Restorying of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School

by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to uncover the untold history of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School (SBIRS), located in the centre of Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation. Using community-based processes, I examine the intentions of government officials and missionaries in establishing and operating the school, the student experiences at the SBIRS, and the lasting impacts it has made. My research utilizes a collaborative approach that combines archival work, storytelling, and community-based historical documentary work. Throughout my research, I used Indigenous methodologies that prioritized Sandy Bay's cultural protocols and values of reciprocity and respect. Throughout this process, community members were considered partners rather than subjects of research. This thesis reveals that the intentions of the government and missionaries were rooted in efforts to erase Indigenous culture, traditions, spirituality, and language. Survivors' oral histories reveal that the students at the SBIRS were subjected to abuse, neglect, and isolation. These impacts continue to be felt, and Survivors' offer suggestions for healing.

This thesis contributes to the field of residential school literature by offering a localized history that is representative of Sandy Bay's experiences and perspectives, challenging the colonial misrepresentations of residential school history. This narrative provides Canadians the opportunity to learn residential school history through a community perspective and offers Sandy Bay community members a deeper understanding of the historical transformations within the community and the lasting legacies of the residential school, which can adequately inform strategies for healing. Through this work, we commemorate Survivors, honour the lives of students who have passed, and begin a pathway toward healing.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The residential school system in Canada aimed to assimilate Indigenous Peoples by breaking the link to their heritage and identity. Understanding the history of the residential school system is crucial for meaningful reconciliation and the advancement of Indigenization.[1] As healing for Survivors and descendants proceed, we must recognize the truths of the residential school system, along with the colonial policies that happened alongside it such as community removal, the Indian Act, and systemic discrimination in the justice system.[2] If this is not acknowledged, Canada will continue to fail Indigenous Peoples, and colonial ideologies will reproduce through lack of awareness.[3] Building on the work of the TRC and recent scholarship, my research will reveal the untold history of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School (SBIRS) in Manitoba to shift discourse toward a decolonial understanding that recentres Sandy Bay history, thereby bringing the school into the present as an active agent of community history.[4] Applying a local historian lens, I will pursue a study of the Sandy Bay Residential School as a case study to examine the collective changes on the Sandy Bay community stemming from the operations of the school, providing the chance to for students reflect upon the past and present, and facilitate a stage of collaborative healing. My work will advance reconciliation through commemorating the voices and experiences of former students, reclaiming community history,

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[1] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). 2015. *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 148.
[2] John Milloy. *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 – 1986* (University of Manitoba Press, 2017),305.
[3] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 144.*
[4] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "That's my Auntie": Community-Guided Residential School History. *KULA*, (5(1), 2021), 2.

and furthering of public knowledge and demonstrate that doing so contributes to collective healing.

Historical Background

The harsh reality is that too many Canadians are unaware of the history of the residential school system and its legacies as the truth was hidden and disregarded for generations.[5] Investigating and understanding this history is crucial to the ongoing process of reconciliation.[6] As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) states, "Without truth, justice is not served, healing cannot happen, and there can be no genuine reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada."[7]

Colonization sought to achieve the interests of the state. The federal government viewed the presence of Indigenous Peoples as a blockage to settler access to the land and resources.[8] The perception of Indigenous Peoples as inferior based on contemporary privileging of "progress" justified colonizers efforts to "civilize" and assimilate them into dominant society through the eradication of culture, identity, language, and distinctiveness.[9] The argument was that Indigenous Peoples did not know how to make "proper" use of the lands, and were not Christian and therefore required "saving."[10] The federal government sought out cheap methods to get out of their long-term commitments to Indigenous Peoples to advance the financial and territorial needs

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[5] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,* 144.
[6] Ibid, 189.
[7] Ibid, 148.
[8] Ibid,*18*
[9] Susan Dianne Brophy. *A Legacy of Exploitation: Early Capitalism in the Red River Colony, 1763-1821*. (UBC Press, 2022), 4.
[10] Allard Tremblay & Elaine Coburn. "The Flying Heads of Settler Colonialism; or the Ideological Erasures of Indigenous Peoples in Political Theorizing." *Political Studies*, (2021), 7.

of settlers.[11] These methods included negotiated treaties, disrupting and relocating Indigenous families and communities, and imposing new orders that came with new sets of values and cultural practices.[12] The educational system was used as a tool to support a paradigm of inclusion that enabled cultural genocide, assisting in the "elimination of the native."[13]

Education was initially desired by Indigenous communities so that they could understand the language treaties were being negotiated in, and the state took advantage of this by establishing missionary schooling that suppressed Indigenous religious expression and culture to discourage Indigenous resistance and safeguard colonial power.[14] The government embraced missionary schooling as a "civilizing effort," based on the belief of white racial and cultural superiority.[15] Historian Sean Carleton argues that the schools "programmed students for settler capitalism and the making of the nation."[16] The rationale was that the schools, run by missionaries, would bring civilization and salvation to Indigenous children.[17] The presence of missionaries justified the extension of empires as they spread the word of God.[18]

Residential school Survivor Theodore Fontaine argues "The Indian residential school policy and era were not intended to support or educate our people, but to get us out of the way of settler development and access to the wealth of Canada's natural resources," further noting that

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[11] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,* 16.
[12] Ibid, *18.*
[13] Natalie Cross & Thomas Peace. "My Own Old English Friends, Networking Anglican Settler Colonialism at the Shingwauk Home, Huron College, and Western University," *Historical Studies in Education.* (33, 1, 2021), 26.
[14] Sean Carleton. "Settler Anxiety and State Support for Missionary Schooling in Colonial British Columbia, 1849–1871," *Historical Studies in Education.* (29, 1, 2017), 58.
[15] Ibid, *70.*
[16] Ibid, *79.*
[17] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 16.*
[18] Ibid, *21.*

the policy "aimed to displace our Nations, destroy our traditional ways of life, our customs, cultural and linguistic heritage, legal rights, spirituality, and governmental and societal structures, and the very identities of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada."[19] In 1879, Nicholas Davin, the first Member of Parliament for Assiniboia West, carried out a study of boarding schools in the United States that were established for Native Americans.[20] Following this, he recommended an establishment of schools on the Prairies in Canada, suggesting that the schools be directed towards the destruction of Indigenous spirituality, therefore proposing the government fund the schools while the churches operate them.[21] The TRC highlighted three reasons the government embraced Davin's recommendations and chose to invest in residential schools. Firstly, the schools would provide Indigenous Peoples with the skills to be participating members of society. Secondly, lawmakers anticipated that students would leave the community and become enfranchised after receiving an education. Thirdly, the schools would erase Indigenous Peoples distinct cultural and spiritual identities.[22] The TRC further noted that there was a security aspect to this, noting that Indigenous Peoples would be unlikely to retaliate against the government if it had their children.[23]

The TRC explained that Indigenous children were taken from their families and communities, stripped of their belongings, and separated from their siblings, living in a world "dominated by fear, loneliness, and lack of affection."[24] The system was designed to erase

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[19] Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine. "Preface," in *Did You See Us? Reunion, Remembrance, and Reclamation at an Urban Indian Residential School,* edited by Survivors of the Assiniboia Indian Residential School and Andrew Woolford, (University of Manitoba Press, 2021), xix.
[20] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 30.*
[21] Ibid, *30.*
[22] Ibid, *44.*
[23] Ibid, *33.*
[24] Ibid, *14.*

Indigenous Peoples from their lands due to the fact their beliefs and values did not suit colonial standards.[25] The schools were organized by class and gender, and students were taught Canadian gender roles, situated in the fixed place of capitalist and heteropatriarchal society.[26] Historian John S. Milloy states that discipline was curriculum, and the atmosphere was violent in nature.[27] The environment of residential schooling justified the use of force against children.[28] There was no one to protect the children, advocate on their behalf, nor feed, nourish, or keep them safe.[29] Natalie Cross and Thomas Peace argue that industrial training, poor funding, and lack of quality education resulted in Indigenous students being "schooled for inequality." Milloy argues that the children that were sent off to residential schooling were worse off than those who were not.[30]

Survivor of the St. Joseph's Mission, Bev Sellars, explains that a lot of Canadians proudly boast about living in one of the best places in the world, while being unaware of what happened in the past, arguing the country is "a supposedly democratic country where the freedoms and cultures of all are protected and respected."[31] Sellars argues "it is the greatest place to live for anyone, except for the original inhabitants of this land, the Aboriginal people."[32] The closing of the residential schools did not mark the end of the system.[33] The resulting inequities from residential schooling are reflected in contemporary education, income, and health

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[25] Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine. *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*. (Heritage House Publishing, 2022), 21
[26] Sean Carleton. *Lessons in Legitimacy, 91*.
[27] John Milloy, *A National Crime*, 44.
[28] Ibid, *46.*
[29] Ibid, *46.*
[30] Ibid, *69.*
[31] Bev Sellars. *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School.* (Talonbooks, 2013), xv.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 129.*

disparities that are seen among Indigenous populations as compared to non-Indigenous people.[34] Indigenous Peoples statistically live shorter, poorer, and more troubled lives, and many of these issues can be traced back to the residential school system.[35] The TRC argues that health disparities of such magnitude have social roots.[36] There is an overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system, and Indigenous Peoples are victimized at a higher rate than non-Indigenous people.[37] Biases and stereotypes as well as general racism towards Indigenous Peoples are used to justify or explain these disparities to prevent meaningfully addressing them.[38] Certain damages are furthered through poor government policies based on a lack of understanding of Indigenous Peoples and the legal framing of Indigenous nations as dependents of the government unable to govern themselves[39] Colonial ideologies are renewed through exploitation, concealment, justification, and denial.[40] Confronting the dominant historical narrative and understanding the foundational ideologies of colonial policies links the experiences of Indigenous individuals to political processes that have impacted their lives.[41]

The TRC explains that the closure of residential schools led to the disproportional apprehension of Indigenous children by child welfare agencies, arguing that the child-welfare

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid, *134.*
[36] Ibid, *138.*
[37] Ibid, *129.*
[38] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 130.*
[39] Ibid, *141.*
[40] Erich Steinman (2020). Unsettling as Agency: Unsettling Settler Colonialism Where You Are, Settler Colonial Studies, (10(4), 2020), 559.
[41] Timothy Stanley. The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-Racist Pedagogy, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, (19(1), 1998), 46.

system is the residential school system of our day.[42] Tendencies to view Indigenous parenting skills and poverty as evidence of neglect results in disproportionate rates of Indigenous children being apprehended.[43] Following apprehension, little care is given to where these children are sent or consideration for the need to preserve culture and identity.[44] The agencies are underfunded, and children are often placed in culturally inappropriate and often unsafe environments.[45] Advancing meaningful reconciliation requires an understanding of historic and ongoing legacies of colonial policies, as the TRC argues "We must learn the failures of the school to ensure mistakes of the past are not repeated."[46] Canada's future history must be based on the truth of what happened in the past.[47]

Colonialism proceeds as an active and ongoing structure within Canada that shapes the quality of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous Peoples.[48] Reconciliation therefore involves awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm, and action to change.[49] The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples argues that Canadians and the state must acknowledge that we are all "treaty peoples" in order to attain meaningful reconciliation.[50] This notion of "treaty peoples" brings the material and social aspects of the colonial past into the present, recognizing the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples and ongoing treaty relationship.[51] Viewing one another as

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[42] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,* 132.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid, *131.*
[45] Ibid, *132.*
[46] Ibid, *141.*
[47] Ibid, *154.*
[48] Ibid, *19.*
[49] Ibid, *142.*
[50] Eva Mackey, "The Apologizer's Apology," in *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, edited by Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2013), 51.
[51] Ibid, 52.

"treaty peoples" would transform reconciliation as more than a cultural and empathetic procedure into a responsibility of all Canadians as inheritors of benefits of treaties.[52] Reconciliation requires supporting Indigenous Peoples healing from the long-lasting impacts of colonization.[53] Indigenous People's knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, and connections to the land have informed the reconciliation process, and are crucial in proceeding forward.[54] Reconciliation involves opening new pathways to healing forged in truth and justice.[55]

Focusing on the community impacts of one of these institutions will allow us to better understand how the school impacted the community as a whole and what steps may be taken to achieve collective healing. The SBIRS operated from 1905 to 1970 in the heart of Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation, where the current community school now stands. Reconstructing Sandy Bay's history to adequately represent the community's experiences, worldviews, and traditions presents a distinct opportunity for all Canadians to comprehend a community's perspective of its residential school history and its continuing impacts.

Literature Review

The founders of residential schools justified the system as a humanitarian enterprise established to "save" Indigenous Peoples.[56] These justifications legitimized the actions of

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[52] Ibid, 59.
[53] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,* 143.
[54] Ibid, *145.*
[55] Ibid, *148.*
[56] Eric Taylor Woods. "On the Making of a National Tragedy: The Transformation of the Meaning of the Indian Residential Schools," in *Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation,* edited by Brieg Capitaine & Karine Vanthuyne. (UBC Press, 2017), 29.

colonizers, by portraying them as introducers of enlightenment and advancement.[57] By the 1990's as the last residential schools closed, the general public began acknowledging the realities of residential schools, marking a shift in the dominant narrative that was pushed by the government.[58] Basil Johnston was one of the first to publish personal experiences as a Survivor in his book *Indian School Days* in 1988, a memoir of his accounts of the St. Peter Claver's Residential School. Celia Haig-Brown was also one of these Survivors, publishing *Resistance and Renewal* in 1988. The book includes thirteen Survivor's stories sharing their horrific experiences at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Haig-Brown stated that the participants explained "the experiences of leaving home, of arriving at school, of surviving the daily routines of the school, and, finally, of returning home, are restructured."[59]

J. R. Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools,* published in 1996, and John Milloy's *A National Crime,* published in 1999, both exposed the horrific realities and abuses of the residential school system as an active and ongoing part of Canadian history.[60] Milloy stated "while healing proceeds, we strive to ensure that the terrible facts of the residential school system, along with its companion policies… become part of a new sense of what Canada has been and will continue to be if our historical record is not recognized for what is has meant

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[57] Allard Tremblay & Elaine Coburn. "The Flying Heads of Settler Colonialism; or the Ideological Erasures of Indigenous Peoples in Political Theorizing." *Political Studies*, (2021), 2.
[58] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 46.*
[59] Celia Haig-Brown. *Resistance and renewal-surviving the Indian Residential School,* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 1988), 25.
[60] Mary Jane Logan McCallum. "Foreword," in *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 – 1986,* edited by John Milloy. (University of Manitoba Press, 2017), xi.

to Aboriginal people."[61] The books served an important role in bringing to light the treatment of Indigenous Peoples by the Canadian government and advocated for the acknowledgment of wrongdoings to begin redress.

In 1990, former Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Phil Fontaine, spoke publicly about the abuse he had experienced and witnessed at the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School, bringing national attention to the matter.[62] The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was launched in the 1990's to examine the "historical roots of the troubled relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the government."[63] While the report did not focus on the residential school system, the commission provided a platform for Survivors to share their experiences, thereby publicizing the issue and beginning discussions on reconciliation, while placing the mistreatment by the government in the spotlight.[64] In 1996, the RCAP final report was released, calling for a full investigation of the residential school system as necessary, with the inclusion of remedies such as apologies and compensation.[65]

As a result of the widescale disclosure of experiences, Indigenous Survivors filed a class action lawsuit against the Canadian government which resulted in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in 2006/2007 which included 1) a healing and commemoration fund, 2) a Common Experience Payment to all Survivors that attended Indian residential school, 3) the Independent Assessment Process for those who experienced abuse at the schools, and 4) the

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[61] John Milloy. "The State Investigates: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples." *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 – 1986*. (University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 305.
[62] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,* 124.
[63] J.R Miller. "Beyond Closure, 1992 to 1998." *Residential Schools and Reconciliation. (*Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017), 41.
[64] Ibid, 42.
[65] John Milloy. "The State Investigates: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," 303.

formation of a truth and reconciliation commission.[66] In addition to agreeing to appoint the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued an apology in 2008 to all students who had attended residential schools, and those who were impacted by it.[67] The residential school system thus began to be understood as a targeted tactic of assimilation organized by the state and church that led to child abuse and deaths with intergenerational impacts.[68] The TRC's primary goal of "truth-telling" intended to confront Canada's suppression of the realities and impacts of residential schooling and the broader structure of colonialism in how it frames its national history.[69] Previously silenced residential school Survivors disrupted the long-denied colonial policies of assimilation through processes of truth-telling.[70] Although truth-telling may not lead to reconciliation within itself, the recognition that the oppressions took place acknowledges the experiences of Survivors, helps to restore their identities of and creates dialogue between Survivors and settlers on the road to reconciliation.[71]

Meanwhile, writing about residential schooling continued. Bev Sellars began writing her memoir *They Called Me Number One* of her experiences at St. Joseph Mission in the early 1990s when communities began dealing with the aftermath of residential school impacts but held off finishing until 2004. *They Called Me Number One* shines light to the devastating realities

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[66] Brieg Capitaine & Karine Vanthuyne. "Introduction," in *Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation,* edited by Brieg Capitaine & Karine Vanthuyne. (UBC Press, 2017), 6.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid, 5.
[69] Sean Carleton. *Lessons in Legitimacy, 4.*
[70] Rachel George. "A Move to Distract: Mobilizing Truth and Reconciliation in Settler Colonial States," in *Pathways of Reconciliation: Indigenous and Settler Approaches to Implementing the TRC's Calls to Action*, edited by Amy Craft & Paulette Regan. (University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 93.
[71] Brieg Capitaine. "Telling a Story and Performing the Truth," in *Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation,* edited by Brieg Capitaine & Karine Vanthuyne. (UBC Press, 2017), 69.

Survivors faced at residential schools and the long-lasting impacts that stick with them throughout their lives, providing readers a comprehensive understanding of the residential school system. Sellars healing journey consisted of reflections upon her patterns of dysfunctional behavior within her own life. Sellars explains the dysfunction within the lives of those around her at the schools were normalized as there was nothing else to compare to, and there were no supports or role models as the social problems resulting from the residential school system and other policies impacted the entire community.[72] As Sellars proceeded in her healing journey, she began understanding that "all of the social ills in Aboriginal communities could be traced to the destruction of our culture and to the non-Aboriginal institutions that forced their racist policies on us," causing her anger to fade.[73] Sellars' memoir deepens our understanding of residential schools in Canada by demonstrating the destructive impacts of residential schools on individuals, families, and community, while also discussing healing.

Theodore Fontaine, Survivor of the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School, and the Assiniboia Indian Residential School, spoke on his experiences and life journey in his memoir *Broken Circle,* providing readers with the opportunity to understand the individual and collective harms that were directed towards Indigenous Peoples from a firsthand account. *Broken Circle* presents the horrific realities within the school as well as the daily practices that impacted Fontaine and separated him from "being and becoming Anishinaabe."[74] Andrew Woolford explains the book as an invitation to understand the devastating harms of residential schools and

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[72] Bev Sellars. *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School.* (Talonbooks, 2013), 125.
[73] Ibid, 135.
[74] Theodore Niizhotay Fontaine. *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*. (Heritage House Publishing, 2022), 3.

contribute toward undoing the legacy.[75] Fontaine's memoir provides further insight into the diverse experiences of residential school students and responses from community, as well as how these experiences impact individuals differently.

As the field of residential school history expands, the complexities of experiences spanning throughout the country are revealed. Exploring narratives and experiences at a number of different residential schools allows us to understand the broad, complex, and systemic histories that came with them, in contrast to a singular linear experience. Woolford shares a variety of Survivor experiences in *Did You See Us*. The book features chapters written by various former students, recounting their own experiences. The chapters are presented in chronological order, and the eras feature varying experiences. Woolford explains "Assiniboia provides us a unique opportunity, given its relatively short lifespan, to hear from Survivors from its opening to its close."[76] One of the goals of this work was to spread awareness of the school that the school had been there, ensuring the legacy of Assiniboia survives.[77] Academic accomplishments were not the priority of this work, but rather the community's need to discuss experiences across institutions.[78] *Did You See Us* deepens our understanding of residential schools in Canada by providing insight into an urban residential school in Winnipeg hosting children in grade 10-12. Sean Carleton's book, *Lessons in Legitimacy*, investigates the relationship between colonialism, capitalism, and the rise of state schooling.[79] Bringing together the schooling of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, this book provides one analytic frame of study that encapsulates the systemic

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[75] Ibid, 6.
[76] Survivors of the Assiniboia Indian Residential School and Andrew Woolford. *Did You See Us? Reunion, Remembrance, and Reclamation at an Urban Indian Residential School*, (University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 3
[77] Ibid, 200.
[78] Ibid, *199.*
[79] Sean Carleton. *Lessons in Legitimacy*, 6

complexities of colonial education.[80] Employing a dual view of the state and schooling, Carleton's work explores the topic as a project of rule and site of struggle.[81] *Lessons in Legitimacy* contributes to truth-telling and correcting Canadian history which is required for decolonization and meaningful reconciliation.[82]

In 2013, Ian Mosby sheds light on the nutritional experiments taking place in Canadian residential schools in his work *Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952*. The experiments involved providing vitamin supplements and fortified foods to malnourished students in attempt to analyze nutritional interventions in diets.[83] The cruel controlled environment of residential schools permitted them to be viewed as laboratories, while Indigenous bodies were perceived as "experimental materials."[84] The supplements could not solve the issue as the problem lay in the lack of food for the students. Mosby argues that "under the guise of benevolent administration," the experiments were used to "further their own professional and political interests rather than to address the root causes of these problems or, for that matter, the Canadian government's complicity in them."[85] Mosby's work deepens our understanding by highlighting the governing and exploitation of students that were conducted within the walls of residential schools.

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[80] Ibid, 6.
[81] Ibid, 11.
[82] Ibid, 18.
[83] Ian Mosby. "Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952." *Histoire sociale* (46, 91, 2013), 151.
[84] Ibid, 148.
[85] Ibid, 171.

Mary Jane Logan McCallum discusses the Mount Elgin Industrial School, located on the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation in Ontario, from the years 1851 to 1946, in her book *Nii Ndahlohke: Boys' and Girls' Work at Mount Elgin Industrial School*.[86] Her contribution to residential school history provides a localized perspective of the industrial school. Mary Jane Logan McCallum argues that local history deserves to be understood "as it is important to the ways that the broader history of Indigenous-settler relations unfolded" in the communities surrounding the schools.[87] McCallum explains the Munsee Delaware Language and History Group provided contributions to the book, in which their priorities are to support research and education on Munsee people, communities, language, and territories.[88] She goes on to state that this work in developing *Nii Ndahlohke* was centred on "relationships to land, the environment, and other people, and self-determination."[89] In the afterword, Julie Tucker states she hopes that peoples will use the knowledge gained from *Nii Ndahlohke* to further their process of learning and unlearning to obtain a truthful understanding of Canadian history.[90] *Nii Ndahlohke* contributes to the field of residential school literature by focusing on the unsafe and relentless student labour at Mount Elgin Industrial School.

Woolford comparatively analyzes the regional and temporal differences between boarding schools from the United States and Canada in *This Benevolent Experiment.* Woolford's approach investigates four school at an international and local scale. The schools include two from New Mexico, Albuquerque Indian School, and Santa Fe Indian School; and two from

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[86] Mary Jane Logan McCallum. *Nii Ndahohke: Boys' and Girls' Work in Mount Elgin Industrial School, 1890-1915* (Friesen, 2022), 1.
[87] Ibid, *5.*
[88] Ibid, 2.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Julie Tucker. "Afterword," In Mary Jane Logan McCallum. *Nii Ndahohke: Boys' and Girls' Work in Mount Elgin Industrial School, 1890-1915* (Friesen, 2022), 66.

Manitoba, the Portage la Prairie Indian Residential School and the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School. Woolford explains that "settler colonial practices of assimilative education as a series of nets that operates at macro-, meso-, and microsocietal level," and when these are collectively examined, they create a settler colonial mesh that fluctuates over time and space.[91] Although the Manitoba residential schools operated separately, the schools and policies interacted with one another and often link histories of communities together. Woolford notes that the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School and Portage la Prairie Indian Residential School had students from numerous First Nation communities across Manitoba being brought in to attend, similar to the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School. Woolford further discusses a preventorium created at the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School that brought in students from Pine Creek and Sandy Bay.[92] A preventorium was an institution designed to stop the spread of tuberculosis by keeping infected students separate from non-infected children. Woolford's comparative analysis of the four boarding schools offers a distinct perspective on understanding the assimilative practices employed through education as part of a genocidal project.

Through research on the various residential schools in Manitoba, our comprehension advances on the way in which these schools worked individually and collectively to gain a more thorough understanding of residential school history in Manitoba. A focused local study of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School situated in the centre of the Sandy Bay community presents a unique opportunity to contribute to the growing field of residential school literature by examining the school through the lens of the community's experiences over several

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[91] Andrew Woolford. *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 3.
[92] Ibid, 243.

generations.[93] Investigating the community's past allows us to witness the development of social and cultural impacts on the present, empowering Sandy Bay to identify opportunities for healing.

Recentering Local History – Methods section

It is my goal to contribute to the field of community-led residential school history by situating the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School within its community context to promote healing for Survivors and descendants of the school through creating opportunities to address specific needs for individuals' wellbeing.[94] Examining the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School from the community lens binds individuals' perspectives, creating a collective past that reflects the experiences of the entire community.[95] As a community member of Sandy Bay, I have an insider perspective that allows for an understanding of the community's ways of knowing, being, and doing that adequately addresses the community's goals, aspirations, and perspectives.[96] My research will support Indigenous wellbeing by, for, and with Indigenous Peoples.[97] Histories with communities recount local histories of struggle and construct a new history representative of the community's collective experiences, thereby confronting existing myths from the past.[98]

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[93] Michael Arnold Williams. *Researching Local History: The Human Journey.* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 6.
[94] Sheryl R. Lightfoot. "Revealing, reporting, and reflecting," *in Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies* edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 299.
[95] Michael Arnold Williams. *Researching Local History: The Human Journey.* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.
[96] Robert Innes. "Introduction: Native studies and Native Cultural Preservation, Revitalization, and Persistence." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal,* (34(2), 2010), 3.
[97] Kim Tallbear. "Standing with and Speaking as Faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies,* edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 84.
[98] Amy E. Den Ouden. "Histories with communities," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies,* edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 143.

This confrontation includes writing against colonial silencing mechanisms used to legitimate colonial history.[99] Local histories hold the potential to reconstruct our ancestors lives, recapturing how they experienced the world: what they were thinking, how they felt, what they hoped and wished for.[100] Finally, histories with communities encourages us to look back and see ahead historical transformations, bringing the past into the future to identify specific needs for individual wellbeing.[101] Understanding the school's history will allow for the community to mourn the lost lives of students, commemorate Survivors, and re-center our history.

Throughout my research, I will be using Indigenous methodologies that prioritize kinship connections and respect in bringing knowledge of the past into the present.[102] Woolford explains the process of working with Assiniboia Indian Residential School Survivors and being presented the opportunity to use "academic resources to respond to the everyday needs of a particular Survivor community."[103] This requires unsettling the researchers relationship with knowledge, thereby "surrendering ownership, control, access, and possession to the community."[104] I plan to proceed in studying the history of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School using community models of care and kinship-based archival methods, engaging in mutual learning, sharing, and knowledge production, prioritizing community wants and needs.[105]

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[99] Ibid.
[100] Joseph Anthony Amato. Rethinking Home a Case for Writing Local History. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 3.
[101] Amy E. Den Ouden. "Histories with communities," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 149.
[102] Sean Carleton. "Settler Anxiety and State Support for Missionary Schooling in Colonial British Columbia, 1849–1871," 11.
[103] Survivors of the Assiniboia Indian Residential School and Andrew Woolford. *Did You See Us?* 198.
[104] Ibid, 198.
[105] Alexandra Giancarlo, Janice Forsyth, Braden Te Hiwi, & Taylor McKee. "Methodology and Indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences." *Visual Studies.* 36, 4-5, 2021), 407.

Addressing residential school history requires viewing the comprehensive colonial history and present through a holistic approach based on Indigenous understandings that "everything is related."[106] This requires addressing historical wrongs alongside the ongoing legacies. Sheryl R. Lightfoot argues that by engaging in *Revealing, Reporting, and Reflecting* on reconciliation projects we can centralize Indigenous voices, perspectives, needs and futures.[107] Linda Tuhiawai Smith argues "the negation of Indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization," and further adds, "reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization."[108] Jane Griffith refers to Survivors as breathing archives, experts on the residential school experiences.[109] My research will involve Indigenous oral histories as they illuminate perspectives that have been historically denied by written records, thus allowing for the advancement of Indigenous Peoples through the exposure of hidden histories and historical injustices. Oral history allows for Indigenous Peoples to reclaim the past as recollections contrast to what has been preserved in government and church documents to hold these institutions accountable for wrongdoings.[110] Through testimonies, Indigenous Peoples attain the ability to reclaim history and restoration of spirit as they stand at the centre with foremost voices, with government policy and colonial forces positioned in the background.[111] Truth-telling assists the reconciliation

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[106] Sheryl R. Lightfoot. "Revealing, reporting, and reflecting," 301.
[107] Ibid, 304.
[108] Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, 2021.
[109] Jane Griffith. 2009. "Settler Colonial Archives: Some Canadian Contexts." *Settler Colonial Studies*, (9, 3, 2009), 320.
[110] Waziyatawin Angela Wilson & Eli Taylor. *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2005), *35.*
[111] Ibid, 240.

process through the restoration of human dignity as victims of violence, while holding the government accountable.[112] Aroha Harris argues life histories counterbalance the dominance of the state's record that is told about Indigenous Peoples.[113] Oral histories are illuminating sources that can be read with and against archives which writers of history depend on.[114] The reinterpretation of these narratives in light of Survivors' voices presents the space of narrative, linking the past with the future to create meaning in the present, through a continuous process of *restorying*.[115] This process counters societal silences by individualizing historical records and eliminates erasure in record keeping. In the face of marginalization and misrepresentation, revealing the truth and highlighting the stories from former students present the opportunity to reflect upon community history and progress toward a better future collectively through an understanding of the consequential impacts on individuals, families, and the community. Through a collaborative healing process with participants, storytelling will work towards the resurgence of dignity and agency, and encourage reconnection to culture, voice, family, and community.[116]

While oral histories constitute a collective memory within themselves, I plan to combine archival work and oral histories to integrate Survivor perspectives into the historical records, thereby challenging colonial narratives and taking back history for Survivors and the

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[112] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,* 148.
[113] Aroha Harris. "History with Nana," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 138.
[114] Ibid, 133.
[115] Alexandra Giancarlo, Janice Forsyth, Braden Te Hiwi, & Taylor McKee. "Methodology and Indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences," 418.
[116]Rachel L Burrage, Sandra L Momper, & Joseph P Gone. "Beyond Trauma: Decolonizing Understandings of Loss and Healing in the Indian Residential School System of Canada." *Journal of Social Issues.* (2022), 27.

community.[117] Archival documents on the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School will offer insights into the school's operation including funding; staffing; the conditions of the school; the treatment of students and community members; and daily routines. Survivors sharing their experiences through oral history will bridge the gaps of knowledge from archives by providing essential information about the school and the lasting impact it has had. Therefore, investigation of both approaches will provide insight from all parties involved and lead to a more comprehensive understanding. Applying a local historical lens reveals collective changes on the community, offering the chance for community members of Sandy Bay to reflect upon the past of our people and identify healing strategies to address community needs.

Staff administrators, church organizations, and the federal government documented the residential school system in reports that are now archived. While these records can inform us on the operations and historical contextualization of the schools, relying solely on written sources misinterprets historical events by disregarding pivotal perspectives.[118] The structure and role of archives are within the national boundaries and histories that exclude Indigenous communities and reinforce colonial paternalism.[119] Those intentionally undocumented marginalized groups felt they were unworthy of documentation, or because their narratives ran counter to accepted societal beliefs and colonial agendas.[120] Archives are not neutral and contain the power to define what is and what is not an object of research or mention.[121] Most archival materials relating to

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[117] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing." *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies,* (3(2), 2021), 11.
[118] William Bauer Jr, "Oral History," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies,* edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 164.
[119] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health." *British Journal of Canadian Studies*. (30(2), 2017), 164.
[120] Ibid, 167.
[121] Ibid, 167.

residential schooling document colonial violence and racism, as well as abuse, neglect, and systemic racism that occurred within.[122] Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan argue that what was documented by residential school staff rarely documented the reality of experiences that students endured.[123] Moreover, the archives focus on the schools operation and do not offer insight into the schools impacts on students and the community. My research in archives requires using practices of reading "against the grain" to consider the intentions and ideologies of staff and state officials and reading "with the grain" to obtain a depiction of the treatment of Indigenous Peoples.[124] It is crucial that the colonial narrative that disregards and misinterprets Indigenous experiences is shifted from the settler state to Indigenous perspectives. Through use of community-driven decision-making processes, Euro-centric structures and traditional archival power structures are pushed back, allowing those who are impacted by trauma to hold the power.[125]

Lightfoot argues further research is needed to investigate historical wrongs in truth-telling contexts.[126] This includes a collective and collaborative approach to memory work, storytelling, archival work, and community-based historical documentary work.[127] The legacy of the residential school system continues, reflected in inequities in education, income, and health between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians.[128] Through the process of obtaining

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[122] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives," 6.
[123] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives," 6.
[124] Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "Laws, codes, and informal practices," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies,* edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 280.
[125] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives," 6*11.*
[126] Sheryl R. Lightfoot, "Revealing, reporting, and reflecting," 299.
[127] Ibid, 299.
[128] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,* 129.

histories from community, we write against colonial silencing mechanisms that were used to legitimate assimilation and colonial history.[129] With a focus on Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous storytelling, Sandy Bay will be able to transfer the residential school narrative from settler control to a localized history told by its people, thereby creating a new record that is representative of Sandy Bay's knowledges and customs.[130] My research on the history of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School will further reconciliation as it serves "to know, to explain, to preserve, to understand, and to commemorate."[131] By recentering local history, my work will further public knowledge by providing Canadians the opportunity to understand how the residential school system operated within the community of Sandy Bay, the shared experiences of Survivors, and how this has impacted the community collectively. Through this work, Sandy Bay will mourn the lives of lost students, commemorate Survivors, and begin a pathway toward healing.

[129] Amy E. Den Ouden, "Histories with communities," 143.
[130] Rachel George, "A Move to Distract," 97.
[131] Joseph Anthony Amato. Rethinking Home a Case for Writing Local History. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 5.

Chapter 2

Dismantling Colonial Narratives

My archival research uncovering the history of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School (SBIRS) had three primary objectives: to obtain a depiction of the school's condition, to obtain a depiction of the experiences of students, and to utilize archival resources to support the needs of the community. A comprehensive understanding requires consideration of all insights and revelations of the various forms of memory, including the experiences and views of three sets of actors - Indigenous Peoples, the government, and missionaries.[132] This chapter will highlight the narrative as told by the school staff and government in reports, letters, and other documents. Moreover, this chapter will explore the misconceptions about Indigenous Peoples expressed in archives and how community-based archival practices can assist in reclaiming the historical narrative to more accurately reflect the community. An investigation into the archives provides insight into Sandy Bay's history by obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of how the school operated, the experiences of students through biased narratives, and what administrators chose to report.

In the 1870's, as settlers were moving west, Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries established missions and boarding schools across the nation.[133] In the 1880's, larger residential schools began to be established, and the system grew exponentially. It was not until the late 1990's that the last federally supported residential school had closed its door. It is estimated that at least 150,000 Indigenous students attended the residential school system.[134] The Indian

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[132] J.R Miller. "Beyond Closure, 1992 to 1998." *Residential Schools and Reconciliation. (*Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017), 85.
[133] Ibid, 5.
[134] Ibid, 6.

Residential Schools Settlement Agreement provided compensation to former students across 139 residential schools and residents. The major denominations that partnered with the government in operating residential schooling were Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, Methodist, and Presbyterian.[135]

The Canadian government's aim was to absorb Indigenous Peoples within settler society through assimilation to rid Canada of reserves, treaties and Aboriginal rights.[136] Thus, the residential school system became a central operation aligned with their intentions of achieving cultural genocide. Based off the assumption that European civilization and Christian religions were superior, the system attempted to rid Indigenous students of their Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.[137] For many generations, the damaging experiences and realities of residential schools in Canada were concealed, suppressed, and discredited.[138] Staff administrators, church organizations, and the federal government documented the residential school system in reports framed by their belief in the assimilative project that are now archived.[139] For a long time, these were the primary sources of evidence concerning the residential school system and therefore directed the dominant narrative of residential school history. Residential school documents intentionally excluded Indigenous perspectives while presenting decisions that profoundly impacted student lives.[140] Indigenous perspectives were

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[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid, 5.
[137] Ibid, 7.
[138] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 189.
[139] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health." *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, (30(2), 2017), 165.
[140] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing." Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies, (3(2), 2021), 7.

intentionally undocumented due to the belief that they were unworthy of documentation, or because their aims and goals differed from colonial agendas.[141] Therefore, these archives are sites of power that are neither stable nor neutral and require researchers to not only extract, but to treat archives as subject to interrogation.[142] While investigating residential school archives, the original intentions must be acknowledged, ones that sought to justify and legitimize the choices and actions of school administrators as well as the nation state through the exclusion of Indigenous voices, bodies, economies, histories, and socio-political structures.[143]

Archival records for residential schools hold the opportunity to assist in reclaiming Indigenous identities and community healing if they are reinterpreted through a community lens.[144] Community-based archival practices form a representational belonging that asserts communities' historical presence, through community assertion and verification of facts in the face of silencing, marginalization, and misrepresentation.[145] These perspectives allow us to disrupt harmful historical narratives imposed upon Indigenous Peoples and used against them in ways that are distinctly political.[146] As a result, archival documents can be used as resources for community to determine which materials adequately represent their history. This process assists with correcting misconceptions, advancing education, strengthening kinship ties, and fostering intercommunity relationships.

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[141] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 167.
[142] Jane Griffith. 2019. "Settler Colonial Archives: Some Canadian Contexts." *Settler Colonial Studies*, (9, 3, 2009), 321.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid, 1.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Amy E. Den Ouden. "Histories with communities," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies,* edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 143.

Although it is common for residential school archives to be either destroyed or misplaced, I was fortunate to access a vast amount of archival material on the SBIRS. Utilizing the archives from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), the Saint Boniface Historical Society, and Library and Archives Canada I sifted through records containing photographs of students, correspondence detailing the conditions of the school, and school documents that detailed student attendance. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the interests of the government and missionaries of the SBIRS, and how these interests reflected onto the experiences of their students. This chapter will expand on community-based archival practices through the "*restorying"* of residential school archival material for the benefit of community.[147] By addressing residential school archives through community-driven practices we can reinterpret colonial history for the purpose of kinship reconnection, education, and healing.[148]

Attendance at the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School

In 1905, the Oblates Fathers, in agreement with the Department of Indian Affairs, closed the doors to the Saint Boniface Industrial School located in Winnipeg to open three schools closer to First Nations communities, with hopes that a closer proximity would encourage more First Nation families to send their children to the schools. Three residential schools were thus opened in Fort Frances, Fort Alexander, and Sandy Bay. The SBIRS opened its doors in August

[147] Alexandra Giancarlo, Janice Forsyth, Braden Te Hiwi, & Taylor McKee. "Methodology and Indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences." *Visual Studies*, (36, 4-5, 2021), 407.
[148] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 168.

1905 with 34 students in attendance and closed in 1970 with 76 students.[149] 1950 was the year with the highest student enrollment, with 197 students attending. The school served Indigenous boys and girls from Sandy Bay and surrounding reserves operating as both a residential school and a day school and included grades 1-8. Each residential student was given a number when they were enrolled at the SBIRS. The opening year of the school began with student 1, and each enrollment went up chronologically by perceived binary gender. The final students enrolled were number 710 for females, and 618 for males. Based on these registrations in the quarterly returns, 1328 students were registered in residence over the period the school was in operation. The number of day school students registered is unknown. Information relating to the day school was largely dismissed in the archives, with the result that day school students' attendance records were rarely documented. It was frequently documented, however, that there were recommendations to transfer day school students to residence. During my research, I found only eight quarterly return documents from 1963 and 1964. These quarterly return documents, titled "Day pupils provided with noon lunches," listed only the name of each student along with the number of days they attended. In the first quarterly return of 1963, 48 day school students were in attendance, and by the first quarterly return of 1964, the number of day school students had doubled, with 97 students in attendance.

School staff advocated for day school students to be transferred to residence as they perceived their home environments to be inadequate. Indigenous parents were commonly seen as unfit parents due to lifestyles that ran contrary to European standards. Moreover, Indigenous

[149] L615. M21L 151, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

culture and traditions were seen as savage.[150] Through these misperceptions, missionaries suggested that by taking the children into residence, they would be "saving" them from their life at home with their family and community. Missionaries would also mention the lack of adequate housing, clothing and food within Sandy Bay, advocating that the only way to help these families was to take in the children. A letter sent by Principal Reverend J. Lambert to the Chief Training Division of Indian Affairs Branch states, "In my opinion the Sandy Bay Indians are not quite prepared, nor do they have the resources to maintain their children on a day-school basis for some time to come."[151]

An article by Ted Weatherhead in the Winnipeg Free Press of January 1960 titled "Indians Close to Starvation: They Lack Food and Jobs; Plight Virtually Ignored" provides commentary on the living conditions in Sandy Bay, arguing that the people of Sandy Bay are in a "semi-starvation diet for the winter amid what appears to be government indifference and public concern."[152] Weatherhead mentions that fishing and trapping have not been plentiful, and farm work and employment were difficult to find for community members. John Beaulieu, Sandy Bay Chief, and Councilor Doug Desjarlais estimated 75 percent of the 900 Sandy Bay residents were hungry and stated that their request for flour was turned down by Indian Affairs. Weatherhead wrote that Sandy Bay received a small number of elk that the community had to ration to survive.[153] Weatherhead referred to their food supply as an "elk bone diet" due to community members using the bones in soup. Weatherhead attributed this issue to Indian Affairs, and

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[150] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 7.
[151] L615. M21L 151, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*
[152] Ted Weatherhead. "Indians Close to Starvation." Winnipeg Free Press, (1960), 1.
[153] Ibid, 11.

compared what Sandy Bay received to the relief supplies Dog Creek, a reserve only 35 miles away, received at regular amounts. When Weatherhead sought comments from the SBIRS staff about the lack of resources provided to Sandy Bay residents, many declined or refused to provide their name as they did not want to provoke conflict or lose their job. An unnamed teacher stated, "I think you will agree it is not in the interest of the Indians to make it possible for them to sit back and exist on relief."[154] Leo Lambert, a teacher, stated some day school students may appear hungry but attributed this issue to lack of sleep, arguing that the school provided them a lunch at four PM. He went on mention the generosity of the school toward its day-school students, as the lunch was only meant for students in residence. Lambert stated that the lunches provided to students were either a bun, apple, cookies, or a slice of bread and butter.[155] Most reasonable people would consider such portions to be hardly a snack for a growing child rather than a primary meal. Weatherhead's article provides insight into the issues community members were facing demonstrating that difficulty finding employment, along with limited hunting and fishing success created conditions in which residents of Sandy Bay required food relief from Indian Affairs. However, Indian Affairs ignored Sandy Bay requests and provided inadequate amounts of food so that community members remained hungry. The circumstances suggest that hunger would push residents to send their children to residential school. Although the students were still not provided an adequate diet, in dire circumstances, there may still have been relief in knowing that your child would at least receive some form of food.

Overcrowding at the residential school seemed to be a prevalent issue throughout its years of operation. In 1934, a letter written to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs urged

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[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.

construction of a larger school that could accommodate the large number of children in Sandy Bay and surrounding communities. The letter stated that the population of children available to attend school was about 200, while the existing school could only accommodate a maximum of 80 children.[156] Despite the addition of new wings, the school seemed to consistently hold more students that it could adequately fit. The quarterly return of September 1950 marked the highest attendance of residential school students throughout the history of the school, with 197 students in residence. Although we are unable to determine the number of students that attended the day school for each year, a note from March of 1950 states that 33 students were not documented due to attending day school which suggests that day school students were a minority of those educated at the school. In the day school student quarterly return of 1964, 94 students were documented as attending day schooling, while 149 students were documented as attending in residence. Additionally, it is documented that missionaries consistently sought to recruit children to attend the school, despite ongoing issues of overcrowding. In 1942, the new principal, Father Lemire, conducted a survey of all the children in Sandy Bay to determine the number of students he desired in residence.[157] In 1943, Father Lemire then wrote to the Superintendent of Welfare and Training, stating "What I find also very important for the future of this reserve is compulsory education. It might be somehow difficult and hard to break in the parents towards it, but it has to come if we wish to built (sic) up any future hopes for this Reservation. I believe, forty children or more, of school-age, on the Reserve, to whom the parents are refusing education… It is too bad. There is lot of room in School for them all, and more yet."[158] Just two years later, a letter is sent to the Department of Indian Affairs from a school inspector stating that the grant of the

[156] L615. M21L 104, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*
[157] DIAND, Residential Schools Records Office, File 501/23-5-076, Vol. 1.
[158] Indian Affairs. RG 10, Volume 6279, file 584-11, part 1.

school covers 95 students while 115 are enrolled. It is further mentioned that Father Lemire had 15 more student applications and would therefore like the grant to be increased to accommodate 130 students.[159]

Conditions at the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School

The school was comprised of a dormitory, infirmary, recreation room, kitchen, dining room, sewing room, and classrooms. The basement held a power plant, a furnace, laundry room. Moreover, the school had a workshop and carpentry shop adjoining the school, and further away, a farm comprised of crops, cows and poultry, and a barn. School inspectors often visited the school to report the school's conditions to the Department of Indian Affairs. These reports largely detailed the cleanliness of the school, praised the school staff for their hard work in civilizing the children, and spoke of repairs in need of attention. The principal of the school would often send written requests to the Department as well, most commonly regarding student overcrowding. For example, a school inspection from 1930 listed the required repairs needed for the school including a repair of stairs, repair of walls and interior decorating in almost every room and outside, and a complete overhaul of plumbing.[160] The inspection further noted that the school was in miserable condition, and that the lighting was dangerous and dim. A letter written in 1943 states that the nurse on duty in Sandy Bay had left the community and not returned in over seven months, with the result that the "Indians have been very neglected, especially in terms of medical care."[161]

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[159] DIAND, Residential Schools Records Office, File 501/25-1-076, Vol. 1.
[160] L615. M21L 98, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*
[161] L615. M21L 122, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

Figure 1.1: Photograph of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School[162]

The school inspections and requests from staff inform us that the school structures were in constant need of repair. Missionaries frequently wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs expressing frustration over numerous attempts to inform the Department about the repairs without any response. The conditions of the school as described in the archives reveal to us that while the children worked hard to maintain the conditions and cleanliness of the school, the building was poorly built, unsafe for children, and often lacked necessities such as water, medical care, sufficient beds and adequate food. Although the school received upgrades throughout the period of operation, the correspondence between school staff and the Department of Indian Affairs indicate that the building was in constant need of repairs.

Treatment of Students

The rationalization of colonial interests through firsthand accounts within residential school archives demonstrates the foundational beliefs of colonizers that framed the residential

[162] SHSB101208. *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

school program.[163] Residential school archives reveal documentation of colonial violence and racism, along with instances of abuse, neglect, and systemic racism that children endured.[164] The terminology used when speaking about Indigenous Peoples were derogatory and filled with biased perspectives on Indigenous bodies, intellect, and life.[165] Missionaries operated under the pretense of benevolence, claiming, whether sincerely or otherwise that they were providing opportunities to "save" Indians through assimilation. The terminology used by both missionaries and members of the department of Indian Affairs were condescending to community members and placed blame for the conditions in which they were living on supposed flaws within Indigenous societies rather than recognizing these conditions as the outcomes of colonial policies toward Indigenous Peoples.

An archival document discussed new additions added to the school in the 1960's, and the writer emphasized the perceived notion that Indigenous children needed Christianity to integrate them into a "Christian society."[166] Moreover, the writer suggested that Sandy Bay is privileged to receive a Western and religious education, furthering the humanitarian narrative in which Indigenous Peoples should be grateful to have attended residential schooling. It is suggested within this letter that unless Christian, there is no place for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This letter highlights the foundational ideologies of the residential school system to assimilate Indigenous Peoples to a perceived Canadian ideal. The writer indicated, "Now, more than ever, we need Christian schools to teach our young this Christian way of life, to ensure Christian

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[163] Jennifer Hardwick. "Dismantling Narratives: Settler Ignorance, Indigenous Literature and the Development of a Decolonizing Discourse." *Topia, (*Montreal, 33(33), 2015), 102.
[164] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing," 6.
[165] Ibid, 7.
[166] L611.M27 1- L611- 1963, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

homes and a Christian society. Such is the character of the Sandy Bay Indian School where you are privileged to receive your education, my dear children," going on to add, "It's also with deep appreciation that we acknowledge the interest of the Indian Affairs Branch in Indian Education as testified by the presence of its representatives. We are all aware that much remains to be accomplished in this field of education, but we are confident that, working hand in hand in the study of these problems and in our efforts to cope with the preset needs of Indian Education in our country we shall find the solution that will respect local conditions and foster culture according to present possibilities toward the final goal of integration into the Canadian unity."[167]

A chief of training division Philip Phelan wrote a letter to Sandy Bay's Indian Agent on 1937 following the death of a SBIRS student, Bella Whitford. The student had died December 16, while the letter written on January 20th stated that the Department of Indian Affairs did not receive an inquiry into the cause and circumstances of the death of Bella. Phelan scolded the Indian Agent for not informing the principal to complete a memorandum form that details the circumstances of student deaths. The inquiry was to be completed in collaboration with the Indian Agent, Principal and Medical Officer, and to be forwarded to the Department of Indian Affairs, while also informing the parents. Finally, on February 8th, the memorandum report indicated that Bella had passed due to pulmonary tuberculosis. Sixteen students of the SBIRS were reported as passing away during their time at the school. While I could not locate all their memorandum reports, the ones documented were due to illness such as tuberculosis.

Table 1.1: Honouring the following Sandy Bay Indian Residential School Students that have passed away while at school.

Arthur Mousseau- 1937	Bella Desjarlais- 1920

[167] L611.M27 1- L611- 1963, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

Clifford Swan- 1948

Harvey Wilson Beaulieu- 1950

Jean Baptiste Hunter- 1926

Lawrence Clearsky- 1937

Mabel Houle- 1920

Mary A. Desjarlais- 1928

Mary Bone- 1946

Masie Bella Whitford- 1936

Patrick Beaulieu- 1937

Philomene Mcivor- 1944

Russell Rufus Cook-1953

Veronique Levasseur- 1932

William Manijins- 1947

William Richard-1920

The majority of correspondence in the archives wrote of the great job the missionaries were doing at civilizing the children while emphasizing the perceived incompetence of community members due to their conditions of living and failing to send their children to school. Response letters to Sandy Bay Chief and Council from the missionaries were within the archives, although the initial letters from the band council were undocumented. A letter in 1948 was written in response to Chief George Sutherland's concern for the children and request to visit the school. The response stated that a notice of a planned visit is required, and the visit must be accompanied by the principal. The unknown writer further attempts to ease the Chief by stating that it is a penance for children to go to school anywhere and always has been.[168]

Community-based Archival Work

Students were transported in to attend the SBIRS from across Manitoba, including one student from Cote, Saskatchewan. Sociologist Andrew Woolford in *This Benevolent Experiment* states the exercise of transporting children to far away communities and enforcing distance was

[168] L615. M21L 133, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

"an attempt to forge a radical break between Indigenous children and their communities."[169] Many of these communities were located far away from Sandy Bay, and some had residential schools located within their own communities, suggesting that in these cases, distance was used as a tactic to further separate children from their communities or prevent student run aways. The TRC states that corporal punishment by school staff often led students to run away.[170] They further describe one scenario in 1937 where a SBIRS student escaped home, and when the boy's father refused to return him to school, he was sentenced to ten days in jail. To prevent the boy from running away again, he was sent to a school in Saskatchewan.[171]

Beginning in 1941, the quarterly returns began documenting home communities of students in attendance. The numerous communities represent the shared history that connects various First Nations. The table provided below references the SBIRS students from 1941-1970 and their retrospective communities. Sandy Bay is located on the Western shore of Lake Manitoba, 165 kilometres Northwest of Winnipeg.

Table 1.2: Community Attendance of the SBIRS from Quarterly Return Archives 1941-1970.

Sandy Bay - 463	Long Plain – 50	Swan Lake – 27
Ebb and Flow – 100	Waywayseecapo – 66	Mathias Colomb – 5
Rolling River – 29	Dog Creek – 55	Island Lake – 1
Lake Manitoba – 19	Elphinstone – 25	Valley River – 3
Keeseekoowenin - 6	Crane River – 18	Pine Creek – 4

[169] Andrew Woolford. This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 226.
[170] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 88.
[171] Ibid, 111.

Fort Alexander – 3	Oak River – 1	Bloodvein – 4
Hole River – 1	Norway House – 3	Camperville – 5
Cote, SK – 1	Nelson House – 6	Jackhead – 1
Roseau River – 19	Gods Lake – 8	Shoal River – 1
Waterhen – 8	Peguis – 1	

The attendance of students from each community can be correlated to distance, as Ebb and Flow First Nation has the second highest enrollment of students and is the closest First Nation community to Sandy Bay. Interestingly, many of the communities that students were coming from had residential schools situated within their community, or near it. Moreover, many of these communities are far distances from Sandy Bay, including Gods Lake which is 1012 kilometres Northeast of Sandy Bay. The community names listed below are sourced directly from the archives and do not reflect any current names the communities may have adopted after changes. Furthermore, "Elphinstone" is not an Indigenous community, indicating that the students may have been living off-reserve, the students were non-Indigenous, or that the school staff listing the communities used the nearest municipalities that refer to the respective Indigenous community. The TRC notes that often residential schools made "made no distinction between status and non-status or Métis children."[172]

The archives on the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School includes hundreds of photographs of former students, staff, community members, and the school itself. The photographs commonly consisted of smiling children. The reality of what is occurring behind

[172] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,* 41.

these pictures is what is unsettling. Images of students smiling at residential school furthered the humanitarian narrative of residential schools that the Indian Service shared with the public, and obscured the realities of abuse and neglect, thereby reinforcing positive support for residential schools and assimilation.[173] Captions under photographs in scrapbooks, calendars, and articles of the SBIRS mentioned the happiness and success of students, depicting a narrative that the school was a good place for children. Archival photographs of students at residential school emphasized the "civilizing process" that was promoted by the government and church-run institutions.[174] The carefully constructed photos are filled with artificial poses and intentional symbolism that speak to the colonial relationship through attempts to remove cultural identity from the students to produce a unified acceptable social group.[175] The residential school experience was therefore visually presented through the colonial lens, with an aim to promote the schools as healthy and successful.[176]

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[173] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 172.
[174] Alexandra Giancarlo, Janice Forsyth, Braden Te Hiwi, & Taylor McKee. "Methodology and Indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences," 410.
[175] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 170.
[176] Ibid, 174.


Page 8 THE INDIAN MISSIONARY RECORD MAY, 1948

A Visit To Sandy Bay

Figure 1.2: The Indian Missionary Record, "A Visit To Sandy Bay," May 1948.[177]

> Top left - Brother Bruyere with a group of small boys: Raymond Martin, Bill Paul, Stanley Mckay, John St. Paul, Leo Paul, Jos. McKay, Geo. Roulette, Lloyd Daniels, Fred Roulette, Charles Roulette, Frank Roulette, Louis Martin, Alex and J.B. Roulette. Top right – A group of boys went camping overnight, to dig Seneca root, earning $6.00 each on a special trip with Brother Bruyere, in the school truck. They cheer their manual instructor who is so devoted to them. Ahmo, Elsie Paul, Annie Malcolm, Myrtle Burns, Lena Misiabit, Josephin Martin, Martha Mcivor and Evangeline Cook. Centre left - These cheerful young misses attending school are: Veronique McIvor, Joyce Roulette, Irene McIvor, Darcy Levasseaur, Madeleine Beaulieu, Florence Ahmo, Elsie Paul, Annie Malcolm, Myrtle Burns, Lena Misiabit, Josephine Martin, Martha McIvor, and Evangeline Cook. Centre right - Proud of their manual training achievements, these girls show the badges they won in weaving, sewing, housekeeping courses: they are: Edith Paul, Isobel Mousseau, Esther Houle, Lina Clara Roulette, Irene Levasseur, Angeline Hunter, Madeleine Beaulieu, Evangeline Paul, Darcy Levasseur, Rachel Bone, Edna Houle, Henriette Beauchamp, Olga Paul, Isabelle McKay, Joyce Roulette, and Myrtle Burns.[178]

[177] SJSH 0696/1054/32, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*
[178] SJSH 0696/1054/32, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

Figure 1.2 portrays a series of photographs that were published in The Indian Missionary Board. Beneath the photos, the caption stated that the students "cheered their manual instructor who is so devoted to them," and further mentioned that the female students were "proud of their manual training achievements."[179] Viewing photography as capturing objective truths works to silence colonial experiences, thereby creating, distorting, and perpetrating colonial ideologies.[180] The uniformity of students, demonstrated through hair length and style as well as clothing provide insight into the students' experiences and the power school staff had within the system,[181] shedding light onto the civilizing process.[182] The carefully constructed photos are filled with artificial poses and intentional symbolism that speaks to the colonial relationship between students and administrators through attempts to remove cultural identity from the students to portray the illusion of assimilated Canadian children.[183] The residential school experience, presented through the colonial lens of these photographs, aimed to promote the schools as healthy and successful.[184]

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[179] SJSH 0696/1054/32, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*
[180] Ibid.
[181] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 163.
[182] Alexandra Giancarlo, Janice Forsyth, Braden Te Hiwi, & Taylor McKee. "Methodology and Indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences," 410.
[183] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 171.
[184] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 174.

Figure 1.3 Photograph of students at the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School.[185]

Figure 1.4: Photograph of students in class at the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School.[186]

[185] SJSH0696/1054/31, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives*.
[186] SHSB101204, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

Figure 1.5: Photograph of female students and priests at the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School.[187]

Figure 1.6: Photograph of male students and a priest at the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School.[188]

[187] SHSB121565, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*
[188] SHSB22642, *Société historique de Saint-Boniface Archives.*

Visual reinterpretation refers to a practice in which historical images from institutions are returned to the original communities for re-interpretation.[189] Photographs can be used for storytelling to facilitate conversation and memories among Survivors, while contributing to the field of visual repatriation. Through these re-interpretations, community members tell stories that are relevant to the community, thus engaging in the practice of "*restorying*."[190] As a result, archives move away from colonial definitions of archival value to thus prioritize community well-being, allowing community members to determine what is essential for remembering and healing.[191]

After locating hundreds of photographs of students, staff, and community members of Sandy Bay, I consulted with Sandy Bay councilor Randal Roulette regarding what should be done with these photographs. We discussed the significance of making them accessible to community members. Social media is the main form of engagement among members of Sandy Bay and seeing as there was already a Facebook group "The Sandy Bay Indian Residential School Photos and Memory Repository" that had been created which had over 700 members, we agreed to share some of these photos with that group. 70 photographs were selected, based on the quality of the photos, and posted to the group, encouraging members to comment with stories or names of those photographed. Numerous users filled the comments with the names of those photographed, or acknowledging their family members: grandpas, mothers, fathers, aunts, and

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[189] Alexandra Giancarlo, Janice Forsyth, Braden Te Hiwi, & Taylor McKee. "Methodology and Indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences," 407.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing," 11.

uncles. Others recognized the rooms within the residential school. One comment shared "Bottom left [photo] second from the left, my mom [heart emoticon]. Love seeing these pics since I only saw her for a short time while she was still alive." The post gained a lot of appreciation and love, with people making kinship connections and sharing stories. Moreover, many people recognized the injustices behind the pictures in which their relatives were photographed. The Facebook posting system which allowed participants to respond to one another created a space in which users engaged in meaningful dialogue, reflection, and family.[192] The practice of adding names to archival materials relating to residential schools connects the student's history and lived experiences to the photograph, while also providing commemoration to former students. Visual repatriation confronts colonial histories that the photographs reproduce, thus reclaiming them by shifting them from institutions to the family and community sphere.[193] Although these records could potentially trigger intergenerational trauma, with community input and support, archives documenting historical trauma hold the opportunity to reduce shame and encourage education and healing.[194] McCracken and Hogan argue that reinterpreting archival materials through community perspectives "brings the history of Residential Schools into the present and transforms static archival records into active parts of individual, family, and community history."[195]

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[192] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "That's my Auntie": Community-Guided Residential School History. *KULA*, (5(1), 2021), 2.
[193] Alexandra Giancarlo, Janice Forsyth, Braden Te Hiwi, & Taylor McKee. "Methodology and Indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences," 411.
[194] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing," 9.
[195] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "That's my Auntie," 2.

The quarterly return archives of the SBIRS not only provides a list of students in attendance, but they also provide students number, community, students date of birth, grade, standing, trades pursued (such as sewing, cooking, shopwork, etcetera), days in residence, days in classroom, and remarks that note instances such as illnesses, transfers, dischargements, and deaths. While the school resided on Sandy Bay land, the school is a history that connects numerous First Nation communities whose children attended the institution. Through use of archives, we can better commemorate former students. Residential school archives are not simply administrative records, they record Indigenous experiences, and generations of Indigenous Peoples who have passed.[196] Every name listed within the register depicts a child that was taken away from their family, community, and culture.[197] Moreover, archived photographs of students may be the only photographs families have of their relatives.

McCracken and Hogan argue that archival records may shape community and family history, through reconnection with lost family membered, confirming memories of the past, or providing evidence required to seek justices.[198] Through community-based practices, archival spaces therefore transform from the original colonial intentions of the images to community truths that serves the needs of Survivors, descendants, and the community.[199] The archives become a living connection to their family stories.

Conclusion

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[196] Ibid, 4.
[197] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing," 8.
[198] Ibid, 12.
[199] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 178.

Timothy Stanley argues that the absence of Indigenous perspectives in history racializes Indigenous Peoples as individuals whose motives are unknown and irrational, deeming them moral outsiders and justifying racism as inevitable and eternal, resulting in the historical and contemporary treatment of marginalized groups to stay within the realm of the oppressed.[200] In this sense, archival records were used to discipline Indigenous Peoples while "protecting" white people.[201]McCracken and Hogan argue that what was documented by residential school staff rarely documented the reality of experiences that students endured.[202] The very context of these records and their connection to the residential school system linked them to historical trauma and Indigenous experiences of loss of language, culture, and identity.[203] Community archival practices, on the other hand, constitute truth, acknowledgement, and connection to a community past.[204] Through confronting colonial documents, communities can practice strength, healing, and resilience.

Researching residential school archives allows us to see the foundational colonial intentions behind the schools. It allows us to witness how the schools operated systemically, what they lacked and required, and how the Department of Indian Affairs responded to these schools. Moreover, they provide insight into the intentions of the churches and government, and what they were trying to achieve from these schools. Facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the SBIRS requires knowledge on the foundational aspects of the school and how they

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[200] Timothy Stanley. The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-Racist Pedagogy, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, (19(1), 1998), 42.
[201] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 275.
[202] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing," 7.
[203] Ibid, 8.
[204] Krista McCracken, & Skylee-Storm Hogan. "That's my Auntie," 2.

operated within the community. However, residential school archives are linked to concepts of evidence, power, and silence.[205] Marginalized groups are intentionally undocumented within archives, resulting in absences that reflect power relationships. As a result, studying residential school history requires further evidence such as visual material and oral histories to support our understanding.[206] Oral history from Survivors fills the gaps of knowledge, providing the ability to gain an understanding of the experiences of students, what life was like, and how this has impacted individuals, families, and communities. A comprehensive understanding of the history and ongoing legacies of the school provides opportunities to address specific individual and community needs to move toward healing.

[205] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 166.

[206] Ibid, 165.

Chapter 3

Oral History from the Survivors of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School

Within the dominant settler colonial rhetoric on residential schools, the intricate knowledge of events Indigenous Peoples have faced within school walls were not heard for a large part of history due to oral histories being dismissed and not preserved in traditional archives.[207] The dominant collective narrative held by non-Indigenous people is a societal construct that fabricates a reality through the perpetuation of colonial beliefs and concealment of the mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples and settler colonialism.[208] Furthermore, settler colonial ideologies have largely shaped discourses surrounding residential schools through the justifications of Indigenous Peoples as inferior and resistant to progress and denial of settler colonialism.[209] The dominant public discourse, through the framing of settler colonialism, therefore, erases the settler colonial reality. The concealment of Indigenous narratives results in a misconception of community histories and misunderstanding of contemporary impacts. Many Canadians are still unaware of the tragedy of the residential schools despite the growing coverage of the destructive nature of the system. Moreover, many Canadians cannot grasp why the history and legacy of residential schools are "such a big deal" and are convinced they were not bad due to hearing about isolated positive experiences at the schools.[210] Proceeding with reconciliation first requires truth-telling and an understanding of what occurred to move forward

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[207] William Jr. Bauer. "Oral History," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies,* edited by Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 150.
[208] Laura Mudde. "Framing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Process in Canada: A Media Analysis of Settler Colonial Rhetoric and Colonial Denial, 2003-2016," *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry,* (7(2), 2020), 54.
[209] Ibid, 47.
[210] Cheryl Gaver. "Residential Schools in Canada: Why the Message Is Not Getting Across," in *Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation*, edited by Karine Vanthuyne and Brieg Capitaine (UBC Press, 2017), 202.

toward healing the consequences. Survivors' oral history present the opportunity for Indigenous Peoples to reclaim the past as their narratives provide contrast to what has been historically shared through residential records as well as hold the government accountable for wrongdoings.[211]

Survivor narratives form a collective memory that contrasts the idealized version portrayed in state documents and photographs through the revealing hidden histories and historical injustices Indigenous Peoples experienced, thus exposing settler colonialism and shifting residential school discourse. An understanding of the assimilatory and racist nature in which residential schools were conducted highlights the connection between colonial processes enforced by the federal government and the historical and contemporary impacts Indigenous Peoples consequently face.[212] Upon achieving this understanding, biased colonial historical narratives can exist as relics of the past. Moreover, truth-telling expresses sovereignty by reclaiming traditional understandings of the past for a decolonized history wherein Indigenous resistance to colonizing forces allows for the undoing of false narratives.[213] For Sandy Bay to begin healing at the community level requires revealing the untold history of the SBIRS, examining the impacts that continue to devastate individuals and families, and unpacking the intergenerational trauma through an individual and collective community process. This chapter will reveal the stories shared from Survivors of the SBIRS that touch on their experiences at the SBIRS. Through sharing of these stories, I aim to provide a local historical lens on the history of

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[211] Angela Wilson, & Eli Taylor. *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives. (*Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2005), 35.
[212] Timothy Stanley. "The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-Racist Pedagogy," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, (19(1), 1998), 48.
[213] Angela Wilson, & Eli Taylor. *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives, 1.*

the SBIRS as revealed through the perspectives of Survivors who have been largely unheard; to establish a holistic framework for healing within Sandy Bay; and to offer the opportunity for Canadians to understand a community perspective on the history of residential schools and its impacts.[214]

My research with the oral history of Sandy Bay Elders is Survivor-led research rooted in relationships, responsibility, and kindness. Through an emphasis on Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous stories, these stories are used to transfer control over the residential school narrative from the settler state to Indigenous Peoples, thereby creating a new historical record that is representative of Sandy Bay perspectives and customs.[215]

The oral narratives that contribute to this chapter come from Sandy Bay's Search for Missing Children and Unmarked Burials that is currently in progress. This project aims to locate missing children that attended the SBIRS, commemorate former students, facilitate education and dialogue on the historical and contemporary legacy of the school, and begin a pathway toward healing within the community. The project therefore conducted oral history interviews with former students of the SBIRS to allow them to share their experiences, address the ongoing legacies of residential schools, and provide possible healing strategies. This chapter will include the oral histories from five of these Survivors who have given consent for including their stories in this research.

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[214] Janice Cindy Gaudet, & Lawrence Matrin/Wapistan. "Learning through Conversation: An Inquiry into Shame," in *Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation*, edited by Karine Vanthuyne and Brieg Capitaine (UBC Press, 2017), 95.
[215] Rachel George. "A Move to Distract: Mobilizing Truth and Reconciliation in Settler Colonial States," in *Pathways of Reconciliation: Indigenous and Settler Approaches to Implementing the TRC's Calls to Action*, edited by Aimee Craft & Paulette Regan. (University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 97.

Linda Demerais

Linda Demerais is a resident in Sandy Bay and attended the school from 1961 at the age of seven, until 1969. She described her time at the residential school as “an awful experience.” She stated that life at the SBIRS was black and white, whereas at home, she was able to enjoy life and the culture. Attending residential school was the opposite of her life at home, as she was suddenly told by nuns and priests that her language was dirty, and ceremonies were “Satan’s gatherings.” Linda explained that her life at home prior to residential school was very cultural. She recalled that in her early childhood she would go to ceremonies and feel the love within her family. She explained that now, although the love is still there among her siblings, it felt as though her family was more connected prior to attending residential school.

In her interview, Linda stated, “The language we spoke was Ojibway, 100 percent no English, nothing,” she explained that this all changed after attending residential schooling. Linda shared that she continued to speak the language at school, but not openly. The priests and nuns told her it was a bad language and deemed it “the Devil’s language.” She further related, “When we were caught speaking our language they would wash our mouth with soap and water because it was a dirty language.” Linda explained that students would sometimes receive punishment in the form of physical abuse for speaking the language. When asked if students were able to practice any form of the culture or traditions, Linda stated “Nothing at all. Nothing. It was their way or no way.”

Linda shared in her interview that the daily schedule of the residential school was strict. She recalled that the students would wake up and pray, wash up, get dressed, fix the beds, go to the dining area, pray again, and eat. She explained that praying would occur numerous times

throughout the day, stating, “It was always pray, pray, pray… They were meaningless because it was memorized.” Linda recalled that they would have academic classes during the day, and if there was no church in the evening, they would study.

Linda explained that while she was at the school with her siblings and cousins, she was only able to interact with the girls. The students were divided by gender and age group. Linda stated that the only time she would saw her brothers was in the dining room, and the girls would sit on one side and the boys would sit on the other, “The nuns were walking around and as soon as they seen you look towards the boys, that was a no-no. Even if you’re looking at your brother like you’re happy to see them and you want to wave. And (if they say they) didn’t exist, they didn’t." Linda recalled that day school students were not allowed in the school, explaining “Even when they first get there, say in the morning, they weren’t allowed to come in the school. They were outside freezing. I would see them go under a vent there where that dryer was… It was warm right under there. And they would throw them away from there.”

Linda recalled her nickname at the SBIRS, “Bully.” She was given this because she was stubborn and would stay mad for long periods of time, and often rebelled against the school staff and rules. Linda remembered one instance of resistance among her and her friends. She and three other girls in her age group would speak to each other in Ojibway away from the school staff. Linda explained that the staff implemented incentives to prevent the use of Ojibway: “They cut out little pieces of paper, they’re like, one-inch by one-inch little squares. We would get like twenty, in a little bag on Sunday, and then throughout the week, if you caught anybody speaking the Native language, you asked them for that token. So, the more you collected, the better it was… because at the end you won a prize like a chocolate bar or something…. We had a plan, me and my little friends. We would give all our tokens to this one certain girl right away, right

off the hop, and so we spoke our language, so when somebody caught us speaking our language, we didn't have a token to give them."

Linda's family was residing in Sandy Bay, so she was able to go home on the weekends and went back to the school each Sunday. Additionally, she was able to go home in the summer. Linda's mother would occasionally drop her off at school and speak to the priests and nuns to advocate for Linda. Linda explained that her mother's advocacy never helped as this would often make situations worse. Recalling one instance in which her mom advocated for her, she described receiving a pair of shoes from the school staff that were too small for her. The improper footwear led to Linda developing foot corns that made her toes bleed. She attempted to tell the school staff while showing them her injured feet, but nothing was done. Linda would walk on the heels of her feet to alleviate the pain from her toes. Consequently, she was punished by school staff for walking this way. When she arrived home on the weekend, her mother questioned why her feet were injured, and Linda explained the situation. Her mother then brought her to school on the Sunday and talked to the priest. They informed her mother that they would handle it, and again Linda got punished. Linda was taken to the closet and received shoes that were way too big, and she had to wear those for the rest of the week to humiliate her. By the end of the week when it was time to go home again, they gave Linda her proper size to go home in. Linda shared that she avoided telling her parents of negative situations within the school due to fear of punishment.

Linda shared that when she reflects upon her experiences, she is mostly angry. She explained her anger is directed towards the nuns, and she does not believe she will ever forgive or forget. Linda stated, "There's nothing that I appreciate. Nothing at all. Nothing," she notes that "maybe the education I got, you know. But that's about it." Linda called the nuns and

priests working at the school “hypocrites,” since they would preach their religion and claim to act in good faith yet commit horrible acts against children.

Doreen Spence

Doreen began attending the SBIRS in 1946 at the age of nine years old until 1953. Doreen began sharing her experiences at the SBIRS by stating, “I had a good life. But when I went to school, that ruined my whole life.” She first entered the school when she was six years old and stayed there for approximately eight years. She explained, “It was a heck of a life for anybody to live like that. When you have a good life on your own at home, then you get into something like that. It was a horrible thing.”

Doreen shared that the Sandy Bay community was filled with good people. She learned a lot at home, with her grandma in particular teaching her important skills and life lessons. Doreen explained that she learned from the land and working with people in the community. Doreen recalled that when she was young, she enjoyed visiting other families in the community. She stated that the entire community spoke Ojibway, and it was uncommon for community members to speak English. She explained, “In our hearts, in our family, our whole family, that was everybody’s language.” When Doreen first began attending residential school, she hardly knew any English at all. Ojibway language, and First Nations culture were strictly prohibited within the school: “it was the Devil’s work. That’s what they said. Did not believe in our own Natives ways at all. Nothing.” Upon arrival at the school, students were immediately expected to learn English. This was tough for Doreen to navigate, claiming “you just can’t learn just like that.”

One day, Doreen was told that she had siblings she had been unaware of and that they also attended SBIRS. She shared that when her parents separated, her two brothers were kept at

the school. She did not meet them until one day they came home with her for the summer. Doreen never saw her two sisters during her time at the residential school and never heard from them afterwards. She never knew where they were or what happened to them, and this is something that still bothers her.

Doreen slept at the school during the weekdays but was able to go home during the weekends. She expressed her heartache for the students that came from far away reserves, since they were not able to see their parents throughout the year. She further mentioned that some students were unable to go home for Christmas due to the far distance of their home community.

Doreen recalled the poor quality of the education, claiming that she did not receive much academic education during her time at the school, but instead was instructed to do labour. She shared that she was instructed to help in the kitchen, do laundry, and clean. She explained that there was not much time after all these chores for her to learn. Moreover, she claimed that the school never had good meals. She shared one incident when she first began attending the school, when she was instructed to go down to the cellar and noticed stored fruits and canned foods. In that moment, she thought that the students would receive good meals, but they never ended up receiving any of it. She identified the meals prepared for students as mushy and commonly comprised of "old pork with broth." The students would sometimes receive porridge, and bread with grease, she added, "That was terrible. Oh, I hate it. I've never hated anything so bad. Because I didn't have that kind of a life at home."

Doreen explained that the nuns that ran the school were mean to the students, claiming there was "lots of abuse." This made attending the school very hard. She expressed that it was incredibly challenging, as it felt as though the students were never allowed to do anything. Her efforts in academics and chores were never seen as good enough, and the students were

prohibited from engaging in ordinary activities, such as talking to other students and being limited on when they could use the washroom. Doreen elaborated that the students got punished for everything they did, and they could not do anything about it. Some of the students were taken away from the others to be abused in private. After some students experienced abuse from the school staff, they would groom them, inform the children that it was alright, and this abuse was normal. When Doreen reflects on her experiences, she stated that she still gets nightmares about her time at SBIRS.

Eileen Roulette and Verna Pearl-Houle

Eileen and Verna are sisters in Sandy Bay that chose to conduct their interviews together. Verna recounted her experiences as negative and filled with bad memories. Eileen believes that various generations received different treatment throughout the operation of the school, as she recalls only good memories and experiences while still acknowledging Verna's and other former students' negative experiences. Verna began attending the SBIRS in 1964 at seven years old and stayed five years. Eileen began attending in 1949 and stayed for seven years. Eileen claimed that each generation of students in the school had different experiences, and that the generation after her began experiencing abuse from the priests and nuns. Eileen began the interview by sharing her memories of life prior to the residential school, recalling her family moved around a lot within the community when they were children. Eileen remembers picking and eating berries often. As a child, Eileen would explore the marsh in Sandy Bay, collecting frogs at the end of her dress and letting them go. In the winter, the sisters would skate near the marsh. Eileen stated that her family grew up poor but had fun. They were loved. Verna added to this, stating, "I didn't think we were poor, because we lived off the land. We were clean. We had water, we had love.

It's poor in the white man's terms, I guess, but not us because we did live off the land. I've never been hungry in my life." Both sisters further recalled feeling love and connection at home, whereas they described the school as lonely, and filled with separation.

Eileen estimated being seven when beginning school, and related that when she first began, she remembers clinging to her mother and begging not to go. She explained that it was lonely, but she still loved school. Eileen stated that she learned a lot in the school during her seven years of attendance. She described the daily routines as "very structured. Same thing over and over again." She mentioned two or three nuns that were kind and took care of the students. Eileen recalled her experience as not bad, however she has heard other students share their horrific experiences at the SBIRS. Eileen asked her mother about her experiences at the SBIRS, and they were negative. In the interview, Eileen stated that the older girls were protective of the younger girls and would look after them, stating that maybe that is why she never experienced any abuse.

Verna shared her experiences after Eileen. Verna was sent to a sanatorium when she was approximately five years old due to a tuberculosis diagnosis. During this time, she lost her Ojibway language and was taught to speak and read English. Even once she no longer felt sick, she still was not able to leave. Verna was instructed to rest in bed all day. When she finally came back from the sanatorium after two years, she began attending the SBIRS. She attended for four or five years. She described her time at the school as very structured: "You're always busy, doing chores or praying. That's basically what I went through."

Verna remembers the nuns being very mean. She recalled a few nuns that were kind but were not popular with the other nuns. She mentioned that the younger girls were very scared and would often cry, and further added, "I wasn't scared because of the sanatorium, I learned a lot of

things. Those nuns couldn't do nothing to me." Verna explained she would stick up for other students when they were being "tortured." She further asserted that she often rebelled, "I was into everything in that school. I went through the dormitory where the priests and nuns lived. They dared me and I went in there. We were not supposed to go there." Eileen recalled feeling proud of the students when they rebelled and defied the nuns and priests.

Verna claimed that she witnessed a lot of abuse. She emphasized that when students ran away, they would get punished. Verna stated, "If a boy went missing, we wouldn't know because we weren't even allowed to look at that… Or if you ask, you'll get in trouble." Verna also shared one experience of walking with her friends and seeing a priest, "I remember us girls were just scared coming across. We went to try and hide because we were scared of him. He was a devil in disguise. I shouldn't say that. Sorry."

When reflecting upon her experiences, Verna shared her belief that the parents of SBIRS students feared the priests and were influenced by the narrative that portrayed First Nations as savages and the constant encouragement to pray for themselves, explaining "The priest was so wicked… and they were very influential, they influenced our parents." Verna believes the Catholic doctrine that was pushed by the school resulted in community members adopting these values in an effort to improve themselves and their families. Verna recalled her frustration over how the narratives influenced her family, and expressed that this led her not to share her experiences at SBIRS with them, "So What? What's the use of telling them? They're not going to believe us… They believe the priests and the fathers… Our Almighty God." The negative depictions of First Nations that were imposed on students impacted Verna's daily life at the school. She explains, "You couldn't even write anything about yourself… They kept calling us

savage, of course we understood that." Verna further mentioned, "Day in and day out, when you're told this and that, you're conditioned for it… and then you start to believe it."

Dennis Malcolm

The final interview included in this chapter is my grandpa, Dennis Malcom. Dennis was originally from Ebb and Flow First Nation, approximately sixty-five kilometres north of Sandy Bay. However Dennis explained in his interview that his parents were impacted by the trauma from their experiences at residential school so that they asked his aunt and uncle at Sandy Bay to adopt him and his brother when he was an infant. Dennis began attending the SBIRS when he was five years old and spent nine years at the school. He started out discussing his experiences at the school by mentioning, "There was a lot of experiences that I went through, the good and the bad. I mean, not everything that was there was bad. But it was an education centre that was run by priests and sisters, so sometimes it was awful to be there." Throughout his interview, Dennis repeatedly discussed his experiences enduring and witnessing abuse from the priests and school supervisor, claiming the school was "all punishment," and "very hard to get used to."

Dennis described attending the SBIRS with siblings whom he did not realize he was related to, "While we were at the residential school, my older siblings were already there, and we didn't know. We weren't even told about that. Nobody told us we had a brother and three sisters going to school." Dennis then shared what it was like being dropped off and living in residence at the school, stating, "It was quite an experience to go there. I remember the first day when we went, it was a Sunday. We got dropped off there and so that's how that started. We were taken into a room. We were given shoes. We were given certain clothing. I think like, a shower. We were given everything. Toothbrush. Toothpaste." Dennis explained that the school was divided

by gender, and then again split between younger and older boys and girls. In the classrooms, the girls would sit on one end while the boys sat on the other, and they were prohibited from speaking to each other. He explained that two priests ran the school, along with one supervisor who was a community member. Dennis explained that the students rarely saw their parents, but the priests and nuns would tell the children that their parents were not good people. Dennis related that the school staff showed no affection towards the children and would not treat any of the students like family. He claimed that the school staff only saw the school as a business.

Discussing the education he received at SBIRS, Dennis stated, "I guess the education wasn't too bad. But it was more of the church… We had to go to the church in the morning, even sometimes church at night." The lessons the students were taught were focused on God. He expressed, "So, I think… they thought we were bad people, so I think they thought they could change us around by using God… They would say things like 'you people are the devil' or 'you don't want to be the devil.'" When asked if the language and culture was allowed within the school, Dennis replied that, "It was completely not allowed. But some of us still spoke it because everybody was Ojibway. But we weren't allowed. If they ever caught us, then we would be punished for speaking the language because they would say 'that's the devil language.' So that's how we were treated in that area."

Dennis described the meals that the students were given, saying they would feed the students, but if students did not like the food, they were still required to eat it, "They made sure that you ate everything. Whenever you have a plate of food, they wanted you to eat all of it. See, if there was an apple, if you had an apple, they wanted you to eat the whole apple, even the inside of - the everything. They didn't want nothing. They had a garbage thing in the middle, they didn't want nothing there."

Dennis related that the punishment of students occurred frequently, “Punishment was very active when I was there. There’s always something happening.” He further explained that the school staff would often punish students in front of the others to humiliate them. He identified that this would often occur if they found out students did not complete certain tasks or were not preforming them correctly. Dennis went on to mention that they would have a movie night on Sundays, and if they believed a student did something wrong, the student was required to stay in the dorm while the other students saw the film. Moreover, if the school staff believed a boy was breaking the rules, they would shave his head. The punishments the students received were unjustifiable. Dennis recalled that the school staff would not allow students to go to the washroom during class and would require them to wait until the entire class would go. He further explained that if a student asked to go to the washroom, they would not be allowed, and because of this, students would soil themselves. Following this, students would be shamed for this in front of the other students and humiliated.

Dennis recalled witnessing the girls being punished in front of the boys, and believes the girls received more punishments and went through a harder time than the boys because the nuns were very mean. He also mentioned witnessing nearly half of the boys being physically, verbally, and sexually abused by the priests, while he believed that the other half did not receive this treatment, claiming, “half of the boys were kind of punished quite a bit. I don't know why they didn't do the others.” Dennis also remembered witnessing some boys that would cry from fear, whereas others would not show emotion.

Speaking of his own experiences being abused, Dennis stated, “I never used to say anything. I was very quiet about it. Punishment. Just go through it.” Dennis argued that as the boys would get older, the abuse would get worse. He explained that some of the priests would

offer students candy or cigarettes after abusing them. Dennis expressed, “It was hard to live that life, you didn’t know what was going on. You were wondering how they can do that.” As a victim and a witness to the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, Dennis stated that he and the boys experiencing this “would never, ever talk about it. So, I guess that was one thing that was hidden at the school.” Dennis recalled that halfway through attending the SBIRS, he began getting used to the lifestyle he was living, stating, “I never bothered to tell anybody because when I first went there, we weren't allowed to go home. We weren't allowed to go home until later on… So, I guess, really, you were always scared of something to happen. A lot of fear. You had to get used to the fear of punishment all the time.” When Dennis reflected upon his experiences, he shared, “It’s hard to see how I managed, but I was able to survive that kind of lifestyle.”

Conclusion

For decades, the dominant narrative of the Indian Residential School system has been shaped by government and missionary perspectives, as reflected in the archives. The archives present a biased colonial narrative that suggest residential schooling was in the best interests of Indigenous Peoples. Archival documents on the SBIRS, as examined in the previous chapter, highlight the intentions of government officials and SBIRS staff, and portrayed Sandy Bay community members and SBIRS students in a negative light. Archival documents and photographs fail to acknowledge the harsh realities of student life, including the mistreatment by staff, the abuse that occurred, and the loneliness and isolation felt by students. These crucial aspects are revealed through Survivors’ oral history. Through storytelling, we obtain an authentic understanding of the experiences of students, both positive and negative. We hear how students

coped with the lifestyle changes and the resistance against the system. Survivors' oral histories are crucial in understanding the reality of residential schools, offering insights that archival records fail to provide.

Although some Survivors of the SBIRS reflected upon their experiences differently, they all share common themes. Through their narratives, the SBIRS is described as an institution that was foreign to them. While their home lives were filled with love, comfort, and cultural richness, the residential school represented a stark contrast, characterized by loneliness and separation. The students were subjected to a strict schedule that prevented them from engaging in normal childhood activities and behaviours. Students became accustomed to the fear of punishment and learned to obey the orders of school staff without revealing anything to those outside of the school. The church employed fear as a tactic to assimilate Indigenous community members and children to align them with their beliefs. While positive memories are mentioned throughout the oral history, they do not diminish the true intentions of the church and the government. Despite the hardships they faced, students were able to create positive memories. These instances of resistance and rebellion highlight the strength of the former students.

To begin to proceed with reconciliation and healing, we must first listen to and learn from Survivors. This is crucial to understand the untold history and ongoing legacies of residential schooling. Learning the devastating realities of what had occurred to children within the community will allow for Sandy Bay members to understand the historic and contemporary legacies that are reflected within the community, particularly given how suppressed these experiences were at the time that they were happening and in some cases for decades afterwards. Through these revelations, community members can face the intergenerational trauma within themselves and their families and begin a pathway toward healing. Moreover, oral histories aid

the process of reconciliation through the confrontation of normative settler colonial discourses embedded within the structures of society, allowing for non-Indigenous Canadians to attain an understanding of the nation's history and the connection between assimilatory historical events and contemporary consequences.

Through truth-telling, residential school Survivors can disrupt the long-denied and silenced colonial policies of assimilation,[216] thereby constructing a new collective memory that runs counter to the generally accepted history of the nation.[217] Without truth-telling, the legacies of the residential school system will continue to persist, hindering efforts to heal. By creating opportunities to listen to and learn from Survivors, individuals impacted by the ongoing legacies of residential school can grasp the deep-rooted trauma and begin a journey toward healing. Through testimonies, Survivors are provided space to have their stories of victimization heard and validated, while receiving the support needed to unpack their history, foster empowerment, and heal.[218]

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[216] Rachel George. "A Move to Distract: Mobilizing Truth and Reconciliation in Settler Colonial States," 53.
[217] Karine Vanthuyne, & Brieg Capitaine. "Introduction," in *Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation*, edited by Karine Vanthuyne and Brieg Capitaine (UBC Press, 2017), 16.
[218] Rachel George. "A Move to Distract: Mobilizing Truth and Reconciliation in Settler Colonial States," 97.

Chapter 4

The Legacy and Healing

Colonialism worked as a structure to systemically disadvantage Indigenous Peoples into giving up their treaty rights and lands. Numerous colonial policies were targeted against Indigenous Peoples, such as broken treaties forced dislocation, forced sterilization, banning of cultural traditions, and imposed reserve systems.[219] The residential school system was a unique policy that aimed to break the links between children and their families, communities, and identities. The legacy of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system continues to impact not only Survivors, but their partners, children, grandchildren, and entire communities through a collective, cumulative, and intergenerational transmission.[220] The IRS system has brought historical trauma upon Indigenous populations across the nation through systematic destruction and oppression of traditional practices and removal of children from homes and communities.[221] Moreover, assimilation of Canadian culture, identity, religion and kinship ties resulting from residential schooling has had devastating impacts on Indigenous Peoples. This chapter will explore the ongoing legacies of the SBIRS as shared by Survivors, address the current issue of substance use in Sandy Bay, and discuss possibilities to pave a pathway toward healing within the community. A comprehension of the lasting legacies of the SBIRS allows us to connect the

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[219] Jennifer Nutton and Elizabeth Fast. "Historical Trauma, Substance Use, and Indigenous Peoples: Seven Generations of Harm From a 'Big Event.'" *Substance Use & Misuse, (*50, 7, 2015), 839.

[220] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). 2015. *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* (University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

[221] Nichea S Spillane, Melissa R Schick, Katelyn T Kirk-Provencher, Tessa Nalven, Silvi C Goldstein, Michael C Crawford, and Nicole H Weiss. "Trauma and Substance Use among Indigenous Peoples of the United States and Canada: A Scoping Review." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24, no. 5 (2023), 3298.

unjust history to the current issues facing the community, helping to identify potential pathways for healing.

Nichea Spillane et al. describe historical trauma as "the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events."[222] Historical trauma is passed onto descendants and manifested in unresolved grief.[223] The unresolved grief stems from internalization of colonial impacts that are passed down through generations. Colonial impacts on culture, traditions, and languages prevent some Indigenous individuals from using these methods as a way of coping. It is my goal that my research on the history of the SBIRS will facilitate education for community members to comprehend the connection between colonial policies and the contemporary legacies that continue to linger within the community.

My Grandpa, a SBIRS Survivor, never discussed his experiences at the SBIRS with anyone and kept these private. This is a common theme I noticed in my engagement with community. Many of the former students' experiences have been kept private and rarely shared with others. At a community meeting discussing the research findings on the SBIRS, Chief Trevor Prince announced that while growing up, he was rarely educated on the history of residential schools in Canada. He stated that through brief discussions with family members and community members, the increased national attention on the IRS system, as well as the recent discoveries of the potential unmarked burials found at residential schools across the nation, gave

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[222] Ibid.
[223] Kat Chief Moon-Riley, Jennifer L Copeland, Gerlinde A S Metz, and Cheryl L Currie. "The Biological Impacts of Indigenous Residential School Attendance on the next Generation." *SSM - Population Health* 7 (2019), 1097.

him a general understanding of what happened within these schools, but not Sandy Bay's specific history.

Oppressive policies of the past create potential pathways for ongoing trauma and health disparities today.[224] Bianca Braganza et al. deem the term historical trauma to describe the legacies that are passed on stemming from the IRS system, noting "the identification and prevalence of trauma within the community was so pervasive and expansive, no single definition would manage to capture the multitude of experiences individuals faced," and further mentions that the phenomenon crossed boundaries of time and place, creating a collective form of shared grief and loss that is passed down through generations.[225] The legacies of the IRS system can be seen through a variety of outcomes including mental illness, homelessness, violence, suicide, and substance use. The legacy further resulted in spiritual oppression, weak Indigenous identity, loss of connection to homeland, loss of language, and poor family affiliation.[226] Moon-Riley et al. argue "the most profound influence on parenting is the way an individual was parented themselves."[227] A national survey reveals that First Nations adults reported their parents' attendance at IRS negatively impacted the parenting they received as children, subsequently

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[224] Jennifer Nutton and Elizabeth Fast. "Historical Trauma, Substance Use, and Indigenous Peoples: Seven Generations of Harm From a 'Big Event.'" *Substance Use & Misuse*, (50, 7, 2015), 839.
[225] Bianca Braganza, Gerald P McKinley, and Shannon L Sibbald. "The Construction of 'Trauma' in Canadian Residential School Survivors and Impacts on Healing Interventions and Reconciliation Initiatives." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, (38, 1, 2018).
[226] Jennifer Nutton and Elizabeth Fast. "Historical Trauma, Substance Use, and Indigenous Peoples: Seven Generations of Harm From a 'Big Event.'" *Substance Use & Misuse* (50, 7, 2015), 842.
[227] Kat Chief Moon-Riley, Jennifer L Copeland, Gerlinde A S Metz, and Cheryl L Currie. "The Biological Impacts of Indigenous Residential School Attendance on the next Generation." *SSM - Population Health*, (7, 2019), 1097.

believing their grandparents attendance impacted the parenting their parents had received.[228] Amy Bombay et al. argue that many Survivors transmitted inappropriate parenting styles such as abuse or neglect due to the experiences they were subjected to at residential schools.[229] Residential school Survivors early life experiences of neglect and corporal punishment manifested into the transmission of violent and neglectful parenting patterns.[230]

Substance Use

Among the disproportionate health impacts Indigenous Peoples face as compared to non-Indigenous Canadians is increased risk of substance use. Jennifer Nutton and Elizabeth Fast explain that the impacts of colonial policies such as weakened Indigenous identity and poor family affiliation are linked to the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs as a means of coping among Indigenous youth.[231] Colonial policies took away traditional methods of spiritual healing, leading to community members developing other ways for coping with the traumas they experienced, thereby turning to substances. Widespread substance misuse within a community can therefore be recognized as a method of self-medicating to avoid memories and reduce emotional hurt due to historical trauma.[232] Moreover, attending residential schooling reduced

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[228] "First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) 2002/03." *The Aboriginal Nurse* 20, no. 2 (2005), 37

[229] Amy Bombay, Kimberly Matheson, and Hymie Anisman. "The Impact of Stressors on Second Generation Indian Residential School Survivors." *Transcultural Psychiatry* 48, no. 4 (2011), 369.

[230] Kat Chief Moon-Riley, Jennifer L Copeland, Gerlinde A S Metz, and Cheryl L Currie. "The Biological Impacts of Indigenous Residential School Attendance on the next Generation." *SSM - Population Health* 7 (2019), 1098.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. "The Historical Trauma Response Among Natives and Its Relationship with Substance Abuse: A Lakota Illustration." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 35, no. 1 (2003).

self-esteem, which has been linked to substance use. Hamid Reza Alavi notes that a lack of self-esteem can contribute to delinquency, as individuals with low self-esteem develop an inferiority complex in which they consider themselves undesirable and lacking value.[233] Kat Chief Moon-Riley et al. argue that health behaviours are "shaped by biological, psychological and social factors."[234] Numerous Indigenous communities depict substance use as the most pressing health disparity impacting their people.[235] Spillane et al. argues that "many Indigenous groups believe that historical trauma lies at the heart of substance use and mental illness within their communities.[236] Historical trauma, and the removal of Indigenous children from their homes and kin networks to be subjected to harsh conditions, resulted in shifted parenting styles that reflected a lack of affection, harsh discipline, and inconsistent supervision, and decreased social ties, which can all be linked to individual substance abuse.[237]

Sandy Bay is currently facing what community members are calling a "drug crisis." The drug crisis within Sandy Bay has been posted online through Facebook posts by numerous community members in an attempt to call attention to the matter and demand action. Their concerns are echoed by official media attention to drug related incidents at Sandy Bay. A 2024 CTV news article stated that "The Manitoba First Nations Police Service (MFNPS) is warning

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[233] Hamid Reza Alavi. "The Role of Self-Esteem in Tendency towards Drugs, Theft and Prostitution." Addiction and Health 3, no. 3–4 (2011), 122.
[234] Kat Chief Moon-Riley, Jennifer L Copeland, Gerlinde A S Metz, and Cheryl L Currie. "The Biological Impacts of Indigenous Residential School Attendance on the next Generation." *SSM - Population Health* 7 (2019), 1098.
[235] Nichea S Spillane, Melissa R Schick, Katelyn T Kirk-Provencher, Tessa Nalven, Silvi C Goldstein, Michael C Crawford, and Nicole H Weiss. "Trauma and Substance Use among Indigenous Peoples of the United States and Canada: A Scoping Review." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24, no. 5 (2023), 3298.
[236] Ibid, 3299.
[237] Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. "Gender Differences in the Historical Trauma Response Among the Lakota." *Journal of Health & Social Policy* 10, no. 4 (1999).

residents about a dangerous drug supply circulating in Sandy Bay First Nation," after 3 community members lost consciousness after using drugs that were laced with other substances.[238] This led Sandy Bay to conduct safe drug usage workshops, a harm reduction effort to reduce the risk of overdoses in the community. A 2019 CBC article discussed the methamphetamine issue within Sandy Bay after a 4–5-hour long standoff occurred between a community member and police.[239] The article stated that a community meeting was scheduled after numerous incidents involving violence between community members occurred involving people high on methamphetamine. The article further mentioned a young girl was pricked by a needle used for drug use on a school playground earlier that year. There was no follow up regarding the impacts or health of the girl. Elder Eileen Roulette, the same Elder that spoke on her experiences at the SBIRS in this thesis, was interviewed for the CBC article, and argued that ridding drug dealers from the community do not get at the root of the issue and suggested helping drug users.[240] Eileen stated however that easy access to drugs within the community makes it difficult for users to quit, and that getting the dealers out of the community would create help those trying to overcome their substance abuse. Eileen further mentioned that Sandy Bay has no help, and that resources are limited. She mentioned previously making a Facebook post calling for suggestions to address drug use within the community, and numerous community members informed her that they want to quit but do not know how. [241]

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[238] Kayla Rosen. "Police warn of dangerous drugs on manitoba first nation." CTV News. (2024.) Retrieved from https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/police-warn-of-dangerous-drugs-on-manitoba-first-nation-1.7011606.
[239] 'I'm scared,' Sandy Bay woman says as First Nation struggles to cope with meth use." CBC News. (2009). Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/sandy-bay-meth-emergency-1.5161551
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.

Community members that advocate for addressing the substance use issue often call out Sandy Bay's Chief and Council, arguing that they are not doing enough and that they must support the community by solving the issue. In 2023, Sandy Bay Chief and Council hired the Anishinaabe Ambassadors to come and stay within Sandy Bay and assist with the drug crisis. The Anishinaabe Ambassadors is a group that goes out to First Nations communities under band council mandates authorizing them to support the communities' guidelines on substances. Their mandate is "to provide support to First Nations communities in crisis."[242] The group conducts check points, patrols, and search and seizures of substances and weapons in an effort to address substance misuse in communities. A Facebook post created by the Anishinaabe Ambassadors page stated, "We are tasked with many duties when we are invited into a community. For me the creation of community led patrol groups is the most significant," the post later mentioned, "We have check points on the winter road access points, patrols night and day in community, we're supporting CFS as needed, monitoring the school and other spaces as needed. And our Interactions with the community can be the most productive and effective way to support… sometimes you just need to be present!!"[243]

The Anishinaabe Ambassadors arrived in Sandy Bay in August 2023 and stayed until January 2024. While the Anishinaabe Ambassadors certainly assisted in ridding some of the substances within Sandy Bay by decreasing the prevalence of dealers and availability of drugs within the community, the drug crisis remains. Following the 2024 incident in which three community members fell unconscious following drug use, flyers have been put up around the

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[242] *Anishinaabe Ambassadors Inc*. Facebook. (2022). Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068187595631
[243] *Anishinaabe Ambassadors Inc*. Facebook. (2023). Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068187595631

community and posted on Facebook to educate members on safe drug use. Moreover, a narcotic anonymous support group has been created within the community, as well as drug awareness walks, and community meetings discussing the drug issue within Sandy Bay.

Ridding communities of substances does not adequately address the issue of substance use. As historical trauma continues to impact the community, substance use is subsequently reinforced as it numbs or reduces emotional distress caused by trauma. Spillane et al. argues that "weak cultural identity, lack of adherence to traditional values and behaviours, and poor spiritual foundations have been shown to be related to substance use among Indigenous populations."[244] Tackling issues such as substance use requires a comprehensive understanding of the root issues such as historical trauma and weakened social ties within community that cause members to engage with substances. The attempted assimilation of Indigenous Peoples through residential school policies and curriculum that rejected and punished expressions of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing resulted in the loss of traditional coping strategies, leaving Indigenous populations to seek out alternative ways of coping that have proven deeply destructive.[245] Those dealing with the negative emotions that are linked with trauma may use substances as a coping method, a method to numb the pain. Moreover, parents engaging with substance use leads to an increase in substance abuse among the youth.[246] No punitive method will adequately tackle the

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[244] Nichea S Spillane, Melissa R Schick, Katelyn T Kirk-Provencher, Tessa Nalven, Silvi C Goldstein, Michael C Crawford, and Nicole H Weiss. "Trauma and Substance Use among Indigenous Peoples of the United States and Canada: A Scoping Review." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24, no. 5 (2023), 3306.

[245] Nichea S Spillane, Melissa R Schick, Katelyn T Kirk-Provencher, Tessa Nalven, Silvi C Goldstein, Michael C Crawford, and Nicole H Weiss. "Trauma and Substance Use among Indigenous Peoples of the United States and Canada: A Scoping Review." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24, no. 5 (2023), 3305.

[246] Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. "The Historical Trauma Response Among Natives and Its Relationship with Substance Abuse: A Lakota Illustration." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 35, no. 1 (2003).

substance use issue within Sandy Bay. By tackling the root of the issue, we can begin a pathway toward healing. Addressing the personal hurt and dysfunction within individuals requires an understanding of the contemporary and historic impacts of residential schools. Obtaining an understanding of the political decisions that impacted Indigenous Peoples lives we can help us begin to understand the ongoing consequences.

I focus on substance use within Sandy Bay not to portray a victimized approach, but rather to bring attention to the ongoing legacy of historical trauma that continues to impact the community collectively. Sandy Bay community members have explicitly linked the issue of substance use within the community to the legacy of the SBIRS. Through a specific case study of Sandy Bay, we obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts on a community than a national survey would provide. The drug crisis within Sandy Bay is a significant issue that community members are actively working to address. Substance misuse is a multidimensional socio-politicized, economic problem disproportionately affecting Indigenous individuals.[247] Understanding the historical and ongoing legacies of colonial policies is important for Sandy Bay community members given the disparities of substance use among Indigenous Peoples.

Survivors Stories

Survivors' testimonies allow for other Survivors to relate to and identify similar behavioural patterns that have been picked up as a result of the residential school system, thus allowing for individuals to disembody the settler colonial mischaracterizations and stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples. Listening to and engaging with Survivors stories allows impacted

[247] Jennifer Nutton and Elizabeth Fast. "Historical Trauma, Substance Use, and Indigenous Peoples: Seven Generations of Harm From a 'Big Event.'" *Substance Use & Misuse* (50, 7, 2015), 845.

individuals to relate to others and understand the systemic nature of the issue, thus holding the government and missionaries accountable for ongoing legacies and lifting personal shame from individuals that may have been internalized. Residential school Survivor, Bev Sellars explains in her book *They Called Me Number One* that throughout her life dysfunction was perceived as normal as there were no other experiences that were not tainted with the legacies of colonialism to compare to.[248] Sharing stories and relating to similar experiences and impacts of other residential school Survivors allows individuals to become their authentic selves, facilitating a reconnection to family patterns and lifestyles while providing a sense of rapport.[249] This rapport helps individuals identify common patterns of thought and behaviour rooted in historical trauma, which can be addressed

During the SBIRS Survivors' testimony, the former students shared the impacts of their experiences in the school and their subsequent healing journeys. Among the numerous intentions for sharing and engaging with stories, the central goal is to initiate conversation and form new relationships to begin healing and reclaiming traditions.[250] They addressed issues within the community that may stem from the residential school legacy and offered healing strategies that could benefit others. The same five Survivors from my previous chapter, Dennis, Eileen, Verna, Doreen, and Linda, are used in this chapter, to share their perspectives on the impacts of the

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[248] Bev Sellars. *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School.* (Talonbooks, 2013), 145.

[249] Lorena Sekwan Fontaine, Lisa Forbes, Wendy McNab, Lisa Murdock, & Roberta Stout (2014). "Authentic Connections Among Daughters of Residential School Survivors," in *Reconciliation & the Way Forward: Collected Essays and Personal Reflections,* edited by Shelagh Rogers, Mike DeGagné, Glen Lowry, and Sara Fryer. Aboriginal Healing Foundation. (2014), 200.

[250] Sara Fryer. Learning to Listen. In Rogers, M. Degagné, G. Lowry, & Fryer, S. *Reconciliation & the Way Forward: Collected Essays and Personal Reflections.* Aboriginal Healing Foundation. (2014), 11.

SBIRS while offering possible methods for healing. Through all the stories, the Survivors spoke on similar themes that discussed the impacts in their life as a result of the school, reclaiming what was lost, and moving forward towards a brighter future.

Doreen explained that she still reflects on her experiences, “I still think about the second floor of the school… I still have nightmares.” She reflected on her healing journey throughout her life and mentioned her family. Doreen shared, “I have so many grandkids I can’t even count them on my hands and feet, toes, even with all yours too. Lots of fifth generation, so much. Oh, my goodness. So many, so many, that keeps me going.”

Verna reflected upon her healing journey and coming to terms with her experiences on residential schooling and stated that placing Indigenous children in an institution away from their families and where they were subjected to neglect and abuse was destructive. Verna shared an experience she had in the 1990’s at a church in Kenora, Ontario. She explained she was kicked out after arguing with the Priest about residential schools. Verna argued to the Priest that Indigenous children should have never been sent to residential schools, and the Priest shouted at her, “You guys were savages!” Verna claimed the Priest was old and continued to justify the schools. The Priest then told Verna, “Don’t ever come back in my church!” to which Verna replied, “Of course I’m not coming back!”

When Eileen reflected upon the IRS system, she claimed that main aim of the system was to destroy the family unit, and that you can see the impacts of this, as it continued to be passed on. Verna described the harsh treatment from staff at the SBIRS including students being told that they were savages, and that their family members were bad people, and stated “day in and day out, when you’re told this and that, when you’re conditioned for it. Even though I’m

educated, I was really affected. And because you're told that too, and then you all you start to believe it… It's hard. You can't get rid of that."

Linda explained that the IRS system had an impact on Indigenous parenting styles. She explained that students had issues expressing affection after attending residential school, and mentioned that her mother, who attended the SBIRS, did not show her affection. Linda stated, "I know she loved me," and shared that she, too, showed this lack of affection to her own daughter. She argued, "It is a cycle," highlighting how generational impacts continue to be passed down families. Linda considered the methods that have assisted in her healing journey and suggested that those who are struggling find their true Indigenous identity. She suggested that engaging with the culture and praying supports reconnection with their Indigenous identity in a positive way. Linda reflected upon being forced to pray in residential school and stated that those who seek healing need to pray from the heart, rather than reciting memorized words as they did in residential school. She argued that praying from the heart is more meaningful. Doreen also addressed the intergenerational legacies within the community and the need for community to prioritize youth. She addressed dysfunctional parenting within the community, and the importance of empowering youth. Doreen suggested teaching children important life lessons such as respect, so that youth are brought up on traditional morals, values, and belief systems. Doreen emphasized the importance of the language being revitalized and spoken within homes again. She suggested families use the resources that they have at home and pass the language onto the children. Doreen shared her efforts at teaching her grandchildren the language, and they how they have begun to speak in complete sentences. Doreen claimed it is best to teach the children when they are small, "That's the time to teach them. They sound so cute when they talk in their language. They are so cute."

Dennis mentioned that Indigenous Peoples are beginning to start their healing journeys. He discussed that Survivors cope in the ways that suit them best, and mentioned that Survivors may still follow Catholicism, or follow traditional spirituality, or even both. Dennis suggested that there is change within the culture. He argued that this change is activated within a person when they engage with the culture and the use of ceremonies. Dennis explained that a weight is lifted, and a different life begins when a former student of IRS becomes the traditional versions of themselves and rejects the conditioning they received in residential schools where they were told that being a good person means being a Catholic only. Dennis explained that he still practices Catholicism and praises God, and refrains from judging himself when he does. Furthermore, Dennis explained that he refrains from negative terms within the church such as calling someone, or himself, a "Devil." Dennis argued that the way one lives is a lifestyle. He further mentioned that culture and the church are a lifestyle, arguing that if you follow the morals within the church, you live a reasonable life. He stated that following cultural practices is similar, and you learn to follow valuable teachings within the tradition.

Verna shared her processes of healing and explained that when she visits with other former students, they reflect through humour, "A lot of people in my school, we talk about it now – some of the stuff, you know. I guess that's the way we handle it. Some of the ones that are still alive, I see them, let's say in Winnipeg, somewhere gathering, then we walk and some of us just laugh. I mean, we laughed at it because, I don't know. We didn't blame ourselves, it just happened to us, but we couldn't do nothing. Can't do nothing." She further stated "Apitche ahko anoochigo ikidwook Anishinabek," an Ojibwe phrase that translates roughly to "Anishinaabe people will say anything," referring to their use of humour when discussing their experiences at the SBIRS. Humour is often used as a method of coping and talking through situations with

others among First Nations. Verna explained that through her visits with other former students, they attempt to reflect in a positive way yet still acknowledge the injustices that they experienced.

Eileen explained that there are still unjust situations that occur today throughout the world, but in order to come to terms with the injustices, it is crucial for individuals and communities to determine what is helpful to them and what can be done. Eileen discussed the long-lasting impacts that former students still have from their experiences at the SBIRS and claimed that Survivors can try to change this. She stated, "There's always help out there to help you heal," she went on to add however that this help has not always been beneficial for Survivors. Eileen stated she that has no bad feelings towards residential school; therefore, she has not needed to seek any resources to support herself.

Dennis reflected on the impacts of the residential school, and stated "Well, I think history shows that we come a long way in terms of the residential school." He mentioned that there is still a lot of good and bad things that occur within the world. Once we acknowledge the injustices of the schools, we can work towards ensuring nothing similar ever occurs again. Dennis reflected on the increased awareness on residential schools across Canada, and stated "I guess throughout history the white generation has always had a hard time to believe how residential school was at that time, and I think within the last few years they've really come to understand that. There was a lot of bad stuff that went on in those – just being there, like how they ran the schools. And so, people are starting to believe that." He further stated that due to increased awareness, he noticed that non-Indigenous people now make less judgements towards Indigenous Peoples and can understand some of the disparities that Indigenous Peoples face as a result of colonial policies. Dennis later added "Staying there was quite an experience and I think

today we have gone past a bit, but it's very important that we continue to look at what happened, all the things that happened. Because there's still a lot of people that are alive, like myself." Verna explained the importance of education, and how this helps the healing journey. Those who understand where the hurt is rooted are able to seek resources that will support them. Meanwhile, she explained those who do not know the source of their pain often cope through unhealthy practices. Verna reflected on other Survivors of the SBIRS and shared, "I know a lot of people that have drank themselves to death. Because they don't know, because people don't understand." She further added, "I know lots of them. Here too from Sandy Bay, lot of people drank themselves to death. In Winnipeg, I know lots of them. Because they didn't know how to handle it. And there's no one to help them." Linda reflected on reconciliation efforts within Canada and stated that non-Indigenous Canadians should be taught Indigenous history and culture. She argued, "They actually don't know who we are. They don't know that this is our land, and they are visitors. They have to be educated first to know that." She further argued that many non-Indigenous Canadians discriminate against Indigenous Peoples and use stereotypes. Linda argued that these beliefs are passed down, and stopping this requires education.

Empowerment

Community collaboration is crucial in addressing community needs and healing, as self-empowerment flourishes when individuals within a community take responsibility for defining their problems and determining their needs.[251] Braganza et al. note that "in communities that have historically been denied agency and control over their own land, resources, and peoples,

[251] Bianca Braganza, Gerald P McKinley, and Shannon L Sibbald. "The Construction of 'Trauma' in Canadian Residential School Survivors and Impacts on Healing Interventions and Reconciliation Initiatives." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies.* (38, 1, 2018), 5.

becoming empowered and regaining authority is imperative."[252] Viewing historical trauma as a collective process challenges the model of trauma as an individual experience, and places emphasis on the collective process that impacts an individual and community collectively.[253] Braganza et al. further argues that since the IRS system involved processes in which children were removed from their homes, away from their families and their community, the healing process should involve family and community levels.[254] Historical trauma impacting communities therefore should not be addressed only through individuals, but rather collectively with the community.

Revitalizing Indigenous identity addresses a root cause of historical trauma and strengthens Indigenous wellbeing. By integrating Indigenous culture into methods of healing, Indigenous identity is strengthened and provides support to those impacted by historical trauma.[255] Braganza et al. argues that through use of a clinical disorder paradigm, "mental health initiatives will have a limited effect, as there is limited trust and authenticity from Indigenous community members in having outside counselors, with little to no experience with Indigenous history, culture and traditions, intervene in efforts to help Survivors," moreover, medication may assist but will not confront the root of the trauma.[256] Western understandings and approaches to health and wellness are unsuited and fail to meet the needs of Indigenous Peoples.[257] Culturally

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[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid, 6.
[254] Ibid, 5.
[255] Jennifer Nutton and Elizabeth Fast. "Historical Trauma, Substance Use, and Indigenous Peoples: Seven Generations of Harm From a 'Big Event.'" *Substance Use & Misuse. (*50, 7, 2015), 842.
[256] Ibid, 7.
[257] Phoebe Quinn, Bhiamie Williamson, and Lisa Gibbs. "Indigenous-Informed Disaster Recovery: Addressing Collective Trauma Using a Healing Framework." *Progress in Disaster Science* 16 (2022), 4.

informed supports and treatment for substance abuse has shown to aid in emotion regulation, increase cultural continuity, encourage mindfulness, and arousal regulation.[258] Traditional healing methods are effective in Indigenous healing journeys and must be commenced through Indigenous methodologies.[259] Phoebe Quinn et al. argue that healing is predicated on Indigenous knowledges that interconnect the "mental, physical emotional, social and spiritual aspects of a person's life, as well as their relationships with family, community and the land," and healing therefore attempts to restore balance between these.[260] Healing practices prior to colonialism included healing circles, powwows, Sundance's, sweats, fasts, stage of life ceremonies, practices that build relationships with the land, and family stories. Cultural activities that may promote Indigenous identity and wellbeing include land-based activities, language programs, feasts, traditional art activities, harvesting and using medicine, and drumming, dancing, and singing.[261] Through traditional healing methods and engaging with traditional and spiritual practices, individuals reclaim their Indigenous identity.

Residential schooling sought to break apart community ties by isolating individuals, therefore healing requires us to come together and heal as a collective. Collective strategies within the community include storytelling, ceremonies, community events, and group activities that are guided by the community's cultural practices and knowledges. Moreover, strengthening

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[258] Elaine Toombs, Jessie Lund, Lauren Kushnier, Ana Stopa, Dennis C Wendt, and Christopher J Mushquash. "Addressing Experiences of Trauma within Indigenous-Focused Substance Use Residential Treatment: A Systematic Review and Environmental Scan." *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse*, (2023), 41.
[259] Jennifer Nutton and Elizabeth Fast. "Historical Trauma, Substance Use, and Indigenous Peoples: Seven Generations of Harm From a 'Big Event.'" *Substance Use & Misuse* (50, 7, 2015), 11.
[260] Phoebe Quinn, Bhiamie Williamson, and Lisa Gibbs. "Indigenous-Informed Disaster Recovery: Addressing Collective Trauma Using a Healing Framework." *Progress in Disaster Science* 16 (2022), 6.
[261] Ibid, 8.

mutual aid and support among one another nurtures the sense of connectedness within the community. Revitalizing the language and teaching youth traditional morals, values, and belief systems is a collective process that, as mentioned by Doreen Spence in the previous chapter, can be taught by grandparents. This process would solidify the traditional role of Elders as keepers of wisdom within the community. Elders play an essential role in guiding individual and collective healing processes by providing wisdom and spiritual and emotional support that is rooted in traditions and lived experiences.

Braganza et al. lists three key components to healing for Indigenous communities: language and heritage restoration, infrastructural investments, and legislative and policy changes.[262] In tackling historical trauma, the government has responsibility to participate through funding and justice. This includes compensation for Survivors, and increased funding through "Indigenous education, health and social services, roads, housing, water, and waste management."[263] Improved education and increased employment opportunities would allow Indigenous individuals to feel empowered and experience a sense of pride, thereby allowing themselves to address their healing needs and promote this within the community. Adequate structural resources, such as quality infrastructure, food security, housing, education, employment, health services, and social services, within a community can help "mediate the impacts of stressors and environmental hazards."[264] Therefore, investments into these structural resources are essential to allieviate current stressors and supporting community wellbeing.

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[262] Ibid, 9.
[263] Ibid, 9.
[264] Kat Chief Moon-Riley, Jennifer L Copeland, Gerlinde A S Metz, and Cheryl L Currie. "The Biological Impacts of Indigenous Residential School Attendance on the next Generation." *SSM - Population Health* 7 (2019), 1098.

Conclusion

The misrepresentation of history through a colonial lens has distorted the perception of Indigenous Peoples and their histories. When history is told through the community narrative, the injustices faced by its members are highlighted. Revealing the community's perspective links the historical events that have impacted the community to their ongoing effects, thereby aiding in determining potential methods of healing. Challenging the biased colonial narrative by revealing the truth demonstrates self-determination and resilience in the face of colonial powers by asserting agency in defining our own history, identities, and future.

Among the numerous lasting impacts of the IRS system are loss of culture and language, loss of identity, and sense of community.[265] The ongoing legacies are further manifested through mental illness, suicide, violence, and homelessness. Coping with historical trauma without access to or knowledge of traditional and cultural practices can lead individuals to turn to substances, an issue Sandy Bay is actively working to address. Survivors reflected on the impacts the SBIRS has made on their lives, while offering strategies that have assisted them in overcoming historical trauma. The pathway towards healing is certainly not a one size fits all approach, thus making community collaboration essential. Healing must occur in processes that bridge the past and present, and the self and community.[266] The complex history of colonialism that is shared within a community requires culturally responsive practices that are informed by the historical trauma that impacts them collectively.[267] Storytelling practices, listening to and connecting with another

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[265] Bianca Braganza, Gerald P McKinley, and Shannon L Sibbald. "The Construction of 'Trauma' in Canadian Residential School Survivors and Impacts on Healing Interventions and Reconciliation Initiatives." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies.* (38, 1, 2018), 6.
[266] Ibid, 8.
[267] Phoebe Quinn, Bhiamie Williamson, and Lisa Gibbs. "Indigenous-Informed Disaster Recovery: Addressing Collective Trauma Using a Healing Framework." *Progress in Disaster Science*. (16, 2022), 5.

individuals' experiences of residential schooling and historical trauma, helps to connect the past to the present, while also reducing any personal shame that may have been internalized. Supporting community members and implementing group activities and community events within the context of their community and cultural settings would allow individual and community wellbeing to flourish by igniting the sense of connectedness and empowering community members. [268] It is essential to prioritize coming together, supporting kinship, and being guided by Elders throughout the process. Through community-based processes in bringing the community's history to the present, we can begin to identify the roots of trauma and determine specific needs within the community.

[268] Kat Chief Moon-Riley, Jennifer L Copeland, Gerlinde A S Metz, and Cheryl L Currie. "The Biological Impacts of Indigenous Residential School Attendance on the next Generation." *SSM - Population Health* 7 (2019), 1098.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The Indian Residential School (IRS) system has left devastating legacies on Indigenous individuals, families, and communities. The founders of the IRS system justified the schools through colonial ideologies that defined Indigenous Peoples as inferior and resistant to progress, thereby legitimizing the assimilative intentions to the non-Indigenous public that shared his prejudices and colonial aims.[269] The perpetuation of colonial principles and denial of settler colonialism frame the schools as a humanitarian enterprise, while disregarding the negative impacts the schools have made on the lives of Indigenous Peoples. My work in restorying the history of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School aims to challenge the normative settler colonial discourses embedded within society by offering a community perspective on the school's history and its impacts. By facilitating discussion and education within the community about SBIRS, it is my goal to support community members in understanding how the SBIRS may have impacted themselves, their families, and the community, and begin a pathway toward individual and collective healing. Connecting the community's history to the ongoing disparities its members currently face creates opportunities to address specific needs for wellbeing. Through truth-telling processes, Sandy Bay members can begin to comprehend the legacy of the SBIRS and look toward a better future rooted in healing and empowerment. In chapter one, I discussed the archival materials on the SBIRS that provided insights into the school's operation and experiences of students by examining the conditions and of the school and treatment of students. The archival materials provided insight into the rationale of residential schooling and the

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[269] Laura Mudde. "Framing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Process in Canada: A Media Analysis of Settler Colonial Rhetoric and Colonial Denial, 2003-2016," *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry,* (7(2), 2020), 47.

intentions from missionaries and the government. As discussed in chapter one, residential school archives are framed within a colonial narrative, thus requiring Survivors stories for truth-telling. The SBIRS archival records reveal the intentions of government officials and missionaries who pushed for the erasure of Indigenous lifestyles and traditions in an effort to integrate Indigenous Peoples into Canadian society. The archival records frame residential schools through a humanitarian narrative, suggesting the SBIRS was in the best interest of children and served a noble service. In chapter two, I used five oral history interviews with Survivors to obtain an understanding of student experiences. The Survivor narratives countered the colonial narrative told in the archival material, thereby enabling a reconstruction of history to accurately depict the perspective and experiences of former students from Sandy Bay. In chapter three, I discussed the ongoing legacies that continue to impact former students, their families, and the community. Obtaining an understanding of the legacies that impact the Sandy Bay community enables a greater opportunity to adequately address strategies toward healing.

As I began my research, I quickly realized that the history and ongoing legacies of the SBIRS would extend far beyond the scope of a master's thesis. I acknowledge the limitations within my thesis, such as the limited scope on the ongoing legacies of the SBIRS and the small number of Survivors oral histories. I decided to focus on the issue of substance use in Sandy Bay as this is a pressing concern that community members explicitly link to the residential school legacy and are actively seeking to tackle. However, there are many harmful impacts of the SBIRS that I was unable to cover. Moreover, five Survivors do not encapsulate the entire history of the SBIRS, but rather a glimpse into the lived experiences of former students. Additionally, this thesis does not include former students of the SBIRS from communities outside of Sandy Bay, further limiting the scope of the student experiences. Although the focus of my research

was to provide a localized history of the SBIRS located within Sandy Bay and how this has impacted the community, it is still important to acknowledge SBIRS history was not only Sandy Bay community members history. The large demographic of students coming from other communities shared this history. In future work, I plan to extend my research to consider further impacts of the SBIRS and the perspectives of former students of the SBIRS from communities other than Sandy Bay, as well as the inclusion of descendants of SBIRS Survivors. By gaining additional perspectives on the impacts of the SBIRS, we can further our understanding of the legacy and how to pursue community healing, as well as identify meaningful ways to commemorate all former students.

Focusing on Indigenous epistemology and community-based research, my goal has been to transfer the residential school narrative from the settler state to Indigenous Peoples.[270] Archival material on the SBIRS present a biased narrative that limits the realities experienced by community members, emphasizing the need for restorying. By creating a narrative that is told by community members we challenge historical misrepresentations perpetuated by colonialists, contribute to the complex history of the Indian Residential School system, and assert agency in defining our own history and future. A community-based narrative that is reflective of the community's perspectives and experiences highlights what is important for remembering and confronts the lasting legacies. An examination of the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School from the community lens binds individuals' perspectives, creating a collective past. A collective past allows those affected to connect with a shared history and its continuing legacies, fostering a

[270] Rachel George. "A Move to Distract: Mobilizing Truth and Reconciliation in Settler Colonial States," in *Pathways of Reconciliation: Indigenous and Settler Approaches to Implementing the TRC's Calls to Action*, edited by Aimee Craft & Paulette Regan. (University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 97.

sense of unity that can pave the way for healing. My work contributes to the growing field of residential school literature by offering a community perspective on the history of the SBIRS, which was located on Sandy Bay reserve lands, and examining the ongoing legacies it has made. My work demonstrates community-based research grounded in mutual learning and sharing.[271]

The archival materials that I have investigated within this thesis have offered insights into SBIRS operation and conditions. These materials highlight the perspectives of the school staff and the government, and therefore highlight the colonial aims of the institution. These are included within my research to investigate the foundation of the SBIRS and the interests of missionaries and the government, and how these interests reflected onto the students. The documents reveal the conditions of the school, highlighting issues such as inadequate funding and overcrowding of students. Moreover, these records inform us about the school's operational period, how many students attended each year, and what communities they came from. The quarterly returns of the SBIRS includes a list of each student including their age, grade, and home community. The list of students reflects the kinship relations that are not present within other colonial archival records. Each name represents a child that was removed from their homes and subjected to harsh conditions within the SBIRS. Indigenous perspectives were excluded within these archives because they were perceived as inferior or in conflict with colonial interests. As discussed in chapter one, the resulting gaps of knowledge reveal the archives as sites of power that determine which narratives are validated.[272] It is essential for researchers to approach residential school archives as sites of interrogation and acknowledge the colonial

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[271] Alexandra Giancarlo, Janice Forsyth, Braden Te Hiwi, & Taylor McKee. "Methodology and Indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences." *Visual Studies.* 36, 4-5, 2021), 407.
[272] Krista McCracken. "Archival photographs in perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," 167.

intentions.[273] Oral histories from Survivors bridge the gaps of knowledge from archives and reveal firsthand perspectives of the lived experiences of students. Considering both archival documents and Survivor oral histories offers a more comprehensive understanding of the system by providing insight from all parties.

The dominant settler colonial discourse influences non-Indigenous people's perceptions, resulting in internalized shame by Indigenous Peoples and systemic discrimination and resentment towards Indigenous Peoples in the public sphere. The deconstruction of colonial ideologies and the exposure of colonial interests that were made to seem inevitable are required to bring justice to those who are impacted by the IRS system and move forward with reconciliation.[274] Confronting the perpetuation of the settler colonial discourse is crucial as these narratives continue to be renewed, thereby creating conditions wherein willful denial and ignorance can prosper.[275] The indifference of non-Indigenous Canadians toward the impacts of residential schools creates conditions in which the guilt remains in the past and urges people to "move on" while ignoring the structural context that enables the legacy of residential schooling to continue to negatively impact Indigenous Peoples.[276] To properly proceed with reconciliation and allow for Indigenous individuals, families, and communities to heal requires the dismantling of these discourses and for Canadians to understand colonial policies that continue to have long-lasting impacts. Survivors' oral histories offer the opportunity for Indigenous Peoples to shift the

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[273] Jane Griffith. 2019. "Settler Colonial Archives: Some Canadian Contexts." *Settler Colonial Studies,* (9, 3, 2009), 321.
[274] Laura Mudde. "Framing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Process in Canada: A Media Analysis of Settler Colonial Rhetoric and Colonial Denial, 2003-2016," 50.
[275] Jennifer Hardwick. "Dismantling Narratives: Settler Ignorance, Indigenous Literature and the Development of a Decolonizing Discourse." *Topia, (*Montreal, 33(33), 2015), 115.
[276] Laura Mudde. "Framing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Process in Canada: A Media Analysis of Settler Colonial Rhetoric and Colonial Denial, 2003-2016," 60.

narrative to represent their experiences, in contrast to what has been shared through archival documents, thereby presenting the opportunity for Canadians to relearn the history and legacies of residential schools. This was my goal for chapter two. Oral history allows for Indigenous Peoples to reclaim the past through their experiences as students which contrast with the intentions of teachers and administrators that have been historically shared.[277] Survivor testimonies thereby illuminate the perspectives that have been disregarded and expose the historical injustices. Preserving these narratives as a part of the historical record therefore becomes a strategy of resistance and liberation resulting in a more equitable relationship between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous.[278] Within these stories, Indigenous Peoples stand at the centre with foremost voices, as government policy and colonial forces are positioned in the background.[279]

Truth-telling expresses sovereignty by reclaiming traditional understandings of the past for a decolonized history wherein the resistance of colonizing forces allows for the undoing of false narratives.[280] Through a collaborative effort, it has been mine and Sandy Bay's priority to support the Survivors of the SBIRS, assist in their healing journeys, provide space to restore human dignity, and listen to and validate their stories.[281] Sara Fryer argues that the road to reconciliation is a complex and collaborative journey which must be approached with the trust of

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[277] Angela Wilson, & Eli Taylor. *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives. (*Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2005), 35.
[278] Angela Wilson, & Eli Taylor. *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives. (*Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2005), 240.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid, 1.
[281] Rachel George. "A Move to Distract: Mobilizing Truth and Reconciliation in Settler Colonial States," 93.

selves and each other to speak the truth and to listen.[282] Although truth-telling may not lead to reconciliation in and of itself, the recognition of a collective trauma through sharing stories that is broadcasted and participated in restores the identities of Survivors and creates dialogue towards achieving reconciliation.[283] Mike DeGagné argues that Survivor narratives are shared for themselves and other Indigenous People that seek "solace in the catharsis of speaking our truth out loud and finding others with a similar story who nod in agreement."[284]

As discussed in chapter three, the Survivor testimonies revealed how the SBIRS conditioned them to think and act in ways that were foreign to their identities and upbringing. Their Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing were directly demonized and targeted for assimilation. The Survivors shared that reclaiming Indigenous identity is an impactful method of healing. Reclaiming traditional practices, spirituality, and the language all assist in reclaiming Indigenous identity and therefore facilitate healing. Moreover, education on the harms of the IRS system helps individuals to recognize historical trauma within themselves, thereby enabling them to identify their specific needs for wellbeing.

It has been my goal throughout my research to reject a victimization narrative of SBIRS Survivors and community members. Although the IRS system attempted to assimilate Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, they were unsuccessful. Sandy Bay community

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[282] Sara Fryer. "Learning to Listen," in Reconciliation & the Way Forward: Collected Essays and Personal Reflections, edited by Shelagh Rogers, Mike DeGagné, Glen Lowry, and Sara Fryer. (2014), 13.
[283] Brieg Capitaine. "Telling a Story and Performing the Truth," in Power through Testimony: Reframing Residential Schools in the Age of Reconciliation, edited by Brieg Capitaine & Karine Vanthuyne. (UBC Press, 2017), 69.
[284] Mike DeGagné. "Afterword," "Authentic Connections Among Daughters of Residential School Survivors," in *Reconciliation & the Way Forward: Collected Essays and Personal Reflections*, edited by Shelagh Rogers, Mike DeGagné, Glen Lowry, and Sara Fryer. Aboriginal Healing Foundation. (2014), 250.

members continue to speak the language, practice their culture and traditions, and resist colonial policies. My work contributes to reconciliation efforts by investigating and furthering public knowledge on the historic and ongoing legacies of colonial policies, providing a distinct opportunity for Canadians to relearn hidden histories and comprehend a community's perspective on its own residential school history and its continuing impacts. Through processes of restorying, Sandy Bay reclaims the past from settler control to a localized history told by community members. A comprehensive understanding that is representative of Sandy Bay's perspectives and worldviews therefore presents the opportunity for community members to reflect upon the history and understand the legacies and determine methods of healing that best suit the needs of community. Through community-based processes, it has been my aim to uncover the untold truth of the SBIRS, linking colonial policies to their ongoing legacies and documenting Indigenous survivance. In doing so, I hope to empower Survivors and community members, and support a continued pathway toward collective healing.

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