current generation of elders of “self-esteem, parenting skills, and language.”⁶⁷

One former residential school student interviewed by Rosalyn Ing, identified by the name of Beverley, related that her “father knew the impor-

⁶² Ibid., p. 18.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 51 and 56.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁶⁷ N. Rosalyn Ing, “The Effects of Residential Schools on Native Child-Rearing Practices,” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 18 (1991 Supplement) p. 68.

tance of a good education and because of this, we kept going back to residential school.” He expected his children to maintain their own language and also kept some children home from residential school who then went on the trapline in fall and spring to learn the Native customs and to polish their language.⁶⁸ The father seemed to have his own combination of Native and Euro-Canadian cultures, his own version of cultural synthesis.

Another former student interviewed, Salina, stated that her mother expected her to stay in school and finish her education and become a nurse or teacher. Although her grandmother showed affection to her and cuddled her, Salina acknowledged that she did not receive affection from her mother and did not in turn show her own son much affection. On the other hand, she feels that her husband, who did not go to residential school, was more affectionate with his son.

At Native residential schools, Ing concludes,

no interpersonal relationship skills were taught to the children; discipline was authoritarian; and no parenting, affection, care, or love occurred. This lack of caring at the school affected the children’s self-esteem and self-concept. Now their lack of confidence and their lack of the nurturing skills to become good parents have been attributed to school experiences.⁶⁹

It is difficult to say how representative these three interviews are. Other students tell of an affection for their school and their teachers that lasted a lifetime.⁷⁰ Some schools, as happens today, were more caring than others. Each school was different, each teacher was different, and each student’s experience was different.

Ing also accuses the church and the state of deliberately creating a Native inability to parent properly as “part of a systematic assimilation program.”⁷¹ Ing writes that the “chaotic condition of the Native family is traced to the residential school education that caused this disintegration.”⁷²

In *Resistance and Renewal*, Celia Haig-Brown, an instructor in a Native teacher education program, interviewed former students of Native residential schools and organized the results into pre-school experiences, school

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 96-98.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 110.

⁷⁰ Gresko, “Creating Little Dominions Within the Dominion,” p. 96 and 100; National Steering committee Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB), “Some Observations on the Residential School Experience,” pp. 7-8.

⁷¹ “The Effects of Residential Schools on Native Child-Rearing Practices,” p. 114.

⁷² “The Effects of Residential Schools on Native Child-Rearing Practices,” p. 114.

experiences, and later reflections. She compares the idyllic life of the pre-school youngster being instructed at home by a loving grandparent with the hard realities of the life, work, and discipline at school. She indicates that parents failed to prepare their children for the shock of school and compares the innocent youngsters with their uncompromising supervisors. Phrases such as “cultural invasion,” “the invaders,” “an oppressive and dehumanizing system,” and “resistance to this invasion” appear throughout the text. She has difficulty acknowledging the ironic fact that many former Native residential school students became successful leaders of the pan-Native nationalism of the 1970s and 1980s.⁷³

Authors writing from a Native perspective on the Native residential school seem to contrast the romantic innocence of the Native community with the harsh realities of the free market system. These last three articles show us how the Native perspective is being worked out. It is important to retrieve Native remembrances and let them become part of the historical context.

Reflecting a growing sensitivity to the legitimate feelings of indigenous peoples, two recent studies associated with the Catholic Church and Native people should be noted. The first, *That the World May Believe* by Michael Stogre, is a history of the development of papal thought on aboriginal rights during the second millennium. In a clear summary of the evolution of papal thought since the Middle Ages, Stogre asserts “that aboriginal issues have evolved from marginal concerns to being at the cutting edge of Catholic social thought.”⁷⁴ Acknowledging the breakdown of indigenous cultures consequent upon European contact, John Paul II in Canada called for a “revitalization” of aboriginal culture which would lead to an integral liberation of the First Nations. This process must begin with respect for Native rights, reconciliation of Native people with non-Natives, a renewal of Native faith and culture through the power of the Gospel, and a consequent liberation in solidarity with other Canadians. The Pope cautions non-Natives that the First Nations “must be the architects” of their own future, freely and responsibly, and be in control of their own educational systems.⁷⁵

A Canadian church document of current importance is “Some Observations on the Residential School Experience” by the National Steering Committee on Residential Schools of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. The committee included clergy and laity, Native and non-Native

⁷³ Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988), p. 118.

⁷⁴ Michael Stogre, SJ, *That the World May Believe: The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights* (Sherbrooke, Québec: Editions Paulines, 1992), p. 125.

⁷⁵ *That the World May Believe*, pp. 232-33, 237-38, and 253.

persons. Following an examination of the school experience which included the hurts, angers, sufferings, and negative memories of former students, the twenty-five page report examines the reportage in the media on Native residential schools and points to some of the positive memories and definite benefits which accrued to those who attended the schools.⁷⁶ The committee calls for concrete measures to rectify injustices and to reconcile both Native and non-Native peoples with one another and with their church. Natives and non-Natives must work together to create a suitable environment to enhance Native schools and families. Native views and values must become part of “the church’s approach to pastoral, liturgy, religious education, social affairs, chaplaincy services, mission [and] national church policy on residential schools.”⁷⁷ “A true communion can be celebrated only when Natives and Non-Natives alike genuinely see themselves as pilgrims together on a Way to God.”⁷⁸

In *A Narrow Vision*, Titley establishes the significance of education in the eyes of a government committed to assimilation of Native people and the importance of utilizing church schools for this purpose. In their articles about Native residential schools in western and northern Canada, Gresko and Carney see the schools in their historical context of the objective universe. They see the schools from 1860 to 1960 in these particular geographical areas as generally accepted by parents and students, by church and government and functioning according to the insights of that time. Jean Barman and colleagues J.R. Miller, Ken Coates, and Thomas A. Lascelles, broaden out these themes with lengthier studies placing the schools in the historical context of the world prior to 1960, that is before a paradigm shift to a world emphasizing personal growth and cultural roots. The *Western Oblate Studies* 1 and 2 offer a balanced appraisal but without the advantage of the Native perspective. Basil Johnston and Isabelle Knockwood provide eyewitness accounts of residential schools revealing both their positive and the negative features. Linda Bull, Rosalyn Ing, and Celia Haig-Brown have begun the first steps of working out the Native perspective. These contributions while powerful need to be placed more fully in context. Since 1960 all would agree that Native residential schools have become unacceptable and are condemned jointly by Native people, church and state. Today it is considered sacred to each of Canada’s ethnic groups to have the right to guide the education of their youth.

Recent publications on Native residential schools have progressed from studies on specific schools in the early 1980s to book-length studies in the

⁷⁶ National Steering Committee, CCCB, “Some Observations on The Residential School Experience” (September 1992), pp. 2-4.

⁷⁷ “Some Observations on The Residential School Experience,” p. 22.

⁷⁸ “Some Observations on The Residential School Experience,” p. 25.

late 1980s and early 1990s. While more specific articles are necessary, the book-length studies provide a broader historical framework and have begun to include the Native perspective. We look forward to several monograph studies now in preparation which will begin the integration of the Native and the non-Native perspectives in the troubled history of Native residential schools.