

Bleeding Hearts: Missions, Philanthropy, Gender, and Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan,
1880-1920

by
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Abstract

Beginning in the 1870s, white women in Ontario and Quebec began organizing into women's missionary societies to support Protestant missionary work at home and abroad. These groups organized the sending of female missionaries to work at Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan. The purpose of female missionary work was to convert 'heathen' children to Christianity as part of the Canadian state's goal of 'civilizing' Indigenous peoples. Examining female missionaries and female supporters of missionary work as a single network explores how Anglo-Canadian women were connected to settler colonial processes.

This dissertation investigates how sentimentality directed towards Indigenous peoples at residential schools and mission sites in Saskatchewan became a vehicle for expanding colonialism from 1880 to 1920. White women created an emotional culture around sentimentality which made colonialism appear as a humanitarian project on the Canadian prairies. Missionary women promised to love, care, and have compassion for Indigenous children and they expressed these sentiments to their female supporters in eastern Canada. The promises of sentimentality fused white women into a cohesive Christian emotional community which produced racial difference on the Canadian prairies. Race, gender, and religion were woven together creating the identity of the white female subject as generous and loving, and the Indigenous 'other' as a pitiable creature.

Using diaries, letters, government records, and missionary memoirs, this study argues that as women began missionary work in Saskatchewan, they initially portrayed Indigenous peoples as 'foreign heathens' that they needed to convert. As settlers began pouring into Saskatchewan around the turn of the century, missionary discourse shifted and Indigenous people became 'our Indians,' a possessiveness rooted in paternalism and white supremacy. By centering

emotion, this study draws out the tensions between the ways missionaries presented missions as benevolent, humanitarian efforts and the violence that underwrote colonialism.

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Introduction:
Emotions, Missionary Humanitarianism, and Settler Colonialism

In May 1907, Mrs. O. Fortin, the Vice-President of the Women's Auxiliary of the Diocese of Rupert's Land of Winnipeg, Manitoba, gave a speech to Anglican church women at their second annual meeting of the Women's Auxiliary of the Diocese of Saskatchewan in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Speaking to the audience gathered at the event, she encouraged the women by saying they were building on the work of their 'older sisters in the East' who had gone before them establishing missionary philanthropic movements across the globe. "In all philanthropic movements she (women) is the recognized leader," she stated. Fortin instructed the women that their task as a newly formed missionary organization in Saskatchewan was to enlist the sympathy of every woman in their parishes to help their 'poorer and less favoured sisters' and these missionary ministrations for the less fortunate should be rooted in feelings from the heart. "Let there be definite organization, loving organization, and organized love. Organization without love is dead machinery, dry, stiff, and hard and love without organization is like a tidal wave, gawking and sentimental, but is short lived...women's power is greatest when it is felt rather than seen," she declared."¹

The rhetoric of sentimentality was woven through the language of women's mission work in Saskatchewan. Protestant women's auxiliary groups were a network of voluntary workers across Canada whose stated purpose was to raise funds for missionary work at home and abroad and send out female missionaries into the mission field. Female missionaries sent to Saskatchewan directed sentimental feelings towards Indigenous peoples in the late nineteenth

¹ Speech by Mrs. Fortin, May 29, 1907, GS-196, B117 A.IV.14, Miscellaneous, 1907-1985, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (PAS), Regina.

and early twentieth centuries. Sentimentality underpinned white female missionary work on the prairies, shaping how missionaries interpreted their work as compassionate benevolence. Sentimentalized discourses circulated within the women's auxiliary groups, building an emotional culture that worked to rationalize the extension of the settler colonial project in Canada's west. This dissertation is about the shared affective consciousness amongst missionary women in Saskatchewan and their female church supporters. My research questions consider the way white female missionaries expressed the sentimental emotions, particularly the affective registers of pity, love, compassion, and sympathy towards Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan and how these emotions justified their intervention into Indigenous lives.² My dissertation examines emerging theories of race based on biological determinism at the turn of the century alongside changing ideas about women's roles in the world. This leads me to ask: how did benevolent feeling give missionary women opportunity to enter paid mission work? How did sentimentality underpin settler colonialism in Saskatchewan? In what ways did missionary women communicate their experiences to their female supporters in Britain and Canada's east? How did this shape the image of Indigenous people in the eyes of the missionary supporter back home in Ontario or Britain? And how were emotions as 'sites of feeling' contested by Indigenous people?

Until the 1890s, Saskatchewan had a primarily Indigenous population, with a small white settler populace. For millennia, First Nations people had lived across this fur-rich region with its river corridors and its hundreds of fresh-water lakes. In the top northern half of the province, the Denesuline (Dene/Chipewyan) and the Woodland Cree occupied the region, whereas the south

² In this dissertation, I use the terms "Indigenous" when I refer to Métis, to those defined as "Indian" under the Indian Act, and to First Nations people who are not statutorily defined as "Indian." The term "First Nations" refers to a community of First Nations people officially recognized as an administrative unit by the Canadian federal government.

was primarily the territory of the A'aninin people, (also called Gros Ventres). The advent of the fur trade in the late seventeenth century ushered in dramatic territorial changes on the plains. By the 1730s, the southern plains were primarily controlled by the Nêhiyawak (Plains Cree), who had begun migrating to the region and had allied with the Nakota, expanding their role as intermediaries in the fur trade linked to the Hudson Bay watershed.³ At the same time, the Nahkawiniwak (Saulteaux) were beginning to move westward during this period, while the Dakota and Lakota nations to the south were both trading partners and military rivals to the Cree-Nakota alliance. The English-based Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had claimed the northern Great Plains as part of Rupert's Land with the signing of a royal charter issued by King Charles II in 1670. The HBC were in fierce competition with the Northwest Company headquartered in Montreal over control of furs until 1821 when the English forced the companies to amalgamate. By the nineteenth century, First Nations peoples in Rupert's Land lived and worked alongside the Métis, an Indigenous community with roots in the fur trade.

Protestant missionaries established mission stations across what was known as Rupert's Land or the Northwest beginning in the early nineteenth century to evangelize Indigenous people. Missionaries in the British world conceptualized the Northwest similarly to other empire locales like India, the West Indies, or Africa— 'foreign' locations that needed to be reformed for Christ. My focus in this study is on Presbyterian and Anglican missionary activism in Saskatchewan from 1880 to 1920, following the end of the fur trade and the birth of an agricultural economy on the prairies. During this time, a massive wave of white immigrants arrived taking up homesteads to farm, drastically altering the social order of the Northwest, the region in focus becoming a province of Canada in 1905. The Dominion Lands Act of 1872

³ James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Indigenous Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2019), 43.

legislated male immigrants from Europe, Canada, and the United States could receive a homestead for 160 acres in exchange for ten dollars and a residency agreement of three years. The arrival of Euro-settlers in Saskatchewan to cultivate their ‘free’ homesteads coincided with the rise of single white female missionaries from across the British empire joining the missionary movement around the globe. Women justified their participation in the missionary world on the premise they would not only proselytize Christianity to the ‘heathens,’ but would love, care, and extend sympathy to the colonized Indigenous charges they were attempting to convert. Much of the literature written by female missionaries originated from Britain’s imperial influence and referred to Indigenous peoples as ‘heathens,’ ‘Indians,’ ‘degraded,’ ‘backwards,’ or ‘inferior races.’ I use this nineteenth and early twentieth century terminology throughout this study to accurately reflect the cultural landscape of British and Anglo-Canadian missionary activity, while remaining fully aware of the structures of colonial harm and legacies of white supremacy from which it emerged.⁴

Women’s Protestant mission work in Saskatchewan primarily consisted of teaching at industrial, residential, and day schools for Indigenous children. It was in these spaces where white female missionaries configured and structured how to manage the deployment of emotion and the inscription of difference into the colonial project in Saskatchewan. This dissertation argues that female missionaries in Saskatchewan crafted the image of the ‘destitute Indian’ as the racial ‘other’ deserving of white sympathy for their missionary supporters in eastern Canada and in the British metropole to justify their expanded female professionalism.⁵ As thousands of

⁴ I am indebted to Gregory Younging’s, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples* (Edmonton: Brush Education, 2018) for shaping my choice of terminology as a non-Indigenous author writing about Indigenous peoples.

⁵ I refer to Ontario and Quebec as ‘eastern Canada’ throughout this dissertation to signify central Canada as being east of Saskatchewan, the focus of this study. Saskatchewan church women notably called women auxiliaries in Ontario and Quebec, their “older sisters in the East.”

settlers poured into what became the prairie province of Saskatchewan, missionary sentimentality helped consolidate the emerging racial order. The making of white womanhood in Saskatchewan and the white female subject's traditional social role as moral regulator in the body politic was predicated on racialized violence against Indigenous peoples. By 1920, government authorities had dispossessed the land base from Indigenous populations through the establishment of treaties, reserves, and land surrenders. White missionary women and their female church supporters stressed that 'Indians' in Saskatchewan were no longer 'foreign heathens,' but were now 'our Indians'—the possessive property of white settlers. Both representations originated from white supremacist ideology, the belief in the superiority of Europeans and their descendants over non-white races. I argue that settlers merely took the original image of the racialized 'heathen' and shapeshifted the portrayal for the changing social landscape of the twenties.

Emotions and Empire

At its core, settler colonialism is an emotional project. Anthropologist Patrick Wolfe emphasises the territoriality of settler colonialism—settler colonizers came to stay on an expropriated land base seized from native people.⁶ But as much as settler colonialism is fundamentally about the taking of land, it is just as much about the shaping of hearts and minds to structurally displace and marginalize Indigenous populations for European domination. Postcolonial scholars have wrestled with the affective strains of empire since the 1980s by exploring the social and cultural spaces of colonial governance. The intimacies of empire, or as scholar Ann Laura Stoler puts it,

⁶ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 no. 4 (2006): 388; for more on settler colonialism see, Lorenzo Veracini, "'Settler Colonialism: Career of a Concept,'" *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41 no. 2 (2013): 567-583.

“managed hearts were critical to colonialism’s political grammar.”⁷ Historians have excavated the archives for the ways the domains of the intimate, such as marriage, sexuality, and child-rearing became, as theorist Michel Foucault calls it “dense transfer points” of power.⁸ Driven by Stoler’s quest to examine how the management of affective ties shaped colonial projects, this study is concerned with the ‘feelings’ of the settler colonial project on the Saskatchewan prairies and the ways emotion made it possible for the extension of empire to be interpreted as a humanitarian endeavor in Anglo-Canadian society.

Emotion is a slippery and challenging site of analysis for the historian to pin down. Constantly in flux, and subject to a wide range of whims and influences, the emotionality of persons seems best left to the field of psychology. Yet over the last decade historians have begun to investigate emotions as an important economy between different persons and the attachment of hierarchies of power. Centering the emotional culture of women missionaries and their female Christian supporters on the Canadian prairies at the turn of the century led me to three conclusions in this dissertation. First, emotions masked the violence within the Indian Residential School System for Indigenous children in Saskatchewan. The majority of the Canadian missionary women who were sent to Saskatchewan worked in the schools for Indigenous children operated by the Department of Indian Affairs in partnership with Canadian churches. Indigenous children endured massive human rights violations within these institutions; they were subjected to violence, starvation, and disease, and forced to endure the loss of their

⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 40. One of the first studies to examine the “tender ties” in colonial settings was Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980). See also Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980).

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1.* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1978), 103.

culture and identity.⁹ Canadian government officials maintained the imperial fiction that children were recipients of benevolent care within this genocidal system and this masking was perpetrated by Protestant missionary men and women employed within the school system. The perception that missionary women functioned as symbolic ‘motherly replacements’ for Indigenous women within the church-run schools served as a reoccurring Canadian myth which undergirded the entire Indian Residential School System. Missionary women purposely maintained an emotional curtain to conceal the abhorrent conditions within the schools. For the maintenance of empire, missionaries downplayed and suppressed the fears, anxieties, and worries they felt from labouring in such climates of violence. They obscured the schools’ strategies of violent forced assimilation from the Canadian consciousness. When cruel treatment of Indigenous children leaked into the public realm, the women’s societies remained convinced that their missionary strategy to culturally assimilate the children was well-intentioned.

Second, the state project of transforming the Northwest into an agricultural paradise for incoming white settlers was a volatile colonial project that required projecting humanitarianism ideals with empire to legitimize its extension. The British world nurtured the myth that humanitarianism was the ideological foundation of the British empire—Britain expanded its

⁹ An extensive volume of scholarly literature exists on the history of residential schools in Canada, see: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 1: Origins to 1939*, vol. 1 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015); TRC, *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 2: 1939–2000*, vol. 1 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015); John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999); David Macdonald, *The Sleeping Giant Awakens: Genocide, Indian Residential Schools, and the Challenge of Conciliation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019); J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015); Isabelle Knockwood, with Gillian Thomas, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi’kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2015); Crystal Gail Fraser, *By Strength, We Are Still Here: Indigenous Peoples and Indian Residential Schooling in Inuvik, Northwest Territories* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024); Ian Mosby, “Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Indigenous Communities and Residential Schools, 1942-1952,” *Social History* 46 no. 91 (May 2013): 145-172.

imperial frontier, not to dominate but because ‘far-away’ parts of the world needed to be gifted the blessings of civilization. The extension of the British empire had long been theorized as a humanitarian endeavor across the British world, as pointed out by historian Joanna Lewis: “An imperial culture of emotion supported the ideology of empire, often enabling British intervention to be interpreted as humanitarian and as the highest stages of white morality.”¹⁰ This ‘humanitarian narrative,’ that the British empire desired to relieve the world of its backward ways, fostered an imperial culture of emotions at home which was managed through the expression of emotional stories. Religious narratives were central to feeding justifications of empire. The task of the missionary was to bestow ‘light’ into ‘dark’ places offering the humane gifts of ‘civilization’ and Christianity to Britain’s colonial charges. Emotional stories rooted in humanitarian justifications aided the dispossession of Indigenous lands in Saskatchewan. The silencing of the violent conquest of the Northwest combined with an emphasis on the ‘humanitarian’ underpinnings of the British empire provided incoming settlers to Saskatchewan with an emotional connection to the space they were imposing themselves on and created shared feelings among Anglo-Canadian settlers.

Lastly, the circulation of shared feelings between missionary women and their supporters connected Saskatchewan with the wider British world. Writing about the economies of emotion in missionary print culture aligned these Canadian women not only with other missionary projects around the globe, but with late nineteenth and early twentieth century British discourse on right feelings, race, and women’s participation in the world. Saskatchewan was not an isolated

¹⁰ Joanna Lewis, *Empire of Sentiment: The Death of Livingstone and the Myth of Victorian Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4. For other works on empire and emotion, see: Jane Lydon, *Imperial Emotions: The Politics of Empathy Across the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Tony Ballantyne, “Humanitarian Narratives: Knowledge and the Politics of Mission and Empire,” *Social Sciences and Missions* 24 No. 2-3 (2011): 233-264.

frontier separate from the rest of the colonial world, but a piece in a much larger imperial puzzle connected to other colonized regions such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, and the West Indies. Missionary writing provided space for female missionaries and their supporters to engage in emotional arenas to work out ideas of who belonged in the Canadian nation and larger British empire and what that belonging looked like. Drawing attention to the emotions of missionary women and their Christian female supporters reveals how power, race, and gender worked through emotionality and how shared emotional connectivity aligned imperial projects.

The Logic of Sentimentality

The Cambridge dictionary defines sentimentality as an “expression of gentle emotions such as love, sympathy, or caring.”¹¹ These sentiments had always been central to the tenets of Christian theology: “love God with all your heart and love your neighbour as yourself” underpinned the teachings of the New Testament—a message which missionaries sought to propagate to lands beyond Europe’s borders.¹² Sentimental discourses were critical to missionaries’ self-image. Missionaries considered themselves fundamentally distinct from colonial government officials as their concerns were of the spiritual realm, rather than the physicality of the colonial world. Yet their claims of sympathetic engagement with non-Europeans solidified their role in British colonial extension. The Church Missionary Society of the Church of England in 1878 instructed their missionaries that “The chief secret of power is sympathy, and nothing so conduces to this as an intelligent and appreciative knowledge of the people whose hearts you want to win.”¹³

Sentimentality, or good faith, was intricately woven into imperial enterprises. Scholar Amit Rai

¹¹ Cambridge dictionary online, s.v. “sentimentality,” accessed October 16, 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sentimentality>

¹² Claire McLisky, “The Emotional Economies of Protestant Missions to Aboriginal People in Nineteenth Century Australia,” in *Emotions and Social Change: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, ed. David Lemmings, and Ann Brooks (New York: Routledge, 2016), 86.

¹³ Lawrence Nemer, *Anglican and Roman Catholic Attitudes on Missions: An Historical Study of Two Missionary Societies in the Late Nineteenth Century* (St. Augustine: Steyler Verlag, 1981), 134.

argues that sentiments have histories and operate as modes of power in the vicissitudes of history. Who gets to feel and who is the object of that feeling creates a power imbalance in the movement of relations on both an individual and collective level. As Ann Stoler maintains, “sympathy conferred distance, required inequalities of position and possibility, and was basic to the foundling and funding of imperial enterprises.”¹⁴

Missionaries to Saskatchewan were no exception to their missionary contemporaries around the globe in relying on sentimentality to justify maneuvering into the lives of colonized peoples. Missionaries sought to communicate the love of God, but they also intended to acculturate those feelings amongst Indigenous people. They desired to ‘correct’ Indigenous affective ties, remolding Indigenous emotional responses to align with Christian affective piety. My work builds off other scholars in the field of mission history who have critically explored the uses of sentimentality to Christianize Indigenous populations in imperial contexts. American scholar Laura Stevens provided a framework for how British missionaries used the compassionate emotions among First Nations people in British North America to gain support in the years preceding the American revolution. American historian Jennifer Graber examines how Christian missionaries on the American plains cast themselves as “friends of the Indians,” cloaking their support of American possession of their lands and cultural displacement as benign acts of expansion. Canadian scholar of religion Pamela Klassen analyzes how an Anglo-Canadian missionary living on the Northwest coast of British Columbia negotiated the imposition of Christian narratives of evangelicalism on Indigenous spaces and how it shaped the “spiritual invention of the Canadian nation.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, “On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty,” *Public Culture* 18 no. 1 (2006): 134.

¹⁵ Laura Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Jennifer Graber, *The God’s of Indian Country: Religion and*

After the birth of the foreign missionary movement in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century, evangelical missionaries and their enthusiasts concerned themselves with ‘feelings of the heart.’¹⁶ This missionary emphasis on reshaping affective allegiances connects to the rise of British women joining the missionary ranks. Single female missionaries began to enter the missionary profession by the end of the nineteenth century across the British empire brought on by changing domestic social norms across the western world. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the mission field, once dominated by male missionaries and the unpaid labour of their mission wives, was now the purview of women’s social activism. Missionary societies attracted Victorian and Edwardian young women to their cause and vast numbers of British and Anglo-Canadian women who did stay home eagerly joined women’s missionary auxiliary groups. Sympathy for ‘heathen’ women and children in ‘uncivilized’ lands drove thousands of women to leave their homes in Britain or, in the case of Canada, in Ontario or Quebec, to convert the colonized masses abroad.

Beginning in the 1980s, scholars such as Patricia Grimshaw, Jane Hunter, Elizabeth Prevost, Patricia Hill, Eliza Kent, and Claire Midgley began to tackle how Protestant women defied traditional social roles by joining professional mission work, which some have called the “feminisation of mission Christianity.”¹⁷ My dissertation contributes to Canadian scholarship that

the Struggle for the American West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Pamela Klassen, *The Story of Radio Mind: A Missionary’s Journey on Indigenous Land* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

¹⁶ The concept of ‘evangelical’ throughout this study is drawn from the late eighteenth-century revival of Christianity, a period of religious fervour in Britain which promoted religion for ‘the people’ and was energized by beliefs in the depravity of humankind, an emphasis on personal conversion through a changing of the heart, and a focus on the soul’s progress towards salvation. The evangelical revival of the British Protestant movement led to the establishment of missionary societies, and with them, the desire to spread British Protestantism across the empire. See Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1876* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 86-93 on the evangelical revival in the eighteenth century.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Prevost, “Assessing Women, Gender, and Empire in Britain’s Nineteenth Century Protestant Missionary Movement,” *History Compass*, 7 no. 3 (2009): 771. See: Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn of the Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Elizabeth Prevost, *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century*

has analyzed how this period transformed the lives of religious Canadian women who entered the missionary movement at the end of the nineteenth century. In the early nineties, scholars Ruth Compton Brouwer and Rosemary Gagan contributed important studies on Presbyterian and Methodist Canadian missionary women in Asia.¹⁸ Brouwer was interested in how mission work became an acceptable vocation for Canadian women, arguing the changing gender norms which missionary women experienced abroad did not alter gender prescriptions at home making their entrance into the professional world palatable for the larger Canadian public. Gagan arrives at similar conclusions in her study on missionary women in Asia arguing how missionary work contributed to a “feminist consciousness” among missionary women in their struggles for autonomy. Her work includes an interesting chapter on missionary women who worked in northern British Columbia on First Nations mission sites, claiming that the women became quickly disillusioned with missionary work in Canada compared to their missionary counterparts in more ‘exotic’ locals such as Japan and China. Historian Myra Rutherdale’s study on missionary women in British Columbia and the Yukon remains the only missionary monograph to solely examine female missionary efforts on Canadian soil. By placing Homi Bhabha’s theory of centering the ‘contact zone’ in the colonial relationship and spaces of cultural encounter,

Hawaii (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Women’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985); Eliza Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Claire Midgley, ed. *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Ruth Compton Brouwer, *‘New Women for God’: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992). For broader studies on missionaries and Canadian history, see important works: Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton, eds. *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017); Timothy Foran, *Defining Metis: Catholic Missionaries and the Idea of Civilization in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1845-1898* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017); John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Susan Grey, *‘I will fear no evil’: Ojibwa-Missionary Encounters Along the Berens River, 1875-1940* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006).

Rutherford moves beyond the binary depiction of the missionary relationship with Indigenous peoples as colonizer/colonized and argues that missionary women were good-intentioned women whose identities were made and remade through syncretic encounters shaped on the colonial frontier.¹⁹

Education on Emotional Frontiers

The inequalities of sympathy converged on the settler colonial front of the Indian Residential School System. Schools were the main points of contact between Protestant missionary women and Indigenous children. Emerging from the imperial heritage of the 1830s and 1840s, British colonial administrators considered education to be a humanitarian offering that would enlighten and uplift Britain's colonized subjects across the empire. Guided by these principals, Canadian authorities established residential schools for Indigenous children in eastern Canada by the mid-nineteenth century. As the century progressed, ideas around education shifted from governmental attempts to 'civilize' colonized populations to classifying and constructing boundaries around education that emphasised racial differences. Education for colonized populations began to prioritize industrial pursuits based on the belief this was more suitable for non-white races so they could be turned into future labourers for whites. Historian Rebecca Swartz asserts that "education was thus used to serve both humanitarian and settler colonial aims."²⁰

In 1880, the Canadian state created the Department of Indian Affairs and over the course of that decade constructed church-run industrial, residential, and day schools across the Northwest. The racial evolutionary thought process behind the schools entailed that Indigenous

¹⁹ Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002). On how 'contact zones' disrupt the colonizer/colonized binary, see: Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 125-133.

²⁰ Rebecca Swartz, *Education and Empire: Children, Race and Humanitarianism in the British Settler Colonies, 1833-1880* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 8.

people were a sort of ‘semi-civilized’ peoples that needed to progress through various ‘rites of passage’ on their path toward acculturation into Canadian society, rationalizing the establishment of different educational systems for whites and Indigenous people. Assimilation through Christian evangelism and education was the intended goal of the schools. The government opened schools or began to fund pre-existing small schools that were already operating on the initiative of Christian missionaries. By the turn of the century, the Protestant denominations, both Anglicans and Presbyterians, had established two industrial schools, six residential schools, and approximately twenty day-schools in present-day Saskatchewan under the purview of their foreign missionary organizations and staffed by Christian missionaries. Industrial schools were large institutions established in urban settings that prioritized trades training, while residential schools were more modest structures with a combination of classroom education and practical training. Day schools were mostly scattered across the far northern regions of the province and allowed for children to remain at home while attending school for a few hours each day. Women’s auxiliary groups organized the sending of female missionaries from eastern Canada to work at all three types of church-run institutions in western Canada.

Indian Residential Schools operated as coordinated sites of genocide aimed to destroy children’s identity, culture, and ties to nationhood, while wresting control over their lives and autonomy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Schools were one facet of the government’s plan to paralyze Indigenous sovereignty for the sake of building a settler society in the second half of the nineteenth century. Hungry for land, Canada acquired the Northwest from the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1869 and worked to secure land treaties with First Nations people, which the government determined were land surrenders, precursor agreements which they needed signed before they could fill the land with white settlers. First Nations leaders

understood that they needed to adapt their economic livelihoods due to the loss of the buffalo herds and looked to the treaties as means to secure an agrarian future in an uncertain economic order. According to the government, they relinquished title to the land in exchange for reserves, annuity payments, farming implements, and promises they could continue to hunt and fish on unsettled regions in Canada's west.²¹ Scholar James Daschuk argues, "Communities that entered treaties assumed that the state would protect them from famine and socioeconomic catastrophe, yet in less than a decade the "protections" afforded by treaties became the means by which the state subjugated the treaty population."²² Following the signing of treaties, the government positioned First Nations communities on isolated reserves scattered across the prairies and intentionally failed to uphold their contractual commitments, which promised farming implements, seed, and domestic animals to aid First Nations communities in their transition to an agriculture-based economy.

In 1885, the Canadian state, now in a position of power, exploited the Northwest Resistance, an armed conflict between the Métis and First Nations who fought against the Canadian government over land rights. The Dominion forcibly squashed the conflict with strong punitive force, to further limit First Nations sovereignty and collective agency.²³ Newly established white communities feared living near First Nations people who they perceived as a threat to their properties and lives following the 1885 Resistance. To quell settler discomfort, state officials curtailed the freedom of movement of reserve residents by imposing a pass system which gave the Indian Agent dictatorial power to approve or deny requests for persons leaving

²¹ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 54.

²² Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains* 125.

²³ John L. Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885," *The Canadian Historical Review* 64, No. 4 (Dec. 1983): 547-548.

the reserve. The Indian Act was a federal law created by the government in 1876 to manage and control every aspect of First Nations lives. It revoked First Nations sovereignty by defining who was a 'Status Indian' according to 'blood,' limiting the number of legally recognized Indigenous people. By 1895, the state revised the Act, prohibiting religious ceremonies, thereby terminating any opportunities for large groups of First Nations people to gather on the plains. Furthermore, the Department of Indian Affairs implemented the peasant farming programme for Indigenous farmers on reserves, requiring them to rely on rudimentary farming tools rather than modern machinery to cultivate their farmland, believing Indigenous people needed to pass through the various 'stages of civilization' in their social evolution from 'barbarism' to 'civilized' before they could compete with white farmers in an agricultural economy.²⁴

Indigenous communities on the prairies suffered greatly from the effects of these tyrannical attempts at control, experiencing extensive economic, social, and health declines. Over the course of the two decades after signing treaties, Indigenous people on the prairies experienced mass starvation and widespread sickness. The hunger crisis, combined with overcrowding, poor sanitation, and corrupt government practices, made the Indigenous population susceptible to disease, resulting in thousands of deaths.²⁵ High death rates fed the nineteenth century colonial stereotype of the 'vanishing Indian,' the idea that Indigenous 'primitivity' made them unable to flourish alongside the expansion of modernity. White Canadians resigned Indigenous peoples to the annals of history, marking them as doomed for extinction.

²⁴ Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 212. See also: Brian Titley, "Hayter Reed and the Indian Administration in the West," in *Swords and Ploughshares: War and Agriculture in Western Canada*, ed. R.C. Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 109-148.

²⁵ Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); See also: Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*.

Female missionaries arrived at mission schools in Saskatchewan steeped in racial metaphors and civilizing narratives of the Indigenous “other,” rendered less than human and destined for death. Myra Rutherdale argues that racial boundaries began to erode the longer missionary women served on mission frontiers.²⁶ My dissertation challenges this assertion, illuminating how missionary women’s bourgeois model of keeping Indigenous peoples within the racialized category of neglected and downtrodden subjects, deserving of religious sentimentality, maintained and strengthened their racial bias into the twentieth century. Missionary women arrived at Indian Residential Schools in the last two decades of the nineteenth century promising to ‘love’ their downtrodden colonial subjects, which they interpreted as a fundamental aspect of the evangelical declaration to fulfill the Great Commission.

However, sentimental claims to offer Christ’s love to their colonized charges aside, there were a myriad of reasons which compelled women to join the mission field. Some single women turned to a missionary career to challenge the domestic prescriptions of marriage and childrearing expected for Victorian women, while others were attracted to the opportunities for travel to experience ‘exotic cultures’ abroad. With the rise of the Progressive era and the emergence of a ‘social gospel’ in Canada, women turned to the mission field to pursue career positions such as teachers, doctors, and nurses, vocations where they could connect their Christian faith to acceptable social activism. Married missionary women often followed their husbands to the mission field, willingly embracing the opportunity which provided them with experiences that would be unavailable to them at home as white middle-class women. Others stayed behind or reluctantly went out of duty as loyal Christian wives submissive to their husbands’ missionary impulses. For most missionary women, tending to the world’s women and

²⁶ Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man’s God*, xxv.

children became their Christian service; as historian Jane Hunter points out, female missionaries combined “the female gendered obligation to ‘love’ and ‘nurture’ within the organizational discipline of the social reform era of the late nineteenth century.”²⁷

Missionaries were convinced that the ‘foreign’ children on the receiving end of white women’s sentimentality in the Indian Residential School System needed to convert to Christianity, and their affective ties to their families, communities, and culture also required a sort of detaching and reworking. Using Stephanie Olsen, Kristine Alexander, and Karen Vallgård’s theoretical framework of ‘emotional frontiers,’ I explore how industrial, residential, and day schools all served as colonial settings where white female missionaries and Indigenous children navigated the terrain of complex emotional spaces. Women promised to extend ‘sympathy’ to their young charges in their roles as administrators of cultural and religious transformation, with the hope that children would shed their affective bonds to home. Young children were confronted with new emotional expectations that they needed to traverse.²⁸

Missionary supporters in eastern Canada or back home in the British metropole were also actors engaged in these emotional circuits. Missionaries in the ‘foreign’ field reported to their supporters back home on their newfound ‘love’ of their little students with the expectation that their affective narratives from the field would help generate funds for the missionary cause. Not only did female supporters raise substantial amounts of financial support for foreign missions in the Northwest, but the women’s auxiliary groups in eastern Canada, and eventually settler church women from Saskatchewan supported the industrial, residential, and day schools by supplying

²⁷ Jane Hunter, “Women’s Mission in Historical Perspectives: American Identity and Christian Internationalism,” in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Native, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 31.

²⁸ Stephanie Olsen, Kristine Alexander, and Karen Vallgård, “Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,” in *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*, ed. Stephanie Olsen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 22.

massive amounts of material goods and supplies to the schools. Since the Canadian government failed to provide sufficient funding to operate the schools, material and financial donations from the women's auxiliaries largely kept the institutions operational. Missionary narratives regarding the schools provided the intellectual space for females to engage in empire discourse, encouraging more women to become important philanthropic supporters in Saskatchewan's missionary world.

The rhetorical devices of sentimentality—compassion, love, and sympathy—employed in these missionary circuits were cultural and emotional constructs harnessed to hold female missionary women and Canadian Christian women together in a network of circulating discourses to maintain the institutional power of colonialism. I argue that sentimentality was the cultural glue keeping female missionaries and their female philanthropic supporters in a mutually influencing dynamic. Historian Carlo Ginzberg defines culture as “a flexible and invisible cage,” and to me this image captures Saskatchewan missionary women and the wider philanthropic missionary network into one interwoven system held together by the sentimental emotions. Sentimentality was not an official stance, since the primary goal of the missionary operation was Christian conversion, but the ‘soft emotions’ operated as a set of meanings intersecting with each other, sometimes opaque, other times with rare clarity to give power and meaning to the women's actions.²⁹

This dissertation takes claims of emotionality seriously and considers how imperial dynamics, and more specifically settler colonialism in Saskatchewan, were informed by affective patterns. It relies on Sara Ahmed's claim that “emotions do things.” Emotions connect “individuals with collectives—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of

²⁹ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, Trans. John & Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xx-xxi.

their attachments.”³⁰ Examining what moves us, what makes us feel things, and how that emotionality connects to social projects is at the core of this project. Taking William Reddy’s work into consideration, historian Barbara Rosenwein theorizes how ‘structures of feeling’ organized into collective groupings, which she terms ‘emotional communities’ become culturally collective sentiments which constitute social life.³¹ I rely on this framework of ‘emotional communities’ to describe the creation of affective networks of missionaries in Saskatchewan and their female supporters within the larger women’s auxiliary groups in Canada.

Emotion as a community practice borrows from Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen’s work on how British Protestant women’s missionary publications constructed religious “affective communities.” These publications produced and managed discursive outputs about women’s missionary efforts to convert women in India to Christianity for a transnational female audience.³² Communities of people were brought into a shared consciousness about the ‘foreigner’ in India, including the circulation of ideas about what it meant to be a good Christian woman, which was developed alongside racial and gendered divisions in the imperial world.

Race, Gender, and Affect

This analysis centers gender and race as theoretical constructs produced through historically contextualized changing social norms and human interactions. Gender and race are not fixed, immobile categories of analysis, but are flexible and fluctuating social constructions that configure humanity. They are unstable constructs created in the human imagination to categorize individuals and social groups to structure society. For decades, feminist theory has engaged with

³⁰ Sara Ahmed, “Collective Feelings Or, The Impressions Left by Others,” *Theory, Culture, & Society* 21 no. 2 (2004), 26.

³¹ Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), On emotions as ‘structure of feeling,’ see, William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³² Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen, “Imperial Emotions: Affective Communities of Mission in British Protestant Women’s Missionary Publications, 1880-1920,” *Journal of Social History* 41 no. 3 (2008), 691-716.

gender as a social category to create ideas about what is ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine.’ With the turn towards postcolonial and poststructural thought, scholars began to consider how the making of gender crisscrossed with groupings of racial difference and exclusion. This study is profoundly indebted to Catherine Hall’s work on the making of race and gender in the British colony of Jamaica and how those ideas fortified what it meant to be British in the eighteenth century. Hall’s analysis of how British missionaries’ experiences in the colony shaped racialized and gendered prescriptions of Britishness at home speaks to how Protestant missionaries to Saskatchewan influenced and shaped the racist ideas of Protestant church women settlers in Canada. Hall’s work was informed by Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler’s argument that the colony and metropole need to be conceptualized in a single analytical frame. Postcolonial scholarship over the last three decades has brought attention to how race and gender were configured in the colonies and how that inscribed racial and gendered thinking at home in Britain. Historians of colonialism, including Catherine Hall, Susan Thorne, and Alan Lester, have shown how the colony and the metropole are mutually constitutive in the making and unmaking of each other on multiple axes in the process of empire building.³³ Thorne’s work argues that missionary outreach was an important aspect of how European identities were forged in the overseas colonies. She looks specifically at how the feminization of British missionary philanthropy was a medium to inscribe racialized imagery into British society.³⁴ Her work remains one of the few scholarly attempts to examine the creation of racial configuring in empire projects through the voluntary efforts of women’s missionary organizations.

³³ Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*; Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

³⁴ Thorne, *Congregational Missions*, 7.

I accept Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar's challenge that feminist theory and practice must include an understanding of imperialism and critical engagement with challenging racism.³⁵ The colonial project in Saskatchewan depended on the workings of racial and gendered difference into the Canadian social fabric to dispossess racialized people. Representations of Indigenous peoples on the prairies as primitive, backwards, and downtrodden colonial subjects worked to construct the superiority of white womanhood in Saskatchewan. Indigenous bodies crafted as non-normative functioned as the inverse of white womanhood. Positioning Indigenous bodies as physically and spiritually deficient reinforced the racial and gendered 'otherness' of female whiteness. American historian Sarah Haley examines how black female bodies committed to the carceral system in Georgia in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century were coded as abnormal, degenerate and were excluded from the discourse of protection which white female prisoners were afforded.³⁶ This racialized and gendered othering of black women inadvertently created white womanhood as the ideal gendered subject as the contradiction to the subhuman black woman. Using similar logic, the depiction of what it meant to be a white, Christian woman in Canada required the racialized 'heathen' subject as the social, religious, and political inverse of the stability of white women's gendering. The extension of female missionaries' sympathy for Indigenous peoples reduced their representation as mere subjects of charity. This reinforced the notion that white womanhood was the source from which Indigenous peoples could receive spiritual and material necessities to raise their social position.

This was not a benign sympathy but guaranteed racialized violence through the creation and maintenance of the genocidal system of Indian Residential Schools. Since the white

³⁵ Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, "Challenging Imperial Feminism," in *The Feminist History Reader*, ed. Sue Morgan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 284-294.

³⁶ Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 8.

imagination conceptualized Indigenous parenthood as suspect and unable to impart the lessons of modernity to their children, missionary women became tasked with the role of ‘mothering’ Indigenous children in the school system. American historian Margaret Jacob’s research on white women in the American Indian boarding school system depicts how they occupied critical roles in imperial culture by invading the intimate and familial spaces of Indigenous families, separating children from their kinship structures and placing them in boarding schools across the country.³⁷ While missionary print culture celebrated white women’s ‘mothering’ of Indigenous children in the church-run industrial and residential school system in Canada, I argue the dividing line of racialized difference was not merely between Indigenous mothers and missionary women, but extended into the larger network of Canadian Christian women who sponsored the missionary endeavor. In Canadian settler culture, white Christian women’s benevolence towards Indigenous peoples became coded with normative femininity. As women were increasing participants in the paid labour force at the turn of the century, women needed to reinforce that womanhood was grounded in ideals of self-sacrifice to make women’s entrance into the public realm acceptable in a patriarchal society. The pairing of white womanhood with the positionality of sympathy— her ‘bleeding heart’— was an acceptable femininity substantiated in its proximity to the ‘needy’ Indigenous subject.

This study scrutinises the formation of whiteness at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I draw from burgeoning American scholarship on whiteness, where scholars like David Roediger who connects race with American class formation, Matthew Frye Jacobson who examines white panic over rising immigration in the American Progressive era, and Kathleen Blee’s research on the banality of racial hatred through her analysis of white women in

³⁷ Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.)

the American Ku Klux Klan.³⁸ Examining whiteness through a racial lens in American history opens a scholarly window into the interrogation of ‘white people,’ exploring how whiteness and power operated in tandem with each other. In Canada, scholars like Constance Backhouse joined the conversation, challenging the longstanding myth that Canada was a raceless society by tracing racial discrimination through six separate legal cases in the Canadian judicial system.³⁹ Other Canadian scholars, including Adele Perry, Ryan Eyford, and Lisa Chilton inform this dissertation by situating Canada in a larger British imperial context, excavating how modalities of power functioned through race-making in a settler colonial context.⁴⁰

In her study of mid-nineteenth century British Columbia and her analysis of how race and gender ideologies contributed to the formation of the province, Perry also draws attention to the inherent instability behind colonial projects, stating that “the messy practice of actual colonial space profoundly challenged imperial dreams and ideals.”⁴¹ She importantly points out how the rhetoric of colonization, the ‘dreams and ideals’ perpetuated by missionaries, politicians, and colonial administrators were not the lived experiences of the local subjects on the ground. This aligns with my analysis of women’s missionary writing in Saskatchewan. Women’s missionary narratives were fictions—often exaggerated and idealized portrayals of their missionary experiences written for their white audiences to invoke emotion about the Christian necessity to

³⁸ David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso Press, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2000); Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, updated edition, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

³⁹ Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁴⁰ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Ryan Eyford, *White Settler Reserve: New Iceland and the Colonization of the Canadian West* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2017); Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

⁴¹ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 7.

love the ‘poor Indian.’ As producers of these colonial aspirations, missionary women positioned themselves as heroic ‘rescuers’ of Indigenous children.⁴² Their letters to the women’s auxiliary groups aimed to stir up emotion among their female readership, and this conjured affect contributed to structures of ongoing displacement rather than material improvement in the lives of Indigenous people. Missionaries held the power to determine the limits of the representation of the ‘suffering Indian’ for readers. Foreign missions’ committees sent out missionaries into the field to love and care for the vulnerable subjects under imperial rule, who they believed required material and spiritual uplifting, but missionaries could choose what they wanted to communicate to their home audiences about Indigenous realities. Not wanting to undermine the church’s reputation, missionaries were cautious in how they described the physical and emotional pains that came with the seizing of Indigenous land and the violence of child removal at the sites of residential schooling.

Taming the ‘Wilderness’

Canada’s West underwent a massive reconstruction as white settlers began to flood the prairies at the end of the nineteenth century. Historian Sarah Carter defines this as a time when “most of prairie Canada was gobbled up by white settlers, the squares on the map filled with their names.”⁴³ In Saskatchewan, a third of the incoming settlers were ‘foreign born,’ mostly from central and eastern Europe, while the other two thirds of the incoming settlers were made up of Anglo-Saxons from the British Isles, white settlers from eastern Canada, or Americans who

⁴² On white women as “rescuers”, see Allyson D. Stevenson, *Intimate Integration: A History of the Sixties Scoop and the Colonization of Indigenous Kinship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021); in a global context see, Ian R. Tyrrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1800–1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999); Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁴³ Sarah Carter, *Imperial Plots, Women, Land, and the Spadework of British Colonialism on the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 6.

migrated north hoping to secure ‘free’ land. Although many immigrants came from continental Europe, the province was an Anglo-Canadian stronghold where Protestant British values and principles dominated the social landscape.⁴⁴

This dissertation blends the history of emotion with social history to reveal that when white settlers moved into Saskatchewan, the identity of white womanhood materialized in opposition to the image of the ‘heathen Indian.’ Since the women in my study were Anglo-Saxons who belonged to Anglican and Presbyterian congregations in Canada, I have chosen not to focus on the non-Anglo immigrants to Saskatchewan. More specifically, I examine the circulating networks of discourse between three groups of Canadian Christian women: missionary women who were sent to Saskatchewan, female parishioners in the women’s auxiliary groups in eastern Canada, and the Anglo-Canadian female settlers who joined Anglican and Presbyterian women auxiliary groups in their newly formed churches in the province of Saskatchewan after 1905.

Before the arrival of settlers to the Northwest, Anglo-Canadians imagined the prairie landscape as a vast and empty wilderness, sparsely populated with roaming fur traders and First Nations communities. This perception of the prairie west as a ‘wild’ and ‘untamed’ space fostered racial anxieties amongst white settlers who feared the radical ‘otherness’ of the people who lived on the prairies. Part of the civilizing process under imperial rule was about domesticating those elements of ‘foreignness’ to remove the threat of the unknown for incoming settlers. This follows American scholar Amy Kaplan’s theory that imperial expansion was not only about conquering overseas territories, but that the “home contains within itself those wild or

⁴⁴ Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Allston: Fifth Press, 2005), 248.

foreign elements that must be tamed.”⁴⁵ Settlers wanted ‘foreignness’ expelled from prairie spaces so a clear delineation could be drawn between the ‘foreign’ and the ‘domestic’ in the new settler colony. I explore in this dissertation how sentimentality became the vehicle for how white Anglo-Saxon women ‘tamed’ the prairie land. By directing the sentimental passions towards Indigenous peoples, white women shifted the conceptual borders of the prairie space from ‘wild’ to ‘tame,’ conquering the territory through the outpouring of their female affect. It became more difficult to fear the Indigenous presence in Saskatchewan once Anglo-Saxon Christian women had reduced them to objects of pity in their imagination. Racial anxieties lessened as settlers crafted an image of Indigenous peoples as docile and pitiable.

Centering white women’s experiences of settler colonialism, my work is indebted to historian Sarah Carter and her groundbreaking research on how white Anglo-Canadian women were to be British models of femininity and domesticity in the Canadian imperialist project and how this gendering took shape around the imagery of Indigenous women as the dangerous opposite.⁴⁶ I also rely on important research by Canadian feminist scholars who have analyzed relations between white settler women and Indigenous women on the Canadian prairies and how they encountered each other in the ‘contact zones’ of colonial spaces where power dynamics of class, race, and gender were fleshed out. Kristin Burnett’s vital study on missionary women who worked as nurses in Southern Alberta and Patricia Roome’s research on the complexity of Canadian suffragist Henrietta Muir Edwards, in her duality as both a feminist and a colonizer,

⁴⁵ Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” *American Literature* 70 no. 3, No More Separate Spheres! (1998), 582.

⁴⁶ Sarah Carter, “Britishness, ‘Foreignness’, Women and Land in Western Canada,” *Humanities Research* 13, no. 1 (2006): 44. For more on gendered myths and the prairies see, Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada’s Prairie West* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997); Catherine Cavanaugh, “‘No Place for a Women’: Engendering Western Canadian Settlement,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 28 (1997): 493-518; Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, “Hidden Homesteaders: Women, the State, and Patriarchy in the Saskatchewan Wheat Economy, 1870-1930,” *Prairie Forum* 24 (1999): 171-183.

detail how the domestic realm on the Canadian prairies served as a social frontier for white women to impart colonial ideals of progress and civilization.⁴⁷ This dissertation also owes much to Indigenous scholars who have encouraged white women to examine their complicity in colonial projects. Indigenous Australian feminist scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson's claims that all "white women benefit from colonialism" and must challenge their situational positioning to the dominant white center in settler society.⁴⁸ And I am indebted to Indigenous historian Allyson Stevenson who first brought to my attention white women's 'bleeding hearts' in her discussion of white women's involvement in Indigenous child removal in the postwar period in Saskatchewan, in what is known today as the "Sixties Scoop."⁴⁹

For decades, postcolonial scholars have explored white women's contributions to extending imperial rule. Historians Vron Ware, Antoinette Burton, Philippa Levine, and Catherine Hall have looked at how British imperialism influenced women's self-representation at home and her relationship to feminism.⁵⁰ Empirical maneuverings around the globe and the debates that it initiated about nation, gender, race, and citizenship fashioned British ideals of middle-class white womanhood. Categorizing people along racialized hierarchies, proposing 'grammars of difference' onto people and places was at the heart of British global expansion, and

⁴⁷ Kristin Burnett, *Taking Medicine: Women's Healing Work and Colonial Contact in Southern Alberta 1880-1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Patricia A. Roome, "'From One Whose Home is Among the Indians': Henrietta Muir Edwards and Aboriginal Peoples," in *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women's History*, ed. Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roome, and Char Smith (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); 47-78. An important collection on Indigenous-settler female interactions, see, Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles, eds. *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

⁴⁸ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2000), xxv.

⁴⁹ Stevenson, *Intimate Integration*, 29.

⁵⁰ Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London: Verso, 1992); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (The University of Carolina Press, 1994); Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (London: Routledge, 2003); Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

this racial classification of subjects inflicted white women with privileged authority over imperial peoples.⁵¹ Scholar Ann McClintock argued that white women had power over colonial women, as well as colonial men, but were bound by patriarchal hierarchies placing them under white men's rule. In this way white women were both "ambiguously complicit, both as colonizers and colonized, privilege and restricted, acted up and acting."⁵² This dissertation argues that in order to assert their power in a patriarchal Canadian nation state at the end of the nineteenth century, Canadian Anglo-Saxons on the prairies set their sights on women-centered missionary church organizations as a way to assert professional agency into their lives and into the lives of others. White settlers perceived that their support of 'foreign' missions in the Northwest rested on a kind of 'do-good' settler morality. Yet the idea that white woman supported the Indian Residential School System out of the goodness of their hearts was a powerful imperial narrative but one that was completely divorced from the reality of colonial processes. Racialized hierarchies of power materialized through violence and were directed towards Indigenous children within the Indian Residential School System.

Historical Positioning

I propose four methodological frameworks to ground this dissertation. The first framework I engage with is the notion of 'liberal paternalism' to explore the symbiotic relationship between Canadian Protestant women with Indigenous peoples. Reassessing liberal notions came into vogue with Ian McKay's liberal order framework with his argument that the Canadian nation state should be conceived of as a liberal empire rather than as a traditional ethnic nation because

⁵¹ Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, "Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 19.

⁵² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), 6.

the polity of the Canadian government sought to offer “liberty, equality, and property” to the citizens of the Dominion.⁵³ Challenging previous conceptions of how to determine state formation, McKay’s thesis broke new ground for Canadian historians and provided them with ways to reimagine thinking about rights and Canadian territoriality for the twenty-first century. Through successive waves of challenging conservative rule, liberal thinking argued for the inviolability of civil liberties and freedoms, placing the individual ahead of the collective need for social order. Historians confronted McKay’s hegemonic structure for the nation sparking critical discussions in Canada regarding articulations of individual rights and the Canadian state. Historians Adele Perry and Robin Jarvis Brownlie challenged his thesis, arguing that his “Canada-as-project” model excluded women and Indigenous peoples in northern North America from participating in the liberal promises.⁵⁴ Perry points out, “globally and locally the liberal order project was predicated on the privatization of women and the relegation of non-Western peoples to various states of reduced humanity, savagery, unfreedom, or containment.”⁵⁵ Laws steeped in racialized and patriarchal assumptions prevented women and Indigenous persons from the promises of liberal equality and justice in Canada.

Brownlie presents the concept of “liberal paternalism” as an alternative to the liberal order framework for understanding how government officials administered policy towards First Nations people in Canada. Rather than being able to partake in the promises of individual rights and freedoms, First Nations people received a kind of “colonial despotism” from the Canadian

⁵³ Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81 no. 4 (2000): 616-645.

⁵⁴ Adele Perry, “Women, Racialized People, and the Making of the Liberal Order in Northern North America,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, eds. Jean-Francois Constant and Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 274-297; Robin Jarvis Brownlie, “A Persistent Antagonism: First Nations and the Liberal Order,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, eds. Jean-Francois Constant and Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 298-321.

⁵⁵ Perry, *Liberalism and Hegemony*, 275.

government, which positions them as child-like colonial charges who needed the firm hand of the Canadian government laid out in the broad-sweeping Indian Act of 1876. The idea of liberal paternalism suggests the Indian Department engaged in a two-way dance. On one hand, they wished for First Nations communities to become self-supporting; on the other, they were unwilling to step away from a paternalistic model of governing. I borrow from Brownlie's concept of "liberal paternalism" to describe missionary engagement with First Nations peoples. Although my dissertation focuses on the two categories of people exempt from the promises of liberalism, women and Indigenous peoples, I assert that the notion of "liberal paternalism" pertains to how power flowed through the employment of sentimentality directed towards Indigenous peoples. Missionaries rooted their sentiments in liberal rights-claims that Indigenous peoples were inherently deserving, not of political equality, but an ideological equality within the state because they belonged to the family of God. Unlike colonial government officials, missionaries advocated for the universality of all people on the basis that "all peoples are created in the image of God," as stated in the biblical chapter of Genesis. Yet, at the same time, Christian white women were unwilling to afford full humanity to Indigenous peoples because they were fearful of disrupting the racial order. White women perpetuated stereotypes of primitiveness and inevitable extinction relegating them to the margins of settler society.

This religious model of 'liberal paternalism' provided missionary women with control over the representations of Indigenous persons through sentimental discourse. This discourse is concerned with frameworks of knowledge and how those structures are informed by power and domination.⁵⁶ The excavation of female missionary writing is not about locating simplistic representations of Indigenous peoples, such as 'savage' or 'wild,' but its importance lies in how

⁵⁶ Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (University Press of Kansas, 2004), 10-11.

these representations constituted accepted knowledge about white women and how they attained power.⁵⁷ I rely on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory of representations as more than mere symbols and something that gives meaning to reality.⁵⁸ I am concerned with how representations work as political acts that provide knowledge imbued with societal hierarchical differences about subjects. Importantly, I investigate how Indigenous peoples became the subject of white women's representations and how the resulting communication of those meanings existed within relations of power. White women crafted meaning about the 'Indian' racialized subject into bodies of knowledge.

The second methodological frame places humanitarianism and settler colonialism in the same category of analysis. Scholars Alan Lester and Fae Dussart pointed me in the theoretical direction of merging humanitarianism with the project of settler colonialism, arguing that humanitarian dispositions underlined the ideologies behind empire projects.⁵⁹ It is a paradoxical concept to situate the idea of humanitarianism with the genocidal system of residential schools in Canada. I am not suggesting in any way that residential schools were beneficial or good-intentioned; rather, I am proposing that humanitarianism was a discursive logic which gave meaning and shape to settler colonialism and its working on the Canadian prairies. Missionary writing produced knowledge about the Indian subject resulting in material forms of philanthropy at the sites of Indian education, which was conceived of as humanitarian efforts by settlers. Scholar Thomas Lacqueur argues, "humanitarian narratives created 'sympathetic passions'—bridged the gulf between facts, compassion, and action."⁶⁰ Sentimental discourses resulted in

⁵⁷ Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 11.

⁵⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke, UK: MacMillan Education, 1988); 271–313.

⁵⁹ Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance: Protecting Aborigines Across the Nineteenth-Century British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6.

⁶⁰ Thomas Lacqueur, "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 179.

material actions. Missionaries reported on their experiences working in the Indian Residential School System to their missionary organizations, propelling women's auxiliary groups to send material supplies to the mission sites. Missionary organizations took over the management of the material goods in the lives of Indigenous peoples in western Canada. I propose that a humanitarian triangulation developed: women's auxiliary groups as donors, missionaries as practitioners, and Indigenous peoples as recipients, a network which maintained racialized hierarchical structures based on compelled feelings.⁶¹ The Canadian government failed to provide adequate financial support for the industrial, residential, and day schools, and therefore missionary organizations stepped into the role of material provider. This allowed for female Christian supporters to conceptually draw a boundary between church and state, arguing their interventions into Indigenous lives were humane because of their missionary philanthropy to the schools. The settler colonial logic in Saskatchewan prevailed in belief that the Canadian government failed Indigenous children through inadequate provisions, and it was the role of Christian settlers to relieve the children's pain through philanthropic initiatives. The line between state and settler efforts to 'improve' Indigenous lives on the prairies allowed white settlers to perceive the resulting genocidal violence as mistaken benevolence.

Humanitarianism, a 'moral landscape' constructed to ease the pain of others, connects to Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality. As western governments shifted from asserting sovereign power over life and death to the care and management of populations, they provided different forms of state interventions. The state applied various mechanisms to manage the

⁶¹ On the relationship between donor, practitioner, recipient, see Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*, 10.

welfare of its population and Foucault coined these new ‘technologies of care’ as biopolitics.⁶² Stephanie Rutherford remarks that “Biopolitical mechanisms, then, are those through which the self and others could be governed via invitation to live in particular ways that cause specific kinds of life to flourish.”⁶³ Who was allowed to live, and not only live but to flourish, became controlled by the modern state, which consisted of multiple actors working in different functions to preserve the health of the social body. Missionaries as social actors within the colonial state managed the material welfare of the children’s lives, as well as the realm of the affective. Stoler has demonstrated how statecraft was interested in mastery over sentiments and desires; and Ben Anderson has theorized how “affective life is imbued with relations of power.”⁶⁴ Civilizing the sentiments was an important function of missionary work. Missionaries did not consider filial love and cultural affinity the ‘human right’ of Indigenous children but were affective spaces in the child’s mind to be reimagined. Manipulating the material and affective worlds of the children within the schools, was what Lester and Dussart’s label ‘humanitarian governmentality,’ a process of dealing with the precarity of lives through a paradigm of control and management.⁶⁵ This dissertation historicizes this understanding of ‘humanitarianism,’ not to suggest missionaries were moral crusaders, but to grapple with how modes of control functioned through the ‘humane’ offerings of education. Missionaries asserted power over the lives of children through the regulation of their emotional and physical conditions and argued that they were

⁶² Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*, trans. G. Burchell (London: Macmillan, 2008).

⁶³ Stephanie Rutherford, *Villain, Vermin, Icon, Kin: Wolves and the Making of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2022), 8.

⁶⁴ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 71; Ben Anderson, *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions* (London: Routledge, 2014), 8.

⁶⁵ Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*, 16.

providing the children with a more humane future. This framework allows for the untangling of evangelical claims to morality with missionary violence inflicted on colonial subjects.

The third methodological approach brings the textured layers of colonial history into focus. Postcolonial scholars have argued for the necessity of examining the colonial and the metropolitan in the same frame of analysis. Yet, for this dissertation, this binary frame fails to account for the multiple communication circuits and social relations of settler colonies. In 1905, Saskatchewan became a full partner in Confederation, becoming the ninth province of Canada. The Canadian Dominion was not a historical case of British colonialism marked by the paradigm of the colonized/colonizer, but a settler colonial version. I employ Lorenzo Veracini's distinction: "whereas settler colonialism constitutes a circumstance where the colonizing effect is exercised from within the bounds of a settler colonizing political entity, colonialism is driven by an expanding metropole that remains permanently distinct from it."⁶⁶ Or in simpler terms, settlers come to stay while colonizers return home. Canada was a settler national project with its own national history, similar to Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, sovereign states with their own hierarchical structures between the 'center' and the 'periphery.' Yet the infrastructure of settler colonialism in Saskatchewan cannot be separated from the broader imperial world. At the turn of the century, the Canadian nation state was deeply rooted in the British empire and proud of its bonds to the British motherland. This study responds to Rebecca Swartz's call for imperial historians to examine the local, national, and global into a single analysis.⁶⁷ By examining what Alan Lester coined as "imperial networks," I explore how the communicative circuits of

⁶⁶ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

⁶⁷ Rebecca Swatz, *Education and Empire: Children, Race and Humanitarianism in the British Settler Colonies, 1833–1880* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 14.

knowledge and materials travelled across multiples spaces informing each other at the local, national, and imperial levels.⁶⁸

Missionaries belonged to a transnational Christian enterprise. In colonial settings, British missionaries travelled to places in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific to evangelize local populations and their denominations expected them to return home at the end of their careers. In the case of settler colonies, the colonial front received Protestant missionaries from both Britain and the settler nation state. A group of religious activists from the Church of England formed The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) in 1799 and began work in Canada's Northwest in 1822 when Reverend John West arrived as chaplain with the Hudson Bay Company. Anglican evangelical missions in the Northwest were funded by the missionary societies of the C.M.S. and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.) until 1920 when the Missionary Society for the Church of England in Canada fully took over responsibilities.⁶⁹ The Presbyterian Church of Canada joined the mission race in the Northwest in 1866 when the first Anglo-Canadian Presbyterian missionaries established posts in what was to become northern Saskatchewan.⁷⁰ I examine the layers of networks in these missionary societies to explore how female missionaries shaped social hierarchies on the prairies through anatomies of difference in religion and affect.

The last methodological point I propose sheds light on the fragility of settler colonialism. This dissertation reflects on Indigenous agency and resistance to missionary religious ideology in settler colonial Canada. Indigenous men and women turned sentimental expressions of love, compassion, and sympathy into meanings they could exploit to challenge the colonial

⁶⁸ Lester, *Imperial Networks*, 7.

⁶⁹ T.C.B. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies: A History of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land and its Dioceses from 1820-1950* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962), 2; Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*, ix.

⁷⁰ Peter Bush, *Western Challenge: The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Mission on the Prairies and North, 1885-1925* (Watson Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 2000), 86.

prescriptions for their lives. They manipulated the material philanthropy and discursive scripts for their own gain to confront their racialized subjugation, pushing back against spiritual and cultural erosion into their lives and the attempts to redraw their affective ties. This analysis looks particularly at the work of Cree Christian missionary Edward Ahenakew in northern Saskatchewan who relied on his close positioning to the Anglican women's auxiliary to facilitate his early workings in Indigenous political organizing and contributions to anti-colonial feeling in Canada.

This study cautions against the depiction of people in history as one-dimensional figures. Although missionary women relied on the sentimental as an affective register to exercise control over Indigenous women and children at education sites in Saskatchewan, missionaries had their own emotional internal cultures. Fear, sadness, loneliness, and disgust could overwhelm them. Schools, particularly the industrial and residential institutions, were places of severe brutality and cruelty, making them emotional messy and chaotic spaces. The children suffered emotional trauma, creating a sort of affective chaos at the mission site, which influenced the lives of missionaries in Saskatchewan in diverse ways. Claire McLisky and Karen Vallgård argue, "Just as Christian mission changed the emotional culture of converts, it also produced significant changes in missionaries' emotional worlds."⁷¹ The affective reimagining of the children's lives altered how missionaries thought of their own familial ties and created space for them to redraw new ones. In addition, some missionaries and church supporters did raise alarms when confronted with the violent abuses taking place at the schools. Yet, when missionaries attempted to challenge the school establishments, moving beyond sentimentality to an ethic of care that

⁷¹ Claire McLisky and Karen Vallgård, "Faith Through Feeling: An Introduction," in *Emotions and Christian Missions: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Claire McLisky, Daniel Midena, and Karen Vallgård (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.

challenged settler colonial rule, they were chastised and silenced by their fellow missionaries. Missionary culture only held space for the performance of the sentimentality—doubts and fears were forced into the private realm. Missionaries attempted to convince the Canadian public, as well as themselves, that their ‘civilizing’ efforts to remold Indigenous subjectivities came from feelings of the heart. The myth of Christian benevolence at the site of Indian Residential Schools became deeply entrenched in Canadian society with its reverberations still felt strongly to this day.

Sources and Structure

This study relies on a mix of primary source material created by church and government actors to untangle the work of race, gender, and affect in colonial missions across Saskatchewan. I turned to Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa to examine Canadian government records from the Department of Indian Affairs related to the establishment and operation of the industrial, residential, and day schools. The National Center for Truth and Reconciliation located at the University of Manitoba holds a vast collection of publicly accessible residential school records, including the school files of the Department of Indian Affairs. The voices of female missionaries are found in letters, statements, and annual reports written to government officials. In these documents, the women discuss their lives and the Indigenous children within the residential schools. A private collection at Library and Archives Canada holds important sources for this project, including invaluable letters, speeches, and notes from a female missionary in Saskatchewan. In the collection is a missionary memoir/novel, handwritten by Catherine Motherwell, a Presbyterian female missionary writing about her time as principal at File Hills Residential School and the File Hills Farming Colony in Saskatchewan in the first decade of the twentieth century. Parks Canada was in possession of Motherwell’s writings following her death

in 1952 and gave them to the national archives in the 1970s, where they lay unexamined by historians and researchers until now. Motherwell's writings provide critical insight into women's missionary work on the prairies and its entanglement with settler colonialism in Saskatchewan.

Church sources represented the second and largest repository of material used to excavate the voices of missionary women. Locating women in the annals of history is often a winding and circuitous path through the archival terrain. Most of the principals at the schools or head missionaries on the mission sites were men, with missionary women relegated to the positions of teacher, nurse, matron, or domestic helper. Yet carefully scrubbing the archives for women's voices creates opportunity to think about networks of power in new ways. I examine the positionality of white missionary women and their perspective on Indigenous peoples in the Women's Foreign Missionary Society records in the national Presbyterian, United, and Anglican church archives located in Toronto. Female missionaries penned private letters to family and friends and collected photographs from their time spent in the mission field. Other significant records from the society include published letters, missionary periodicals, society publications, annual reports, fictional texts, and administrative documents highlighting Protestant women's evangelical foreign activity in Canada. Other important archival collections to examine missionary women activity on the prairies include the British based organizations, the Church Missionary Society and The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts—missionary bodies responsible for sending out male missionaries from Britain to the Canadian Northwest until 1920. British women accompanied their husbands to mission stations and worked in unpaid positions alongside their spouses, contributing to the mission cause through various mission activities, while caring for their own kin and domestic responsibilities. These

sources were written by male missionaries, and so I read them ‘against the grain’ to deduce the women’s perspectives, self-representations, and emotional ranges.⁷²

My work relies heavily on the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society records from local chapters in Saskatchewan. Prairie historians have completely overlooked these primary sources. Newly arrived settlers to western Canada established Protestant congregations in their villages and towns and within a few short years formed women’s foreign missionary society organizations within their congregations. The records of these groups, which are located at the Saskatchewan Provincial Archives in Regina, divulge how missionary women and local settler women collaborated to sustain the church-run industrial and residential school system in Saskatchewan. I examined meeting minutes, speeches, annual reports, pamphlets, and letters to ascertain women’s auxiliaries’ involvement in Indian Residential Schools, and how they positioned Indigenous subjects in the white female imagination at the turn of the century. Local white settler women frequently visited the schools and advocated for keeping the doors open, in spite of widespread abuses and corruption. I argue that historians’ lack of willingness to use these records reinforces the sidelining of women’s religious history in Canadian history and the failure to take women’s religious organizing seriously, which has contributed to sustaining the narrative of settler benevolence in Indigenous schooling over the course of the twentieth century. Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues there are different ways the making of history crisscrosses with historical “silences.” One of the ways silences are embedded in the past is in the process of how historians consider what narratives are important to tell.⁷³ Women’s foreign missionary society

⁷² Adele Perry, “Historiography That Breaks Your Heart: Van Kirk and the Writing of Feminist History,” in *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women’s History in Canada*, ed. Jarvis Brownlie and Valerie Korinek (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 86.

⁷³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

records have been ‘silenced’ in the moment of fact retrieval, deemed as inconsequential in the telling of Saskatchewan’s history. This project challenges this assumption and maintains that these records are central to grasping white women’s complicity in the colonial project in Saskatchewan.

This dissertation is about the centrality of white women and the ways they narrated their mission work through the construction of an inferior Indigenous subject. To describe the ways Indigenous peoples resisted the material and discursive networks of white women’s ‘benevolence,’ I rely on oral testimony, speeches, and letters. The Provincial Archives in Saskatchewan holds Indigenous women’s oral testimonies conducted by interviewers in the 1970s and 1980s created for an ‘Indian History Film Project’ by the Saskatchewan Archives Board. The Provincial Archives also houses the papers of Cree Anglican Minister, Edward Ahenakew, which include his personal writings, speeches, and sermons from the early twentieth century. Indigenous voices do appear throughout government and church sources. Borrowing from Susan Neylan’s caution to scholars who try to “hear only ‘authentic’ Native voices in historical documents,” I recognize that those in the archives can not speak for themselves and that historians must carefully traverse the boundary between interpretation and narrative.⁷⁴

The chapters that follow progress chronologically but are also organized thematically around the themes of missionary philanthropy, racial violence, adoption, domestic servitude, missionary representations, settler networks, and Indigenous activism. The first chapter examines the creation of Protestant women’s church missionary groups in eastern Canada and their entry into mission work in the Canadian Northwest. Chapter 1 situates women’s auxiliary groups from eastern Canada in the larger global context examining how Protestant Canadian women

⁷⁴ Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 26.

borrowed from their British and American counterparts to form the ideological basis of their organizations. It looks at how the dispatching of missionaries and material goods to mission sites in present-day Saskatchewan created a female-centric network to support education work among Indigenous peoples and contributed to popular representations of Indigenous peoples that reinforced racial hierarchies into the Canadian social body. This chapter reveals how missionaries in Saskatchewan coopted the processes of settler philanthropy for their own benefit and financial gains.

Chapter 2 focuses on the emotional experiences of missionaries labouring at industrial, residential, and day schools across Saskatchewan and how missionaries engaged an affective discursive circuit with their female supporters in eastern Canada. This chapter examines the regulation of emotions on the school frontiers and the ways white female missionaries rationalized the uses of sentimentality to further their own professional agency. It investigates how missionaries deployed sentimentality and how Canadian government officials and fellow missionaries intervened if sympathies towards First Nations peoples contested settler colonial order.

Chapter 3 is a biographical microhistory of Catherine Motherwell, a Presbyterian missionary to the File Hills residential school and File Hills social engineering colony in the first decade of the twentieth century. Motherwell performed evangelical missionary work to Christianize Indigenous families from the File Hills Indian Agency. Yet her missionary labour filtered through her greater concern to erode racialized ‘heathen’ characteristics out of Indigenous children. Victorian sentiment provided a roadmap for Motherwell to mask both the hierarchical racial and gendered power dynamics on the Canadian prairies and the legacies of violence of residential schools from the growing settler population.

Chapter 4 traces the patterns of unofficial child adoptions of Indigenous girls from residential schools into missionary families where they were forced to become domestic servants. Missionaries employed sentimental discourses to extend Indigenous child removal beyond the boundaries of the educational institutions. I examine how the constant meddling into Indigenous families manifested into possibilities for missionaries to reimagine their own affective kinship ties.

Protestant church women's auxiliary work is discussed further in chapter 5. It analyzes Saskatchewan settler women's takeover of support for Indigenous missions in Saskatchewan from women's auxiliary groups in eastern Canada. I explore the intellectual shifting of white women's representation of the Indigenous subject. White women transformed the image of the 'savage Indian,' deserving of empathy into the claim they were now 'our Saskatchewan Indians.' Perceived as better off than they were before because the state brought them under imperial rule, settler women asserted that Indigenous peoples still needed the sympathy of settlers to propel them forward on their civilizing path and legitimized their standing in Canadian society.

I close this dissertation with a look at how Cree Anglican minister Edward Ahenakew challenged racial terror in Saskatchewan through his platform with the Anglican women's auxiliary group in Saskatchewan. It highlights Ahenakew's efforts through his work with the women's auxiliary to garner respect for Indigenous peoples and to have them treated as equal partners in modern Saskatchewan society, demonstrating the divergent uses of sentimentality and how rhetorical scripts can be spun as a form of colonial sabotage.

This dissertation examines white women's emotional and religious lives in the making of settler Saskatchewan, and how their material and discursive outputs created a hierarchical racial and gendered social ladder that still forces Indigenous peoples across the province to climb

today. There are many difficult histories discussed in the following pages related to the history of residential schooling. The disavowal of full humanity for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan led to systems of terror, dehumanization, and violence which many individuals and communities were forced to endure. By foregrounding painful and challenging stories, this study illuminates how religious culture on the prairies contributed to racial violence in the making of modern Saskatchewan. These histories are not presented to reinscribe Indigenous trauma or pain, but to shed light on truths about Saskatchewan's past which have been silenced or collectively forgotten, and to honour the Indigenous children who never came home from residential schools.

Chapter 1:
Taking Pity on these Poor Souls: Female Missionary Philanthropy and Indian Missions in
Saskatchewan

On November 2, 1897, Reverend Ewen Mackenzie, Presbyterian Scottish missionary at Hurricane Hills Reserve, known today as the Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation in southern Saskatchewan, wrote to the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Toronto thanking them for the packages of clothing sent to him and his wife to be distributed amongst the reserve residents. He described opening the bales of clothing and experiencing great delight in these "exhibitions of loving, practical Christianity towards poor, superstitious, benighted Indians."¹ To Mackenzie, the bales symbolized Christ's love for the poor and would hopefully bring the 'needy' Indigenous subject to the Protestant faith. He wrote, "If the Toronto ladies saw these dirty, ragged, expectant Indian women in our hall, either seated or squatted on the floor, they would have positive evidence that their sympathy is not misdirected, and their gifts are not misused."²

This chapter details the formation of Presbyterian and Anglican women's church missionary society groups in eastern Canada and how their financial and material contributions to residential schools and reserves, like what the Mackenzies received, drastically shaped church work among Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Tracing the institutional history of the women's church missionary societies, this chapter details how the philanthropy of the women's auxiliary groups funded a significant portion of the Protestant Indigenous missionary work on the prairies, including the church-run residential

¹ "Acknowledgements of Clothing and Gifts," *Foreign Missionary Tidings: Women's Foreign Missionary Society Presbyterian Church in Canada, Western Division*, December 1897, 246.

² Ibid.

schools in Canada. Missionaries stationed in Saskatchewan on reserves and at industrial, residential schools, and day schools wrote letters to the women's auxiliary groups describing the state of the 'poor Indians' on the prairies and asking for the women's humanitarian intervention to 'improve' the well-being of Indigenous peoples. These missionary appeals functioned as an impetus for Canadian church women to devote themselves to raising funds and collecting material items for foreign missionary work in western Canada. They sent goods to the poor and elderly on reserves and built and supported residential schools for Indigenous children. These women church groups also trained and sent out their own sponsored female missionaries to Saskatchewan's schools and reserves. Missionaries in Saskatchewan and church women in eastern Canada formed discursive networks which created ideological spaces for white women to construct racial and gendered knowledge in Anglo-Canadian society at the turn of the century. I argue that these networks enabled white women in eastern Canada to represent themselves as the elder sisters in the Canadian nation who were motivated by pity for their degraded 'heathen' sisters and children in the west. The distance between the mission stations in the Northwest and congregations in Ontario and Quebec contributed to white women's feelings that they were benevolent philanthropists helping the racialized poor from afar.

Women-centered mission organizations had not always been a feature of the missionary world. This chapter builds on historian Emily Manktelow's argument that British missionary practice shifted over the course of the nineteenth century from a mission strategy of 'integration', where missionaries lived amongst Indigenous communities with the goal of imparting Christianity and Enlightenment values of progress, reform, and moral uplift, into a missionary system of 'institutionalization,' where missionaries emphasized a total physical, cultural, and spiritual transformation of Indigenous lives through their interactions with formal institutions,

like schools, hospitals, or children's homes.³ By the end of the century, the conviction that missionaries needed to impart both Christianity and 'civilization,' a form of social Christianity, to ready them for cultural assimilation into colonial society gave white women new opportunities to become influential participants in the missionary enterprise. This resulted in Protestant Canadian women in eastern Canada organizing into women's auxiliary groups. They were tasked by their church denominations to aid 'heathen' women and children in foreign missionary fields, where the missionary women ushered in religious and social transformations into the lives of colonized subjects. This chapter traces the birth of these women's auxiliary groups in Canada, exploring how white Christian women in eastern Canada became implicated in the creation of residential schools and the extent of their material and financial support of the schools and reserves. It details how missionaries and women auxiliary members formed emotional circuits ensuring the maintenance of hierarchal power relations between white women and Indigenous peoples. Lastly, this chapter examines how the materiality of white women's offerings became corrupted by missionaries in local spaces or were merely settler 'leftovers,' furthering material inequities between settlers and Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan and instigating relational harm between missionaries and Indigenous communities.

The Birth of Protestant Women's Auxiliaries in Eastern Canada

Beginning in the 1870s, women in eastern Canada began organizing into women's church missionary societies that supported those working to convert 'heathen' women and children living in 'primitive' cultures around the world. Building on the initiatives of their British and American sisters who had begun forming church women's missionary committees starting in the

³ Emily J. Manktelow, *Missionary Families: Race, Gender, and Generation on the Spiritual Frontier* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 24; See also Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise Since 1700* (London: Routledge, 2008), 171-196; Felicity Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education in the 19th Century British Empire. Part II Race, Class, and Gender," *History Compass* 10 no. 4 (2012): 306.

1860s, Canadian women joined in the feminization of missions, founding their own evangelical women's groups with the hope of furthering the global missionary movement by converting non-white and non-Christian women and children to Christianity.⁴ In 1876, Presbyterian women in eastern Canada organized their first Women's Foreign Missionary Society (W.F.M.S.) with Marjory MacLaren as president and Catherine Ewart as secretary, with their first monthly meeting held on April 4, 1876, at Knox Church in Toronto.⁵ The women's auxiliary group intended to be an extension of the larger Presbyterian Church of Canada's foreign mission work, but was not to interfere with the larger churches' foreign missionary aims. They aspired to be a missionary organization made up of white women proselytizing 'foreign' women and children on behalf of the Presbyterian church. The W.F.M.S. had a centralized structure with headquarters in Toronto. Thirty-six women sat on the board and met monthly to discuss their aims. To advance interest in their work among Canadian women, they published a *Monthly Letter Leaflet* until 1897 when it became the *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, which had an immense circulation. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the magazine rivaled the popular Canadian weekly *Saturday Night* with more than 27,000 issues published monthly for Canadian women readers.⁶

Anglican women were a little slower to organize. Elizabeth Roberta Tilton, who had travelled to England and the United States, was inspired by women's missionary organization efforts abroad. In 1885, she convinced six other Anglican women to meet with the Board of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society to discuss forming a women's foreign auxiliary group

⁴ The first women's missionary societies were formed in the 1860s in the United States and Britain. See: Marion Aikens Wolfe, "Constructing Modern Missionary Feminism: American Protestant Women's Foreign Missionary Societies and the Rhetorical Positioning of Christian Women, 1901-1938" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2018), 10; Brian Heeney, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England, 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 19-45.

⁵ *Our Jubilee Story 1864-1924: Members of the Women's Missionary Society, Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Women's Missionary Society, Toronto, 1924), 39.

⁶ Ruth Compton Brouwer, 'New Women for God': *Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 5.

for the Church of England in Canada. The board approved the idea, and the Women Auxiliary (W.A.) of the Church of England was permitted to participate in the missionary ventures of the Anglican church, holding their first Provincial meeting in September 1886.⁷ In 1888, the women created the publication of their monthly *Letter Leaflet* to highlight their work and publish missionary letters from the mission field. Kate Halson, organizing secretary of the W.A. in 1900 wrote that their first publication had started off with four pages and was now at thirty-six pages with a monthly circulation of over 8000 copies, pointedly noting how “great results often flow from small beginnings.”⁸ The Anglican women’s groups functioned a little differently than the Presbyterians—each diocese had freedom over where they wanted to invest in missionary work. This caused a lack of cohesiveness until 1911, when the Missionary Society of Canada confirmed the W.A. was fully responsible for women and children in all foreign missionary work.

At the end of the nineteenth century, women’s church missionary societies were massive success stories in terms of collective membership for Canadian women. By 1916, 200,000 Canadian women belonged to a women’s missionary society group.⁹ Historian Wendy Mitchinson argues that these groups operated as acceptable outlets for Canadian women’s public engagement in society, allowing them to maneuver beyond the confines of their homes. Women’s missionary societies did not challenge Canadian gender hierarches in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and their members were adamant that their foreign missionary efforts were to solely persuade non-Western people to embrace the Christian religion. Participation numbers were extremely high for white middle-class women in eastern Canada, possibly because the

⁷ Story of the W.A. by K. E. Halson, 3 May 1900, GS-76-15, Box 29, File 1, Women’s Auxiliary Fonds, General Synod Archives for the Anglican Church of Canada (GSA), Toronto.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Brouwer, *New Women for God*, 5.

groups did not place high demands on their members other than to pay monthly fees, read the literature, and attend meetings when possible.¹⁰ Historians have debated to what extent these groups contributed to a sense of Canadian women's feminist consciousness. Yet there is widespread agreement they did provide Canadian women with new opportunities to engage in the public sphere unthinkable for women decades prior.¹¹



Figure 0-1: Members of the Women's Auxiliary of the Church of England in Canada, November 1905. Letter Leaflet, Women's Auxiliary Fonds, The Anglican Church of Canada General Synod Archives, Toronto.

¹⁰ Wendy Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Towards Independence," *Atlantis* 2 no. 2 (1977): 63-64.

¹¹ Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, eds. *Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 15.

In their organizations, church women recruited, trained, and sent out missionaries around the world. They raised massive amounts of charitable donations, participated in church committees, published newsletters, and hosted conferences with national and international delegates. Scholar Mariana Valverde argues that middle-class women made their feminist formation in this era through careers out of studying the ‘problems’ in society, such as poverty, alcohol abuses, lack of public health, child welfare—issues which they believed required moral reforms. White women began to intervene in once-male dominated affairs to come up with solutions to tackle societal ills to strengthen the nation.¹² In the case of Protestant church women’s groups, their targeted concern was bringing Christianity and ‘civilization’ to ‘foreign’ women and children, providing Canadian church women with a sense of vocational purpose.

Even though religious women were beginning to enter public life in the nation, women’s missionary societies were not concerned with challenging patriarchal structures at home or abroad. They sought to impart notions of Victorian femininity and evangelical Christianity, which connected the idea of a good woman with home and hearth into the lives of ‘foreigners’ through their missionary work.¹³ Women’s religious activism functioned on the conventional premise that white women were ‘gifting’ the joys of Victorian domesticity to non-white races in their mission work. Susan Thorne argues, “Missionary outreach to women abroad was expressly designed to extend to so-called heathen women precisely these advantages that Victorian women reputedly enjoyed of their domestic pedestals.”¹⁴ In empire discourse, Anglo-Saxon homes were

¹² Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 30.

¹³ Jane Haggis, “White Women and Colonialism: Towards a Non-Recuperative History,” in *Gender and Imperialism*, ed. Claire Midgley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 57.

¹⁴ Susan Thorne, “Missionary-Imperial Feminism,” in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, ed. Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 45.

bastions of happiness and contentment because of their Christian ways and church women desired to impart these ideals into the lives of others. They were convinced that only white women could help non-white races ‘progress’ on the path to civilization since they were the ultimate ‘mothers’ of the race.’ All women mothered their own races, but white women were the only true harbingers of goodness, piety, and virtue, characteristics of a good and desirable mother.¹⁵ Only they could steer ‘heathen’ women and children away from paganism and move them towards civilization. Maya Rutherford argues, “Domesticity and maternalism were not always limiting ideologies for women; rather, they could be used as deliberate strategic identities to extend women’s influence.”¹⁶ White women subverted their own subjugation in patriarchal Victorian society by exerting the need to impart proper notions of femininity into the lives of foreign ‘others.’¹⁷ Domesticity and motherhood became ideologies to extend women’s influence, imbuing them a sense of power in missionary spaces throughout the imperial world.

Canadian white women shaped their idea of the ‘other’ through their missionary publications. They rendered women and children in ‘foreign’ lands through racialized frameworks of degradation and suffering. Colonized women and children needed white women to ‘rescue’ them from impoverished conditions where they suffered under the controlling dominance of black and brown men. In women’s missionary publications, Canadian women consumed articles on the ‘backwardness’ of the subjects in the far reaches of the empire. An article in the *Letter Leaflet* states, “In the cramped, fettered and enslaved situation of the women of the Orient, women have been called the ‘corner-stone of heathenism,’ and India alone

¹⁵ Michele Louise Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 120.

¹⁶ Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 15.

¹⁷ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (The University of Carolina Press, 1994), 12-13.

furnishes millions of women and girls sunk in utter ignorance and degradation.”¹⁸ Africa was the “land of ladies last,” where women’s lives were “one of intense and prolonged misery,” and China was a land of barbarism where they bound women’s feet, subjecting them to ‘heathen’ forms of patriarchy.¹⁹ In an even more explicit manner, women’s missionary publications provided clear charts for their Canadian women readers, juxtaposing ‘heathen’ women and white women. Heathen women were described as: illiterate, one of many wives, men’s slaves or drudges, not wanted, many false gods, sin approved. Women in Christian lands were: wanted, educated, had a one-true God, the wife of one-husband, his companion, children protected, women’s rights, sin condemned.²⁰ Anglo-Canadian women consuming their monthly subscriptions of their letter leaflets read how ‘foreign’ women and children were exposed to cruel and degrading practices such as child marriage, forced prostitution, widow burning, and infanticide, justifying why white women’s emancipating interventions were necessary.

In women’s missionary publications, white women placed non-white bodies on display for their discursive consumption. They racially depicted their bodies with clear markings of deviance and repugnance in comparison to the white female body, which was well-dressed, virtuous, and attractive. In the widely read missionary book for women published in the early nineteenth century by Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands*, Montgomery emphasizes the degradation of non-white, non-western women. For example, she depicts Korean women as “these ignorant superstitious little Korean women with their everlasting paddling of their lord’s white linen garments, their unceasing drudgery, their

¹⁸ “Letter from the Niagara Diocese,” *Letter Leaflet of the Woman's Auxiliary to the Board of Domestic and Foreign Missions of the Church of England in Canada*, December 1893, 61-62.

¹⁹ “The Land of ‘Ladies Last’: Bearer of Burdens for her Master, the African Women is a Chattel, Not a Personality,” *The Living Message of the Woman's Auxiliary to the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada*, October 1924, 285, GSA.

²⁰ “Women in Christian and Non-Christian Lands,” *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, March 1912, 1, United Church of Canada Archives (UCCA), Toronto.

seclusion in their dark unsanitary women's apartments." On the other hand, she describes a white evangelical missionary woman in China this way, "Her head is crowned with a coronet of soft dark hair. Her brow is beautifully calm, and her eager eyes look straight out at you from level brows. The picture is full of strength and sweetness – a thoughtful, earnest, purposeful face. The picture is beautiful. She seems about to smile but a mysterious questioning, unafraid, yet sober is in the firm lips. My eyes fill with sudden tears, and I look into Eleanor Chestnut's brave eyes, and I think of the precious gifts of life she poured out for Christ in far-away China."²¹

Women's church missionary societies advocated for the emancipation of the world's women and children through the manifestation of Christian sympathy. In their literature they reduced 'foreign' women and children to objects of Christian pity. They looked to British evangelical 'heroes' of the Christian faith, such as William Wilberforce and his anti-slavery movement of the 1830s, highlighting his "power of sympathy" and how he "threw himself heart and soul into every project which had good for its object."²² The church women's publications repeatedly stressed the work of British missionary celebrity David Livingstone and his evangelical endeavors in Africa in the mid-nineteenth century, celebrating the British intent to Christianize the 'dark continent'. Women's publications urged Canadian women to embrace the courage of their forefathers in the faith, reminding Canadian women it was their duty to "penetrate into the hearts of the benighted lands" to reach the world for the Christian church.²³ They were told the ideal member of the women's auxiliary was a woman that gave her time and talents to the service of the church. She was to be charitable, broadminded, and most importantly

²¹ Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1910), 51, 196.

²² "The Power of Sympathy," *The Presbyterian Record of the Presbyterian Church of Canada*, January 1899, 26. <https://archive.org/details/presbyterianchurchcanadaarchives>.

²³ "Letter from the Niagara Diocese," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, December 1893, 61.

sympathetic. “She will have sympathy and tact in dealing with those people as their advisor and sympathetic friend. She will rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Our ideal woman will be patient, thoughtful, and loving for others,” the *Letter Leaflet* stated. Her enthusiasm for missions should radiate from her heart, placing her affect at the core of her missionary philanthropy.²⁴ Women’s missionary societies showered themselves with praise for how they were filled with ‘love’ for black and brown women and children around the world, claiming that this affective desire was the motivation for their missionary efforts. It was in these publications where white women created and maintained racialized depictions of what constituted ‘foreignness.’ White Canadian women drew imaginary lines to mark difference between themselves and the unsaved “foreigner” in China, Africa, or India. These racialized religious distinctions extended to how women in eastern Canada conceptualized the ‘Indian’ in Saskatchewan.

Indigenous Missions in the Northwest

Convinced Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan were ‘heathen foreigners’ comparable to racial ‘inferiors’ abroad, Canadian church women eagerly embraced mission work within the province on the rationale it was their Christian duty to evangelize non-Christian and non-white women and children. Although the Indigenous subjects lived within the borders of the Canadian nation state, missionaries categorized them as poor, backwards, and savage, placing them in the cohesive racial-religious category of ‘heathen.’ Rev. A.B. Baird, joint convenor of the foreign mission committee of the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories for the Presbyterian Church wrote in 1895, “Our young and growing nation cannot harbor within its borders solid masses of heathenism, such as Indian reserves are, without suffering the contamination which

²⁴ “An Ideal Member of the Women’s Auxiliary,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, October 1920, GSA.

must come from the peculiar moral and social ideas entertained in these communities. Possibly we effect to despise their barbarism and their dirt, but we are influenced by it none the less.”²⁵ This fear of the geographical closeness to the ‘heathen’ alarmed church goers in eastern Canada. The proximity of the suffering religious subjects was markedly close to home, complicating the plan of populating Canada’s west with Anglo-Saxon settlers. According to Baird, the west required a renovation to eradicate the barbarism and dirt of those languishing in ‘darkness.’

By the 1870s, Indigenous people on the plains were suffering from the devastating effects of poverty. They were witnesses to the harmful effects on their communities from American and Euro-Canadian overhunting of the buffalo, incoming white immigration, the spread of diseases from impoverishment, and the hazard whiskey trade on the plains.²⁶ Having entered into treaty agreements with the Canadian government on the promise of financial annuities, large reserves, schools, and farming implements, they agreed to share the land on the guarantee that their rights would be protected. Yet the government viewed the treaties as land surrenders and wanted reserves quickly surveyed so they could begin the work of opening the land to white settlers.²⁷ Food security had deteriorated severely with the loss of the bison economy, and starvation was widespread amongst bands on the plains. Dependent on government rations for their survival, the Canadian government further exploited the hunger crisis to its own advantage. In 1880, Cree leaders Big Bear, Piapot, and Little Pine gathered near the Cypress Hills to have their reserve locations surveyed. This was a strategic location for hunting and an important historical site for Cree-Nakota diplomacy. Government officials, fearing that the large population of Cree reserves

²⁵ “Indian Missions in the Northwest,” *The Presbyterian Record*, October 1895, 262.

²⁶ Kristin Burnett, *Taking Medicine: Women's Healing Work and Colonial Contact in Southern Alberta, 1880-1930* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2010), 25.

²⁷ Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 32.

in the area would interfere with their plans to build the Canadian Pacific Railway, made the decision to expel the Cree population from the Cypress Hills through a state organized plan of forced starvation. Indigenous historian Robert Innes argues that the removal of approximately five thousand people from the Cypress Hills was an act of genocide perpetrated by the Canadian government towards Indigenous peoples.²⁸ The government forced Piapot to march on foot with 470 people to the Qu'Appelle region.²⁹

Thousands died as government officials marched those gathered in the Cypress Hills to their government allotted reserve land. After having forced people onto reserves, the government failed to uphold its treaty commitments and financial promises, triggering devastating conditions of widespread hunger, destitution, and disease outbreaks.³⁰ Rampant starvation aggravated the spread of sicknesses on reserves, such as tuberculous, influenza, and pneumonia, measles, and whooping cough, which disproportionally affected the young and elderly. For example, in a ten year period from 1884 to 1894 in Treaty 4 in Saskatchewan, Crooked Lake's reserve lost 41.3 per cent of its people, and File Hills lost 46 per cent.³¹ In the Battlefords reserves (Mosquito, Grizzly Bear's Head, Lean Man, Sweetgrass, Poundmaker, Little Pine, Moosomin, and Red Pheasant) in Treaty 6, the death rate in 1890 was 67.5 deaths per thousand.³² In comparison, the peak death rates for the cities of Montreal and Toronto in 1880 was 20 deaths per thousand.³³

Church officials on reserves were acutely aware of the desperate poverty afflicting First Nations communities. Missionary Neil Gilmour at Hurricane Hills mission wrote to the women

²⁸ Robert Alexander Innes, "Historians and Indigenous Genocide in Saskatchewan," *Shekon Neechie: An Indigenous History Site*, June 21, 2018. <https://shekonnechie.ca/2018/06/21/historians-and-indigenous-genocide-in-saskatchewan/>

²⁹ Lux, *Medicine That Walks*, 38.

³⁰ Lux, *Medicine That Walks*, 20; See also Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 183-185.

³¹ Lux, *Medicine That Walks*, 45.

³² Lux, *Medicine That Walks*, 50.

³³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1*, 384.

of the W.F.M.S. in the fall of 1897, explaining to them about the large number of Indigenous fatalities over the last winter at his mission, “The death was so high. Our little band of less than 200 was decimated, it was unspeakable sad. A quarter of the reserve was dying.”³⁴ In 1901, Sophia Smythe, the missionary day-school teacher on Day Star’s reserve in Treaty 4 wrote to government officials at the DIA explaining how the people on the reserve had nothing to eat and were boiling the bones of dead animals that had died from tuberculosis to survive.³⁵ White women on mission sites both witnessed and drew attention to the rapid decline of Indigenous health on the prairies.

From the 1880s until the Second World War, Canadians looked to race to explain health disparities between Indigenous peoples and the rest of the population. Over the course of the nineteenth century, racial science emerged amongst leading thinkers in the western world where scientists, anthropologists, and doctors explained how physical differences were features of one’s ‘race’ and could be ranked from inferior to superior in the name of science. Racial constructs developed alongside a broader imperial agenda connecting the civilizing mission of the British world with the conquering of ‘inferior races.’ Historian Douglas Lorimer argues that early missionary discourse, with its emphasis on black and white, sinner and Christian, savage and civilized, primed how theorists thought about race. By mid-century, secularists adopted this framing and turned these dichotomous constructions into racial science.³⁶ Canadian officials and academics advanced the view that Indigenous persons were ‘biological inferior’ to Europeans, making them susceptible to disease and poor health. In 1893, in a report to the DIA on Indian

³⁴ “Northwest Indians: Striking Incidents,” *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, September 1897, 150.

³⁵ Letter by Sophie Smythe to J.D. Mclean, April 6, 1901, RG 10, Vol. 6283, File 605-1, Part 1, School File Series, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa.

³⁶ Douglas Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain, 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 61.

health read by missionaries on the Canadian prairies, Dr. George Orton explained how consumption and scrofula, the markers of tuberculous were hereditary to the ‘Indian race.’³⁷ This allowed the missionary societies to perpetuate the stereotypical belief that they were working amongst ‘foreigners’ in the Northwest who needed the influence of the superior Anglo-Saxon race. By the turn of the century, Anglo-Saxons in Canada were robustly racist. Of course, racialized beliefs about Indigenous peoples in Canada’s west were for all intents and purposes fabrications to justify colonial domination. Colin Kidd argues, “All theories of race—from the simplest and most obvious to the most sophisticated and contorted—are examples of cultural construction superimposed upon arbitrarily selected features of human variation.”³⁸

Concerned with ‘barbarism’ within their nation state, church women missionary groups began to send out material aid in various forms to raise the standard of living on reserves in Saskatchewan. Female leaders in the Canadian women’s church missionary societies became aware of the lack of food, material goods, and the spread of devastating diseases on reserves from letters they had received from missionaries stationed on the prairies. In 1884, Reverend Hugh McKay at Round Lake Presbyterian mission on the Crooked Lake reserves (Ochapowace, Kahkawistahaw, Cowessess, Sakimay, and Yellow Calf bands) in Treaty 4 wrote to the W.F.M.S. begging for clothing that he could give to Indigenous families on his reserves. McKay’s appeals prompted the women’s societies to begin mailing out bales of clothing and supplies to reserves across the Northwest.³⁹ Different branches of women’s auxiliary groups in eastern Canada were

³⁷ Extracts from a Report of Dr. George T. Orton to the Supt. General of Indian Affairs, Ex-109, 3025, Box E, File 199, Rev. Andrew B. Baird Fonds, The United Church of Canada Archives (UCAM) Winnipeg. See also Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), this book explores how Euro-Canadians racialized the health situation of Indigenous peoples in the first half of the twentieth century.

³⁸ Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8-9.

³⁹ John Webster Grant, “Presbyterian Women and the Indians,” *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers* 4 (1978): 26.

allocated specific reserves and became responsible for sending out material supplies to the missionaries for distribution amongst residents. Kate Halson, Provincial Dorcas Secretary for the Anglican Women's Auxiliary, wrote, "the opening of our vast northwest has brought its needs very near to us. The Indians no longer possess the land as in former years, and deprived of their natural means of livelihood, hunting and fishing to a great degree...so despite all that our government has done, and is doing, they are often in dire need of the simplest necessities of life."⁴⁰ In the Touchwood Hills in Treaty 4, Church of England missionary Reverend Dawson's wife wrote to the W.A. in 1893 thanking them for sending material goods to Poor Man's reserve, known today as Kawacatoose First Nation, stating, "We will clothe these children from your stores."⁴¹

The church women's missionary societies moved quickly in the 1880s and 1890s, from distributing material goods, to sending their own female missionaries, sponsored by the women's church societies. British and American women in this period were eagerly signing up to be career missionaries, seeing it as an alternative to a domestic life, which kept women bound within the confines of the Victorian home. Canadian women were no different in their desire to flex their spiritual and social muscles on the mission 'field.'⁴² Protestant denominations established missionary training homes for women in Toronto: the Ewart Missionary Training Home for Presbyterian women in 1897 and the Church of England Deaconess and Missionary Training Home for Anglican women in 1892. Based on the deaconess model which had been established in Germany in the 1830s, these schools instructed prospective female missionaries in religion,

⁴⁰ Story of the W.A. by K. E. Halson," 3 May 1900, GS-76-15, Box 29, File 1, Women's Auxiliary Fonds, GSA, Toronto.

⁴¹ "Letter by Rev. Dawson," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, February 1893, 103.

⁴² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1*, 688.

cooking, cleaning, nursing, accounting, and education to prepare them for careers in mission work. Most of the qualified women trained in these schools were stationed in mission sites overseas', because church leaders conceived of the Northwest as a less desirable destination than locations such as India, Korea, or Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Nevertheless, some of the women from these institutions were sent to mission stations in the Northwest. Women in the Canadian field were generally less educated and more likely to come from lower middle-class backgrounds than their overseas' Christian sisters.⁴³ Different denominations had varying regulations for entrance into these missionary training programs. For example, the Church of England required single female missionaries to be between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five, while the Presbyterians took a more flexible approach and accepted women into their forties.⁴⁴ However, many of the women who went to the Northwest never received any missionary training. They were accepted because of their previous training in nursing or teaching or having received a recommendation from a pastor. This was enough to land them a paid position with a missionary organization in Canada.

The women's church society groups paid missionary women from England or eastern Canada either their full or a portion of their salaries. The Anglican W.A. sent out their first female missionary to the Northwest in 1889 to the Blackfoot reserve in southern Alberta. Six years later, they sent the first W.A. missionary to Saskatchewan. Annie Brown came from England and arrived at Onion Lake to work at the Church of England mission in Treaty 6. Lucy Baker, a Presbyterian missionary from Ontario was sent to the vicinity of Prince Albert,

⁴³ John Webster Grant, "Two-Thirds of the Revenue: Presbyterian Women and Native Indian Missions," in *Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada*, eds. Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 107.

⁴⁴ Regulations Concerning the Missionaries of the Women's Auxiliary Canadian Field, GS-76-15, Box 22, Rules and Regulations for Missionaries, 1910-1911, Women's Auxiliary Fonds, GSA, Toronto; Brouwer, 54.

Saskatchewan, in 1879. She was celebrated by the W.F.M.S. as the first female Presbyterian missionary in the Northwest, where she laboured among the Dakota people near Prince Albert for thirty-one years, although her salary was initially paid by the general Foreign Mission Committee.⁴⁵ A biography written in 1920 described Baker as a “light bearer” to the “poor benighted pagans, amongst whom she sojourned so long, and whose sad position called forth her deepest sympathy and most practical help.”⁴⁶ From the outset, Canadian evangelical culture represented white missionaries as virtuous women bringing ‘light’ to ‘dark savagery’—equating Indigenous peoples with ignorance, desperately in need of Christianity and Britain’s civilizing empire.

In actuality, the first W.F.M.S. missionary to the Northwest was not Lucy Baker, but Isabella Rose from Woodstock, Ontario, who was stationed on the Piapot reserve, north of Regina, but she created a church scandal when she married the reserve farm instructor, a man named McKinnon who had not divorced his Indigenous wife.⁴⁷ The W.F.M.S. quietly silenced the memory of Rose’s embarrassing career, choosing instead to emphasize Baker as the appointed first female missionary to the Canadian Northwest.

At the same time that these foreign missionary societies were forming, the Canadian government was beginning to invest in a new programme of schooling for Indigenous children. In January 1879, the Canadian government initiated a one-person commission led by lawyer-journalist Nicholas Flood Davin to inquire into whether Canada should create a boarding style educational system for Indigenous children, appointing him to visit the American Indian

⁴⁵ John Webster Grant, *Presbyterian Women and the Indians*, 24.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth A. Byers, *Lucy Margaret Baker: A Biographical Sketch of the First Missionary of the Canadian Presbyterian Church to the North-West Indians* (Women’s Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, 1920), 5.

⁴⁷ Grant, *Two-Thirds of the Revenue*, 103.

boarding schools to the south. His official report issued two months later recommended that the Canadian government should expand its system of boarding schools for First Nations children with the intent that the government should separate children from their parents for the purposes of colonizing.⁴⁸ He wrote that the state should “catch him very young” and the young students should be “kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions.”⁴⁹ Davin advocated for the opening of four industrial schools where children would be instructed in the practical trades to become potential cheap sources of labour for Canadian society. Choosing to implement Davin’s report, the government launched its construction of industrial schools in the 1880s, paid for by the federal government and administered by the churches.⁵⁰ The Christian churches, both Catholic and Protestant, were already operating smaller residential schools for Indigenous children on their own initiatives in the Northwest, recruiting students and staff and constructing school buildings. The government provided these smaller residential schools with grants of no more than \$300 a year. The schools heavily relied on church investments for their operation, mixed classroom learning and practical training, and were located on or nearby reserves.

In the late nineteenth century, Protestant denominations opened two industrial schools and six residential schools in present-day Saskatchewan. The Presbyterians opened Regina Industrial School in 1891, located in the provincial capital, and ran three smaller residential schools in the southern portion of the province: File Hills (near Balcarres), Round Lake (near Whitewood), and Crowstand (near Kamsack). The Church of England opened Battleford Industrial School in 1883 on the outskirts of the town and had two residential schools in the

⁴⁸ John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 7-9.

⁴⁹ Davin Report on Industrial Schools, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part I*, 157.

⁵⁰ Jacqueline Gresko, White ‘Rites and Indian ‘Rites’: Indian Education and Native Responses in the West, 1870-1910,” in *Western Canada Past and Present*, ed. A.W. Rasporich (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975), 169.

Diocese of Saskatchewan, Onion Lake (near Fort Pitt) and La Ronge (near Lac La Ronge), and one residential school, Gordon's (near Punnichy) in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle. By 1900, there were twenty-two industrial schools in Canada and thirty-nine boarding schools. However, by 1920, the Canadian government did away with the industrial schools and all boarding schools for Indigenous children became part of the residential school system.⁵¹

The churches also administered day-schools on First Nations reserves. The day-school permitted children to live at home with their parents while attending school for a few hours each day. The Anglicans had twenty-three day-schools, whereas the Presbyterians had approximately seven day-schools in Saskatchewan. However, the day-schools were beset with numerous operational challenges. Many of them were in the northern reaches of the province and the churches struggled to attain teachers for remote communities, as well as to maintain regular school attendance since children frequently travelled with their parents to hunt and fish. Some of these day-schools were only open for a few years before the church closed their doors.

Since Protestant women's societies had a special mandate from their foreign missions' committees to convert women and children to Christianity, supporting schooling for First Nations children deemed a logical connection. Convinced residential schooling fell under their missionary scope, Canadian church women readily embraced the challenge of sponsoring the church-run schools. They initially funded small schools that began in a missionary's home or in a church on a reserve. In the 1880s, these schools transitioned to a more formal approach. The women's church societies purchased land to build schools, constructed the buildings, paid the salaries of female missionary teachers and nurses, and freighted thousands of tons of bales filled with clothing, foodstuffs, bedding, quilts, reading materials, furniture, papers, cards, toys, and

⁵¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1*, 161.

children's books across the country. British Anglican activist Louise Creighton, who spoke to Canadian church women on several occasions, gave a talk at an Anglican conference in England in 1894 stating that church women in the empire "do not wish to be sofa cushions, or even props to men, but we wish to work by their side."⁵² The Indian Residential School System in Canada offered Protestant church women this opportunity. J.R. Matheson, missionary and principal at St. Barnabas Residential School at Onion Lake in Treaty 6, commented on the incredible efficiency of evangelical Anglican women's organizing efforts for the schools, stating, "women accomplish while men squabble."⁵³ Hugh McKay, head missionary at Round Lake in Treaty 4 declared the women of the Presbyterian W.F.M.S. were an "army of women for God."⁵⁴ Too often, historians have characterized the 'churches' in Canada as responsible for the residential school system. Yet it was not merely the 'churches' who implemented the genocidal system of schooling for Indigenous children. Ordinary white Christian women subsidised an enormous portion of residential school costs.

By 1892 there were growing frustrations coming from Ottawa. Federal bureaucrats worried that the industrial schools were far too costly, triggering the government to implement a new system of financing for the schools. The government introduced the per capita grant system, which came into effect the following year, providing each school with a government grant based on the number of students enrolled.⁵⁵ Any costs of operating the schools beyond the government grants were to be supplemented by church missionary societies. Yet the per capita grant system

⁵² Louise Creighton, "What Women Can do to Raise the Standard of Moral Life," quoted in Charles Dunkley, *The Official Report of the Church Congress, Held at Exeter, on October 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th 1894* (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1894), 245.

⁵³ "Letter from J.R. Matheson to Miss Barton," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, February 1898, 139.

⁵⁴ "Letter from Hugh McKay," *Monthly Letter Leaflet, Women's Foreign Missionary Society, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Western Division*, February 1891, 15.

⁵⁵ J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 125-127.

failed to provide sufficient funding to the institutions that were already operating under severe financial strain. Principals attempted to increase the number of pupils at their schools through various unscrupulous means, like bribing parents or stealing children from the day schools, to raise their enrollment figures in order to increase their per capita grants. The government's ploy to reduce its financial commitments by introducing the per-capita system caused Indigenous children to suffer in horrible, poverty-stricken institutions.

The women's missionary societies shouldered a significant portion of the church's efforts to top up the per capita grant from the government. Canadian women provided massive amounts of funding to their auxiliary groups which were in turn channelled into 'Indian missions' in the Northwest. Historian John Webster Grant details how the operating budget of the W.F.M.S. of the Presbyterian Church of Canada increased in the first ten years from \$1,000 to \$13,000.⁵⁶ By 1910, they were contributing \$29,000 a year towards Indigenous mission work.⁵⁷ As increasing numbers of Canadian women joined missionary societies to participate in public life at the end of the nineteenth century, their membership fees and fundraising efforts filled the accounts of the W.F.M.S. and W.A. In 1902, *The Evening Journal* published an article stating how the women's auxiliary groups in eastern Canada regard the 'Indian' as a 'foreigner' and since 1885 have spent \$200,000 on their 'foreign' missionary 'field' in the Northwest, not including the material goods they sent out in packages to the schools. The entire amount the Presbyterian Church invested in missions to Indigenous peoples totalled \$314,000 and the women contributed over half of the overall expenses.⁵⁸ In 1894, the Church of England's Bishop of Saskatchewan claimed the W.A. paid about a third of the money to run the schools, but noted how much more money was

⁵⁶ Grant, *Presbyterian Women and the Indians*, 29.

⁵⁷ "Topic for August: Indian Missions in the Northwest," *The Presbyterian Record*, August 1911, 357.

⁵⁸ "Indian Work" in *The Evening Journal*, 27 March 1902, RG 10, Vol. 3965, File 150000-1, Correspondence Regarding the Education of Indian Children, LAC, Ottawa.

required.⁵⁹ By the early 1920s, women in the Church of England were financing 43 percent of the church's domestic and foreign work.⁶⁰ The Indian Residential School System in Canada relied on the pockets of middle-class white women in order to achieve their goal of assimilating Indigenous children into the Canadian nation state.

However, not all Canadians agreed that women were directing their missionary finances in the right direction. On November 26, 1896, an editorial in *The Regina Standard* called the money spent on residential schools in the Northwest "philanthropy run mad" and argued that the government was paying too much money for the construction of the residential schools. "It is impossible not to regard with a critical eye an expenditure on Indian education which is apparently quite lavish," it stated.⁶¹ One month later, the *Ottawa Evening Journal* reported that a growing number of Canadians were beginning to express concern for the large amount of money spent on the schools and questioned whether they were capable of producing the desired results.⁶²

Regardless of the public criticism, evangelical women remained undeterred. They positioned themselves as domestic 'providers' to Indigenous women and children and embraced 'civilising' work which gave a sense of importance and meaning to their middle-class lives. Their respectability in Canadian society required a distance from the unrespectable, and the Canadian 'foreign field' provided church women with a tangible racialized 'other' within the nation state to use as their ideological foil.⁶³ Their networks of connection with missionaries in Saskatchewan allowed for Canadian women to enter an imaginative relationship with the 'Indian' subject. They

⁵⁹ "Urgent and Special Appeal," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, August 1894, 358.

⁶⁰ Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*, 21.

⁶¹ "A Sumptuous Indian Palace" in *The Regina Standard* 26 November 1896, RG 10, Vol. 3965, File 150000-1, Correspondence Regarding the Education of Indian Children, LAC, Ottawa.

⁶² *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 9 December 1896, Ibid.

⁶³ Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 121.

did not need to see the ‘Indian’ to ‘know’ them. The missionaries relayed details of the ‘Indian’ subject to the women in Ontario and Quebec and the women formed their knowledge about what constituted ‘Indianness’ through their engagement with missionary discourse. Gendered as societal care-providers, Canadian church women constructed representations of themselves in the settler-colonial dynamic as white women filled with pity for the poor benighted Indigenous women and children in the Northwest. Anne McClintock, postcolonial literary scholar, argues that the “dynamics of colonial power are fundamentally, though not solely, the dynamics of gender.”⁶⁴ The women’s church missionary societies’ evangelical publications provided the discursive spaces to untangle these racialized and gendered representations. Catherine Hall argues that racial hierarchies were also at the heart of the missionary enterprise.⁶⁵ Through relying on intersecting racial and gendered stereotypes, white Christian women mobilized the affective strains of pity directed towards Indigenous peoples in the Northwest to ensure their superior positioning in Canadian society. They self-represented as white women bursting with emotions to come to the relief of the poor and suffering. Their offerings of pity, those benevolent gestures to extend common humanity to Indigenous people, quieted the inherent power dynamic in the humanitarian relationship of the white ‘giver’ and brown ‘receiver.’

Circulatory Missionary Networks

A circulatory discursive relationship developed between missionaries in Saskatchewan and women in Eastern Canada. Missionaries at industrial, residential, or day-schools, as well as missionaries pastoring churches on reserves, wrote letters to Canadian women in the east asking for material supplies and money. Both the W.F.M.S. and the W.A. had organizing secretaries for

⁶⁴ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), 364.

⁶⁵ Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1876* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 2002), 97.

the Northwest who received the letters and delegated the needs to local congregations in Ontario and Quebec, providing lists for the church women of how many students were in the schools and the measurements of the children. In addition to paying their member fees, the women held fundraisers, collected donations, and sold handicrafts and baked goods to raise money and awareness for the ‘poor Indians’ in the west.

Through their missionary periodicals, racialized representations of the ‘Indian’ were invented for white women’s consumption. To an audience of church women in 1890, Reverend Ewan Mackenzie, missionary at Hurricane Hills, described the Assiniboine band he was tasked with proselytizing to as “shameless, hardened beggars.” He stated, “They consider begging a virtue, and the more they get, the more they ask. They are filthy in their persons, their dress, and their domestic affairs...the Indians require much improvement to reach the stage of self-respecting men and women.”⁶⁶ He also outlined to the church women about the so-called cruel and heartless treatment of Indigenous women by Indigenous men. The women are “burden bearers, inferior to man, and obliged to go to the bush to fell trees, bring them home, and cut them for use. But this notion is being modified, and the Indians are learning the gentler ways of the white man,” he stated.⁶⁷ Sarah Carter argues that there is a long trajectory in Anglo-Canadian discourse depicting Indigenous women as drudges of men who worked as passive slaves within their communities.⁶⁸ Black and brown women’s degradation was a common missionary discursive tool used across the entirety of the British empire to orchestrate the need for missionary intervention into the lives of women and children.⁶⁹ Indigenous women were

⁶⁶ “The Hurricane Hill Indians,” *The Presbyterian Record*, February 1898, 34.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada’s Prairie West* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 8.

⁶⁹ Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840-1900* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 26.

rendered victims of brown men, where only Christian conversion could ‘uplift’ them from a life of degradation and suffering.

White missionaries reduced the complexities of the rich cultural and kinship traditions of First Nations communities to racist stereotypes. This continued the perceived need for missionary interventions on the plains. These stereotypes of the non-normative ‘Indian’ spread amongst Anglo-Canadians in eastern Canada. One missionary remarked how, when he visited Toronto and talked with a woman from one of the missionary societies, she remarked to him, “Oh, you are a worker among the Indians, poor beasts, have they any souls?”⁷⁰ Missionary teachers also informed Anglo-Canadian women in eastern Canada about the ‘corrupted nature’ of Indigenous children who were receiving their ‘civilizing’ education within the residential school system funded by their charitable donations. Janet Gillespie, missionary matron, wrote to the women auxiliary about how the staff at File Hills Residential School wanted to show sympathy to the children to win the hearts of these “poor darkened souls.” She wrote: “going in and out amongst them in times of sickness and death, we realize the awful delusions of paganism, and how binding are its chains on their sadly ignorant minds.”⁷¹

Missionaries pleaded with the middle-class church women to intercede on behalf of the desperate situation facing First Nations peoples in Saskatchewan. Hugh McKay at Round Lake mission wrote to the women’s societies, telling them that people on his reserve would starve if they did not soon receive Christian sympathy. Missionary Rev. F. Swainson, on the Blood Reserve in neighbouring Alberta, confirmed what McKay was articulating in a letter to the women: “The Government rations are not enough to keep the Indians in health, many of them

⁷⁰ “Work Amongst the Indians,” *The Missionary Messenger*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, September 1920, 211, UCCA, Toronto.

⁷¹ “Pictures of Indian Life at File Hills,” *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, May 1902, 18, UCCA, Toronto.

being nearly starving. I have actually had Indians come round here and eat garbage off a manure heap. A man must be pretty hungry to do that.”⁷² Reverend C.T. des Marais at the Anglican mission on Little Pine’s reserve near Battleford explained how it would surprise the people down east to see how poorly clad the First Nations people were dressed in freezing cold weather and how so many individuals on his reserve were sick and dying. He reported that nineteen had died within the year alone.⁷³

Facing severe governmental repression and land dispossession, Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan suffered from the government’s policies, which created conditions of hunger and widespread destitution. Yet the continual depiction of their communal identities as ‘poor, pagan’ souls in women’s evangelical literature infused the idea of ‘otherness’ in the minds of white women. This formed racial knowledge about the Indigenous subject and crafted an enduring image of destitution to represent ‘Indianness’ on the prairies for a white audience in eastern Canada. Moreover, the periodicals also shaped how white women self-represented their identities through their supposed benevolence. The leaflets described the women in Protestant churches forming missionary societies out of ‘unity’ and ‘love’ to support the ‘foreigner’ on the prairies. The church missionary society groups relied on familial language to describe their female-centered philanthropy. Missionaries called the auxiliaries ‘loving sisters in Christ,’ who acted from the warm impulses of the heart, or their organization was a ‘kind mother’ who tended to her lost children in the west. In colonial discourse, it was customary for British officials and missionaries to refer to Indigenous peoples through the stereotype of a childlike figure marking

⁷² “Letter from the Quebec Diocese,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, October 1893, 377.

⁷³ “Letter from Rev. C.T. des Marais, Little Pine’s Reserve, Battleford, SK to Miss Beatrice Muir,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, November 1899, 11-12.

them less knowledgeable and subservient in the colonial order of things.⁷⁴ Women's charitable offerings to the mission sites and schools allowed them to turn the gaze towards themselves and feel validated that they were self-sacrificial women relieving the sufferings of the 'heathens.' A woman writing in the Presbyterian women's periodical wrote, "the work in the W.F.M.S. has long showed white woman's sympathy. And mothers, do you not think that during the long years of service in foreign work, it has helped you when you knelt by the bedside to ask the blessing on your little ones? Don't you think you do it in firmer faith because you have helped those in an Indian school?"⁷⁵ By directing their benevolent charity towards Indigenous women and children, white women could attest to themselves that they were proper Christian models of domesticity, motherhood, and femininity in the Canadian nation state.

Hayter Reed, the Indian Commissioner in prairie Canada from 1888 to 1893, agreed to cover the freight costs for mission bales being transported to schools in western Canada on the condition that the women's societies would supply the government with lists of supplies and distribution. In 1890, Presbyterian women in eastern Canada shipped out 20,000 pounds of bales of second hand and new clothing to the schools and reserves.⁷⁶ Eight years later that number increased to 35,000 pounds of supplies.⁷⁷ Having a less centrally structured organization than the Presbyterians, Anglican women listed in detail the amount of goods each parochial branch had sent out west each month in their *Letter Leaflet*. In November 1894, it stated that a Perth, Ontario congregation had sent a bale worth \$37.75 to Emmanuel College Residential School in Prince

⁷⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 150.

⁷⁵ "Miss McGregor, Indian Work," *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, September 1912, 64, UCCA, Toronto.

⁷⁶ "Items of Interest from the Northwest, forwarded by Mr. Cassels," *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, January 1890, 3.

⁷⁷ "Reports of the General Secretaries," *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, June 1898, 37.

Albert in the Northwest containing: 43 new garments, 45 second hand, 4 quilts, blankets, sheets, 6 pillow cases, 6 towels, yarn, working materials, 25 yds., new goods, and groceries.⁷⁸ Bales were also organized through word of mouth in Britain and sent out by individual missionary supporters or congregations to western Canada.

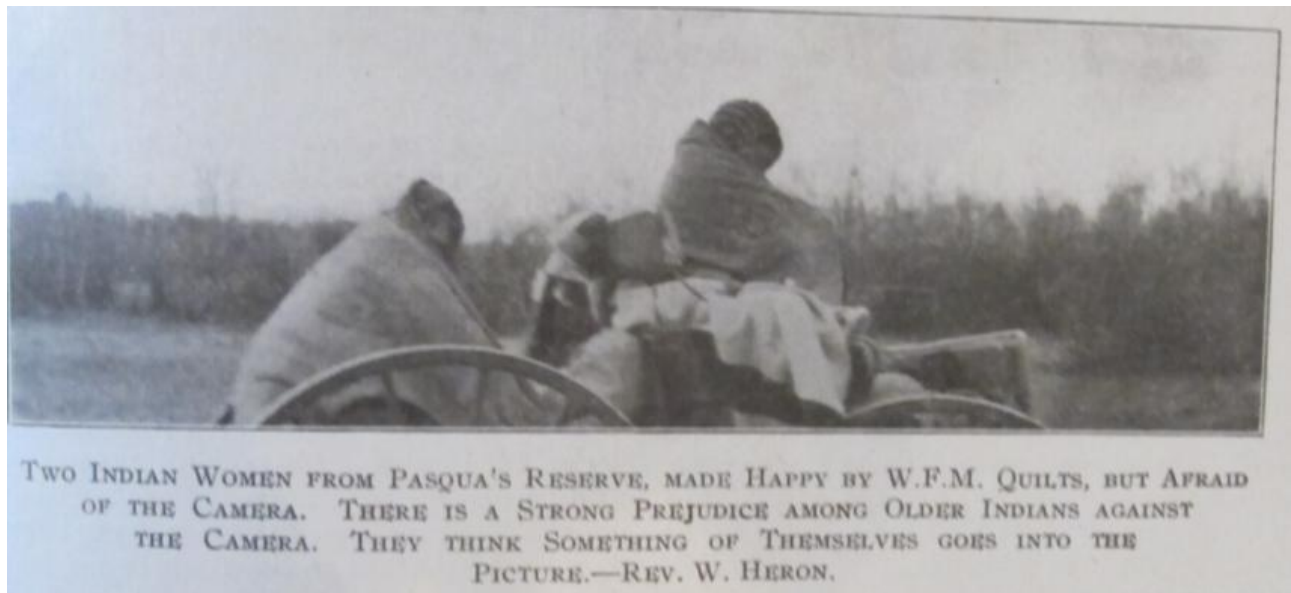


Figure 1.2 Women from Pasqua's Reserve, Foreign Missionary Tidings, Presbyterian Church of Canada, March 1914, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

Changing the clothing habits of First Nations people was a critical part of the 'civilization' process taught by missionaries and they hoped it would translate into Indigenous people rejecting their cultural and spiritual traditions and embracing Christianity.⁷⁹ Western clothing represented the Indigenous subject's transformation from a backwards 'heathen' into an assimilated Canadian citizen in the national body. It signified a repudiation of their Indianness and an outward adoption of a willingness to align with settler colonial values. Baird informed Presbyterians how Indigenous peoples were 'wards of the nation' and until they could take care of themselves, it

⁷⁸ "Dorcas Report from Ontario Diocese," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, November 1894, 456.

⁷⁹ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 195.

was the missionary duty and privilege to provide the necessities of life. Depicted as childlike ‘savages,’ he explained that Indigenous peoples were not privy to the financial details of the missionary enterprise in the Northwest and because they did not know how much money was invested through missionary donations, the clothing and material supplies worked as tangible evidence for them to experience Christian generosity. In the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society annual report for 1896, Cecelia Jeffrey, the Treasurer of Supplies, wrote that the gifts of clothing “appeal to a side of his nature that is not dormant; the proof they bring of a thoughtful and intelligent sympathy comes home to him in a most convincing way and the soil is prepared for the sowing of the gospel seed.”⁸⁰ To the missionaries, the bales represented physical manifestations of civilization and a way for Indigenous peoples to connect with the wider Anglo-Saxon world, an important step in their acculturation to white society. Missionaries praised Canadian women in the east for sending the garments, thanking them profusely for their holy ambitions towards the ‘poor’ subjects in the west.

Charitable Corruption

Indifference and corruption mired the system of church women’s philanthropy to Saskatchewan. The church women’s societies freighted supplies to both the schools and the reserves. However, the bales shipped to reserves were intended for those seen as poor, sick, and elderly, deliberately excluding healthy adults. Although missionaries expressed delight in their letters to the women in the east for sending charitable offerings, this was an evangelical fiction perpetuated by the missionaries to preserve their denomination’s image of a benevolent organization working for the poor. In reality, the women auxiliaries freighted bales to Saskatchewan packed with dirty and useless garments which the missionaries had to spend a significant amount of time sorting and

⁸⁰ “Report of Supplies to Missions,” Twentieth Annual Report of the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, May 1895-1896, 47-48, UCCA, Toronto.

distributing. In the annual report of the W.F.M.S. in 1893, the leaders of the committee reminded the women to exercise great caution in packing their bales, gently telling the women that several of the items they had sent were completely useless.⁸¹ In 1895, the Church of England W.A. women were asked by the missionaries to stop mailing out pounds of old newspapers, like the *Evangelical Churchman* or old copies of the *Letter Leaflet*.⁸² The Canadian Church of England's weekly newspaper, the *Canadian Churchman* reminded the women again in May 1898 to only send clean garments, for them to remember that "cleanliness is next to godliness."⁸³ Victorians were obsessed with cleanliness. In the nineteenth century, clean white bodies were designated markers of class and respectability.⁸⁴ To clothe Indigenous people in clean material goods represented an engagement with British hygiene practices which missionaries hoped would transform their bodies from 'savage' to 'civilized.' But in many cases, the women failed to send clean clothes. At the Regina Industrial School, Principal Sinclair wrote to Francis Pedley, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1902 stating that although the W.F.M.S. gave the school a large supply of clothing, it did little to benefit the school's finances in keeping down clothing costs. Only in the matter of bedding was it of some help.⁸⁵

In 1906, the Canadian government informed the church women's society groups they would no longer cover the freight on bales to reserves. They would only cover the costs of freighting clothing to the schools. This prompted the women's organizations to send out deputies from their societies to reexamine the needs of the schools and reserves to determine the future of

⁸¹ "Report of Supplies to Missions," Eighteenth Annual Report of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, 1893-1894, 40-41, UCCA, Toronto.

⁸² "St. Peter's Mission," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, November 1895, 4.

⁸³ "The Toronto Women's Auxiliary to Missions," *Canadian Churchman*, Church of England, 5 May 1898, 281.

⁸⁴ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 211.

⁸⁵ Letter by J.A. Sinclair to Francis Pedley, 18 December 1902, S00062, Item R00013812, General Correspondence Relating to The Regina Industrial School, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Archives (NCTR), Winnipeg.

their missionary philanthropy. In 1906, Kate E. Halson, the Treasurer of the W.A., went on a tour of the Northwest, visiting Anglican schools and mission sites where she spent approximately three of four days at each location assessing the application of women's missionary contributions. What she found depressed her. Halson wrote to the women in eastern Canada informing them about the general state in which she found the residential schools: "My heart ached often, both for the workers and the children. The majority are so badly equipped for even the barest necessities of life. The buildings are often poor and inconvenient and the way in which they have been added to makes the labour and expense of heating greater, and there is almost an utter absence of proper facilities for cleanliness or sanitary arrangements."⁸⁶

Concerning the bales, Halson described piles of useless second-hand clothing stashed throughout the schools that had been sent to the missionaries. She opened a few bales on her own accord and found ragged and useless clothing, including pounds of old magazines and newspapers. She explained how the women in eastern Canada had sent materials that the missionaries had never asked for. They sent materials that were not assigned or they sent materials which missionaries repeatedly had asked the branch not to send. For future bales, she recommended Anglican women needed to send fewer bales and increase the quality of the ones being freighted west.⁸⁷ The fact was, materials sent to residential schools and reserves became opportunities for white women in eastern Canada to dispose of their own discarded items and materials they no longer wanted. Little thought or concern went into what would support First Nations people on the missionary front. Instead, the bales became opportunity to offload white women's possessions.

⁸⁶ "Report of the General Dorcas Secretary Upon her Deputation Work," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, December 1906, 54, GSA, Toronto.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Halsen's recommendations were never heeded. Twenty years later, Lucy Affleck, a teacher at the Round Lake mission, described how the children received the most outlandish clothing at residential schools. She told how some of the girls walked around in pumps with high heels, clothing sizes too large, or sandals that wouldn't stay on their feet. She wrote about how all the children had one good outfit to wear to church or for when the inspector arrived, but the rest of the time wore strange or misfit second-hand clothing. "To almost everything at Round Lake, there is the two sides, the side that goes in the report and that inspectors see, and the side that exists from day to day in the actual working out," she stated.⁸⁸

The women's materials given to the schools did not properly clothe the children, provide them with suitable school supplies, or make the schools a comfortable place to live. Halsen told the church women she believed the missionaries were not truthful about the bales because they were worried, they might come across as ungrateful to the women in the east. The female church supporters held power in the colonial order in Canada and could determine the extent of their offerings to the colonial subject, and by what they gave, could control how recognizable the colonial 'other' could become in Anglo-Canadian society. Colonial theorist Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry argues that no matter how much the colonized adopted the colonizer's habits they were "almost the same, but not white."⁸⁹ McClintock teases out Bhabha's theory to investigate the politics of agency in the 'ambivalence' of the representation of the colonial subject. McClintock argues that this 'in-betweenness' space is fundamentally about power—who gets to define the colonial order of things.⁹⁰ I assert that women's philanthropy, and how these

⁸⁸ Letter from Lucy L. Affleck to William Morris Graham, 15 November 1929, RG 10, Vol. 6332, File 661-1, Crooked Lake Agency–Round Lake Residential School–General Administration, LAC, Ottawa.

⁸⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 130.

⁹⁰ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 63.

women envisioned they were ‘helping’ the colonial ‘other,’ assured the women that they were engaging in the Christian vocation to love others, but that their offerings were harmfully inadequate. The Indigenous subject could never fully align with colonial expectations. This was a form of ambivalence that Indigenous peoples had to traverse in the colonial power dynamics in Saskatchewan. Caught in an imaginary abstraction that white women were offering Christian ‘pity’ to the ‘poor Indians’ in the Northwest, their clothing was never adequate, and it marked them as separate and contributed to growing Indigenous poverty.

Because of the large amount of material goods shipped to Saskatchewan, missionaries profited from the women’s philanthropy. By the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the Canadian government had designated reserve land to First Nations people and were encouraging their adoption of western-style agriculture, primarily in the central and southern regions of the province. Strict governmental regulations controlled every aspect of their lives and enforced their social and economic exclusion from the growing Anglo-Canadian settler society. They required permits for off-reserve sales of their agriculture products; they needed to obtain passes from the Indian agent to leave the confines of the reserve; no trespassing signs were placed on reserve lands; and white storekeepers refused to extend credit because they lived on federal lands which prevented them from collecting debts.⁹¹ This governmental overreach into the lives of Indigenous peoples enabled missionaries to exploit their positions of religious authority. Missionaries observed the lack of economic opportunities available to Indigenous peoples and therefore engaged in commercial trade to fill the void of capital on reserves.

Church denominations did not regulate the distribution of donations of clothing and goods, and this resulted in widespread missionary abuses throughout Saskatchewan. The

⁹¹ Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties That Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 76.

denominations intended the missionaries to freely distribute the items to the children at the schools and to the elderly on the reserves. Then they could decide how they wanted to dispose of the rest of the bales.⁹² An informal system emerged where missionaries sold the remainder of the items from the bales to the adult population on the reserves. Not all the donated material and foodstuff from the women's auxiliaries were entirely inadequate. Some of the Indian agents were pleased with the missionary donations because it properly clothed the people within their agencies. Others objected, because they wanted to teach reserve residents to be tidy and did not want to have large amounts of second-hand clothing lying around.⁹³ As early as May 1887, the Canadian government issued a warning to the churches that missionaries and teachers must confine themselves to their duties and avoid trading with First Nations people. L. Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, wrote to Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, "Very great embarrassment has been occasioned to the Department in consequence of other interests than the legitimate calling which missionaries should follow engaging the attention of some of those gentlemen, causing them to act in dissonance from the views of the Department and its officers as their private interests might dictate to them to be advisable."⁹⁴ He explained to Macdonald that some missionaries had been executing business practices on reserves and stated how government officials would forbid any missionaries from reserve lands if they continued with such trading practices.

Some of these dubious business practices involved the women's missionary donations. Missionaries forced adult reserve residents to either pay cash or perform manual labour on the

⁹² Letter by Rev. Andrew B. Baird to Rev. A.W. Lewis, 21 March 1894, Ex-109, 3025, Box J, File L177, Personal Papers, Andrew B. Baird fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁹³ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 190.

⁹⁴ Letter from L. Vankoughnet to John A. Macdonald, 28 May 1887, RG 10, Vol.2378, File 77020, Headquarters-Ottawa-Correspondence Regarding Missionaries Who Engage in Trade, LAC, Ottawa.

mission station to receive the women's auxiliary goods. At Onion Lake, Church of England missionary J.R. Matheson informed the women in eastern Canada that adults at his mission and school had to work to receive the clothing. He reported how one of the families went to the Catholic mission because Matheson refused to give them clothing for free.⁹⁵ Lewis, missionary at Mistawasis reserve, wrote to the W.F.M.S. explaining how the men bring wood to the mission and the women do housework, and bring potatoes and oats, and the children perform small tasks to attain items, and through these means the missionaries dispose of all the clothing donations.⁹⁶ In a unique form of subjugation, Indigenous communities became labourers for the mission station, performing services for the missionaries to secure their basic living needs. Although the missionaries had asked for relief from the women auxiliaries to aid the suffering reserve residents, some of the missionaries had turned the philanthropy into commercial transactions by either selling the clothing donations or demanding Indigenous labour in exchange. Missionaries wrote to the women in the east that the food and material distribution on the reserves had become a burdensome aspect of their job. Yet by selling the donations, missionaries believed they were educating the 'childlike wards' on the merits of physical labour in a capitalist society.⁹⁷

One of the most outrageous cases of corruption involved Rev. C.W. Whyte's business dealings at the Crowstand Residential School near Kamsack, Saskatchewan. Whyte was a missionary and the head principal of the school on Cote First Nation Reserve in Treaty 4. He wrote to the W.F.M.S. in 1894 stating, "We make it a rule to have the people pay for the clothing...some of the lazy ones think they can get it for nothing, and, in fact, sometimes tell us

⁹⁵ "Branch Notes of Ontario Diocese," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, August 1895, 782.

⁹⁶ "Disposal of the Clothing," *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, October 1893, 160.

⁹⁷ On Indigenous people as childlike wards in the missionary mind, see, "Rebate of Freight on Bales," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, January 1896. On the notion they must work to receive clothing, see "From the Mission Field," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, August 1895.

that these clothes are sent up for the Indians, and that we have no right to sell them. And in one or two cases children have been taken away from the school because we refused to agree to the demands of the parents.”⁹⁸ Some members of the mission staff were appalled by Whyte’s dealings with the reserve residents. The farm instructor on the reserve wrote to Baird, “I don’t know how any man could pretend to work among the Indians and say that he can see nothing good in them and that they are all rogues.”⁹⁹ One missionary worker wrote to the Foreign Missions Committee explaining how Mrs. Whyte was stingy with distributing the children’s clothing at the school and was dressing them in rags. Flora Henderson, a staff member at Crowstand, wrote to Baird describing how one of the men from the reserve asked her why the Foreign Missionary Committee did not send Christians. He told Miss Henderson, “Mr. Whyte is just a leader that has come to make money he can from the Indians and the white men too...you will never see a soul on the reserve saved by Mr. Whyte.”¹⁰⁰ Whyte was not only making people pay for the clothing; he was selling food and clothing at exorbitantly increased prices in the Kamsack area. In 1894, Vankoughnet wrote to Baird that he had been informed by the Indian agent at Fort Pelly that Whyte was buying beef from First Nations farmers, and instead of paying them cash, gave them the women’s charitable clothing donations as payment, and then turned around and sold the meat for 100 percent profit. In 1897, Whyte retired from the principal position at Crowstand claiming his wife’s health had declined to such an extent that she was too weak to continue working at the school. Upon Whyte’s resignation, Baird told Rev. Neil Gilmour, the incoming principal at Crowstand, that the church was pleased to have parted ways

⁹⁸ “Acknowledgments of Clothing,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, April 1894, 324.

⁹⁹ Report of Wright to Rev. A.B. Baird, 20 June 1893, Box E, File F267, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Flora Henderson to Rev. A.B. Baird, 16 May 1895, Box E, File F1110, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

with Whyte because he failed to keep a proper dividing line between the church and his business dealings. He admitted to Gilmour that Whyte's store on the reserve had been so profitable it had driven neighbours' shops in the surrounding Kamsack area out of business.¹⁰¹

Exploitation of the women's charitable donations was widespread. In neighbouring Alberta, a teacher on the Blood reserve wrote to his superiors about how Anglican missionary Samuel Trivett was selling the women's donations to the surrounding white communities.¹⁰² Neil Gilmour, missionary at Hurricane Hills before he moved to Crowstand Residential School, discussed the importance of building a storeroom in the mission house for the clothing because "you want it out of sight of the Indian so they may not know what clothing there is any given time."¹⁰³ Other missionaries used the clothing as incentive to persuade parents to send their children to residential schools. Kate Gillespie, principal at File Hills Residential School, told the Foreign Missions Committee that, in her efforts to persuade Chief Star Blanket to send his children to the school, she offered a bale of W.F.M.S. clothing as a bargaining chip.¹⁰⁴ Some of the missionaries expressed annoyance around having to prioritize the needs of the schools in their distribution of the clothing. In 1896, the missionary at Lakesend, Reverend George Arthur, wrote to Baird telling him how the absence of the residential school was no big drawback to his missionary work on the reserve. He claimed that he now had a freer hand in distributing the clothing because he did not have to keep privileging individuals who 'helped' the school in his decision making. But he wrote that he continued to have a difficult relationship with the people

¹⁰¹ Letter from A.B. Baird to Neil Gilmour, 18 August 1897, Box F, File G1800, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁰² Letter from Blood Reserve, 19 March 1891, G1C10, Reel 71, File 137, North-West Canada: Original Papers, Letters and Papers of individual missionaries, catechists and others, 1890, 1891 (1-160), Church Missionary Society Archive (C.M.S.), Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

¹⁰³ Letter by Neil Gilmour for A.B. Baird, 28 January 1896, Box E, File G32, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Kate Gillespie to A.B. Baird, 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 56, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

on the reserve, calling them “greedy Indians” who only viewed the mission as a “sponging shop.”¹⁰⁵ From 1888 to 1896, the Presbyterians had operated a mission called Lakesend, located on Muscowpetung’s reserve, north of Edenwold, Saskatchewan. The missionary oversaw a small residential school, but the Foreign Missions Committee decided to close the school in 1896 because it had been plagued by constant fighting between the head male missionary and two missionary female teachers who administered the school. The W.F.M.S. had requested that the Foreign Missions Committee keep the school open with just the two women in command and the W.F.M.S. would cover all the operating costs, but the committee declined the women’s offer. Rev. Arthur was pleased that he had regained total control over the distribution of the women’s donated items and could disperse them to the ‘greedy Indians’ as he seemed fit.

Rumours of missionary corruption and mismanagement of funds at mission stations at turn of the century in Saskatchewan circulated in church circles in both the nation and larger British empire. A letter written by Church of England Reverend Cecil C. Owen from London, Ontario, described the utter ineffectiveness and failure of the C.M.S. missions in the Northwest. He described Diocese of Saskatchewan’s Bishop William Cyprian Pinkham as a “conceited, selfish fellow with less missionary spirit than an average cat,” and Reverend Edward Matheson, principal of Battleford Industrial School, as a “failure” who had a reputation as a deplorable manager of his accounts at the industrial school.¹⁰⁶ At an Anglican Conference in England, C.M.S. missionary John Hines reported that Emmanuel College, a residential school for

¹⁰⁵ Letter from George Arthur to Baird, 25 June 1897, Box E, File G477, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg; 31 October 1896, Box E, file G822; Report on Lakesend, Box F, File G1316.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Cecil C. Owens, 6 November 1900, G1C10, Reel 76, File 138, North-West Canada: Original Papers, 1900, C.M.S., Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

Indigenous children in Prince Albert, brought a lot of church money from eastern Canada to the city but that no one cared if the children were being educated or not.¹⁰⁷

There were some missionaries in Saskatchewan who expressed reservations about engaging in blatant commercial transactions with the people on the reserves. Lucy Baker, missionary to the Dakota people on Makoce Waste, which meant “good land,” also known as Round Plain Reserve, and today known as the Wahpeton Dakota Nation and located near Prince Albert, told the W.F.M.S. that she refused to sell the clothing donations to the people because they were simply too poor to pay for them. Other missionaries pointed the blame at Ottawa for failing to improve the social welfare of First Nations people in the early reserve period. Reverend A.W. Lewis at Mistawasis reserve wrote to Baird questioning, “Would the government provide clothing if the church did not?” He told Baird that he was already selling the clothes at a low price, and that if the Canadian government would step up and provide sufficient supplies to First Nations people, the women’s missionary societies could put their time and efforts towards procuring “hard cash” for the missionary enterprise in the west.¹⁰⁸

Resistance to Pity

Just as missionaries had their own ideas of what to do with the bales from the women in eastern Canada, reserve residents displayed their own personal and communal agency in how they managed the materials. They were not passive recipients of the women’s philanthropy but understood how missionaries attached certain conditions to the giving of the bales which benefitted the church and state. Reserve residents had to either pay cash, perform free labour for

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum Prepared by the Convenor to be Submitted to the Special Indian Committee at its Meeting on Tuesday 28 April 1908, G1C10, Reel 80, File 55, North-West Canada: Original Papers, Letters and Papers of individual missionaries, catechists and others, 1908-1910, C.M.S., Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from A.W. Lewis to Foreign Missions Committee Synod of MB and NWT, 5 February 1895, Box F, File F1600, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

the mission station, send their children to residential schools, or attend church services to get the donated clothing and supplies from the missionaries. The Indian Agent at Mistawasis described how missionaries felt they had less control than previous decades over their congregations: “the days are past, and gone when they can take an Indian by the throat and say you have got to come and listen to my preaching.”¹⁰⁹ Missionaries exerted pressure on the Indigenous population in Saskatchewan through newfound controlling tactics around the women’s philanthropy to garner Christian converts and support their assimilation into Canadian society. Reserve residents had their own tactics to counter missionary strategies of persuasion to convert.

Historian Paige Raibmon argues that Indigenous people transformed colonial concepts inscribed for their lives in their own diverse and unique ways.¹¹⁰ Some people re-gifted their items that the church had given them to other community members, not attaching the same value to the items as missionaries, frustrating the missionaries who wanted to teach western notions of capital accumulation and individualism to their racialized subjects. Others traded the clothing items for culturally relevant materials or foodstuffs they desired to attain. Principal Alex Skene at File Hills Residential Schools noted, annoyed, to the women in the east that “the Indians have been trading the clothes they were given to the Half-breeds (the Métis) for tea, tobacco, and fish. Thus, instead of clothing Indians we have been in past years clothing Catholic Half-breeds.”¹¹¹ Missionaries reported how reserve individuals failed to hold denominational allegiance, frequenting Catholic, Anglican, or Presbyterian mission sites to get supplies, clothing, and food. C.M.S. missionary, G. Smith Winter at Sturgeon Lake in Treaty 6 wrote to his church superiors

¹⁰⁹ Letter from S.A. Milligan to Department of Indian Affairs, 3 July 1917, RG 10, Vol.6290, File 616-1 part 1, no. 502318, Carleton Agency-Mistawasis School-Teachers-General Administration, LAC, Ottawa.

¹¹⁰ Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 12.

¹¹¹ “Description of School Work at File Hills,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, May 1891, 7. Alexander Skene preceded Kate Gillespie as principal at File Hills Residential School from 1891 to 1899. Kate Gillespie was principal from 1901-1908.

in England how people from the reserve promise to attend his services, but only if he will give them food and clothing, complaining how they are always expecting the missionary to give them things.¹¹² People frequented different denominational mission sites as a practical and necessary strategy to attain food and clothing in a post-treaty period. Dealing with rampant starvation and destitution, Indigenous peoples forged paths to counter settler logic and structures to survive.

The women's donated materials invoked strong emotions amongst Indigenous peoples, perceiving their distribution as another strategy of racialized control over their lives by the church and state. In 1891, Principal Alex Skene at File Hills Residential School reported to the women that there was a smallpox outbreak at the school and on the reserve and the people feared it came from the W.F.M.S. clothing.¹¹³ Smallpox had ravaged the Northwest during the fur trade era, killed entire Indigenous nations and massively weakened Indigenous communities west of the Great Lakes. The fear of epidemics driven by contact with white settlers was deeply rooted in Indigenous memory on the plains. Some refused to wear the clothing because they believed it came from dead people.¹¹⁴ There was also visible anger expressed over the injustice of the church operating as a financial enterprise yet falsely marketing the donations as benevolent Christian offerings. Principal Whyte at Crowstand reported to the women that the people on the reserve were so angry with the church for selling the clothing that some of them removed their children from the school over the matter.¹¹⁵ Others simply refused to receive donations from the bales as a challenge to missionary activities. Miss Mackenzie at Hurricane Hills mission wrote to

¹¹² Letter from G. Smith Winter to Baring Baring Gould, 6 November 1900, G1C10, Reel 75, File 67, North-West Canada: Original Papers, Letters and Papers of individual missionaries, catechists and others, 1897, C.M.S., Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham; file 167.

¹¹³ "Letters from the Northwest by Alex Skene," *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, March 1891, 10-11.

¹¹⁴ Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 190.

¹¹⁵ "Acknowledgements of Clothing," *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, April 1894, 324-325.

the women about how one of the men on the reserve, Big Darkness, refused to attend their church services: "He is an ambitious, jealous, greedy, superstitious heathen...he is greedy, and if he not always getting, he is always complaining. A whole bale of clothing would not pay for his church attendance...He has revived the Ghost Dance, keeping it in his own house, very often on Sunday night, but we are thankful only a few people attend."¹¹⁶ These were acts of resistance initiated to counter the civilizing attempts by the churches for their cultural, physical, and spiritual destruction of the Indigenous peoples of North America. The Protestant churches took advantage of their poverty by creating a system of conditional philanthropy which benefitted the growth of the church denominations and missionary pockets in local spaces. Indigenous peoples employed ways to circumvent the church's system of distribution to gain access to material goods, sometimes allying with the missionary and adopting Christianity, while at other times exploiting the denominations against each other, or outright rejecting the missionary humanitarianism organized by the women in eastern Canada.

Conclusion

By the end of the nineteenth century, white Canadian women were entering the 'public' realm, moving into new leisure and commercial spaces and taking on different roles outside of the home, which gave them greater opportunity to engage with the world and others around. Women flocked to volunteer organizations like the church missionary societies because they were socially acceptable ways to exercise agency in professional spaces in Canadian society. In these spaces, women gained a sense of vocational productivity and collective organizational skills by working with other white middle-class church women towards missionary goals. Women's church missionary societies were religious spaces where white women came together in local

¹¹⁶ "Indians of the Northwest and British Columbia," *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, July 1898, 89.

congregations to learn about the ‘other,’ their knowledge about the world moulded by missionary depictions of the racialized subjects across the British empire. In their missionary periodicals, white women ascribed normativity to white female bodies and degradedness upon black and brown bodies, fostering the belief in white women’s racial superiority. They viewed their own Protestant religion, white race, and Anglo-Canadian culture through a normative lens, while the ‘other’ from a geographical and ideological distance as the dangerous ‘foreigner.’ White women in eastern Canada were convinced that their philanthropic giving and missionary labours would ‘improve’ the lives of women and children around the world through increased contact with the ‘civilized’ world and by their acceptance of Christianity.

Protestant church women in eastern Canada placed the ‘Indian’ in Saskatchewan in the same colonial frame as the ‘foreigner’ in other parts of the non-western world. Convinced ‘foreign souls’ required white women’s sympathy, they came with “hearts throbbing” to their foreign missionary work in Saskatchewan, where they tried to “accept these perishing heathens” as their own.¹¹⁷ White Canadian church women entered discursive networks with missionaries around the world, including in Saskatchewan, where ideas of what constituted ‘Indianness’ and ‘foreignness’ was imagined, lumped together, and then repackaged for church people’s consumption. Racial knowledge, which connected poverty and destitution to Indigenous bodies, became lasting impressions on middle-class ideas of ‘Indianness.” Evangelical discourses portrayed white women as fully human and represented through the emotional facets of love, purity, and self-sacrifice, whereas Indigenous women were suspect and needy, their humanity robbed through repeated missionary fictions.

¹¹⁷ “President’s Address,” Sixteenth Annual Report of the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, 1891-1892, 13, UCCA, Toronto.

The church women's missionary groups were not a mere sideshow to the church's operation of residential schools and missions in Saskatchewan—they were the main providers of church funds. In 1907, Margaret Craig, convenor for Indian missions in the Northwest, reported to an overflowing audience in eastern Canada about her visit and inspection of residential schools in the west. Craig put pictures of the schools on screen for the women to view and to encourage them to believe that, although the work of 'civilizing' and Christianising was slow, "the early Britons were not civilized in one generation."¹¹⁸ This was an effort to congratulate themselves on the superiority of whiteness, and on how they had progressed as Anglo-Saxon descendants to the highest rung of the civilizational ladder. Through their sympathetic love, white women believed they should be philanthropic organizers to work for the uplift and civility of black and brown people. Church women in missionary societies positioned themselves through emotional prisms of sentimentality to explain their philanthropy towards the 'heathen,' which they both pitied and detested at the same time. And missionaries in Saskatchewan engaged in these same missionary fictions. They gratefully wrote their thankfulness to the women in the east for the bales, regardless of what was in them. Some missionaries worked to improve the material conditions of Indigenous lives through the giving of materials and foodstuffs, but many viewed the women's philanthropy as an opportunity to benefit themselves and fill their own pockets. This led to larger struggles in Saskatchewan, a period marked by the Canadian government's intent on weakening Indigenous presence in the area and using punitive measures to clear the land for incoming white settlers.

¹¹⁸ "Secretaries of the Board, Miss Craig," *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, June 1907, 19.

Chapter 2:

“It Does Seem Very Hard That They Should Forget Their Parents”: Missionary

Emotionality and its Limits in the ‘Foreign’ Mission Field

In December 1892, the matron at Regina Indian Industrial School, Miss Bessie Walker from Chatham, Ontario, wrote to the Presbyterian Women’s Foreign Missionary Society informing them that in the fall a large group of Indigenous parents arrived at the industrial school and camped out on the school grounds for the purpose of seeing their children. She told the story of how two small boys, aged three and five years old, did not initially recognize their mother upon her arrival at the institution. The mother was “heartbroken and pleaded so for the little ones to come to her, but they would only scream and cry, if touched by the Indians.”¹ Walker explained it was not until the next day that the mother won their affections and the boys freely went to her, gifting them each a pair of moccasins that she had brought for them. The children bonded so quickly to their mother that Walker feared that the boys would want to leave the school with her, but she assured the women in eastern Canada that this had not been the case. Although the mother cried bitterly upon leaving, the children were content to remain at the school in the care of the Presbyterian missionaries. Walker concluded that it “Seems another proof that the younger we get them the better, although it does seem very hard that they should forget their parents.”²

Dislocating Indigenous children’s affective belonging was at the heart of the missionary project of civilizing and Christianizing for empire on the Canadian prairies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Walker’s narrative, missionaries at the Regina Indian Industrial School had successfully severed the affective ties of the boys to their mother because the boys

¹ “Changes in Our Staff of Mission Workers,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, December 1892, 197-198.

² Ibid.

opted to remain at the institution instead of wanting to return with her to their First Nations community. In this emotionally heightened evangelical text, Protestant missionaries in the ‘foreign’ realm sought to demonstrate to home society how missionaries were rearranging emotional bonds between parent and child for the sake of aligning the children’s lives with Christian and Anglo-Canadian values. Walker rendered the boy’s redeemable in her narrative because of their rejection of their ‘Indianness,’ which in the eyes of missionaries represented depravity and backwardness. In missionary discourse, missionaries became child rescuers, heroically evangelizing a ‘heathen’ culture by targeting their impressionable young. Missionaries espoused strong sentimental feeling to church audiences of their ‘love,’ ‘compassion,’ and ‘pity’ for First Nations children in Indian Residential Schools and positioned themselves as alternate parents promising emotional richness, warmth, and familial belonging, and in doing so making colonialism seem like a humanitarian undertaking on the Canadian prairies. These types of missionary stories were communicated to female church supporters in eastern Canada to signify the missionaries ‘good intentions’ and to validate to the larger Canadian society that mission projects in Saskatchewan were doing God’s work by putting students in the Indian Residential School System on the ‘correct’ path of civilizing advancement. Missionaries hoped that these types of sentimental stories would galvanize white women to increase their financial donations to Christian missions.

Yet Walker’s lingering assessment that “it does seem very hard that they should forget their parents” reveals the more complex and knotty emotional dynamics missionaries navigated in their encounters with Indigenous children. The colonial encounter created spaces of intermingling between Indigenous and white peoples, which produced new meanings and practices. These interactions opened a wide and vast emotional crevasse marked by competing

tensions and colonial anxieties for missionaries at mission sites and residential schools.

Reimagining affective ties between Indigenous children and parents became contested terrain amongst British missionaries in Saskatchewan. Missionaries realized their enforcement of racial boundaries was emotionally violent, and as they maneuvered in the affective lives of Indigenous peoples, breaking up family units for the sake of ‘civilizing’ and Christianizing, they wrestled over the management of how best to weaken familial longings and whether they should be severed completely at all.

This chapter examines the emotionality of Protestant missionaries in Saskatchewan in their execution of what I deem ‘affective violence.’ It analyzes how invading the intimate realm of Indigenous families brought into question concerns over racial degeneracy, sexuality, and preserving the ‘white race’ amongst missionaries and their own families living in Saskatchewan. The chapter also analyzes how church and state officials managed missionary affect and its relation to power. Sentimentality had its limits in Saskatchewan, and when emotional rhetoric veered into actionable demands for change to the colonial order for the emerging Canadian nation state, government and church officials ignored or silenced missionary demands.

Family, Sentiment, and the Mission Site

Protestant missionaries organized their mission structure around the family unit. Christianity had long relied on familial imagery. Once converted to the faith, Christians became brothers and sisters in Christ, missionaries were fathers and mothers, and young converts were children who required disciplining to mature in their faith.³ In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the importance of the family became a vital part of British evangelical missionary culture. Most male Protestant missionaries in the British empire were married and took their wives and

³ Emily J. Manktelow, *Missionary Families: Race, Gender, and Generation on the Spiritual Frontier* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 12.

children with them, opening mission stations with the hopes of bringing the locals to Christ. The missionary family lived on the mission site and encouraged their converts to marry and create patriarchal, nuclear family structures. In addition, the mission station and the converts that grew out of the missionary encounters became a symbolic larger Christian family tied together by a religious kinship. The mission station was a family of God, a religious allyship amongst foreign ‘heathens,’ or as historian Catherine Hall describes it, a “bulwark, a defense against the immortality of the world, a haven in which Christian morality was practiced.”⁴

Missionaries sought to infuse the ideal of Victorian domestic ideology with the concept of the family. Evangelical missionary societies marked by their concern to “Go ye therefore and teach all nations”⁵ sent out thousands of missionaries across the British empire, teaching the importance of the role of the family in Christian missions. Scholars of colonialism have analyzed how *family* related to colonial power relations across empire. Anne McClintock argued that the family structure allowed for social hierarchies—the father as the head of the home, the woman subordinate to the man, and the child below the woman—to appear natural and a God-ordained set of relations.⁶ The Christian family was a hierarchical unit where God had granted authority in the family to men, and women were the ‘weaker’ sex who needed to practice restraint and submissiveness to male headship. Missionaries instructed colonized populations on the importance of separate spheres for men and women based on sexual divisions of labour. Gender roles were inscribed into missionary activity, where men were encouraged to engage in public life and women were to remain in the domestic realm and commit to carrying out their ‘natural’

⁴ Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1876* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 2002), 94.

⁵ Mark 16:15 KJV in Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part I*, 25.

⁶ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), 45.

duty as mother and caregiver to her children.

Protestant male missionaries from Britain, supported by their respective mission societies, arrived with their wives and children in Rupert's Land beginning in the 1820s and 1830s to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity and to impose an evangelical domestic ideal of the Victorian family. British missionary women played invaluable roles in contributing to early mission stations and teaching the colonial subjects of the Northwest about the virtues of proper domesticity and household management. For example, in 1827, Church of England missionary William Cochrane and his wife Anne arrived in Red River, and it was Anne who established the first Protestant school in the colony for Métis girls for the purpose of training the daughters of fur trade company officers on how to be good housewives.⁷ British missionary wives were indispensable for the running of mission stations and inscribing what they saw as proper domestic habits to Indigenous peoples. While male missionaries often travelled for preaching and evangelizing, the wives remained close to the mission, taught in the mission school and Sunday school, made meals, cared for the livestock and gardening, and kept the mission living spaces tidy and organized, while also caring for their own children.⁸

Indigenous missionaries and their wives in the Northwest were expected to adopt middle-class Victorian standards and expectations around the family and household operations. Two hundred years of intermarriage in the Northwest between First Nations women and European fur traders had resulted in the formation of a racially fluid space. The arrival of Euro-Canadian missionaries and their evangelization efforts to convert locals, resulted in the emergence of

⁷ Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980), 130.

⁸ Derek Whitehouse-Strong, "'Because I Happen to be a Native Clergyman': The Impact of Race, Ethnicity, Status, and Gender on Native Agents of the Church Missionary Society in the Nineteenth Century Canadian Northwest" (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2004), 272.

Indigenous Christian missionaries. The Church of England willingly supported native converts since they wished to establish a self-sustaining Indigenous church in the Northwest. Indigenous missionary families performed similar missionary tasks to their British counterparts over the course of the nineteenth century, and in many respects the church saw them as better suited to meet the linguistic, cultural, and spiritual challenges of the Northwest. Yet, because of their race, Indigenous missionary families were not offered the same status and respect compared to British C.M.S. missionaries. Indigenous ministers received half the salary of European white missionary families to support their families in their evangelizing mission work.⁹

By the 1880s, with the establishment of church-run residential schools in the Northwest, Protestant missionaries continued to emphasize the role of the mission family and domesticity. The family enterprise has been an overlooked system in the early residential schools. Protestant missionaries relied on the ideology of the domestic Christian family structure in the schools, positioning the residential school as an ideal Christian home to bring up the children and placing themselves in the familial categories of parents to the children under their care. Missionaries conceptualized the school and its pupils as a missionary family where the missionary principal served as the ‘father’ and the missionary wife in her role as matron. She oversaw the household management of the institution and was ‘mother’ to the children in her care. In a letter to the Church of England W.A. in 1904, J.R. Matheson, missionary principal at St. Barnabas Residential School at Onion Lake, affectionately described the boys at his school as “my boys” and wrote to the women in eastern Canada about how he was incredibly pleased to be getting a new worker at the school who could “mother” the children at the school.¹⁰ Miss Shaw, a

⁹ Ibid., 204.

¹⁰ Letter from J.R. Matheson to Mrs. Hall, 25 August 1904, GS-76-15, Box 19, Corresponding Secretary, Women’s Auxiliary Fonds, GSA, Toronto.

missionary teacher at Onion Lake, remarked to the women in the east how their school was a “family” made up of thirty-one pupils, while Miss Nichol, a teacher at Regina Industrial School, in 1897 wrote to the Presbyterian W.F.M.S. informing the women that she was fond of the children, telling them, “You know we are like one big family.”¹¹ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, employing familial language was an evangelical missionary strategy to claim ownership over the children’s affective longings. The physical care of children transferred from Indigenous parents to the missionaries once the children arrived at the institutions. By adopting familial language, the missionaries convinced themselves they were furthering the children’s colonial transformation by severing Indigenous parental ownership over the children’s lives.

Moreover, missionary women did not have to be married to adopt the role of ‘mother’ within the schools. White unmarried missionary women played influential roles in child removal in Saskatchewan by attaching the position of motherhood to themselves within residential schools on the gendered belief that women had a ‘natural’ ability to care and nurture children. Single white female missionaries arrived at the schools to work in positions as matrons, teachers, or nurses. Although men primarily staffed principal positions and the schools had male farm instructors on their payroll, the schools mostly functioned because of missionary female labourers. Positioning themselves as substitute mothers to Indigenous children, white women maneuvered in the intimate realm of Indigenous children’s emotional lives. At File Hills Residential School, matron Janet Gillespie, who had no children of her own, remarked to the W.F.M.S., “We have grown to love the children like our own.”¹² Gordon’s Residential School, the Bishop of the Diocese of Qu’Appelle described missionary teacher Elizabeth Atwater, who

¹¹ “From Miss Shaw to Mrs. Holden,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, January 1898, 93; “A Happy School Home,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, January 1897, 243-244.

¹² “Pictures of Indian Life at File Hills,” *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, May 1902, 18-19, UCCA, Toronto.

worked alongside her missionary father, H.W Atwater, as a ‘great mother’ who had given her whole life to the welfare of the children.¹³ In Saskatchewan, identifying as ‘mother’ figures allowed missionary women to work in genocidal institutions yet still preserve their self-image as loving, Christian women. They could rationalize to themselves that Indigenous children were not left motherless by shapeshifting the idea of ‘mother’ in the children’s lives into a new substituted form to ease their guilt. Historian Margaret Jacobs, in her analysis of white women in American boarding schools for Indigenous children, argues that white women believed they were “one large family” working together in a Christian home, a place where adult males were unnecessary because white women knew best how to care for and nurture children.¹⁴

Reimagining Mothers and Fathers

By conceptualizing the residential school as a ‘family’ unit and the missionaries in the parental roles of ‘father’ and ‘mother,’ missionaries contributed to an image of Indigenous child removal as a humanitarian intervention for racialized children in Saskatchewan. Not only did Indigenous children require exposure to Christianity and colonial schooling, but missionaries also believed children needed ‘rescuing’ from their parents and distance from their racialized environments. Colonial discourse across the British empire questioned non-white parenting practices, contending that black and brown parents failed to properly care for their children, subjecting them to cruel and degrading customs. In 1872, William Bompas, an Anglican missionary to the Northwest, authored a small book for white children in Canada, titled *A Missionary Present*

¹³ Journal of the Thirty-Second Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Qu’Appelle, June 2, 3, 4, 1926, S00062, Item NAR-NCTR-107, 152, Gordon’s Residential School Narrative, NCTR, Winnipeg.

¹⁴ Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 290.

About the Red Children. It described how Indigenous children should be ‘rescued’ from their parents so they could be instructed on how to become ‘useful’ Canadian citizens.¹⁵

Missionary women in Saskatchewan contributed to the missionary discourse on non-normative Indigenous parenting by emphasizing to the church women in the east about the ‘strange’ parenting practices they witnessed on mission sites. Mrs. Moore, missionary wife at Mistawasis reserve, wrote to the W.F.M.S. in 1898: “The great trouble with most of the mothers is they do not know how to care properly for their little ones...I often wish I could take the little ones into the house when they are ill and take care of them until they should be well.”¹⁶ An article written for the W.M.F.S. and presented at one of the women’s Presbyterian meetings stated that Indigenous mothers did not properly care for their babies. If the child was sick, the mother took the baby to an Indigenous healer, “which meant squeezing the little naked body with their gnarled hands to remove the bad spirit, amid a din of noise, made by shaking stones or pebbles in small tin cans, while they hummed or chanted a weird cry which was the only method they used.” The article explained, “Now these methods are of the past, babies are kept, sweet, clean and wholesome as a white mother’s.”¹⁷ Protestant missionaries in the ‘field’ racialized representations of Indigenous parenting, presenting children’s removal from their home environments as enlightening and humane experiences for Indigenous children because it distanced them from the ‘backwardness’ of their Indigenous homes.

The focus on transforming Indigenous children’s lives, rather than Indigenous adults’ lives, emerged from changing discourses about childhood in the nineteenth century. Scholars

¹⁵ William Bompas, *A Missionary Present About the Red Children* (London: Wesleyan Missionary Society, 1872), 31-32 in Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race, and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada, and Australia, 1850-1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 96.

¹⁶ “Acknowledgements of Clothing and Gifts,” *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, January 1898, 275.

¹⁷ “Indian Children Then and Now,” *The Missionary Messenger*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, December 1917, 336-337, The Presbyterian Church of Canada Archives (PCCA), Toronto.

Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel analyze how childhood emerged as a separate category from adulthood due to the effects of industrialization and urbanization in Britain; children came to be viewed as ‘potential citizens’ for empire building through careful rearing and social control.¹⁸ Missionaries across empire projects turned their attention towards ‘heathen’ children, considering them more pliable than adults for civilizing because of their young minds’ capabilities to embrace new ways of thinking and seeing, and the belief that children’s attitudes were more receptive to the proselytizing Christian and colonial messaging. Historian Karen Vallgård points out that missionaries in general had fewer problems with children than they did attempting to convert parents across mission projects. Unlike colonial officials, who could force colonial subjects to bend to their economic or social demands, missionaries depended on the emotional receptivity of children.¹⁹

When establishing residential schools in Canada, government officials employed the colonial logic of children’s capacity for ‘civilizing’ to justify their targeting of Indigenous children for ideological and physical transformation. J.A Macrae, the Department’s Inspector of Schools for the Northwest, explained in 1866 that Indigenous adults were “physically, mentally, and morally...unfitted to bear such a complete metamorphosis.”²⁰ Canadian government officials dismissed the civilizing capabilities of Indigenous adults, placing their ambitions and hope for the future of the race on the children. Missionaries in Saskatchewan, thinking along a similar vein, worked to attain children as young as possible into residential schools. At St. Andrews Mission at Fort Pelly, located between the Saskatchewan towns of Kamsack and Pelly, C.M.S.

¹⁸ Swain and Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race, and Empire*, 3.

¹⁹ Karen Vallgård, “Adam’s Escape: Children and the Discordant Nature of Colonial Conversions,” *Childhood* 18 no. 3 (2011): 299.

²⁰ J.A. Macrae to Indian Commissioner, Regina, 18 December 1886, RG 10, Vol. 3647, File 8128, MR C 10113, LAC, Ottawa in Milloy, *A National Crime*, 25.

missionary Rev. Owen Owens advocated for removing children as young as missionaries could possibly get them from their homes and keeping them at the schools until the child is such an age “that the habits are fairly well ingrained into their minds.”²¹ Fellow C.M.S. missionary J.R. Matheson at Onion Lake stated similarly, “It is for the advantage of the children that they should be taken at as early as age as possible from their association.”²²

This remapping of the children’s emotional association from their respective kin and community for the purposes of becoming ‘civilized’ children within the nation and their ability to contribute economically to the larger ‘white society’ was what Vallgård calls ‘a future-oriented strategy’ by the missionaries.²³ This invasion, which was deemed a humanitarian ‘rescue’ of the governing of Indigenous children’s lives aligned with what Foucault termed the rise of ‘biopower’ technologies of the state, which he defined as “the right to intervene in the making of life, in the manner of living, in ‘how’ to live.”²⁴ Missionaries, who laboured as colonial actors, albeit sometimes reluctantly or defiantly, operated alongside state agents to enforce ideas about what constituted ‘savagery’ and ‘civilized.’ They intervened into the emotional undercurrents of children’s lives, managing who they could love and how. Missionaries exercised panoramic power by forcing children to reimagine their affective bonds upon entering residential schools where Indigenous children began the process of transforming their emotional longings for the sake of advancing their character.

Although missionaries spoke highly of Indigenous children’s ‘advancement’ after

²¹ Diocese of Qu’Appelle, Occasional Paper No. 84, May 1906, GR72, Qu’Appelle Association Occasional Paper, Diocese of Qu’Appelle fonds, PAS, Regina.

²² Letter by J.R. Matheson, 2 September 1896, F 200, Acc. 720, IV Miscellaneous, 4, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS, Regina.

²³ Karen Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 42.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, “Faire vivre et laisser mourir: la naissance du racisme,” *Les Temps Modernes* (Feb. 1991): 37-61 in Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 83.

separating from their parents, they grappled with the task of altering children's emotional bonds to home. In the fall of 1896, Rev. Angus Joseph McLeod, principal at the Regina Indian Industrial School wrote to government official Hayter Reed in the Indian Department explaining that he had attended a conference in St. Paul, Minnesota for Indian missionary workers in American Indian Boarding Schools. He aimed to initiate a similar conference for Presbyterian workers in Indian schools on the Canadian prairies. He described the American convention, and how one of the speakers discussed that the intended purpose of the American Indian boarding school system was to break up the reservation and tribal system, noting how Reed had a similar goal for reservations on the prairies. McLeod agreed with Reed that the children should not return home to their reserves after completing their education for fear they would regress from their 'civilized' indoctrination. But he also felt it important to note that even though they encouraged the children to disband from their communities they still taught the children to love their parents. McLeod wrote "We teach our children here that they are to continue to love their parents, but that perhaps they can show them love in a more tangible fashion by becoming useful industrious citizens side by side with the white man."²⁵

For missionaries, it was a moral dilemma to what extent they should manipulate children's intimate longings. As colonial functionaries responsible for the education of 'heathen' children, missionaries understood they needed to enact colonial government policy and destabilize the emotional landscapes of the children in their care. Evangelical Christians, who espoused the notion that love was a central tenet of their faith, had to ideologically restructure violence to interpret it as an act of care extended towards Indigenous peoples. 'Heathens' had to be won for Christ, and part of the cost was the remaking of affective attachments in children's

²⁵ Letter from McLeod to Reed, 5 September 1896, RG 10, Vol. 3964, File 149, 874, Correspondence Regarding the Education of Indian Children, LAC, Ottawa.

lives. This was a reorganization of the psyche most missionaries incorporated quickly, but other missionaries struggled to merge affective disconnection with humanitarianism. Three months after McLeod's letter to Reed, Presbyterians held a conference in Winnipeg for Canadian Presbyterian Indian workers where they discussed practical matters pertaining to the schools as well as the subject of children's affections for their parents. For example, Rev. Joseph Hogg argued that the salvation of Indigenous children was more important than preserving family ties, whereas missionary Hugh McKay wrote "no care, no affection in an institution, can take the place of a parent's love."²⁶

In settler colonies, blending humanitarianism with child removal into a single analytical frame was an act of missionary colonial violence. As scholars of colonialism Penelope Edmonds and Amanada Nettleback argue, "Colonial violence was embedded in everyday bureaucratic, social, and discursive domains, it was mobilized through a diverse, often normalized, means of coercion and control; and it was enacted across an array of settings that included colonial workplaces, domestic arrangements, legal cultures and government policies."²⁷ The rearranging of racialized colonial subjects' emotional lives was an intimate act of cruelty which missionaries made 'normal.' They told themselves that love could take on many forms. Love could be expressed as sacrifice, prioritizing usefulness to the nation state over loyalty to one's parents, or that love for God should come before filial piety. These self-rationalizations enabled missionaries to enable familial violence against children while still believing they were upstanding moral figures in society.

²⁶ "Indian Missions: Closing of the Conference in St. Andrew's Church," *Winnipeg Morning Free Press*, 7 November 1896, RG 10, Vol. 3964, File 149874, Correspondence Regarding the Education of Indian Children, LAC, Ottawa.

²⁷ Penelope Edmonds and Amanada Nettleback, "Precarious Intimacies: Cross-Cultural Violence and Proximity in Settler Colonial Economies of the Pacific Rim" in *Intimacies of Violence in the Settler Colony: Economies of Dispossession Around the Pacific Rim*, ed. Penelope Edmonds and Amanada Nettleback (New York: Palgrave, 2018), 8.

Missionaries from the Church of England also looked for ways to normalize their violent removal of Indigenous children from their homes into their schools. Matheson at Onion Lake compared Indian Residential Schools to the English boarding school experience, writing in a letter to prominent Toronto-based Anglican S.H. Blake, “Separating the child from a parent for a few years does not destroy his love for his parents. And in this case, the parents often visit the children. Does the remark not apply to white children who are sent for years to distant schools? Is their love and respect for their parents destroyed?”²⁸ Owens at Fort Pelly argued that residential schools were less harmful to the children’s emotional state than industrial schools: “If we can take them into boarding schools where we can have them under constant control without cutting them off entirely from parental interest and love, they shall grow to regard the missionary on their reserves, as well as their farm instructors and agents, as their best friends.”²⁹ Writing critically of the industrial schools, Owens explained to church goers in the Diocese of Qu’Appelle how at the age of eighteen, pupils leaving the industrial schools had lost what little love of parents and kin they ever possessed.³⁰

Around the turn of the twentieth century, missionaries began to voice their apparent disdain for industrial schools. Scathing reports began to emerge about the state of industrial schools operated by the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Catholic denominations. It became known in Saskatchewan that underfunding by the federal government had resulted in hastily designed and poorly constructed buildings. There was serious overcrowding and an overall lack of proper provisions for the children, causing frequent disease outbreaks. At Battleford Industrial School,

²⁸ Letter from Matheson to Blake, no date, A113 Campbell Innes Papers, V. McKay Papers, 5. Indian Schools, 1907-1908, PAS, Regina.

²⁹Diocese of Qu’Appelle, Occasional Paper No. 84, May 1906, GR72, Qu’Appelle Association Occasional Paper, Diocese of Qu’Appelle fonds, PAS, Regina.

³⁰ Ibid.

Edward Matheson, brother to J.R. Matheson at Onion Lake, was the principal. The government reported how three boys had died in one month alone. The inspector noted there was no sunlight in any of the classrooms and dormitories, which in his view contributed to the rampant spread of tuberculosis and resulting high death rate.³¹



Figure 2.1 Battleford Industrial School, 1888. Thomas Clarke Papers, A.718, 15.4, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

Tensions simmered in Saskatchewan between industrial school and residential school principals. Residential school principals claimed their schools were more suitable homes for the children

³¹ Report of Indian Agent J.G. Day, 8 March 1910, RG 10, Vol. 3922, File 116 820-1A, General Correspondence Relating to The Battleford Industrial School, LAC, Ottawa.

because of their smaller size and their proximity to reserves, making them more ‘caring’ and homelike than industrial institutions.³²

Also, residential school principals argued they had a more ‘realistic’ approach to educating Indigenous children. Unlike the industrial school principals, who were supposed to be giving the students an industrial training to attain skills, like carpentry, printing or blacksmithing, residential school staff had no obligation to provide anything other than a rudimentary education supplemented with labour. Mission staff forced the children to work for half of the school day to prepare girls to become housekeepers and boys to become small farmers, or herdsmen.³³

However, the residential school missionaries’ primary concern with the industrial schools was not the terrible living conditions for the students but that industrial school principals kept turning up unannounced on their mission sites and forcefully removing older students to return with them to the industrial schools. Residential school principals were furious that just at the time students were mature enough for principals to exploit their labour for their needs at the school, they lost them to the industrial schools in urban centers.³⁴ Hostilities reached a climax in 1904 when the Presbyterian Church appointed a commission to study the rivalry between the industrial and residential schools. In December, the commission released their findings, blaming the entire conflict between the two types of schooling on “Indigenous tattling” and wrote that “though our missionaries call attention to this feature of the Indian character they have been altogether too susceptible to his wiles.” The report also put fault on Indigenous parents for the cause of tensions

³² Letter from W.H. Farrar to Miss Craig, 15 April 1901, 79.199C, Box 2, File 23, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto; Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 3 October 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 54, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto; Report of the Synod’s Commission on Indian Affairs, selected to visit Indian Reserves and Schools, no date, 79.199C, Box 5, File 68, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

³³ Diocese of Qu’Appelle, Occasional Paper No. 53, August 1898, GR72, Qu’Appelle Association Occasional Paper, Diocese of Qu’Appelle fonds, PAS, Regina.

³⁴ J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 136-137.

between the different institutions.³⁵ Describing the conflict between the principals at the two different levels of schooling a “misunderstanding,” the report concluded the industrial school students were in fact, not better educated or better trained compared to the residential schools, and that the residential schools offered a similar educational experience for the students. The commission’s findings even suggested that some of the residential schools’ students were significantly ‘more advanced’ in their educational knowledge than the industrial students. The committee concluded the smaller residential schools were ‘better agents for the moral uplift of the Indian,’ arguing the so-called ‘failure’ of the Indian in society was not because of his lack of intellectual ability but due to his moral weakness.³⁶

Regardless of the debates, the church was horribly managing both residential and industrial schools, resulting in similar financial, health, and enrollment problems. Although the residential schools were smaller institutions than industrial schools, and often situated on or near the reserve, the same desperate conditions for students existed. *St. Matthew’s Magazine*, a church periodical, published an article by an anonymous writer who described a visit to Gordon’s Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan stating, “He never saw a more dilapidated and unsanitary institution. The rooms are small and dark, low pitched and very badly ventilated—if it all. Conveniences there are none; sleeping apartments reek with foul air; kitchen and dining hall are underground, and conditions here are abominable—fit breeding places for all kinds of diseases.”³⁷

³⁵ Report of the Synod’s Commission on Indian Affairs, selected to visit Indian Reserves and Schools, no date, 79.199C, Box 5, File 68, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ “Church and State and the Indian” in *St. Matthew’s Magazine*, no date, RG 10, Vol. 6309, File 654-1, part 1, Gordon Residential School, LAC, Ottawa.

In March 1907, the Department of Interior and Indian Affairs initiated a medical inspection of the schools conducted by Dr. P.H. Bryce to report on the conditions of the prairie schools. Bryce inspected thirty-five schools and three months later produced an exhaustive report outlining the connections between the poor conditions of the schools and the high death rates of students infected with tuberculosis. For example, he noted that at the File Hills Residential School, 69 percent of all discharged students were dead at the time of his report.³⁸ After reviewing the conditions at the schools, Bryce was surprised the death rates were not higher. Principal C.W. Whyte at Crowstand Residential School explained to Baird, who sat on the Foreign Missions Committee, that he was constantly surrounded by scrofula germs at the school. He explained that no one should enter missionary work among Indigenous peoples unless they had first class health and a good amount of vitality due to the threat to their health from working in the schools.³⁹

Although there were high death rates of students at the residential and industrial schools, missionaries avoided dealing with parental grief. Thousands of students died alone, far from their parents while living in industrial and residential schools in Canada, although an exact number is not known. This distance and the parents' inability to be close to their children at the time of death led to what the *2024 Final Report for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves* called the 'ungrievability' of Indigenous children's lives.⁴⁰ Indigenous children were not offered dignity or basic human rights in the institutions, nor in their deaths, where they were placed in unmarked

³⁸ Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 123.

³⁹ Letter from C.W. Whyte to Baird, 22 May 1896, Box E, File G362, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁴⁰ On the notion that some lives are deemed "ungrievable" see Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2016), 25 in Canada. Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools. Sites of Truth, Sites of Conscience, Unmarked Burials and Mass Graves of Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children in Canada, 2024, 13. <https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/1.OSI-Sites-of-Truth-Sites-of-Conscience.pdf>

graves at the schools, far from their kin and home communities. In their letters to the foreign mission's committees, missionaries downplayed the number of student deaths at the schools, often contributing a sentence or two that a pupil had died since their last letter, or merely commenting on the 'sad state' of things and offering little elaboration. For example, in March 1894, Principal Alexander Skene of File Hills Residential School wrote to the foreign missions committee on the state of his school, stating, "We began the year with twelve children but two were taken home, one in April, the other in May. Yes, they sang about Jesus, spoke of Jesus, and that place of many mansions, and we believe went home to Jesus."⁴¹

Yet on mission sites where children remained on the reserves with their parents, missionaries had markedly different experiences. Living directly amongst Indigenous families, missionaries witnessed intense parental love from Indigenous parents towards their children and encountered the deep wells of suffering of parents upon the death of a child. Lucy Baker, a single female missionary on the Makoce Waste reserve, known today as the Wahpeton Dakota Nation near Prince Albert, operated a Presbyterian mission site and day school where she boarded children in the mission house while parents were away hunting and trapping. In 1896, she wrote to Miss L. M. Harvie, organizing secretary for the W.M.S. about an immense outbreak of tuberculous on the reserve, stating how her mission home was operating as both a school and a hospital for the reserve residents. In her letter, she vividly described to Miss Harvie the details surrounding the horrific death of a little girl, Mary Winyan. She wrote, "The father seated on the floor hugging his dead child all covered with blood swaying himself in the most frantic manner wailing most piteously...the mother who had lifted her was also covered in blood and wailing and busy gathering up all the earthly belongings of her dear child to place them beside her."

⁴¹ Report of the Mission at File Hills for the year ending March 31, 1894, Box E, File 589, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

Baker remarked in her letter, “how a pagan would do anything to please her child” and introspectively remarked how she and her missionary assistant, Miss Annie Cameron, had never witnessed such a scene of despondent grief.⁴²

Highlighting the intense parental love exhibited towards the child, Baker noted how it was a powerful moment of emotional suffering to witness. Yet instead of concluding her story by letting the reader ponder the depths of parental emotional pain, Baker manipulated the narrative to explain how her and Cameron’s missionary interventions on the reserve were remolding the emotional expressions of the reserve peoples along Euro-Canadian standards. In a letter published by the W.M.S. on the incident, Miss Baker used the death of the child to report that, because of the women’s missionary endeavors, the emotional characteristics of the adults on the reserve were being transformed from ‘savage’ to ‘civilized.’ She wrote, “Now that it is all over, we have been contrasting the present with the past and are thankful to see the effects of a silent influence working among them. Since the first outburst we have had very little wailing, formally it would have continued for several days after a death.”⁴³ She claimed that because of her missionary efforts, Indigenous parents were modifying their grieving habits. For Christian missionaries, the marked difference in emotional expression indicated evidence of civilizing change in the lives of the colonized. Historian Joanna Cruikshank argues that, in cross-cultural contexts, because of language and cultural differences, missionaries struggled to access the inner life of the colonized subjects and focused on subject’s emotional displays to determine internal changes in their lives.⁴⁴

⁴² Letter from Lucy Baker to Miss Harvie, 10 February 1896, (S) A 1076, Correspondence, Speeches, 1870-1896, Lucy Baker fonds, PAS, Regina.

⁴³ “A Sad Scene,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, June 1896, 46-48.

⁴⁴ Joanna Cruikshank, “Blood, Tears and Race: Moravian Missionaries and Indigenous Bodies in Colonial Australia,” *Interface* 14 no. 2 (2011): 24.

Missionaries desired to alter the emotional impressions of Indigenous peoples which were left on missionaries in the foreign 'field.' Sara Ahmed argues we can think about 'impression' as the emotional "marks left by others" or "a sign of the persistence of others even in the face of their absence."⁴⁵ Missionaries were discomforted by the emotional impressions of Indigenous grief over the death of their children and sought to conform it along Euro-Canadian emotional expressions. It was unsettling for missionaries to sit with the grief-ridden emotional impressions of Indigenous peoples. They wanted their emotional reactions to their children's deaths lessened for the missionaries' benefit in order to separate themselves from blame. White missionaries saw Indigenous expressions of sorrow as being far too excessive and extreme compared to Anglo-Saxon displays of grief. Alice Elizabeth Dodds (née Baron), missionary wife to Francis Dodds at Moose Mountain reserve in southern Saskatchewan, wrote to the church women in eastern Canada describing how two young children died on the reserve and how the mother and all the other women on the reserve squatted in the snow and cried bitterly. She asked the church women, "Have you ever been at an Indian funeral? If so, you know the peculiar, weird sound the women make."⁴⁶

According to the missionaries, Indigenous women failed to practice self-restraint and self-regulation in their emotional articulations. Rev. Neil Gilmour at Hurricane Hills wrote to the W.F.M.S., "I will never forget the picture that presented itself on one occasion we entered the house where a little boy lay dying. Only a few minutes before a baby girl had died, and squatting on the earthen floor were perhaps a dozen women, their straight black hair hanging in wild disorder over their paint and tear-stained faces, while from dozens of wounds on their arms and

⁴⁵ Ahmed, "Collective Feelings Or, The Impressions Left by Others," 30.

⁴⁶ "Sewing Classes for the Indians," *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, June 1899, 61-62.

feet the red blood trickled to the ground.”⁴⁷ Historian Sarah Carter argues that describing Indigenous women, particularly reserve women, through negative stereotypes gave power in the settler colonial order to the colonial administrators and statesmen.⁴⁸ Missionaries depicted Indigenous mothers as ‘wild heathens’ who cared for their children but expressed their emotion in savage ways—a parental representation which validated the missionary argument on the inadequacy of Indigenous mothers and fathers to properly raise their children and prepare them to assimilate into the Canadian nation state. In missionary discourse, Indigenous children needed to be removed from their communities to learn Euro-Canadian emotional behavior for their assimilation into settler society.

Missionary Children, Racial Anxiety, and Empire

In the 1880s and 1890s, missionaries and their children arrived from Britain and eastern Canada to live amongst Indigenous locals, moving onto reserves to run the mission stations and residential schools and live in proximity to other mixed-Indigenous communities. Although the Canadian state signed treaties with First Nations leaders in the 1870s to open the land for white settler development and repress Métis territorial rights in the Northwest Rebellion in 1885, the population of Saskatchewan was largely Indigenous in the 1890s. In the northern regions of the province, which was made up of lakes and boreal forest, Indigenous ways of living were the economic mainstays for most people. In the southern reaches, small settler communities formed but were confined to the Canadian Pacific Railroad main line, in the Assiniboine and Qu’Appelle valleys in the southeast. Small settler communities also resided near the North Saskatchewan

⁴⁷ “Northwest Indians: Striking Incidents,” *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, September 1897, 150.

⁴⁸ Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada’s Prairie West* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 160.

River, in the Prince Albert and Battleford areas where the railway had intended to be laid.⁴⁹ The population of Saskatchewan in 1891 was only 41,522—far from the population explosion which officials had envisioned in decades previous.⁵⁰ Colonial officials, missionaries, and statemen desired to transform western Canada into a white agricultural-paradise, but the vision had not materialized by the early 1890s.

Mission sites and residential schools were mixed-raced spaces where Protestant missionaries and members of their families and Indigenous peoples encountered and interacted with one another, fostering missionary concerns about racial contamination and contact. Meddling in the affective lives of Indigenous parents and children by reimagining emotional kinship connections was instrumental for how missionaries perceived their own domestic sentiments. For missionary parents, racial anxieties surfaced over their families' close contact with Indigenous peoples on mission sites and at the schools, sparking apprehensions about their children's physical and social well-being. Historian Emily Manktelow argues, "Contamination, separation, and moral contagion became the ciphers through which missionary families' interactions with Indigenous peoples were understood."⁵¹ The British founded settler colonies in the empire on the myth of the superiority of Anglo-Saxon race. Anthropologist Ann Stoler suggests that colonial authority had two powerful premises: the first, that Europeans in the colonies had an "identifiable and discrete biological and social entity," a superior culture marked by cohesive racial characteristics, and second, these racial boundaries of whiteness were self-

⁴⁹ Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Allston: Fifth Press, 2005), 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵¹ Manktelow, *Missionary Families*, 163. For more on missionary families see, Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Classes, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Patricia Grimshaw, "Faith, Missionary Life, and the Family," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Nancy Bunge, *Converting the Missionaries: The Wheeler Family and the Ojibwe* (Cham: Springer, 2024);

evident and recognizable.⁵² Fears of digressing from the imagined boundaries of whiteness, which were marked by physical characteristics, social mores, religion, and cultural ideas, shaped missionaries' experiences when they took their children with them around the globe. Living in 'foreign' spaces with their families, missionaries worried about racial intercultural contact and its implications for their children's lives.

The atrociously high death rates in the 1880s and 1890s on the mission sites and at residential schools affirmed the missionary conviction that the 'foreign' mission field was a racially dangerous and precarious space for whites and their offspring. Convinced they needed to 'gift' the Christian message of salvation to Indigenous populations, missionaries believed contact with the racialized 'peril' was a byproduct of the mission vocation to 'love' the world for Christ. Although they were convinced that part of the reason for the high death rate on reserves and at the schools was due to the 'biologically inferiority' of Indigenous persons, they still worried about the health of their own children, which was impacted by the spread of disease. Rev. Owens and his wife lost three children in a matter of weeks to an outbreak of scarlet fever on the reserve. He described arriving home one day and seeing his children playing with "sick Indian children" and within days his children came down sick with fever. He wrote to church officials in England that three of his children had passed away in quick succession. "Both the mother and I are stunned and hardly able to think for days, he wrote."⁵³ Trying to make sense of his grief he stated, "The loss of them may be due to our surroundings and circumstances, but some persons must do the work we do. Someone must help these helpless ignorant ones."⁵⁴ Pained by personal

⁵² Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 42.

⁵³ Letter from Rev. Owens to the Secretary of the S.P.G., London, 16 January 1903, E-Series Mission Reports, 1901-1903, U.S.P.G., E series reports for Canada, Rhodes House Library, Oxford, England, <https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/59/canada-in-records-from-colonial-missionaries-1722-1952/access?documentId=6108>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

grief, Owens' letter reiterated to church officials in England the dangers of mixed-race relationships in colonized settings and how interactions with colonized populations brought untold threats to the lives of missionary families who laboured and lived amongst Indigenous families.

Missionary families also suffered the loss of children within the residential and industrial school system due to the rapid and unbiased spread of disease within the institutions. Edward Matheson, principal at Battleford Industrial School, had four children who never made it past infancy. One of his children died from whooping cough at the school when he was nine months old. He also lost his wife during his time as principal. Reverend A.J. McLeod, principal at the Regina Indian Industrial School, died during his principalship from a contracted illness, as did two of his children, who were buried in the school graveyard beside the Indigenous pupils of the school.⁵⁵ However, missionaries gave their children's death a status of racial martyrdom where they could be grieved as part of the church's sacrifice to 'save' the colonized subjects. Their deaths were "grievable" and made dignified because of their whiteness. For example, staff buried McLeod's children in the Regina Indian Industrial School's graveyard and marked the sites with tombstones for remembrance. Surrounding their graves were dozens of unmarked Indigenous children's graves. The tombstones of McLeod's children were the only two marked graves in the entire Regina Industrial School cemetery.⁵⁶

Arriving in Saskatchewan, missionary mothers and fathers expressed fearful hesitations over their children's living arrangements. In 1894, G.S. Winter, a Church of England missionary

⁵⁵ Ruth Matheson Buck, *The Doctor Rode Side Saddle* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 98, 131; Letter from Jen McAra to William M. Graham, 14 November 1921, RG 10, Vol. 3927, File 116 836-1C, General Correspondence Relating to The Regina Industrial School, LAC, Ottawa.

⁵⁶ Evie Ruddy, "Once Abandoned, This Cemetery Became A Marker for Indigenous Reconciliation," Broadview, November 1, 2016, <https://broadview.org/regina-indian-industrial-school-cemetery/>.

from Bristol, arrived with his wife and children at the Sandy Lake mission, now the Ahtahkakoop First Nation in central Saskatchewan, and was dismayed at the state of the house that the C.M.S. expected the family to live in. Winter explained that the house was in a terrible state, so filthy and disgusting that his wife was on the verge of vomiting. They tried to sleep in the house for two nights but on the third night they moved outdoors because they could not manage the smell and filth. They left the house and moved into the Hudson's Bay Company post and were awaiting to hear from the church missionary society where they could reside since they refused to return to the house at Sandy Lake. Winter wrote to church superiors that he was furious with C.M.S. missionary J.A. Mackay, who let his family leave Prince Albert for the Sandy Lake home thinking it was an acceptable accommodation. Winter had spoken with an Indigenous student from Emmanuel College Residential School in Prince Albert and the student mentioned that he would not sleep in the house. In telling this story, Winter underlined the point to church officials that the house was not even up to standard for the local 'natives.'⁵⁷

Winters' demand for new housing signified the privilege that came with Europeaness and the culturally coded racial distinctions between what indicated appropriate housing for European and Indigenous peoples. While Indigenous children lived in horrid and decrepit schools with windowless dorms, without sanitary washing and bathing facilities, and inadequate heating, the expectations for missionary children of European parents widely differed. Domestic arrangements in an emerging settler society were meant to highlight the hallmarks of what a proper Anglo-Canadian society should look like. Historian Adele Perry explains that "the

⁵⁷ Letter from G.S. Winter to Mr. Higgins, 12 September 1894, G1C10, Reel 73, File 125, North-West Canada: Original Papers, Letters and Papers of individual missionaries, catechists and others, 1893-1894, C.M.S., Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

appearance of family migration marked the transition from fur-trade to settler colony.”⁵⁸ Winter bringing his white British family to Saskatchewan meant that the home needed to operate as a racial delineation from the Indigenous population and had to meet the standards of proper Anglo-Saxon domesticity, which it had failed to do.

Sexual anxieties surrounding the vulnerability of missionary children and the threat to their ‘purity’ abounded at the site of residential schooling. In 1914, claims of widespread sexual abuses became known at Crowstand Residential School near Kamsack, Saskatchewan, under the leadership of Presbyterian missionary Rev. W. McWhinney, who lived with his missionary family in a separate home on school grounds. When allegations surfaced that the farm instructor, H. Everett, had been taking Indigenous female students into his private room and having “immoral relations,” McWhinney admitted to Presbyterian church officials that upon learning about these transgressions, rather than calling the police, he had asked Everett to leave town on the next train. He reported to church officials that he was not up for turning the affair into a criminal investigation. Instead, he called Everett, “A well meaning young man who had fallen in a time of weakness and to prosecute him would only ruin his life.”⁵⁹

McWhinney admitted that he was aware of sexual abuse being an ongoing problem at his school. Furious over the lack of protection for their daughters at Crowstand, Indigenous parents from the nearby Cote Reserve demanded the school be closed and converted into a day school.⁶⁰ Andrew Grant, the Presbyterian Superintendent of the Board of Home Missions, suggested that if they closed the residential school, McWhinney could be transferred to the File Hills Residential

⁵⁸ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 146.

⁵⁹ Letter from W. McWhinney to Dr. Grant, 5 August 1914, RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1 Part 1, General Administration of Crowstand Residential School, LAC, Ottawa.

⁶⁰ Letter by Chief Joe Cote, 1 October 1914, RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1 Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

School to take over the principalship. Yet McWhinney protested this transfer on account of the safety of his own daughters. He wrote, “There is no place anywhere within reasonable distance where my own children could go to school unless they went to school with Indian pupils, and anyone who has had experience in this work knows that this is not desirable. I have as much real fondness for the Indian children as anyone, but I feel I must safeguard the welfare of my two little girls.”⁶¹ McWhinney offered no protection to the Indigenous young girls in his school, suggesting they were to blame for the purported abuses that had transpired with Everett. “Indian boys and girls have strong sexual passions,” he wrote in his letter to Grant.⁶²

In his opinion, his white daughters required the most stringent protections to safeguard their physical and moral well-being living in the racialized environment of the residential school site, yet the Indigenous school girls’ physical safety could be disregarded. This double standard was rooted in Victorian culture which epitomized the proper gender order for Anglo-Saxon girls through the image of the ‘angel in the home,’ a figure of gentility, morality, and piety. She was supposed to remain in the domestic realm and learn to become a proper white woman.

Missionary daughters were to grow up and become ‘helpmates’ for their husbands and bear children as good virtuous Christian wives.⁶³ The possibility of sexual abuse at the residential school institutions threatened this gender prescription for Anglo-Saxon girls. McWhinney was fearful of sexual advances from other Indigenous children towards his young daughters.

Historian Margaret Strobel argues that across the colonies in the British empire, European women were thought to arouse the sexual appetites of Indigenous men and so needed

⁶¹ Letter from McWhinney to Grant, 24 September 1914, RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1 Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

⁶² Letter from McWhinney to Grant, 15 August 1914, RG 10, Vol. 6027, File 117-1-1 Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

⁶³ Kristin Burnett, “Aboriginal and White Women in the Publications of John Maclean, Egerton Ryerson Young, and John McDougall,” in *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women’s History*, ed. Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roome, and Char Smith (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 110.

protection.⁶⁴ Colonial stereotypes cast Indigenous peoples as sexually deviant and lewd, their lustful urges threatening the purity of European women and children. Missionaries contributed to these stereotypes at residential schools where Indigenous children became socially coded as sexually non-normative. White missionary daughters required safeguarding from the imagined sexual advances of other Indigenous children within the schools, which fit the racism and imperialism of the period.⁶⁵

In 1896, the racialized makeup of the province massively transitioned following the appointment of Clifford Sifton as the new Liberal Minister of the Interior. Effectively opening the prairie west to immigrants in search of land through an energetic campaign to attract homesteaders, the population of Saskatchewan drastically increased. Historian Gerald Friesen argues that Sifton and his department brought Canada to the rest of the world's attention.⁶⁶ Millions of immigrants began to pour into the prairie west in the last decade of the nineteenth and into the first two decades of the twentieth centuries. Although Sifton favoured British settlers, he desired to populate the land and turn the prairie west into settler agricultural space and made the decision to open Canada's door to immigrants from central and eastern Europe. The incoming European and British immigrants essentially engulfed the Indigenous population in the Northwest. By 1906, the First Nations population represented less than three percent of Saskatchewan's population.⁶⁷ Missionaries began to witness the appearance of new towns and homesteads forming around their mission sites, and came to the realization that they were labouring less and less in a 'foreign' mission's field. Missionaries fretted about their children's

⁶⁴ Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 6.

⁶⁵ On sexual abuse in the missionary world see Emily Manktelow, *Gender, Power and Sexual Abuse in the Pacific: Rev. Simpson's "Improper Liberties"* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

⁶⁶ Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 250.

⁶⁷ Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 64.

daily contact with racialized ‘others’ and created ways to help their children interact with the growing settler society out of concern that otherwise their children might become too acclimatized to ‘native’ ways.

Although missionary children lived on reserves or at the schools, they had uniquely privileged upbringings in comparison to Indigenous children. Ruth Matheson Buck, who was born at Onion Lake in 1906 and lived at the mission with her family, recalled how the Matheson children slept in separate bedrooms from the Indigenous children’s dormitories. They ate their meals with the staff separate from the school children, played on special tennis courts, learned how to play the organ in their leisure time, and travelled on numerous occasions to visit extended family and friends.⁶⁸ Agnes Fox and Maria Sinclair, who were students at Onion Lake Residential School during the years the Mathesons were in charge, recollected on their experiences at the school and that their remembrances vastly differed from the Matheson girls. They recalled how the food was terrible; they lived off black bread. The women remembered an organ at the school, but that it was only intended for the staff.⁶⁹

Principal Sinclair at the Regina Industrial School lived with his wife and family in a two-story brick house close to the school. He elicited the anger of the Indian Department for his excessive ordering of clothing and extravagant foodstuffs which he claimed were for the students but were actually intended for his family and fellow staff mates. In 1904 Sinclair ordered syrup, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, peaches, red cherries, pears, pineapples, apricots, raisins, bananas, chocolate, dates, icing sugar, and canned salmon while the students lived off porridge

⁶⁸ “The Matheson’s of Saskatchewan,” Address to the Golden Jubilee Meeting of the Saskatoon Diocesan Board of the Women’s Auxiliary, 11 May 1955, F 200, Acc. 720, IV Miscellaneous, 2b, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS, Regina.

⁶⁹ Agnes Fox and Maria Sinclair. Interview by Mary Mountain and Iris Baker, 6 November 1973, Indian History Film Project, PAS, Regina.

and skim milk.⁷⁰ If missionary children contracted an illness on the mission site, they were taken to the nearest town to see a local doctor and treated with the latest medical advancements, while Indigenous children were left to die in the institutions, which doctors only visited every couple of weeks or months. In addition, government officials cautioned principals to be stringent with their budgets and encouraged them to withhold calling medical professionals to come to the aid of sick Indigenous children. J.D. McLean, Secretary of the Department for Indian Affairs, wrote in a letter to William Morris Graham, Indian Agent for Qu'Appelle, that although the Indian Department was technically willing to pay for a First Nations child to be sent to the hospital if sick, to save costs the "greatest care shall be taken to act with discretion before it is decided to send the patient to the hospital."⁷¹

Separate schooling for missionary children from the residential schools offered a physical and social parting from the mission site to ease parental anxiety concerning their children's racial 'contamination.' Across the British empire in the nineteenth century, missionaries sent their children back to Britain to attend English boarding schools to receive a Christian British education at home in the British metropole, allowing missionary mothers and fathers to concentrate on the larger mission Christian family. C.M.S. missionaries in Saskatchewan dispatched their children to the Limpsfield institution in the Surrey Hills of England, which offered a girls' school, a boys' school, and a nursery home for missionary children. In 1891, Rev. John Isaac Taylor, C.M.S. British missionary to Onion Lake, remarked that he wanted to send his children to Limpsfield as he and his wife were anxious for them to be surrounded with other social and religious influences of progress and culture: "Which can hardly be found outside of

⁷⁰ Letter from Martin Benson to Deputy Superintendent General, 30 December 1904, RG 10, Vol. 3927, File 116836-1A, LAC, Ottawa.

⁷¹ Letter from J.D. McLean to W.M. Graham, 22 May 1917, RG 10, Vol. 1394, C-13934, File Hills Qu'Appelle Agency - Subject Files, Monthly Reports, Medical, Employees, LAC, Ottawa.

our own home; and that they should early be removed from an environment, of the undesirable possibilities of which, from their knowledge of the Cree language, in an always anxious, and on our guard, but from which we have good ground for believing God has hitherto in his mercy kept them.”⁷² Taylor wanted his children to leave Onion Lake before they learned Cree, a signal that they were becoming too intimately connected to Indigenous people and their ways of knowing. Their children’s departure from British bourgeois thinking, culture, and ideology frightened Saskatchewan missionaries. According to Stoler, it was presumed that European children could withstand native cultural influences up till the age of six where they spent most of the time with their mothers, preventing them from learning the Indigenous languages and assimilating into native ways, but after the age of six they would be exposed to the corrupting influences of the colony.⁷³

Limpsfield officials presented the school to prospective missionary parents as a ‘true home,’ promising to provide sympathy and individual attention to ease the emotional pain of sustained separation between parents and children. Appealing to missionary sentimentality, the home offered to be a substitute for parental love and care, but it pained missionaries to part with their children. Winter at Sturgeon Lake wrote to C.M.S. officials that he and his wife had four children and chose to leave their oldest son, a nine-year-old boy, at Limpsfield and how it was such a “severe struggle” for the couple who were working at Sturgeon Lake as C.M.S. missionaries. Remaking the emotional ties of Indigenous children required their own affective reorganizing of intimate relations within their own families. Fears of the colonial world and their children’s interactions with it signalled intense discomfort for missionaries, whereby they chose

⁷² Letter from John Taylor to Rev. C.C. Fenn, 12 June 1891, G1C10, Reel 72, File 165, North-West Canada: Original Papers, Letters and Papers of individual missionaries, catechists and others, 1891 (161-end), 1892, C.M.S., Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

⁷³ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, 74.

to separate from their children, breaking up their families and homes for the sake of their mission work and the ‘protection’ of their children’s Anglo-Saxon ties.

Other schooling options for Protestant missionary parents in Saskatchewan were to send their children to boarding schools in eastern Canada. Missionary John Hines reported how his daughter was at Limpsfield but was moving to the Anglican-run Havergal College for girls in Toronto run by Principal Mary Ellen Knox. Bishop of Saskatchewan J.A. Newnham and his wife Letitia also sent their daughters to Havergal when he was Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Moosonee at Moose Factory. In 1904, when Newnham moved to Prince Albert to become the Bishop of Saskatchewan, he and his wife established St. Alban’s Ladies College in Prince Albert for the sake of ‘bettering’ their daughter’s education. The Matheson’s at Onion Lake also sent their daughters to St. Alban’s because J.R. and Elizabeth Matheson’s girls had gained the reputation of being ‘those wild Mathesons from the bush’ and needed proper Victorian refinement.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Buck, *The Doctor Ride Side Saddle*, 132; St. Alban’s Day and Boarding School for Girls Pamphlet, St. Alban’s College, advertisement, etc. 1925, Diocese of Saskatchewan Archives, St. Alban’s Anglican Cathedral, Prince Albert. I visited these archives in May 2022. The archivist kindly shared a box of records from St. Alban’s Ladies College, where they were being temporarily stored in the church basement.

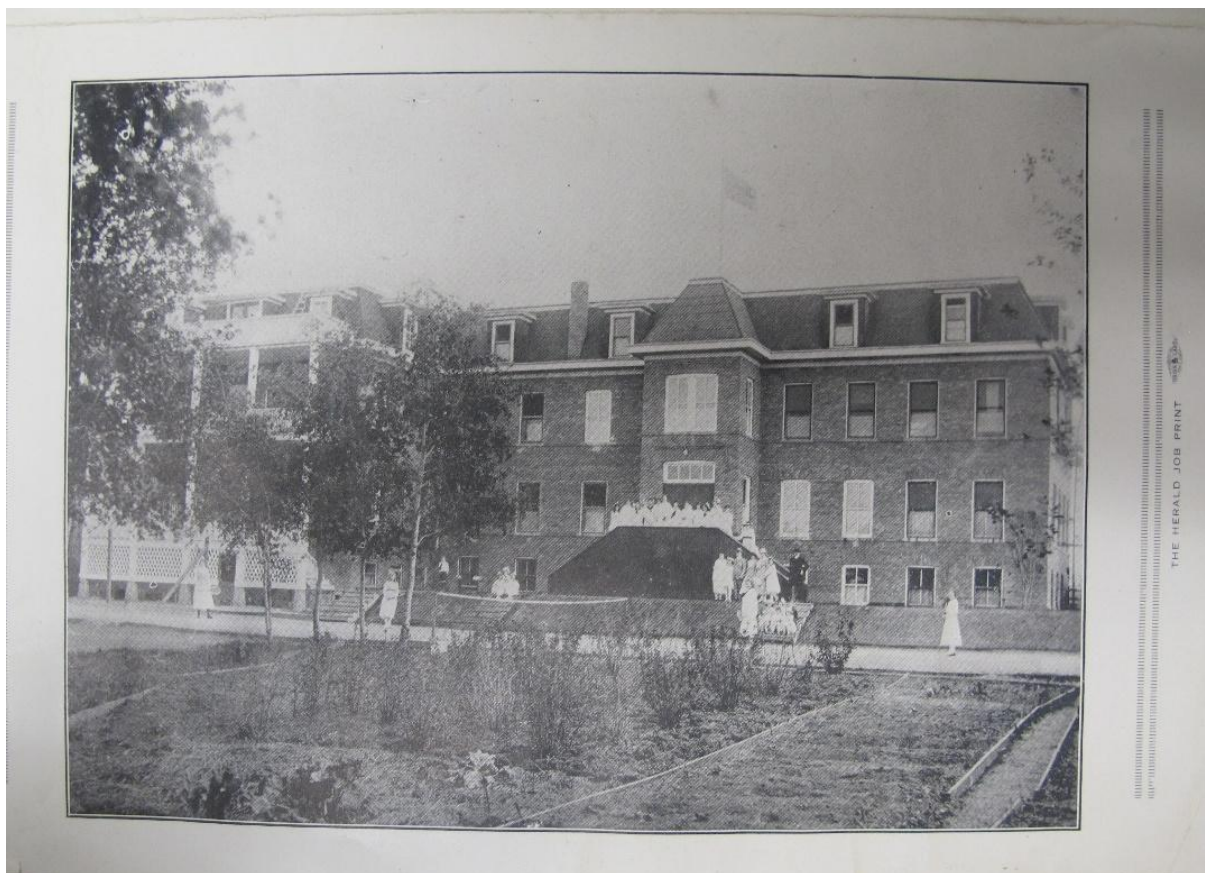


Figure 2.2 St. Alban's College. Diocese of Saskatchewan Archives, ED-4, Prince Albert. Note the tennis courts for the schoolgirls.

St. Alban's offered a 'proper' education for the girls which catered to middle-and upper-class girls from across Canada. The Newnham's modelled the school off the British boarding school experience. Staffed by female teachers from the British Isles, who came with long lists of expert qualifications, the girls studied the core subjects of a modern education and then could partake in extracurricular classes in violin, voice, piano, drama, French, drawing, and dance. At schools like Limpsfield, Havergal, or St. Alban's, school staff assured missionary parents that their children were being properly acclimatized along British cultural, social, and religious traditions, a respite from the racialized 'foreignness' of the colony. Missionaries understood that the racial and social makeup of the prairie population was changing dramatically with Sifton's open-door

immigration policy and they wanted to prepare their children to function as educated and upstanding citizens in the emerging Canadian nation state. As settlers poured into Saskatchewan, missionaries perceived of mission sites as liminal spaces on the edges of settler society and sought to move their children toward settler centers, both figuratively and literally, to advance them beyond a station which Indigenous school students were never afforded.

Domestic Arrangements and Sexual Morality

Single white female missionaries arrived on mission sites in Saskatchewan with a maternal obligation to ‘love’ and ‘care’ for Indigenous children as a means to draw them into the Christian family of God. Historian Myra Rutherdale, in her study of female missionaries to British Columbia and the Yukon, describes how the notion of ‘motherhood’ gave Anglo women missionaries a sense of maternal power in the mission field: “The image lent a sense of status and freedom and created boundaries of maternal authority that gave women missionaries a feeling of self-worth and responsibility.”⁷⁵ Maternalism was a pervasive discourse which missionary women held close to their sense of self to justify the domestic rearrangement of Indigenous children’s lives by moving them out of their homes and into schooling institutions. But as much as residential school missionary discourse represented children being cared for by ‘loving’ missionary mothers, nothing could be further from the truth.

Residential schools were emotionally cold and distant environments for the children, where missionaries promised parental love but failed to deliver. The 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Report* extensively documented how children ran away from the institutions as forms of resistance. Indigenous parents refused to send their

⁷⁵ Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 99.

children and staff physically and sexually disciplined them to maintain order and obedience.⁷⁶ This juxtaposition of maternal care versus callous disregard for the students is evident in the experiences of Onion Lake student, Matilda Black. In her missionary family memoir about her upbringing at Onion Lake, Ruth Matheson Buck described how the staff relied on the domestic help of Black, who was an eighteen-year-old female student transferred from the Battleford Industrial School. According to Buck, Black loved her time at the school and described the school as her home where she supposedly stated to her friends, “We are just like one family.”⁷⁷ The unreliability of missionary testimony on the prairies becomes vastly apparent in a report from the Indian Agent at the Onion Lake Agency. Indian Agent George Mann wrote in his report on the Onion Lake mission that Black had deserted from the school in February 1898 to return to the reserve to be with her parents and all efforts to bring her back to the school had been fruitless.⁷⁸ Onion Lake was not the warm familial environment Buck wrote that it was. Missionaries described benevolent and pleasant domestic atmospheres at the school, yet such narratives depended on the invisibility of Indigenous testimony.

Despite their optimistic posturing about the state of the schools, single female missionaries lived at the residential schools, where they laboured for low pay under arduous conditions, including poor staff morale. As a result, staff frequently quit in angry resignations over the terrible conditions at the schools. Mary MacIntosh, a newly arrived teacher at Crowstand Residential School, wrote to Baird in 1893 detailing that many of the children in the school were infected with scrofula sores. She was angry that the principal had failed to isolate

⁷⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1*, 517-613 (see chapters 21, 22, 24, and 25 on discipline, covering up sexual abuse, truancy, and separating children from their parents.)

⁷⁷ Buck, *The Doctor Rode Side Saddle*, 80.

⁷⁸ Letter from George Mann to Secretary Department of Indian Affairs, 2 February 1898, RG 10, Vol. 3889, C-10195, File 95833-15, LAC, Ottawa.

the children once they were sick. She wrote how she was always freezing at the school and had developed rheumatism in her joints. When she developed sores on her face, she worried she had contracted tuberculosis and asked to be transferred to the Okanese day school run by Presbyterian missionary George Flett near the Riding Mountain House, a Hudson's Bay Company post, hoping it would be a less strenuous and harmful position to her health.⁷⁹

In addition to the constant barrage of illness at the school, staff infighting was a common occurrence at the institutions. Arguments over labour divisions amongst staff frequently erupted. Anger brewed amongst staff members when they felt their co-workers were not contributing fairly to the heavy workload of running the boarding schools. Furthermore, relations between missionaries at different institutions were often hostile, especially over the matter of children's bodies as objects of labour. Institutions moved older children around to tend to labour needs at different schools. The flexibility of brown children's forced labour was part of the capitalist infrastructure of the institutions. Yet this 'borrowing' of children's bodies led to missionary fighting over the control of labour exploitation. Kate Gillespie, principal at File Hills Residential School, wrote to the Foreign Missions Committee in 1903 explaining that she wanted to take a female student from the Regina Industrial School to assist her with the domestic labour at File Hills school. Upon finding out that Principal Sinclair from the Regina Industrial School was angry with her over the request, she wrote, "It is a pity that the schools are so related to each other as to create anything like wounded feelings."⁸⁰

Day schools in Saskatchewan had their own distinctive domestic challenges for church staff. Women missionary teachers lived in modest mission houses, sometimes sharing them with

⁷⁹ Letter from Mary MacIntosh to Andrew Baird, 15 February 1893, Box E, File F60, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg; 8 March 1893, Box E, File F123.

⁸⁰ Kate Gillespie to R.P McKay, 14 August 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 52, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

the missionary and his family, which often served as both the schoolhouse and mission residence. On some reserves, female missionaries lived in the schoolhouse if the missionary occupied the mission house. Thomas Cory, Indian Agent for the Moose Mountain Agency in 1913, reported that the teacher, Miss Innes, who in his opinion had been a complete failure in her regard for the children, was living in the kitchen of the school, where the bathtub in the bathroom served as her bed.⁸¹ In addition to uncomfortable living quarters, the government expected day school teachers on the reserves to teach the students, prepare a mid-day meal, instruct the older girls in sewing and cooking, and visit the women on the reserve in their homes, giving them instruction in cleanliness, ventilation, meal preparation, and other areas of management related to sanitation, which they called the ‘domestic sciences.’ This system depended on a massive amount of female labour. Faced with a heavy workload and a dreadfully low government salary, church officials appointed day school teachers who exploited Indigenous children’s labour to maintain a minimum standard of living on mission sites on the reserve.

At Little Pines Day School near Battleford, W. Murison, Inspector of Indian Agencies in Saskatchewan, wrote about how the Department of Indian Affairs was tremendously satisfied with the day school teacher, Miss A.L. Cunningham, an Anglican missionary teacher who held a Junior Matriculation Certificate from Havergal College. According to the Anglican Archdeacon, J.A. McKay, she was “one of the best Indian school teachers that I know of, and, under her management the school is admirably conducted.”⁸² Yet Beatrice Nightraveller, from Little Pine reserve, attended Cunningham’s day school and remembered things quite differently. She recalled how Miss Cunningham was a severely strict teacher at the school and treated her like a

⁸¹ Extract from Report of Thomas Cory, Indian Agent in connection with Moose Mountain Agency, 4 August 1913, RG 10, Vol. 6294, File 624-1, part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

⁸² Letter from J.A. McKay to D.C. Scott, 12 April 1923, RG 10, Vol. 6287, File 612-1, part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

slave, depending on her free labour to run the school which impacted her studies. Being interviewed years later, Nightraveller questioned, “Why didn’t she hire somebody to do the washing? Why did a school child have to do it?”⁸³ Similar to residential schools, Indigenous children at day schools in Saskatchewan received sub-standard education. Missionary workers exploited children’s bodies as sources of free labour. While white women teachers at day schools could take pride in their successful contributions to the workforce as a new kind of working woman in the early twentieth century, it was on the backs of Indigenous child labor.

The challenges of seclusion plagued female missionaries residing on mission sites in Saskatchewan. As racial attitudes hardened by the end of the nineteenth century, missionary women, convinced of their racial and cultural superiority as white women, did little to befriend Indigenous women. Rutherford points out how white female missionaries tried to ‘mother’ Indigenous children and sought to mentor young Indigenous women in the schools but suggested there is little evidence to suggest that they tried to have ‘sister solidarity’ with other Indigenous women.⁸⁴ Annie Brown, an English missionary teacher at Lac La Ronge Residential School, wrote to the W.M.S. in October 1906 that, “This is a very lonely place, not a single white woman have I seen since April.”⁸⁵ Elizabeth Matheson, missionary at Onion Lake, explained to the W.M.S. how their mission was two hundred miles from the nearest railway station, reiterating to white church women how far they were from ‘civilization.’⁸⁶ Some missionary women were overwhelmed by the isolation of mission projects and so abandoned the vocation altogether. Margaret Drever, wife to Anglican Métis missionary J.A. McKay, described living at the Stanley

⁸³ Ada Ladue and Beatrice Nightraveller. Interview by Christine Welsh, 15 June 1983, Indian History Film Project, PAS, Regina.

⁸⁴ Rutherford, *Women and the White Man’s God*, 99.

⁸⁵ “Letter from Annie Brown to General Corresponding Secretary,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, August 1907, 269, GSA, Toronto.

⁸⁶ “Report of the Fourth Triennial Meeting,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, May 1895, 646.

Mission on the banks of the Churchill River: “I would sit on those rocks at Stanley and think I would go mad.”⁸⁷ She eventually could not handle the isolation any longer and left her husband, where he remained working alone in northern Saskatchewan as a missionary for the remainder of his life.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, white men still largely outnumbered the number of white women in the province. Excluding the Indigenous presence, the prairie west was primarily populated with white male bachelors who migrated west for ranching, to work in the northern fisheries or try their hand in farming with the offer of a ‘free’ homestead. Saskatchewan was primarily a male homosocial world. These bachelors created a sense of unease amongst the missionaries with their proximity to mission sites. Sarah Carter asserts that, “‘Bachelor homesteaders’ were perceived to be living in squalor and loneliness, and here was concern about their tendency to become shiftless drifters given to drinking, card playing, engaging the services of prostitutes, and other censured practices associated with rudderless ruffians.”⁸⁸ In 1906, missionary John Hines wrote disapprovingly from Prince Albert that drink was flooding the country from the large influx of white men to the labour camps and how a great portion of their earnings goes towards purchasing alcohol.⁸⁹ Single male homesteaders in the southern prairies were described by one settler as sad creatures, “who needed kindness badly.”⁹⁰ The diverging approach of colonial takeover displays the competing tensions behind colonial projects, in what

⁸⁷ “Early Missions in the Diocese of Saskatchewan,” Address Given in Prince Albert, 25 May 1974, F 200, Acc. 720, IV Miscellaneous, 14, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS, Regina.

⁸⁸ Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2008), 38.

⁸⁹ Letter from John Hines, Extracts from Annual Letters of the Missionaries Part IX, 1906, Central Records, Annual letters of the missionaries, 1905-1906, Reel 42, C.M.S., Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

⁹⁰ E. Mitchell, *In Western Canada Before the War* (London: J. Murray, 1915), 47 in Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 113.

scholar John Comaroff calls ‘competing colonialisms.’⁹¹ Male homesteaders and male labourers vied for a settler takeover of prairie land where missionaries battled for the souls of the colonized. Missionaries in Saskatchewan focused on the ‘civilizing’ aspects of the colonial project and expressed frustration in the 1880s and 1890s at the disreputable male settlers who were corrupting their mission ‘field’ with their sinful influences on the reserve residents.

The influx of white single missionary women contributed to the missionary vision of reshaping the land toward a more ‘respectable’ and ‘civilized’ prairie society. White Anglo-Saxon women were considered the ‘right’ sort to fill frontier spaces and assert British supremacy across the world by transforming Indigenous land into settler territory that aligned with British Christian values.⁹² As single female missionaries arrived in Saskatchewan and interacted with surrounding settler communities, some women departed from their mission positions to marry male bachelors.⁹³ Historian Emily Manktelow argued that the importance of companionship became even stronger for missionaries due to the isolation and loneliness of the spiritual frontier.⁹⁴ When Kate Gillespie worked at Crowstand Residential School in the late 1890s, her fellow mission worker, Miss Carson, left the school after she married a local farmer. A decade later Gillespie followed in her footsteps, leaving formal missionary work to marry a bachelor, a prominent Saskatchewan politician. A former La Ronge Residential School teacher from England, Kate Harmen, married a fellow single male missionary when she moved to take on a

⁹¹ John L. Comaroff, “Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), 188.

⁹² Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 11.

⁹³ Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 200; Denise Hildebrand, “Staff Perspectives of the Aboriginal Residential School Experience: A Study of Four Presbyterian Schools, 1888-1923,” (M.A. thesis., University of Manitoba, 2003), 264.

⁹⁴ Manktelow, *Missionary Families*, 70.

teaching position at the Sturgeon Lake Day School, but the marriage did not last and she returned to her home in Kent, England. There she was awarded a gift from her parish in Kent for her Indian mission work in Saskatchewan. In 1906, J.R. Matheson at Onion Lake wrote to Mrs. Hall from the W.M.S. in Toronto: “Regarding marriage, well perhaps if you W.A. did not send out such fine looking, splendid, capable ladies we would be less apt to lose them in that way. You can hardly blame men for snapping up such women. I’m sure if you’re in search of a wife, I could make no better choice than a W.A. missionary, and it would be among them I would try first—as sure as you are alive.”⁹⁵

By the end of the nineteenth century, the prevailing ideal for marriage in the prairie west was founded on a Christian monogamous model. Public authorities reinforced this ideal through a series of laws, policies, church pressures, social attitudes, and cultural beliefs. Racially mixed marriages had been the custom throughout the two-hundred-year fur-trade but the colonial imposition from church and state at the turn of the nineteenth century desired to put an end to mix-race marriages. In her pioneering work on marriage and the American state, Nancy Cott argues that, “By incriminating some marriages and encouraging others, marital regulations have drawn lines among its citizenry and defied what kinds of sexual relations, and which families will be legitimate.”⁹⁶ Prairie historian Sarah Carter argues that Canada similarly worked to build a marriage “fortress” of Christian, heterosexual, monogamous unions between two people of the same race (and opposite sex); —arrangements beyond this model were suspect to the health and prosperity of the nation.⁹⁷ Although mixed-race relationships were thought to disrupt the proper

⁹⁵ Letter from J.R. Matheson to Mrs. Hall, 29 May 1904, GS-76-15. Box 19, Corresponding Secretary Mrs. Caroline M. Patterson-Hall, 1903, Women’s Auxiliary Fonds, GSA, Toronto.

⁹⁶ Nancy Cott, “Afterward,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. 471; see also Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁹⁷ Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 4.

racial order of the emerging Canadian state on the prairies, the cultural encounter of the mission site brought people together as intimate contacts formed between missionaries and local peoples.

In April 1904, Miss Annie Phillips, an Anglican W.A. missionary at the Onion Lake Residential School, wrote to her superior in the W.A., Mrs. Hall, in Toronto, “The rumour is quite true I have been led in strange ways and paths that I knew not of I am marrying a real Indian but he is a man and a gentleman in the truest sense.”⁹⁸ Phillips, who was from England, had moved to Winnipeg in the early 1890s and had trained as a member of the staff at Government House with Sir John and Lady Shultz, the fifth Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba. Shultz had been one of the leading opponents of Louis Riel's provisional government in the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870. After working at the Shultz home, Phillips decided to pursue a missionary career and became the first W.A. female missionary, moving to Onion Lake mission to support the Mathesons in 1895. It was there she met James Brown, former student of Battleford Industrial School, who had been sent upon his graduation to St. John's College in Winnipeg to train to become an Indigenous missionary. It was the only career option deemed suitable for First Nations boys besides farming or working as a general labourer. In 1904, Phillips and Brown wed and moved to the mission at Lac La Ronge. Unfortunately, James was killed in 1912 while constructing the residential school.

Phillips' letter to Hall signalled her unease upon having to admit that she was marrying outside the confines of her race. To justify her decision to Hall, she positioned Brown as outside the boundaries of the discursive category of the ‘wretched heathen’: “You would all be rejoiced if you knew Mr. Brown to think that such could be made of these people, he is an exception, but

⁹⁸ Letter from Annie Phillips to Mrs. Hall, 6 April 1904, GS-76-15, Box 19, Corresponding Secretary Mrs. Caroline M. Patterson-Hall, 1903, Women's Auxiliary Fonds, GSA, Toronto.

taking them on a whole they are bright, quick, and intelligent people.”⁹⁹ Phillips was straddling a delicate line in her letter, reinforcing white supremacist social and cultural thinking by positioning Anglo-Saxons higher up the civilizing ladder from the racialized brown ‘savages.’ At the same time, she wanted to provide a reason for her affective desires towards this man.



Figure 2. 3 Wedding of Annie Eliza Phillips and Reverend James Brown, S-B9397, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina. (left to right) Back row: Miss Hazlet, unknown, Miss Cunningham, Mrs. Matheson, Reverend Matheson. Front row: Mr. Sibbald (Indian Agent), Mrs. Sibbald, Rev. James Brown, Annie Phillips, and Elizabeth or Ruth Matheson.

Her love symbolized the underlying potential of the backward races. The colonized could be more than an imperial fantasy but someone worthy of affection. In the minds of evangelicals, Christian knowledge helped narrow the racial distance between the Christian versus the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

‘heathen.’ Phillips wanted to demonstrate Brown’s assimilation progress because she knew marrying an Indigenous man would cause concern in the Canadian Anglican church world. According to historian Philippa Levine, relationships between white women and racialized men were seen as a greater threat to the colonial order than relationships between white men and racialized women. Sexual relations between white men and black or brown women were seen as part of men’s ‘natural’ tendency to extend their sexual licence, while “White women choosing relationships with colonial men implied danger to the colonial state and to white men’s supremacy.”¹⁰⁰ In the Northwest, if white women married First Nations men, they gained treaty status, effectively rendering them non-white in the eyes of the law, a worrying concern for the Canadian state attempting to populate the Northwest with white bodies.¹⁰¹ Phillips never did return to England after her marriage and Brown’s death. The missionary encounter and resulting affective links to Brown changed the course of her life forever. She continued working in missions in Saskatchewan on Thunderchild’s reserve and then in Prince Albert until her death in the 1940s. Anglo-Canadian women were the bearers of upholding racial distinctions on colonial fronts. But to suggest that they never created intimate contacts with Indigenous men ignores the social mingling in Northwest society.

The geographical isolation of the missions’ sites in Saskatchewan from the wider white local populace influenced white missionaries’ expressions of sexuality and intimacy. The mission site offered independence for missionary women where they could build a female-centric missionary network, allowing emotional richness and deep affection to form between fellow missionaries. Lucy Baker, a Presbyterian missionary, formed close affective bonds with her

¹⁰⁰ Philippa Levine, “Sexuality and Empire,” in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 134.

¹⁰¹ Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 169.

assistant Annie Cameron on Round Plain reserve near Prince Albert. Baker was born in Ontario in 1836, educated in the United States and France, and taught at a ladies' school in New Orleans during the Civil War. Before moving to the Presbyterian Mission station in Prince Albert in 1878 she worked as missionary teacher.¹⁰² In 1894, Baker moved with Cameron onto the newly established Round Plain reserve under the administration of the Carleton Agency.

The Wahpeton Dakota Band hunted the borderland between the United States and Canada before moving into the Prince Albert area in 1878 under Chief Hupa-yaktao. In 1894, an Order in Council reserved 80 acres for every five people. The band of approximately 140 non-treaty people moved onto a reserve about ten miles from Prince Albert. Baker and Cameron moved with the band and lived together in the small mission home, operating the mission station and day school for the Dakota children. In 1897, Baird wrote to the Indian Commissioner that, "These ladies furnish the only object lesson in Christianity and civilization that is constantly before the Indians," since there was no Indian Agent, farm instructor, or any other government or church representative on the reserve.¹⁰³ Without the close watchful eye of other white administrators or church officials, the women turned to each other to forge close homosocial connections.

The women established an intense emotional partnership on the Round Plain reserve. The women only worked together on the reserve for three years before Cameron's father passed away and she needed to leave the reserve to return to Prince Albert to care for her mother. In those three years, Baker and Cameron lived together in the decrepit little mission house, which they repeatedly advocated to the Presbyterian church to have repaired. They shared the domestic

¹⁰² Elizabeth A. Byers, *Lucy Margaret Baker: A Memoir* (Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1920), 6.

¹⁰³ Letter from Andrew B. Baird to Indian Commissioner, 18 August 1897, RG 10, Vol. 3929, File 117 090, LAC, Ottawa.

labour of running the mission and they worked in partnership to Christianize the Dakota, who expressed little interest in their proselytizing messages. In her report to Baird in 1897, Baker wrote how it was so difficult to see Cameron leave the mission field and emphasized how much she would miss her but understood it was part of her duty to care for her mother. She noted to Baird how if a new teacher was appointed at the mission, she would break up the duties differently than how she had it arranged with Miss Cameron. She would like to manage the house independently if she was with another missionary woman.¹⁰⁴ In her resignation letter, Cameron stated to Baird, although she had a duty to care for her mother, she was quite sorry she had to leave since she had become “quite attached” to Miss Baker.¹⁰⁵ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has demonstrated how eighteenth, and nineteenth century women lived in female-centric worlds that served a multitude of emotional functions which could be both affective and sensual.¹⁰⁶ White women’s perceived isolation on the mission site reflected racial, social, and cultural distinctions from Indigenous peoples and allowed for close intimate partnerships to develop between women. Baker and Cameron engaged in intense emotional missionary experiences, battling disease and deaths on the reserve. The demands of mission work, and Indigenous resistance to Christianity, propelled them together into an affective, mutually satisfying relationship.

Cameron and Baker’s intimate relationship continued even after Cameron left the reserve. Although she quit her position in 1897, Cameron returned periodically to Round Plain over the years to visit Baker and assist her with the mission. In 1904, Baker wrote the Secretary of the

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Lucy Baker to Andrew B. Baird, 2 December 1897, Box F, File H121, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Annie Cameron to Andrew B. Baird, 12 November 1897, Box F, File H50, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁰⁶ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 63.

W.F.M.S. stating her nervous system was so severely overtaxed that she was officially submitting her resignation. Baker's missionary spirit seems to have ceased after Cameron's official departure. Baker wrote to Cameron explaining her resignation: "How I wish I could talk to you instead of writing," calling her "dearest Anna" and signing off the letter, "Ever Yours Affectionally." Close emotional bonds lingered for years between the women, even after Cameron married William Kirby, an Englishman in Prince Albert, and Baker moved to Montreal to live with extended family in her retirement. The women continued to correspond and, upon Baker's death in 1909, a cousin wrote to Annie in Prince Albert stating how Baker often spoke "of how you helped her on the reserve and what a comfort you were to her" and how "attached she was to you." The cousin explained the details of her passing and informed Cameron that Baker had left all of her personal belongings to Cameron in her will, except the cutlery and silverware.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Letter to Annie Kirkby from E. Jackson, 7 September 1909, (S) A 1076, Correspondence from Lucy M. Baker, Lucy Baker fonds, PAS, Regina; Letter to Annie Kirkby from E. Jackson, 10 June 1909.



Figure 2. 4 Annie Cameron, on far left, and Lucy Baker on far right with school children from Makoce Waste Reserve. Image from Elizabeth A. Byers, Lucy Margaret Baker, 4, F 375, Lucy Baker fonds, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.



Figure 2.5 A young Lucy Baker, MIKAN 3474130, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Baker and Cameron's relationship show how lifelong friendships, which may have developed into queer partnerships, materialized at the site of the mission station. Saskatchewan Historian Valerie Korinek has suggested that "Finding evidence of women's same-sex socializing and/or sexuality requires determination and good fortune. And when those glimpses and fragments are found, they require close attention because they raise suggestive questions about queer possibilities."¹⁰⁸ The women depended on each other for emotional support and physical

¹⁰⁸ Valerie Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 75.

companionship in an era when close female friendships played pivotal roles in women's lives when their social worlds were detached from men's. For Baker to put Cameron in her final will suggests their relationship was intense, loving, and played a significant role in both of their lives. The details of their friendship point to a queer relationship which provided the women with an emotional and physical comfort to their racially solitary lived experiences on the mission site.

The Boundaries of Sympathy

Although missionaries developed intimate relationships with other staff members on reserves and at residential schools, their stated vocational purpose on mission stations was to offer Christian love to the 'pitiable' Indigenous subjects and to express hope for the conversion of their souls. Historian Laura Stevens in her work on British missionaries in the early American colonies demonstrates how missionaries perceived themselves as running a race to rescue 'heathens' from eternal damnation. Out of grave concern for their 'lost' souls, missionaries worried for the hearts of the unconverted.¹⁰⁹ They pitied the state of the 'heathens' material and spiritual lives. To understand the missionary feeling of a sympathetic pity for the 'other' requires an examination of the relationship to oneself. Thomas Lacquer in his examination of David Hume's writings on humanitarianism argues that "Moral concern and action are engendered not by the logic of the relationship between human beings, but by the pain of a stranger crying out—as if the pain were one's own or that of someone near."¹¹⁰ Humanitarians often operate by claiming an ownership over suffering by placing themselves in a position of power that only they can bring aid to those they care for.

¹⁰⁹ Laura Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 163.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Lacquer, "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 180.

Across the missionary landscape in Saskatchewan, missionaries believed they had the truth and needed to share this truth to alleviate the pain and ignorance of the ‘heathen’ from a life of ‘savagery.’ Christianity and civilizing would break the chains of bondage and bring Indigenous peoples into personal and spiritual freedom. Christians believed they were the authorities on love, compassion, caring, and gifts of the faith, which they could delineate to non-believers. Their espoused promises of loving sentiment toward the colonized was part of the substance of empire projects. Missionaries furthered imperial expansion by vowing to extend care and concern towards Indigenous peoples. Scholars have long established how empire extension was just as much about the heart, as the head.¹¹¹ Sentimentality was a discursive posturing for missionaries across the British empire, including in Saskatchewan, and they regularly disseminated it to their church supporters through their writings and sermons on their ‘love’ for the colonized. Love, sympathy, and compassion functioned as an emotional repertoire, which missionaries relied on to substantiate the importance of their mission work to the larger Protestant church world.

When sentiments among missionaries in Saskatchewan went beyond empty platitudes and advocated for tangible changes in the treatment of Indigenous lives, both church and state officials dismissed missionary concerns. Church officials vigorously worked to hold onto the power which the state afforded them in administering schooling for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan and most missionaries had little interest in disrupting this mutually beneficial relationship. However, a few missionaries did oppose the injustices they witnessed on mission sites and at the schools to deceive Indigenous peoples and navigated their resistance in several ways. At the Ahtahkakoop Indian Day School in Sandy Lake, missionary teachers Mr. H.

¹¹¹ Danilyn Rutherford, “Sympathy, State Building, and the Experience of Empire,” *Cultural Anthropology* 24 no. 1 (2006), 4.

Hutchinson and his wife, Mrs. Hutchinson, an elderly couple who ran the day school on the reserve, wrote to the Indian Department detailing their frustration with Henry Ellis, the Anglican principal at Onion Lake Residential School in the twenties. Ellis had turned up unexpectedly on the reserve and removed seven children from the Hutchinsons' day school and taking the children with him to the Onion Lake Residential School. Hutchinson wrote to government officials about how Ellis had seduced the young children to join him on the journey, making it appear like they were going on a picnic. Hutchinson listed the names of the seven children in his letter, asking the Department to return them to the reserve.¹¹² J.D. McLean, Assistant Deputy and Secretary for Indian Affairs, responded to Hutchinson, explaining he should not feel injured at residential school principal's recruiting efforts and that the children would not be returned.

A year later, hostilities increased when Hutchinson wrote department officials again, questioning why parents were being threatened on the reserve with imprisonment from police officers if they refused to allow their children to be sent to Onion Lake.¹¹³ Hutchinson wrote, "I consider the threatening of Indians with imprisonment very unique—I can say more but I leave it at that...Indians may need firmness but they also need kindness and consideration."¹¹⁴ Hutchinson's questioning brought him to the ire of government department officials. Indian Commissioner W.M. Graham wrote, "Why should the department stand for this? Why should not this man be retired, and someone be put in his place who will work in harmony with the Agent?"¹¹⁵ McLean wrote to George Lloyd, the Bishop of Saskatchewan, that they no longer required the Hutchinsons' service as day school teachers even though Chief Allen Ahenakew and

¹¹² Letter from H. Hutchinson, 15 February 1926, RG 10, Vol. 6279, File 600-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

¹¹³ Letter from J.D. McLean to Hutchinson, 16 February 1926, RG 10, Vol. 6279, File 600-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

¹¹⁴ Letter from H. Hutchinson, 3 January 1927, RG 10, Vol. 6279, File 600-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

¹¹⁵ Letter from W.M. Graham, 3 January 1927, RG 10, Vol. 6279, File 600-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

Councillor Adam Ahenakew from Ahtahkakoop's wrote to officials questioning why the department was disposing of the Hutchinsons because they "really has done their very best for the Indians."¹¹⁶

This management of outward sympathy was not confined to government officials. Lead male missionaries on reserves advocated for the dismissal of church employees on mission sites, often of single female missionaries, if they thought they were too sympathetic in their treatment of children. Missionary Francis Dodds, originally from Bowmanville, Ontario, working at Moose Mountain, nine miles north of Carlyle, Saskatchewan, wrote to the Foreign Missions Committee over his displeasure with Edith McDonald, the missionary teacher at the day school. Dodds explained to R.P. McKay that McDonald was furious with Principal Sinclair from the Regina Industrial School for visiting her day school and giving the children a lesson in how to act and conduct themselves. Dodds wrote that McDonald had told the children that Principal Sinclair was a 'bad man,' which they repeated amongst themselves and that she had sacrificed order, discipline, and progress in her classroom for the sake of maintaining attendance.¹¹⁷ Dodds, an unsympathetic missionary with his own record of sexual misconduct over the course of his missionary career, wanted McDonald dismissed from her position as teacher, which church officials appeared to have agreed to. In a separate letter to the foreign missions committee, McDonald described how she had been unfairly treated by the church, as she believed she had worked hard in her position as teacher at Moose Mountain, emphasizing how the government school inspector had given her a perfect report.¹¹⁸ Once McDonald had left the reserve, Dodds

¹¹⁶ Letter by Chief Allen Ahenakew and Councillor Adam Ahenakew to Duncan Scott, 2 August 1927, RG 10, Vol. 6279, File 600-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

¹¹⁷ Letter by F. Dodds to R.P. McKay, 25 February 1904, 79.199C, Box 5, File 58, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

¹¹⁸ Letter from D. Currie to R.P. McKay, 17 March 1904, 79.199C, Box 5, File 59, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

promised church officials he would give all possible assistance to assuring pupils from Moose Mountain would be sent to the Regina Industrial School, noting how he wished there was a compulsory law that forced parents to send their children.

Missionary quarrels were common on mission sites and female missionaries were particularly vulnerable to being dismissed, with missionary men exhibiting little regard for ‘women’s rights’ in the field. Historian Ruth Compton Brouwer examined gender politics amongst Canadian female missionaries in India and explains how the mission experience working with ‘heathen’ races gave women a sense of authority and self-determination but they faced fierce resistance from male missionary co-workers who objected to women’s expanding authority.¹¹⁹ Similarly, at Crowstand Residential School, missionary teacher Flora Henderson was obliged to resign when the principal claimed she was dividing her loyalties between First Nations people on the Cote reserve and staff at the school. The head missionary C.W. Whyte, the same missionary who was operating a store on the mission station at Crowstand, portrayed Henderson as a divisive, unfit missionary who failed to have a good relationship with her colleagues. However, Henderson was one of the only staff members in the 1890s who tried to sound the alarm to church officials about the dire situation of children suffering in the horrible institution at Crowstand.

After only one month of being at the school, Henderson began to raise concerns. She wrote in a letter to Baird, “I know what big undertaking it is to attempt to fight against such a baby of men as the Committee is composed of. But I have God and truth on my side, my deliverer is mighty...And know I will try and give you a few of the many reasons why the

¹¹⁹ Ruth Compton Brouwer, *‘New Women for God’: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 160-161.

Committee should send a member to inquire into the state of their flocks.”¹²⁰ She described witnessing violence at the school, poor management of the children’s food, children forced to conduct hard labour, and stated, “The mission field is not at all what it should be.”¹²¹ Yet her concerns went unheeded. A month later, she submitted her resignation letter. Church officials encouraged missionary women to resign or labelled them as ‘difficult women’ within missionary spheres if they challenged the church’s governance of Indigenous education. Henderson defied Whyte’s authority by questioning his management of Crowstand. Church authorities deemed such behavior unacceptable and viewed the accusations as a power struggle that the church sought to quickly curtail.

When female missionaries tried to assert themselves on equal authority to male missionaries within the institutions, they faced vehement opposition from male missionaries steeped in patriarchal beliefs. In 1896, at Lakesend school on Muscowputung’s reserve, the missionary Rev. George Arthur became incensed, describing school life as ‘unbearable’ when he became convinced two female teachers on staff were challenging his authority over the management of the school, which consisted of nine day school students and twelve full-time boarders. According to Arthur, the missionary women wanted to have full control over school matters. They believed that he should prioritize the Christianizing work on the reserve and stay out of school affairs. Quoting Scottish Poet Robert Burns in his letter to the foreign missions committee, he explained how the peace on the mission had been broken because of “ye ugly creepin blastin women detested shunned by saint and sinner.”¹²² The intensity of the conflict

¹²⁰ Letter from Flora Henderson to Andrew B. Baird, 16 May 1895, Box E, File F1110, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Letter from George Arthur to Baird, 25 June 1896, Box E, File G477, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg; 13 August 1896, Box E, File G600, Baird Fonds.

between the missionary teachers and Arthur led to Presbyterian church officials closing the school later that year. Part of the women's evangelicalism was to maintain the hierarchical ladder of Christian patriarchy which required female obedience to male authority. An essential part of women's missionary work was to teach 'heathen' women and children their place within a male-dominated hierarchal structure. Women could draw on gendered arguments of maternal domesticity to attain a newfound sense of power and self-actualization in their lives at the end of the nineteenth century, but this form of agency had limited boundaries in the mission field. While women could extend power over their racialized Indigenous charges within the schools and on mission sites, they were unable to rival male church authority on the prairies, even for the protection of the students in their care.

Male missionaries had more freedom to express their political frustrations. Yet their protestations produced little change. Over the course of the 1890s and 1910s, Missionary Hugh McKay at Round Lake Residential School challenged the church stance on Indigenous education, consistently writing letters to his church superiors questioning its child removal policy. McKay was born in Oxford County, Ontario, studied at the University of Toronto and Knox College and was ordained into the Presbyterian Church in 1877. He first worked as a missionary at Manitoulin Island and then in 1884 headed west onto the prairies, establishing the Presbyterian mission at Round Lake in the Qu'Appelle Valley. McKay operated Round Lake Residential School, removing children from their homes into his boarding school, while concurrently voicing his increasing concerns over the violent tactics of church-state coordination to 'civilize' Indigenous children.

In November 1893, he wrote to his mission board to say he sometimes had to travel twenty or thirty miles to remove children from the reserves to bring them to his boarding school.

He asked, “Have we been pressing the Indian too much for their children? I have often asked myself this question. Can we expect to do that boy much good who is brought into the school and kept in it contrary to the wishes of the boy, his parents, and friends?”¹²³ In the same letter he wrestled with the violence of child separation, informing R.P. McKay how he had been told a story of a priest trying to take children from their mother and in her fight to protect her children had been hit so hard she would never recover.

In 1901, almost ten years later, McKay reached out to the foreign mission’s committee again asking why should white women do the work of raising Indigenous children when the mothers would gladly do the work themselves: “Would it not be better for a boy to lose a right eye than to grow up without parental love? Is there not much danger in breaking up a family, [sic] even of God’s institutions, I have often thought that if half the care, and anxiety, and money spent upon an Indian child in a boarding or industrial school was spent upon him in his home the results would be better.”¹²⁴ To McKay, the church-run government schools were failing Indigenous families on multiple levels: mothers desired to raise their own children, fathers needed their boys at home to help with their transition to becoming prosperous agriculturalists, and children required the tenderness of a home environment which only kin could offer. McKay repeatedly suggested to church officials that Presbyterians should transition from boarding schools to day schools. In his most virulent criticism to the foreign missions committee, McKay pleaded, “We ask again why, are we not trying to do a thing that’s so impossible, to educate and colonize people against their will?”¹²⁵ McKay had a reputation amongst government and

¹²³ Letter from Hugh McKay to R.P. McKay, 15 November 1893, 79.199C, Box 2, File 4, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

¹²⁴ H. McKay to R. McKay, 9 January 1901, Box 2, File 21, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

¹²⁵ H. McKay to R. McKay, 23 October 1903, Box 4, File 54, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

missionary officials in Saskatchewan for being too lenient in his treatment towards the children at Round Lake. Rev. McWhinney, Principle at Crowstand Residential School, described how McKay had let one of the young girls leave the school with her mother due to his kindly nature, to the annoyance of the Indian Agent and the Indian Inspector Graham.¹²⁶

Although McKay consistently reported his dissatisfaction to church officials about the state of Indian education on the prairies and was reported to express kindness on multiple occasions to Indigenous children and parents, he helped to maintain the destructive system of residential schools and furthered injury towards Indigenous children by remaining in his position at Round Lake as principal and head missionary until 1920. McKay, and his wife, Selma, lived in the mission home three hundred yards away from the school, where they could distance themselves from the atrocious conditions in the school building. In 1915, a government inspection of the school conducted by Graham reported the building at Round Lake School to be in a horrible, dilapidated state, with children sleeping two to one bed, outdoor washrooms not fit for animals let alone human beings, and the children's appearances dirty and unkept. The inspector reported that the church needed to replace McKay, "The old man means well enough but is not cut out for the work."¹²⁷

¹²⁶ W. McWhinney to R. McKay, 4 January 1911, Box 7, File 130, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Foreign Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

¹²⁷ Inspector Report by W.M. Graham to Duncan Scott, 20 February 1915, RG 10, Vol. 6333, File 661-6, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.



Figure 2.6 Hugh and Selma McKay, R-A9438, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

McKay was both an advocate of Indigenous rights and an accommodationist for a regime intent on the erasure of Indigenous political, cultural, and spiritual sovereignty. He questioned the practices of the religious establishment while upholding it at the same time. Missionaries did not always see eye to eye with colonial administrators or their church boards but they wanted to remain apolitical, refusing to challenge enforced policies, which caused them to preserve the

status quo.¹²⁸

The most vocal demands for social action to challenge the state in its treatment of Indigenous children came from Dr. Peter Bryce and Anglican activist Samuel H. Blake, who collaborated to demand the restructuring of the Indian Residential School System. In 1907, Bryce, in his position as Chief Medical Officer for the Department of Interior and Indian Affairs, submitted his *Report on the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories*, which provided a statistical analysis of the poor health conditions at the church-operated schools. In 1908, Blake published his forty-three paged pamphlet to the churches titled, *Don't you Hear the Red Man Calling?*, which called for radical changes to the church's administration of Indigenous schooling. While Bryce sought to improve conditions at residential and industrial schools following the release of his devastating medical report, which drew attention to the horrid conditions and high death rates at the schools, Blake was much more interested in closing several of the schools to restructure church financing. Blake was concerned with the C.M.S. withdrawing from the Canadian mission field by 1920, which they had already started doing, and believed that the Church of England in Canada needed to stream less money into its Indian missions in the western provinces and transition to greater support for foreign missions in Asia.¹²⁹

Blake and Bryce teamed up with R.P. McKay from the Presbyterian Church, Alexander Sutherland from the Methodist Church to publicize a massive reorganization of the entire Indian Residential School System. The men orchestrated a campaign to publish the details of Bryce's

¹²⁸ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 67.

¹²⁹ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 137; See also E.T. Woods' argument that Blake was trying to move the conceptualization of residential schools for the churches from a triumphant, civilizing narrative to viewing them like other forms of secular educational institutions. Woods, *A Cultural Sociology of Anglican Mission and the Indian Residential Schools in Canada: The Long Road to Apology* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 61-62.

data, which outlined the number of deaths of Indigenous children, the poor sanitary conditions, the lack of medical treatment for the children, and the dysfunctional management of the system caused by the church-state partnership in operating the schools.¹³⁰ Missionaries in Saskatchewan were outraged with church officials in eastern Canada for placing the blame of the failure of the schools on them.¹³¹

Missionaries in Saskatchewan were furious that these Toronto-based church leaders had portrayed them as poor financial and irresponsible managers of residential schooling facilities. Instead, they deflected blame for the astonishingly high death rates at their schools towards Indigenous parents on the reserves. Edward Matheson, principal at Battleford Industrial School, blamed the extreme death rates at his school on poor health conditions from inadequate housing on the surrounding reserves. Principal M. Williams at Gordon's Residential School asserted that the schools should not be blamed for the deaths of pupils after being discharged and that the cause of so many deaths on his reserves were from the result of parents intermarrying who were infected with scrofula. Principal Heron at the Regina Industrial School blamed Indigenous homes on reserves for being "hotbeds of disease."¹³²

In addition to the prairie missionaries at the schools trying to argue for their innocence after the so-called 'attack' on their management of the schools, the women's church missionary groups also felt that they needed to defend their own financial, moral, and spiritual support of the schools. Copies of the Bryce report had been sent to Miss Jessie Parsons, the Secretary of Publications for the W.F.M.S., Miss Craig, Organizing Secretary for the W.F.M.S. of the

¹³⁰ Megan Sproule-Jones, "Crusading for the Forgotten: Dr. Peter Bryce, Public Health, and Prairie Native Residential Schools," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* Vol 13 no. 2 (1996): 201.

¹³¹ P.H. Bryce, *Report on the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1907); Samuel H. Blake, *Don't You Hear the Red Man Calling* (Toronto: W. Tyrell, 1908).

¹³² Letter by E. Matheson, 10 December 1907; Letter by M. Williams 20 December 1907; Letter by R.B. Heron, 8 January 1908; RG 10 Vol. 4037, File 317 021, LAC, Ottawa.

Presbyterian Church of Canada, Miss Kate Halstead, Dorcas Secretary for the W.M.S., and Mrs. Willoughby Cummings, the editor of the *Letter Leaflet* of the Church of England. Missionaries in Saskatchewan, along with the heads of the Women's Foreign Missionary Societies, had access to Bryce's alarming report. On February 8, 1908, printed in the *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Protestant women put forward their opposition to the Bryce report:

Dr. Bryce's report to the government on the condition of Indian schools as called forth some candid statements from the missionaries of the various churches, who feel strongly that this report is misleading to the general public, and already has resulted in unfortunate comments by the daily press, deprecating the work in particular of Indian mission schools, whereas the schools are not to blame for the conditions; in fact but for the uplifting humanitarian influence of these schools the condition of the Indian and his family would be even more pitiful. Facts go to prove that not only is the death-rate decreasing, but that those who are longest in our schools are those who are now alive...Every phase of missionary and philanthropic work has its darker side, and no doubt that our missionaries, by their self-sacrificing spirit have, with the equipment provided brought about results far beyond what might ordinarily be expected.¹³³

The Blake/Bryce campaign to close the doors to several of the residential schools failed to come to fruition. Although Bryce had detailed that 24 percent of students had died in or shortly after being discharged from residential schools in Manitoba and the Northwest, and in some cases the death rates were as high as 69 percent, missionaries in Saskatchewan and their female church supporters in eastern Canada refused to confront the genocidal landscape they were upholding. In 1911, the government drew up a series of contracts which promised varied per capita rate

¹³³ "Dr. Bryce's Report in Foreign Missionary Tidings," 5 February 1908, RG 10 Vol. 4037, File 317 021, LAC, Ottawa.

increases to schools, improved living conditions, and increased government inspection of the institutions based on dividing the schools into three categories: A, B, and C.

Although, as J.R. Miller demonstrates, despite the promises which came out of this tumultuous period, the institutions continued to function into the 1920 in much the same way.¹³⁴ As a female missionary school teacher in the Assiniboine Agency at Hurricane Hills remarked, “On no reserve have I ever found the Indians so adverse to sending their children to boarding schools as they seem to be under the impression as it is practically the same to send their children there as to send them to their graves.”¹³⁵ Missionary sentimentality of ‘loving’ and ‘caring’ for colonized subjects was a discursive invention which brought no improvements to Indigenous children’s lives. When missionaries in the field realized that ‘civilizing’ and Christianizing at the sites of Indigenous education were bringing undue cruelty and death to children, they came to the realization that complaining to church officials higher up the church ladder meant either losing one’s missionary position or being ignored by a paternalistic church structure bent on allying with an imperial state. The Protestant church enforced strict boundaries around sentimentality. The Christian churches could boundlessly offer compassion but had few missionary proponents to deliver on its rhetorical promises.

Conclusion

Seeking to convert Indigenous children to Christianity, missionaries to Saskatchewan argued that they could reinvent the affective familial connections of Indigenous children by interceding into their lives as reimagined ‘mothers’ and ‘fathers.’ Single white female missionaries particularly embraced this imagining, convinced in the colonial maternalist discourse of the late nineteenth

¹³⁴ Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 141.

¹³⁵ Extract from Report of Inspector Christianson on the Assiniboine Agency, 27 February 1922, RG 10, Vol. 6280, File 601-1, Part. 1, LAC, Ottawa.

and early twentieth century of the notion that women could gain power and agency through their roles as ‘mothers’ to colonized children in empire projects. It was of no concern to school organizers that these females did not have children themselves; they drew on ideas of superiority as white, ‘civilized,’ Christian women to capitalize on the image of being selfless Christian mother figures to Indigenous children under their care. Married families with children arrived on Saskatchewan mission sites and at schools, assuring their white female church supporters that they were creating home-like environments for the children, where protection, safety, and understanding were basic foundations of their missions. Yet missionaries understood that their promises to church goers and the reality of mission sites did not align. They worried for their own children’s health and social upbringings in environments they believed were racially dangerous, with their children becoming exposed to ‘backward’ and ‘heathen’ ways of living. Missionaries entrenched racialized worldviews, positioning brown bodies as non-normative, which contributed to their sense of loneliness in Saskatchewan. This encouraged missionaries to seek out alternative affective relationships to ease their feelings of racial seclusion. When missionaries did challenge racialized injustices that they were witnesses to on the mission sites and at the schools, they were confronted with Protestant church bodies committed to working alongside state officials to build a settler nation intent on Indigenous dispossession.

Reimagining parenthood and the emotional violence of Christian missionaries was normalized for church audiences and packaged as assertions of compassion. Just three years after Miss Bessie Walker at the Regina Indian Industrial School wrote to church women in eastern Canada in 1892 informing them about the two little boys, aged three and five at the Regina Indian Industrial School, who clung to their mom upon her visit and where Walker remarked, “It does seem very hard that they should forget their parents”— the older brother, Chaski had died,

and the younger brother, Herbie was close to death. With neither his mother nor his brother by his side in his final weeks of life, Herbie found himself surrounded by female missionaries who claimed him as their own. The matron at Regina called him “Miss Walker’s little Herbie.”¹³⁶

In Saskatchewan, the violence of children’s removal, rationalised on the representation that Indigenous parents were unable to rise with the tide of civilisation, normalized racial terror which was embedded in the making of settler Saskatchewan. The colonization of Saskatchewan was an emotional project where missionaries linked sentimentality to missionization and where isolating children from their Indigenous parents was part of the evangelical model of transforming the world through ‘love.’ Although missionaries communicated in clear terms that they were separating children from their kinship systems, the masking of this violence in sentimental terminology reassured a settler population that missionary administration of Indigenous schooling was a humanitarian process geared to advancing both civilization and Christianity in the prairie west. This benign veneer allowed settlers to experience a sense of benevolence around the system that was enacting physical and cultural violence in Saskatchewan.

¹³⁶ “A Glimpse of the Home Life of the Children,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, February 1895, 264-265.

Chapter 3:

The Performativity of Compassion: The Missionary Propaganda of Catherine Motherwell

In a 1952 article titled “A Friend of the Canadian Indians,” published in *The Missionary Monthly*, a periodical of the Women’s Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, Cree and Saulteaux writer and former member of the File Hills Farming Colony, Eleanor Brass, described her memory of the late Presbyterian missionary, Catherine Motherwell (née Kate Gillespie) to Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan.¹ Brass portrayed Motherwell as a woman who had a “genuine Christian spirit,” which endeared her to a “host of friends regardless of race or colour,” and espoused that “the Indian people loved her very much.”² First employed as a missionary for the Presbyterian Church of Canada at the Crowstand Residential School in 1894 and at the Mistawasis Day School in 1897, Motherwell became the first female principal of File Hills Residential School in 1901. She left that position in 1908 to marry William Richard Motherwell, Saskatchewan's first Minister of Agriculture.

Although she officially ended her missionary career following her marriage to William, Motherwell informally continued her missionary efforts, establishing the File Hills Farm Colony in the early decades of the twentieth century with Indian Agent William Morris Graham on the Peepeekisis First Nations reserve. From the 1890s until her death in 1952, Motherwell self-represented as a ‘friend of the Indians,’ a compassionate woman that cared for the First Nations peoples of the File Hills agency in Saskatchewan. The collective memory of Motherwell as ‘friend to the Indians’ has persisted over the course of the twentieth century in Saskatchewan

¹ Throughout the chapter I refer to Kate Gillespie as “Motherwell” to keep the naming consistent, although her surname only changed in 1908.

² Eleanor Brass, “A Friend of the Canadian Indians,” *The Missionary Monthly*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, November 1952; Eleanor Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1987), 38.

through the maintenance of her life story presented at Lanark Place, the former home of William Richard and Catherine Motherwell, and the current site of the Parks Canada Motherwell Homestead National Historic Site.

Considering the documented genocidal intent of the Indian Residential School System outlined in the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the claims of Motherwell's friendship with Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan demands further inquiry. Probing emotional expressions of closeness, friendship, and compassionate caring in missionary encounters reveals how missionaries positioned their engagement with colonial projects as humanitarian. Missionaries believed that they had a religious obligation to spread evangelical Christianity around the globe on the grounds that it would relieve the suffering of colonized peoples. They saw themselves as "messengers of mercy" sent to alleviate the plight of the colonial 'other' through Christianizing and 'civilizing.'³ Through a biographical case study, this chapter examines how Motherwell constructed her identity as a missionary driven by humane principals whose efforts were for the goodwill of First Nations peoples. Inspired by Alan Lester and Fae Dussart's study on the intersections between colonialism and humanitarianism, this chapter analyzes how Motherwell facilitated empire extension through her missionary emphasis on 'bettering' the lives of the colonized 'other.'⁴ Driven by an evangelical projection that Christianity would erode savagery and barbarism on colonial fronts, she grounded her invasion in the lives of Indigenous children through the humanitarian sentiments of benevolence and compassion.

There is a paradox that lies at the heart of residential schools: missionaries imparted love

³ Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 93.

⁴ Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance: Protecting Aborigines Across the Nineteenth Century British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

that was not loving and care that was not caring. The compassionate emotions professed by Christian missionaries to ‘love,’ ‘care for,’ and have ‘sympathy’ for Indigenous children engineered the missionary project on the prairies, and missionaries tried to influence the emotional experiences of Indigenous children. Motherwell’s missionary career in Saskatchewan became an exercise in relations of power informed by race, gender, and civility but she silenced the hierarchical power dynamics behind the facade of humanitarian benevolence. As anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler argues, “Appeals to moral uplift, compassionate charity, and protection of brown women and children..., were woven into the very weft of empire.”⁵ A close historical reading of a missionary manuscript Motherwell authored about her experiences as principal at File Hills Residential School and over fifty letters she penned to her superiors in the Presbyterian Church allows for a questioning of her engagement with the compassionate feelings and her humanitarian efforts to provide schooling to Indigenous children. What emerges is a complicated picture. Responding to changing ideas about race and feminine agency around the turn of the century, she assisted state officials in the extension of settler colonialism in Saskatchewan by growing the Indian Residential School System and File Hills Farm Colony. Victorian sentiment provided a roadmap for her to mask the structured power dynamics of colonialism and white supremacy on the Canadian prairies and obstruct the violence of residential schools from the growing white settler population.

Catherine Motherwell as Career Missionary

In 1889, Motherwell arrived with her parents and siblings as new settlers to Saltoun, a village about ten miles south of present day Balcarres, Saskatchewan. Originally from Teeswater, Ontario, Motherwell moved west with her Scottish Presbyterian family and quickly found work

⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, “On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty,” *Public Culture* 18 no. 1 (2006): 134.

as a teacher for white settler children in the Orkney district, west of Yorkton. Two years later, she became a teacher in the Balcarres school district. In July 1893 she wrote to Reverend Andrew Baird, Superintendent of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Synod of Manitoba, and the North-West Territories, expressing her desire to become a missionary for the Presbyterian Church of Canada: “I have felt for some time an earnest desire to take part in the Indian Missionary work in this country...I am not ignorant of the trials connected with Indian work. I think I am acquainted with its disagreeable side, but I love children and have a sincere desire to work for my Master.”⁶ Motherwell’s description of her ‘love’ for children as an incentive to enter mission work aligns with what Métis historian Allyson Stevenson calls the “bleeding heart of settler colonialism.” The outpouring of white woman’s emotion functioned as a reason to remove Indigenous children from their families of origin and place them in the care of white women.⁷ Stoler argues that colonial incursions operated in the intimate: it was through the home, the family, the boarding school, where colonial agents worked out the details of the imperial project through the reimagining of affective ties.

Motherwell was not unique in her desire to do mission work among Indigenous peoples. Thousands of women across the British Empire shared in her yearning to enter the mission field by the end of the nineteenth century. British women had begun to join the ranks of foreign missionary involvement over the course of the nineteenth century, and by 1890 British women contributed over 70 percent of the funding for foreign missionary work. The number of women applying for missionary work exceeded their male counterparts by the close of the century.⁸ The

⁶ Kate Gillespie to Rev. A.B. Baird, 31 July 1893, Indian Missions Box E, File F331, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁷ Allyson D. Stevenson, *Intimate Integration: A History of the Sixties Scoop and the Colonization of Indigenous Kinship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 29.

⁸ Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 41.

missionary field had once been the terrain of male missionaries who were sent out into ‘uncivilized heathen lands’ to convert colonized subjects to Christianity. Women often followed as missionary wives, but they lacked professional recognition or institutional representation. Their role was to accompany their husbands to the edges of the British empire. This disparity shifted in the second half the nineteenth century. As females joined the missionary ranks and were sent out by their respective women’s missionary societies, they became tasked not only with the goal of converting non-believers to Christianity but also with the duty to spread a social gospel, which meant improving the health, education, and welfare of their colonized subjects. In concert with state officials, missionaries laboured to ‘civilize’ across empire, opening schools, hospitals, and other forms of social services in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. This allowed for Victorian women to begin participating in professional activities in new and meaningful ways. Although sometimes critical of the state’s colonization practices, missionaries were colonial actors who contributed to the dispossession and destabilization of Indigenous peoples and land. Historian Susan Thorne argues that missionaries launched a “cultural assault on Indigenous subjectivities,” often through the guise of humanitarian benevolence.⁹ They couched their imperial supremacy through the benevolent discourse of ‘saving’ Indigenous peoples from their backwards and ignorant ways. Missionaries possessed the ‘truth’ and wanted to bring all empire citizens into the family of God.

Scholars have tended to exclude white women from a close examination of how they participated in colonial incursions on Indigenous lives. Historian Margaret Jacobs argues that historians have focused primarily on how white women were “hearty pioneers, innocent

⁹ Thorne, 9.

bystanders to colonial conquest” in the field of Western history.¹⁰ By examining gender and its intersections with race, scholars of colonialism demonstrate how white women were cast across the colonial empire as symbols of purity, cleanliness, innocence, representations of civilization and progress. White women occupied a privileged category in relation to others races across empire. Colonial discourses presented white women as civilized maternal figures, while black and brown mothers were gendered as unfit parents, lazy, or even dangerous to the well-being of their children. In her comparative study on boarding schools for Indigenous children in the United States and Australia, Jacobs highlights how colonial officials relied on this racial gendering as justification for the removal of Indigenous children from their homes and communities.¹¹ White missionary women promised to offer ‘heathen’ women and children the missionary ‘gift’ of civilization. Their desire to ‘rescue’ Indigenous children inspired female missionaries to enter paid mission work.

Crowstand Residential School

In the spring of 1894, Presbyterian missionary reports listed Motherwell as being on staff as a missionary teacher at Crowstand Residential School to thirty-seven students. Crowstand was located south of Cote First Nation reserve in Treaty 4, near the present-day town of Kamsack, Saskatchewan. In an article published in 1961 in the *Saskatchewan History Journal*, L.L. Dobbin, who was principal at File Hills Residential School from 1942 to 1947, praised his predecessor Motherwell for initiating a kindergarten class for the youngest children enrolled in the school and for her excellent work in the school room, where he credited her for starting a

¹⁰ Margaret D. Jacobs, “Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 36 (Winter 2005), 455.

¹¹ Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 26.

literary class and giving illustrated talks to the older students on various scientific, historical, and geographic subjects.¹² His positive assessment of Motherwell's performance failed to capture the reality of the desperate situation at Crowstand during the 1890s.

The Canadian government gave each residential school a per-student capita grant up to a certain number of students for the operation and maintenance of the schools. The Christian churches were to supplement the financial needs beyond the per-capita grant system. The grant system failed to meet even the most basic standards of proper management of an Indian Residential School. In the 1890s at Crowstand there were severe food shortages, the buildings were in constant disrepair, and the children lacked proper bedding and clothing.¹³ On August 9, 1893, Helen Adams, a staff member at Crowstand wrote to Baird, complaining, "There is not much real mission work being done at Crowstand...the food was anything but agreeable, most of the time, very little of it, and there is no drinking water whatsoever, the river water being very impure...the buildings too all decidedly not fit."¹⁴ In the spring of 1894, when Motherwell arrived at the school, a government health inspector, Dr. T.A. Patrick, visited the school and wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs on the horrible conditions he witnessed during his visit to Crowstand. The boys' dormitory lacked heating and ventilation, while the children were dirty, wearing unclean clothes, and covered in scrofula sores.¹⁵ Patrick returned in November of that year and wrote in his report that the staff had made no changes to the boys' dorms.

¹² See L.L. Dobbin., "Mrs. Catherine Gillespie Motherwell, Pioneer Teacher and Missionary," *Saskatchewan History* vol XIV (Winter 1961): 17-26; Report by C.W. Whyte, 1895, Box E, File F1597, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹³ John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 121.

¹⁴ Letter from Helen Adams to Rev. A.B. Baird, 9 August 1893, Box E, File F356, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁵ Report of T.A. Patrick, 16 November 1894, Box E, File F923, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

School principal and missionary, Reverend C.W. Whyte, and his wife were frequently accused of corruption over the way they operated the mission station at Crowstand. This was the same missionary couple described in chapter one, who were operating a store on the mission, selling the women's auxiliary clothing donations. The Whyte's dressed the children at the school in ragged clothing and never ministered to Indigenous adults on the reserve. Tensions between staff members at the mission school frequently erupted and even resulted in physical altercations. Mission staff reported that parents refused to send their children to school because of the hostilities.

In the three years she worked at Crowstand school, Motherwell chose to ignore or downplay the toxic atmosphere in her missionary reports to church officials. Other staff members quit in angry resignation over the conditions at Crowstand, yet Motherwell only alluded to difficulties in her reports. She stated in one letter that she was "quite contented and happy in instructing my little dark-skinned friends," but admitted that there was no furniture in her kindergarten class and the children who were between the ages of three and seven had to sit on the cold floor.¹⁶ In her first missionary letter for the Presbyterian Women's Foreign Mission Society periodical, the *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, she wrote that she had done extensive reading about missionary work before arriving at Crowstand and was convinced she was not entering into Indian mission work naively, but admitted that once she was in it, there were numerous aspects for which she was not prepared.¹⁷ She repeatedly defended Mr. Whyte against frequent accusations of his impropriety at the school, identifying Mr. and Mrs. Whyte as her good friends. When a staff member at Crowstand accused Mr. Whyte of making the older female students do

¹⁶ Letter from Kate Gillespie to Rev. A.B. Baird, 9 January 1895, Box E, File F971, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁷ "Incidents Connected with School and Mission Work," *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, July 1894, 72-73.

all the heavy domestic labour at the school, she objected to the accusation, asserting that Mr. Whyte would never make the students do anything beyond their strength.¹⁸ Motherwell revelled in playing the role of an innocent female bystander amidst corruption and violence. Her silence of the ongoing abuses at Crowstand in her letters to the W.F.M.S. and the Foreign Missionary Committee revealed a woman deeply concerned with maintaining her teaching position rather than exposing the dysfunction on the mission. Intent on preserving a facade of innocence, she was extremely selective in what she voiced about her experiences at Crowstand to the foreign missions committee. By not making a spectacle of the conditions, she continued quietly carving out her career path at the residential school.

When Motherwell drew attention to deaths at the school, she enveloped the language in Christian symbolism, using cosmic imagery of a spiritual battle in the children's lives. Like the desperate situation on reserves at the end of the nineteenth century, constant disease outbreaks at the schools led to extremely high deaths rates amongst the students. Doctors rarely visited the schools which left untrained missionaries responsible for the medical care of the children. The schools were dirty and overcrowded, dorms were cold and lacked proper ventilation, and the children were poorly dressed and frequently hungry. All these factors caused disease to rapidly spread amongst the children.¹⁹ In February 1896, she wrote in her report for the *Monthly Letter Leaflet* that one of the little girls from her kindergarten had died. Romanticizing the death for the white Christian female readers in eastern Canada she wrote, "The death angel came into our midst and soared away with one of our precious little lambs."²⁰ Such language presented the

¹⁸ Letter from Kate Gillespie to Rev. A.B. Baird, 13 June 1895, Box E, File F1169, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁹ Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 107.

²⁰ "Suffer the Little Children to Come onto Me," *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, February 1896, 265.

child as a victim, justifying missionary charity. Unable to save this one child, Motherwell's narrative reiterated the vulnerability of Indigenous children but insisted that the crusade to save the 'Indian race' was part of their Christian obligation. Although there would be losses, the mission behind the British empire to civilize Indigenous children in institutional environments was the correct way forward.

Death was a frequent occurrence during Motherwell's time at the school. In August of that year, Mr. Whyte reported to his superiors in the Presbyterian church that two more children from the school had passed away. Five months later in January 1897, Mrs. Whyte wrote in the *Monthly Letter Leaflet* that more students from the school had died. Just four months later, the missionaries at Crowstand reported on the news of even more student deaths. In a letter to Baird in May 1896, Mr. Whyte wrote, "No one should come to work among the Indians unless they have first class health and a good amount of vitality. So much scrofula germs around here."²¹ In the same letter, he blamed Motherwell's parents for visiting her at the school and bringing more disease into the building. Motherwell's mother died while she was at Crowstand. In March 1897 in a letter to Baird, Motherwell explained that she had resigned from Crowstand because the Toronto General Hospital had accepted her into their nursing program. Surrounded by illness, she wanted to expand her missionary capabilities by becoming a registered nurse.²² Yet this plan would not come to fruition. Following her mother's death, her father, William, and sister, Janet, came to rely on her as the primary breadwinner for the family, prompting her to accept a teaching position at Mistawasis Day School located in Treaty 6 territory, seventy kilometers west of Prince Albert. Crowstand would remain operating as a residential school until 1915 when the

²¹ Letter from Rev. C. W. Whyte to Baird, 22 May 1896, Box E, File G362, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

²² Letter from Kate Gillespie to Rev. A.B. Baird, 9 March 1897, Box F, File G1205, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

Presbyterians converted it into a day school. Over the course of its operation as a residential school, the mistreatment of Indigenous children, along with the sexual abuse and high death rates, continued to plague the institution.

Mistawasis Day School

While teaching at Mistawasis Day School, Motherwell struggled with trying to convince parents to send their children to the school. Much to the chagrin of the teachers, day school attendance was typically low as most children only attended sporadically. Day schools were usually located in remote areas of the province further from settler incursion. Children frequently travelled with their parents, hunting and trapping, learning Indigenous ways of living rather than classroom values. Motherwell reported to Frank Pedley, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, that the children at Mistawasis were irregular in their attendance and were rarely punctual. To make progress with their education, she had to go into the children's homes to give them lessons.²³ Historian Peter Bush writes that Motherwell missed the opportunity to see this as a culturally appropriate way to deliver education to Indigenous children. Instead, her solution relied on the colonial notion that Indigenous homes were inferior and bastions of 'heathenism,' and thus children needed to be removed from their surroundings so they could be morally re-educated and progress along their path toward civilization.²⁴ Additionally, with the aid of her father and sister, Motherwell turned the Gillespie home on the reserve into a semi-temporary residential school, where the children lived with them from Monday to Friday. In her letter to the *Monthly Letter*

²³ Letter from Kate Gillespie to Frank Pedley, Deputy Super. Gen. of Indian Affairs, May 1908, RG 10, Vol. 6040, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

²⁴ Peter Bush, *Western Challenge: The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Mission on the Prairies and North, 1885-1925* (Winnipeg: Watson Dwyer Publishing, 2000), 104.

Leaflet in February 1900, she reported that they had seven children living with them in their home during the week.²⁵

On the reserve, Motherwell established a Women's Foreign Missionary Society auxiliary group for Cree women, holding monthly meetings and weekly prayer meetings in their homes. Mistawasis missionary Rev. W. Moore and his wife expressed their immense pleasure in having Motherwell as a teacher on the reserve, calling her a great blessing and an ideal missionary. However, she was exhausted. She filled her missionary updates to the foreign missionary committee with positive comments on the success of her missionary work, but in 1901 she confessed she was weary and discouraged. Her sister was not healthy, and her children were all sick. She did not want to stay at Mistawasis any longer. She desired to leave mission work altogether and move to British Columbia, mentioning to the committee that her friends were trying to convince her to leave "Indian work."²⁶

The violence behind colonial governance is not apparent in Motherwell's letters, but her weariness alludes to its proximity at the mission site. The federal government, through amendments to the Indian Act in 1895, required that all First Nations children attend residential or day schools and the most advanced pupils would progress to the larger industrial schools at the age of fourteen. The Presbyterian Church operated one industrial school in Saskatchewan, which was in Regina, under the principalship of Rev. A.J. McLeod until his death in 1901, when Principal J.A. Sinclair took over. The system of moving students between schools created an enormous amount of tension between the missionaries on the reserves and the school principal in Regina. The Regina Indian Industrial School had a horrendous reputation on the reserves for

²⁵ "Letter from Kate Gillespie to Toronto Presbyterial," *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, February 1900, 309.

²⁶ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 19 March 1901, 79.199C, Box 2, File 23, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

maintaining poor health standards and inadequate supervision of its students. The wider network of government and church officials became aware of this problem.

Unlike Motherwell, other missionaries in the Presbyterian church openly expressed their frustrations with the corruptions in the Indian Residential School System. Missionary Rev. W. Moore at Mistawasis wrote multiple letters to the Foreign Missionary Committee in 1903, explaining in detail the physical and sexual abuse committed at the Regina Indian Industrial School and stating that everyone on the reserve knew about these happenings. He described how one of Motherwell's most promising students, a fifteen-year-old from the Mistawasis reserve, who took part in her weekly prayer meetings and worked as her interpreter, was sent to the Regina school, where she was forced to endure horrific sexual abuses and returned to the reserve traumatized. Moore stated to Rev. R.P. McKay, the new head of the Foreign Missionary Committee, that these occurrences were routine, he called the Regina school nothing more than a "common whorehouse."²⁷

In another letter to McKay, he testified that the children suffered "heartless brutality" from the staff members in Regina. He recounted a story of a young girl who attempted to run away from the institution but was caught by the staff and brought back. She then tried to hang herself in her room but the assistant principal, Rev. Neil Gilmour, caught her in time. He then pulled out a revolver and suggested she use that instead, although it did not have bullets. He also shared how Gilmour tied children behind his horse buggy and would make them run for miles. Moore stated that he knew these stories were true because Gilmour himself told them to Moore and his wife.²⁸

²⁷ Letter from Rev. W. Moore to the Convenors of the Presbytery's Foreign Missionary Committee, 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 45, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

²⁸ Letter from Rev. W. Moore to R.P. McKay, 11 March 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 47, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

In his letters, Moore stated how he and Motherwell initially tried to follow the directions of the denomination and send the children from Mistawasis to Regina when they were of age, which he later regretted.²⁹ While she was at Mistawasis, Motherwell reported to the committee in her annual report that she had sent four children to Regina from her classroom and believed it was for the best because those students came from the worst homes on the reserve.³⁰ There is no evidence to suggest that she knew the full extent of the happenings at Regina while she was at Mistawasis, even though Moore admitted to the that committee it was common knowledge by the summer of 1901, when Motherwell was still employed at Mistawasis. However, in 1903, once she was principal at File Hills Residential School, she became aware that Moore had confronted Sinclair about the abuse at Regina which she had brought up in one of her letters to the foreign missions committee. Yet instead of backing Moore's claims or demanding to know more information about the abuses in Regina, she responded by stating "It is such a great pity missionaries cannot get along without disagreeing. It lowers the whole tone of the Christian work."³¹ After he admitted to the foreign missions committee that he had confronted Sinclair about the violence at the Regina School, souring their professional relationship, Moore and his wife submitted their resignation as Presbyterian missionaries at Mistawasis and chose to leave Indian mission work entirely.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, it was widely known amongst Presbyterian missionaries in Saskatchewan that the Regina Industrial School was an embarrassing failure as an educational institution for the denomination. Motherwell purposely refused to engage in these

²⁹ Letter from Rev. W. Moore to the Convenors of the Presbytery's Foreign Missionary Committee, 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 45, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

³⁰ Report of the School at Mistawasis, 31 March 1899, Box E, File H438, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

³¹ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 25 February 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 46, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

controversies as a method of preserving her reputation as a respectable Christian professional woman in the late nineteenth century. Historian Philippa Levine argues that Victorian women valued respectability and decency and believed in the sentiment of moral superiority as justification for their expanding professionalism.³² Motherwell wished to leave Indian mission work after working at Mistawasis but depended on the income to support her father and sister. When the opportunity for a principal position at File Hills Residential School opened in June 1901, she seized the opportunity to expand her professional career as a missionary teacher to Indigenous children.

Beginnings at File Hills Residential School

Located approximately twenty miles northeast of Fort Qu'Appelle, the File Hills Indian Agency in Treaty 4 contained four reserves: Little Black Bear, Starblanket, Okanese, and Peepeekisis, with a combined population of approximately 275 people. In 1889, the Presbyterians opened the File Hills Residential School, which was located just outside the boundaries of the Okanese reserve on the west side. Throughout the 1890s, Alexander Skene served as the principal of File Hills school but left the position in 1900. For a few months, Mr. E.C. Stewart took over the principal position but was replaced by Rev. W.H. Farrar. The Truth and Reconciliation Final Report details how high staff turnover was a common occurrence at residential schools, given the horrible conditions and the constant tensions between staff members, students, and government agents.³³ Upon arriving in 1901, Farrar was horrified by the state of the school. He wrote to Miss Craig, organizer of missions to the Indians in the Northwest in the Women's Foreign Missionary Society, explaining, "It was a disgrace to any church to have this school the way we found it. I

³² Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism, 1850-1900* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1987), 13.

³³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1*, 675.

knew it was in bad shape and that is partly why I came, but I never anticipated that it was quite so filthy.”³⁴ Writing to Craig, he described that upon his arrival he found the children unclean and covered in scrofula sores. The children told him that the previous principals had forced them to clean each other’s scrofula wounds. The children were ill, the school was filthy, and the children claimed that Principal Skene had stolen their annuity money upon his arrival at the institution. Farrar begged the W.F.M.S. to make regular inspections of the residential schools and in the same letter announced his resignation, stating he could not continue at the school due to its dilapidated and filthy state.

Upon hearing about the open principal position while at Mistawasis, Motherwell wrote to the foreign missions committee explaining that she was a viable candidate for the job. She stated that her father and sister would join her at the school. Her sister would work as matron and her father would assist with the outdoor work. She also mentioned that her family was from the nearby Abernethy area and her brother, J.B. Gillespie farmed nearby.³⁵ Her brother had been relying on free labour from the male students at File Hills Residential School for his farm operations since 1897. It was uncommon for women in the early twentieth century to apply for leadership positions in male-dominated professions.

Women were beginning to advocate for expanded rights at the turn of the century but had not yet achieved the right to vote in Canada. The idea of domestic ideology or separate spheres for men and women dominated societal thinking. It was socially acceptable for women to be teachers, but positions of authority were beyond the possibility for most women.

³⁴ Letter from W.H. Farrar to Miss Craig, 15 April 1901, 79.199C, Box 2, File 23, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

³⁵ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 8 June 1901, 79.199C, Box 3, File 26, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.



Figure 3.1 File Hills Residential School, staff and pupils 1905. Motherwell Collection, Parks Canada.

Motherwell, however, relied on the virtue of being a sympathetic white woman to non-white races as a reason to grant her expanded professionalism. Empire historians have argued that white women across various empire projects depended on the image of being kind and loving maternal figures to further their own agendas. Historian Antoinette Burton argues that British feminists won the vote because they positioned themselves as “global sisters” to women across the imperial landscape.³⁶ Anglo-Saxon women claimed that they could further the imperial

³⁶ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

project of bringing civilization to non-white women and children and on this basis deserved to be granted the vote to assist in the tutelage of Britian's imperial subjects. White women pushed to make the connection between their moral superiority and the advancement of the British empire. Historian Susan Thorne argues this is also true for the missionary movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁷ Missionary women relied on the logic of bringing Christianity to 'heathen' minds in order to attain new opportunities of paid employment otherwise unavailable to women. In Motherwell's letter sent to the committee on October 1, 1901, she tried to persuade the committee that she was a strong contender for the desired position by emphasizing her longing to Christianize the Indians of the File Hills Agency: "My heart yearns for their darkened souls."³⁸

However, the missionary project of converting the 'heathen' was never just about religion. The 'heathen' meant racialized bodies conceptualized as uneducated, sick, indolent, oppressive to women and neglectful of children.³⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of the 'heathen' was a racialized trope connecting religion to evolutionary progress and Social Darwinism. Motherwell's belief in her cultural and racial superiority as a white woman gave her self-confidence that she could assist Indigenous peoples in the transformative process of becoming both 'civilized' and Christian, it was this racism that partially motivated her to apply for increasing professional positions in the missionary world. She was among the white women that contested patriarchy on the idea that they were "effective civilizers."⁴⁰ In the late nineteenth

³⁷ Susan Thorne, "Missionary-Imperial Feminism," in *Gendered Mission: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, edited by Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 52).

³⁸ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 1 October 1901, 79.199C, Box 3, File 30, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

³⁹ Kathryn Gin Lum, *Heathen: Religion and Race in American History* (Harvard University Press: 2022), 14.

⁴⁰ Michele Louise Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 20.

and early twentieth centuries, white women across the globe opened schools, hospitals, settlement homes, but these so-called benevolent actions took place in a context where they considered themselves superior to the colonized 'other.'

Challenging the gender restrictive idea that missionary leadership positions were only for men, Motherwell not only applied for the position, but demanded higher pay when the foreign missions committee informed her that they intended to pay her less than what the previous principals had made. She wrote in frustration to McKay that she recognized that she was not Skene or Farrar's equal because she was a woman, but emphasized that the committee would expect her to do the same amount of work if she were a man and thus should be paid fairly. The committee had offered her an annual salary of \$450, and she expressed concern that the amount was not sufficient to maintain a home that was located a far distance from the railway. Although she admitted that she was nervous about shouldering the role of principal as a woman, she formally accepted the position and arrived at File Hills school in the early weeks of October 1901 regardless of the committee's decision not to pay her more.

Missionary Writings

Motherwell left behind a detailed account of her time as principal at File Hills Residential School from 1901 to 1908 through a bulk of published and non-published writings. She drafted nine chapters in the style of a historical novel about her experiences with the students at the school and with persons from the surrounding reserves, which have been unexamined by historians and researchers. In her unpublished book, she provides the male students with pseudonyms while the girls' names are historically accurate. There is no evidence to suggest that she ever published her novel. In 1914, she travelled with her husband, William Motherwell to Chicago for the winter to receive medical treatment for William's sciatica. She likely drafted the chapters during the winter

in Chicago while they were convalescing in the United States. Six years after having left her principal position at File Hills school, she may have been contemplating her experiences at the residential school and wanting to formulate her memories on paper. She penned them on stationery at the Chicago's Lexington Hotel.

The inspiration for her book likely came from a gift during her time as principal. While she was the principal at File Hills School, Motherwell wrote to the head of the foreign missions committee, Robert McKay in 1903, thanking him for sending her a book, *Jean Mitchell's School* by Angelina W. Wray. It was written in 1902 as a sentimental narrative celebrating the accomplishments of a rural schoolteacher in America, who is portrayed as a morally superior heroine. Through Jean Mitchell's hard work, discipline, and sympathetic nature, she brings a 'hard classroom' of unruly children into cooperation; they eventually become upstanding and willing students.⁴¹ Motherwell's prose and book structure are similar to Wray's. In Motherwell's novel, she portrays herself similarly as a missionary heroine whose task it is to transform the lives of the young Indigenous students under her care at the File Hills Residential School from indolence and backwardness into upstanding Canadian citizens. Due to her unyielding influence and strong moral guidance, the children begin to exemplify the Protestant characteristics of self-discipline, hard work, thriftiness, and independence in their personhoods. Alongside her unpublished manuscript, Motherwell authored over fifty reports and letters to the Department of Indian Affairs and Presbyterian church officials while she was a paid employee of the denomination. These reports and letters provide insight into what Motherwell encountered on the colonial front in Saskatchewan at the turn of the century and how she interpreted these events as one of the first female principals in the residential school system. In addition, she authored

⁴¹ Mary Phillips Manke, "The Rural Teacher in the Early 1900s: Sentimental Image and Hard Reality," *Journal of Research in Rural Education* vol 9 no. 2 (1993): 59.

articles for the *Monthly Letter Leaflet* filled with anecdotes from the mission site for female Christian readers at home.

Missionaries across the British empire were prolific writers. They penned reports for government officials and their respective missionary societies, wrote private letters and journals to family and friends, and published articles for the British community across the empire in order to raise support from public coffers for their missionary endeavors. Protestant evangelicalism exploded at the end of the eighteenth century in Britain and evangelical missionary societies massively influenced the moral agenda of British society over the course of the nineteenth century as the empire was expanding across the far reaches of the globe. The British public rapidly consumed Protestant missionary publications detailing the lives of ‘heroic’ missionaries and their exotic ventures living amongst ‘foreigners.’ Missionary writing informed Britain’s citizens about colonial cultures fostering the ideas of difference between the ‘colonized’ and the ‘colonizer’ at home in the metropole. Missionary discourse presented the colonized subject as the ‘other’ in the British imagination, identifiable as black, brown, heathen, and savage. Missionaries contrasted this colonized figure with the image of the white, civilized Christian who was reforming behavior and bringing the social gospel to the ends of the earth. Historian Esme Cleall asserts, “difference was inscribed at the heart of the colonial relationship and on the psyches it forged.”⁴²

British missionary publications were also contradictory texts. Homi Bhabha argues that at their core, colonial discourses are ambivalent and unstable.⁴³ Missionaries emphasized the

⁴² Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840-1900* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3.

⁴³ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, edited by A. Stoler and F. Cooper (London: California Press, 1997), 152-162.

difference between their colonized non-Christian subjects and their western civilized selves. At the same time, it was crucial for them to highlight the power of transformation. The colonized subject was capable of moral redemption if they embraced Christianity. The colonized native was powerless to alter their own racial, biological features, but missionaries needed to present Indigenous subjects as capable of cultural assimilation into western civilization if they chose religious conversion. Missionary literature reveals recurring contradictions; on one hand, missionary writing stressed the native's racial differences from the white European, while on the other hand, promoted the concept of shared humanity through Christianization. This tension reveals the complexities apparent in missionary discourse as missionaries asserted their superiority in colonized communities, implicating themselves as colonial actors, but also in a complex way emphasizing human universalism. These tensions existed in Motherwell's missionary writings. She consistently attempted to ascribe differences between the Indigenous people at File Hills and the Anglo-Canadian settlers, while at the same time, emphasizing the remaking of the colonial subject through her missionary efforts.

Gender and Sexuality at File Hills

One of the most significant ways Motherwell maintained difference between the 'colonizer' and 'colonized' in her writings was how she positioned gender and sexuality. Missionaries sought to reform the family, kinship, and domesticity to align with Anglo-Canadian ideals in their project of 'civilizing' Indigenous peoples on the Canadian prairies. They expressed alarm when they were introduced to Indigenous parenting methods which differed from their Euro-Canadian ways. Cleall argues, "Missionaries found deviations from their understandings of familial roles profoundly shocking and telling labelled them 'unnatural.'"⁴⁴ In their writings, missionaries

⁴⁴ Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference*, 31.

across Canada's west portrayed Indigenous parents as inadequate, lazy, backwards, and their homes dirty and unkempt. Missionaries proposed removing children from the intimate spaces of their kinship systems and placing them in the residential school system. In her manuscript, Motherwell represented herself and her sister Janet as child rescuers, bravely withdrawing children from their degraded environments in the File Hills reserves and ushering them into their sympathetic care at the school. Colonial discourse cast Euro-Canadian women as model mothers who were ideal representations of femininity, aiding Indigenous children along the path to progress.

In her first chapter of her manuscript about File Hills school, titled, "A Little Child Shall Lead Them," Motherwell tells the story of going into the home of a man named Akapew's on Little Black Bear's reserve to arrange for the care of his eight-month-old baby, Sidney Richard Akapew. The baby's mother was dying, and his siblings were already students at the File Hills school. Motherwell described how, upon arriving at the home, her party of missionaries "brought a breath of God's pure air" with them. She wrote, "Oh, such a home! In one corner on the floor, lying on a dirty straw mattress, was the dying mother. A short distance from her sitting on an old, ragged quilt was the little boy...oh the pity of it! It was a touching scene, the cheerless room, the dying mother and little boy, the stolid father steeped in heathenism."⁴⁵ When the mother died, Akapew brought the baby to the File Hills school and passed the care over to Motherwell and her sister. Motherwell emphasized to her female Christian readership how dirty and sick the poor baby was and reported how the baby would not settle and cried constantly for his mother. When an aunt arrived at the school to comfort the boy, Motherwell described her as a "dirty, teepee smelling old aunt," yet admitted she was the only adult who could sooth the child. Missionaries

⁴⁵ "A Little Child Shall Lead Them," speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

recognized that Indigenous women loved and cared for their children but believed that the children's best opportunity for future success depended on their removal from their home environments.

After two months at File Hills school, baby Sidney died from disease. In a letter to McKay of the foreign missions committee, Motherwell suggested that baby Sidney served as an experiment in taking children at such an early age from their homes, but she sadly pointed out that they were unable to know how one taken so early would develop.⁴⁶ In her manuscript, Motherwell manipulated Sidney's death to emphasize how her missionary labours transformed his young life by removing him from a home of squalor and disease on the reserve and adopting him into a clean, civilized Christian environment during the last few months of his life. She romanticized his death at the school, emphasizing to her readers his transformation from heathenism to godliness. She wrote, "God whispered into his baby ears, your work on earth is done little man, come up higher and join my white robed baby choir."⁴⁷ Motherwell converted baby Sidney's life into an 'object lesson' for her female readership. His passing provided the opportunity for her and Janet to proselytize Akapew, whom she claimed converted to Christianity following his son's death. By positioning herself as a white, Euro-Canadian Christian woman, she presented herself as the ideal mother to baby Sidney, assuring her readers that the residential school provided him with a 'proper' Christian environment during the last months of his short life, implying that this was something his own mother failed to provide. Motherwell dramatized Sidney's life for her readers to emphasize the superiority of white motherhood in the making of settler Saskatchewan.

⁴⁶ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 9 November 1902, 79.199C, Box 4, File 43, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

⁴⁷ "A Little Child Shall Lead Them," speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

Convinced that removing Indigenous children from their ‘degraded homes’ on the reserves and assimilating them into Anglo-Canadian culture was the right path forward, Motherwell laboured to expand her school at File Hills. When she became the principal in October 1901, there were sixteen children on the register. Desiring to enlarge the number of students in order to increase the per-capita grants from the government for the school, Motherwell actively recruited children from the File Hills agency for her boarding school. In the Qu’Appelle area, the Presbyterians were in fierce competition to win more students for their schools than the nearby Catholic industrial school operated by Principal Father Hugonard. In a letter to McKay in December 1903, Motherwell expressed vitriolic criticism towards Father Hugonard’s methods of trying to get children to attend his school. She explained how the priest visited the reserves and lodged in Indigenous homes for several days at a time trying to draw the children away. She recalled a story of how the priest went onto the reserve with two fake police officers and stole the chief’s daughter. She reported to McKay that the Indians referred to it as ‘child stealing.’⁴⁸

Wanting to increase student enrollment at her school, Motherwell framed her methods as being more respectable in attaining students than the Catholics. In chapter two of her manuscript, titled “Recruiting,” she described how she used one of her older female students, Margaret (Maggie) Pratt, who had come from Mistawasis reserve, to work as her interpreter. Together they visited Chief Starblanket and his men to discuss attaining three boys from the reserve, one of them being Starblanket’s son. Presenting herself to her female readership as a brave and heroic missionary woman, she describes riding out to Starblanket’s encampment through a winter storm, and laughter breaking out amongst the men when they saw the two weather-beaten

⁴⁸ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 15 December 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 56, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

females arrive. Unlike the Catholic priest who made numerous promises to the men about their children, she offered the men few assurances, convincing Starblanket to send the three boys to File Hills school.⁴⁹ Her unwillingness to bribe the men convinced them to trust her. She wrote McKay in December 1903, explaining that the priest was furious with Starblanket for sending his child to the Presbyterians: “The priest offered them money and ponies for the boys, but we refused to give anything only the clothing the women’s auxiliaries sent.”⁵⁰ In her role as the principal, Motherwell challenged the image of a docile, submissive Victorian woman by going to battle against Father Hugonard in her effort to recruit Indigenous children for the schools. Paradoxically, she used the mission field to exercise her own authority as a white woman, challenging gender stereotypes, yet within the school itself she reinforced the idea that the girls needed to adopt gendered notions of domesticity, restraint, and proper Christian behavior.

Treatment and education at residential schools widely differed for male and female students. Historian J. R. Miller argues that one of the most poignant aspects of residential schools in Canada was their “fanatical segregation” of male and female students.⁵¹ Both sexes spent a few hours in the classroom each morning and were then separated in the afternoons, when girls were to supposed to learn domestic skills such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, and mending, while boys were to become agriculturists and learn how to manage their own farms. However, school staff taught few fundamental skills to the students at the institutions and the children spent most of their days doing mundane chores or hard manual labour.⁵² Motherwell expressed to McKay

⁴⁹ “Recruiting,” speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

⁵⁰ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, December 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 56, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

⁵¹ J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 219.

⁵² See Mary Jane McCallum’s study on child labour exploitation at Mount Elgin Residential School. *Nii Ndahlohke: Boys’ and Girls’ Work at Mount Elgin Industrial School, 1890-1915* (Altona: Friesen Press, 2022).

that she did not think her Indigenous students were capable of skills beyond housekeeping and agriculture: “In my opinion, the next step after the common school education has been secured and a certain knowledge of farming and housekeeping received, is the practical application of what they now know, the establishing of Christian civilized homes.”⁵³ She was convinced that placing Indigenous students in higher education in the Canadian educational system beyond their common school training was like climbing stairs with no intervening steps in the middle: “If he is a great jumper he might do it, but the chances are very much in favour of his coming short of his mark.”⁵⁴ Implicit in her metaphor was a belief in a racial hierarchy that ranked Indigenous peoples as inferior, marking them capable only as labourers for whites.

Together with attaining the practical skills of gendered labour, missionaries sought to change the hearts and minds of Indigenous children to align with western Christian principles. Historian Anna Johnston notes how missionary women tried to save Indigenous women and children by reorganizing their behavior with the adoption of Christian values to ‘improve’ their moral character.⁵⁵ It was important for Motherwell to demonstrate to her white female audience that the conversion to Christianity transformed the children’s identities. Depicting Indigenous women as racially inferior—naturally jealous, lustful, and barbaric in their character—Motherwell shared with her readers how the training in civilization at File Hills school transformed the girls from ‘savages’ into proper Victorian girls. The ideal Victorian girl of the nineteenth century was a domestic being who represented restraint, self-control, and purity. In chapter three titled, “The Green-Eyed Monster,” Motherwell recounts the story of her sister Janet

⁵³ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, April 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 48, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003),

visiting a nearby residential school and returning with a girl named Susan, who made the other girls in the school sick with jealousy. Motherwell notes how Susan was fairer than the other Indigenous girls and that she conversed easily with the boys, igniting suspicion and fury amongst the other female students, particularly Maggie Pratt. The girls' 'heathen' characteristics were on display as they fought with Susan for attention from the boys.

Yet Motherwell stressed how Christian education altered the girls' sense of self and their relationship to others. In a follow-up chapter titled, "Reconciliation," Motherwell wrote how the girls came to the realization that they were falling back into their patterns of 'heathen' ways of thinking by being cruel to Susan. She explained how upon this realization Maggie claimed, "I think we are all a pack of heathens. Our teachers had better bring us back our paint and feathers and send us away to the teepees in blankets. What we have been doing would not be so bad if we were heathen Indians." The antagonist Susan responded, "But we are not, we are supposed to be civilized and they tell me a lot of money is being spent on making us like white people."⁵⁶

Motherwell's use of whiteness in this story exposes how she connects religion and race in her understanding of the civilization process. Through these fictionalized discussions showing the girls' character transformation, the text initially represented them as petty and cruel but then depicted their identity transformation through their embrace of the Christian message.

Missionary accounts structured racialized discourses to emphasize Indigenous peoples as naturally corrupt in character and lacking judgement, unlike white Anglo-Saxons who were judicious and prudent, and of the highest racial quality. However, the assimilation process had racialized limits. Colonial officials and missionaries believed the 'Indian' could assimilate into

⁵⁶ "The Green-Eyed Monster," "Reconciliation," speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

Euro-Canadian culture and adopt Christianity, but at the same time would remain racialized subjects within settler society.

Motherwell devoted a substantial portion of her manuscript to highlighting the romantic relationships which developed at File Hills schools between students. Historian Sarah Carter explores how Indigenous marriage traditions on the prairies differed from Anglo-Canadian culture and did not always conform to the monogamous model. Anglo-Canadians questioned the validity of these marriages, depicting them as sinful or immoral and sought to reform their relationships to align with settler ideals. Carter argues, “Reshaping the gender order was at the heart of government efforts to reconstitute Aboriginal societies.”⁵⁷ Not only did state officials intervene in Indigenous marriages, but missionaries tried to reconstitute unions through the arrangement of marriages at residential schools between pupils.⁵⁸ Missionaries worked to control the sexuality of Indigenous women by advocating for early marriages at the schools. They held the dual beliefs that Indigenous women were sexually and physically vulnerable to exploitation, but at the same time, considered them filled with lust and quick to give into bodily passion. Because of this colonial reasoning, government officials worked in tandem with missionaries to encourage their students to marry early to colonize Indigenous children.⁵⁹

Arranging Marriages at the File Hills Experimental Colony

Motherwell’s writings provide clues as to how she accomplished this task. In 1901 when

⁵⁷ Sarah Carter, “Complicated and Clouded”: The Federal Administration of Marriage and Divorce among the First Nations of Western Canada, 1887-1906,” in *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women’s History*, edited by Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roome, and Char Smith (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 156.

⁵⁸ Phil Fontaine and Aimée Craft, *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Vol. 1* (Winnipeg: Univ. of Manitoba Press, 2015), 65. See also, Karlee Sapoznik Evans and Anne Lindsay, ““Have them suitably married”: A Case Study of Marriage and Coercion of Indian Residential School Pupils in Canada’s Prairies,” *At the Forks: Where Indigenous and Human Rights Intersect* 4 No. 1 (2025): 1-14.

⁵⁹ Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 229.

Motherwell arrived at File Hills School, Indian Agent William Morris Graham established the File Hills Farm Colony on the southeastern portion of the Peepeekisis reserve, although there is evidence to suggest Graham started organizing his scheme already by 1898. Established as a social experiment to solve the ‘Indian problem,’ the government provided graduates from the industrial and residential schools with eighty-acre lots and loaned each colonist \$125 to begin cultivating their land. Missionaries and government officials feared that graduates from the schools were returning to their reserves at the age of eighteen and retreating ‘back to the blanket,’ a phrase symbolizing their regression from civilization to Indigenous modes of living. This anxiety prompted Graham to establish the experimental colony and received the support of Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian missionaries on the prairies. By 1915, there were thirty-six farmers and their families farming over three thousand acres of land on a single colony.⁶⁰ Deeply invested in the civilization process of these ex-pupils on the farming colony, Motherwell manoeuvred in the romantic lives of the young colonists.

In 1901, in letters to McKay, she wrote how the Catholics were trying to persuade Fred Dieter, one of the promising young colonist boys, to marry one of their Catholic girls. She told McKay how the nuns manipulated Fred trying to get him alone with the girls at the industrial school. Frustrated with the Catholics and fighting for Fred’s allegiance to the Presbyterians, Motherwell explained how she was pressuring Fred to marry Daisy, one of her old Crowstand students. She wrote, “I hope Daisy will see her duty and come and live here as I verily believe it means Fred’s soul’s salvation to get him married to a Christian girl and Daisy is that.”⁶¹ The

⁶⁰ Sarah Carter, “Demonstrating Success: The File Hills Farm Colony,” *Prairie Forum* vol. 16 no. 2 (Fall 1991): 157. See also, Cheyanne Desnomie, “Voices of the File Hills Farm Colony,” (Master’s thesis, University of Regina, 2018). C Drew Bednasek, “Aboriginal and Colonial Geographies of the File Hills Farm Colony,” (Ph.D. diss., Queen’s University, 2009).

⁶¹ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 14 November 1901, 79.199C, Box 3, File 31, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

young men and women became pawns in the fight between Presbyterians and Catholics as both denominations hoped to acquire young Christian couples to further the success of their missions. However, the relationship between Fred and Daisy did not materialize and Fred married Mary Belle Cote from the Regina Industrial School. Motherwell had brought Mary Belle to the File Hills School to work for one month when she arranged the marriage between Fred and Mary Belle. Eleanor Brass, daughter of Mary Belle Cote and colonist Fred Dieter, described in her book, *I Walk in Two Worlds* how Motherwell helped make her mother's wedding dress, and her sister Janet made the cake. The wedding was held at the File Hills School with the children in attendance.⁶²

A year after the wedding, Motherwell wrote to McKay informing him about another relationship she was arranging at the school between colonist Roy Keewatin and a female student named Ruby. She mentioned she was keeping a watchful eye on the situation with the hope that they would marry, calling herself a "matchmaker."⁶³ In 1934, David Mandelbaum, an American anthropologist, who studied the culture and economy of the Plains Cree, wrote that the File Hills Farm Colony was likely a racialized experiment. Graham's colony clerk, Mr. White told Mandelbaum that Graham was primarily selecting boys of mixed blood and lighter skinned boys to reside on the colony and those with "pure Aboriginal blood" were set aside.⁶⁴ In her novel, Motherwell highlighted that some of the girls she brought from other schools to File Hills had notable 'fair' skin. Motherwell visited Regina Industrial School, Round Lake Residential School,

⁶² Eleanor Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1987), 9.

⁶³ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 14 November 1901, 79.199C, Box 3, File 31, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto; Roy and Ruby were married and settled on the colony in 1904.

⁶⁴ C Drew Bednasek, "Aboriginal and Colonial Geographies of the File Hills Farm Colony (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 2009), 127-128.

and Crowstand Residential School and returned with girls who she thought were ‘whiter’ to marry colony boys.

In her manuscript in a chapter titled “Surrender,” Motherwell went into explicit detail over the romantic liaisons between student Maggie Pratt and colonist William Bird, who appeared under the pseudonym Richard Beed.⁶⁵ She explained how some of the young men still lived at the school while they were waiting to receive a plot of land on the colony, or they were already farming on the colony, and came to the school to socialize on evenings and weekends with other students. During these social gatherings Motherwell encouraged romantic relations to develop between students. Aiming to show her white readership that young Indigenous men and women were eager to adopt Christian marriage, she overtly romanticized Maggie and William’s developing relationship for the consumption of her female readers. She described how Maggie boldly stated to William, “You are pouring out such a flood of love upon me that you are overwhelming me. You carry me off my feet until I know not where I am.”⁶⁶ Motherwell wrote that she could not resist approving their engagement: “I congratulate you William, for the love of a pure young girl like Margaret is a priceless treasure for any man to win.”

In a later chapter titled, “Storm-Tossed,” Motherwell described how the marriage did not materialize because William died from tuberculosis before the marriage could take place. In her letters to the foreign missions committee, she wrote how William Bird had been engaged to Maggie Pratt, but he died at his home on the reserve on October 3, 1903. In her novel, she described a long romantic death bed scene between Maggie and William where they professed

⁶⁵ I was able to determine which students received pseudonyms to by comparing her unpublished manuscript with the letters she wrote to R.P. McKay of the foreign missions committee of the Presbyterian Church. In those letters to McKay, she discussed the students and events at the school.

⁶⁶ “Surrender,” speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC Toronto.

their love for each other. In actuality, William passed away with his mother and father by his side before Maggie and Motherwell even arrived on his reserve. Within a year after William's death, Motherwell had arranged the marriage between Maggie Pratt and another colony boy, Ben Stonechild, who appeared under the pseudonym Joe. They were married on September 1, 1904, with Motherwell and Indian Agent Graham in attendance.⁶⁷ Motherwell's manuscript blends fact with fiction to create a missionary narrative for the consumption of her white readers. Although many of the stories contained truthful elements about the events at File Hills school, she intended her writings to purport the success of her colonizing mission at the residential school and nearby colony. Her manuscript served as unabashed missionary propaganda highlighting Presbyterian contributions to the refashioning of Indigenous marriage traditions. It demonstrates how missionaries collaborated with government agents to reorder gender relations between their colonial subjects, detailing how the establishment of Christian marriage between the young men on the colony and the young women in the residential school served as a critical function of colonial incursions into their lives.

⁶⁷ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 3 October 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 54, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto; Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 10 November 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 55, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto; Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 1 September 1904, 79.199C, Box 5, File 65, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.



Figure 3.2 Maggie Pratt and Ben Stonechild wedding, 1904. Violette Graham, third from right. Catherine Motherwell behind Violette. On far right, William Morris Graham. Motherwell Collection, Parks Canada.

Sickness and Difference

Although Motherwell's missionary writings had little to say about the difficult realities of the mission site, sickness and disease were a constant presence at the school and nearby colony.

After only one year of being at the school, Motherwell admitted to McKay that she had to stop teaching in the classroom because she could no longer stand being in such close quarters with so many sick children. Previous principals had sounded the alarm to their administrators over the constant deaths of students. In 1894, Principal Skene wrote to Mrs. Harvey of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society, informing her that another little boy had died at the school, "The

doctor thinks he died of consumption of the brain, this makes the eighth child of our pupils who have died since we came here four years ago. Four of them we buried, the remaining four died on the reserve.”⁶⁸ Missionaries recognized that conditions at the school contributed to the transmission of disease but remained convinced it was better for the children to die as converted Christians than to remain unsaved ‘heathens’ in their home surroundings. In the same letter, Skene expressed gratitude to Harvey for her continued support of sustaining the schools in the West through charitable donations, “I am pleased to think that we are to have your assistance in our struggle, to rescue a few more children from darkness and misery.”⁶⁹

When Motherwell arrived at File Hills, the school buildings were in a dilapidated condition with poor ventilation systems contributing to the rapid spread of disease. In 1902, a medical inspector visited File Hills and condemned the boys’ dorms, suggesting to the staff that they erect a tent outside the building to serve as the boys’ accommodations. His report mentioned that every spring he found the children at File Hills school in poor health from living in cold and cramped quarters over the prairie winter. Following the inspection, Motherwell wrote to the Presbyterian authorities asking for six hundred dollars to have an addition added to the school to improve the children’s sleeping quarters. The school lacked sufficient space to house the current number of students, but the lack of accommodations did not stop Motherwell from trying to recruit more children from the File Hills Indian Agency. Her determination to acquire more students than the Catholics led her to misrepresent to Indigenous parents’ what conditions were genuinely like at the school for their children. Motherwell wrote to McKay, “Our pupils are increasing, the more children we can get the stronger our footing will be against the Catholics,

⁶⁸ Letter from Alexander Skene to Harvey, 19 September 1894, Box E, File F813, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

but should it be discovered by the parents that their children failed in health after entering school – which they are sure to do in cramped sleeping rooms – it would be fatal to our securing more.”⁷⁰ Her justification for fixing the accommodations did not stem from her anxiety for the children’s health but from her fear the Catholics would overtake Protestants in the Qu’Appelle area if the Presbyterians were unable to keep students on the school roll.

At the turn of the century, tuberculous (TB) and complications from the disease served as the main cause of death for Indigenous students at residential schools. TB was also rampant amongst white settler communities, but poverty and starvation exasperated the spread of the disease across reserves on the plains. The popularity of beliefs in racial science and Social Darwinism in the early twentieth century convinced many settlers that there was a hereditary ‘weakness’ in Indigenous peoples which made them biologically susceptible to TB.⁷¹ Air transmission was a major factor in the spread of TB, but the disease also spread through milk that was infected with bovine tuberculosis. TB symptoms revealed themselves as problems with head and joint pain, eruption of sores (scrofula), injuries to bones and organs, coughing blood, and eventually, death. If sick students did not succumb to death at the schools from disease, the children were often subjected to painful experimental medical treatments in attempts to treat their symptoms. On May 10, 1902, Motherwell reported to the foreign missions committee that a doctor had recently visited the school and had scraped the scrofula sores of the children. This had been such a horrifying and painful experience for the children that she spent the rest of her day alone in her room recovering from witnessing the procedure. If cases were severely advanced, Motherwell took children from the File Hills school to Indian hospitals in Brandon and Selkirk to

⁷⁰ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, September 1902, 79.199C, Box 3, File 41, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

⁷¹ Maureen Lux, “Perfect Subjects: Race, Tuberculosis and the Qu’Appelle CBG Vaccine Trial.” *CBMH/BCHM* vol 15 (1998): 278.

have their limbs amputated when their bodies were far advanced in the disease. At a convention for Anglican Indian Workers in Edmonton on January 6, 1909, one of the speakers discussed the recent emergence of the new Indian hospitals on the prairies and stated there was a tendency on the part of some doctors to use these hospitals as places of experimentation. The speaker accused doctors of conducting amputations on Indian patients which may not have been medically necessary.⁷²

In her writing, Motherwell included stories about her diseased students to emphasize the racialized difference between white and Indigenous bodies. Sick bodies were a visible spectacle of heathenism. Her discourses about the students' bodies and their illnesses connected sickness and race in her writings. She portrayed Anglo-Canadians as having robust constitutions and Indigenous bodies as sickly and weak. Missionaries battled poor health at the residential schools since they were exposed to the same diseases as the students, but their bodies were never on put on display for public consumption in her writings. It was the Indigenous bodies she labelled as susceptible to sickness and vulnerable to the horrors of disease. She described taking a student, Winnie Akapew, sister to baby Sidney Richard Akapew, "Whose soul was as white as the driven snow but whose poor body was full of corruption" to Dynevor Indian hospital in Selkirk to have her arm amputated from scrofula of the bone.⁷³

In her novel, the students' sick bodies represented symbols of 'heathen darkness' frightening the vulnerable female missionary in the mission field. She wrote how upon seeing the young farm colonist, William Bird, who was living in a tent at the school, exhibit symptoms of the disease, "a shiver passed over her as she recalled the burning blood-shot eyes of Richard and

⁷² Notes Taken at the Indian Workers Convention at Edmonton, 6 January 1909, GS 75-103, Box 15, File S.H. Blake 1909, S.H. Blake Correspondence, GSA, Toronto.

⁷³ "A Little Child Shall Lead Them," speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

the strange wild things he had done and said.”⁷⁴ Missionaries differentiated Indigenous bodies from white bodies through their portrayal of sickness, identifying disease as part of their ‘savage’ makeup.⁷⁵ However, missionaries also needed to demonstrate in their narratives to their congregations how conversion transformed the hearts and minds of their colonial subjects in the face of illness. The students were portrayed as brave little Christians in the trials of their illness and on their deathbeds while Motherwell depicted herself as the benevolent mother to these sick children, facilitating their acquisition of medical treatment and care in their final days. In a chapter titled “Pals,” she wrote how two little girls at the school, who both underwent amputations from TB infections, became inseparable friends, exhibiting Christlike selflessness for one another. She wrote how the girls’ tended to each other through washing, dressing, and feeding the other, finding purpose through their caregiving. In Motherwell’s depiction, the girls’ bodies were broken, but their spirits were redeemed because of their adopted Christian identity.⁷⁶

Expanding the File Hills Experimental Colony

Graham began organizing the File Hills Farming Colony on the Peepeekisis reserve in 1898. By the time Motherwell arrived at the File Hills Residential School in October 1901, Graham’s plan of placing ex-pupils from the Indian schools onto the experimental farming colony was well underway. In her first couple of months as the principal, Motherwell expressed reservations about whether she could trust Graham in his role as Indian Agent to support her development of the school. She wrote to McKay in January 1902, mentioning how Graham had visited the school and acted very friendly with her and her sister, Janet, but adding that she had doubts about his character, and wondering if he was secretly helping the Catholics attain students for the industrial

⁷⁴ Ibid., “Reconciliation.”

⁷⁵ On identifying Indigenous bodies as a dying race see, Mary Ellen Kelm, “Diagnosing the Discursive Indian: Medicine, Gender, and the “Dying Race,”” *Ethnohistory* 52 No. 2 (Spring 2005), 373.

⁷⁶ Ibid., “Pals.”

school in Qu'Appelle. She relayed the story of how the Presbyterians had acquired Fred Dieter's little sister, Agnes Dieter for the File Hills school. But when Graham found out that Agnes was going to the Presbyterians, he was furious and made a dramatic scene in his department office. The parents from the reserves informed Motherwell that Graham had pressured them to send their children to Qu'Appelle, some as young as three years old.

It was likely that Graham was secretly collaborating with the Catholics in trying to sway parents to send their children to the Qu'Appelle school in return for personal payment from the Catholic Church. In his study on the File Hills Farm Colony, geographer Drew Bednasek explains how a Peepeekisis community member described that when Graham and his wife, Violette, came to the File Hills agency, they had little more than a two-wheeled wagon. However, within three years, they were financially well-off because of his corrupt dealings with band money. As the Indian agent in the area, Graham accumulated large tracts of land, over time becoming a prosperous farmer on the prairies.⁷⁷ It was common for missionaries to frequently complain about the questionable business practices of the Department of Indian Affairs agents. Missionaries and state agents shared the similar goal of colonizing Indigenous subjects but would often approach the processes in contradictory ways. Motherwell confronted Graham with the fact that Agnes' parents felt pressured to send her to the Catholics. She told him if there was any "crooked work" preventing Agnes from attending File Hills, her and Janet would make no small stir about it. Graham placated her by stating that she should not "build too much on it for the Indians were so slippery you could not depend on them."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ C Drew Bednasek, "Aboriginal and Colonial Geographies of the File Hills Farm Colony (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 2009), 142.

⁷⁸ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 13 January 1902, 79.199C, Box 3, File 33, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

Within a year of being in the principal position, Motherwell began to warm up to Graham and started placing her hope for the future of the Indian ‘race’ on the success of the File Hills Farming Colony. By spring 1903, the colony was growing in her opinion as a solution for how to deal with the graduates of the schools to avoid ‘regression.’ She mentioned to church officials that Graham was not a religious man and was motivated by his desire for fame, but that she supported his plans because the colony would provide colonial protection for the ex-pupils. In a speech to the W.F.M.S. in 1922, she reflected on her reasoning for why she became Graham’s “co-worker” in establishing the File Hills Farming Colony:

We were demanding these young people taken out of heathen homes dating generations back and expecting them at the age of eighteen to have a strength of character and Christian faith to resist temptations, which we would shrink from asking our boys and girls from civilized homes. What did we find in the white world? That our girls were a target for the dishonorable white man. Our boys treated indifferently by the better class of white people and made pals to the lesser class. The human heart naturally wants to be liked and the boys showed themselves friendly to those that shared this debauched life.

The white world became a menace.⁷⁹

As a white woman convinced of her moral and spiritual supremacy over Indigenous peoples, Motherwell positioned herself as a protective mother to the children at the residential school but also aimed to extend this mothering into their adult lives. Colonial subjects needed protection from the dangers lurking in the empire that would draw them away from the Christian middle-class ideals of Anglo-Canadian society. Motherwell pointed to class differences to emphasize how the poor were like a contagion in society threatening the better classes and guilty of

⁷⁹ “File Hills Colony,” Personal Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1889, 1908, 1922, 1928, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

contaminating the missionary's colonization project to 'uplift' Indigenous subjects to Anglo-Canadian standards. The colony would not only teach Indigenous subjects how to cultivate the land but would also enforce habits of domestication, religious, and moral training into the lives of these Indigenous men and women, helping them to assimilate into the Canadian middle-class.

Motherwell laboured tirelessly to get Presbyterian boys to settle on the colony. A staunch believer in the experimental colony as an extension of her missionary work at File Hills school, she wrote to Principal Sinclair at Regina Industrial School trying to persuade him on the importance of encouraging boys from the industrial school to support Graham's initiative. She travelled to Round Lake Residential School to discuss the colony project with Principal Hugh McKay with the hope that he could offer some ideas for growing the community of ex-pupils. She wrote the Foreign Missions Committee to say, "I feel quite satisfied that the colony is going to be one of the most important and successful missions among the Indians and our church would do well to hold it now."⁸⁰

Graham's dictatorial control over colony affairs contributed to the appearance of 'success' in the early decades of the colony. Historian Sarah Carter describes how Graham rigidly enforced the Indian Act, imposing tight restrictions on the lives and liberties of the colonists. He restricted parents from visiting their children for extended periods of time. Colonists had to refrain from their native languages and women were not allowed to socialize with other colonists since it would take them away from their domestic duties. 'Heathen dances' were strictly outlawed.⁸¹ Instead, state and church officials encouraged the colonists to attend

⁸⁰ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 26 January 1904, 79.199C, Box 5, File 57, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

⁸¹ Carter, "Demonstrating Success," 165.

church, women to attend sewing circles, and men to join a brass band. Their activities on the colony needed to align with Anglo-Canadian colonial ideas of acceptable forms of leisure.

In 1903, Motherwell conspired with Graham to stop the colonists from engaging in Indigenous ceremonies and dances. Missionaries in conjunction with state officials sought to reshape the cultural and religious practises of Indigenous peoples across the Canadian state. First introduced in 1895, section 114 of the Indian Act sought to suspend Indigenous ceremonies from taking place across the prairie region.⁸² Frustrated that the colonists were still engaging in traditional Indigenous dances, feasts, and funerals into the twentieth century, Motherwell pleaded with McKay for the Presbyterian Church to vocalize their support for Graham in his wrangling with the federal government to do more to support his efforts of cracking down on the dances. She wrote, “We have sympathized with him individually, but what force have we brought to bear on the government, could we not have a petition drawn out and signed by the representatives in our church asking for the strict carrying out of a law prohibiting all heathen gatherings?”⁸³ Ceremonies like the Thirst Dance (Sun Dance) served as significant cultural practices of the Plains Cree. Ceremonies brought kinship groups together to celebrate communal rites across the prairies, often involving the communal sharing of goods. Adversely, state officials held the belief that giving away of one’s possession or sharing indiscriminately was unprogressive and anti-modern, undermining the settler notion of capitalist accumulation.

In 1903, Etchease, a Saulteaux man from Muscowpetung’s reserve, conducted circle dances throughout the File Hills agency, including participating in the custom of ‘giving away’ as part of the ceremonial practices. Graham ordered his arrest for ‘sharing goods’ at the dances but

⁸² Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties That Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 107.

⁸³ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 10 November 1903, 79.199C, Box 4, File 55, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

the judge initially acquitted Etchease of the charge. After protests from missionaries across Saskatchewan, the judge retried the case, ruling that tea, bannock, and soup counted as the sharing of illegal items, and sentencing Etchease to three months imprisonment. Missionaries, including Reverend Dr. Hart, the Convenor of Indian Missions for the Presbyterian Church, strongly advocated to convict Etchease.⁸⁴ Motherwell's letters to church authorities also strengthened the denominations' willingness to support the prohibition of Indian dances, knowing that their missionaries also championed the cause. Aware of the possibility of punishment from the DIA, the colonists' continuation of their cultural practices revealed the significance of ceremonies in their lives and their on-going involvement functioned as resistance to the social control of the Indian agents.

In her novel, Motherwell presented the opposite view. She emphasized the young colonists' enthusiasm to transform from 'savagery' into 'civility' accentuating their willingness to embrace Anglo-Canadian culture. She described a conversation she had with colonist William Bird at the residential school about a vision he had about his future on the colony. William stated, "I saw a farm with a neat little house around it, fields of waving grain, a clean well-kept summer fallow...I saw myself walking amongst the flowers and hedges in the evenings, every little while I would glance towards my house and standing the door—well some person pretty mine."⁸⁵ In Motherwell's narrative, William not only rejected Indigenous ways of living from the land but he hungered for an agricultural, settled life. Motherwell needed to convince herself and her readers that the 'heathen' readily endorsed their education in colonial citizenship. She did it to evade guilt for the colonial violence she was inflicting in the children's lives.

⁸⁴Pettipas, *Severing the Ties That Bind*, 120.

⁸⁵ "Surrender," speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

To further cement this argument for her readers in the chapter titled, “The Difficulties of a Young Housewife,” she recounted a story of her sister Janet travelling to the farming colony, twelve miles away from the school and inspiring one of the young colony homemakers to embrace the domestic challenges of making a home. Supposedly, the young woman, Mary Belle Cote, Fred Dieter’s wife, missed the excitement of living at the residential school surrounded by friends and staff members. Facing dreadful loneliness in the new colony, she failed to appropriately complete her domestic tasks as a helpmate to her husband. Frustrated by her lack of ability to maintain proper standards of femininity in the home, Motherwell explained how Mary Belle’s lack of domestic energy was a serious concern since Graham tended to unexpectedly visit colonist farms to inspect their civilizing ‘progress.’ She described Graham as a “wonderful student of Indian nature, ambitions to develop the best in each one...his task was indeed a difficult one and although a man of very tender sympathies he had often to assume the role of a hard-hearted tyrant.”⁸⁶ Embracing her role as a female Christian educator teaching proper ideals of managing home and hearth, Janet attempted to motivate the young woman of her domestic responsibilities. When the colonist Mary Belle blamed her ‘Indianness’ for the domestic failures, Janet dismissed the idea, informing Mary Belle that her race was not to blame for her feelings of loneliness on the prairie homestead, reassuring her that white female homesteaders experienced the same pangs of isolation. Motherwell’s text is both racist and anti-racist at the same time. Missionaries walked a delicate line between operating as colonial agents enforcing colonial practices but, in other circumstances, rejecting racist, exclusionary arguments. At these times, they preached a worldview where Indigenous persons were human beings worthy of acceptance in the family of God.

⁸⁶ Ibid., “The Difficulties of a Young Housewife.”

Although Motherwell stressed the ‘success’ of the File Hills farming colony in her writings, the reality was more dire than she depicted. Eight of the male colonists died of TB before 1911, as did thirteen children.⁸⁷ Strong tensions existed between the original reserve residents and the colony inhabitants over divisions of land. Cree Anglican missionary Edward Ahenakew questioned the triumph narrative purported by Graham: “The colony is a tribute to his own ability and to his strong desire to improve the Indian, but I do not believe that it is a natural development.”⁸⁸ Motherwell may have exhibited kindness to the women of the colony, helping with weddings, their children, and organizing church groups but steeped in her ethnocentric desire to see Christian transformation along with ideas of racial ‘improvement’ she sanctioned colonial incursions into the lives of the colonists.

Motherwell and the Performance of Benevolence

In 1908, Motherwell left Indian missionary work to marry widower William Richard Motherwell, moving to his home in Abernethy, Saskatchewan, referred to as Lanark Place. In 1906, the Saskatchewan Legislature appointed W.R. Minster of Agriculture, a role he held until 1921 when he entered federal politics, taking Catherine with him to Ottawa. But from 1908 to 1921, Catherine Motherwell resided over the household at Lanark Place and was stepmother to William’s two children. Her supervision of Lanark Place stood as a symbol of civilization on the prairies. If the colonist homes on the experimental farm represented colonial spaces on a path moving towards civilization, Lanark Place was the quintessential example of civilized progress. The home was a Victorian structure of elegance, a place where the Motherwells entertained

⁸⁷ Statistical Statement of File Hills Colony, 31 March 1911, RG10, Vol. 6300, File 641-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

⁸⁸ Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 133.

family, friends, and influential guests from across Canada. They were doted upon by a host of workers hired to perform fieldwork and domestic help.

Motherwell made it explicitly clear in her missionary reports that the only career options she deemed suitable for Indigenous children were agricultural and domestic services. Upon leaving the school in 1908, she hired ex-pupils from the school and women from the reserve to work as domestics at Lanark Place. The employment of brown women in her home extended Motherwell's control over Indigenous bodies beyond the walls of the residential school.

Historian Mary Jane McCallum argues that the "labour of young Indigenous women was crucial to the economies of colonialization."⁸⁹ White women desired the labour of Indigenous women to fulfill the most arduous household tasks marking them separate from whites. Some of the women Motherwell employed at Lanark Place were: Nellie Reed; Rose Keewetan, who went to live with Motherwell after graduation from File Hills; Nora Thomas, who later became Ben Stonechild's second wife; Lorraine Starblanket, the daughter of Victor Starblanket; Peter Desnomie's mother, Hazel Coming-Day; and Olive Cummings.⁹⁰ After graduation, Maggie Pratt went to work for the Indian Agent Graham's household in Regina.⁹¹

Domestic servitude of Indigenous labourers in white women's homes reinforced white supremacist ideas of racial hierarchies. Black and brown women's employment in white households emerges from a historical context of white women being positioned as managers over non-white bodies. Scholar Elsa Barley Brown writes, "White women and women of colour not only live different lives, but white women live the lives they do in large part because women of

⁸⁹ Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "'I would like the Girls at Home': Domestic Labor and the Age of Discharge at Canadian Indian Residential Schools," in *Colonization and Domestic Service: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Victoria K. Haskins and Claire Lowrie (New York: Routledge, 2015), 205.

⁹⁰ Barbara Powell, *Women of the Motherwell Homestead Oral and Documentary History*, Prepared for Parks Canada, (Western Canada Service Centre: Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2004), 30.

⁹¹ File Hills Residential School, Brief Summary, Board of Home Missions, The Presbyterian Church of Canada, File Hills Residential School Narrative, NAR-NCTR-105, 129, NCTR, Winnipeg.

colour live the ones they do.”⁹² The Indigenous domestics at Lanark Place referred to Motherwell as “Mrs. Motherwell,” while she called them by their first names, reinforcing the power dynamics of ‘colonized’ and ‘colonizer’ in the intimate space of the home. The making of settler Saskatchewan took shape around microsites like Lanark Place, where colonial orders positioned Indigenous women as racial and social inferiors to white middle-class Anglo-Saxon women. Residential and industrial schools were the engines behind constructing these social and labour dynamics in the settlement of Saskatchewan and the west more broadly. It created the socially and racially separated labour force that settlers could acquire to help them create a façade of superiority, especially in the social realm which they may not have been able to aspire to in Europe.

Residential schools were not the only place where missionaries interrupted Indigenous kinship systems. They brought Indigenous children into their own households and adopted them as kin. By 1918, Nina Stonechild, the daughter of Ben Stonechild and Maggie Pratt, who had been Motherwell’s interpreter at File Hills school was reported living with W.R. and Catherine at Lanark Place. Conflicting opinions surrounded Nina’s role in Catherine’s life. Some community members believed the Motherwell’s adopted her after the death of her mother, Maggie Pratt, while others asserted that she was strictly a girl hired for labour. Catherine and William also adopted a three-year-old white girl named Margretta Evans, whose mother had died and her father could no longer care for her. In later years, according to Margretta, the treatment of the two girls was quite different. Margretta addressed Motherwell as ‘mother,’ and the family treated her with tenderness, while the family never afforded Nina the same level of care. Nina was at Lanark Place to work as a household labourer. In 1922, Motherwell sent Nina to Regina College

⁹² Elsa Barkley Brown, “What has Happened Here: The Politics of Difference in Women’s History and Feminist Politics,” *Feminist Studies* 18 no. 2 (Summer 1992): 295-312.

for training in piano and household science to further her education in domestic service.⁹³ The notion that Indigenous women were only capable of working in the domestic realm in white women's homes positioned them as inferior subjects in settler Saskatchewan, limiting their autonomy to mere servanthood.



Figure 3.3 Nina Stonechild, Possible date 1920, Motherwell Collection, Parks Canada.

⁹³ Constance Dieter-Buffalo, *Women of the Motherwell Homestead Oral and Documentary History*, Appendices, *Women of the Motherwell Homestead*, Prepared for Parks Canada (Western Canada Service Centre: Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2004), 82; Barbara Powell, *Women of the Motherwell Homestead Oral and Documentary History*, Prepared for Parks Canada, (Western Canada Service Centre: Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2004), 26-29.

Motherwell formally left her missionary career in 1908, but she continued her direct involvement in organizing and growing the File Hills Farming Colony. She had developed a close professional as well as a personal relationship with Indian Agent William Graham. Graham offered up his home for William Motherwell and Catherine to secretly court each other from 1905 to 1908, likely because of William's public profile as an important politician in the area, following the death of William Motherwell's first wife. The couple held their clandestine meetings in the Indian Agent's home and were married in 1908 at the File Hills Residential School. Now married and living at Lanark Place, Catherine continued to act as a watchful monitor of the File Hills Colony for Graham, visiting the homes of the colony families to ensure they were maintaining their homes in a cultured fashion and aligning their lives along Christian principles.

Catherine's surveillance of the colony families continued into the twenties. In 1915, Janet Gillespie and Motherwell assured Graham they would visit each of the Presbyterian families on the colony at least twice over the summer months. In 1916, Graham phoned Motherwell about helping him find more boys for the colony. In 1923, after Motherwell had moved to Ottawa for William's federal career, Janet wrote Motherwell about recently visiting the colony and hoped Motherwell could join her on her next visit home to Abernethy.⁹⁴ Until they left for Ottawa in 1921, William and Catherine Motherwell attended the Wanakapew Church on Peepeekisis reserve every Sunday. When she moved to Ottawa in 1921, the Presbyterian church appointed a deaconess, Miss Emily L. Latimer, to live in the Presbyterian manse on the colony.

⁹⁴ Letter from Janet Gillespie to Catherine Motherwell, 27 May 1923, personal Catherine Motherwell 1923, 1928, 1929, 1931 MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

The Motherwell's were integral to getting the manse built. It was Motherwell who organized a shower of goods for the newly appointed deaconess, helping her to establish her home on the colony. Motherwell's twenty-year involvement with the colony was critical to maintaining colonial power over the lives of the colonists. In a private letter to Motherwell in the 1920s, Janet wrote about a female member from the colony who was too busy to stay at Lanark Place and assist Janet with her domestic work because she was getting 'visits' later in the month.⁹⁵ Janet and Motherwell understood what these 'visits' entailed. Conducted by the Indian agents or missionaries, they were institutionalized mechanisms of surveillance to control the bodies and labour of First Nations people on the colony. They operated as a critical function of a racial experiment to track the colonist's progress of assimilation and acceptance of modernity.

Women's Foreign Missionary Society in Saskatchewan

Before she left Abernethy for Ottawa in 1921, in the years following her resignation from File Hills school, Motherwell actively participated in the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church. In September 1908, she helped establish the Abernethy Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society, which changed their name in 1914 to the Women's Missionary Society (W.M.S). She served as Mission Band Secretary in 1908 and 1919, President of the W.M.S in 1914, 3rd Vice President in 1916, and President again in 1920. In the second annual meeting of the Abernethy Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society held on September 14, 1911, the group organized a collection of bales for File Hills Residential School.⁹⁶ In 1920, the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Society of Saskatchewan appointed Motherwell to visit the

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Abernethy Minutes, 14 September 1911, A. 381 XV A6, Abernethy, Kenlis, Gillespie, Board of Managers, FL 003 Abernethy-Lemberg Pastoral Charge Fonds, Living Skies Archives (LSA). I accessed the Living Skies Archive at the Provincial Archives in Saskatchewan in Regina, but they have since moved to Grace-Westminster United Church in Saskatoon.

newly built Round Lake Residential School and report on the list of much-needed furnishings. She returned to the group with this list which the women worked to acquire.⁹⁷

Motherwell gained authority amongst Anglo-Canadian women in the W.M.S. in Saskatchewan because she positioned herself as a kind humanitarian who had given years of her life to Indian mission work. She had been on the front lines of colonial encounters with Indigenous peoples. This gave her greater influence among the Presbyterian church women of Saskatchewan, who provided her with a platform to communicate the aims of the missionary project. In 1915, she gave a speech titled “Our Indians” to the Saskatchewan Women’s Missionary Society, stating “I am not among those who claim that this county belonged to the Indians and that the white man had no right to take it from him. The earth is the Lord’s.”⁹⁸ She claimed it was a spiritual necessity to see prairie land divided into private property for agriculture purposes, “God could not afford to have this vast and food producing continent lie waste and be one large Indian hunting ground.”⁹⁹

It was a common argument expressed by settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that Plains Indians, who living by hunting, fishing, and trapping were ‘wasting’ the land by not cultivating the landscape. Settlers justified colonization of the prairies on the premise that they were ‘improving’ the space by dividing it into sections for farming.¹⁰⁰ Motherwell appealed to this argument, telling the women that the task of the missionary was not to drive out the Indians but to teach them “how to handle their God-given soil and greater still what purpose to

⁹⁷ Saskatchewan Women’s Missionary Society Annual Meeting, 10, 11, 12, March 1920, FW 06, A. 381.V1.C, Women’s Missionary Society, Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

⁹⁸ “Our Indians,” speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 16.

make of their God-given lives.”¹⁰¹ Colonial logic rendered Indigenous peoples as primitive and subordinate human beings that required Euro-Canadian governance to propel their civilizing development forward. Scholars Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt argue that this colonial myth “positions Indigenous peoples as dependant on the goodwill of settlers to bring us (Indigenous people) into a more advanced period to ensure our survival.”¹⁰²

In her speech to the women, Motherwell challenged the idea that the Indians were a dying race and provided statistics to establish that their population numbers were on the rise. This encouraged the women to believe that their task of missionization was more pertinent than ever. Describing Indigenous peoples as “our Indians,” she cast Presbyterian church women into a maternalistic role, arguing that it was their responsibility to supervise Indigenous peoples’ progress along the path to civilization. In her speech, she explained to the women the significance of residential schools on the prairies and the unique importance of the File Hills Farming Colony. Seven years later, in 1922, Motherwell presented another speech to the W.M.S. on Indian mission work, but for the first time displayed a willingness to admit errors in this endeavor. That same year, Dr. P.H. Byrce published his pamphlet, “The Story of a National Crime,” which revealed to the nation the high death rates and horrific conditions which afflicted residential schools. Possibly feeling accountable for her role, she stated that the Indian was once a noble figure but “mistaken kindness mingled with thoughtlessness on the part of both state and church combined” led the Indian into the “degeneracy into the weakling we too often find today.”¹⁰³ Unwilling to become a vocal critique of the state-and church-run residential school

¹⁰¹ “Our Indians,” speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

¹⁰² Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2020), ch.1.

¹⁰³ “File Hills Colony,” Personal Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1889, 1908, 1922, 1928, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

system, Motherwell was only able to offer the most basic explanation for their errors. The work of the church and state was well-intentioned but had only produced a few unhappy results.

Female Idealism in Saskatchewan

At the turn of the century, many Canadians joined various organizations and reform campaigns to work towards the improvement of society. Canadians engaged in social reform projects to solve the cultural and social ‘problems’ of the early twentieth century, which historian Ramsey Cook defined as a period of ‘regeneration’ in Canadian history.¹⁰⁴ Organizations and social networks sought to better the Canadian state through the moral regulation of its nation’s citizens, which was also occurring in Britain and the United States through similar movements. Reformers sought to stamp out characteristics amongst the population that were deemed unhealthy to the body politic. Vices like alcoholism, prostitution, poverty, and degeneracy became conceptualized as “moral decay.” Christian evangelicalism motivated Canadian social reformers or what Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau call ‘social evangelists.’ They sought to define the standards of “goodness, cleanliness, and godliness” in Canadian culture. They promoted Protestant Anglo-Saxon middle-class values on the home and on the health of Canadian families.¹⁰⁵

Differences in race and class from the middle-class Anglo-Saxon ideal shaped moral regulation efforts. Social reformers positioned the working poor and the ‘foreigner’ outside the boundaries of societal normality. The poor inspired fears of the spread of disease and crime, often depicted as the racialized immigrant in the inner city or the Indigenous person living on a rural reserve. The wretchedness of the ‘other’ did not belong in Canadian society and reformers instituted efforts to ‘purify’ their habits before they could be included in the nation state. This

¹⁰⁴ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 17.

¹⁰⁵ Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 245.

period witnessed the birth of hospitals, settlement houses, the rise of social workers, mission organizations, and a host of other charitable and philanthropic initiatives, on one hand, to address destitution in the nation state. Scholar Mariana Valverde argues, “Social purity was a campaign to regulate morality...in order to preserve and enhance a certain type of human life.”¹⁰⁶

It was during this period that Canadians willingly embraced racial science and eugenics, which linked race to mental capability. Anglo-Saxons believed themselves to be biologically superior to other racial and ethnic groups, thereby justifying their domination of the political, cultural, and social milieu of Canada. Relying on the understanding of race as an objective science allowed Canadians to extend control over the lives of Indigenous peoples and ethnic ‘foreigners.’ They were convinced that European ancestry was the highest level on the scale of the world’s racial hierarchy.

It was in this milieu that Motherwell became actively involved with organizations in Saskatchewan like the Red Cross and the Women’s Grain Growers’ Association (W.G.G.A.), which were established to address Saskatchewan’s social ills during its early years as a province. The W.G.G.A. branch in Abernethy, which Motherwell was an active member of, alongside her missionary work, worked to improve the social and economic welfare of Saskatchewan settler women. These women organized themselves to raise funds for a municipal hospital, wrote pamphlets for mothers on how to care for their babies, set up a cooperative laundry, and organized dress-making classes.¹⁰⁷ Out of their concern for social reform, middle-class white women wrestled with the question of moral purity in Saskatchewan. The minutes from their February 22 meeting in 1917 lists the topics that the W.G.G.A. wanted to address in their organization. These included examining the liquor laws, laws that affect the home and family,

¹⁰⁶ Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 24.

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Powell, *Women of the Motherwell Homestead Oral and Documentary History*, 43.

women police to look after wayward girls, checks for social diseases, and increased patriotism. White women saw themselves responsible for trying to improve the lives of the poor and racialized.

In 1920, the women of Abernethy dealt directly with the topic of racial eugenics. When they listened to an invited speaker discuss the need for eugenic laws in Saskatchewan, they heard about the need to prevent degenerates from mingling with those of sound mind and body to prevent ‘mentally deficient’ children. The speaker advocated for representatives to visit communities across Saskatchewan to determine suspected cases of ‘degeneracy’ and suggested there was a need for the formation of colonies comprised of ‘degenerates’ that should be separated from the rest of Canadian society.¹⁰⁸ The Abernethy women’s investigation into the social issues of the day was part of a wider Canadian social reform movement which aimed to link Protestant Christianity, social morality, and Canadian statehood into a single whole. In their struggle for social dominance, they linked race and class into categorical systems perceiving what might be threatening to the establishment of Saskatchewan’s social order.

The W.G.G.A. enjoyed reforming success on the topic of equal franchise for women. The organization became a major instigator in pushing the enfranchisement of white women in Saskatchewan, which they achieved in 1916. Motherwell was a cautious reformer on the matter of suffrage. She gave several speeches on women’s enfranchisement, remarking how the women of Saskatchewan owed much of their success to their liberal male politicians who gave them the ‘gift’ of the vote.¹⁰⁹ She believed women deserved equal franchise and with it a responsibility to respond to the needs of the wider world, the empire, and their community. Nevertheless, she

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of the Abernethy Women’s Grain Grower’s Association, 13 June 1917, microfilm 1.20 (1), PAS, Regina.

¹⁰⁹ “Address Given at Lemberg on December 5, 1916, by Mrs. W.R. Motherwell,” speeches Catherine Motherwell n.d., 1916, MG 27-IIIB25, Vols.7-8, Catherine Motherwell fonds, LAC, Ottawa.

argued that women's greatest realm to make change was the home. She centered domesticity as the space in which women should first bring about necessary reforms and then challenged women to uplift those in their homes: intellectually, morally, spiritually, socially, and aesthetically.

Motherwell recognized the immense power that the women of Saskatchewan had achieved with gaining the right to vote. She argued that it was their responsibility to use it for social uplift. In a speech on December 5, 1916, in Lemberg, Saskatchewan, she addressed a group of women one week before a referendum on temperance in Saskatchewan. This would be their first opportunity to exercise their right to vote. Predicated on the view that white women had an imperative task in furthering social purity aims in Saskatchewan, she pleaded for a "call to arms" for women to come together as a civilizing force to halt the sale of liquor and to stop the old enemy of "King Alcohol."¹¹⁰ Motherwell connected feminism with social reform to 'cleanse' society from the corruption of drink in order to curb Saskatchewan's social evils. Motivated by her colonial assumption that Anglo-Saxons were evolutionary superior and that Euro-Canadian women had a critical role in the 'civilising mission' of the prairies, Motherwell connected the franchise of white women with the discourses on 'protection' and 'rescue.' In her speech at Lemberg, she admitted that she was reluctant at first to embrace the goal of enfranchisement but argued that the idea of protecting her 'weaker sisters' compelled her to reverse her position. She described, "It was witnessing the conditions of less fortunate women than myself that awakened me to the selfishness of holding back from others a power which might help remedy their unhappiness, just because I was not suffering myself, and so I joined the army of petitioners for the women's franchise."¹¹¹ Her missionary compulsion to rescue the 'other' drove her

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

commitment to fight for the franchise. The subject position of the ‘weaker sister’ emerged from longstanding colonial discourses that were steeped in racializing tropes of black and brown women as morally and intellectually inferior who required white women to elevate their societal status.¹¹² Historian Sarah Carter argues that feminism on the prairies took on a “profoundly imperialist tone,” with many activists arguing that, by giving white women the vote, preferably Anglo-Canadians, the nation would be protected from “race degeneration.”¹¹³



Figure 3.4 Catherine Motherwell at Lanark Place, Abernethy, R-A4801, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

¹¹² Burton, 7. See also Newman, *Introduction*.

¹¹³ Sarah Carter, *Ours by Every Law of Right and Justice: Women and the Vote in the Prairie Provinces* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2020), 33.

Convinced of her racial and economic superiority, Motherwell believed she had a responsibility to the nation and to the larger imperial project, and this drove her decision to become a suffragist. Some of the issues that prairie women could now address with their newfound electoral power included: solving domestic problems, greater protection of girls and women, and the easing of the burden for rural women. These were all vital causes but the framework of white women ‘helping’ their weaker sisters within the nation originated from the representation of white women’s superiority over racialized minorities. White women received the vote in Saskatchewan in 1916, yet it would be several more decades before Indigenous, Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian women could cast ballots.

Conclusion

When William Motherwell entered federal politics in 1921, the Motherwells moved to Ottawa and lived between residences in Abernethy and Ottawa until 1939. Motherwell’s life took on new forms as William rose up the ranks in the political world. They began to associate with wealthy elites in Canada and traveled extensively around the world on work trips. After William passed away in 1943, Motherwell lived with her sister, Janet Gillespie, and sister-in-law, Barb Gillespie in Abernethy. In her final years, she moved to a convalescent home in Moose Jaw until her death on July 6, 1952, at the age of eighty-six years. The collective memory of Motherwell’s life has been shaped by a social knowledge of her as a benevolent friend to Indigenous peoples. Eleanor Brass, a former member of the File Hills Farming Colony and Cree and Saulteaux writer, emphasized the positive relationship between the Motherwells and the First Nations people from the File Hills agency, writing “the Indian people loved them very much; their home was always

open to us.”¹¹⁴ Yet, Mary Belle Dieter, who was Eleanor’s mother and more closely associated with Motherwell, said in her final days, “If heaven is full of white people, then I do not want to go there.”¹¹⁵

I have shown that the perception of Motherwell as ‘friend to the Indians’ is more fraught than previously imagined. Emotional expressions in imperial contexts become convoluted when colonial actors employ technologies of power into the lives of their Indigenous subjects. Colonialism is more than the extension of military or political power into new spaces. It acts as a governing system which operates to displace Indigenous families, redraw kinship lines, create new intimate bonds, and perceive bodies as sites of control. Motherwell was neither a state official nor a military personal, but a colonial actor who laboured in the interruption of Indigenous kinship.

As a woman on the Canadian prairies at the turn of the century, she navigated patriarchal structures that worked to exclude her from positions of power. Presbyterian missions became a site of opportunity for increased female agency in the world and served as a space for her to foster her own leadership capabilities in the public sphere. But her yearning for career advancement attained through her missionary drive to convert the ‘heathen’ resulted in her reticence to discuss residential school abuses, which took place under her watch. She downplayed the number of children’s deaths and their suffering from horrific diseases. Drawing attention to the reality at the schools would likely have come at the expense of her career, as it had for others who spoke out. As a devout Presbyterian, she fervently believed in the goals of assimilating Indigenous children into the Canadian settler fold through the missionary

¹¹⁴ Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds*, 38.

¹¹⁵ Constance Dieter-Buffalo, *Women of the Motherwell Homestead Oral and Documentary History*, Appendices, *Women of the Motherwell Homestead*, Prepared for Parks Canada (Western Canada Service Centre: Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2004), 83.

enterprise of church-run schools. Upon leaving the Indian Residential School System, she became an educator of empire, attaining an audience in missionary circles because she had been on the front lines of the colonial encounter. She became a missionary communicator to white women on the prairies, encouraging them to sustain the residential school system in order to further the Christian civilizing process. Her missionary writings crafted a gendered narrative in which she painted herself as a missionary heroine, while placing Indigenous women and children in categories of victimhood as helpless charges who needed white women's intervention.

Only in later years, before she left for Ottawa in 1921, did Motherwell reluctantly hint at the idea that evangelical missionaries had made errors in their support of the colonization of Indigenous peoples on the plains. Unwilling to implicate herself, she avoided any notion of personal responsibility for the attempted destruction of Indigenous culture. Instead, she continued to preach to Presbyterian church women in the early 1920s that Indigenous peoples still required the strong hand of the church to move them forward on the track towards civilization. Following her death in the 1950s, she was remembered by white settlers as a kind-hearted female pioneer on the prairies who invested herself in the welfare of others as a teacher, principal, wife, stepmother, community member, suffragette, female activist, and, most importantly missionary, 'friend to the Indians.' Fashioning her reputation on the missionary conviction that she was 'caring for' and 'protecting' the empire's colonized races on the Canadian prairies, she clothed her Western cultural and racial arrogance under the ideological banner of 'compassion,' thus, obscuring the violence and coercion of colonial tactics underneath the surface of missionary humanitarian benevolence.

Chapter 4:

“She is a Great Help and Comfort to Me”: Missionary Adoption and the Exploitation of Indigenous Child Labour

In 1983, Beatrice Nightraveller, from Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan, in an interview for the Indian History Film Project, recounted the story of a group of white settlers who had arrived on the prairies in the early settlement period, and in their travels, stopped to camp for the night just east of North Battleford. As the settlers were wandering about their camp getting organized, a group of Indigenous people who had been hiding in the bushes nearby snuck into their camp and stole a white baby who was sleeping alone. Nightraveller stated, “They stole that baby girl. And they kept her mouth shut like this and they ran away from there.”¹ According to Nightraveller, the girl grew up in Prince Albert and never knew she was a white settler girl. The interviewer asked Nightraveller, “Why did they take that baby?” And Nightraveller responded, “I don’t know. Because the white people took a lot of Indian kids away from their parents like that.”² In Nightraveller’s remembering, the disappearance of Indigenous children in Saskatchewan sparked the retributive action of taking a white child from incoming settlers in the Battleford area.

Indigenous children had been disappearing since the beginning of the Indian Residential School System in Canada when state officials sent them away to these genocidal institutions. The forcible taking of children from their homes and their placement into residential schools led to the disappearance of thousands of Indigenous children who never returned to their kin and communities. Residential school historians have analyzed how ‘child taking’ was a function of

¹ Ada Ladue and Beatrice Nightraveller. Interview by Christine Welsh, 15 June 1983, Indian History Film Project, PAS, Regina.

² Ibid.

settler colonial logic to undermine Indigenous sovereignty and their ability to claim their lands. Church and government agents brought Indigenous children into these institutions where children were intentionally disappeared to permanently break their bonds to family. The Independent Special Interlocutor's *2024 Final Report for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves* associated with Indian Residential Schools outlined how, when Indigenous children were brought to the schools, they entered a maze of government and church-controlled institutions. They were forcibly transferred between schools, Indian hospitals, farming colonies, reformatories, and arranged marriages—institutional structures which enabled the disappearance of thousands of Indigenous children.³

Indigenous children also went missing into the familial homes of white settler families. The Sixties Scoop, which has generated a significant amount of historical scholarship, was a period which began in the 1950s, when social workers in Canada apprehended Indigenous children and placed them for adoption in Euro-Canadian families.⁴ Originating from a similar colonial rationale as the one behind residential schools, the removal of Indigenous children into white settler families was designed to break Indigenous kinship systems and further destabilize the organization of Indigenous societies. Historian Allyson Stevenson argues that, in Saskatchewan, the Sixties Scoop came to an end in the late 1970s, but that child welfare

³ Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools. *Sites of Truth, Sites of Conscience, Unmarked Burials and Mass Graves of Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children in Canada*, 2024, 17-18. <https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/1.OSI-Sites-of-Truth-Sites-of-Conscience.pdf>

⁴ Allyson D. Stevenson, *Intimate Integration: A History of the Sixties Scoop and the Colonization of Indigenous Kinship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021); Margaret Ward, *The Adoption of Native Canadian Children* (Cobalt: Highway Book Shop, 1984); Jessa Chupik-Hall, "Good Families Do Not Just Happen": Indigenous People and Child Welfare Services in Canada, 1950-1965 (M.A. Thesis, Trent University, 2001); Raven Sinclair, "All My Relations: Native Transracial Adoption: A Critical Case Study of Cultural Identity" (Ph.D. diss., University of Calgary, 2007). Joyce Timpson, "Four Decades of Child Welfare Services to Native Indians in Ontario: A Contemporary Attempt to Understand the Sixties Scoop in Historical, Socioeconomic, and Political Perspectives" (Ph.D. diss., Wilfrid Laurier University, 1993).

apprehensions by Canadian social workers increased, continuing the legacy of child removal. In Saskatchewan today, over 80% of the children in the provincial childcare system are Indigenous.⁵ However, the adopting of Indigenous children into the familial realm of the Anglo-Saxon family did not commence with the Sixties Scoop.

Missionary families began to experiment adopting residential school students in their homes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶ Mission homes in Saskatchewan operated as another arm of enforced disappearances of Indigenous children. Under the guise of missionary adoptions, Protestant missionaries across Saskatchewan enacted physical and symbolic violence against Indigenous children through the intimate realm of the mission home. Missionaries took adoptees from the residential schools and moved them into the missionary family unit. By drawing on discourses of benevolence and Christian duty, they created affective networks with Indigenous children, turning students into kin. By converting Indigenous children into family, missionaries produced a familial labour force in their homes that they could work endlessly. This chapter demonstrates how missionary adoptions, along with sentimental emotive posturing of love and care, became a gendered and racialized carceral landscape for Indigenous children. Missionaries exploited children as labourers in their adoptive placements.

Indigenous Children and Child Welfare Governance

Out of social necessity, adults have always managed arrangements for children's care. In the nineteenth century in North America, if birth parents were unable to care for their children, other adults assumed responsibility and sent them elsewhere. Children were moved around to live in

⁵ Stevenson, *Intimate Integration*, 8.

⁶ In her book, *Indians in the Family*, Dawn Peterson describes how Indigenous children were adopted out from Indian boarding schools in the United States into the households of American white families. For a memoir describing this practice see, Peter Razor, *While the Locust Slept: A Memoir* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2002).

other kin or non-kin households or were sent to institutionalised settings such as reformatories, orphanages, or industrial schools. Religious and philanthropic organizations also organized the movement of vulnerable children. From 1867 to 1917, approximately 80,000 British children who were poor, orphaned, or destitute were sent to Canada through a migration scheme organized by evangelical reformers to help populate the young and growing nation. The children were considered good British ‘stock’ and were sent to labour as farm helpers and domestic servants.⁷ The city of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, received 70 British home children in the first decade of the twentieth century, where they were sent to live at the St. Patrick’s Catholic Orphanage.

In the United States, exchanging children became a legal practice beginning in 1851 in Massachusetts. It is regarded as the first law of adoption in North America. In 1873, New Brunswick followed with the first official adoption law passed in Canada. The 1873 New Brunswick Act allowed for unmarried persons or married couples to apply for the adoption of children. It required the consent of the child if they were over twelve years of age and the birth parents, unless they were legally considered “hopelessly insane,” divorced or without legal custody. If approved, the state transferred the custody of the child to the adopted parents and subsequently the child was given a new surname. New Brunswick amended the law in 1903 to rid the clause that required a birth parent’s signature if they had neglected or abandoned the child. Other provinces in Canada followed in the 1920s by passing similar adoption laws.

⁷ On the history of British home children to Canada, see, R.A. Parker, *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867-1917* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2008); Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (Oxford: Routledge, 1980).

Saskatchewan ratified its first adoptive act in 1922, titled “An Act Respecting the Adoption of Children.”⁸

From Saskatchewan’s inception as a province in 1905 until the first adoption act passed in 1922, the province enacted separate child welfare acts for the care and wellbeing of neglected and destitute children. In 1908, the province passed its first child protection act titled, “An Act for the Better Protection of Neglected and Dependent Children,” which established a government bureaucratic structure for the protection of children within the province. Between 1908 and 1911, reformers established Children’s Aid Societies in cities across Saskatchewan. They functioned as private societies providing comparative child protection services throughout the cities and towns of Saskatchewan. By 31 December 1913, 457 children were listed in foster care either under the Bureau of Child Protection or in non-governmental Children’s Aid Societies.⁹ Stevenson asserts that these early child welfare organizations in Saskatchewan did not encourage children in care to be placed for adoption into nuclear families.¹⁰ Not only did these adoptive laws not exist in Saskatchewan in the 1910s, but eugenic thinking dominated the rationale behind child welfare placements, discouraging the concept of adoption. Eugenicist supporters widely disapproved of adoption. Around the turn of the century, it was commonly believed that ‘one’s blood’ was a fixed and permanent feature of one’s personhood and could not be altered or ‘bettered.’ The scientific community alleged that characteristics such as laziness, criminal tendencies,

⁸ Veronica Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves: English Canada Encounters Adoption from the Nineteenth Century to the 1990s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25-28. For more on adoption in Canada see also, Karen Andrea Balcam, *The Traffic in Babies: Cross Border Adoption and Baby Selling Between the United States and Canada, 1930-1972* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Karen Dubinsky, *Babies Without Borders: Adoption and Migration Across the Americas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁹ Frank Dornstauder and David Macknak, “100 Years of Child Welfare Services in Saskatchewan: A Survey,” Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers, 2009. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpajpcgglefindmkaj/https://sasw.in1touch.org/uploaded/web/CW/100-ChildWelfarePaper.pdf](https://efaidnbmnnnibpajpcgglefindmkaj/https://sasw.in1touch.org/uploaded/web/CW/100-ChildWelfarePaper.pdf)

¹⁰ Stevenson, *Intimate Integration*, 54.

promiscuity, and poverty were inherited traits, which a parent passed down to their child.¹¹ Only after the Second World War did eugenicists begin to change their thinking.

Yet these early century adoption and child welfare policies in Saskatchewan had little impact on the lives of Indigenous children in Saskatchewan. Racial identity influenced adoption policy marking Indigenous children separate from settler children based on provisions in the Indian Act. Historian Jessa Chupik-Hall argues that before the 1940s, the Indian Residential Schools were the only child welfare options for First Nations children and families from the state.¹² First Nations kinship structures had long supported interfamily adoptions but the Canadian state's answer for vulnerable First Nations children was placement in the Indian Residential School System. Métis children were also admitted into residential schools. Although the federal government believed that educating Métis children was the responsibility of provincial jurisdictions, many missionary principals had no reservations about admitting them into their mission schools. From their inception in the 1880s, residential schools targeted neglected and orphaned Indigenous children to create a student body for the institutions. The 1886 Indian Act stated that the Governor-in-Council allowed for Indian agents to 'commit children of Indian blood under the age of sixteen years' to industrial or residential schools. Indian agents and Christian missionaries specifically visited reserves and chose vulnerable or orphaned children as their initial pupils.¹³ Edward Dewdney, the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs wrote to Reverend Thomas Clarke, Principal at the Battleford Industrial School in 1883, "Orphans and children without any persons to look after them should first be selected."¹⁴

¹¹ Stevenson, 54 and Julie Berebitsky, *Like Our Very Own: Adoption and the Changing Culture of Motherhood, 1851-1950* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 28. Ellen Herman, *Kinship by Design: A History of Adoption in the Modern United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 64.

¹² Chupik-Hall, 39.

¹³ Patrick Johnston, *Native Children and the Child Welfare System* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1983), 2.

¹⁴ Letter from E. Dewdney to Rev. Thomas Clarke, 31 July 1883, RG 10, Vol. 3674, File 11422-2, LAC, Ottawa.

In an interview with Cora Sanderson, a Cree woman from La Ronge, in the 1980s, recalled how Archdeacon J.A. McKay visited Lake Deschambault, Pelican Narrows, Stanley Mission, and Montreal Lake and picked up all the orphans to build the Church of England Lac La Ronge Residential School in 1907. She explained, “All the children that had lost their mothers, he brought them out.”¹⁵ This was widely practiced across the prairies. In Manitoba, the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society (W.F.M.S.) in Portage La Prairie described how church women ‘bought’ their first pupil, Inkabah, who had been abandoned by her mother and was being raised by another Indigenous woman, Ada Ross. The W.F.M.S. bribed Ross to give them possession of Inkabah, whom they described as their sole student for the Portage La Prairie Residential School during the first six months. A. D. McKay of the Portage La Prairie W.F.M.S. wrote, “Inkabah was our first conquest. She was not pretty or clever, sometimes she seemed incorrigibly stupid, but she was our first very own child of the mission, and no one could take her from us.”¹⁶

Historian John Milloy argues that the practice of taking orphaned or neglected children off reserves continued throughout the entire duration of the Indian Residential School System.¹⁷ However, this categorization of children as being orphaned or neglected was determined by church and state officials and disregarded Indigenous kinship systems. Historian Margaret Jacobs argues that, by “Ignoring the close-knit extended families and clans from which Indigenous children came, reformers and authorities in both the United States and Australia often further justified Indigenous child removal by categorizing many of the children they removed as orphans

¹⁵ Cora Sanderson. Interview by Janet Fietz, 23 September 1981, Indian History Film Project, PAS, Regina.

¹⁶ Notes on the Indian Early History of the Indian Residential School Portage La Prairie, C272 d1, Amanda Norris Mackay Personal Papers, UCAM, Winnipeg.

¹⁷ John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 31.

in need of a home or family.”¹⁸ Jacobs explained how many of the ‘orphans’ were children from unwed parents and were classified by church and state officials as kinless because the Indigenous parents’ relationship did not align with the Christian prescription of a nuclear family.

Functioning as an apprehension apparatus for Indigenous children, the early Indian Residential School System existed separately from Saskatchewan’s child welfare services in the early twentieth century. Until 1951, First Nations children in Saskatchewan fell under the sole authority of the federal government. In that year, the federal government made amendments to the Indian Act, which made reserves subject to provincial child welfare acts. It was these 1951 changes to the Indian Act which prompted the beginnings of the Sixties Scoop.¹⁹ The different jurisdictional terrain of child removal policies for First Nations children from the rest of the province’s children from the 1880s to 1951 enabled Protestant missionaries to remove children from their schools and into their households without the knowledge of the burgeoning child welfare authorities.

The federally funded residential school institutions were responsible for the care of First Nations children and were separate governmental spaces than the provincially run child welfare institutions. Falling outside the boundaries of provincial jurisdictional spaces facilitated the enslavement of Indigenous children into white missionary homes. The mission house on the reserve existed as a liminal sphere of exploitation for Indigenous children. Children made vulnerable when removed from their kinship systems and put into residential schools, entered another realm of confinement when transferred by the missionaries from their schools to a mission home. There is no evidence to suggest that any of the Protestant missionaries formalized

¹⁸ Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 47.

¹⁹ Stevenson, *Intimate Integration*, 12.

their adoptions of First Nations children from the schools. These were unofficial transfers conducted by the missionaries who removed children to their homes and then exploited them for the missionaries' labour, emotional, and sexual needs.

Although tending to the home and caring for their husbands' and their own biological children were the supreme tasks of missionary wives, some wives felt that their spiritual calling by God demanded more of them. In her study of women missionaries in the Dutch East Indies, historian Rita Smith Kipp argued that women missionaries grew increasingly frustrated with male dominated missionary bureaucracies on the mission front where struggles over feminist agency and women's self-determination erupted.²⁰ Building on Smith Kipp's argument, I argue that, for white women missionaries in Saskatchewan who were labouring in patriarchal mission organizations on the prairies, adopting children from residential schools was a way of inserting themselves directly into the male-dominated mission project, centering mothering as central to their mission work. The home was the Christian woman's domain. Evangelicals perceived motherhood to be a woman's highest purpose. Bringing adopted children into the missionary home not only extended Christianity to colonized subjects but fulfilled evangelical Victorian women's purpose of spreading the gospel message to the children in her home.²¹ The missionary impulse to bring colonized children into the family unit aligned with the goal of the school missionary, namely to raise Indigenous children from a lamentable existence by 'gifting' a civilizing education. Missionaries conceived of the mission home as an offshoot of the school

²⁰ Rita Smith Kipp, "Why Can't a Woman Be More like a Man? Bureaucratic Contradictions in the Dutch Missionary Society," *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, edited by Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Luthehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 145-146.

²¹ Diana Langmore, "The Object Lesson of a Civilized Christian Home," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and Colonial Impact*, edited by Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 85-86; See also Susan Thorne, "Missionary-Imperial Feminism" in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, edited by Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Luthehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 46-47.

where the civilizing process would continue and the student would flourish under a constant Christianising influence. By ‘mothering’ residential school adoptees, female missionaries created a new institutional sphere for Indigenous children, one that lay outside the boundaries of provincial child protective measures and continued to reinforce the ‘othering’ of Indigenous children.

Female missionaries across empire projects believed their authority as white women justified their adoption of brown and black babies. Communicating to their mission supporters that their kinship manipulations were an act of Christian selfless maternal love, the removal of Indigenous children from mission stations and residential schools in Saskatchewan was not an isolated occurrence. Historian Rhonda Semple claims that missionary historians have found much evidence of missionaries around the globe adopting children and raising them as their own. Semple describes how British missionary Mary Slessor from the London Missionary Society in the late nineteenth century adopted twin girls in India and raised them herself, travelling with them to Britain to attend missionary meetings.

In another instance, Semple tells the story of an orphaned baby at the Almora Boarding School in India who was raised by a pair of mission sisters. In her research, Semple learned the baby was not actually orphaned but had been playing outside with her siblings at her home when she had been picked up by a female missionary who decided to take the child back to the mission.²² Historian Rosemary Gagan also describes how late nineteenth century Methodist female missionaries in China adopted children at an orphanage. Gagan sees this as more of a

²² Rhonda Semple, “Making Missions Through (Re-)Making Children: Non-Kin Domestic Intimacy in the London Missionary Society’s Work in late-nineteenth century North India,” in *Creating Religious Childhoods in Anglo-World and British Colonial Contexts, 1800-1950*, edited by Hugh Morrison and Mary Clare Martin (London: Routledge, 2017), 27, 31-32.

form of ‘sponsorship,’ since the women never actually took the children home.²³ Protestant missionaries identified adoptions as a meaningful aspect of mission work to draw colonized children into the Christianizing project.

Controlling Children’s Movement

Moving the children from the schools and into the mission homes was an act of violence over the movement of children’s bodies, which the church officials were already perpetuating in the schools. Residential schools functioned as carceral spaces where church administrators controlled every aspect of Indigenous children’s lives. Building on Foucault’s work on how carcerality is governed by disciplinary power, scholar Dion Million argues, “Residential schools were quintessential carceral spaces since they were organized to discipline both bodies and minds with the order socially invested in them.”²⁴ Missionaries worked to mold children’s minds to imagine themselves as ‘civilized’ and Christian, transitioning their identity as ‘foreign heathens’ into assimilated Canadians citizens. And they subjected Indigenous children’s bodies to gender specific forms of forced labour where settler society could later access and use them for capitalist development. The “carceral geography of residential schools”²⁵ established ownership over the students social and physical lives within the institutions and over the students’ movements beyond the school grounds. Missionary staff and Indian agents harnessed the power to determine when and if students could leave the schools. The freedom of students’ movements became subjected to their racialized social position.

Missionaries in Saskatchewan relocated children between institutions, hospitals, and into

²³ Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 138.

²⁴ Dian Million, “Telling Secrets: Sex, Power, and Narratives in Indian Residential School Histories,” *Canadian Women Studies* vol. 20 no. 2 (2000): 4. See also, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 303-304.

²⁵ Crystal Gail Fraser, *By Strength We Are Still Here: Indigenous Peoples and Indian Residential Schooling in Inuvik, Northwest Territories* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 99.

forced marriages. However, they also transitioned them out of residential schools into the larger Canadian settler society for extended periods at a time, widening the boundaries of their carcerality. In January 1891, in the Presbyterian *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Miss E.M. Armstrong, one of the staff members at Crowstand Residential School, wrote that one of the teachers, Miss McLean had just returned to the school after having been away for four weeks. She had taken one of the little girls from Crowstand with her on holidays. Armstrong wrote, “The visit among white people has made a great improvement on the little thing. She chatters away to us now in English where, before we could scarcely get an English word.”²⁶ Other staff members employed carceral logic to spontaneously take children from the schools to display their ‘Indianness’ for the consumption of white Christian settlers.

In December 1892, Presbyterian missionary Hugh McKay, principal at Round Lake Residential School, attended a church meeting in Toronto and gave an address regarding the Indian mission work in the Northwest. McKay had brought with him a six-year-old female student from Round Lake school to exhibit one of the pupils under his charge.²⁷ Missionaries took liberties with Indigenous students, often shifting them between locales to demonstrate their success to the wider settler world about their civilizing mission work on the prairies. Principal Jennie Cunningham from File Hills Residential School took eight male and female students to the second annual meeting of the W.F.M.S. in Abernethy, Saskatchewan. The children gave a talk on the Knox Presbyterian church platform about their life in the school and presented a map to the church women detailing the locations of all the Indian Residential Schools and Presbyterian

²⁶ “A New School Building at Cote’s Reserve,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, January 1891, 6.

²⁷ “Self-Help,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, December 1892, 200.

mission stations in Canada.²⁸ Controlling the children's movements signified power over the children's autonomy, turning them into objects that justified colonialism.

Before missionaries in Saskatchewan moved Indigenous children into their own homes, they were experimenting with relocating them into white settler homes through the outing system. When Hayter Reed became the Indian Commissioner of the Northwest Territories in 1888, he ushered in the 'outing system' for students at industrial and residential schools. The idea, which he had borrowed from Indian boarding schools in the United States, designed by state official Richard Pratt, proposed hiring out students to white settlers as a type of apprenticeship program.²⁹ Girls were to work as domestic servants in white women's homes and boys would labour as farm hands on settler homesteads. The first student placed in the outing program was Battleford Industrial Student, Annie McKay, who was sent to work in Hayter's Reed's home as a domestic servant.³⁰ Although settlers preferred to hire 'respectable' British domestic servants, they were in short supply so there was a great demand for Indigenous girls.³¹ Access to a live-in domestic at the turn of the century signified middle-class bourgeois respectability for white households. Having an Indigenous domestic worker contributed to white women's perception that they were "virtuous guardians of the race" in the white popular imagination.³² White Anglo-Saxon women dictated the standards of middle-class prosperity with

²⁸ Second Annual Meeting of the Abernethy Presbyterial, 14 February 1911, 381 V1 C 1. A, FW 06, Woman's Missionary Society Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

²⁹ Brian Titley, *The Indian Commissioners: Agents of the State and Indian Policy in Canada's Prairie West, 1873-1932* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2009), 108.

³⁰ Sarah Faye Nason, *Books and Broomstick: Prairie Indigenous Female Domestic Workers and the Canadian Outing System, 1881-1901* (M.A. Thesis, University of Calgary, 2019), 5.

³¹ Eric Sager, "The Transformation of the Canadian Domestic Servant, 1871-1931," *Social Science History* 31 no. 4 (2007): 510; Regarding bourgeois responsibility and domestic service, see, Magda Fahrni, "Ruffled Mistresses and Discontented Maids: Respectability and the Case of Domestic Service, 1880-1914," *Labour/Le Travail* 39 (Spring 1997).

³² Sarah Carter, "Britishness, 'Foreignness', Women and Land in Western Canada," *Humanities Research* 13, no. 1 (2006): 44.

health and access to various resources, while brown women represented subservience and docility.

Missionary principals orchestrated the organizing and deployment of Indigenous students into white homes. They managed the amount of money earned by the students, which in the case of female students was around four to ten dollars a month. Principals arranged for girls to work in the homes of Indian agents, government officials, and Northwest Mounted police officers. At File Hills Residential School, in a letter to the foreign missions committee, principal Kate Gillespie described one of her students, Fanny, as a ‘treasure’ in the school but noted that she will have to leave soon to work in the house of the commissioner.³³ Other principals arranged for their extended family to have access to domestic servants from their schools. The principal before Kate Gillespie at File Hills, Rev. Alexander Skene, removed one of the children at the school, Ruby, to work in the town of Indian Head as a servant in the home of his sister.³⁴ White settlers in Saskatchewan sought out Indigenous domestics for their homes. Thomas Clarke, principal of the Church of England’s Battleford Industrial School reported, “Those in service are doing remarkably well and are highly spoken of by their guardians. With increased accommodation, a greater number of girls could be advantageously trained, as there would be no difficulty in procuring them from the Duck Lake and Carlton agencies, and a great many more could be found in this district.”³⁵

At a missionary conference in 1896 at St. Andrews Church in Winnipeg, Presbyterian missionaries discussed how the outing system was being pursued in the schools and how it gave

³³ Letter from Kate Gillespie to R.P. McKay, 16 October 1901, 79.199C, Box 2, File 30, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

³⁴ Letter from Stewart to Andrew Baird, 11 December 1899, Box F, File H1407, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg

³⁵ Canada. Annual Reports. Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 1891, report of Thomas Clarke, Principal of Battleford Industrial School, 29 September 1891, 359.

the children opportunity to learn how to live among white people. Historian Mary Jane McCallum explains how the outing system functioned to transition Indigenous girls from residential school labourers to working as domestic servants in the labour market when they left the school at eighteen. It was one of the few labour avenues available for Indigenous girls.³⁶ In 1890, when the federal government appointed a reserve for the Dakota people just outside of Prince Albert, Andrew Baird, superintendent of the Presbyterian Foreign Missions Committee, noted that the people of Prince Albert are not anxious for the Dakota to leave because they work in their homes. He wrote, “the women especially do a considerable amount of the rougher kind of housework.”³⁷

Becoming Kin

The coercive control over children’s bodies through the outing system was an exercise in violence which preceded the removal of children from the Indian Residential School System into the mission home. The outing system turned white settler homes in Saskatchewan into additional realms of carcerality for Indigenous children. Through this system, the burgeoning settler community in Saskatchewan became familiar with racial exercises of power operating within the home. It normalized the placing of racialized subjects within white homes on the Canadian prairies. The familiarity of witnessing Indigenous children living in settler homes granted Protestant missionaries a similar opportunity to take children from residential schools and reserves and adopt them into their own families. Although evangelicals structured their families around middle-class domesticity, imbued with a proper gender order of the patriarchal nuclear family, the mission and its converts represented a larger Christian family. Indigenous peoples

³⁶ Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940-1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 29-30.

³⁷ Letter from Andrew Baird to Hayter Reed, Indian Commissioner, 16 September 1890, RG 10, Vol. 3929, File 117 090, LAC, Ottawa.

became brothers and sisters in Christ among the missionary family after they were converted.³⁸ This religious model of a larger Christian family conceived in spiritual terminology produced a sense of religious kinship with the missionary and its colonized subjects. This fluidity of the larger Christian family through the processes of Christian conversion allowed for a flexibility around missionary kinship structure.

The mission home became the most intimate location for ‘civilizing’ Indigenous adoptees. The home worked as a laboratory of emotion where the missionary could further pursue the ‘civilizing’ experiment beyond the institutionalized setting of the residential school. Missionaries sought out children for adoption who they ‘desired’ or who they felt a certain emotional affinity to, bringing them into the clutches of their admiration. Anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler argues that child-saving reformers in the United States in the 1880s held the belief that the working class “did not know what love really is.”

Similar beliefs were held amongst missionaries regarding Indigenous peoples. They believed the mission home was a microcosm and that sentimental affect could be demonstrated to small children.³⁹ The home as a site of colonial encounter brought Indigenous children into the affective realm of white missionary families. But the home was also a place of racialized tensions where assimilation was closely monitored and could become a site of anxiety. Some of the missionaries found the home as a civilizing frontier, a ‘productive’ site of colonial engagement, while others grew frustrated with the civilizing path of their adopted charges and abandoned the task altogether.

³⁸ Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1876* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 2002), 94-95; Emily J. Manktelow, *Missionary Families: Race, Gender, and Generation on the Spiritual Frontier* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 12-14.

³⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, edited by Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 44.

Missionary adoption in Saskatchewan, or what historian Rhonda Semple calls missionary ‘child circulation,’ was primarily discussed amongst missionaries within church circles.⁴⁰ Discourses of owning, taking, and adopting were interchangeable concepts in missionary letters to each other and their church supporters. Missionary discourse around adoptive practice was mostly opaque and provided few supporting details for readers. In 1895, the principal at Crowstand residential school, Rev. C.W. Whyte wrote to Baird informing him that a new female missionary, Miss Carson was going to join the staff, describing her as a “warm hearted Christian lady and a friend of children.”⁴¹ After only working three years at the school, E. Carson wrote to Baird in June 1898 informing him that she was leaving her position at the school because she was going to be married the following month. In her resignation letter she described to Baird how she was going to miss all the little children at Crowstand, especially the girls, but she had decided to adopt one of the young non-treaty girls, Rosy Brass, who she explained was a “bright little girl though not very healthy.”⁴²

In another instance, Anglican Women’s Auxiliary British missionary Annie Phillips, who married Battleford Industrial School graduate, James Brown in 1904, adopted a Métis girl from Lac La Ronge Residential School where Brown was the principal and Phillips was the senior teacher. While they were employed at the school, they adopted pupil Catherine Beatty who was born in 1896 at Nistowiak, near Stanley Mission and whose mother, Pauline Beatty had died. Catherine moved with the Browns to Stanley Mission when they relocated from Lac La Ronge school. When Brown died from tuberculous in 1912, Phillips and Catherine moved again to Red

⁴⁰ Semple, *Making Missions Through (Re-)Making Children*, 31.

⁴¹ Letter from Rev. C.W. Whyte to Andrew Baird, 17 May 1895, Box E, File F1113, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁴² Letter from E. Clifford Carson to Andrew Baird, 24 June 1898, Box F, File H752, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

Pheasant Reserve, where Phillips worked as a missionary for the Church of England and as a field matron for the DIA⁴³ Writing to female church supporters in the Church of England *Letter Leaflet*, Phillips wrote, “I have had with me Catherine, a girl from the north, in whom I have always had an interest and care. She is a great help and comfort to me and makes herself useful in so many ways.”⁴⁴

The mission home was a carceral terrain where the line between kinship and indenture overlapped. Indenture, or ‘placing out,’ was an arrangement practiced across Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Children whose parents had died or were unable to care for them were placed into a family home in exchange for their labour.⁴⁵ It gave children material benefits for their contributions to the family workload which could be particularly laborious on the farming prairies in early Saskatchewan. Neglected or destitute children were indentured out across Saskatchewan households. Yet moving settler children differed from the adoption of Indigenous children from residential schools. Adopting children from the schools was a specific practice where Indigenous children were subordinate based on their race in white missionaries’ domestic domains. Equating the indenture of settler children to the taking of Indigenous children from residential schools ignores the racial fabric of late nineteenth century Saskatchewan and the violent control the state established over Indigenous children.

Married missionary couples kept Indigenous servant girls in their homes. Mission staff displaced girls, not only from their reserve communities, but from their peers within the Indian Residential School System. When the Foreign Missions Committee was planning to build a

⁴³ “Recollections of Mrs. A.E. (James) Brown,” By Mrs. Paul, 1953-1954, F 200, Acc. 720, II. Miscellaneous, 19, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS, Regina; Catherine (Beatty) Okanee, Interview by Darcy Handy, 7 November 1985, Item Tape S-0896a & b, PAS, Regina.

⁴⁴ “Annual Reports of the Missionaries,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, June 1917, 246-247, GSA, Toronto.

⁴⁵ Herman, *Kinship by Design*, 23, Veronica Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*, 11.

home for the missionary on the Hurricane Hills mission, today known as the Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation, Rev. Neil Gilmour wrote to the committee explaining how the mission house will need to have at least three bedrooms because the missionary family will want to keep an Indian servant girl.⁴⁶ In 1893, Rev. A.W. Lewis and his wife, missionaries at Mistawasis, wrote a missionary update to officials in the Presbyterian church describing how the parents wanted to have a boarding school on the reserve because they did not want to send their children to the Regina Industrial School. At the end of the letter Lewis wrote a short sentence: “Our Indian boy is doing splendidly.”⁴⁷ Often there was only a sentence or two in missionary reports or letters devoted to the servant children living in missionary homes. In 1919, in reports from the day school at Moose Mountain, the Indian agent stated that the day-school teacher, Miss Lillie Morrice, had resigned from her teaching position and was leaving the reserve. She had been living in the house with the widowed Reverend John Fernie, from Belvidere, South Dakota, who was eighty-two years old, and a little Indian girl.⁴⁸ The invisibility of these children in missionary and state officials’ exchanges signified their relegation to marginal spheres of existence. These children did not receive even the most rudimentary and basic education available to students in the Indian Residential School System but were further exploited as child labourers through missionary domestic servitude.

Marriage was not a prerequisite for missionary adoption. Historian Julie Berebitsky argued that before the 1920s, it was acceptable for single women to adopt children.⁴⁹ For many Victorian and Edwardian women, motherhood was the highest calling and all women, even

⁴⁶ Letter from Neil Gilmour to Andrew Baird, 28 January 1896, Box E, File G32, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁴⁷ Letter from Rev. A.W. Lewis to Andrew Baird, 21 June 1893, Box E, File F272, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁴⁸ Letter from Indian Agent Thos. Cory to J.D. McLean, 13 November 1919, RG 10, Vol. 6294, File 624-1 part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

⁴⁹ Berebitsky, *Like Our Very Own*, 102-103.

childless, were thought to have the ‘natural’ abilities to mother. Missionary women clamoured towards the gendered depiction of white women as instinctually maternal to legitimize the professionalization of the female missionary. Women reformers at the turn of the century used maternalism to gain power in political, social, and civilizing projects. Although many of the women working in the Indian Residential School System were childless, the missionary glorification of motherhood meant that their removal of children from the schools did not cast a negative light on their character. Professional single women, unlike their working-class counterparts, tended to adopt children more frequently because they had access to capital and because their professions put them in closer contact with children.⁵⁰

Such was the case for single missionary women. Missionaries Lucy Baker and Annie Cameron on Round Plain reserve, located on the outskirts of Prince Albert, adopted two young girls, aged six and nine, who they kept in their mission home. When Cameron had to leave the reserve when her father died and needed to take care of her mother, she took the eight-year-old Emma Swiftbear with her, moving the child into her home in Prince Albert. The preponderance of evidence around missionary adoptions reveals that this was not isolated to Saskatchewan missions. In neighbouring Manitoba, Lilian B. Yeomans, the daughter of suffragette and female physician, Amelia Yeomans, worked as a female doctor and as the principal of Norway House Residential School, alongside her sister, Charlotte Yeomans. Charlotte worked as a nurse at the school during the first decade of the twentieth century. Both sisters adopted young girls from the residential school during their time at Norway House in northern Manitoba. Charlotte adopted a three-year-old girl named Fanny Beardy from Split Lake whose father had died sometime in 1900. Fanny’s mother consented to the adoption, and it was arranged in October 1901 that

⁵⁰ Ibid, 104.

Anglican minister Reverend Charles George Fox would bring Fanny to the Norway House school for adoption.

However, in the months before Fanny was to come to the school with the minister, Charlotte adopted another young girl, Anna Moody, who ended up dying at the age of eight. The sewing teacher, Hannah Riley, who had come from England in 1900 to work at the Norway House Residential School, decided to adopt Fanny instead. Riley changed Fanny's name to Frances Nickawa, and the young girl went on to have an illustrious career as a stage performer for church audiences across Canada. She even travelled as far away as England, Scotland, and Australia to raise funds for the Methodist church and its missions through concerts and recitals, showcasing her 'Indian' identity until her death in 1928.⁵¹ The doctor and principal, Dr. Lilian Yeomans, also adopted a young girl from Norway House school. She was named Tanis Anne Miller and was born in 1896 at Oxford House in northern Manitoba. In 1906, Lilian and Charlotte Yeomans left their positions at the residential school and took Tanis with them. They lived in Calgary for the next seventeen years before moving to California to pursue evangelical missions.⁵²

The freedom with which missionaries moved children across spaces was evidence of the invisibility of Indigenous adoptees. At times, children disappeared from the schools into the homes of missionaries and then were transferred back and forth between different homes and schools, often slipping through the cracks of institutional oversight. Bessie Walker had been the principal at Portage La Prairie residential school in 1888. She moved to the Regina Industrial

⁵¹ See Jennifer S.H. Brown's Chapter, "Francis Nickawa: "A Gifted Interpreter of the Poetry of her Race," in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderland*, edited by Sarah Carter and Patricia McCormack, 263-285 (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011).

⁵² Desiree D. Rodgers, "Encountering the Great Physician: The Life and Ministry of Dr. Lilian B. Yeomans," *Assemblies of God Heritage*, Vol. 35 & 36 (2015-2016): 4-15.

School for one year in 1891 and then transferred back to the Portage school. She was not employed for long at the Portage school when she wrote that she needed to leave missionary work to care for her aging mother. Upon her departure from the residential school, she took thirteen-year-old student Topsy McCleod with her.⁵³ Topsy had been the first pupil ‘purchased’ by the W.F.M.S. to launch the Portage Residential School. Her name now swapped by the female mission staff from Inkabah to Topsy, a derogatory name based on the poorly behaved, ignorant slave girl in the wildly read American novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.⁵⁴ Bessie Walker and Topsy travelled to Humboldt Township in Michigan, where they lived together in Walker’s home. Writing for the women’s auxiliary periodical, Topsy described her time with Walker in Michigan: “I like Humboldt very much, there are lots of hills here. Mrs. Walker’s house is on a high hill. There is a church here, but no preaching and sometimes we get lonesome.”⁵⁵

After a year spent in Michigan, Bessie Walker returned Topsy to Portage Residential School with the explanation that the school desperately required Topsy’s labour. Walker wrote that she wished Topsy would come back and live with her when she turned fifteen years old. Though once Topsy arrived back at the residential school, staff moved her to work as a domestic servant in the house of another former missionary teacher, Mrs. Essie Brown in Portage La Prairie. Addressing the Winnipeg Presbyterial W.F.M.S in 1897, a member of the school staff, Miss Laidlaw said, “Especially when I speak of Topsy tonight, because the prediction has frequently been made that if anything could be made of her, there would be hope for all. In the home of Mrs. Brown, where she has been for the last year...her work consists of washing,

⁵³ Letter from Bessie Walker to L. M. Harvie, 19 December 1892, 79.199C, Box 2, File 4, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

⁵⁴ Gretchen Alene Albers, *Boundaries of the Heart: White Women, Indigenous People, and the Christian Missions to the Dakotas, 1862-1938* (Ph.D. diss., University of Calgary, 2012), 353.

⁵⁵ “Topsy in her New Home,” *Monthly Letter Leaflet*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, March 1893, 273.

ironing, scrubbing, assisting in baking, cooking, and because of her kindly disposition the children are entrusted in her care.”⁵⁶

Topsy’s story unmasks how Indigenous children were at the mercy of the impulses of the mission staff. Moving children to the private realm of the mission home was an act of white supremacy aimed at forcing Indigenous girls into racial and gendered subservience for their social superiors. Black feminist scholars in the United States have looked at the production of black dehumanization and how black women were positioned at the end of the nineteenth century outside of the gendered categories of womanhood. They were constructed as non-human beings in relation to white women.⁵⁷ Similarly, the forced movement of Indigenous girls between the schools, the mission homes, and the white settler homes for the purpose of white domestic labour needs excluded them from the spatial boundaries of ‘child.’ Missionaries subordinated them as less than human and exploited them for their labouring capabilities in a period when Saskatchewan reformers were working to usher in governmental measures for the protection of children. It was in these intimate mission spaces where Indigenous children encountered colonial violence. They were isolated from family, community, and student peers.

Indigenous girls were especially vulnerable to sexual violence within missionary adoptive situations. In October 1897, Neil Gilmour, the principal at Crowstand Residential School, wrote to Baird from the foreign missions committee, asking if he could go to Regina Indian Industrial School, where he had previously worked as teacher and assistant principal, to bring Wandah, his adopted daughter, back to Crowstand school. The Presbyterian Church had hired Gilmour in

⁵⁶ Address by Miss Laidlaw, “Mission Work Among the Sioux,” *The Presbyterian Record*, May 1897, 117.

⁵⁷ Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 160. See also, Deborah Gray White, *A’rn’t I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985); Valerie Smith, *Not Just Race, Not Just Gender: Black Feminist Readings* (New York: Routledge, 1998). On the illegitimacy of the Indigenous female subject see Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman*, 99.

1892 as a single man, at the age of twenty-five. He had been in close contact with the students. During his time at the school, he had adopted one of the female students. He explained to Baird how he had “gotten her Indian friends, to relinquish entirely to me.”⁵⁸ He had placed Wandah in the home of the Regina Industrial School Principal, A.J. McLeod, but wanted to bring her to Crowstand to be with him there. He planned to inquire about finding her a Christian home in Ontario for a couple of years to be educated. Gilmour wrote, “I would of course pay for her. I would wish her to be treated not in any sense as an inferior, but just as an equal of the people with whom she lived.”⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Letter from Neil Gilmour to Andrew Baird, 14 October 1897, Box F, File G1969, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁵⁹ Ibid.



Figure 4. 1 Wandah Gilmour, an Indigenous girl adopted and educated by Reverend Neil Gilmour, Brock Silversides fonds, R-B1465, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

Seven months later, in May 1898, Gilmour wrote to the Presbyterian W.F.M.S. to inform them that McLeod had finally brought Wandah to join him at Crowstand. Gilmour was still in the process of trying for a few years to find Wandah a ‘respectable’ home. He turned to the network of female church supporters in eastern Canada trying to arrange a home for the young girl, even

stating that the task “would be a very genuine kind of mission work.”⁶⁰ Gilmour’s benevolent narrative of adopting Wandah cannot be left unexamined. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission details how Indian Residential Schools functioned as opportunistic institutions for sexual predators to prey on children. Access to vulnerable children, little oversight from state and church higherups and an institutional culture founded on racialized ideology regarding the inferiority of Indigenous peoples, allowed for sexual violence to be rife within the schools. In some cases, even when sexual abuses came to light, abusers were allowed to maintain their positions of authority over children with impunity from any criminal charges.⁶¹ Historian Jean Barman argues that, in colonial settings, Indigenous women were portrayed as sexually promiscuous to give male settler’s license to abuse without culpability.⁶²

In 1907, Principal W. McWhinney reported to the foreign missions committee that the summer before he arrived at the school in 1903, when Gilmour was still principal, mission staff had caught Wandah sneaking out of the dormitories to meet Indigenous men from the reserve at night. Gilmour responded to these claims by sending her to the town of Sintaluta, Saskatchewan to live with ‘friends’ for six months.⁶³ Gilmour resigned from the principal position at this time. There is no further evidence of what happened to Gilmour and his adopted daughter. However, Gilmour’s desperation to control Wandah’s movements suggests that this missionary adoption gave cover to a sexual relationship with an adolescent girl.

⁶⁰ Letter from Rev. N. Gilmour,” *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, August 1898, 124.

⁶¹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 1*, 560.

⁶² Jean Barman, “Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality during the Colonial Encounter,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, edited Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 206.

⁶³ Letter from McWhinney to Farquharson, 8 July 1907, 79.199C, Box 6, File 99, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

Indigenous parents resisted the relocation of their children into mission homes. In 1896, at the Lakesend school on Muscowputung's reserve, the school consisted of twenty-one pupils, and twelve of those students were boarders living on the mission site and attending the day school. The teacher, Miss McWilliams, wrote in her report for the Presbyterian foreign missions committee at the end of September 1896 that Rev. George Arthur and his wife 'owned' one of the students, Ruth Anakut. McWilliams described how Arthur decided to allow Ruth to go home at the end of the quarter for a visit, but that the child never returned to the school.⁶⁴ The word 'owned' denotes imprisonment or a kind of slaveholding. Returning the child to the Lakesend school meant abandoning the child to forced labour under the Arthur's control. Not returning Ruth was a concerted act of resistance on the part of Ruth's family.

Refusal to return to the school represented sabotage to the landscape of carcerality. I include this example not to point to the inherent agency of Indigenous peoples. Dene historian Crystal Fraser argued that settler scholars do not need to locate Indigenous agency to prove their personhood when she writes, "Agency begins with the idea that Indigenous people were not sovereign, calculated or intellectually savvy. Histories concerned with this concept seek to prove what Indigenous peoples already know: that we were and are all of those things."⁶⁵ Rather this example places emphasis on Indigenous strength and demonstrates that, although Christian missionaries attempted to disparage Indigeneity through child removal, they could not erode Indigenous communal and kinship ties.

Complicated Intimacies

Some missionary couples turned to the adoption of Indigenous children if they were unable to

⁶⁴ "Report of the School at Lakesend for the Quarter Ending 30 September 1896," Box E, File G704, Andrew Baird Browning Fonds, UCAM, Winnipeg.

⁶⁵ Fraser, *By Strength We Are Still Here*, 21.

have their own biological offspring. The social emphasis on the importance of a woman's role as mother, as part of her civic duty to shape the next generation, posed a challenge to childless married women. The mission site brought European missionary women into contact with Indigenous family units, where they may have enticed community members to give them their children, promising a happy and healthy upbringing for the child, or they forcibly displaced children from their communities so that these women could enter the ranks of mothering. The drive to have their own child may have incentivized some missionary couples to adopt children so they could experience parenthood and command respect in a society that glorified women's maternal instincts. Historian Julie Berebitsky explained how beliefs about women's essence were tied to motherhood. A marriage manual from the turn of the century, stated, "The mission of woman is childbearing. Women who have not married, or who have married and not borne, children, do not know what happiness is. There is a void in their lives which no other experience fills."⁶⁶ Although some childless women desired to mother, fears of racial mixing permeated discourses around adoption.

While white families adopting black or brown children was interpreted through frames of 'rescuing' and 'raising up' racialized children, it was looked upon in horror for white children to be placed in black or brown homes. In Arizona in 1904, a Catholic New York City orphanage placed forty Anglo children for adoption into Mexican Catholic families. Furious at these home placements, local Anglo-Saxons seized the children and placed them in white homes.⁶⁷ In Canada, as historian Veronica Strong-Boag argues, non-Anglo-Saxon families wanting to adopt "remained problematic" in the eyes of Canadians well into the twentieth century.⁶⁸ Anglo society

⁶⁶ E. Marea, *The Wife's Manual* (Cortland, New York: n.p., 1896), 18 in Berebitsky, *Like Our Very Own*, 78.

⁶⁷ Berebitsky, *Like Our Very Own*, 10.

⁶⁸ Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*, 117

interpreted white missionaries' motivation for adopting Indigenous children around the turn of the century as a benevolent Christian act that would gift 'heathen' children a superior life by their adoption into well-meaning Christian missionary families.

At the Hurricane Hills mission, Presbyterian missionary Ewen and Mary MacKenzie adopted and raised a First Nations baby girl from the reserve. Mary was born in Glenrines, Scotland, on August 4, 1861. She met and married Rev. Ewan MacKenzie at the age of twenty-five. Rev. MacKenzie accepted a missionary position in Nova Scotia and Mrs. MacKenzie followed shortly after. In 1897, they moved to the Hurricane Hills reserve near Sintaluta, Saskatchewan, to work as missionaries, where they adopted baby Edith. They stayed at the Hurricane Hills mission until Ewen passed away in 1915. In his legal will, he left a portion of his estate to his adopted daughter: It read: "And I further charge the aforesaid Mary MacKenzie my wife to pay to Edith the daughter of David Salteaux, provided she remains with the aforesaid Mary MacKenzie my wife until she marries with the approval of the aforesaid Mary MacKenzie my wife to the sum of one hundred dollars."⁶⁹

Two years after Ewen's death, Mary moved to St. Clements, Manitoba, continuing missionary work with the Presbyterian Church, although she did not bring her adopted daughter with her for reasons unknown.⁷⁰ The exclusionary politics of settler colonialism and the genocidal institutions of the residential school complicate the settler narrative of the benevolent adoption practices of missionaries on the prairies. Children disappeared into missionaries' families, losing ties to their community and kin, but intimacies could and did develop with

⁶⁹ Ewen MacKenzie, Probate. Regina, Saskatchewan. File 1407, Micro. 2314086, Saskatchewan Probate Estate Files, 1915, Canada.

⁷⁰ Steve and Rose Rapko, MacKenzie Presbyterian Church, Red River North Heritage, <https://redrivernorthheritage.com/mackenzie-presbyterian-church/>; <https://redrivernorthheritage.com/mary-mackenzie/>

missionaries in the field. The Mackenzie's felt a parental responsibility to care for Edith, evidenced by Ewen leaving an inheritance for the girl. The remaking of families was a part of the colonial footprint but affective ties to the subaltern could be fashioned and sustained between colonizer and colonized.

Similar complicated stories of missionary affection coupled with colonial power ensued at the Round Lake mission run by Rev. Hugh and Selma McKay. In 1889, Hugh McKay, who was in his forties at the time, was teaching a class of high school pupils from Broadview and Whitewood, Saskatchewan, where Selma was a student. Hugh pursued the impressionable student, who was only seventeen years of age, and her parents agreed to the marriage after she completed one year of finishing school in Minneapolis. After her schooling in the United States, she returned to Broadview, where she married Hugh and moved to Round Lake mission to take on the role of Presbyterian missionary wife. Selma and Hugh had two children of their own, but both died in infancy, so they took in children from the residential school as their own. In 1977, Hugh and Selma's niece, Jean Réti-Forbes, authored a memoir of her upbringings on the Saskatchewan prairie. In her text, she described her aunt and uncle's affection for the children at the Round Lake Residential School in nostalgic and sentimental terms: "All the Indian children seemed to become theirs, and indeed several orphans were taken into their home, and although never legally adopted, the Indian names were discarded for McKay."⁷¹

One of these children was Fred Ahetapew from the Crooked Lakes reserve. In his memoir, Hugh McKay describes how Fred's mother brought him to the Round Lake Residential School at the age of eight because "His mother had no husband and was living a low life among her people."⁷² Once at the school, he was renamed Fred McKay. It was common to give students

⁷¹ Jean Réti-Forbes, *Child of the Prairie* (Athens, Georgia, 1977), 39. R-E 597, PAS, Regina.

⁷² Transcript of Notebook and Reminiscences, Personal Papers of Rev. Hugh McKay, File 2, F3276,

the missionary's surname and Fred was celebrated in church mission circles as one of the adoptees of Hugh and Selma who had successfully become 'civilized.'

In the opinions of church supporters, the mission gained value because of Fred's transformative story. According to Hugh McKay's memoir, Fred left the residential school and spent a year in high school and then completed normal school training in Regina. He worked in a school north of Saskatoon, taught for three years in a German colony, attended the German Lutheran Church and became a member of the choir. He married an ex-pupil from the school, most likely arranged by Hugh, naming his first-born son, Hughey, in 1910. Fred worked as a teacher at the Round Lake Residential School and when the First World War broke out, he was one of the first volunteers to sign up. Hugh noted how the little boys in the school looked up to Fred as their hero. When he returned from the war, he started farming on the reserve.⁷³

Along with Fred, the McKays adopted an eighteen-month-old Indigenous girl named Mary in 1902. In 1912, Hugh McKay wrote to the Presbyterian Foreign Missions committee about an incident at the Round Lake Residential School involving Mary, who was now school-aged. McKay explained how Mary had been 'brought' to the mission at the age of eighteen months. Selma had taken her into the mission home, which was located 300 yards from the school, and raised her, giving Mary her own room in their mission house.⁷⁴ Yet McKay reported that once Mary reached school age she went to live at the residential school with the other pupils. McKay explained that he still required Mary's domestic labour occasionally to assist Selma, who was prone to fainting spells. When Hugh went to the school to retrieve her, the principal angrily

UCCA, Toronto.

⁷³ *The Sweet Toned Bell: The Heritage of the Round Lake Mission and History of Camp McKay*, R-E 1902, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

⁷⁴ Letter from Hugh McKay to Robert McKay, 1 October 1912, 79.199C, Box 8, File 15, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

refused to let Mary leave. Arguing over the labour rights of the child, the principal, Mr. Ledingham, and Hugh McKay vehemently clashed. McKay wrote how the “unimaginable temper of the principal and the matron is the cause of the trouble” at the school.⁷⁵ Six months earlier, in April 1912, McKay had written the committee complaining about the Ledingham’s concerning behavior at the school:

The beginning of the trouble was Mrs. Ledingham’s rough treatment of the poor sickly girl daughter of Harry Favil. This was in the presence of Harry and his wife. They took the girl away at once and on the following day they went to Goose Lake where Harry’s wife’s people are and told all about it. Then some time after, Mrs. Ledingham took a daughter of Poonake (from Shepheps Band) by the throat and battered her badly, not with a gentle pat but with a closed fist about the face not for any act of insubordination in the girl but being homesick and wishing to go home. This conduct has alienated the whole band. Then again, she took Ida Saket used still more roughly on the head, the face badly swollen the next day in her room and dragged downstairs to get another whipping from Mr. Ledingham—all because Mr. Ledingham asked Ida to put the chair in its place, she did not put it down quietly.... I will write no more. Have I said too much. Shall I send this letter or burn it. I am troubled not about myself or the treatment received by members of the staff but about the school. Is all the past work of the twenty-seven years to be thrown with the Church of Rome! I have had little sleep since you were here—something must be done.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Letter from Hugh McKay to McLaren, 15 April 1912, 79.199C, Box 8, File 14, Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Missions Fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

Regardless of his claims of love for Mary, the McKays had abandoned their adopted daughter by exposing her to the abhorrent violence within the school at Round Lake by principal and matron, Mr. and Mrs. Ledingham. Caring for Mary since she was a baby, Hugh and Selma formed both an affective attachment for her and a possessive claim over her body as a subservient labourer for their household and personal needs. The McKays cast a benevolent gaze towards their adopted children. They were legitimately concerned for their moral and physical well-being and extremely troubled by the violent stories emerging from the school regarding the children's treatment. Yet their colonial positioning as missionary authorities intent on removing the children's 'Indianness' and transforming their personhoods into Christian and Canadian citizens, affirmed to the McKays that their adoptees required the governing environment of the Indian Residential School System, which subjected them to violence and disease. Although the McKays emphasized loving the children like their own, their adoptees, Fred and Mary, had to endure the horrid conditions at the Round Lake Residential School to further the church and state's goal of assimilating the children's minds and bodies in the colonial project.

Hugh and Selma muddy the image of the 'colonizer.' Though they were appalled by the brutal conditions in the school, they refused to break with their colonial sentimentalism of Indigenous child 'rescue.' When the Ledinghams left Round Lake following the allegations of abuse, Hugh McKay took on the role of the principal, but conditions at the school failed to improve. While he may not have resorted to violence and while church and state officials remarked on his gentleness towards the children and parents, the school fell into further disrepair. In 1915, Indian inspector W.M. Graham wrote, "The whole institution presents a most dismal

picture, and the sooner the Presbyterian Church takes action and replaces McKay the better it will be for the Indians and the work generally.”⁷⁷



Figure 4.2 Photo Taken in front of Hugh and Selma McKay’s house on the Round Lake Mission. Selma McKay second from the left with students from the Round Lake Residential School. Photo Credit Lorraine Gerrie. Image from *The Sweet Toned Bell: The Heritage of the Round Lake Mission and History of Camp McKay*, R-E 1902, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

⁷⁷ Report of Round Lake Residential School, Inspector of Indian Agencies William Morris Graham, 20 February 1915, RG 10, Vol, 6333, File 661-6, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

White missionary women's affinity for their adopted daughters intermingled with violent exploitation. Emotional intimacy and imprisonment weaved together, crossing paths in the settler colonial mission home. South African scholar Shireen Ally argued that domestic service and colonialism is a "unique species of relations in which closeness, familiarity, and intimacy co-exist with distancing, estrangement, and dehumanization."⁷⁸ Caring for the servant in the role of adopted daughter eased missionary anxieties around child exploitation. On the Red Pheasant's reserve, Anglican missionary Annie Phillips described to female church supporters in her letters how she affectively cared for her adopted daughter, Catherine, from La Ronge residential school. At the same time, she extracted her labour as a domestic servant. Writing to church women in eastern Canada, Phillips wrote to the W.A. thanking the women for their financial donation of fifteen dollars to build a well: "I tried to get the well bored, but the price was prohibitive. I expect the work to begin soon, and I am sure Catherine will be glad as well as the animals, to save that long walk up and down the hill in cold, stormy weather."⁷⁹ Catherine was clearly responsible for conducting Phillip's most laborious chores.

Saskatchewan was an agrarian province and, in the early twentieth century, parents expected children to participate in the production of the agricultural economy through toiling on the family farm. Prairie historian Sandra Rollings-Magnusson argues that children on prairie homesteads were critical to the production of agricultural commodities and household maintenance.⁸⁰ Therefore, the labour demands on Indigenous adoptees require historical

⁷⁸ Shireen Ally, "Domesti-City: Colonial Anxiety and Postcolonial Fantasies in the Figure of the Maid," in *Colonization and Domestic Service: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Victoria K. Haskins and Claire Lowrie (New York: Routledge, 2015), 51.

⁷⁹ "Letter from Annie Brown to Montreal Board," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, February 1920, 120, GSA, Toronto.

⁸⁰ Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, "Hidden Homesteaders: Women, the State and Patriarchy in the Saskatchewan Wheat Economy, 1870-1930," in *Women's History: History of the Prairie West Series Vol. 5*, edited by Wendee Kubik and Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 206-207.

contextualization. Missionaries' labour exploitation of Indigenous children aligns with larger empire threads of attempted European mastery over colonized bodies. Children all over the province laboured on homesteads at the turn of the century, yet the stealing of Indigenous children into the mission home and the colonial imposition of control over their lives differed from white settler family productive labour units because of the racialized colonial architecture of empire practices. Brown bodies worked for white household managers across the British empire as part of establishing hierarchies of power.

Missionary intimacies extended to Indigenous adoptees were often short lived. The young Cree girl, Emma Swiftbear, whom missionaries Lucy Baker and Annie Cameron procured and moved into the mission home on Round Plain reserve was later abandoned into an industrial school. In 1899, Baker wrote how she had taken six-year-old Emma to live with her on the reserve.⁸¹ Baker and fellow missionary Annie Cameron had a close and intimate partnership. Even though Cameron moved to Prince Albert to take care of her aging mother in 1897, she still frequently visited the reserve and stayed with Baker in the mission house. At some point over the next two years, Cameron took Swiftbear to live with her in her home in Prince Albert, along with Cameron's mother and sister. The 1901 Canadian census listed Swiftbear as an eight-year-old Cree lodger in Cameron's residence.⁸²

Annie Cameron married an Englishman, William Kirkby, in Prince Albert, and available evidence suggests it was around this time that she transferred Swiftbear again to live at the Regina Indian Industrial School. In 1909, Baker passed away in Quebec and left her personal

⁸¹ "Extracts from Miss Baker's Report," *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, September 1899, 152.

⁸² Annie Cameron. Canada, Census of Canada, 1901, digital image, Library and Archives Canada, accessed April 29, 2025, <https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Record?app=census&IdNumber=34397819&ecopy=z000182776>

effects and furniture in her will to her intimate companion and friend, Cameron. Baker stated in her will, “Mrs. Kirkby will keep for herself whatever is good in the above mentioned personal effects and I would like her to give some of the older articles to the Indians of the mission specially remembering the little girl in Regina School.”⁸³ In Presbyterian church records, an Emma Swiftbear, a Cree girl from Sturgeon Lake, located close to Round Plain reserve, was reported enrolled at the Regina Industrial School as a pupil. Baker and Cameron removed Swiftbear from her kin and community, extracted her labour, and then disposed of her into the industrial school in the capital. Yet Baker’s mention of her in her will shows how affective encounters flowed directionally on the missionary front, even if only in a one-sided manner. Swiftbear’s movement from reserve to mission home and to industrial school illustrates how care and violence co-existed on the settler-colonial front in the missionary world. Missionaries rationalized to their church supporters that their adoptions were rooted in loving benevolence. Nonetheless, missionaries regarded Indigenous children as disposable servants whom they could have full charge over and then cast aside. Upon the departure of missionaries from the field, Indigenous children, previously exploited as coerced labour within settler society, were often marginalized and abandoned.

Colonialism, Adopt a Child, and Humanitarianism

To urge women’s missionary societies to increase their donations to Indian Residential Schools, missionaries advocated for a philanthropic scheme around adoptive language. Particularly for the Church of England, lack of financial support from church missionary societies for Indian missions in the Northwest was hampering missionary work. The largest Anglican missionary funder was the English-based Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), but they were withdrawing

⁸³ Lucy Margaret Baker, Probate. Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. File 151, Saskatchewan Probate Estate Files, 1920, Canada.

by 1920 from Canadian mission work, to be replaced by the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (M.S.C.C). As early as 1910, the C.M.S. was already beginning to retreat and any supplemental funding for Indian mission work, including residential schooling, was not forthcoming. In terms of Indian missions, Anglican historian, T.C.B. Boon wrote, “It seemed strange that the C.M.S. had not arranged with the M.S.C.C. to take over this work, but such a course had never been attempted...The C.M.S. announced, “We are not going to support you anymore, the Canadian church ought to do it”; the M.S.C.C. practically asserted, “We can’t do it.”⁸⁴ A large part of the financial responsibility for Indian mission work fell on the shoulders of the Anglican women’s auxiliaries.

Missionary principals encouraged Anglican women’s missionary society branches to ‘adopt’ residential school students as part of a philanthropy scheme to enhance financial support to the schools. Struggling with the lack of funding from both church and state coffers, principals strategized various methods to financially appeal to their missionary base. Building on Victorian notions of women’s innate maternalism, evangelical Protestant principals emphasized the virtues of mothering to middle-class Canadian women to help increase missionary financial contributions. Missionaries believed in the Christian duty to express compassion and love through practical channels and they were convinced that congregations at home would respond to their calls for financial support of individual children so they could metaphorically ‘mother’ on the path towards civilization. Missionaries understood what academics Richard Wilson and Richard Brown note, that “humanitarian impulse seems to be strengthened when we encounter testaments of individual suffering, but rarely so profoundly invoked by stories of large-scale

⁸⁴ C.B. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies: A History of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert’s Land and its Dioceses from 1820-1950* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962), 298.

suffering.”⁸⁵ Drawing on humanitarian sentiment towards the personal, missionaries presented the individuality of children to incentivize women in eastern Canada to open their pocketbooks. Emotive humanitarianism from Canadian female evangelicals regarding the adoption of Indigenous children began in the early residential school period and would continue in Saskatchewan throughout the twentieth century.

Edward and Eleanor Matheson, principal and matron at Battleford Industrial School, were the first missionaries in Saskatchewan to employ the sympathetic appeal of adopting Indigenous children in the schools to women’s missionary society branches. Writing in the *Letter Leaflet* for Anglican church women, Edward wrote in 1895, “As we have over 100 children to feed, clothe, and attend to, there is a large need field open for any of you who wish to help us advance our Master’s work. Would any of you like to *adopt* some of our boys and girls—that is to clothe them and make any further provisions you wish while they remain in school here?”⁸⁶ He informed the women that the school could provide orphans and would inform the children of the Christian people out east who were adopting them. This was not meant to remove the child from the school but to give white middle class Canadian women a humanitarian title over a child’s life. This spiritual and material commitment would provide for the child’s needs.

Some W.M.S. branches in Ontario and Quebec accepted the missionary appeal and adopted individual pupils. Eleanor Matheson wrote to one of the Anglican branches called the King’s daughters of St. Paul’s Church in Woodstock, Ontario: “Your adopted daughter at Emmanuel College, Catherine, is one of the brightest and best tempered girls in the school,

⁸⁵ R.A. Wilson and R.D. Brown, *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) in Laura Suski, “Humanitarianism as Politics of Emotion,” in *Emotions Matter: A Relational Approach to Emotions*, edited by Dale Spencer, Kevin Walby, and Alan Hunt (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 130.

⁸⁶ “From Rev. E. Matheson, Industrial School Battleford to Miss Counsell, Secretary Treasurer, Literature Committee,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, October 1895, 850.

strong and healthy, fairly clever, but does not get along with her English as the younger girls.”⁸⁷

White women mapped themselves into the lives of Indigenous students, offering material and financial aid to their adopted children. These children became in the women’s minds distant objects deserving of sympathy. However, there was a level of detachment in the relationship between the donor and receiver, as missionaries and school staff were the ones to receive and distribute the goods, acting as liaisons between the church women and the school children.

By 1920, when the C.M.S. had completely withdrawn from the Canadian mission field, the M.S.C.C. recognized the immediate need to extend their appeal to their churches for increased subsidies. Saskatchewan congregations suffered during the First World War, with congregants gifting their financial extras to the war fund rather than to their parishes.

Desperately needing increased income for mission work, the M.S.C.C. emphasized adoption as a mission strategy to subsidize a portion of the residential schools’ operations, which they had officially taken over in 1920. Two years later, the board of management of the newly formed M.S.C.C. announced in their church bulletin that Canadian church parishioners could adopt Indigenous children in the residential schools. This was proposed as a scheme to fund the schools: “It is hoped that very many schools will yet introduce this excellent plan, which provides the living link between the Sunday school and the work.”⁸⁸ For thirty dollars a year, which the M.S.C.C. explained was the difference between the actual cost per pupil per annum and the per capita government grant, a Sunday school could adopt a student to support their material needs within the institution. Full page advertisements ran in Canadian missionary publications with pictures of Indigenous children with a description at the bottom, “Will Your

⁸⁷ “From the Mission Field, Mrs. Matheson,” *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, November 1895, 19.

⁸⁸ “Adopt an Indian Child,” M.S.C.C. Bulletin, no. 2., November 1922, A113 Campbell Innes Papers, V. McKay Papers, 17. Books and Pamphlets, PAS, Regina.

Sunday School Adopt One of Us?”⁸⁹ The depiction of needy First Nations children for adoption helped form what constituted ‘Indianness’ in the minds of white middle-class Canadians.

Indigenous children were represented as pitiful subjects deserving of white sympathy. Appealing to settler emotions, whiteness represented the ‘giver’ who could compassionately transform the lives of a young Indigenous child through the loving act of adoption.

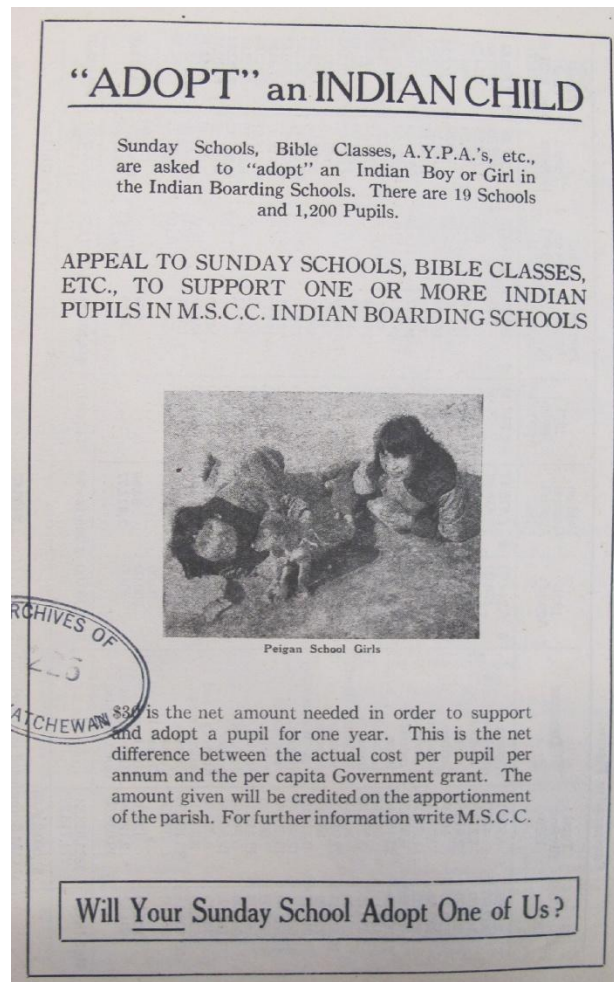


Figure 4.3 Advertisement for Adoption in M.S.C.C. Story of the Year: A Review of M.S.C.C. Work Based on Reports by the Workers, 1922, Campbell Innes Papers, A113, V. 17, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

⁸⁹ "M.S.C.C. Story of the Year: A Review of M.S.C.C. Work, 1922, A113 Campbell Innes Papers, V. McKay Papers, 17. Books and Pamphlets, PAS, Regina.

Church women in Saskatchewan responded to this appeal in the 1920s. In the Diocese of Qu'Appelle in southern Saskatchewan, the W.A. branch of St. Paul's in Stoughton adopted a female student, Philomena Cyr from Gordon's Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan. The head matron at Gordon's, Elizabeth Atwater, wrote to the church women in 1925 informing them of Philomena's needs. She required two sets of: underwear, aprons, stockings, and school dresses. The adoption of Philomena by the Stoughton auxiliary lasted for a total of five years. Sometimes Atwater corresponded with the church women and other times, Philomena wrote letters herself thanking the women for their philanthropic generosity. Mission staff read student letters before they left the institutions. This led the students to omit some of the truthful aspects regarding the conditions of the schools and their experiences in them. Philomena's letters need to be read cautiously because matron Atwater would have surveilled them before mailing them to the W.A. branch in Stoughton. Philomena wrote to the church women in Stoughton, providing them with an update on her time at Gordon's: "Everybody is enjoying their school days. We are all well and happy."⁹⁰ She informed the women that the students had just returned from summer holidays and how "we were all glad to come back to school."⁹¹ In 1929, Atwater informed the W.A. women that Philomena was leaving the school since she was now eighteen years of age, but that the school had a list of twenty boys who had not been adopted by branches and were without support. Even though Philomena had turned eighteen, she struggled to escape from the clutches of the residential school's carceral fabric. In 1929, even though Philomena had turned

⁹⁰ Letter from Philomena Cyr to Mrs. Slack, 24 April 1927, Women's Auxiliary and Correspondence, Gordon's School, 1924-1927, Stoughton, St. Paul's: Reports, 1926-1941(SCH No. 3), Diocese of Qu'Appelle Archives, Regina.

⁹¹ Letter from Elizabeth Atwater to Mrs. Slack, 22 January 1929, Women's Auxiliary Correspondence, 1928-1936, Stoughton, St. Paul's: Reports, 1926-1941(SCH No. 3), Diocese of Qu'Appelle Archives, Regina; Letter from Atwater to Slack, 6 March 1929, *ibid*.

eighteen, she continued labouring in the position as school cook, without the support of the W.A. women.

Missionary adoption of Indigenous students by the W.A. branches, although not officially adopted since the children remained at the school, legitimized a colonial hierarchy over Indigenous children's lives. Although the church presented school adoption as a humanitarian deed, the child became the racialized object of white's women concern. These women inserted themselves into a hierarchical power position over the racialized less fortunate subject. White middle-class women in Canada could not feign ignorance about the destitute conditions in the schools. Not only had the Bryce report been highly publicized in the Canadian media, but church officials had long raised the alarm on the appalling conditions by the 1920s. Yet white women continued to offer humanitarian aid through school adoptions and ignored the totalizing systemic problems within the Indian Residential School System. Instead, they embraced a church scheme which they believed was helping the children, but it had the effect of reinforcing their self-representations as charitable, benevolent actors within Saskatchewan society.

Adoption and Colonial Memory

In post-World War II Saskatchewan, missionary adoption has received varying interpretations in colonial memory. Protestant missionaries remembered adoption fondly, but colonial adoptees told different stories. In analyzing colonial memory, postcolonial scholars have challenged the collective memory of the rosy depiction of missionary relations where the missionary is situated as the loving Christian hero. But merely painting the subaltern through an oppositional lens, as the defiant adversary to colonial order, also fails to capture the nuisances and complexities of settler colonialism. The affective cord that runs through missionary adoptions requires a focus on

memory work which provides space for silences, complex remembering, and an analysis of the ways that affect is woven through colonial projects.

Listening to the voices of the colonized and the colonizer provides an opening to grasp the many uses of memories around missionary adoption. Ann Laura Stoler reminds us in doing memory work, “The focus is on not only what is remembered but how.”⁹² Examining knowledge creation about the past requires making connections between the narrative and the emotive to ascertain how memories speak to colonist histories. How white settlers framed missionary adoption and how missionaries inserted themselves into adoptive stories are vital for understanding how missionaries conceptualized emotional structures in missionary work. Examining memory around missionary adoption exposes how Christian benevolence shaped the collective memories of those on the prairies. Memories of adoptees sometimes supported this collective memory structuring, challenging tidy accounts of postcolonial reckoning.

Much of the colonial memory work around missionary adoption involved the Matheson families at Onion Lake and Battleford. For the Matheson missionary wives, adoption functioned as an emotional measuring stick of their ‘love’ for Indigenous people in Saskatchewan. Elizabeth Matheson laboured in western Saskatchewan with her missionary husband, J.R. Matheson, where together they operated the Onion Lake Mission and Residential School. Becoming the first female doctor in Saskatchewan in 1898, Elizabeth worked as a physician for the mission and the surrounding area. She also helped operate the mission school and birthed nine of her own children. In her daughter Ruth Matheson Buck’s book about her mother’s life, published in 1974, Buck described how her parents, in addition to their extensive mission duties, adopted several Indigenous children who arrived at the mission as babies. She described the Matheson family’s

⁹² Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 170.

particular affinity for Carolyn and Manias Money, baby girls who came to the mission when their mother Rosalie died from tuberculosis.⁹³

The removal of children into the residential school morphed into a sentimental story of missionary adoption by the Matheson family. An article in the *Lloydminster Times* on January 22, 1958, about the life of Elizabeth Matheson included the detail that she was a mother to nine children and out of her “great kind heart” also adopted five ‘Indian’ girls without parents.⁹⁴ In post-WWII settler Saskatchewan, memory work imagined the story of Elizabeth taking Indigenous children into the Onion Lake Residential School as celebratory. This self-sacrificial depiction of the Mathesons produced a colonial memory of missionary adoptions as something good legitimizing the perception that the taking of Indigenous children emerged from a place of loving affection. Settlers shaped the collective memory of the Mathesons through a sentimental and compassionate lens of missionary care and compassion. This privileging of missionary memory silenced narratives of oppression and dispossession of Indigenous peoples on the prairies.

Elizabeth’s sister-in-law, Eleanor Matheson, relied on the idea of adoption through a different frame in declaring her love for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan. Eleanor Shepphird, who trained as a Church of England deaconess at the Deaconess House in Toronto, went to work at the Battleford Industrial School in 1892. She married J.R. Matheson’s widowed brother, Edward Matheson, and the married missionary couple worked together at the Anglican-run Battleford Industrial School until it closed in 1914. Following the school’s closure, the Diocese of Saskatchewan appointed Edward as the Superintendent of Indian Missions in the

⁹³ Ruth Matheson Buck, *The Doctor Rode Side Saddle* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 68.

⁹⁴ “Historical Figure Passes on...Dr. Elizabeth Beckett Matheson,” *The Lloydminster Times* 22 January 1958, F 200, Acc. 720, IV Miscellaneous, 2a (Gertude S. Telford Papers), Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS, Regina.

prairie provinces. In this position, he and Eleanor traveled across Saskatchewan visiting reserves for missionary purposes. Eleanor lost two children in infancy during her time in Battleford. Writing about her life to the Anglican W.A. in the 1940s, Eleanor glowingly described her missionary career and praised the industrial school's transformative influence on the lives of Indigenous students. Although she had been born in Toronto to white parents, she wrote to the W.A. how she had been adopted by a First Nations family on the prairies during her lifetime: "In my 36 years of intercourse with them (First Nations peoples), and my adoption in a family, where the father had been a great warrior, with many Blackfoot scalps to his credit, and my Indian mother still smokes her black pipe, I have learned to love and respect the Indians and have found them warm-hearted and affectionate though they have not always been quite justly and by no means ungrateful for kindness received."⁹⁵ Lack of further details makes this claim of adoption difficult to ascertain. Yet its significance lies not in the truthfulness of the narrative, but in its usefulness to Eleanor and why she chose to include it in her letters to the W.A.

Not able to raise her own children after suffering her infants' deaths, Eleanor placed herself into the subject position of the 'adoptee' into a First Nations family in Saskatchewan. This act emphasized her missionary commitment to Indigenous peoples. It was a mirror image of the collective memory of Elizabeth as the 'great mother.' In her memory interpretation, the subaltern loved Eleanor so greatly that they enveloped her as their adoptee, bringing her into the domestic realm of Indigenous kinship. For Eleanor and Elizabeth, missionary adoption became part of their colonial reckoning. Adoption fit into a triumphant collective memory of white women's Christian dedication to serve the needy and destitute. These women, praised for their missionary labours, thrust adoption into the production of their colonial memory. And missionary

⁹⁵ "A Talk Prepared by Eleanor Shepphird Matheson for the Alumni Meeting of the Deaconess Training House, 1943-1944," F 200, Acc. 720, IV Miscellaneous, 8, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS, Regina.

adoptions became a part of the white settlers' reminiscing about the past. In her letters, Eleanor silenced any of the harms she and Edward inflicted at Battleford Industrial School, which had an atrocious record of abuses and deaths. When the Battleford Industrial School closed in 1914, Edward reminded the Department of Indian Affairs that the school cemetery contained seventy or eighty bodies, most of whom were students.⁹⁶ Avoiding any mention of deaths in her narrative, instead, her story abounded with sentimental fondness for the past. The placing of a colonial story depicting her inclusion into Indigenous kinship signified the 'goodness' of her missionary efforts to the W.A. women.

Settler memory failed to give room for the contrasting memories of the missionary adoptees. The adoptees' memories clashed with the settler collective memory of Christian benevolence around adoption. In 1975, Ruth Matheson Buck, conducting interviews for the book she was writing about her mother, Elizabeth, interviewed one of the adopted Matheson girls, Manias Rivard (née Money.) Ruth asked Manias about her memories from the Onion Lake mission where she attended the Onion Lake Residential School in the 1890s. Manias recollected positive and affirming reminiscences about the mission and the Matheson family. Stoler has shown in her study of the colonial Dutch East Indies that former students "did not always outright reject the roles cast for them in colonist narratives."⁹⁷ She writes that servants sometimes embraced the idea that they were treated like family. Similar narrative trajectories are present in Manias' retelling; however uncomfortable they may be. She described how her sister, Carrie was J.R. Matheson's favourite student, and how he would give the girls candy on their birthday. She mentions how the staff allowed some of the children to go home on weekends. She provides a

⁹⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 4, Missing Children and Unmarked Burials* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 119.

⁹⁷ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 183.

humorous anecdote about when she was a young girl and how she accidentally grabbed the leg of the Bishop of the Diocese of Saskatchewan, J.A. Newnham, when he arrived at the mission for a visit. Rivard and Ruth went back and forth remembering people they both knew who were associated with the Onion Lake mission. Buck dominated the rhythm of the interview. She was positively upbeat throughout the questioning, and asked Manias Rivard, “Manias, you did enjoy your childhood, didn’t you?” And Manias responded, “Oh, yes, happily.”⁹⁸ She administered the question with such exuberance, there was little room for a varying response. However, in the interview, Manias broached the memory that one of the female missionaries, Fanny Cross, came from the deaconess house in Toronto to work at Onion Lake. Cross died at the mission from tuberculosis. Manias used that story to mention how there were many deaths at the mission. Yet in response, Buck quickly attempted to provide levity to the interview, demonstrating her reluctance to engage in painful memories which may have clouded the Matheson’s sentimental memories of Onion Lake.

The interview with Buck and Rivard was a bid to conjure sentimental memories from the mission’s history, which both women could lay claim to. Memory arenas that felt safe for Buck included: acquaintances they both remembered, visits from outsiders to the mission, and special treatment of the adopted girls. These were memories which avoided the devastating terrain of the violent strategies employed by church and state at the Onion Lake Residential School. The silences in Rivard’s recollections spoke volumes. There was an awareness between the interviewer and the interviewee regarding the interview’s objective. The objective was to recollect on the past, to conjure up memories of Elizabeth Matheson’s life story and her contributions to the mission work through her experiences at Onion Lake. Buck’s interview and

⁹⁸ Manias Rivard, Interview by Ruth Matheson Buck, 9 May 1975, R 8717, PAS, Regina.

subsequent published text framed the Onion Lake Residential School as a charming prairie historical location where her missionary parents, through hard work and self-sacrifice, left an enduring positive legacy on Indigenous peoples in the area. Buck portrayed her parents as hardworking, trailblazing Christian missionaries on the prairies. However, Buck and the larger white settler society in the 1970s were still unwilling to engage with an alternative colonial collective memory around Indian missions and the history of residential schools.

Missionary adoptee, Catherine Okanee (née Beatty) cautiously delved into her childhood memories when Saskatchewan historian D'Arcy Hande interviewed her about her life story for an oral history interview in the 1980s.⁹⁹ She had been adopted by the W.A. missionary, Annie Brown (née Phillips). The narrative thread of the interview was a compilation of her life story. She pointedly described how her biological mother died when she was nine years old and she was sent to Lac La Ronge Residential School, where she lived for five years. She described loving her time at the school but also included remembering that challenged this memory. She expressed being terrified of the upstairs in the school building and how she cried when she saw a white woman for the first time. She explained that once missionaries took her into the school, she never went back to her people and community, forever losing contact with her father and remaining seven siblings.

In her description of her adopted mother, Annie Brown, there were no sweeping sentimental recollections and no emotional tenderness in her voice during the interview. Okanee described how the Browns kept her as a foster child when they left Lac La Ronge Residential School. When James died, Mrs. Brown had to fend for herself and Catherine. Catherine explained how at one point, Brown went to the bank and only had ten dollars left to her name.

⁹⁹ Catherine (Beatty) Okanee, Interview by Darcy Handy, 7 November 1985, Item Tape S-0896a & b, PAS, Regina.

Catherine and Brown moved to Red Pheasants reserve where Brown also worked also for the DIA, dispensing medicines. Catherine became known on the reserve as the ‘prayer girl.’ Illness eventually led to Brown’s retirement from missions when she moved to Prince Albert. In plain language, Catherine remarked that Brown died in 1953 and that she had attended her funeral. Their longstanding relationship as mother and adopted daughter which lasted until the 1950s illustrates the enduring kinship ties between the women.

However, Catherine’s categorizing of memories and her matter-of-fact presentation of her life story challenges the white settler’s nostalgic remembering of the past. Empty of sentimental maneuvering when remembering her adopted mother, Catherine recalled events remembering the intimate bond between Brown and herself. While they shared a domestic existence for years, the way she framed her memories suggest a professional servitude bond rather than an emotional and intimate one. Her inclusion of when she entered Lac La Ronge Residential School and never saw her family or community again was an intimate piece of knowledge from the perspective of the colonized. This kinship rupture in Catherine’s life story quietly unsettled the settler oriented celebratory memory of the heroic missionary and the church’s ‘successful’ project of residential schooling. Yet her recollections do not easily fit into an image of the oppressed colonial victim because of the long-lasting ties that remained between herself and Brown. Colonial impositions were evident in more subtle depictions in the ways adoptees presented their stories to their interviewers and in the silences they kept.

Conclusion

The taking of Indigenous children and their subsequent adoption into white settler families did not commence with the Sixties Scoop in Canada in the 1950s. For decades prior, Christian missionaries adopted Indigenous children from Indian Residential Schools and surrounding

reserves and moved them into the intimate realm of their white Anglo-Saxon homes. Beginning in the 1880s, missionaries adopted Indigenous children, ushering them into their familial worlds to perform a variety of social and economic functions in their lives. Because Indigenous children fell under the governmental district of the federal government, provincial regulations around child protection at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century did not apply to these young and vulnerable lives.

The federally run residential schools functioned as the sole option for Indigenous child welfare needs during this period. Church and state officials purposely eroded Indigenous kinship and community structures. It was a settler colonial strategy to consolidate power and claim frontier lands. Taking children into the Indian Residential School System was a governmental policy to dispossess Indigenous lives and erode their sovereignty on the Canadian prairies. Turning children into civilized, assimilated Canadian citizens intended to destroy Indigenous lifeways, political systems, culture, and kinships systems. Enforcing Christian patriarchal nuclear family structures on reserves allowed for church and state officials to intervene in Indigenous family units and remove children who they deemed as orphans, neglected, or destitute. Once missionaries placed children in the schools, they had boundless control over their lives. They extended the carceral realm of the residential school into the mission home.

Imbued with a sense of missionary purpose, missionaries believed they were exposing the children to a Christian, middle-class way of life through adoption. They symbolically linked themselves to the children through informal adoptions and justified the practice to their church supporters believing they held a moral and spiritual elevation over the children. Thus, missionary adoption became twisted into a benevolent action compassionately extended towards the ‘heathen’ child. Vulnerable to exploitation, Indigenous adoptees became distanced from their

families and community and from their fellow peers within the school system. Their racialized bodies were objects of labour exploitation and were subjected to sexual abuse and rendered invisible in the eyes of settler Canadians. Missionaries claimed ownership over their bodies and moved them between institutions, schools, homes, and hospitals. The dismantling of their Indigenous family and communal units enabled missionary violence over their racialized bodies. White missionaries grew attached to their adopted children, forming affective bonds with the young adoptees.

In some cases, kinship ties between the missionary and the adoptee were preserved for decades. Affect and violence weaved together, intersecting between captive conditions and sentimental care. Sometimes the gaps between violence and compassion were narrow, demonstrating how affective registers influenced harms committee in the colonial project. Missionary adoption mobilized colonialism through the intimate realm. Control and power were tangled together through a politics of care, which was gendered. In most instances, the adoptees were young females forced to do the brunt of the domestic load, which allowed white female missionaries to present themselves as ladylike and respectable and their homes the epitome of middle-class domesticity.

Missionary adoption often operated in the margins of Saskatchewan's missionary families. In updates to church supporters, missionary letters only briefly mentioned the young charges under their care. The disappearing of Indigenous children in missionary writings operated as an intentional reduction of their invisibility, which worked to maintain the white supremacist moral fabric in the province. White female church supporters expanded the meanings of missionary adoption through their women's auxiliaries. Through their institutionalization of adopting a child within the school, each parish branch became responsible for a portion of that

child's material provisions. Female Protestant church women upheld the oppressive Indian Residential School System through their humanitarian energy. In the forties and fifties, missionaries cloaked their collective memories around missionary adoption in the emotional frameworks of sentimentality and around humanitarian discourses of rescue and child saving. The disappearing of these children and the adoptees' silences about their experiences lies as further testaments to the settler marginalization of their stories. Missionary adoption around the turn of the century laid the foundation for the 'bleeding hearts' of Christian families that would later embrace the practice in the mid-twentieth century, extensively widening it and sabotaging Indigenous kinship systems for decades.

Chapter 5:
Caring for ‘Our Indians’: Saskatchewan Protestant Women Auxiliaries and the Making of
White Settler Identities

In 1912, at a meeting for the Presbyterian Women’s Foreign Missionary Society in Oxbow, Saskatchewan, Miss McGregor, the field secretary from the provincial chapter, addressed the Anglo-Canadian Protestant women and gave them her impression of why Canadians were causing the retreat of the Indian on the prairies. McGregor stated that, “the recompense we owe them is to give the gospel to them...we have taken from them this land and it is up to us to do something for them.”¹ In the early decades of the twentieth century, Saskatchewan church women openly acknowledged that they had appropriated Indigenous land and suggested that they could redeem the violent conquest by sharing their Christian faith through the civilizing project of Indian residential schooling. They willingly embraced the task of supporting the schools and joining in the charitable projects that were initiated by the women from eastern Canada. They equipped the schools with financial support, supplies, clothing, and gifts. In some Saskatchewan schools, they even took over the full responsibility of gifting supplies that came from the eastern sources.

The Protestant Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan operated with meagre financial offerings which came from the federal government, church denominational budgets, and the support of prairie women’s mission groups. Philanthropy, driven by sentimentalism towards children in Indian Residential Schools, facilitated massive social power imbalances and fostered the racialized scaffolding during the early twentieth century Saskatchewan. Anglo-

¹ Alameda Presbytery, 1907-1918, 28 May 1912, 381 V1 C 2, FW 06, Woman's Missionary Society Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

Canadian women in the province, convened near the top of the social hierarchy, positioned themselves as the giving patrons of charity, while Indigenous peoples, at the bottom of the social ladder, were rendered pitiable creatures who required continual handouts from the church.

Around the turn of the century, hundreds of thousands of settlers arrived on the Canadian prairies to claim a plot of land and to forge a new life for themselves and their families.

Immigrants built churches and joined congregations, and Anglo-Canadian settler women organized themselves into women's missionary auxiliary groups much like their counterparts in eastern Canada. The organized meetings of these Protestant women auxiliary groups became social spaces where female settlers worked out their relationship to Indigenous peoples. At these meetings, they negotiated ideas of racial difference and rationalized colonial conquest and its ensuing violence. Settler women moved into prairie spaces, embracing the nineteenth century idea that the Indian would eventually disappear from the land because he was unable to flourish alongside the expansion of modernity. However, the trope of the 'vanishing Indian' disappeared when statistics revealed that Indigenous population numbers had increased by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, forcing settlers to reposition their perspective towards Indigenous peoples. Once settlers occupied the prairie landscape and grasped the idea that Indigenous peoples were here to stay, white Christian women in Saskatchewan altered their representation of the Indian from the 'foreign heathen' to the white settler possession of 'our Indians.'

Historians have not taken seriously the history of church women's missionary auxiliary groups. They have been largely ignored in the scholarly literature on Saskatchewan in the early settlement period. However, these women were at the forefront of the colonial drama through their maintenance of the Protestant Indian Residential Schools. In these auxiliary groups, white

women organized the sending of goods to the schools, held lectures to teach about Indigenous peoples, and debated their role in the social fabric of prairie life. This chapter argues that, through their outpourings of philanthropy, which was motivated by sentimentality, church women missionary societies were pivotal in remolding the representation of the Indian figure for the prairie settler at home. As settlers moved onto prairie land, the ‘Indian’ was now too close geographically for missionaries to render them as ‘foreign heathens,’ which conjured up frightening images of primitiveness, ignorance, and poverty. Living near ‘heathen Indians’ alarmed incoming white settlers. But by creating a new story with white women at the organizing helm, they proposed that the ‘Indian’ was no longer the ‘other’ to be feared. They were now to be seen as subordinate wards and the dependant possessions of incoming settlers. Consequently, it became easier for the settler to live beside an ‘Indian’ who was pitied, rather than an ‘foreigner’ who was feared.

This argument builds on historian Philip J. Deloria’s work on Indigenous peoples in America. As they entered the twentieth century, “pacification shifted the ground: Indians might not vanish, but they would become *invisible*, as the very characteristic that had once defined them—the potential for violence was eradicated.”² And as Deloria points out, once the possibility for violence was stripped away, the land could be easily dispossessed and controlled by settlers. By the 1920s, once settlers in Saskatchewan had seized the best land and the Canadian government had tightened its grip on every aspect of Indigenous peoples’ lives, white women’s church donations began to dry up. Resources were reallocated to other philanthropic priorities across the province. The collective memory that settlers owed a debt to Indigenous peoples for

² Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 50-51.

taking their land soon faded into obscurity. It allowed settlers to conveniently forget about Indigenous peoples' presence in the province.

Moving In

Beginning in the 1890s, immigrants poured into western Canada, turning Indigenous land into a vast agrarian frontier. In Saskatchewan, the population of the province increased by approximately five hundred percent, from 41,522 persons in 1891 to 257,763 persons a mere fifteen years later.³ The newly settled populated province was primarily a rural population with approximately eighty percent of the people working the soil on their newly acquired homesteads. The federal minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, had opened the door to non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, but he expected those immigrants to align with Anglo-Canadian values and assimilate their lives along a Canadianized pathway, firmly rooted in British imperial culture, tradition, and heritage.

Missionaries to Saskatchewan were some of the first witnesses to the flood of newcomers moving into the province and the effects on the surrounding Indigenous population. In 1906, Rev. Owen Owens from the Church of England's St. Andrews Mission at Fort Pelly, wrote to the Anglican W.A. in eastern Canada, stating, "I have been nearly twenty years amongst the Indians, but I have not seen so much want amongst them as there is just now. Last winter their hunting was a complete failure, as, with the railways, settlements have sprung up all over their hunting grounds. For every Indian with his old fashioned muzzle loaded gun there were at least 500 settlers, with the best guns and rifles."⁴ Two hundred kilometers to the south, at the Hurricane Hills Presbyterian mission, Rev. Ewen Mackenzie wrote to the Presbyterian church women

³ Bill Waiser, "Our Shared Destiny," in *The Heavy Hand of History: Interpretating Saskatchewan's Past*, ed. Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005), 9.

⁴ "Rev. Owen Owens to St. John's Evangelist Branch, Montreal," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, January 1906, 73, GSA, Toronto.

explaining how the country might have once been considered wild or remote but now towns and communities made up of people of different nationalities had sprung up all over the province.⁵ In the first two decades of the twentieth century, white settlers scooped up the majority of the prairie land, drastically altering the social and environmental landscape of the province. Settlers were convinced that Indigenous peoples would eventually die off and disappear into obscurity from what was now an agricultural ambitious zone of activity.

Religious life and the building of prairie churches functioned as integral spaces which not only offered spiritual comfort but also helped forge social connections between new settlers. In a questionnaire from the 1950s that was given to the early settlers of the province, sixty-five percent reported that churches were formed in their prairie communities within the first year of arriving. The rest reported that religious opportunities were available to them within the first five years of coming to the plains.⁶ Until church buildings were constructed, religious services were held in homes, schoolhouses, tents, granaries, hotel parlours, lumberyards, town halls, and even in barns or stables across prairie settlements. These settlements were geographically spread out over large swaths of areas which often meant long treks to attend church services. Some settlers even reported traveling as far as 27 miles to attend a church service.⁷ Once the major Protestant denominations began to hold regular church services, church members swiftly organized para-church organizations to further extend the social and spiritual offerings to parishioners.

Women's missionary societies were some of the first church organizations to materialize within the province. In 1893, six Presbyterian women in Moosomin, Saskatchewan, organized a

⁵ "Hurricane Hills Mission, N.W. T.," *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, February 1903, 214-216, UCCA, Toronto.

⁶ Christine Macdonald, "Pioneer Church Life in Saskatchewan," *Saskatchewan History Journal* vol. 13, no. 1 (1960): 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

Women's Foreign Missionary Society (W.F.M.S.) auxiliary branch with Mrs. J.M. Douglas as President. Four years later, the women of St. Andrew's church in Moose Jaw followed in forming their own branch. In December 1902, the women in the Presbytery of Qu'Appelle held a meeting in the town of Sintaluta and they organized the Presbyterian Women's Home Missionary Society. The first president installed was Mrs. J.G. McKechnie of Wolseley. In 1905, they officially focused on women's missionary work for women and children in 'heathen' lands and became known as the Women's Home and Foreign Mission Presbyterian. Church women formed foreign missionary groups across the province in the Presbyteries of Regina, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and across dozens of small-town congregations. In 1914, women in Saskatchewan from twelve presbyteries came together and created the Presbyterian Saskatchewan Provincial Society with women from Swift Current, Assiniboia, and Kamsack, bringing the total to fifteen groups. Between 1914 and 1924, there were 467 branches of Presbyterian women's missionary auxiliaries in Saskatchewan with a total membership of approximately nine thousand women.⁸

Saskatchewan's female congregants in the Church of England followed in the steps of their Presbyterian sisters and also organized into missionary auxiliary groups. Along the southern portion of the province, in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle, which was divided into twelve separate districts and covered an area of ninety thousand square miles, the first W.A. group organized in 1899 under the leadership of Mrs. Grisdale at the St. John's Church in Indian Head. The stated goals of the W.A. in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle were: to pray for missions, awaken the missionary zeal among the diocesan church women, to diffuse missionary intelligence, to encourage the formation of parochial branches throughout the diocese, to raise money for missionary accessories, and to receive and forward contributions for any missions in the

⁸ "Call and Response: A History of the Women's Missionary Society, Western Division, of the Presbyterian Church in Canada," Toronto, 1964, 28-30, UCCA, Toronto.

diocese.⁹ Twenty-five dollars was the price of a lifetime membership in the W.A. Branches soon sprang up across the southern prairies in towns like Estevan, Salt Coats, Maple Creek, Fort Qu'Appelle, and Wapella. Every year more branches were added. By November 1910, there were seventy-four branches operating within the diocese. The primary goal of the women's branches was to support missionary work, but the fundraisers were also instrumental in creating a communal effect amongst new Anglo-Canadian settlers. Early settler to Saskatchewan, Julia Clark, from the Pense W.A. remembered, "We had neither telephones [n]or cars. We had a meeting and decided on the date. We rented the schoolhouse for three dollars. We served a cold fowl supper with everything that goes to make a good meal as our W.A. women were excellent cooks. When the supper had been served our men took down the tables. We had a real old-time dance. All had a good time—a really happy time."¹⁰

The Church of England's Diocese of Saskatchewan, which covered the northern half of the province, was the last to organize. They formed their first W.A. group in 1905 under the leadership of Letitia Newnham, the wife of Bishop J.A. Newnham. Twenty women gathered in the St. Alban's Cathedral in Prince Albert to discuss with the bishop the idea of forming a W.A. in their diocese, although there was only one self-supporting parish at the time. Once they had the bishop's approval, the women formed their board, paid their affiliation fees, and began the work of collecting offerings to further the work of missions at home and abroad. In her presidential address to the settler church women one year later in March 1906, Letitia described Saskatchewan as "this great new land of ours" and explained to the women how the W.A. functioned as an affective social body to ease the loneliness of white settlers who had left their

⁹ WA Qu'Appelle 1898-1948 Pamphlet, VIII. I. (a)., Women's Auxiliaries, R-705 Diocese of Qu'Appelle, PAS, Regina.

¹⁰ Ibid.

homes of origin to stake out a new life for themselves on the prairies.¹¹ Describing the WA members she wrote that they were women “whose hearts still bleed from the wrench, who would so appreciate the fellowship and the invitation to be one of us in the work which is perhaps the only thing they see in their new and strange surroundings like ‘home.’”¹²

The auxiliary groups were feminized spaces which functioned to ease the pangs of loneliness experienced by new female settlers in their new location. The branches provided the women with opportunities to regularly interact with other middle-class Canadians in their efforts to raise money for colonial mission projects. The popularity of the women’s missionary auxiliary groups in the first decade of the twentieth century can be attributed to several causes. It provided settler women with the ability to support missionary practices, which was still attractive to the Canadian middle classes in the Edwardian period. It allowed for women to invest their energies into activities beyond domestic structures. And finally, it gave prairie women social connections in a rural province where few other social and cultural opportunities were available. By 1918, the W.A. in the Diocese of Saskatchewan had grown to ninety-five branches and seventy of those branches reported a membership totalling 1176 women.¹³

Although the objective of the Saskatchewan women’s auxiliary groups was to offer financial and spiritual support for missionary work both at home and abroad, they consistently designated Indian mission work as a central priority in their local chapters. In December 1907, at a quarterly meeting for the women from the Diocese of Saskatchewan, the women affirmed that their central focus as an organization was to advance the cause of Indian mission work especially

¹¹ President’s Address March 1906, Letitia Agnes Newnham, GS-196, B117 A.IV.15, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Report of the 13th Annual Meeting of the Saskatchewan Diocesan Branch of the Women’s Auxiliary, 1918, GS-196, B117 A.III.1, Annual Reports 1905-1933, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

since the C.M.S. in England was soon withdrawing their funding from the Canadian field.¹⁴ In 1904, the Bishop of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle reported how the diocese was deeply indebted to the W.A. diocesan branches for their support of Indian mission work on the reserves and residential schools. Visiting the diocese from England in 1914, Maud Burns, whose husband had been Bishop of Qu'Appelle in 1893, described how the main missionary focus of the W.A. in southern Saskatchewan was their philanthropic support for Indian Residential Schools.¹⁵ The W.A.s were deeply intertwined with the Indian Residential School system because their financial donations and material goods consistently given to the schools. At times, the schools even provided spaces for the women to hold their missionary meetings. In the Diocese of Saskatchewan, the W.A. held their meetings for several years at the Battleford Industrial School since the W.A. Presidency had been taken over by Eleanor Matheson. She worked at the school as head matron and her husband Edward Matheson was the principal.¹⁶

There were two vital emotive aspects at work in white settler women's involvement in Indian mission work in Saskatchewan. First, these women understood that they were building on the affective labour of Protestant church women in eastern Canada. Those women had laid the foundation for providing sympathetic support for the foreign 'other.' Across denominations, the women's auxiliary groups in Saskatchewan referenced how they were sharing in the missionary work with their older sisters in the east, to care for the 'poor Indian' on the prairies. Speaking to W.A. women in the Diocese of Saskatchewan, President Eleanor Matheson emphasized that, without their missionary philanthropy and compassionate prayers, the 'heathen' would remain in

¹⁴ 4 December 1907, First Minute Book Diocesan W.A. 1905-1907, GS-196, B117 A.I.1, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

¹⁵ "My Visit to Canada," *The Church Quarterly of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle*, Spring 1929, PAS, Regina.

¹⁶ Saskatchewan Diocesan W.A. Minute Book 1911-1913, 18 July 1912, GS-196, B117 A.I. 2., Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

ignorance and superstition. “Not only among our Indian peoples and settlers from foreign lands, but in far off lands also, to help all those who would otherwise be benighted,” she stated.¹⁷

Prairie women were joining as allies with the church women in eastern Canada to address the ills of ‘heathenism.’

Secondly, Anglo-Canadian women felt obligated to care not only because of their recent arrival to the prairies but because of an imagined closeness to Indigenous peoples. Their charitable sisters in eastern Canada were raising money in established towns and cities across Ontario and Quebec, locations where Indigenous peoples had been displaced by settlers since the early-to-mid nineteenth century. But on the prairies, reserves were recent creations and settlers recognized that not long prior to their arrival these were distinctly Indigenous spaces. Indigenous peoples were not only close in geographical proximity to settler communities in rural Saskatchewan, but they had only just recently moved from spaces that settlers now claimed as their own. There was an imagined familiarity which shaped the sympathetic relationship between giver and receiver on the prairies. The philosopher David Hume argues that we sympathize more with people who are physically close in our vicinity. A close physicality shapes affective considerations and our associations shape our sentiments.¹⁸ Those we affectively feel close to demand our attention. For white women in Saskatchewan, the physical and imagined spatial nearness to Indigenous peoples, combined with the influence of the missionary culture, motivated white women to extend their ‘compassionate offerings’ to Indigenous peoples.

The space between persons extending the sympathy from those on the receiving end, created a distance that became imbued with racial meanings. Scholar Malory Nye argues that

¹⁷ Address by E. Matheson, GS-196, B117 A.III.1., Annual Reports 1905-1933, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

¹⁸ David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, in Fonna Forman Barzilai, “Sympathy in Space(s): Adam Smith on Proximity,” *Political Theory* vol. 33 no. 2 (2005), 196-197.

race and racialization are not about skin colour or genetics; instead, “race is about marking and organizing social differences on ideas of difference that rely on such embedded distinctions.”¹⁹ In other words, white church women in Saskatchewan did not consider their philanthropic missionary strategies fundamentally rooted in racial categories. But it was in the implementation of social differences through their missionary affective outpourings, they marked various groups as different from whites. Settlers placed Indigenous persons into a conceptual category that required white charity for their ‘civilized uplift’ so they would not be stuck in a ‘primitive’ past. Ideas of racial difference were not explicitly on public display, but were built into the stratification of economic, social, and cultural life on the prairies. Racialization is not restricted to comments or labels but works through processes assumed to be natural. As Richard Dyer explains, “whiteness is usually invisible and unnamed, and is assumed the default of humanity.”²⁰ Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt argue that, “In the prairies, negative perceptions of Indigenous people do not just emerge during the course of overtly racist interactions, but rather they form an unnamed and taken for granted social norm.”²¹ Using emotive discourses, white church women in Saskatchewan characterized Indigenous persons as colonized beneficiaries of their sympathetic love. They were recipients of affective tenderness which would lead them towards white British Christianity. The culture of Saskatchewan’s female missionary groups forged categories of difference by creating a gap between the ‘Indian’ as the receiver of charity and the white Christian female as the giver. This process legitimized white women’s belief that they were of the highest moral character, cheerfully giving out of the goodness of their

¹⁹ Malory Nye, “Race and Religion: Postcolonial Formations of Power and Whiteness,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* vol. 31 no. 3 (2019): 220.

²⁰ Richard Dyer, “White: Essays on Race and Culture,” quoted in Malory Nye, “Race and Religion,” 228.

²¹ Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2020), ch.2.

hearts.²²

Woman's missionary societies unified many white women in their commitment to creating a British Christian culture on the Canadian prairies in the early twentieth century. They helped to determine the racial order and the hierarchical structuring of power on the prairies by identifying Indigenous peoples as 'heathen' and positioning themselves as white female authorities. They were the ones mandated to uphold the religious and cultural prescription to emancipate colonized races. As Gale Kenny argues, whiteness, womanhood, and Protestantism were not separate identities but were structured in relation to each other and contrasted against the image of the 'degraded woman and children' from other races and religions.²³ Saskatchewan church women played a central role in mission work and were instrumental in establishing an Anglo-Canadian imperial culture on the prairies by emphasizing a chasm between 'subaltern races' and British and Canadian Protestants. They occupied prairie land, and they felt a desire to take on an equal or even greater share of the mission philanthropic work that was originally under the purview of the women from eastern Canada.

In 1907, Rev. J. Leishman, Secretary of Home Missions from Fleming, Saskatchewan, wrote to William McLaren, convenor of the Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, stating how Christian Anglo women in Saskatchewan were a great unorganized latent force for prairie mission work that needed to be harnessed by the denomination. He asserted, "And our ladies will not consent to be overlooked in this matter. They may be affiliated with the east, but the east must not dictate in any autocratic spirit...our

²² The belief in the superiority of whiteness and white women's civilizing capabilities was deeply entrenched in early twentieth century Saskatchewan. See Sarah Carter, *Ours by Every Law of Right and Justice: Women and the Vote in the Prairie Provinces* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2020), 220-221.

²³ Gale L. Kenny, *Christian Imperial Feminism: White Protestant Women and the Consecration of Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2024), 6.

western ladies are in every way quite equal to any of the eastern ladies.”²⁴ Prairie women believed that they were equally competent in their missionary endeavors and wanted to be recognized as such.

Although female church groups sought to make their mark on the mission field in Saskatchewan, most Protestant church women were not feminists who tied their missionary participation to a demand for equal rights in public life. They were allies in the missionary project but understood their involvement as female subordinates in male dominated church denominations. In Letitia’s Newnham’s speeches for the Diocese of Saskatchewan, she reiterated on numerous occasions that the women in her diocese had to be submissive to their bishops and rectors. They recognized and accepted that the clergyman in the parish was the head of each individual W.A. branch. Newnham specified that women’s auxiliary work means influence, but it must be quiet and unobtrusive.²⁵ In 1916, in the Diocese of Qu’Appelle, the W.A. voted against supporting votes for women.²⁶ And on the national level, the Presbyterian W.F.M.S. also refused to be affiliated with the National Council of Women in Canada, which was an important organization in the suffrage movement.²⁷ Women’s missionary societies in Saskatchewan steered away from the subject of suffrage in their speeches, reports, and meetings, even though there were many W.A. members who would have likely been in support of the women’s vote.²⁸ The

²⁴ J. Leishman to W. McLaren, 18 November 1907, A. 381.V1.B9 d, FW 06, Woman's Missionary Society Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

²⁵ Sisters of the WA and Fellow-Workers, 19 May 1909, GS-196, B117 A.IV.15, Letitia Agnes Newnham 1906-1921, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina; Speech by Mrs. Fortin, 29 May 1907, GS-196, B117 A.IV.14, Miscellaneous, 1907-1985, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS.

²⁶ Executive Minutes, St. Paul’s Parish Hall, Regina, 1916, Diocese of Qu’Appelle Women’s Auxiliary Minute Book, 1916-1928, VIII 1. (b.) (iii.), Women’s Auxiliaries, R-705 Diocese of Qu’Appelle, PAS, Regina.

²⁷ Ruth Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 43.

²⁸ On the nuances of religious feminisms, see, Margaret Bendroth, *Good and Mad: Mainline Protestant Churchwomen, 1920-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 2; Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xviii; Gail Bederman, “The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough: The Men and Religion

Protestant churches in Canada were institutionally conservative and church officials tended to be cautious on the issue as their parishioners were divided over the issue.

Instead, the W.A.s fixed their sights on expanding missionary philanthropy, emphasizing white women's moral superiority, and extolling the virtues of an Edwardian Christian woman. They envisioned a woman who would be a kind domestic helpmate to her husband and children enveloped in prairie church culture. In this era of changing social norms concerning women and their place in Canadian society, feminized Protestantism in the early twentieth century in Saskatchewan developed around a racialized gender order, one that defined white women by their generosity and Indigenous peoples by their fragility. White church women were not using W.A. meetings as spaces to argue for the female vote; they were producing and disseminating knowledge about who lay outside the boundaries of their constructed racial-religious norms. In so doing, they were forming a cultural imprint on the developing province.

Embracing the Task

The women's auxiliary groups raised funds within their local parochial branches through annual and life membership fees, fundraising initiatives, and special thank offerings. Church women then funnelled these funds upwards to their denominational mission boards which provided financial support to missions at home and abroad, including the church-run Indian Residential Schools and Indian mission sites on the prairies. The flow of these collected missionary finances differed according to the Protestant denominations. For Anglican women, their auxiliaries in Saskatchewan were affiliated with the national Women's Auxiliary to the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada which was based in Toronto. They gave their donations to the national dominion board which was responsible for missionary support across Canada and

Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism," *American Quarterly* vol. 41 no. 3 (1989): 432-465.

overseas. Within their donation to the larger dominion board, they earmarked a portion, called the 'United Thank Offering,' which went to the accounts of the national W.A. The women also made annual pledges to their diocesan board at the regional level.²⁹ The women could allocate or make specific pledges as to how they wanted their collected funds to be spent at the diocesan level. Sometimes they were asked by the dominion board to make specific mission pledges, for example, to pay for a missionary's salary or to cover the repairs to a specific mission school.³⁰ As the Anglican women's auxiliaries grew in numbers across the province, they were fortunate to have swelling budgets, along with thank offerings and left over money from their accounts. This allowed them to make increased pledges for specific mission projects, often supporting local churches and mission initiatives.

For Canadian Presbyterian women, the structure initially required that the local branches take all their raised money and sent it upwards to the centralized W.F.M.S. organization in Toronto. From its inception, male leaders in the Presbyterian church intended that the W.F.M.S. would function as an auxiliary and would not detract parishioners from giving to the general mission fund of their local Presbyterian churches. Yet due to its massive popularity amongst Canadian church women at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the W.F.M.S. swelled into a large-scale organization with an enormous budget that oversaw an extensive mission field. As provincial populations grew, it became cumbersome for the Toronto-based leadership of the W.F.M.S. to control all the financing that was brought in by the women auxiliaries from across Canada.

²⁹ Eleanor Matheson, A Brief Summary of the First Seventeen Years of the Saskatchewan Women's Auxiliary Branch, 5 July 1941, GS-196, B117 A.IV.11, Matheson Family 1915-1955, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina; Our First Fifty Years 1905-1955: Saskatoon Diocesan Auxiliary of the Church of England in Canada, GS-196, B117 A.III.1, Annual Reports 1905-1933, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

³⁰ Geoffrey Stimpson, *A Century of Service: A History of the Women's Auxiliary and Anglican Church Women in Canada and the Diocese of Qu'Appelle* (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1986), 6-8.

Prairie women then formed provincial societies of the women auxiliaries, which allowed local church women to have control over their missionary philanthropy within their home provinces. Provincial treasurers collected, recorded, and distributed funds from the amounts collected by each local branch and then passed that information onto the national W.F.M.S. It became the Women's Missionary Society (W.M.S.) in 1914 after amalgamating with the Women's Home Missionary Society. Saskatchewan women formed the Saskatchewan Presbyterian Society in 1914 and reported each year to the W.M.S. on the amount they had raised and distributed for mission work within their province. For example, in 1917, the women's auxiliaries in Saskatchewan had raised \$14,034 and expended the funds across various departments of the W.M.S. to further provincial mission activities.³¹ Nevertheless, regional tensions existed because of the tight control of the Toronto board and the desired independence among the provincial presbyterial societies.³²

It was difficult for local prairie women to grasp the full extent of the impact of their mission donations when they forwarded their money to their larger provincial or national boards. For Saskatchewan's white church women, the most tangible involvement in mission work was their making and organizing of supplies for Indian Residential Schools. Each Presbyterian society or Anglican diocese had organizing secretaries who determined the material needs of the residential school or reserve and then communicated those needs to a local women's auxiliary branch. Across Saskatchewan, white Protestant women attended weekly or monthly auxiliary meetings to discuss and implement the sending of supplies to residential schools. White women conceived of themselves as benevolent givers through their endless material gifting to residential

³¹ Fourth Annual Report of the Women's Missionary Society Presbyterian Church of Canada, W.D., 1917, 191, Annual Reports of the Women's Missionary Society, UCCA, Toronto.

³² Brouwer, *New Women for God*, 48.

schools. These women sewed, quilted, and collected garments of clothing, bedding, curtains, toys, and other gifts which were then distributed across the network of schools. Reporting on the new Church of England residential school built in The Pas in 1914, Diocese of Saskatchewan W.A. President Eleanor Matheson wrote, "I have visited the school twice since it opened, and as you go through it, you will see W.A. clothes on the children, W.A. bedding, W.A. carpet on the floors, W.A. sewing machines, W.A. washing machines, wringers, clothing baskets; in fact the love and thought of the women's auxiliary are in evidence everywhere."³³

White women across Protestant congregations in cities like Yorton, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Regina, Battleford, and in small towns like Abernethy, Cottonwood, Ruddell, Asquith, Leney, Pense, Grenfell, and dozens of others, organized and collected the materials. They were pleased to provide for the 'poor' Indian child who required the comforts of civilisation to bring them nearer to the gospel. The branches also assembled garments and other materials for the 'heathen' women on reserves and mission sites. At Lumsden, Saskatchewan, the women held two socials in 1910 to raise funds to buy materials to make clothing for the women at the Presbyterian Hurricane Hills mission. They purchased materials from the proceeds and held sewing meetings. That October, the women were able to send the garments to the mission. At Christmas that same year, they also organized parcels of gifts which were delivered to the children at the File Hills Residential School on the Okanese reserve.³⁴

Through this process, Indigenous children were 'othered' from whiteness. They laid outside the racial boundaries of whiteness and were exempt from its privileges. Their transformation into 'good Christian children' could only be made possible because of white

³³ Report of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Saskatchewan Diocesan Branch of the Women's Auxiliary to the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada 1915, 9, GS-196, B117 A.III.1, Annual Reports 1905-1933, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

³⁴ Lumsden W.M.S. Minutes 1910-1918, A 381 XVA 1971, FL 375 Lumsden Pastoral Charge Fonds, LSA.

women's benevolence. Presbyterian Saskatchewan women listened to their organizing secretary, Miss McGregor, speak at a meeting in 1915, describing how a little Indigenous girl at a school questioned her spiritual redeemability, asking, "does God love little Indian girls like white girls?"³⁵ The child's questioning identified the racial structuring of the civilizing mission, but the women interpreted the question as an example of a young girl coming to realize the power of a Christian faith that superseded racial boundaries and justified the philanthropy given to the schools. In the women's rationale, their affective longing to improve the Indian from a childlike ward to an assimilated citizen within the burgeoning Canadian nation state was the reason for their philanthropy. Historians Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen have demonstrated that for English female missionaries that were sent to British India, the emotional desire to 'love' was the foremost affective sentiment employed in their missionary discourses to describe their motivations for their philanthropic giving.³⁶ Saskatchewan women held onto the same affective framework to justify their racial superiority on the Canadian prairies. Eleanor Matheson called the W.A. women in the Diocese of Saskatchewan "a noble army of women enrolled under the banner of love." Other church women described their giving of material goods and supplies to the residential schools as the cause nearest to their hearts.³⁷ Evangelicals believed they were spreading the love of Christ through their charitable donations to residential schools.

Settler Canadians knew about the dire conditions for Indigenous children from their consumption of media coverage in the early part of the twentieth century. There was wide newspaper coverage that reported on the horrendous condition of the schools detailed in Dr.

³⁵ WMS Minute Book, Regina Presbyterian Presbyterial, 1907-1919, A. 381.V1.C 6a, FW 06, Woman's Missionary Society Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

³⁶ Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen, "Imperial Emotions: Affective Communities of Mission in British Protestant Women's Missionary Publications, 1880-1920," *Journal of Social History* 41 no. 3 (2008), 699.

³⁷ Address by Mrs. E.K. Matheson, GS-196, B117 A. IV. 11, Matheson Family 1915-1955, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

Peter Bryce's 1908 government report. Historian John Milloy argues that "it was the stuff of headlines."³⁸ Newspapers across the country published numerous articles on the Bryce Report outlining the dire health of Indigenous children at the schools due to poor ventilation, overcrowding, and insufficient finances. Knowing the schools were incredibly underfunded by the state, the women's auxiliaries attempted to provide material comforts for the children which were not allocated for in the schools' meagre budgets.

To grasp what provisions were needed, Protestant church women regularly visited Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan to assess the material conditions. They then described their evaluations to the parochial branch in their respective towns and cities. At times, local Saskatchewan women functioned as prairie tour guides for the visiting delegates from their sister women auxiliaries in eastern Canada. This was a means to highlight their mission sites. For example, in 1909, Mrs. Leitch, the President of the W.M.S., from the St. Andrews's congregation in Yorkton, visited the Birtle school just across the border in Manitoba and reported her findings to her local branch. In 1914, British W.A. member Maud Burns visited from England and toured the diocese describing how she was "most anxious" to visit Gordon's residential school. Two years later, Catherine Motherwell was asked by the W.M.S. provincial society to visit Round Lake school and make a list of the necessary furnishings needed. In 1922, Mrs. J. G. McKechnie from the W.M.S. provincial society gave a tour of the File Hills school, File Hills Colony, and Round Lake school to visiting W.M.S. leaders from Toronto. In 1925, Miss Oxley, deaconess from England, spent ten days at Gordon's school and then described her experiences to the Anglican W.A. women in Wadena. Lastly, Eleanor Matheron, President of the Diocese of Saskatchewan spoke to the W.A. in the 1940s about how she had spent several weeks in the

³⁸ John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 91.

twenties at different schools in The Pas, Onion Lake, Elkhorn, and La Ronge as the W.A. President.³⁹ Settler women visited residential schools to witness and lend their approval to the civilizing process of Indigenous children adopting settler colonial values.⁴⁰ In March 1929, the Chairman of the Indian committee for the Diocese of Qu'Appelle stated that over the last two decades, hundreds of parishioners in the diocese had visited Gordon's school to see what the church was doing. Thousands had given financially to the school through their churches, and almost every branch of the women's auxiliary in the diocese was helping to clothe the children through yearly contributions.⁴¹

³⁹ Yorkton St. Andrew's WMS minute book 1909-1915, 8 September 1909, A 923 XV SA 3026, FL 773, LSA; A Visit to the Diocese Described in a Letter by Mrs. Burn, 18 January 1914, *The Church Quarterly of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle*, no. 114, Spring 1914, PAS, Regina; Saskatchewan Women's Missionary Society Annual Meeting, Regina, 1920, A. 381.VI, B. 9. a., FW 06, Women's Missionary Society, Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA; Saskatchewan Women's Missionary Society Annual Meeting, Regina, 1922, A. 381.VI, B. 9. a., FW 06, Women's Missionary Society, Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA; Minutes of Meeting of the Pelly Rural Deanery, Wadena, 11 September 1925, Diocese of Qu'Appelle Women's Auxiliary Pelly Deanery Minute and Account Book, 1921-1929, VIII 1. (n.), Women's Auxiliaries, R-705 Diocese of Qu'Appelle, PAS, Regina; Speech Prepared by Eleanor Matheson, F 200, Acc. 720, IV, Miscellaneous, 8, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS, Regina.

⁴⁰ The well-known Canadian suffragist Emily Murphy, who with four other women won the 1929 Persons Case, visited Elkhorn Residential School with her husband in 1902 and wrote admiringly about the transformations in the lives of the Indigenous students, in an article she authored about the school. A committed believer in eugenics and white supremacist ideology, she wrote under the pen name "Janey Canuck" about the triumphs of settler colonialism in Canada's west. She became a widely published author and journalist before turning to fight for women's legal rights. See, Sarah Carter, "Emily Murphy and Indigenous Peoples of Western Canada: 'On the Road to Extinction,'" *At the Forks: Where Indigenous and Human Rights Intersect* Vol. 1 (2021): 1-15.

⁴¹ Letter from Chairman of the Indian Committee in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle to Bishop M. Harding, 9 March 1929, R00011293, Gordon's Residential School, General Administration, NCTR, Winnipeg.



Figure 5.1 Mrs. Clark, the Women's Missionary Society Secretary with children from the Round Lake Mission. Image from *The Sweet Toned Bell: The Heritage of the Round Lake Mission and History of Camp McKay*, R-E 1902, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

Indian residential schools became sites of settlers' scrutiny, where white Anglo-settlers worked out relations of power between Indigenous peoples and whites on the Canadian prairies. Although white settler visitors to the schools most likely received a sanitized depiction of the reality that the students experienced daily, nevertheless, the visits shaped perceptions of racial differentiation. White female settlers monitored the material conditions and reinforced the notion that the material otherness of Indigenous children made them different from white subjects. They were able to exist on the prairies in a separate reality from the 'pitiable' Indigenous subject. The racial othering of Indigenous children coincided with material care from the women auxiliaries. It was through the 'civilized' transformation of the racialized child that the women could celebrate their identity as 'generous Christian helpers.'

Furthermore, the depiction of the ‘poor Indian child’ was a malleable construct which settlers could manipulate for other uses. In 1925, the local Saskatchewan newspaper, *The Touchwood Times*, reported that the boys from Gordon’s school put on a performance of a ‘coon concert.’ The senior boys impersonated ‘negroes’ and their performance before 150 people in attendance ‘brought down the house.’⁴² This double racialization, Indigenous bodies marked as black for entertainment purposes depicts how racial categories are invented and reconstituted to preserve white control over representation. As scholar Eric Lott argues, through blackface acts, “the white subject could transform fantasies of racial assault and subversion into riotous pleasure, turn insurrection and intermixture into harmless fun—even though the outlines of fun disclose its troubled sources.”⁴³ Violence towards racialized bodies could be turned into raucous entertainment, poking fun at the outrageousness of the ‘other.’ The making of the colonial subject in Saskatchewan normalized the discourses of brown and black bodies as flexible representations which whites could contort for their many uses.

If women’s auxiliaries were involved in the lives of the children, they were also involved in their deaths. Due to their heavy involvement with residential schools, Anglo-Canadian Protestant church women were aware that graveyards existed on the school premises for the bodies of Indigenous children. The Independent Special Interlocutor’s *2024 Final Report for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves* outlined that when residential schools were located on mission sites, surrounded by other mission buildings, such as a church, residences, a cottage hospital, or farming and gardening buildings, children were usually buried in the mission cemetery. Their internments were usually done along with other members of the reserve or

⁴² “Gordon’s School Christmas Concert,” *The Touchwood Times*, Punnichy, Saskatchewan 15 January 1925, in *The Church Quarterly of the Diocese of Qu’Appelle*, no. 138, Spring 1925, PAS, Regina.

⁴³ Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 147.

mission staff. But if the schools stood alone, particularly in the case of late nineteenth century industrial schools which were situated on the edges of urban settings, cemeteries were part of the school's infrastructure.⁴⁴

This was the case for the Regina Industrial school's graveyard which existed on school property. In November 1921, the corresponding secretary for the Presbyterian Saskatchewan Provincial Society of the W.M.S., Jen McAra (wife to former mayor of Regina Peter McAra) wrote to William Morris Graham, Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the prairie region that at their last provincial executive meeting, the board had decided that they wanted to write Graham to ask if something could be done about the derelict cemetery at the old Regina Industrial school. McAra wrote, "This plot of land, we are informed, is now part of a field, that is or has been used as a pasture field. The fence has entirely disappeared, having been burned by prairie fire, the cattle have trampled all over the little mounds, flattening them out, and destroying the little wooden crosses that marked the last resting places of some thirty-five or forty of our little Indian children."⁴⁵ She added that Mrs. Sinclair was the member of the society most keenly interested in preserving the cemetery. The widow to the former principal of the Regina school, noted that the graveyard also held the graves of A J. McLeod's children, the school's first principal. Graham wrote to Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, who responded to Graham that the Department of Indian Affairs would be willing to designate \$150 to \$200 to cover the amount of constructing a small picket fence around the grounds of the

⁴⁴ Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools. Sites of Truth, Sites of Conscience, Unmarked Burials and Mass Graves of Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children in Canada, 2024, 34, <https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/1.OSI-Sites-of-Truth-Sites-of-Conscience.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Letter from Jen McAra to William Morris Graham, 14 November 1921, R00013824, General Correspondence Relating to The Regina Industrial School, NCTR, Winnipeg.

cemetery.⁴⁶ The supply organizers of the women's auxiliaries in Saskatchewan knew graves of Indigenous children existed at the schools because of their frequent visits. The women felt a sense of responsibility for their mission field having spent hours of their volunteered time trying to determine where to invest church women's financial donations. Concerned with making 'good' progress in nurturing Christianity among Indigenous women and children, they worked to improve the material conditions at the schools and even helped freshening up the school grounds. Assimilated Indigenous subjects were central to Anglo-Canadian women's vision of a white Christian Saskatchewan and were unwavering in their support of removing Indigenous children from their kinship systems in order to civilize their 'heathen' souls for the sake of constructing new Christian subjects. White female Christian philanthropists believed they were the primary agents of sacrifice, donating their time and resources for Indigenous children's assimilation into the Canadian nation state.

The Indian in Our Home

The creation of Protestant women's auxiliaries in Saskatchewan coincided with missionary organizations in the early twentieth century that were beginning to emphasize academic study and to further scientific knowledge about other 'races.' Influenced by white Protestant women in the United States who were promoting 'mission studies' through the reading of textbooks, study guides, posters, charts, and maps in their women organizational meetings, Protestant prairie women sought to further their missionary service beyond the scope of merely raising and spending money. Between 1901 and 1938, the Central Committee of the United States of Missions (CCUSFM) published textbooks and related pedagogical materials for women's foreign missionary boards. These were created to analyze racialized peoples, cultures, religion, and

⁴⁶ Letter from William Morris Graham to Duncan Campbell Scott, 16 November 1921, R00013824, General Correspondence Relating to The Regina Industrial School, NCTR, Winnipeg.

geography in order to gain a cosmopolitan knowledge about the world to extend their missionary influence globally. Before the implementation of mission studies, women's auxiliary meetings were mostly devotional services with an emphasis on prayer and evangelical spirituality. The American Baptist Helen Barrett Montgomery from New Jersey wrote how she was frustrated with the "smallness" of the women's missionary societies meetings in the late nineteenth century and went on to author six of the textbooks in the CCUSFM series.⁴⁷

Canadian women in the early twentieth century were increasingly enthusiastic to have access to increased education and expanded learning opportunities. The rise of women's missionary studies gave women a sense of confidence in knowing more about the world and its problems. The textbooks were the most popular form of study and the mission boards encouraged women to pick one mission field at a time and present it in their meetings to the women to help connect them with the larger global project of mission work.⁴⁸ Church women in Saskatchewan, particularly in the Presbyterian women auxiliaries, adopted the practice of studying and the reading of the CCUSFM textbooks in their meetings. At a W.M.S. meeting in Wolseley, Saskatchewan, in 1912, the women reported that they were studying from Helen Montgomery's textbook, titled "Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Women's Work in Foreign Lands." The women, at the St. Andrew's W.M.S. meeting in Yorkton, described how they were learning about the terrible conditions that non-Christian women were enduring in places like China, Japan, Korea, Africa, Egypt, and Palestine from their textbook studies.⁴⁹ At the Annual Meeting for the Presbyterian Saskatchewan Provincial Society

⁴⁷ Kenny, 29

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁹ Wolseley WMS 1910-1913 Minutes, 9 January 1912, A. 381. XVA, 4460, FL 768, Wolseley-Santaluta Pastoral Charge fonds, LSA; Yorkton St. Andrew's WMS minute book 1909-1915, March 1911, A 923 XV SA 3026, FL 773, Yorkton Pastoral Charge fonds, LSA.

held in Regina in 1915, the President remarked how their organization had approximately 50,000 members and their book study for the year was the CCUSFM textbook, *The Child in the Midst* by Mary Schaffler Laboree. She hoped that every women's auxiliary would make use of it.⁵⁰

Protestant women devoted a sizable portion of their meetings to studying 'scientific' missionary textbooks outlining the conditions that non-western women and children faced around the world. The missionary answer to elevating 'heathen' women around the world was through the spread of Christianity—the progressiveness of white women was a result because of their Christian faith, and they felt that they had an obligation to share it with non-Christian women. Scholar Marion Aikens Wolfe explains how these textbooks put forward an argument for Christian feminism based on the idea that “Christianity is transformational, not only in a spiritual sense, but also because it allows for (and in fact requires) the empowerment and unification of women.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, the version of Christian feminism that was put forward in these textbooks and read widely by Saskatchewan women was wrapped up in an imperial consciousness that positioned white women as holding the answer to bring about spiritual and cultural changes to women living in 'heathen' lands. Historian Gail Kenny writes that, for American women, this version of Christian imperial feminism tied white women to an evangelical Protestant imperial project that stretched beyond the boundaries of the American imperial project.⁵²

The same was true for Canadian Protestant women. They desired that all people around the world would become Christians and were convinced that their interpretation and visualization

⁵⁰ Saskatchewan Annual Address Knox Church Regina, March 1915, A 381 VI B 9a, FW 06 Women's Missionary Society Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

⁵¹ Marion Aikens Wolfe, “Constructing Modern Missionary Feminism: American Protestant Women's Foreign Missionary Societies and the Rhetorical Positioning of Christian Women, 1901-1938” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2018), 113.

⁵² Kenny, 21.

of what constituted universalist Protestantism was the correct version. Missionary studies helped to shape Anglo-Canadian women's gendered and racial knowledge about the significant role they could contribute to advancing Christianity and ensuring the retreat of 'heathen' religions. This collapsing of 'heathenism' into a single common racialized identity pitted whites against 'heathenness.' However, this binary analysis also collapsed white's own distinctiveness and pushed them together. It flattened them out into a collective and erased their own need for complexities.⁵³ This fixed dualistic positioning of the white mission supporter versus the racialized 'heathen' reduced autonomy and erased most of the distinctions amongst groups, compartmentalizing individuals along religious-racial claims. As historian Katherine Lum argues, "The heathen category has not only racialized those bearing the label as unable to care for themselves; it has also shored up the self-understanding of white Protestant Americans as people who hold themselves up to be the heathen's savior."⁵⁴

Not only were women's auxiliary meetings in Saskatchewan devoted to learning about foreign peoples abroad, but they were also crafting an image of the 'Indian' at home. Anglo-Canadian women's focus on missionary studies extended into learning about the 'Indian' within their own province. The close geographical distance between the women's missionary meetings and nearby residential schools and mission sites allowed mission staff to frequently make appearances and give talks to white church women in Saskatchewan regarding the 'progress' of their mission work. The missionaries at the schools and on mission sites and local Saskatchewan women formed a discursive circulatory network where they created and maintained colonial inventions about the civilizing process among Indigenous peoples. Anglo-Canadian women

⁵³Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesus, "Confounded Identities: A Meditation on Race, Feminism, and Religious Studies in Times of White Supremacy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 86 no. 2 (2018): 322.

⁵⁴Kathryn Gin Lum, *Heathen: Religion and Race in American History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press: 2022), 15.

listened to descriptions from the missionaries about the ‘wonderous progress’ taking place in the children’s lives at the schools in part, the missionaries asserted, because of white women’s generous philanthropic involvement. Missionaries created and nurtured the colonial myth that the residential school project was rooted in Christian benevolence and was conducted with kindly compassion at church women’s meetings in Saskatchewan. Missionaries stood on the platforms of local congregations and praised the number of children’s conversions at the schools. Also celebrated was the children’s rejection of their Indianness and their ability to rise with the tide of civilization.

Learning about the ‘Indian’ was a common topic of discussion at the women’s auxiliary meetings across the province during the first two decades of the twentieth century. For example, at a Presbyterian women’s auxiliary meeting in Lemberg, Saskatchewan, one of the church ladies read a paper to the rest of the group on the topic of the “Indians in the West.” The subheadings included: the religion of the Indians, their characteristics, missions in Saskatchewan, and the present conditions amongst the Indians.⁵⁵ In addition to monthly study meetings, the groups also brought in missionaries from the residential schools to give updates on their mission work.

In 1911, Jean Cowan, a graduate of the Presbyterian Missionary and Deaconess Home in Toronto, a teacher at the Portage La Prairie Residential School, visited one of the women’s branches in Saskatchewan and spoke of the ‘good work’ done by the order of deaconesses and the splendid training that was given to the girls at the residential school.⁵⁶ The group reported in their monthly minutes that “Miss Cowan’s address was very instructive and much enjoyed and

⁵⁵ Lemberg Presbyterian Minutes 1918-1919, A. 381 XVA 1842, FL003, Abernethy-Lemberg Pastoral Charge Fonds, LSA.

⁵⁶ Yorkton St. Andrew’s WMS minute book 1909-1915, 13 September 1911, A 923 XV SA 3026, FL 773, Yorkton Pastoral Charge Fonds, LSA.

we all wish our young friend very much success in the work.”⁵⁷ Missionaries provided lectures for the women on the life of the ‘Indian,’ displayed lantern slides of their mission work, and brought children from the nearby residential schools onstage as visible evidence of their ‘civilizing’ transformation. At another church women’s meeting, Miss Latimer, a Presbyterian deaconess, spoke to the Regina Presbytery W.M.S., telling them all about her mission work on the File Hills colony in the early 1920s. She described Indigenous peoples as the “mystery people of Canada, many of whom are still living in the old heathen customs of their religion,” but encouraged the Anglo-Canadian women about all of the civilizing work that had taken place under her watch on the colony—the clean homes, tidy children, well-dressed people, and well-kept gardens.⁵⁸

Through their talks and lectures, missionaries, most often women, assured white settler women from towns and cities across Saskatchewan that the evangelical project was succeeding on the Canadian prairies. They told stories, celebrating religious conversions, fueling Christian zeal to see “heathen” souls transformed into Godly subjects. For example, at a monthly meeting for the Saskatchewan Presbyterian W.M.S., Annie Cameron, now known as Mrs. Kirby, recounted an interesting narrative for the women from her time as a missionary on the Makoce Waste reserve with fellow Presbyterian missionary Lucy Baker. She recalled how Baker had given the Dakota men a lesson on the biblical story of Elijah, the prophet who prayed for rain. On the seventh attempt when he looked to the sky, rain broke out, a sign of the almighty’s providence. Aligning the biblical narrative with a similar story from the Makoce Waste reserve, Kirkby described how the Indigenous men listened attentively to Baker’s biblical lesson and then

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ WMS Minute Book, Regina Presbyterian Presbyterial, 1924-1926, A. 381.V1.C 6a, FW 06, Woman's Missionary Society Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

asked if they could pray for rain, since they were experiencing a spring prairie drought. Kirkby explained that, after their prayers, although it had been a warm and sunny day, the skies broke open, and rain poured down on the reserve.

Comparing the unwavering faith of Baker to Elijah, Kirkby's story celebrated the triumphant narrative that God had interceded to show his presence to the 'heathen' unbelievers. The arc of Kirkby's story neatly aligned with the conversion narrative strategy commonly seen in missionary literature. Divine intercession brought the colonized subject into the 'light' through a miraculous experience, thereby saving them from eternal darkness.⁵⁹ Regardless of whether or not the Dakota men had a change of heart, Kirkby's story silenced the interpretations of the colonized subject by exercising complete control over the missionary narrative. She presented the Dakota men as unconverted savages who required Baker's mediation to negotiate with the heavens for rain. Kirkby controlled the representation throughout the narrative by speaking for the Indigenous subjects; their version of events was invisible to the women's interpretation of the narrative. Mission stories, like the story of rain at Makoce Waste, worked to shape colonial hierarchies through textual gaps, inequalities, and the crafting of myths regarding Christian progress. As scholar Gareth Griffiths argues, missionary conversion stories were a "principal lens" for home audiences to view the imperial world and its colonized subjects.⁶⁰

Other missionary talks were less about the civilizing transformation taking place amongst Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan and more about missionaries placing themselves at the center of the colonial web of shifting relations. In May 1913, nurse and day-school teacher Anna A. Hawley gave a talk about her mission work on James Smith reserve to the W.A. of the

⁵⁹ "The Story of the Prayer for Rain at Makoce Waste Reserve," Speech or Manuscript about Lucy Baker (Possibly Annie Cameron, n.d., Lucy Baker fonds, (S) A 1076, S2005-15, PAS, Regina.

⁶⁰ Gareth Griffiths, "'Trained to Tell the Truth': Missionaries, Converts, and Narration," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 153.

Diocese of Saskatchewan in Prince Albert.⁶¹ Originally from Quebec, Hawley trained as a nurse at the City Hospital Training School in Worchester, Massachusetts. She worked as a nurse there following her graduation. Later she returned to Canada, where she was employed as a nurse in Yorkton and Lethbridge before applying for the day-school teacher and nurse position among the Cree at James Smith Reserve at Fort a la Corne in 1909.⁶² In addition to speaking to the W.A. church women and writing articles for the Anglican Church Women's *Letter Leaflet*, she also wrote letters to her sister in Massachusetts which were published from 1911 to 1913 in the pioneering American nursing journal, *The Trained Nurse and Hospital Review*. In her letters and talks, Hawley described her work among the Cree people. She taught thirty-five children at the day school and worked as missionary nurse on the reserve. The language she employed to describe her experiences was rooted in popular rhetoric from nineteenth century colonial western travelogues, with its stories of 'Indian savages' and the wild west. Hawley repeatedly referred to herself as a "white medicine woman" who had come to the James Smith Reserve to help the Cree people. When a young mother from the reserve died, leaving behind young children, Hawley wrote a letter to her sister, which was later published in the American medical journal: "I cried Belle, I had lost one of my flock, one of my people, one of my red children."⁶³ And in another letter, she signed off stating, "Should I be silent, don't think I've been scalped, Your Indian sister."⁶⁴

Through her talks and published writings, Hawley painted a caricature of Indigenous representation for settler women. Hawley relied on colonial ideas of Indian primitiveness,

⁶¹ Saskatchewan Diocesan W.A. Minute Book, 1911-1913, 13 March 1913, GS-196, B117, A. I. 2, Minutes 1911-1914, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

⁶² Letter from Anna A. Hawley to J.D. Maclean, 29 June 1909, RG 10, Vol. 6284, File 601-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

⁶³ "The Indian Mission, Letter IV" *The Trained Nurse and Hospital Review* Vol. XLVII no. 6 (December 1911): 361.

⁶⁴ "The Indian Mission," *The Trained Nurse and Hospital Review* Vol. XLVII no. 2 (August 1911): 90.

describing Indigenous peoples as “graduates from the university of nature,” while she self-represented as a tireless white savior tending to her “red children” on the James Smith reserve. Although she exaggerated her missionary and nursing work through a kind of Western mythological lens, white female audiences welcomed her as a missionary speaker. There was always a willing audience for her colonial representations. Non-Indian audiences may have recognized Hawley’s inflated portrayals of Indigenous characteristics and her exaggerated self-portrayal as a fearless missionary worker, but she was embraced by the women’s missionary culture in Saskatchewan. Settler women were curious to hear about her professional experiences because it allowed them to preserve the imagined representation of what they determined Indianness to mean.

Missionary Hugh McKay from Round Lake was one of the few who challenged such simple representations of Indigenous peoples within the province. Speaking to a gathering of the Saskatchewan W.M.S. in 1915, he described to the settler women assembled at the provincial event a conversation he had had thirty-five years prior with an Indigenous elder. The elder told McKay that, when his people were camping near Regina, the ground had been white with snow when they went to bed. When they woke up in the morning, as far as the eye could see, the horizon was black with buffalo. Trying to articulate to settler women the once incredible resources available to the Indigenous peoples on the plains, McKay tried to broaden their collective understandings of Indigenous culture and economic lifeways. He described how First Nations peoples had affection for their deity, the Great Spirit, and denied that they were godless pagans. In the W.M.S. publication, the *Missionary Messenger*, McKay tried to explain that the Indian “possessed many traits of character that would put civilized people to shame and affirmed

that where we would give a dollar for charity, the Indian would give himself in personal helpfulness.”⁶⁵

McKay’s dedication in presenting Indigenous peoples in their full humanity and trying to steer the depiction of them away from a single-handed portrayal of the ‘Indian’ as ‘pagan,’ was a sort of double bind for the missionary. The tensions in the colonial project were evident, when in the same speech, he told of lives transformed because of Christian conversion and how the “spirit of Christ now rules,” in many of Indigenous peoples’ lives. His speech reflected both his desire to promote western Christianity and his conflicting desire to speak against the narrow-minded settler depictions of the ‘Indian.’

The racist assumptions about Indigenous peoples that circulated through women’s church meetings contributed to the mounting belief that settlers in Saskatchewan were the appropriate stewards over the land and the resources. The interest in studying about the ‘Indian’ in women’s church meetings fed imperialist longings for control and acquisition of prairie land. As Edward Said argues, “There is never interpretation, understanding, and then knowledge where there is no interest.”⁶⁶ Settler’s interest in Indigenous peoples epitomised their own longings to fully understand whose land they were dispossessing to rationalize their rapidly advancing settler state. Settlers were cognizant of the fact that they were overwhelming Indigenous lands as they seized homestead properties and constructed villages and towns across the prairie west. In 1915, the Regina Presbytery W.M.S. described a speech given by Catherine Motherwell. She stated to the church women, “Not only how very much worth while the work amongst our own Indians is, but also how truly it is our task, our duty, accepted as ours when we, the white race took

⁶⁵Saskatchewan Provincial Society Annual Meeting,” *The Missionary Messenger*, May 1915, 153, PCCA, Toronto.

⁶⁶ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2000), 170-171.

possession of land till then the exclusive possession of the red man.”⁶⁷ Missionaries were straightforward in their assessment that settlers owed a debt to the Indian for their takeover of the land. *The Presbyterian Record* in 1900 stated, the Canadian churches have committed to Indian mission work because first, “These people are heathen within our own country. In their weakness, poverty, and wretchedness, they are a Lazarus at our very own doors. Second, because they are the people of the land whose hunting grounds we have possessed and whose game we have destroyed. We have possessed ourselves of the best they had, and now they have a right to the best we have—the religion of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁸ In the first part of the twentieth century, missionaries were outspoken in their admission of colonial guilt. They publicly acknowledged that settlers had overrun Indigenous land yet argued that they were revoking the damage by giving them the Christian religion before the ‘Indian’ disappeared.

This expectation of disappearance began to recede amongst settlers as Indigenous peoples proved that they were not receding into oblivion. Mary MacKenzie, missionary at the Hurricane Hills mission, wrote how she had hosted a social on the reserve with forty-one Indians in attendance which had included some white neighbours from the nearby town of Wolseley. She wrote, “Our friends were not a little struck with the robust frames and intelligent faces of many of the young men. Indeed, our people look anything but a “dying race.”⁶⁹ Catherine Motherwell, speaking at the second annual meeting of the Regina Presbyterial W.M.S. at St. Andrew’s Church in Pense in 1915, presented numerical figures to the Anglo-Canadian women to prove that the ‘Indian race’ was not dying. In fact, their population were actually increasing. The secretary for

⁶⁷ WMS Minute Book Regina Presbyterian Presbyterial, 1907-1919, 27 October 1915, A. 381.V1.C 6a, FW 06, Woman's Missionary Society Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

⁶⁸ “Our Work Among the Indians of the Northwest Territories and British Columbia,” *The Presbyterian Record*, August 1900, 244.

⁶⁹ “From Mrs. McKenzie, Hurricane Hills, Wolseley,” *Foreign Missionary Tidings*, Presbyterian Church of Canada, May 1898, 19.

the Regina Presbytery summarized Motherwell's talk by challenging the Anglo-Canadian women, when she argued that "Our task is not to let them to die but to teach them to live. How are we performing our task?"⁷⁰ The church women's assessment was correct. The First Nations population in Saskatchewan, which had been steadily declining due to high rates of mortality from widespread poverty and disease, was at 6,380 in 1906, but the decline had begun to reverse as Indian Affairs officials reported a population close to 8000 in 1909.⁷¹

This knowledge prompted settlers to reimagine the domestication of Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan. The rhetoric of conquest, justified by gifting Christianity, combined with the awareness that Indigenous peoples were here to stay, provided the impetus for the colonial idea that they were now 'our Indians.' While Indigenous peoples still conveyed the threat of violence, most settlers began to perceive them as an inferior people to be pitied. Indigenous children in residential schools remained as the central recipients of white women's pity. It was through their material and financial philanthropy that these white women produced a cultural power which displayed them as generous, gracious, and spiritual women in the social makeup of the province. The missionary project of residential schools eased the guilt of Anglo-women. They had taken Indigenous land but reassured themselves that they were saving 'heathen' children from the 'wretchedness' of their Indigenous upbringings.

Indigenous Protestant women's auxiliary groups also formed throughout the province, especially in the northern reaches in the Diocese of Saskatchewan. The women's auxiliary functioned as another arm of the Christian church to bring Indigenous women to Protestant Christianity. Christianity had made inroads into Indigenous communities, alongside economic

⁷⁰ WMS Minute Book Regina Presbyterian Presbyterial, 1907-1919, 27 October 1915, A. 381.V1.C 6a, FW 06, Woman's Missionary Society Saskatchewan Synod Presbyterian fonds, LSA.

⁷¹ Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Allston: Fifth Press, 2005), 170.

and military imperialist ventures, complicating for historians how to untangle the threads of Christian faith from the forceful imposition of British colonialism. Since the early nineteenth century, the Anglican church had imparted Christianity among northern Indigenous communities and established mission sites during the fur trade across the Northwest. Their conversion tactics further cemented the introduction of residential schools in the late nineteenth century. Catherine Okanee, who had been adopted by W.A. missionary Annie Brown and had attended La Ronge Residential School, remarked how the Cree in the Diocese of Saskatchewan took easily to the white man's religion, and all the people in her family were good Anglicans.⁷² Historian Myra Rutherdale argued, "Historians and anthropologists have offered several explanations for (Indigenous) conversion, which range from the desire for more status and enjoyment of the ceremonies, to dissatisfaction with old ways and the belief that Christianity would empower the colonial subject."⁷³

Anglican missionary women in the northern reaches of the province worked vigorously to promote the women's auxiliary amongst Indigenous women. Organizing Secretary, Miss E.L. Newnham, travelled extensively across the diocese in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and met with W.A. branches that had formed amongst Indigenous women. In her travel diaries, she described visiting W.A. branches in locations like the Pas, Big Eddy, Sandy Lake, Red Pheasants, and the Narrows. In one instance she described how two women had travelled 155 miles by canoe to meet with Newnham where she passed out W.A. badges and Christian leaflets.⁷⁴ Indigenous W.A. women made roggans, a type of birch bark basket, which were

⁷² Catherine (Beatty) Okanee, Interview by Darcy Handy, 7 November 1985, Item Tape S-0896a & b, PAS, Regina.

⁷³ Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 118.

⁷⁴ Diary of E.L. Newnham, Letitia Agnes Newnham, GS-196, B117 A.IV.15, Letitia Agnes Newnham 1906-1921, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

collected by the missionaries and the W.A. organizers and sold in nearby towns and cities. The proceeds went to support missionary work in the Church of England. Rev. Edwards, from the La Ronge Residential School, noted how the W.A. women made birch bark handicrafts for the church that then missionary J.A. McKay sold in Prince Albert. Mrs. Green, a missionary worker at the same school, also noted how the Indian women made roggans in their tents and brought them to W.A. President Letitia Newnham who then sold them at local bazaars.⁷⁵



Figure 5.2 Letitia Newnham with Indigenous Women's Auxiliaries' moccasins for purchase. Jervois Newnham fonds, S-B 12, 073, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

⁷⁵ "Rev. Edwards to the Diocesan Dorcas Secretary," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, May 1912, 217, GSA, Toronto; "Miss Green to the General Corresponding Secretary," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, October 1908, 317-318, GSA, Toronto.

Through the sale of their cultural products, Indigenous women raised money for the missionary project at home. While the women likely had a myriad of complicated reasons for supporting Christian missions, which included residential schooling, some of the possible reasons may have been that many Indigenous women wanted to see their children educated and had hoped that the church-run residential schools would be an appropriate place of learning for them. Some Indigenous converts were devoted to the Anglican church and desired to see missionary progress. Others may not even have known where the sale of the proceeds went. Regardless, the W.A. provided Indigenous women with an acceptable space to produce their cultural and artistic expressions at a time when colonial impositions were rapidly limiting Indigenous peoples' cultural and political freedoms.

Missionaries recognized Indigenous handiwork as objects that they could package and sell to white audiences to further subsidize their evangelical ventures. Indigenous women's artistic materials morphed into a spectacle of 'authentic Indianness' amongst incoming settlers. Historian Katrina Phillips argues that "by the late nineteenth century, the growing sentimentalism for the apparently dominated and disappearing wilderness turned Native peoples and places into commodities."⁷⁶ There was a sense of nostalgia for the past as settlers flooded on to the prairies and the "commodification of Indianness"⁷⁷ allowed for settlers to hold onto a romantic idea of Indian primitiveness which they admired and longed for. But at the same time, they marginalized the very people who they marketed. As American Historian Philip Deloria argues, white settlers "desired Indianness, not Indians."⁷⁸ Settler engagement with Indigenous material art forms

⁷⁶ Katrina Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁸ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 90.

shaped both the white settler and Indigenous peoples.⁷⁹ It allowed for Anglos to feel close to the presence of ‘Indianness’ on the prairies while they were in the processes of land appropriation. At the same time, Indigenous women exercised a certain amount of control over the objects that were commodified for whites. Indigenous women determined the limits of their philanthropic engagement with missions. While they were appreciative of Indigenous women’s fundraising efforts and their commitment to the church, missionaries capitalized on the ‘primitiveness’ of the Indigenous objects as part of the appeal to market the products to white settlers. This entrenched the notion that Indigenous peoples did not fit into modern Canadian society but were relegated to the past as unmodern and irrelevant subjects.

The Limitations of Sentimentality

The Indian Residential School system rapidly expanded in the first two decades of the twentieth century. However, insufficient funding from the federal government and the church resulted in atrocious living conditions for students at the schools. As much as Protestant denominations maintained the fiction that residential schools were appropriately developing the children’s intellectual and physical well-being, administrators knew otherwise. A report from the Presbyterian National W.M.S. outlined, “Our schools during the past year have not had a sufficient maintenance grant to cover legitimate expenditures for 1920.”⁸⁰ And in 1923, the same women’s organization presented to the Presbyterian Assembly’s Home Mission Board regarding their administration of residential schools, with the opening statement, “Our Indian schools are

⁷⁹ Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 3.

⁸⁰ Indian Boarding Schools W.M.S., 79.182C, Box 9, Presbyterian Church in Canada Board of Home Missions fonds, UCCA, Toronto.

nearly all crowded beyond their capacity.” They then proceeded to address the vast needs of their denominational Indian schools across Western Canada to the members of the board.⁸¹

One of the many reasons that Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan failed children was that the women’s auxiliaries on the prairies had replaced the women’s philanthropic support in eastern Canada. In 1914, Indian mission work in the Canadian Presbyterian Church had shifted from being under the umbrella of the ‘foreign missions’ category to the ‘home mission work’ within the denomination. Now classified as ‘home missions,’ prairie settlers increasingly shared in organizing the charity for Indian missions from established churches out east. For example, the 1920 report from the committee on Indian work in the Diocese of Qu’Appelle, detailed that over the past year, the national Anglican W.A. body had contributed \$976 towards the budget for Gordon’s Residential School, while the Qu’Appelle diocesan W.A. had donated \$482.46. Although the W.A. on the national level was still providing significant financial support to the school, the gifting of clothing and other materials had shifted from the responsibility of the women in the east to the Anglo-Canadian women living within the Diocese of Qu’Appelle. This transferring of the volunteer work had not been beneficial to the schools. G. Nelson Dobie, Chairman of the Board wrote:

In my last report I quoted the Dominion Dorcas Secretary Treasurer’s expression of regret at having to take Gordon’s School children away from branches of WA in the East which had for years been clothing them, to give them to branches in the Diocese of Qu’Appelle, which were asking for more children; and while it was encouraging to know that interest in the Diocesan Indian School was on the increase in the Diocese, I could not help feeling that a certain amount of risk was incurred in these transfers. The Branches of the WA in

⁸¹ “Our Work in Canada,” *The Missionary Messenger*, May 1923, 135, PCCA, Toronto.

the East had long been established, while many in the West had just been formed, and the question was, “Would the enthusiasm be maintained?” In the principal centers, there is no doubt about the answer, but in some of the small sparsely populated prairie settlements and in some western towns the responsibilities assumed have not been taken seriously.⁸²

Many prairie Canadians did not have the financial means to support home mission work. A world-wide recession in 1912-1913 hurt the pockets of many households and then in 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War, raising funds for church missions had to compete with the war effort.⁸³ The Diocesan Bishop of Saskatchewan, J.A. Newnham wrote to missionary superiors in London, where he described his field as a “struggling, poor rural diocese comprised almost entirely of country parishes.” He explained that they had been seriously hurt financially because of the war. He stated that the wealth and prosperity of the west is merely “on paper,” and when the economic crash came before the war, people found themselves with quantities of real estate on their hands but with no cash in the bank they were unable to pay the taxes on their properties. Consequentially, the church suffered because parishioners struggled to give their tithes due to the economic downturn, and once the war broke out, settlers tended to prioritize their giving to the Red Cross and to the Patriotic War Fund with whatever extras they had left.⁸⁴

Writing about the W.A. branches in the Diocese of Saskatchewan, the Bishop’s sister, E. L. Newnham wrote, “some of the parishes want to give more but the local needs are high.”⁸⁵

⁸² Journal of the Twenty-Ninth Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Qu’Appelle, 2, 3, 4 June 1920, 51, R-705, Diocese of Qu’Appelle, PAS, Regina.

⁸³ Gregory P. Marchildon, “The Great Divide,” in *The Heavy Hand of History: Interpretating Saskatchewan’s Past*, ed. Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005), 54.

⁸⁴ Report for 1915, Diocese of Saskatchewan, J.A. Newnham, 19 January 1916, E-Series Mission Reports, 1914-1916, U.S.P.G., E series reports for Canada, Rhodes House Library, Oxford, England, <https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/59/canada-in-records-from-colonial-missionaries-1722-1952/access?documentId=6112>

⁸⁵ Diary of E.L. Newnham, Letitia Agnes Newnham, GS-196, B117 A.IV.15, Letitia Agnes Newnham 1906-1921, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon fonds, PAS, Regina.

Settlers sustained their interest in missionary work at home and abroad but had little financial offerings to allocate to the church in the early settler period.

When church women did donate goods and materials, like the W.A. branches in eastern Canada in the 1880s and 1890s, W.A. Saskatchewan women required constant reminders from their organizing secretaries to send items of quality to the Indian Residential Schools. Missionary administrators repeatedly informed prairie women not to send old items as it was a waste of money for the organizers and the schools. The W.A. organizers pleaded with Anglo-Canadian women to send only the best quality made of good materials in their donations. In 1926, the W.A. in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle reported some of the goods that were sent to Gordon's school included: clothing, quilts, tablecloths, serviettes, towels, aprons, scarves, toys, boots, socks, groceries, tea towels, pillowcases, and toques.⁸⁶ Bales full of second-hand items from the women were also sent to Day Stars and Fishing Lake reserves. Missionary principals relied on the women's auxiliary donations in Saskatchewan to support the myth that residential schools sufficiently provided for Indigenous children's material needs. Missionaries relied on this myth to dissuade students from attempting to flee the schools to return to live with their families on reserve. For example, in the early 1920s, First Nations children kept running away from Gordon's Residential School which was near Punnichy, Saskatchewan. Government officials reported that girls as young as seven kept trying to escape the school.⁸⁷ Principal H.W. Atwater from Gordon's wrote in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle Synod Journal for church readers in 1924 that all the reasons for truancy were merely frivolous, and that the children had been told by the

⁸⁶ Report of the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Qu'Appelle Diocesan Branch of the Women's Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, 1926, Diocese of Qu'Appelle Women's Auxiliary Printed Annual Reports 1921-1926, VIII 1. (c.), Women's Auxiliaries, R-705, Diocese of Qu'Appelle, PAS, Regina.

⁸⁷ Letter from H. W. Atwater to Duncan Campbell Scott, 2 January 1923, RG 10, Vol. 6309, File 654-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

government inspector, M. Christianson, “you have good clothes, good food, and are getting a good education, and I can find no reason for your absenting yourselves without leave.”⁸⁸

Missionary principals expected the children to be grateful for their institutionalization because of the ‘generous’ women’s auxiliary donations, which that year alone, valued a total of approximately five thousand dollars for Gordon’s school alone.

By the 1920s, changes in thinking about the relationship between the nation state, Indigenous peoples, and other non-Anglo foreigners in Saskatchewan began to intensify. Close to five thousand men from Saskatchewan lost their lives in the First World War and most of them were of Anglo-Canadian origin.⁸⁹ The war had generated a growing sense of Canadian nationalism, a feeling that ‘Canadianess’ was a separate identity from the British motherland. When the war ended in 1918, settlers in Saskatchewan grew increasingly fearful of “other” threats of foreignness within their young and growing nation beyond the realm of ‘Indianness.’ They began to consider the conceptual boundaries of what their modern nation state should look like. By taking Indigenous lands and turning the prairie space into agricultural homesteads for settlers, the foreignness of the prairie wilderness became reimagined, as did white settlers’ representation of the ‘foreign Indian.’

Anglo-Canadian women embraced the Christian challenge to tend to the ‘poor and pitiable heathens’ within their own province and took to the task of philanthropic giving to missions and residential schools. Through this process, the threat of potential violence from Indigenous peoples gave way to a new pacified image of Indigenous peoples. Not only did the government remove the threat of Indigenous peoples by forcing them onto isolated reserves and

⁸⁸ Journal of the Thirty-First Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Qu’Appelle, 27, 28, 29 February 1924, 79, R-705, Diocese of Qu’Appelle, PAS, Regina.

⁸⁹ James M. Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 10.

limiting their self actualization, particularly with increased force following the 1885 Northwest Resistance. But Anglo-Canadian women added to their marginalization by shapeshifting their representation of the 'Indian' from a 'heathen foreigner' living within their midst, to now, a forlorn people who required 'civilizing uplift'. In the 1921 publication, titled *The Planting of Our Faith* by the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church of Canada maintained, "The Indian population is now practically stationary, and since the government has gained their goodwill, they are no longer a menace to our country or our church."⁹⁰ Positioned as no longer a threat, Indigenous peoples were now in a liminal state of exploitability and intentionally positioned on the marginal edges of contemporary settler society during the interwar period.

Fears of the immigrant 'other' surpassed the threat of 'Indianness' in the twenties and thirties in Saskatchewan. The Ku Klux Klan took hold in Saskatchewan in the 1920s and gained popularity among Anglo-Canadians with their central goal of keeping Canada British and Protestant. In 1931, the Canadian census revealed that the majority of Saskatchewan residents were no longer of Anglo-Saxon origin, but came from Europe more broadly, with large numbers immigrating from Germany, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe.⁹¹ These changing demographics massively worried the Anglo-Canadian population in the province which prompted the rise of xenophobia, evident in the rise of the Klan. Many outspoken advocates in the province railed against the 'foreigners.' In the Diocese of Saskatchewan, George Exton Lloyd, who took over the role of Bishop when J.A. Newnham resigned in 1921, was one of the most outspoken critics in his attacks on non-Anglo-immigration to the province. Lloyd rallied against the continental

⁹⁰ *The Planting of the Faith: A Further Story of Our Missions* (Toronto: Women's Missionary Society Presbyterian Church in Canada, W.D., 1921) 258.

⁹¹ Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 11.

Europeans that arrived in the province. He called them ‘mongrels’ and in another letter addressed to Canadian clergyman, stated that Canada would suffer as a nation if it kept allowing “dirty, ignorant, garlic-smelling Continentals” to immigrate.⁹² Although some thought his language too extreme, many within the province agreed with his views. In an editorial to the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, one person wrote, “thousands of average men are undoubtedly sympathetic. It may even be that the bishop speaks for the majority.”⁹³ The depression in the 1930s led Canada to close its doors to immigration for several years and allowed outspoken advocates, like Lloyd, to feel a sense of triumph in their determination to fight for a British-oriented Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan was a province with deep-seated racism against non-Anglos persons. Yet the racism that emerged in the 1920s was not divorced from the land dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Racial ‘othering’ emerged from the imperialist ventures of the British empire. Initially it was directed towards Indigenous peoples who were in possession of the land that the colonial British state considered desirous. Colonial culture in the nineteenth century across the Northwest packaged discourses of racial thinking which Anglo-Canadians continually reformed and reworked to mark their boundaries for an emerging province. Anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler reminds us that racism is fundamental to colonial categories, but there needs to be an investigation of the ways that racism links people through the affinities they share, even when their other categories of identity-making like gender, class, or localities do not align.⁹⁴

The co-mingling of race and religion was not limited to Saskatchewan, but it formed a part of a broader nation building project in the interwar period. The religious threads throughout

⁹² Chris Kitzan, “Preaching Purity in The Promised Land: Bishop Lloyd and the Immigration Debate,” in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, eds. R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 301.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁹⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 24-25.

missionary culture of saving the ‘heathen’ and the religious enthusiasm of prejudice against non-Anglo-foreigners are an important linkage that connects the racist roots in Canadian Protestant churches. The construction of whiteness in the growing Canadian nation state was deeply shaped by Protestant discourses. The belief that white Anglo-Canadian evangelicals had the correct version of Christianity to impart to others and then to protect it for the sake of Canada’s future, marked religious-racial identity as a dual claim to full subjecthood within the nation. The vision of the ‘right’ national community formed around white British Christianity. Those on the peripheral edges of the racial-religious order were cast as opposition and marginalized across the colonial divide. Framed out of imagined concern, sometimes for the eternal state of the ‘heathen’ subject or the ‘health’ of the future nation state, race and religion overlapped to form Canadian identity.

Conclusion

By the 1920s, once Anglo-Canadian women had reimagined Indigenous peoples as creatures of pity that required their sympathy and posed no threat of violence, settlers could now ignore their existence within the province. Historian Bill Waiser argues that “Saskatchewan Indians during the 1920s were an administered people,” with the federal government controlling every aspect of their lives: stamping out their cultural and religious practices, limiting their economic prosperity with the pass system on reserves, and removing and isolating their children into the expanding Indian Residential School system.⁹⁵ Purposely kept distanced from settler towns and cities, Indigenous persons were now a marginalized peoples that were perceived as an inconvenient obstacle to the development of economic and cultural potential in the emerging province.

⁹⁵ Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, 242.

The shaping of this racialized Indigenous downtrodden subject figure was directly connected to the making of white womanhood in Saskatchewan. Claims to proper white Christian womanhood was a performance built on the compassionate emotions, where the colonial subject necessitated white women's emotional and material interventions. White womanhood's self-constructions of racial superiority was a key mechanism in keeping Indigenous peoples 'othered.' The colonial subject's racial assimilation into the body politic was dependant on white women's material and spiritual offerings. Without them they would languish in 'heathenism' and obscurity. Speaking to the Wadena W.A. in 1925, E. Thompson, the secretary treasurer, described how she had exchanged letters back and forth with a First Nations boy named Colin at Gordon's Residential school. He told Thompson that he had kept all of her letters and said, "You don't know what it was to know that we had your prayers and letters."⁹⁶ White Protestant women positioned themselves as the bearers of hope, bringing Christian knowledge to the 'heathen' world, the unfortunate who did not come from a Christian heritage.

White women believed that they uplifted and strengthened the children through their affective sustenance. They formed their self-knowledge around emotional architectures of religious kinship, their 'care' and 'love' for Indian mission work which was motivated by a Christian sisterhood in the body of Christ. Particularly important to them was their sentimentality directed in material form, providing 'comforts' for Indigenous children within the Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan. Their spiritual and material missionary labours gave white women a fabricated sense of superior personhood. It undergirded the genocidal system of Indian residential schooling that was built on the assumption of the inferiority of Indigenous peoples.

⁹⁶ Minutes of Meeting of the Pelly Rural Deanery, 11 September 1925, Diocese of Qu'Appelle Women's Auxiliary, Pelly Deanery, Minute and Account Book, 1921-1929, VIII. 1. (n.), Women's Auxiliaries, R-705, Diocese of Qu'Appelle, PAS, Regina.

They may have promised to extend missionary compassion based on their Christian belonging in the family of God, a concept that was prevalent across women's religious discourses in the twentieth century, but the emerging social order pointed otherwise.

Conclusion:

Resisting Sympathy: Edward Ahenakew and the Rise of Indigenous Political Organizing

In 1918, Cree intellectual and Anglican cleric Edward Ahenakew gave an address to a meeting of the Anglican Diocese of Saskatchewan Women's Auxiliary on the need for expanded education for Indigenous peoples. He described how Indigenous peoples needed to transition from a nomadic life to one that aligned with the new social and economic paradigm of the Canadian west. He stated, "Education will give the Indian self-respect—it will give him self-support" and in the same sentence, he iterated that the Indian will also "blush to the roots of his hair if you offer him for his own, personal use anything that savors of charity."¹ Ahenakew understood the tension between looking to education as a means to alleviate the impoverishment of Indigenous communities in the Canadian west during the twenties and the charitable impulses which undergirded schooling across the British empire. He attributed importance to his own missionary education and desired to see improvement in the lives of Indigenous Canadians, yet his position as a Cree man in Saskatchewan who experienced the injustices of colonial policy made him acutely aware of the contrary nature of the imperial mission. Familiar with Britain's colonial self-image as a humanitarian empire which delivered civilization to hapless charges, Ahenakew sought to divorce colonial education from this preconceived ideology that Indigenous peoples were pitiable creatures who required 'civilizing' uplift.

As one of the first Indigenous activists in the early twentieth century to organize for the self-determining rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada, Ahenakew was also a Christian convert who was deeply embedded in the Anglican missionary community in the Diocese of

¹ Edward Ahenakew, "Kindly Yet Severe Criticism of Treatment of Indians is Voiced by Native Clergyman," *Saskatoon Daily Star*, 1 June 1918, F 200, Acc. 720, II Miscellaneous, 3, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS.

Saskatchewan. His overlapping identities in both worlds enabled him to challenge the sentimental underpinnings of missionary culture and expose how the humanitarian justifications behind empire enabled white supremacist beliefs. Ahenakew's opposition to the sentimental narratives propagated by white Christian women in Canada revealed how Indigenous peoples thwarted master narratives which aimed to reduce their humanity by emphasizing the trope of the 'needy' Indian.

This dissertation fights against portraying the victimization of Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan by examining the ways Ahenakew contested white women's racial representation of Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan. While white women self-fashioned themselves as generous, caring, and moral, Indigenous persons refused the insubordination and resisted the categorical placement of the miserable creature in the white imagination. By focusing on Edward Ahenakew's relationship to the Women's Auxiliary in the Diocese of Saskatchewan, I illustrate how his conversion to Christianity provided him with access to missionary spaces where he illuminated the power dynamics within the missionary project and then challenged ideas of white supremacy amongst Anglo-Canadians. By resisting the normalization of the 'poor Indian' subject, he assisted in creating the first modern organized political resistance movement for Indigenous peoples in Canada in the twentieth century.

White Women and Indigenous Ministers

Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Women's Auxiliary in the Diocese of Saskatchewan supported the diocese by paying for the salary of a missionary devoted to Indian mission work. In April 1908, Bishop J.A. Newnham requested that the W.A. financially sponsor Mr. Leffler, a missionary working amongst Indigenous communities in the diocese. The women agreed to this arrangement and pledged to contribute \$150 per annum towards his salary. Leffler

became the women auxiliary's "special missionary to the Indians." They supported him for two years before he left for an extended leave. Upon his departure, the bishop requested that the women transfer their support and pay for the salary of Cree missionary Edward Ahenakew. The women agreed to pay the entirety of Ahenakew's salary, at \$700 per annum, which was later raised to \$800 in 1914 to match his salary to other Anglican missionaries in Saskatchewan.² From 1912 until 1918, Ahenakew's missionary salary was paid for by the diocesan W.A. The women's enthusiasm for supporting the missionary work of Ahenakew provided him with the opportunity to regularly interact with Anglo-Canadian women. He gave speeches at their annual meetings and delivered missionary updates on his mission work in the *Letter Leaflet*, the Anglican women's monthly periodical. Although he took a short break from missionary work in 1918, Ahenakew maintained his connections to the W.A. over the next three decades.

Born in the Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation (Sandy Lake Reserve) in Saskatchewan in 1885, Ahenakew lived with his family on the reserve until 1896. That year he began attending the Church of England's Emmanuel College Residential School, located on the outskirts of Prince Albert, until 1903. In 1905, he moved to Toronto, where he studied theology at Wycliffe College before moving back to Emmanuel College where, in his absence, the diocese had converted the Indian Residential School into an Anglican theological training college in 1910.³ The college had been in operation for only three years before the church moved the institution to Saskatoon in 1913.

² Saskatchewan Diocesan W.A. Minute Book, 1914-1916, 29 July 1914, GS-196, B117, A. I. 3, Minutes 1914-1916, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon, PAS, Regina.

³ For literature on Ahenakew's life and writings see, Tasha Beeds, "Rethinking Edward Ahenakew's Intellectual Legacy: Expressions of *nêhiyawî-mâmitonêyihcikan* (Cree Consciousness or Thinking)," in *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*, eds. Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 119-144; David Miller, "Edward Ahenakew's Tutelage by Paul Wallace: Reluctant Scholarship, Inadvertent Preservation," in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, eds. Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 249-273; Deanna Reder, *Autobiography As Indigenous Intellectual Tradition: Cree and Métis Âcimisowina* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2022), ch.. 3 & 4.

Church officials had spotted Ahenakew's strong intellect and his ability to collaborate with people even from an early age. In an interview in 1985, Catherine Okanee (née Beatty) a Cree woman from La Ronge, explained how when missionaries in the north found an intelligent Indigenous boy, the only career option before him was to become a missionary.⁴ Okanee had been adopted by missionary Annie Brown, a close confidante of Ahenakew. This career trajectory for Indigenous boys exemplified Ahenakew's life path. British missionary John Hines wrote to church officials in England that he had ordained twenty-seven young men as deacons in St. Alban's church in Prince Albert in 1910. Ahenakew had been one of them. Hines wrote, "He is a general favorite with all who know him, from the bishop and professors downward."⁵ In 1912, Ahenakew completed his studies and became an ordained priest in the Church of England and graduated with a Licenciante in Theology. Fluent in both English and Cree, he worked from 1912 to 1918, as an Anglican missionary and as a day school teacher across eight different First Nations reserves in Saskatchewan supported by his W.A. salary.

To Protestant women in the Diocese of Saskatchewan, Edward Ahenakew was evidence of the value of white women's religious philanthropy that extended the civilizing mission in the province. White women's financial support of Ahenakew's mission work tied them directly to the spread of Christianity amongst Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan. As the official historian of the Church of England wrote, "God raised up Christian ladies with private means to work in his vineyard."⁶ Ahenakew's work was an important part of women's religious outreach. The W.A's annual report in 1912 listed that Ahenakew's missionary work for that year would reach the

⁴ Catherine (Beatty) Okanee, Interview by Darcy Handy, 7 November 1985, Item Tape S-0896a & b, PAS, Regina.

⁵ Letter from Rev. J. Hines, 30 September 1910, Annual Letters of Missionaries, 1909-1910, Reel 44, C.M.S. Archive, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

⁶ Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society* (C.M.S., 1899), vols. 3, 369, in Billie Melman, *Women's Orients, English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918, Sexuality, Religion, and Work* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 33.

‘heathens’ at Jack Fish Lake which included Moosomin’s reserve, Thunderchild’s reserve, and Island Lake in the district of the Onion Lake mission.⁷ Although the women missionary society’s central task was to evangelize women and children at home and around the world, the diocesan W.A. expanded their evangelical efforts by supporting Ahenakew’s ministry.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the C.M.S. operated on the assumption that Indigenous Christian ministers would facilitate the growth of the missionary project so they committed themselves to building up and supporting Indigenous clerics in the Northwest.⁸ The W.A. was the first female church organization in the province to champion the efforts of a male Indigenous missionary through their financial donations. Ahenakew’s conversion and missionary enthusiasm represented the success of white Christian women’s philanthropic mobilization. He became a showcase for the W.A. regarding the redemptive potential of the Indigenous subject. He demonstrated to the larger Canadian Protestant church about the vital role white women could contribute to improving the Indigenous race. As historian Peggy Pascoe articulates, “native helpers were living proof of the transforming power of female moral authority.”⁹ White women believed they held the key to reforming Indigenous lives because of their gender ideology and Christian influence. These factors became the fabric of their imagined superiority.

Furthermore, exercising ownership of Ahenakew was part of white women signalling their superiority over him as a brown man in the emerging settler colonial state. As settlers were territorially remaking the province in the first two decades of the twentieth century, there was still a sense of fragility in legitimizing the colonial project. Cultural theorist Mary Douglas

⁷ Report of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Saskatchewan Diocesan Branch of the Women’s Auxiliary, 1912, GS-196, B117, A. III.1 Annual Reports, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon, PAS, Regina.

⁸ Derek Whitehouse-Strong, ““Because I Happen to be a Native Clergyman”: The Impact of Race, Ethnicity, Status, and Gender on Native Agents of the Church Missionary Society in the Nineteenth Century Canadian Northwest” (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2004), 62.

⁹ Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 113.

argues that “Margins are dangerous.”¹⁰ As Anne McClintock explains, “Societies are most vulnerable at their edges, along the tattered fringes of the known world.”¹¹ Northern Saskatchewan was in the process of transitioning from a colonial backwater into a modern province with urban centers in the first two decades of the twentieth century. White women’s perception that they had secured the racial majority, along with the comforts of security that come with that power, were still in flux. Needing to exert their gendered power, white women maintained a sense of control over colonized men and assured their racial dominance within colonial systems. White women were below white men in a patriarchal settler society but placed themselves above the category of racialized colonial subjects. One of the ways that white women exercised their gendered power over Ahenakew was in their possessiveness. He was ‘their’ missionary, working to eliminate the ‘heathen’ world. As well, the W.A. women employed a gendered affective strategy which they took pity concerning the obstacles in his missionary work which he communicated to the women.

In the 1917 Annual Report of the diocesan Women’s Auxiliary, Ahenakew reported on his work at Onion Lake, Island Lake, and further north. The report stated, “Mr. Ahenakew is our own missionary, and we were delighted to have him with us to tell of his work. I am sure that after hearing of his many difficulties our sympathy will go out to him in a most substantial way. His loyal devotion to his work and charges, and the simple statement of his worries and discouragements, and also of the renewed hope and encouragement that had come to him went straight to the heart of every W.A. member, I am sure.”¹² W.A. women leaned heavily into

¹⁰ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 63 in Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), 24.

¹¹ McClintock, 24.

¹² Report of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Saskatchewan Diocesan Branch of the Women’s Auxiliary, 1917, GS-196, B117, A. III.1 Annual Reports, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon, PAS, Regina.

sentimentality when they heard of Ahenkew's missionary grievances. The women borrowed imperial rhetoric, when they communicated their pained affective sentiments for the challenges he faced in reaching 'heathen' souls. Invested in Ahenakew's work, white Christian women contributed to the diminishing of the Indigenous subject in the settler mind through the dual process of claiming him as their own and by directing their imperialistic grief towards him in the difficult task of converting his fellow natives.



Figure 7.1 From left to right, Edward Ahenakew, Elizabeth Matheson, J.R. Matheson, with others. Jervois Newnham fonds, S-B 12, 115, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina.

Yet Ahenakew was undeterred. From his first official correspondence with the women's auxiliary organization, he used his missionary platform to resist the displays of sentimentality white women thrust upon him and Indigenous peoples. Both as a Christian believer and as a Cree individual rooted in his familial and community traditions, his resilience and adaption to exist in both worlds gave him what Métis scholar, Joe Couture calls "a pluridimensional state of being."¹³ This enabled Ahenakew, in a creative sense, to counter the missionary paternalism that he faced from the W.A. as a Cree Christian in the early twentieth century. Already as a young student at Emmanuel College Residential School in 1905, he resisted the racial prescriptions that were imposed upon him from colonial officials and missionaries. In an essay he authored that was published in the W.A.'s *Letter Leaflet* for white female readers, he challenged the depictions of Victorian racialism by writing "if any person despises us because our colour does not quite suit his fancy, depend on it, he is not half as great a man as he thinks he is."¹⁴

Turning to the topic of the outbreak of the Russian-Japanese war that had broken out in 1905, he suggested that the Russians naively underestimated the Japanese based on the narrowminded assumption that they were racially superior because of their supposed whiteness. Ahenakew argues "Why, his face is yellow. What can a person with such a yellow face do? I cannot tell you, but I'm sure the Russians can. Therefore, we do not want to bother our heads about our natural colour."¹⁵ Emphasizing the arbitrary nature of race-based arguments, he then directed the topic towards his own people stressing, the opinion that Indigenous peoples seek to become "independent, brushing shoulder to shoulder with the best men of the land."¹⁶ Wrestling

¹³ Joe Couture, "Explorations in Native Knowing," in *The Cultural Maze: Complex Questions on Native Destiny in Western Canada*, ed. John W. Friesen (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1991), 63.

¹⁴ "Indian Work," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, April 1905, 169, GSA, Toronto.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

with the ideas of political liberties from a young age, Ahenakew was frustrated with the political restrictions on Indigenous self-determination and the marginalization from the imposition of the oppressive colonial policies of the Canadian government. He was processing his views regarding racial evolutionary hierarchies which he would challenge in multiple ways in the subsequent years.

Evolving Critic of Sympathy

Once Ahenakew became the formal W.A. missionary in 1912, he fashioned his audience of white Christian women as a space to further tease out themes of Indigenous resistance. In 1918, he gave a talk at the Saskatchewan W.A. deanery meetings on the difficulties with the federal system of Indian education. He explained how the influx of white settlers created a completely new economic and social template for life in western Canada for Indigenous peoples. He argued for the inherent value of education and expressed his conviction that “knowledge is power.” However, he chastised the government for their poorly executed educational system for Indigenous children within the nation. He stated to the W.A. women, “Over ten reserves west of Battleford have only two or three schools among them. The boarding schools neither meet the requirements nor are supposed to.”¹⁷

Ahenakew pointed his direct accusations at the federal government for their failure to provide adequate funding for Indian education. It was not lost on him or to the women present that he was clearly stating that the church-run project of extending a humanitarian education to their colonized charges was an abject failure. He outlined how every year he believed there was a noticeable deterioration in the health and moral character of Indigenous peoples on the prairies. The *Saskatoon Daily Star* described his talk as a “kindly, yet severe criticism of treatment of

¹⁷ Edward Ahenakew, “Kindly Yet Severe Criticism of Treatment of Indians is Voiced by Native Clergyman,” *Saskatoon Daily Star*, 1 June 1918, F 200, Acc. 720, II Miscellaneous, 3, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS.

Indians.”¹⁸ Ahenakew was dependent on the women’s support for his livelihood and had committed his loyalty to the evangelical church, but his beliefs in Christian truth-telling and its beliefs in the inherent equality of man gave him freedom to exist in both his Creeness and Christianity. This duality provided him agency to confront harmful colonial policy. Yet he continued to walk a careful line in his condescension of the church’s treatment of Indigenous peoples to avoid any disruption to his career.

In 1918, Ahenakew left his missionary posting to study medicine at the University of Alberta at the age of thirty-three. The W.A. provided Ahenakew with a bursary to complete his studies but in his second year of schooling he became seriously ill with stomach ulcers and had to abandon his medical studies. He moved to Chief Thunderchild’s reserve northwest of Battleford, where W.A. missionary Annie Brown, a widow, following the death of her Cree husband James Brown, nursed him back to health. While he was convalescing at Thunderchild’s, he spent his evenings interviewing Chief Thunderchild, recording the elder’s oral memories by putting them down on paper.¹⁹ Around this same period, he began to formulate the fictional character of Old Keyam, who functioned as a semi-autobiographical figure for Ahenakew to reflect on his intersections of beliefs, the negative impacts of colonial Christianity, and his political ambitions with Indigenous organizing. Historian David Miller asserts, “Ahenakew created Keyam, in part, to get around the church’s censure of his political activities and its attempts to strangle his political voice.”²⁰ Through the literary figure of Old Keyam, Ahenakew resisted British colonial imposition, honoured his Cree traditional knowledge, and advocated for the equality of Indigenous peoples. Ahenakew struggled to get his work published. The *Journal*

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Reder, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, 82.

²⁰ Miller, *Edward Ahenakew’s Tutelage* by Paul Wallace, 254.

of *American Folklore* published one of his articles, titled “Cree Trickster Tales” in 1929 but his monographed collection went unpublished until the 1970s.²¹

However, because of Ahenakew’s close connection to the W.A., the women’s monthly periodical the *Letter Leaflet* became the first publication to print one of his chapters in 1927, titled, “Oo-pu-wa-mi-wuk, or Men Who Dream.” Challenging missionary concerns for heathendom, Ahenakew made it evident that Anglo-Canadians lacked an understanding of Cree systems of knowledge. His writings subtly communicated his condemnation of a British missionary culture built on their sense of superiority. No missionary had ever taken Cree spirituality seriously. It was in their opinion nothing more than heathen superstition. Ahenakew explained, “The Indian had to cast it aside completely when adopting Christianity. It was of the devil. The fact that it had fed the natural religious instinct of a nation for a thousand years is nothing...it was all branded as being against Christianity.”²² He challenged white Anglo Protestant accusations that Cree spirituality was a demonic and sinister religion by sharing the Cree teaching practice of a young man’s spiritual encounter. When a boy reached puberty, elders sent him to the top of a sacred hill where he received a spiritual visitation. After communicating with the other-worldly presence, the boy became a man, an oo-pu-wa-mi-wuk, or one who dreams. Ahenakew wrote, “Some of the most beautiful prayers to God are made on those occasions. Life and health are asked for.”²³ In Cree belief, the boy’s sacred vision marked his passage into adulthood.

Connections with a spiritual presence beyond the realm of Christian epistemology frightened missionaries. They mistakenly labelled the practice as “conjuring.” Methodist

²¹ Miller, *Edward Ahenakew’s Tutelage* by Paul Wallace, 249.

²² Oo-pu-wa-mi-wuk, or Men Who Dream,” *The Living Message*, Church of England, December 1927, 399-402, GSA, Toronto.

²³ Ibid.

missionary Egerton Ryerson Young in his 1897 monograph, *On the Indian Trail*, wrote about Indigenous conjurers in his missionary text, depicting them as enemies in a metaphysical battle against Christianity.²⁴ This idea was widespread amongst Christian missionaries. Revered William Duncan of the Church of England, in his encounters with Tsimshian peoples on the west coast of Canada, described their religious ceremonies as “horrid fabrication of lies.” Shamans were “sinister,” dancing was “frivolous”, and the potlatch ceremony was “wasteful.”²⁵ Yet the publishing of Ahenakew’s writings communicated a wider picture of Cree cosmology and ethics, detailing the beauty in his traditions and the humanity in Cree philosophical worldview, despite its differences from western Christianity. Ahenakew’s literary engagement with the W.A.’s periodical gave him a religious space in which to confront missionary renderings of Cree knowledge systems as wicked ‘heathen’ practices. Disrupting white Canadian’s depiction of what represented evil, Ahenakew engaged in a radical act by bringing beauty to what Christians perceived as ‘darkness.’ He refused to subjugate his Cree values to the settler conception of Indigenous spiritually as a malicious practice.

In addition to his literary goals, Ahenakew also held political aspirations: to participate in an Indigenous resistance movement to protest the oppressive policies of the Canadian colonial state. In 1906, the federal government began to adjust the terms of reserve land sales with amendments to the Indian Act. In 1911, further amendments gave the state full control over the selling and leasing of reserve lands that were located near urban centers to facilitate settler expansion. In 1918, the government amended the act again to allow the selling of any reserve land for the sake of building public works, like rail lines, highways, or settler infrastructure. The

²⁴ Egerton R. Young, *On the Indian Trail and Other Stories of Missionary Work among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1897), 182-187.

²⁵ Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties That Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 89.

racial injustice behind these land policies sparked the initiation of a modern organized Indigenous political resistance movement in Canada. The League of Indians was founded by Frederick Ogilvie Loft, a Kanyen'kehà:ka (Mohawk) from the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve. Loft became its first president and began encouraging First Nations men across the nation to join. He made clear the aims of the League, which were "to claim and protect the rights of all Indians in Canada by legitimate and just means; second, absolute control in retaining possession or dispensation of our lands."²⁶ The League, which sought to collectively organize for Indigenous demands, began to take hold in Ontario and then spread westwards into the prairie provinces and British Columbia. A Western Association of Indians was formed in 1925.

In 1920, in an address given by Ahenakew at the annual meeting of the Diocese of Saskatchewan's W.A. in Prince Albert, he informed the women about the newly created League. He shared his sympathy for the organization and his desire to participate in the pan-Indigenous movement. In the first part of his speech to the Anglo-Canadian women, he outlined the contributions that Indigenous men had made to the allied victory in the First World War. He articulated in detail their exceptional military accomplishments, their philanthropic donations to war funds, and their self-sacrificial willingness to fight on the front lines beside their Euro-Canadian compatriots. Recognizing that living under white supremacy would not serve as an acceptable impulse for Indigenous activism, he relied on the colonial script that the Indian was once a 'childlike ward' on a path towards full assimilation. Indigenous participation in the Great War had proven that they were ready for full citizenship within the nation state. Ahenakew stated, "some of us had outgrown the status of children, that we have that in us which if developed and cultivated will be of value to the country, and that a time is coming, or has come,

²⁶ Peter Kulchyski, "A Considerable Unrest": F.O. Loft and the League of Indians," *Native Studies Review* 4 no. 1&2 (1988): 101.

when many that have advanced so far are, if so they desire, to be permitted to take upon themselves the full responsibilities and privileges of citizenship.”²⁷

In the last ten minutes of his speech, Ahenakew described how he believed the League would assist the self-determining aspirations of Indigenous peoples and communities. Careful not to appear disloyal to the king and country, he wrote how the tone of the League was “good, wise, and temperate” and “in earnest cooperation with the government and loyalty to the persons of King George.”²⁸ He then proceeded to outline the aims of the organization, which included: meetings where First Nations interests would be represented, better educational facilities for their children, improvements to the health of their communities, perpetuation of the memory of those who fought on the frontlines, and lastly, political representation at the federal level. Concerning the last point, he wrote, “a committee from the House of Commons might be deputed to meet our representatives whenever any legislation important to ourselves is being made.”²⁹ Ahenakew described the movement as an “awakening.” He recognized that there was a paradigmatic shift in Indigenous awareness and a new determination for political resistance so that Indigenous peoples could express their grievances against the colonial order.

Displeased with the growing organized resistance, the Department of Indian Affairs refused to cover the costs of sending the Indigenous delegates to the League’s assembly. However, Ahenakew convinced the W.A. women that the League would benefit the ‘childlike wards,’ and they agreed to subsidize the costs. In September 1920, three months after Ahenakew gave his talk to the Anglo Christian women, Anglican missionary Annie Brown on

²⁷ “Address Delivered by the Reverend E. Ahenakew, At the Annual Meeting of the Women’s Auxiliary Held in the City of Prince Albert, Sask., on Wednesday June 16, 1920,” F 200, Acc. 720, II Miscellaneous, 3, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Thunderchild's reserve wrote to the W.A. that Ahenakew had been on their reserve in the last week talking to the people about the League of Indians. She stated that as a national body representing Indigenous peoples it will take up the issue of improving education for their children. Optimistically, she wrote, "we hope a good deal of good will come from this League, in the way of advancement for the natives."³⁰ Anglo-Canadian Christian women perceived themselves to be allies of 'the Indian' and they celebrated civic movements that appeared to be uplifting for the Indian character. White female Protestants wanted to envision themselves as enthusiastic partners in any missionary civilizing ventures. However, they conveniently overlooked the subservience that they had imposed on Indigenous peoples through their religious-racialized framing of them as fallen 'heathens.'

In his efforts to attain political citizenship and cultural respect for Indigenous peoples, Ahenakew was able to quietly map out a different trajectory with the help of the evangelical sympathy that was extended towards him by white women. With commanding self-worth, he accepted the Anglo-Canadian women's financial support and their keen interest in him and translated their offerings of sentimentality into his own vision for Indigenous growth and self-determination. At the same time, he maintained a fierce loyalty to the Anglican church. In 1921, the W.A. purchased Ahenakew a printing press from which he produced a mimeographed newsletter for Cree Anglicans in the Cree language titled, *The Cree Monthly Guide*. He maintained this publication until 1961. In a letter of thanks to the W.A. President, Eleanor Matheson, Ahenakew wrote, "I feel that a wonderful instrument of good has been placed in my

³⁰ "Extract of Letter of Mrs. Brown of Thunderchild's Reserve," *Letter Leaflet*, Church of England, November 1920, 389, GSA, Toronto.

hands...I am sure the press will prove to be as great an influence in moulding public opinion among the Indians as it is among the white people.”³¹

The Cree Monthly Guide encouraged Indigenous peoples to embrace Christianity, but the production of the guide also coincided with Ahenakew’s literary flourishing during the twenties. He compiled Thunderchild’s oral stories, created the literary figure of Old Keyam who spoke out against state oppression, and completed an autobiographical novel titled *Black Hawk* rooted in Cree epistemology. He straddled two ideological worlds, first as a devoted Anglican and second, as a Cree scholar. One embraced Christianity and the other contributed to Cree history, language, and advocacy work for Indigenous rights and self-determination. His participation in the League and his literary works functioned as evidence that colonial tensions existed. He refused to abandon his Cree culture, kinship, and communal traditions. At the same time, he was deeply embedded in his Christian faith. Ahenakew found room in Christianity for both his Cree identity and new spaces of religious encounter, tying himself to Anglo-Canadian Protestants and their missionary culture but rejecting their racialized pity birthed from white supremacy.

Race and Christian Brotherhood

In 1923, Ahenakew returned to missionary work in the Diocese of Saskatchewan after his pause to pursue medicine. The Church of England’s avowal that they highly valued Indigenous missionary work in Canada was more rhetoric than reality. On his return to the mission field, Ahenakew purchased a vehicle since he had to travel far distances within the diocese over the cold winter months to evangelize multiple Indigenous communities. The virulent Bishop Lloyd, who sought to “keep Canada British and Christian” sharply rebuked Ahenakew for his purchase. He thought it was both unnecessary and opulent, even though white missionaries owned

³¹ Report of the Sixteenth Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Diocesan Branch of the Women’s Auxiliary, 1921, GS-196, B117, A. III.1 Annual Reports, Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of Saskatoon, PAS, Regina.

vehicles. Ruth Matheson Buck, the daughter of Anglican missionary J.R. Matheson, remarked that Lloyd did not respect Indigenous clergy nor had little interest in Indigenous mission work.³² Although Ahenakew was a devoted Christian furthering Protestant missionary work, church officials did little to acknowledge his value to the denomination even though they preached about the bonds of Christian brotherhood and the lack of racial distinction in the kingdom of God.

Back at work in the mission field by the early twenties, Ahenakew coupled his missionary work with political activism and advocated against the state of Indigenous education. In 1923, in the same notebook where he had penned the stories of Chief Thunderchild, he handwrote a letter to the Department of Indian Affairs, signed by the Chief. Ahenakew and Chief Thunderchild's letter hinted at the birth of Indigenous political organizing across the nation, asserting how a "new spirit" was arising amongst Indigenous peoples regarding the education of their children. The letter pointed out that one of the guaranteed promises of the Federal Government in the signing of Treaty 6 in 1876 was the education of First Nations children. The treaty had assured the chief that a school would be constructed on his reserve. However, in 1923 there was still no school and the Indian agents were collaborating with missionaries sending children from Thunderchild's reserve away to Indian residential schools. Angry with the conditions at the residential schools for their children, the letter detailed, "it is not natural, it seems artificial and the fruit so far of the boarding schools in our part of the country has not justified the heartache. More of the ex-pupils have died of consumption, partly because of the strict discipline and partly because of the sickness of tuberculous being lodged in the houses in which they are kept."³³ Thunderchild's appeal convinced the Department of Indian Affairs to

³² Letter from Edward Ahenakew to Bishop George Exton Lloyd, June 1923, Ahenakew's Letter to Bishop Lloyd, F 200, Acc. 720, II Miscellaneous, 5, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS.

³³ Typed copy of a letter by Chief Thunderchild to the Department of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 1923, F 200, Acc. 720, II Miscellaneous, 6, Ruth M. Buck Fonds, PAS.

finally agree to open an Anglican day school on the reserve. The department agreed to pay the teacher salary and provide the classroom equipment. The band took out 250 dollars from their interest funds and purchased the lumber. The men from the reserve constructed the school, which was completed in 1924.³⁴ One year after its opening, Bishop Lloyd, drawing on racial stereotypes, remarked, “thirty children that on the first day were crawling around the floor, spitting and fighting like cats and dogs, are now clothed and in their right mind.”³⁵ Little ‘heathens’ disturbed Bishop Lloyd’s image of a white British Canada.

In the twenties, while employed as an Anglican missionary in Saskatchewan, Ahenakew became the vice-President of the Western League of Indians. The League was made up of Indigenous men from across Alberta and Saskatchewan. As a testament to how the church and state worked in tandem to achieve similar aims for the maintenance of empire, senior officials from the Anglican church asked Ahenakew to step down from the vice-presidency of the Western League after several years spent in the position. When he was in Ottawa speaking on behalf of the League to the Department of Indian Affairs he had a meeting with fellow Saskatchewan cleric, Archdeacon Walter Burd. Burd informed Ahenakew that he needed to concern himself strictly with church matters and must discontinue his work with the League. Anti-colonial struggles were not in the interests of the church in Saskatchewan during the interwar period. Disheartened, but not wanting to forego his missionary career, Ahenakew resigned from the League. Stan Cuthand, a fellow Indigenous cleric, remarked that Ahenakew attended the League’s meetings in 1933 but

³⁴ Letter from J.D. Maclean to W.M. Graham, 10 May 1924, RG 10, Vol. 6294, File 623-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

³⁵ Letter by Bishop Lloyd to Superintendent of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott, 20 August 1925, RG10, Vol. 6294, File 623-1, Part 1, LAC, Ottawa.

looked downcast and quietly exited the group meeting, attributing his resignation to his poor health.³⁶

Constrained by the Protestant church's allegiance to the colonial state, Ahenakew maintained a deferential attitude towards senior church officials and maintained his intense loyalty to the Church of England till his death in 1961 at the age of seventy-six. Yet, from his early education in the Indian Residential School System and from his lifelong experiences in the Diocese of Saskatchewan, Ahenakew intimately understood that whites refused to see the capabilities of First Nations people without a racialized lens. White progressivism of civilizing and Christianising, the hope for the 'Indian,' was the only available model for Indigenous persons to embrace at the turn of the century. In her work on black female reformers in the American south at the turn of the century, Glenda Gilmour argues, "whites listened only when racial portrayals fit racist stereotypes of debasement."³⁷ In the same vein, on the Saskatchewan prairie, any ideological framework that went beyond the notion of simply elevating Indigenous peoples from their debased position as savages was thinkable to whites. Ahenakew understood he needed to conform to this narrow white supremacist lens to experience any advancement in the Anglican church. Any radical departure from this ideological journey would have been disastrous to his vocational aspirations. He was not willing to fail in the career he had worked so hard to succeed at from an early age.

In his later years, he never revived his political activism but through his missionary platform continued to promote the full humanity of Indigenous peoples. In 1955, six years before his death, he gave a sermon in British Columbia on the fiftieth anniversary of the W.A. in the

³⁶ Stan Cuthand, Introduction to the 1995 version, Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 1995), xviii.

³⁷ Glenda Gilmour, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 138.

province. He praised the British missionaries who had brought Christianity to the Northwest and celebrated the ‘accomplishments’ of the Protestant church. However, seizing the moment to confront racialized stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and communities, he described how the Bishop of Athabasca claimed that Indigenous people within his diocese were practicing cannibalism. Ahenakew swiftly worked to dismiss the statement stating in his sermon, “I am surprised for I have never heard of such things on the prairies or in the east.”³⁸ In another anecdote he illustrated how an English missionary had arrived on the prairies from England to assist him in his work. When they met another white missionary in town, the missionary said to the Englishman in Ahenakew’s presence, “If I were you, I wouldn’t. The Indians will never be civilized.”³⁹ Ahenakew expressed his emotional pain upon hearing the comment and expounded to the white women that “the Indians of old were not bad” but that there had only been half-hearted attempts to educate the Indian in the past.⁴⁰ Although he had stepped away from his radical political organizing of the twenties, he still faced a mountain of white supremacist attitudes within the Canadian Protestant church. He laboured to insert fault lines into white women’s false representations of Indigenous peoples. In his 1955 sermon, he offered a subversive challenge by gently posing anti-colonial dispatches to the white normative culture of settler colonial Saskatchewan.

The assumption that white women knew best in British colonial culture aligns with what unfolded with the publication of Ahenakew’s monograph, *Voices of the Plains Cree*.⁴¹ Following his death in 1961, Katie Ahenakew, his niece, found his unpublished manuscript in his home and

³⁸ Sermon Preached by Rev. Edward Ahenakew in British Columbia on the Occasion of the W.A. 50th Anniversary, 1955, R-1, 6, Manuscripts Re. Indians and Anglican Church Missions, Edward Ahenakew fonds, PAS, Regina.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, ed. Ruth Matheson Buck (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1973).

gave it to Ruth Matheson Buck to edit and prepare for publication. Ahenakew had maintained his friendship with Buck's mother, Elizabeth Matheson, who had been a physician and missionary to Onion Lake, until his death. Their longstanding family ties led Ahenakew's niece to trust the Matheson clan with his writings.

Ruth Buck compiled the stories of Chief Thunderchild and the literary writings of Old Keyam and then contacted several publishers. McClelland and Stewart secured the rights and published Buck's version in 1973, along with Buck's nine-page introduction. In her analysis of the 1973 version, Cree-Métis literary scholar Deanna Reder points out how Buck's alterations to Ahenakew's text skewed his original meanings. Reder argues that Ahenakew lived through a historical period where he witnessed a massive reorganization of Cree lifeways. She wrote, "he tried as an expression of a Cree value, to make peace with the viewpoints of both the Cree and the colonizers, by trying to hold what sometimes were irreconcilable perspectives."⁴² Buck's alterations to Ahenakew's text removed some of Keyam's most vocal criticisms of the colonial state and downplayed his actual observations of Cree experiences in order to soften what actually happened.

For example, in his chapter on residential schools, Ahenakew attributed the high death rates in the schools to the specific conditions of the children's dormitories. He described how the children often had to use the same towels, basins, rooms, and eating utensils. Ahenakew wrote, "In time the dormitories are saturated with germs."⁴³ In Buck's edited version, she outright omitted these details, which placed blame on the missionaries for their lack of attentive care towards the children. Intensely critical of the Indian Residential School system, Ahenakew also

⁴² Reder, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, 75.

⁴³ "Old Keyam on Boarding Schools versus Day Schools," page 4, R-1, 2, Writers Book or Journal, Edward Ahenakew fonds, PAS, Regina.

pointed to the affective violence inherent in child removal. Ahenakew described the emotional pain that parents experienced upon separating from their children:

“I have seen again and again children come home from boarding schools – come home to die after having lost the natural joy of association with their parents, brothers and sisters during their childhood, victims of a well-meant but blind educational policy. I am not here speaking of the heartache of the father not the loud song-like sobs of the poor mother whose sobs are not heard by the world. That should count for something, but I do not use it as an argument.”⁴⁴

Buck rewrote this phrase removing the strong emotive wording which Ahenakew aimed to communicate:

“Again and again I have seen children come home from boarding schools only to die, having lost during their time at school all the natural joys of association with their own families, victims of an educational policy, well-meant but not over-wise. Their parents’ sense of loss, and their grief, I need now dwell upon here, nor use it to support my contention.”⁴⁵

Trying to voice his objections to the Indian Residential School System in practical and measured terms, Ahenakew considered it important to emphasize the emotional violence conducted against Indigenous families by church and state officials. Buck’s editing toned down Ahenakew’s criticisms of the school and removed the strong emotive wording which sought to convey the depths of affective pain Indigenous families were subjected to.

⁴⁴ “Old Keyam on Boarding Schools versus Day Schools,” page 4, R-1, 2, Writers Book or Journal, Edward Ahenakew fonds, PAS, Regina.

⁴⁵ Buck, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, 132.

Ahenakew also justified his strong opinions on the state of Indian education in Canada by stating, “I am intimately acquainted with three boarding schools.”⁴⁶ However, Buck’s revision included adding sentences to Ahenakew’s comment, which appears to have been a complete fabrication. Buck’s version states, “During the years when I worked, I came to know three boarding schools. These were no worse than their kind. I think they may have been better, for those in charge knew the Indians and they did their best.”⁴⁷ One of the three schools Ahenakew was referring to was Onion Lake Residential School. He had spent time with the Mathesons at the Onion Lake mission over the course of his career. Buck most likely included the phrase “they did their best” in order to absolve the familial guilt of her parents, J.R. and Elizabeth Matheson. Their involvement in operating the Onion Lake Residential School and Anglican mission in the 1890s and 1900 was mired by abuses and horrid conditions for Indigenous children.

Buck held the discursive power over Ahenakew’s final script and manipulated his words and phrases to serve her vision of Indigenous-settler relations in the early settlement period in Saskatchewan. She downplayed the colonial corruption that Ahenakew sought to illuminate. As part of an influential Protestant missionary family in Saskatchewan, Buck likely believed that her editing and publishing of Ahenakew’s writings continued the family tradition of exemplifying superior knowledge about Indigenous peoples and communities. The white female cultural and religious encounter with Indigenous peoples was linked to a settler colonial fabrication. White women benefited from racial stratification in society and consolidated power over the course of the twentieth century. They reproduced ideologies of racial difference through the emotive lens of care, compassion, and intimacy for the colonized subject. Buck’s editing of Ahenakew’s

⁴⁶ “Old Keyam on Boarding Schools versus Day Schools,” page 4, R-1, 2, Writers Book or Journal, Edward Ahenakew fonds, PAS, Regina.

⁴⁷ Buck, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, 132.

unpublished manuscript illustrates the multiple ways in which white women believed they could speak for the interests of Indigenous peoples, an ideological construct that was built on settler colonial gendered logic regarding the supremacy of white women over brown people. This belief, reminiscent of Buck's revision of Ahenakew's words, was a colonial production embedded in the relationship between missionaries and Indigenous peoples in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Concluding thoughts

The prisms of sentimentality which held white missionary women and their female church supporters together were deeply engrained in Saskatchewan at the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Historically examining white women's emotive promises of compassion, care, and love reveals how affect fused white women into a cohesive Christian emotional community that produced racial difference on the Canadian prairies. Race, gender, and religion weaved together, making and remaking the normative identity of the white female subject and its figurative opposite, the Indigenous 'other.' This dissertation reveals the story of how white Christian sympathy is fundamentally about power structures and civilizational ladders, and how the label of 'heathen' became the focus of white Anglo-Saxon's directed sentiment. In no uncertain ways do I wish to imply that love, compassion, care, and tenderness are exploitative in colonial contexts. No human being in their right mind would want to exist in a world without those sentiments. But what I do challenge in this study is how the sentimental emotions became a function of white women's claim to racialized power in the emerging province of Saskatchewan. White female missionaries and their Christian female church supporters' extension of pity toward Indigenous peoples revealed the constructed nature of their racial superiority and the religious framing they depended on to organize their self-knowledge.

In the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first two decades of the twentieth, women missionaries flocked to missionary organizations to join in the foreign missionary movement. Their desire was to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. Canadian missionary historian Ruth Compton Brouwer labelled them “new women for God,” devoted Christians willing to embark with the love of Christ in their hearts. Initially labelled the ‘foreign field,’ female missionaries departed for Saskatchewan from eastern Canada and Britain to work at Indian Residential Schools and on Protestant mission sites. Imbued with a sense of Christian purpose and strengthened with the support of their female missionary supporters back home in eastern Canada, white women evangelized to Indigenous women and children. They entered new emotional frontiers, civilizing in nature, but centered around the Christian belief in the equality of humanity. White Anglo-Saxon Protestant women promised to extend Christian love to the young children under their care at the schools and towards Indigenous men and women on mission sites.

Imbued with generous charity from donors and trained in an evangelical culture of sentimental rhetoric, missionaries grounded their humanitarian appeals in civilising theories of a racial ‘other’ that required civilizing uplift from the degraded heathenness of their existence. Acts of colonial terror and violence at the sites of residential schools and mission sites were byproducts of the racialization of the ‘heathen’ figure. The image of the ‘heathen’ permitted missionaries and state officials to dehumanize Indigenous peoples as objects of white pity. For white Christians, the ‘heathen’ figure was an acceptable target of racism grounded in a theology that required missionary intervention for their salvation. As scholar Katherine Lum argues, the image of the heathen formed whites’ self-identity: “they constructed the heathen world to give themselves a venue for the evangelizing work that marked them as givers rather than recipients

of aid.”⁴⁸ Race, gender, and religion co-mingled on the Saskatchewan prairie and gave reason for settler colonial expansion. White women believed they played an important role in domesticating the ‘untamed’ prairie space through their Christian outreach to darkened souls.

Convinced that they could more easily convert the souls of Indigenous children than adults, missionaries physically and emotionally intervened in the lives of Indigenous families in Saskatchewan. They removed children, in some cases, with physical violence, and relocated them into Presbyterian and Anglican residential, industrial, and day schools with the goal to eradicate children’s Indigeneity. They labelled them as backwards and degraded, and sought to impart a colonial education through ‘civilizing’ and Christianizing. Through this colonial process, missionaries attacked the inner emotional lives of Indigenous parents and children. Missionary women laboured to sever children’s bonds to home, kin, and community. They promised motherly love and maternal attachment in new emotional spaces that the children were required to traverse. Missionaries claimed that the schools functioned as homelike environments where children received appropriate guidance and tender care in their young ages. But both the students and the missionaries were deeply unhappy. Missionary benevolence and its promises of care were a fiction. The children were exposed to widespread diseases due to the horrific living conditions in the schools. The lack of food, terrible housing, and inadequate medical care resulted in massively high death rates amongst the students. To support these underfunded institutions, Christian women in eastern Canada organized into Protestant women auxiliaries and provided copious amounts of mission funding. They sent material goods to the schools and mission sites, which they freighted across the prairies by the ton. Contrary to what missionary

⁴⁸ Kathryn Gin Lum, *Heathen: Religion and Race in American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2022), 18.

propaganda espoused, the majority of the women's donations were useless leftovers from a Canadian middle-class that was intent on celebrating triumphalist evangelical successes.

Grasping that the schools were unsafe environments, married missionaries worried about their own children's upbringings on and nearby mission sites. Racialized anxieties around the negative influences of colonised children prompted Anglo-Canadian and British missionaries to remove their children from mission sites to resist racial mixing. For British and Anglo-Canadian missionaries, the racial frontier of mission sites in Saskatchewan were culturally, physically, and sexually dangerous spaces. They believed that they needed to vigilantly safeguard their own children from the threats. Missionaries transitioned their children into white Anglo worlds through separate education in the hopes of attaining proper Canadian and British citizenry. Missionaries manipulated the boundaries of familial belonging at the sites of residential schooling. Although privileging their own biological children, they assured their supporters back home in the Canadian metropole that they were replacement loving parents to the Indigenous children in the schools. Blurring the lines between colonized and colonizer through their affective outpourings enabled missionaries to extend the carceral realm of the residential school into their private homes. Missionaries adopted Indigenous students from the residential and industrial schools and gave themselves access to unlimited sources of free labour. Adoption had to do with missionary desire for cheap labour, unrestrained sexual access, and the fulfillment of the civilizing mission on a microlevel.

As the population of Saskatchewan flourished in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Protestant Christian women on the prairies trailed in the footsteps of Canadian women out east and established their own church women auxiliaries. Functioning as collective spaces to strengthen female professionalism and agency, church women's philanthropic groups contributed

to foreign and home missionary work. They grounded their philanthropic work in the nineteenth century notion that the Indian would eventually fade away from prairie life. White women believed the majority would die from disease and the remaining population would be forcefully assimilated through residential schooling.

Yet prairie statistics proved otherwise. With death rates amongst First Nations communities reversing from the onslaught of disease and economic marginalization, their population numbers began to increase in the first two decades of the twentieth century. By the 1920s, reserve agriculture had become more established, creating increased economic stability compared to the last three decades of the nineteenth century, which were marked by massive food and health insecurity. This forced white Christian women to reposition their racialized outlook regarding the vanishing theory. If Indigenous peoples were going to exist in a modern Saskatchewan, they then needed to be incorporated into regimes of white possession. Through taming the land, Anglo-settlers now had dominion over the province's resources and its original occupants. White women's production of paternalism merely shapeshifted from the late nineteenth century Victorian notion of Indian disappearance and into a more modern representation of settler control which enabled the continuation of violence against Indigenous peoples within the province.

As white settler women entered the 1920s, sympathy for Indigenous peoples began to wane. The virulent racism against central and eastern European 'foreigners' arriving in Saskatchewan, marked by the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, took center stage in religious public life. Confined to reserves and with their children sent away to residential schools, Indigenous peoples were out of sight from the majority white populace. They could now be easily forgotten. The Protestant church maintained its posturing of white pity but by the twenties, young white women

had increasing professional opportunities available to them. This lessened the importance of missionary careers and involvement in church women auxiliaries. White settlers drifted between two ideological poles by the interwar period: pity and indifference—the antithesis of true love, compassion, and tender care. The white Anglo-Canadian female settler knit together these two ways of knowing the Indigenous ‘other’ to undergird white supremacy into Saskatchewan’s social fabric well into the twentieth century.

Missionary sentimentality on the Saskatchewan prairie was always an elusive and slippery concept, but it could be subverted by those who resisted its imposition. When Christian missionaries in Saskatchewan contested the emotive pulls of white pity directed toward Indigenous peoples, senior church officials in Anglican and Presbyterian denominations depicted them as having an overabundance of feeling for Indigenous peoples. The Protestant church regulated the offerings of sentimentality. It was a verbal posturing towards colonized subjects, but when it slid into compassionate action, church officials feared retribution from Canadian government officials. Lastly, Indigenous peoples recognized how whites cloaked them in pity and they resisted this patronizing power. Indigenous leaders like Ahenakew challenged white handlings of sentimentality and found avenues to employ these emotional expressions to foster Indigenous resistance and self-determination. As Indigenous communities continue the work of anti-colonial resistance today, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argues, “We are not begging the colonizer for attention, for money, for sympathy, for rights, for recognition, or for moral benevolence...We are the solution based on our own nation-based conceptions of ourselves.”⁴⁹ Indigenous nations then, and today, seek mutual respect. Only when Canadian settlers cease posturing their attempts at reconciliation wrapped in expressions of

⁴⁹ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 237.

sympathy will there be meaningful change in our relationship with each other and the spaces, we call home.

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