

Resistance, Reclamation, & Resurgence:
A History of Public Education and Indigenous Reclamation in Manitoba, 1919 - 2009

by

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Abstract

In this dissertation I unearth the historic and present forces which inhibit Canada's ability to remove barriers for Indigenous reclamation and resurgence as it pertains to education. My research focuses on *The Manitoba Teacher*, the principal publication of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, noting that it has historically excluded the voices of Indigenous learners, educators, and families over the past century. This dissertation asks, despite this historical erasure in *The Manitoba Teacher*, how has Indigenous resistance, reclamation, and resurgence manifested itself in Manitoba educational settings over the past century? I argue there have always been moments and movements of Indigenous resistance, resurgence, and reclamation within education throughout the past century when Indigenous communities have taken control of the educational landscape. Based on the archival documents located within the archives of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, and the Verna Kirkness fonds, evidence in both colonial and Indigenous archives points to critical moments and ingredients as to when Indigenous communities have resisted colonial forms of education, and have reclaimed community-led education as a means to disrupt the colonial and oppressive grip that the Canadian state has held on communities. Through the lens of Gramsci's notion of the subaltern and Trouillot's theory of the silencing of history and by way of juxtaposing colonial and Indigenous archival evidence, I further argue that there has always been a disconnect or a chasm between the prohibition of Indigenous-led education and the desire of white-settlers to provide this education. Despite this gap, Indigenous peoples in Manitoba have perpetually taken back control of education through language, land, culture, and community.

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List of Abbreviations

ACW	Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg
ATC	Aboriginal Teachers' Committee
IMFC	Indian and Métis Friendship Centre
MIB	Manitoba Indian Brotherhood
MMF	Manitoba Métis Federation
MTS	Manitoba Teachers' Society
NIB	National Indian Brotherhood
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Chapter 1: Introduction

Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded. -

Michel-Rolph Trouillot

Trouillot's words quoted above suggest that there is an intentionality when the voices of specific groups of people are left out of the settler-colonial historical canon. Significant imperial and capitalistic forces create the conditions to remove people from the land, the means of production, and their fundamental ability to access the very things needed for a decent life. Education is most certainly one of these resources that has been denied to or imposed upon Indigenous peoples all over the world through intentional silencing. The silencing and marginalization is most evident in Canada, and more specifically in the province of Manitoba.

Research Problems & Questions

All good teaching, learning, and research begins with noticing. A moment when our understanding of the universe is temporarily paused and dissonance is created. In the classroom, learners will often manifest this phenomenon with an outcry of "I'd never thought of that before," or "Why is that?" As humans, when we notice something that is out of the normal sphere of understanding, or where, as John Dewey (1997) suggests, where we experience something that is "*an* experience", we are in a brilliant position to learn. To be transformed. Neuroscientist James Zull (2002), from a neurological perspective frames this experience in a

similar manner. To be transformed. Zull examines how Kolb's (2015) theory of experience manifests itself in the brain. Beginning with a concrete experience – or dissonance – followed by reflection, abstract conceptualization, and then application.

As a K-12 history teacher, I have witnessed this process countless times. Learners coming to terms with a source, an idea, or an individual that has shifted how they operated in the world. A noticing, followed by a deep question. Followed by a radical pursuit of answers to those questions. The six historical thinking concepts (Sexias, 1996; Wineburg, 2011; Miles & Gibson, 2022) have always served as entry points into historical noticings for my learners. As they attempted to establish historical significance, detect ethical judgments made by historians, analyze the cause and consequence of particular actions or movements, determine what has changed and what has stayed the same, and through the examination of primary documents, learners have always come across gaps in their knowledge and beliefs.

This dissertation uses a similar process for uncovering gaps in our historical understanding – related in this case to public education in Manitoba throughout the last century. It began as a directed reading course on the history of public education Canada, stemming from an investigation into the archives of The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Over the course of a summer, I began to dive into *The Manitoba Teacher*, the central publication of Manitoba's teachers' union. It was during this process that I noticed something about the creation of history. I noticed that Indigenous voices were not part of the narrative constructed in *The Manitoba Teacher* and that if Indigenous Peoples were mentioned, it was with sparse consideration and/or through the lens of settler writers and editors. These noticings then became my research problems.

The research problems then evoked central questions for me about the development of public education in Manitoba and about how historical narratives are created to maintain certain dominant, or hegemonic, perspectives. The first question I ask is: What does the last century of *The Manitoba Teacher* tell us about the settler-driven historical narrative of Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba as related to public education. And second, given the settler-driven historical narrative created within the pages of *The Manitoba Teacher*, how have Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba resisted colonial oppression and reclaimed their right to educate their own children?

The radical pursuit of answers to these questions is where the bulk of this project's purpose rests. In this dissertation, I endeavour to surface the colonial and imperial forces that have, as mentioned by Trouillot (1995), sought and continue to seek to marginalize children and families – as these forces continue to place systemic barriers in front of Indigenous communities and families as they make significant attempts to resist colonial control of education, reclaim Indigenous education, and resurge despite these obstacles. Specifically, this dissertation begins with an examination of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, Manitoba's teacher union, largest and most widely distributed publication, *The Manitoba Teacher*. Through this examination, I identify the historical erasure that occurred, and arguably still occurs, in the publication since its initial publication in 1919 while also shedding light on the moments, despite the silencing of Indigenous voices, when Indigenous communities resisted, reclaimed, and surged as related to education. I ask, despite this historical erasure in *The Manitoba Teacher*, how has Indigenous resistance, reclamation, and resurgence manifested itself in Manitoba over the past century? To counter the colonial narrative and the attempts to silence Indigenous voices, I examine the archival evidence in both published and archival records created by Indigenous Peoples and organizations, namely the Verna Kirkness fonds, the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre Fonds,

and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg fonds. This dissertation argues there have always been moments and movements of Indigenous resistance, resurgence, and reclamation within public education throughout the past century when Indigenous communities have taken control of the educational landscape. Based on the archival research documents analyzed in this project, evidence in both colonial and Indigenous archives points to critical moments and ingredients as to when and how Indigenous communities have resisted colonial forms of education, and have reclaimed community-led education as a means to disrupt the colonial and oppressive grip that the Canadian state has held on communities. Additionally, there has always been a disconnect or a chasm between the prohibition of Indigenous-led education and the desire of white-settlers to provide this education. Despite this gap, Indigenous peoples in Manitoba have perpetually taken back control of education through language, land, culture, and community.

Historical evidence in both colonial and Indigenous archives, specifically from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Verna Kirkness fonds, the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre archives, and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg archives, points to critical moments and ingredients as to when Indigenous communities have resisted colonial forms of education, have reclaimed community-led education as a means to disrupt the colonial and oppressive grip that the Canadian state has held on communities. The archival records demonstrate the conditions and ingredients that have manifested when Indigenous communities have reclaimed education (Henderson, 2022). These factors include language, land, culture and community -- a quartet that reflects what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015) assert as essential elements to reconciliation. The significance of this work not only rests within a historical context, that is knowing the truth as it relates to the historic education chasm, but it also informs Manitoba and Canada as colonial states.

Challenging the status quo as it pertains to the silencing of Indigenous voices in the public school system requires a critical analysis of not only colonial archives, but also sources and archives previously overlooked or silenced. To address the educational gap identified here, *The Manitoba Teacher*, the central publication of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, is used as the main colonial archive. The specific critical lens used in this project encompasses Trouillot's (1995) notion of the silencing, Gramsci's (2021) conceptualization of the creation of culture and history, and Battiste and Henderson's (2021) framing of trans-systemia. These are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

The archives of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, and the Verna Kirness fonds were investigated, as Trouillot (1995) writes, "because historical traces are inherently uneven, sources are not created equal" (p. 47). By ensuring that *The Manitoba Teacher* is not the narrator and that a voice of resistance and resurgence has been present in Manitoba's colonial educational history, I contribute to dispelling the hegemonic corpus which continues to establish barriers to reconciliation and the ultimate flourishing of all learners within the system. A further examination of the theoretical framework and its marriage with method follows. The year 2009 has been selected as a way to confine the scope of the research as it represents the year of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology to Indigenous peoples in Canada for the Indian Residential School System. The apology, followed by the launch of the Truth and reconciliation Commission signifies a shift in settler consciousness. After this, *The Manitoba Teacher* begins to include greater content related Indigenous education.

Social and Political Context and Relevance

On July 8, 2021, then-premier of Manitoba, Brian Pallister, responded to the recent toppling of the statue of Queen Victoria on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislative Building. Activists, allies, and advocates brought down the statue, and one of Queen Elizabeth II, on Canada Day in response not only to the discovery of now countless unmarked graves of residential school victims, but also to a legacy of genocide and colonialism in Canada (CBC/Radio Canada, 2021). The accounting of genocide and violent settler-colonialism has been documented at length in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Canada, 1996), The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman and Girls (2019), and the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in Manitoba (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991) -- to name just a few. These reports, findings, and recommendations are rooted in the same phenomenon. As Coulthard (2014) argues, institutions and policies in this country

witnessed Canada's repeated attempts to overtly uproot and destroy the vitality and autonomy of Indigenous modes of life through institutions such as residential schools; through the imposition of settler-state policies aimed at explicitly undercutting Indigenous political economies and relations to and with the land; through violent dispossession of First Nation women's rights to land and community under sexist provisions of the Indian Act; through theft of Aboriginal children via racist child welfare policies; and through the wholesale dispossession of Indigenous people's territories and of traditional governance in exchange for delegated administrative powers to be exercised over relatively minuscule reserved land. (p. 4)

In response to this act of resistance on July 8th at the Manitoba Legislative Building grounds, the Premier defended the colonial state but suggested that:

We need to respect our heritage just as we need to respect one another.... Not to find fault. Not to tear down, not to highlight every failure, but rather to realize that we're a complex country as we are made up of complex people... The people who came here to this country, before it was a country and since, didn't come here to destroy anything. They came here to build. They came to build better. (Froese, 2021)

The former Premier's comments reflect a current paradigm in white-settler thought that Apple and Buras (2006) argue is a reaction to what some would characterize as concerns related to "cultural disintegration, national cohesion, and the decline of Western traditions" (p. 15). For hegemonic blocs, "the maintenance of social, cultural, and economic advantages...is a central preoccupation in the present political context that we have been charting" (p. 15).

I argue that this has always been the case as it pertains to education in Manitoba. The colonial status quo has been maintained through education, first through the establishment of the Residential School System and then through the public education system. And while the colonial state has attempted to silence the voices of Indigenous peoples (Coulthard, 2014), there are always moments, the Queen Victoria statue's toppling by way of example, when Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba have resisted, reclaimed, and countered the positioning of the hegemonic bloc through education (Henderson, 2022). As will be argued, over the past centuries, Indigenous peoples in Manitoba have been resisting colonial forms of education and reclaiming Indigenous ways of educating that now manifest themselves in political resistance on a grand scale.

The intellectual paradigm of the hegemonic bloc was blatantly visible a few days following the comments of the Premier¹ (Froese, 2021). On July 15, 2021, Alain Lagimodiere, a Progressive Conservative Member of Legislative Assembly was appointed as the new Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations. In his press conference following his swearing in, he remarked that residential schools and those who ran them thought “they were doing the right thing” (Petz, 2021, para 3). Lagimodiere fumbled his way through an awkward explanation of the intentions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the 94 Calls to Action, and a revisionist projection of the history of the Indian Residential School system in Canada and Manitoba. The Minister went on to explain that, “From my knowledge of it, the residential school system was designed to take Indigenous children and give them the skills and abilities they would need to fit into society as it moved forward” (Petz, 2021, para 4).

The Leader of the Opposition, Wab Kinew, in an unprecedented manner, interrupted the press conference condemning the comments: "It was the expressed intent of residential schools to kill the Indian in the child," Kinew said. “It is not cultural relativism, it is not revisionist history, for us to say that that was wrong” (Petz, 2021, para 7). Kinew was not only commenting based on his position as Leader of the Opposition, but also a TRC honorary witness. He would become Premier of Manitoba in October 2023.

The comments offered by Lagimodiere reflect two central concerns as they relate to both Truth and Reconciliation in Canada and the decolonization of our institutions, including education. The first is related to the Minister’s lack of understanding of the historical evidence, that is the source, which points to the fact that people at the time knew that residential schools were egregious. It is clear that he lacks a fundamental understanding of not only the events,

¹ The now-former Premier subsequently re-visited his comments on August 3, 2021, indicating that he was sorry that people misunderstood his comments.

people, and significant forces attributed with the development, implementation, and intent of the Indian Residential School System, but he was unable to provide any evidence for his understanding of the stories and truth revealed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The second concern is related to the Minister's inability to think historically, that is to think critically about his conscious and subconscious assumptions as they relate to colonialism, genocide, and systemic institutions which exert power over certain marginalized groups, both historically and presently. He did not analyze the source, or facts, as they relate to Residential Schools, and then determine what has not been included, what power structures were and are at play, and whose voices have been silenced. Settler perceptions and transactional implementation of treaties and the Indian Residential School system have been a two-pronged weapon to exterminate Indigenous peoples (Anderson & Robertson, 2011). For the Manitoba Premier and his minister to suggest that there was a degree of innocence to the colonial project is both historically skewed and arguably apologetic for the colonial state. This skewing and silencing of history, or the historical corpus, not only has its roots in public education in Manitoba but has also led to the marginalization of Indigenous Peoples within the education system.

In contrast to the comments made by members of Manitoba's provincial government, there has always been a desire on the part of Indigenous Peoples post-contact to take back control of their education – particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries. Parallel and symbiotic with this force is the desire of white settlers to provide education for Indigenous children – both in nefarious ways and through other paths seemingly loaded with good intentions. Where moments of Indigenous resurgence and reclamation emerge within education has been when Indigenous communities have had direct input into the design of schools and experiences, where families were included at all levels of schooling, and where language, land, and culture were central to

the purpose of education (Henderson, 2022). As McCallum and Perry (2018) argue, “Indigenous humanity is powerfully asserted in everyday acts that illuminate colonial practices” (p. 7).

The archives of *The Manitoba Teacher*, the principal publication of the Manitoba Teachers Society (the union of teachers in Manitoba) since 1919, have mirrored not only how Indigenous learners have been viewed historically in Manitoba by teachers, but have also pointed to key movements, people, and events which signal opportunities for Indigenous resurgence and reclamation. The archives of *The Manitoba Teacher*, a reflection of mainstream teacher perspectives, shed light on the continuity and change in terms of the perspective teachers and the teachers’ union have had of Indigenous learners and the obstacles Indigenous communities have had in resisting colonial control. Archival documents and published historical texts such as *The Manitoba Teacher* speak not only to the educational chasm or disconnect (that is the legal or implied inability for Indigenous communities to design their own education system, coupled with the desire of settlers to provide this system) which continues to marginalize Indigenous learners, but archival documents also identify the deliberate construction of European settler superiority, privilege and entitlement. The documents and archives also speak to when Indigenous communities have been able to resist and take back control of their education.

To counter the historical narrative within *The Manitoba Teacher*, I also examined the archival documents of Indigenous organizations which have sought to counter mainstream oppression (Henderson 2022). This reclamation came in the form of community school design, language programmes, and the development of substantive education systems controlled by Indigenous communities and peoples.

In the Canadian colonial context, archives and the notion of total archives have been viewed as complete records of events, movements, and peoples (Ghaddar, 2021). When

Indigenous People are mentioned in colonial archives, they are often part of business transactions, trading remarks, or seen as mere objects in history. Alternatively, First Nations children feature prominently in archives as related to the Indian Residential School system. Historians who only access the colonial record risk creating white-washed histories draped in and masked by a desire to maintain things as they were and are. The proposed research, while grappling with the historic education chasm or fissure, also seeks to compare and scrutinize the archival tension between western and Indigenous records based on whose voice has been silenced at the source, through the archives themselves, and through the eventual narrative of the historian. As Anderson and Robertson (2011) assert, “Colonial representations as common sense, naturalized and totalized, compromise the guts of what reflects Canada’s past and present colonial imagery in the printed press” (p. 9). This notion of common sense, or an historical corpus, as Trouillot (1995) describes, is the embodiment of what is deemed significant by a dominant culture. The task at hand here is to disrupt this corpus so what was once silent and silenced surfaces to create new narratives.

As such, the archives of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, the Manitoba Indian and Métis Friendship Centre (IMFC) held at the University of Manitoba Archives, and the Verna Kirkness fonds held at the University of British Columbia Archives are used in this project to counter the narrative derived from *The Manitoba Teacher*. The record left by *The Manitoba Teacher* is principally a version that views Indigenous learners as ‘the other’, as mere actors in a larger grand narrative, while the latter archives, as Toews (2018) argues, represent a moment in time when,

Indigenous organizers in Winnipeg were at the forefront of a national movement to create new Indigenous urban spaces and alliances, foster

strong Indigenous identities and ways of life in settler cities, and reshape cities according to Indigenous people's priorities, against the settler state's desire to shape Indigenous peoples according to settler cities' priorities. (pp. 131–132)

The IMFC in the post-war era (1954 on), Verna Kirkness and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and urban Indigenous groups (1990 on) have had significant influence within the realm of public education in Winnipeg, as a major urban centre, and in Manitoba. While the IMFC's influence is relatively well documented, most notably by Hall (2009), the archives of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg have been left virtually untouched. Coming into existence in 1990 through the amalgamation of the Winnipeg Council of Treaty and Status Indians and the Urban Indian Association of Manitoba, these archives present insights into critical actors, movements, and events associated with national moments of Indigenous resistance in the early 1990s. All three archives, that of the IMFC, Verna Kirkness and the ACW, through this novel methodological approach shed new light on new sources, new archives, new narratives, and a richer "retrospective of significance" (Trouillot, 1995). All three archives bear witness to organizations that have and still do engage in advocacy that pertains to education, child development, and family welfare.

The public education system can be the mechanism for resistance, reconciliation, and decolonization. Not in its present or historic manifestations, but in a system that is "culturally rooted, achieved through teaching Indigenous youth their history and language," and driven and supported by Indigenous educators and settler accomplices (Battiste, 2013). As such, my principal objective in this dissertation is to surface from the IMFC, Verna Kirkness, and ACW archives the conditions and actions within Indigenous communities required to resist colonial

oppression. These moves have not been recorded in *The Manitoba Teacher*, either through the sources themselves or through curation of the publication itself, and the silenced sources may prove to be instructive towards an education system that responds to the specific needs of Indigenous communities.

Conclusion

I return to the initial noticings and questions which have launched and sustained this research. What initially surfaced was the erasure of Indigenous Peoples from *The Manitoba Teacher*. The second noticing was that despite this erasure, Indigenous Peoples still were pushing back against the colonial narrative represented in the publication. The central question then becomes, “why is that?” What does *The Manitoba Teacher* tell us? How does it inform our thinking within the confines of K-12 education and from a societal perspective? And second, how have Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba over the past century been able to resist and reclaim? Under what conditions? And how were these voices captured? The ultimate intent of this project is to offer pathways for equitable, community-driven, effective, and transsystemic schools in Manitoba and other colonial states. This action is central to truth and reconciliation and the overarching aim of this particular project. This dissertation does not just seek to settle minor questions about how one particular individual or movement has impacted a specific period in rather. Rather, its intent is to inform the larger conversation in Canada about how settlers make amends, pay off the educational debt they owe to Indigenous Peoples, and develop a collaborative, respectful, and enduring relationship with Canada’s First Peoples. History is a brilliant means to examine the human experience. That is how we came to this point, for better or for worse. And as historian Desmond Morton posits, “It [History] should tell us that no ideas, however deeply held, last forever.” (2006, p. vii) It is this understanding of the power,

manipulation, and production of history that begins the discussion of the theoretical framework constructed to bolster this inquiry.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

I begin this chapter by fully acknowledging that my theoretical framework rests firmly on the theorizing of Antonio Gramsci and Michel-Rolph Trouillot. While I include the latter based on his thinking and writing related to the erasure of voices in history from the perspective of impoverished Haitians, I understand that the inclusion and dependency on Gramsci may seem out of step. Gramsci was Italian and, in his writing, does not give thought to Indigenous Peoples in North America. The irony is rich – that the use of a European philosopher to help explain how and why Indigenous voices have been silenced in Manitoba might appear, on the surface, tenuous, at best. But as I will explain, Gramsci’s theorizing as it relates to subalternity and the production of history is significantly used throughout the world by Indigenous scholars to ask deep questions about how Indigenous Peoples might resist colonial oppression and reclaim Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Through the thinking of Turner (2006), Warrior (2011), Smith (2015), and Byrd and Rothberg (2011), Indigenous scholars connect the global Indigenous experience with that of the subaltern as described by Gramsci. My use of Gramsci is less about his experience lying in a fascist prison, but rather about whose voice is heard and whose ears are receptive to hearing voices.

Gramsci, Hegemony, & Subalternity

In his *Prison Notebook 25*, Antonio Gramsci (2021) referred to the label of the subaltern and the concept of subalternity. This was the first time that the term had been used in a political

and historical sense, as previous usage derived from military rank. While some (Gerratana, 1997) have argued that the use of subaltern was coded language to veil any mention of the proletariat to his capturers, Green (2011) argues that there was not intent to censor his meaning -- Gramsci developed the notion “to identify and analyze the politics and activity of marginalized social groups” (p. 388). Moreover, Gramsci’s conception of the subaltern differed from traditional Marxist framing of the proletariat, as Gramsci views the subaltern as a heterogenous group where race, class, and gender intersect. The subaltern refers to an historical and cultural complexity that moves beyond divisions of labour in the traditional Marxist dialectic, whereby Gramsci includes all people in society “suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation” (Louai, 2012, p. 5). In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci is not fully certain what he means by the term subaltern but appears to be building a conception as he writes. Despite some vagueness, Gramsci does offer the following to clarify its relation to ruling classes: “Subaltern classes are subject to the initiatives of the dominant class, even when they rebel; they are in a state of anxious defense” (Gramsci, 2011, p. 2). This subjugation of subaltern classes was and is often reinforced by other collectives who benefited from the oppression.

As Apple and Buras (2016) explain, “Gramsci meant that the prevailing matrix of power was sustained ideologically as elites built on existing forms of common senses -- ‘spontaneous,’ often unexamined worldviews held by collectivities -- and compromised with subordinate groups to secure their assent” (p. 4). This understanding of Gramsci's conceptualization of the subaltern is helpful for this project as it frames the subaltern as those who have been prohibited from contributing to their history and where this oppression has been propagated by non-elite,

middling classes. But Gramsci was not simply speaking about class in a classical Marxist tradition. Rather, between 1930 and 1934, he began to transition the conceptualization of *subaltern classes* to *subaltern groups* where he “did not conceive them as a single or homogenous entity, which is why he consistently refers to them in the plural.” (Gramsci, 2021, p. xxxiv). According to Buttigieg and Green (2021), Gramsci’s notion of the subaltern moves beyond class, in that it “intertwines class analysis with the structural, cultural, and ideological specificities of social position and subjectivity.” (p. x1). Furthermore, they argue that Gramsci’s more nuanced conceptualization of the subaltern brings into context historical and present intersections of “race, religion, and gender...” (p. x1). It would be, therefore, too simplistic to equate Gramsci’s notion to strictly class or the proletariat.

In the context of this project, teachers writing in *The Manitoba Teacher* may not be ruling elites who on a day-to-day basis consciously are trying to relegate Indigenous learners and communities to the margins, but through bolstering of a western system of education and speaking to its value(s), they may indeed be placing barriers to reclamation. They may also serve an elitist worldview, through *The Manitoba Teacher* itself, by excluding critical sources, voices, and narratives. The term subaltern is helpful in this dissertation as it helps to rationalize a method that acknowledges that there are certain groups that are marginalized, that they have not been able to contribute to the historical corpus, that forces of resistance remain, *and* that they can speak.

But there is a danger to the term subaltern if not used appropriately. The danger is to assume that the subaltern is a voiceless and helpless homogenous group that needs an intellectual to speak for it. In a recent personal correspondence, M. Apple (August 9, 2021) argues that subaltern can indeed speak, noting the (in)famous essay by Spivak (2010a) written in 1988 and

later revised (Spivak, 2010b) entitled *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Apple argues that the term can be used, but great caution should be taken:

I am less worried about its use **IF** people who employ it state up front the possible dangers. The more recent history of its use is not that subaltern groups do not resist or "speak." Indeed, exactly the opposite is the case. Thus, Spivak makes clear that the subaltern constantly "speak." For me, the problem is that dominant groups don't listen. The fact that it takes very constant hard ideological efforts by dominant groups to bring oppressed groups under their leadership shows that oppressed and marginalized groups are not passive, that they have elements of good and bad sense. And, thus, their resistance can be and often is contradictory, with possibilities and limits existing side by side. (personal communication, August 9, 2021)

The persistence, rather than passivity, of oppressed groups is central to this dissertation. The core purpose and rationale is that Indigenous communities have been resisting colonial educational forces for over a century (since its beginning!). The problem has been that this resistance has not been necessarily captured at the historical source and archival level and therefore may not have informed or disrupted the hegemonic narrative. The term subaltern is useful only in that it refers to Gramsci's assertion that the ruling elite represent a massive oppressive force and that it commandeers subordinate classes to further oppress those who are deemed subordinate. But the subaltern represents more than the working class. Holst and Brookfield (2017) simplify Gramsci's analysis of the production of history that he analyzes throughout the Prison Notebooks. Through a comparison of Roman, medieval, and pre-1870 Italian states, Gramsci spends considerable energy considering "the ways in which relations of class, race, gender,

religion, nationalism, and colonialism” create the conditions of oppression, subordination, and an exclusion of “participating in the dominant political institutions” (Green, 2011, p. 394).

Gramsci’s theory of subalternity, admittedly easily co-opted, misread, and prone to criticism from many angles, also is useful in identifying the complicit role of the bourgeoisie, or in this case, teacher unions, in the subordination and silencing of, whether conscious or unconscious, of Indigenous voices and worldviews (Green, 2011, p. 395). This is where Gramsci is helpful in the current project -- where he situates the oppressed not as voiceless peasants, but as ignored resisters who are, in a contradictory sense, oppressed by a middling, in this case, teacher class which may or may not have the best intentions, but are engaged in the practice of historical exclusion on behalf of the hegemonic and historic bloc. Herein lies the criticality of the project and Gramsci’s theory as it informs the historical analysis proposed.

Articulation & Reception: Subalternity, Indigeneity, & Incommensurability

There is also a tension and compatibility between the concepts of subalternity and Indigeneity which are relevant for this project. Subaltern studies, under the umbrella of postcolonial studies, assume a certain degree of post-ness -- that is that we are past the reality of colonial statehood. Byrd and Rothberg (2011) surface the resistance of Indigenous scholars to use the Gramscian notion of the subaltern due to its western roots and because it is misleading and suggests that colonialism is over and/or that the Indigenous experience in North America is similar to the experience of other marginalized groups. But they also suggest that there is synergy between the theoretical concepts, “as both movements struggle with how to articulate the tensions between overweening colonial power and resilient, resistant actors” (p. 6). The subaltern, especially as Spivak (2010a) argues, is a tool for theorists to use to theorize the gap

between the “failed elite reception” and the sender of the message. Subalternity is helpful as it exposes this gap.

Osage scholar Robert Warrior (2011) argues for the marriage between subaltern and Indigenous studies as it relates to two common purposes. For Warrior, “the Indigenous world of North America above the Rio Grande features two major forms of subalternity, one typified by extreme abject poverty, the other more a matter of political non-visibility and invisibility” (p. 86). While the tension between subalternity and Indigeneity will never be resolved, Warrior provides a theoretical basis that allows for an investigation of silencing, ignoring, and subjugation of Indigenous peoples. And while Spivak does indeed exclaim in her 1988 first edition of *Can the Subaltern Speak* that they cannot speak, her argument that they do indeed speak but are ignored is hyper-relevant to the historical inquiry and the production of history of this project.

And it is in the realization that indeed that the subaltern does speak where Indigenous scholars see the potential partnership between Indigenous studies or dialogue and those of subaltern studies. According to Byrd and Rothberg (2011), both fields of studies help to unpack the notion of incommensurability. They argue that “subaltern/indigenous dialogue is, among other things, a dialogue within and about incommensurability” (p. 4). While Gramsci’s and contemporary theories of subalternity refer to “peasant insurrections that had remained invisible in dominant and even much leftists historiography,” Indigeneity also marks an intellectual project that challenges and disrupts the logics of colonialism that underwrite liberal democracies in order to question Euro-American constructions of self, nation-state...” (pp. 2–3) The crossroads of subalternity and Indigeneity manifest with the incommensurability of liberalism and the struggle of those traditionally marginalized.

Furthermore, both subaltern and Indigenous studies lend themselves to what both Spivak (2010) and Byrd and Rothberg (2011) argue as the central problem to the production of history. The problem is to whether the subaltern speaks or not is turned on its head by Indigenous scholars, such as Byrd and Rothberg (2011), Warrior (2011), and Turner (2006), as the central problem is less about articulation, or speaking, and more about who is receiving – reception. Spivak’s description of the suicide of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri in 1920 suggests that indeed that she was speaking. The suicide was an act of revolution, counter to the dominant narrative that her death was as a result of an affair. Certainly, Bhaduri spoke, but reception of the message was ignored and distorted. As Byrd and Rothberg (2011) highlight,

...the focus of the inability to ‘hear’ opens up the possibility for building bridges across marginalized locations. Indeed the salutary shift from the conditions of (failed subaltern) production to the conditions of (failed elite) reception is one of the things that makes the dialogue between postcolonial studies and indigenous studies simultaneously possible and desirable, as both movement struggles with how to articulate tensions between overweening colonial power and resilient, resistant actors. (pp. 5–6)

The tension between Indigenous or subaltern articulation and the elite’s failure to listen is a central theoretical pillar of this dissertation. The incommensurability of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, primarily situated in land and the relationship to it, will repeatedly manifest itself in the pages of *The Manitoba Teacher*. The archives of the Indian Métis Friendship Centre, The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, and the Verna Kirkness fonds make the case that Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba were indeed speaking, but the staff at *The Manitoba Teacher* were not listening. European liberalism could not accept and/or make sense of the voices of

resistance, resurgence, and reclamation. As Byrd and Rothberg (2011) argue further, “Incommensurability... in other words, refers to the gap between the ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ of messages inflected by power, a gap that has considerable implications for the writing of subaltern and indigenous histories” (p. 6). It is this gap that is the focus of this dissertation – the gap between the voices of Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba and the ears of settler educators was massive. Revealing the persistent struggle endured by Indigenous Peoples to be heard and to ultimately take back control of their children and their children’s education.

Maori scholar Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2015) speaks to this dislocation, or gap, within the context of the Maori educational resistance in New Zealand. Using Freire’s concept of praxis as a central pillar to his own theorizing, Smith pushes back against what he denotes as “national interests” and argues that,

For Maori the current accent on neoliberal, market-led education and schooling practice is detrimental to notions of collective responsibility embedded in words such as society, social, public and community. This is reinforced formally (government policy) and informally (public hegemony). (p. 56)

The hegemonic forces, as outlined by Gramsci, are central to silencing Indigenous Peoples or deafening settlers. Silencing in terms of ignorance and deafening in terms of shifting narrative, cherry picking historical interpretations, or shading historical significance. (Historical Thinking will become a central pillar to the methodology of this project.) In *The Shocking Truth About Indians in Textbooks* (1977), Verna Kirkness attempts to break the silence of colonial oppression and historical ownership by outlining the egregious depictions of Indigenous Peoples in Canadian textbooks. Similarly, historian Sean Carleton (2011) argues in his analysis of British Columbia social studies textbooks that “Authorized textbooks were one tool used by the state to

school children in the logic and legitimacy of settler colonialism” (para 14). The authority created by textbooks or government policy was a tool to both silence Indigenous voices while fully shaping the historical narrative. Speaking and reception, as will be revealed, are central themes to settler colonialism in Canada.

Dale Turner (2006) in *This is Not a Peace Pipe* further clarifies the gap between subaltern/Indigenous speaking and hegemonic reception. Arguing for a transsystemic relationship between western and Indigenous critical thought, Turner surfaces the gap through Supreme Court of Canada decisions. Specifically, he identifies when Canada has ruled that Indigenous Peoples do indeed have rights, but only within the context of the Canadian state. As Turner argues, “The court must take into account the perspectives of the aboriginal peoples, but that perspective must be framed in terms cognizable to the Canadian legal and constitutional structure” (p. 83). Following the creation of the new Canadian Constitution in 1982, which included the Charter of Rights and Freedom – where Indigenous rights were enshrined – Indigenous voices were interpreted through a colonial court system. Public hegemony sought to silence Indigenous Peoples in Canada through an inability and resistance to reception on the part of a settler society. This gap and theoretical underpinnings of subalternity and the silencing of history are primary lenses of this project.

Historian Catherine LaRochelle (2023) examines the creation of a colonial narrative within public education in her work *School of Racism: A Canadian History, 1830-1915*. Throughout, LaRochelle leans heavily on the notion of alterity, or othering, as she explores archival texts, including textbooks and educational journals, in Quebec and Lower Canada in the 19th century. Borrowing from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, including Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas, LaRochelle conceptualizes othering along the lines of gaze. That

is whose gaze determines who the other is. Who is gazing upon who and towards which ends? LaRochelle argues that “We must look at the role of narration, that is, the discursive construction of difference, in order to gain a complete understanding of the process of identity building” (p. 22). *The Manitoba Teacher*, as we will see, was and is an integral tool for developing the narrative and identity of teachers in Manitoba. White, European, and Christian educators have been at the helm of the publication since its inception in 1919 and their gaze has not been focused on Indigenous peoples – or if it has, has been through what one might call *representation*. For LaRochelle, “When the relation to the Other is reduced to his representations as a figure known through observation, a relation of imaginary and material domination is established” (p. 23). Through the creation of an overarching narrative of dominance and othering, *The Manitoba Teacher* created and perpetuated the conditions whereby Indigenous people were simultaneously ignored and socialized through public education as an observable other.

Subalternity as a theoretical framework helps to surface phenomena such as silencing, observation, and othering. LaRochelle posits, “Western civilization and the Christian world of meaning were built on a universal vision of their history and their religion. How then to represent those who lived outside the universal?” (p. 27). This was and is the challenge of *The Manitoba Teacher*, and other publications focused on public education in Manitoba. What mindsets, cognitive paradigms, and critical imaginations are necessary to become fully aware of the forces intent of silencing, othering, and oppression Indigenous learners, educators, and families? This is the focus of this dissertation.

The Production & Silencing of History

This work is also bathed in critical theory and critical education. I ask questions about and problematize what is taken for granted within the context of education, the settler state, and the possibility for truth and reconciliation. As Gottesman (2016) argues, “critical education seeks to expose how relations of power and inequity... in their myriad of forms, combinations, and complexities, are manifest and are challenged in the formal and informal education of children and adults” (p. xii). As such, this dissertation challenges the epistemological, political, historical, and educational underpinnings of public education in the province of Manitoba as it relates to Indigenous learners. To do so, two central tasks need to be carried out. The first is to challenge the colonial archives themselves to not only critically analyze how power was exerted as a means of oppression, but also to identify how Indigenous voices and ways of being were silenced. The second task involves a critical examination of Indigenous archives to help uncover the historical actors, movements, and events that shaped resurgence and resistance movements in public education. The latter task is predicated on a transsystemic research methodology (Battiste & Henderson, 2021) that allows for the silenced voices to emerge not only through the challenging of what knowledge is valued and by whom, but also through the cross referencing of the Indigenous archives with the historical artifacts found in letters, newspapers, correspondence, and other fonds.

History and archives, as a foundation for the creation of histories, are heavily value laden. McCracken (2019) argues, “For historians committed to reconciliation and doing the work of speaking truth about the past, it is imperative that the role of archives in collective memory is understood” (p. 185). To this point, this dissertation is committed to reconciliation, as the practice of removing barriers for Indigenous reclamation and resurgence, but the notion of truth

needs to be carefully theorized. Truth and truth-meaning-making need to be framed in a manner where we can avoid an epistemological pitfall of only listening to the dominant voices then and now. Trouillot (1995) famously deconstructed the concept of historical truth as he theorized how history works:

For if 'the production of history' is more than an elegant metaphor with economistic undertones, then this 'production' is a process that puts together certain components to form something new. If history is 'produced,' we need to illuminate this production process, understand its mechanisms, and classify its components. Silences are among many of such components. (p.38)

This theoretical framing helps to expose the ways Indigenous voices/ideas have been silenced and/or heard in the Manitoba education system over the past 100 plus years. Furthermore, how do we come to understand these voices as truth within the production of history? Trouillot (1995) further theorizes that there are four key stages to history production and subsequently the silencing of history. The first deals with the creation of the source itself. This is the action of the historical actor. All archives (what counts as "knowledge") are embedded in power structures. They are not the objective, "value-free" repositories they have traditionally claimed to be. The Manitoba Teachers' society published archive in the form of *The Manitoba Teacher* reflects/butresses the hegemonic imperatives of bourgeois settler colonialism in western Canada in the twentieth century. As such, it is part and parcel of the same system that created the residential school system. To "decolonize" Manitoba's archives, we must first understand how/where/when they silenced Indigenous voices and perspectives. It is also important to recognize that this process of "silencing" Indigenous people was not always completely

successful--and so we also need to recognize the ways in which Indigenous leaders and activists were already trying to decolonize the archives in the 20th century.

Trouillot's (1995) theorizing of the production of history and the power imbalances throughout all four stages also awakens one to the notion that "unequal control over historical production" is also key to the creation of archives (p. 51). *The Manitoba Teacher*, as an archive - that is a collection of produced facts about some historical actors -- privileges, for the most part, the voices, choices, and actions of white settler educators, policies, and systems. These educators periodically observe Indigenous learners, but this is where at first glance of the archives overt facts end simply with observations. Essential to Trouillot's theory (and critical for this project proposed here) is the notion of silences. As he argues, "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly" (p. 27). Given the exclusion of Indigenous sources in *The Manitoba Teacher*, particularly from 1919 until the early 1960s, it is essential to surface sources for silences. What was happening in Manitoba education during this time? How was power distributed and how did this manifest itself in the public school system? Similarly, as more Indigenous voices enter *The Manitoba Teacher* following 1960 coupled with settler critiques of the colonial state, how did Indigenous peoples begin to assert greater power and control and how did and does this coincide with the middling teacher classes' awakening?

I use archives/collections which speak to Indigenous voices in Manitoba education over the past century while juxtaposing them against the colonial archive of *The Manitoba Teacher* - the central publication of the Manitoba Teachers Society. As McCracken (2019) posits, "archives are never neutral but, rather, exist to reinforce existing colonial hierarchies as inevitable and natural by classifying some individuals (settlers) as observers and others as observed (Indigenous

peoples)” (p. 186). Given this problem in solely focusing on a colonial archive such as *The Manitoba Teacher*, it is critical to firstly examine which voices and stories are left out of the publication and what power structures existed then and exist now to silence these voices. I use outside and inside sources to identify particular moments, events, movements, and individuals in the history of Manitoba education when Indigenous issues surfaced, followed by a return to archives to see how/where/when their voices are silenced.

I analyze editions of *The Manitoba Teacher* from 1919 until 2009 to understand how Indigenous learners, educators, and communities are viewed historically, what power imbalances have and do exist, what assumptions values and perspectives have been normalized or not, and how Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been characterized both historically and presently. 2009 is selected as means to provide scope as it marks the year when Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper made an apology on behalf of Canada to all Indigenous peoples for the Indian residential School system; a notable date when the impact of Indian Residential Schools became widely embedded into the consciousness of settler Canadians. The apology also surfaced at the 2008 launch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But this initial investigation needs to be tempered, for as Burton (2005) argues, “all archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures—pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history” (p. 6). Given this tension, it will be critical to fully employ Trouillot’s four stages of history production -- namely the source, fact collection, fact retrieval, and the stage of making the history -- or determining historical significance (The Six Historical Thinking Concepts will be expanded upon the Methodology chapter.) Through these stages and ensuring that things are not left to an element of take-for-grantedness, *The Manitoba Teacher* is dissected to truly understand what power structures have

existed, how these have impacted Indigenous people over the past century, whose voices have been silenced, and what significance did this silencing have on the ability of Indigenous communities to design their own educational experiences. Through this process, this work surfaces settler attitudes, as observers and actors, to help answer the research question and bridge the educational gap presently.

The second archival task within this project is to seek archival sources of Indigenous organizations that have resisted colonial oppression at critical moments in Manitoba history and have opened the door for educational reclamation. In this sense, this methodological approach borrows from Ghaddar's work (2021) who took strides to challenge the notion of total archives as they "reassemble and interpret the same events, personalities, characters, documents, debates and history texts cited in the archival literature..." (p. 63). Through an examination of the archives of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, the Manitoba Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, and the Verna Kirkeness fonds, it is proposed here that the silenced or ignored voices not represented in *The Manitoba Teacher* might provide insight into the people, events, and movements which punctured holes into the timeline of colonial education. It is through this second investigation and analysis of these two archives, which have been chosen due to their prominence in secondary sources, where I can avoid "to normalize the enfolding and erasure of Indigenous histories, legal orders, cultural knowledges, languages and perspectives in and through the colonial archives" (Ghaddar, 2021, p. 64).

I also seek to connect the ways in which Indigenous issues were treated in the archive to the broader development of bourgeois settler colonialism in Manitoba. I searched the archives for moments when Indigenous voices made themselves heard. I present my findings in a chronological narrative that tracks the ways in which Indigenous voices were and were not heard

in the Manitoba education system over the past 100 years. The project ends by making recommendations, based on what has been uncovered, on how Manitoba can move forward in creating education systems that are led by Indigenous communities. I also provide pathways forward for education systems to begin to decolonize schools and create trans-systemic spaces by revealing provincial responsibility as they relate to UNDRIP, treaty rights as outlined in the Constitution Act of 1982, and recommendations from the Calls to Action (TRC, 2015), The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Canada, Erasmus, & Dussault, 1996), Report on MMIWG (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019), the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991) and other reports which speak to historical truths but also offer clear pathways to self-determination. The theoretical underpinnings for this pathway also connect with Indigenous theoretical knowledge systems derived from scholars such as Simpson (2014), Coulthard (2014), Alfred (2009), and the voices of Indigenous leaders in Manitoba throughout history.

Chapter 3: Literature Review & Historiography

The following chapter seeks to provide a substantive but not exhaustive overview of the literature pertaining to the colonial history of Canada, the scholarly research focused on dissecting this past, current issues as they relate to historical research and archival management and analysis. The review provides a cognitive and theoretical foundation for the analysis of the archival documents and published historical texts in future chapters, while focussing the outcome on reconciliation as it relates to education in Canada. The review of works begins with a focus on imperative need for truth and reconciliation, the Calls to Action located within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 report, the history of the Indian Residential School system and public education in Canada, and finally a survey at significant contributions from scholars located with critical, Indigenist, and transsystemic theory who inform this dissertation.

Truth & Reconciliation

The TRC Calls to Action are one roadmap for Canada as a settler state to begin to decolonize and remove barriers for Indigenous peoples in a spirit of allyship and as accomplices, or accessories, in ensuring everyone has the means for a decent life. I recognize that the Calls to Action are just one series of recommendations and unfulfilled promises that also include the The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (1991), Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), the Phoenix Sinclair report (Province of Manitoba, 2015) the MMIWG Report (2019), to offer just a few. But the TRC Calls to Action have moved Canadian mainstream society to a pivotal point of political and social consciousness that has coincided with some degree of action. The Calls to Action are fresh in the minds of many Canadians and could be argued have had the greatest impact in

spurring a national conversation about colonialism, oppression, truth, and reconciliation. This roadmap, however, is fraught with political, hegemonic, racist, and historical pitfalls that are poised to derail the work. Given this complexity, it is important to spend some significant energy analyzing the TRC Calls to Action and subsequent literature as they pertain to education. Equally as important, it is critical to perform somewhat of a conceptual analysis of what is meant by reconciliation.

What is meant by the term reconciliation? This word is often tossed around by settlers and is one that Elder Mary Courchene once remarked to me is simply a “buzzword” to make people feel better about themselves (M. Courchene, personal communication, February 20, 2020). In Cree writer David Robertson’s (2020) latest book, *Black Water*, the author offers a memoir of his father, long-time Indigenous education leader Don Robertson. In the book, Robertson indicates that both he and his father shared the same view of reconciliation, namely, that it is about listening. Courchene and David Robertson offer two different perspectives on the reconciliation spectrum (one more positive than the other) – and both have merit. I believe that Canadians need to focus on the work that is required to ensure all our learners have the means for a decent life. For this, I turn to the words of Alfred (2011) who outlines what the process of truth and reconciliation might entail:

Challenging mainstream society to question its own structure, its acquisitive, individualistic values system, and the false premises of colonialism is essential if we are to move beyond the problems plaguing all our societies, Native and white, and rebuild relations between our people. (p. 44)

Given this framing of reconciliation, educators -- and education as a system -- have critical roles in unveiling these false promises, critiquing dominant creation myths, and rebuilding healthy and

progressive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians based on trust and mutual respect.

An editorial in the November 23rd Winnipeg Free Press entitled *Time to Answer a Monumental Call to Action* (2020) puts forth the argument that as part of the reconciliation journey, Call to Action number 81 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (2015) must be fulfilled. This call to action demands that:

...the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement Agreement, commissioned and installed a publicly accessible, highly visible, Residential Schools National Monument in the city of Ottawa to honour Survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities. (p. 9)

The editorial was in response to a presentation given by Stephanie Scott, interim director of the National Centre of Truth and Reconciliation, to the House of Commons' heritage committee. At the committee hearing on November 16, 2020, Scott heavily emphasized the need for the fulfillment of these two calls to action: "Canadians need to know the truth and understand what happened in order to foster true reconciliation and healing," and that, "Commemoration and education are critical to understanding the complicated and difficult history that we share as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians" (Alhmidi, 2020).

Eight years following the historic publication of the TRC's 94 Calls to Action, it is still unclear to what extent progress has been made in regard to reconciliation or decolonization on any scale. Jewell and Mosby (2020) released the Calls to Action Accountability report in late 2020 indicating that very little progress has been achieved since 2015 and more gravely since 2019. According to the authors, "Canada has fallen far short of these commitments and has, by

any reasonable metric, received a failing grade when it comes to the 94 Calls to Action” (p. 4). They conclude that in 2020 Canada had not fulfilled any of the Calls to Action. In fact, as they argue, Canada has regressed.

The Calls to Action consist of two main sections. The first, including Calls to Action 1-42, are organized under the heading of Legacy. The Legacy section, which outlines Calls to Action 6-12 (those pertaining Education) address the historical legacy of Indian Residential Schools as well as the deep-rooted racism, capitalism, and oppression embedded by imperial, colonial, and industrial currents that have created the settler version of Canada through schooling. The second section refers to Reconciliation specifically, outlining Calls to Action intended to move Canada towards a better relationship with Indigenous peoples. (These Calls, listed from 43-94, devote specific attention to education in the sections numbered 62-65.)

While the creation of monuments is a tangible act – one that is measurable, despite being fraught with jurisdictional and ideological inertia, other actions are less visible or concrete. If the House of Commons heritage committee takes action on the creation of a monument, it is an overt act, a demonstration that the federal government is committed, at some level, to the complex reality of reconciliation.

Other Calls to Action are less measurable. In her comments to the Heritage Committee, Scott refers to the need for education. In the context of monuments, she is referring to a larger societal education, but in doing this, she underscores the responsibility of public education in both truth and reconciliation as it pertains to the genocidal legacy of residential schools and the historic and contemporary colonial and imperial history that has plagued the relationship between white settlers and Indigenous peoples. And while the Calls to Action surface critical steps that are required to begin the process of both truth (legacy and history) and reconciliation,

it is impossible not to see public education as a means for contributing to the amelioration of the systemic issues evidenced within the education, child welfare and justice systems. As Senator Murray Sinclair has often professed, “Education got us into the mess and Education will get us out of it” (As cited in Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020, p. 55).

The implementation and operationalization of the Calls to Action within public education, Kindergarten to Grade 12, are not easily measurable. And while some inroads have been made (treaty acknowledgements, professional development, divisional elders, language programmes, and so on) in the past five years throughout the country, there persist challenges to school systems, school divisions, and schools. Jewell and Mosby (2020) suggest that there are three main barriers to the achievement of the Calls to Action in general, and education systems should take heed:

- 1) A vision among policy makers of the ‘public interest’ as generally excluding Indigenous peoples;
- 2) The deep-rooted paternalistic attitudes of politicians, bureaucrats, and other policy makers, and;
- 3) The ongoing legacy and reality of structural anti-Indigenous racism (p. 6)

This project surfaces these three significant barriers to the implementation of the Calls to Action by addressing how they have manifested themselves within systems of education and offering recommendations. These refined barriers or challenges to the journey of truth and reconciliation mirror those outlined by Jewell and Mosby (2020) and come in the form of:

- (1) the historic gap between the legal ability of Indigenous Peoples to create their own system of education and the desire of white settlers to provide education (even with the “best intentions”),

(2) the lowered expectations of white settler educators of Indigenous learners, and
(3) the ultimate trivialization of the Calls to Action and Indigenous culture and history in the education system and society writ large.

The first barrier is historical in nature. There has always been a desire on the part of Indigenous peoples post-contact to take back control of their education – particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries. Parallel and symbiotic with this force is the desire of white settlers to provide education for Indigenous children – both in nefarious ways and through other paths seemingly loaded with good intentions. This has come in the form of sinister weaponry, such as the Indian Residential School System, to more benign forms, such as off-campus programmes, which are generally designed with settler good intentions (Coulthard, 2014, p. 4). As Kanu (2005) argues, “formal education plays a pivotal role in the promotion and validation of the cultural knowledge of dominant groups as ‘official knowledge’ for all” (p. 1). The inability of the state to provide culturally and community-based education creates an endless circle, perpetuating education systems that continue to colonize and oppress.

Second, there is significant data throughout the Commonwealth and colonized parts of the world where settler educators hold significantly lower expectations for Indigenous learners based on the deficiency narratives shaped in educational history and discourse (Hynds et al., 2016; Riley & Pidgeon, 2019; Riley & Ungerleider, 2008, 2012). Indigenous scholar Michael Rose (2011) refers to the lowering of expectations for racialized learners as Cotton Wool – that is the providing learners or employees with menial tasks because of preconceived and racist assumptions held by the oppressor. While there is a dearth of research related to the expectations of white settler educators in Winnipeg and Manitoba, we still witness streaming through mathematics curricula, off-campus programs which create a micro-apartheid system, and an

exclusion of racialized learners from co-curricular and extra-curricular programming. As scholar Emdin (2016) argues,

As long as white middle-class teachers are recruited to schools occupied by urban youth of color, without any consideration of how they affirm and re-establish power dynamics that silence students, issues that plague urban education (like achievement gaps, suspension rates, and high teacher turnover) will persist. (p. 9)

The third and final barrier to implementing the TRC's Calls to Action in any meaningful way within public education is the pervasive tendency of the trivialization of reconciliation and decolonization. As Alfred (2011) argues,

Contemporary colonialism is deceptive because it cloaks its racist, assimilative, and possessive intent in words that make hatred, cultural extermination, and stealing of land sound like technical aspects of the inevitable march of progress. (p. 7)

The public education system is equally guilty of such acts when it lauds treaty acknowledgements on one hand, while simultaneously segregating learners into academic streams, and determining who participates in which co-curricular programming, and what music, plays, and other texts are chosen for learners to engage with.

To overcome these barriers, I argue, using the framing of Tacke Alfred, that the public education system can be the mechanism for resistance, reconciliation, and decolonization. This possibility resides not in its present or historic manifestations, but in a system that is "culturally rooted, achieved through teaching Indigenous youth their history and language," and driven and supported by Indigenous educators and settler accomplices (Alfred, 2011, p. 7). Tanya Talaga

(2018) further supports the role of education as a means for reconciliation, decolonization, and reclamation:

In Canada, legions of teachers have taken it upon themselves to learn more about this country's true history by reading and teaching books by Indigenous authors and historians, even if their governments are not keeping pace with what they are doing in the classroom. The educators always lead us forward. (p. 214)

The Case for Reconciliation

Historian Brittany Luby (2020), in her investigation of the causes and consequences of the damming of the Winnipeg River during the 19th and 20th centuries on the Anishinabeg, remarks on the impact of dams on winter roads: “Intergenerational knowledge that had allowed Anishinaabeg families to travel safely along the ice was compromised by industrial operations” (p. 48). The disruption in a way of life by a foreign, capitalistic, and imperial force deeply altered both the manner in which Anishinaabeg people related to each other and to nature. This process is profoundly analogous with public education. The introduction of industrial and residential schools in the late 19th century, coupled with the Indian Act of 1876, launched a century's worth of mayhem into the lives of Indigenous children and families from coast to coast. School for Indigenous children was used as a weapon — a weapon of apartheid and genocide that historian and educator Brian Titley described in 1986 as “The destruction of the children's link to their ancestral culture and their assimilation into the dominant society...” (p. 75).

Further to this, historian John Milloy (2017), in his groundbreaking history, *A National Crime*, reveals through state and church records the sinister methods by which these acts of assimilation were carried out: “...the system's history is marked by the persistent neglect and

abuse of children and through them of Aboriginal communities in general” (p. xxxvii). Canada and the Department of Indian Affairs, according to Milloy, created a “fiction of care” that would destroy the way of life of generations of Indigenous people. And despite Erin O’Toole’s assertion that Ryerson’s goal was to educate children (Zimonjic & Cullen, 2020), the historical evidence is quite clear as to the intent. Mission Schools, Day Schools, Industrial Schools, Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the current child welfare system have all been used by Canada and Canadians as colonial (?) tools — tools that political scientist Karen Murray (2017) describes as “a vector of violence to control Indigenous peoples and their lands” (p. 747).

The Residential School system was intentionally violent and destructive. Similar to the flooding and destruction of the Winnipeg River that altered the lives of the Anishinaabeg in Treaty 3 encompassing Lake of the Woods (Luby, 2020), so too did the Residential Schools erode, scrape, drown, and obliterate the connections between families, community the land, and the self. As Forsyth (2020) argues, “The process of colonization, whether through legislation or brute force, has always been violent and, in spite of Indigenous resistance, persists in Canada” (p. 23). Similarly, Alfred (2009) makes a notable case for reconciliation: “As Indigenous nations, we’ve been disconnected from who we are as people, from the sources of strength and our very survival: our land, culture, and community” (p. 5). It is the reestablishment of relations, not only with non-Indigenous Canadians that is central to reconciliation, but also of Indigenous People to their source of strength.

The last Residential School was shuttered in 1996, signifying the conclusion of the genocidal practice of ripping children away from families and the land and contributing to a legacy of intergenerational trauma. Despite an apology by then Prime Minister Stephan Harper in 2009, data collected by the Truth and Conciliation Commission of Canada, and the release of the

Calls to Action, show that outcomes for Indigenous children, particularly those who live in poverty and/or who are subject to the child welfare system, are significantly lower than settlers and newcomers. For example, according to the Manitoba Auditor General's report (Hatherly, 2018), only 55% of Indigenous students graduate from High School, compared to 96% for non-Indigenous learners. The gaps for children in care are even more significant, as only 30% graduate from High School. According to Levine et al. (2020), "In view of the fact that Manitoba currently has over 10 000 children in care, the possibility that 7000 children will not attain a high school diploma has significant negative social, political, and economic impacts" (p. 253). According to the Manitoba Task Force on Education Outcomes of Children in Care (2016), there is a direct link between Residential Schools and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system.

Equally horrifying are other disastrous outcomes for Indigenous youth in general. According to the United Nations, Indigenous peoples on reserve would have the same Human Development Index level as Romania – 72nd in the world. According to the Department of Justice (Government of Canada, 2018), suicide rates of Indigenous Peoples are three times higher than that of non-Indigenous Canadians. Another equally alarming statistic is as follows: "Although indigenous youth between 12-17 comprise only 7% of all adolescents in the general population, in 2014-2015, about 35% of youth admitted to correctional services were Indigenous" (Section 2, para 4). As Tanya Talaga (2018) offered her summation of the Assembly of First Nations Report in 2015 entitled *Closing the Gap* in her account of the heinous murders of seven Anishinaabe youth in Thunder Bay,

In Canada, half of all First Nations children live in poverty, the life expectancy of First Nations people is five to seven years less than that of other Canadians, and

the practice of placing children in foster care remains a significant issue.

Secondary school graduation rates for First Nations youth living on reserve are at 35 percent, compared to 85 percent for non-Indigenous kids. The TB rate is still 31 percent higher in Indigenous communities, and suicide rates are five to seven times the national average. Indigenous people are still overrepresented in the prison system. One quarter of all adults and youth incarcerated in Canada are Indigenous. (p. 162)

Given the extent of the violence and trauma inflicted by the state, the Calls to Action need to be a far more substantive process than simply checking off a list. As Battiste (2013) argues, “It was about the politics of knowledge production, their intersections with power, race, poverty, and gender, and the processes of colonization, including a patriarchal government and Indian agents” (p. 15). This complex tyranny is further refocused in the context of Winnipeg and Manitoba, an epicentre of all sorts of colonization, both past and present. As Toews (2018) posits, “Winnipeg’s urban history has been intimately caught up in the history of colonialism” (p. 61). Reconciliation is not solely about race. Race has been used as a means for settlers to profit within an economic system that is squarely founded on the exploitation of resources – both natural and human. As Daschuk (2019) argues, “Macdonald’s plan to starve uncooperative Indians on reserves and into submission might have been cruel, but it certainly was effective” (p. 128). The economic and racial imperatives to annihilate Indigenous populations was a premeditated and sinister extension of white-settler supremacy that was founded on unfettered capitalism and Christianity. The deep cuts in the relationship between White and Indigenous were sewn into the fabric of the pillars of the country. Niigaan Sinclair, in the forward to Daschuk’s 2019 edition of *Clearing the Plains*, emphasizes why reconciliation is paramount if

all Canadians wish to move forward and sustain a society where everyone can participate in the polis:

No relationship in Canada is more important, yet no relationship has been more exploited, denied, and ignored. The unbalanced and exploitative relationship Canada has when it comes to Indigenous peoples has done nothing but divide and perpetrate atrocities that continue to happen daily. The dire poverty, health and safety situations, and marginalization Indigenous peoples face in every aspect of Canada's practices and policies cannot be denied any longer (p. xii).

There is therefore a profound need for a conciliatory process. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2009, which spent seven years traveling the country collecting the stories of the survivors of a relationship built on unfettered growth, greed, and hate summarizes this relationship concisely: "The Canadian government pursued this policy of cultural genocide because it wished to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Aboriginal people and gain control over their land and resources" (p. 3). In order to repair this mired relationship, the Commission tasked all Canadians to come to terms with the notion of cultural genocide and implement clear pathways with the intention of "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country" (p. 6). The Calls to Action pertaining to Education, the Child Welfare System, and the Justice system are paramount for all educational leaders to contemplate and personally invest in if we are to ameliorate the outcomes of children in this country.

The Calls to Action

As the TRC Calls to Action turned five on December 15th, 2020, former TRC Commissioner Wilton Littlechild remarked that, "we're collectively quite concerned that it's

been moving too slow and it's a matter of urgency that we have another look at our Calls to Action and maybe get a fresh start in terms of some of the changes that you've seen over the past five years" (Monkman, 2020, para 10).

The Calls to Action which specifically refer to Child Welfare and Education rank first and second in terms of their placement within the TRC report. The Education Calls to Action, six to 12, address a variety of concerns – from curriculum to achievement gaps, to the opening up of the system to parents and families. While Education still exists under the patriarchal purview of the Canadian government on reserve, the Calls to Education are just as applicable in the provincial, public school system. The Calls to Action also span the entire career of a learner – from Pre-K to post-secondary and beyond. In terms of curriculum, that is the knowledge, skills, and ways of being laid out for learners, the TRC tasks governments to develop “culturally appropriate curricula,” protect the “right to Aboriginal languages” and to develop “culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families” (TRC Calls to Action, 2015, p.2). There is a demand that the curriculum, content, and delivery be based in Indigenous ways of knowing. That language is revered as an essential element to Indigeneity, knowing, and connecting to community, culture, and land.

The Calls to Action also demand that Indigenous learners learn. Two critical sub-sections call for the following: “Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation,” and “Improving education attainment levels and success rates” (p. 2). The Commission gets directly to the point – that is that Indigenous youth need the numeracy and literacy skills necessary to engage in the polis and then turn it on its head. As Freire (1971) argues, racialized and colonized learners are not on the margins. They are part of the very system that oppresses them. According to the TRC, for Indigenous learners to resist the colonial

oppression wielded at them historically and in the present, there is a need for the cognitive engagement necessary to name the world.

And lastly, in terms of Education, there is an urgent need to involve family and community, not only in the life of a school, but also in the school's development and obligations or roles it assumes. The TRC report calls on governments, both provincial and federal, to enable "parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems" (p. 2). Many families have mistrust for schools, be they on reserve or in urban contexts. Families need to be at the forefront of the creation and management of schools. More specifically, as Battiste (2013) suggests in her recommendations for reconciliation in education, families need to be able to continue their traditional lifestyles.

The Calls to Action also establish critical steps to developing an education system committed to reconciliation – that is not a form of reconciliation that Leanne Simpson (2011) describes as an abusive relationship, whereby the abuser is surrounded by loved ones, but one "that is grounded in cultural generation and political resurgence," and one that "supports Indigenous nations in regenerating our languages, our cultures, our traditions of governance and everything else residential schools attacked and attempted to obliterate" (p. 22). Calls to Action 62-65, and 66 (as it pertains to youth programs) call for the creation of a curriculum that looks truthfully at Indigenous histories and present contributions, an equitably funded education system on reserve, greater teacher training related to the curriculum, Indigenous practices and pedagogies, and the appointment of Indigenous leadership at the assistant deputy minister level. And as the K-12 system is intrinsically connected to other systems, several Calls to Action are critical to the generation of an education system and experiences capable of engaging in resurgence, reclamation, and reconciliation. Call to Action 55 and multiple subsections demand

reporting from all levels of government on the number of Indigenous children apprehended by the child-welfare system, funding for First Nations children off-reserve, attainment levels for Aboriginal children, and progress on “eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in youth custody over the next decade” (p. 6).

In a recent conversation with Marie Battiste (December 22, 2020), I came to understand a significant framing of what reconciliation and decolonization within the education system might mean. This is not to say that there needs to be one definition. In fact, as Clark, de Costa, and Maddison (2016) argue, “retaining the capacity to debate the meaning of reconciliation itself continues to be important” (p. 3). But on a blizzardy day in Winnipeg through a scratchy phone connection, Dr. Battiste, in Saskatoon, explained to me that reconciliation is about the decolonization of the predominant knowledge system. The process is one whereby Indigenous knowledge systems are recognized as legitimate inroads for equity and inclusion, and for the way that they can complement and resist western knowledge systems. Through this, she explained to me, we can get at the harm that has been done and then begin to contemplate the following questions: How do we address this harm? And how do we move forward with this history?

As mentioned above, however, by way of Niigaan Sinclair and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, reconciliation, and the process of truth and reconciliation as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada by the Calls to Action, is problematic. The concept of reconciliation is fraught with the tendency of white settlers to co-opt the process as Tuck and Yang (2012) identify as “settler moves to innocence.” For school leaders and adults within the education system, there have been and there remain three barriers to improving the outcomes of Indigenous youth. The first, which Tuck and Yang have just touched upon, is the notion of trivialization. As Tuck and Yang (2012) eloquently explain, “There is a long and bumbled

history of non-Indigenous peoples making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonization” (p. 3). The desire for settlers to change the vector of discourse away from the uncomfortable work of looking at roots of harm and Indigenous resurgence.

The second barrier to improving the outcomes of Indigenous learners is that of normalization. That is to say there has been a thread through the history of public schooling in Canada, Manitoba, and Winnipeg of normalizing lower expectations for learners. From the development of Industrial and Residential Schools to a more nuanced perception of Indigenous learners, settler educators have held firmly in their minds the notion of what Australian scholar Mark Rose (2011) calls Cotton Wool – that is changing the expectations, codes, and outcomes for Indigenous learners in an attempt to “go soft” (para 7). Simpson (2011) goes further by saying that, “Our children live in a very different world than their pre-colonial counterparts,” and that “they need to be able to think and act critically, anti-colonially, and honourably from an Indigenous perspective” (p. 127).

The third and final barrier is that of dislocation. Since the creation of the Indian Residential School system and retracing the colonial road map that has existed since contact, there has been an explicit desire on the part of settlers to dislocate Indigenous youth from their communities and knowledge systems. There has remained a gap between Indigenous communities wanting to resist western knowledge systems (and their legal ability to do so), and the intentions of settlers, be them good or bad. Through Industrial and Residential School systems, to learners needing to leave their home communities to finish high schools, the sixties scoop, to off-campus programs, special education programs, and exclusionary streaming in schools and classrooms, there has existed and exists a fundamental desire to dislocate Indigenous learners from their families, communities, culture, language, land, and knowledge systems. The

Indian Residential School was education weaponized for the removal and destruction of a people and the fundamental root cause of contemporary policies which continue to marginalize many Indigenous People.

Residential Schools

Public education has focused primarily on the historical development of schooling in Canada from the perspective of inclusion. The argument made was that over the past 400 years, schools in Canada (or the various settler colonies that have existed since Champlain) have slowly become more inclusive and have expanded their purpose beyond creating Jesuit priests.

But this inclusive evolution, which saw the development of public schools following the Act of Union and further organization with the anointing of responsibility of schools to the provinces through Confederation, meant something very different for First Nations children. School for Indigenous children was used as a weapon — a weapon of apartheid and genocide that historian and educator Brian Titley described in 1986 as “The destruction of the children’s link to their ancestral culture and their assimilation into the dominant society...” (p. 75).

Through Mission Schools, Day Schools, Industrial Schools, Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, Indigenous children have been targeted by Canada and Canadians through education — a tool that political scientist Karen Murray (2017) describes as “a vector of violence to control Indigenous peoples and their lands” (p. 747). Simply put, education, from the establishment of Mission schools in Red River to the closure of Gordon Indian Residential School in 1996 (Edmond, 2016), has been an intentional mechanism to remove Indigenous People from the land and Canadian society based on what historian Sean Carleton (2017a) refers to as “settler anxiety” (p. 57).

Carleton's assertion is that settler anxiety is at its foundation the root cause for residential schools and state-wide control. Early Mission schools on Vancouver Island in the mid 19th century saw schools as a means for moral education and to pacify hostile (Carleton, 2017a) Indigenous groups. With the collapse of the relationship created by the Royal Proclamation through Confederation and the Indian Act, schooling of First Nation children became the purview of the federal government and it used this weapon as a parallel means to remove children from land to make way for settlers, to crush the spirit of any resistance, and relegate entire peoples to the margins of history.

University of Saskatchewan Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2013) expertly expresses what this anxiety has meant to Indigenous people in Canada. Her book *Decolonizing Education* serves as an antidote to those in society who ask Indigenous people in Canada to simply "get over it." She invites Canadians to imagine:

Consider that for more than a century, Indigenous students have been part of a forced assimilation plan — their heritage and knowledge rejected and suppressed, and ignored by the education system. Imagine the consequence of a powerful ideology that positions one group as superior and gives away First Nations peoples' lands and resources and invites churches and other administrative agents to inhabit their homeland, while negating their very existence and finally removing them from the Canadian landscape to the lands no one wants. Imagine how uncertain a person is whose success is only achieved by a complete makeover of themselves, by their need to learn English and the polished rules and habits that go with that identity. They are thrust into a society that does not want them to show too much success or too much Indian identity,

losing their connections to their land, family, and community when they have to move away as there is no work in their homeland. Assimilation. (p. 23)

And further to this, historian John Milloy (2017), in his groundbreaking history, *A National Crime*, reveals through state and church records the sinister methods by which these acts of assimilation were carried out: "...the system's history is marked by the persistent neglect and abuse of children and through them of Aboriginal communities in general." (p. xxxvii). Canada and the Department of Indian Affairs, according to Milloy, created a "fiction of care" that would destroy the way of life of generations of Indigenous People.

This thought-control as an ideological formation of Eurocentric colonial settler supremacy is paramount to making sense of the relationship Canada has with Indigenous People and how this is manifested in Canadian schools today. Since Nicholas Davin's report in 1879, which saw him chronicle the achievement of American industrial schools, we have been on a quest to develop a system of schooling that would so-called civilize Indigenous youth and move them aside in the name of progress. The initial Industrial schools of the late 19th century, located in Battleford, Qu'Appelle, and High River, were disasters in all sense of the word (Titley, 1986). Not only were the economics ill conceived, but attendance was not mandatory, and the Department of Indian Affairs became frustrated.

By the early 20th century, however, and the appointment of Duncan Campbell Scott as Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Residential Schools were clearly a vehicle for apartheid. In 1920, Scott had the Indian Act amended to force all Indian Children from ages five to 17 to attend residential school — a marked change in the intentionality of the Canadian government and partner churches.

Famously, Scott would utter the following vitriolic words that now haunt the legacy and the present colonial experience:

...Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department, that is the whole object of this bill. (Haig-Brown, 2013, p. 31)

It is of note that Duncan Campbell Scott did not possess degrees, credentials, or experience that might position him to make comment or steer Indigenous education in any direction (Backhouse et al., 2021, p. 68). And the implications of our collective experience, that is our history as Indigenous and Settler, manifests itself in schools, education, and the rearing of children in 2023. Canada is still experimenting with providing Indigenous children with different parents, many school divisions relegate difficult children to off-campus programs, and we still manage to alienate many of our learners by secondary school.

And when we speak of achievement, higher expectations, and improved results, we need to imagine the possibilities of a public school system that is inclusive and committed to reconciliation. That is an environment where learners feel that they belong, where their language is heard and seen. Where their teachers look like them. And where their experience, culture and heritage are honoured and seen as a strength. It is through this sense of belonging, as Brendto, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2002) argue, belonging is the first step towards a learner developing independence, mastery, and generosity — all quadrants of the Circle of Courage. The cultural and generational genocide that was committed through schooling for Indigenous children stares us in the face as educators. If we truly want all learners to have the means to a decent life, schools need to focus on allowing all learners the space to develop that sense of

belonging that many settlers take for granted. When learners feel that they are part of a community and able to contribute to it, the learning naturally follows.

Public schools in Canada have a long way to go to ensure that Indigenous children and families feel that they belong. In 2023, educators are doing outstanding work in this manner: indigenizing their classrooms, welcoming elders in their learning communities, and making the language visible. Seven Oaks School Division and Winnipeg School Division both offer Indigenous bilingual programs which not only focus on language acquisition but situate learners on the land. Both divisions recruit and employ Indigenous principals and teachers, host graduation pow wows, employ elders across the divisions, and sustain after-school programming for Indigenous learners. Schools are teaching Ojibway, national anthems can be heard in Cree, and more and more teachers identify as Indigenous. But this type of learning, the learning required to make amends for the damage of 150 years of genocide, requires a radical shift in how schools and public education have been designed historically in Canada. The reality of public schools and their development in Canada is important to address to avoid a sense of taken-for-grantedness.

Public Education in Canada

The notion of public schools in Canada is relatively novel. By the turn of the 19th century, there were only 40 schools serving 160 000 French Canadians and a handful of schools designed by the Anglican Church to serve the English population through the British colonies (Axelrod, 1997, pp. 5–7). And most of the schools were in no way or form created to serve large swaths of the population. In fact, since the substantive arrival of Europeans to this continent in

the early 17th century, school had been a means to offer moral instruction to a handful of privileged young boys. Schooling was soulcrafting for a select and lucky few.

But prior to the calculated rollout of the Indian Residential school system, schools in Canada, particularly in Upper and Lower Canada following the Constitutional Act of 1791, merely sought to educate young men to become priests, be they Anglican or Catholic. At the beginning of the 19th century, survival, not schooling, was on the minds of settlers who were coming up from the United States or from Europe. Life in rural Upper or Lower Canada was harsh and farm work demanded the whole family unit. There was an intense vulnerability to this life; a simple accident with an axe could lead to a painful and drawn-out death.

But by 1840, with the political merger of French and English through Lafontaine and Baldwin's reform movement, there was a greater demand for some form of public schooling. The rebellions a few years earlier, led by Mackenzie and Papineau, also called into question the need for a more just and democratic society that needed educated citizens — or at least fewer rebellions (Axelrod, 1997, p. 25). Lafontaine and Baldwin were French and English, respectively, politicians who collaborated to bring significant reforms to what was then Upper Canada (Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec). The most significant of which was a new form of responsible government that is the foundation of present-day Canadian parliamentary democracy.

And as today, the purposes for schooling differed. Historian and educator Ken Osborne (1999) argues that by mid 20th century, "Conservatives saw schools as a force for social stability, a way of accepting their place in the world," and Liberals envisioned school "as a basic human right, a way of preparing people for peaceful change and progress" (p. 7).

Not much has changed in current discourse. We can often get trapped in the polarizing debate between the conception of education as a pipeline into industry or as citizenship education, or as a nation-building project. The continuity of this historical exchange informs us that everyone has a stake in education, that we care deeply about it, and that we want the best for kids.

But what did change by Confederation in 1867 and the responsibility of public schools being handed to the provinces was that through “industrialism, nationalism, and democracy,” Canada began to develop a public education system that slowly began to include more and more people (Osborne, 1999, p. 7.)

As more children were being schooled in basic literacy and religious instruction, Canada also began its genocidal practice of tearing Indigenous children away from families — ushering in decades of oppression and marginalization that are still present. But for settlers and newcomers to Canada, Confederation marked a specific time in our shared human experience where schooling and education moved from something only enjoyed by the aristocracy. Sections 92 and 93 of the British North American Act designated public education as purely provincial matter, enshrining language rights for colonial languages. Canadian public schooling was and is one of the only western countries that does not have a nationally regulated system — and yet somehow all provinces seem to teach very similar curricula.

Back in 1867, however, schooling was a haphazard experiment, even following the superintendency of Egerton Ryerson, who sought to develop a cohesive system of education through Canada West following the Act of Union in 1841. No two schools taught the same, teachers were ill prepared, deprofessionalized and poorly paid, and the students were subjected

to religious teachings, rote memorization, and forms of direct instruction that would today seem oppressive (Baldwin, 2008).

But what was clear was that schools, schooling, and education were no longer tightly controlled by the various churches. Ryerson and other advocates managed to snatch control and place it within the provinces and locally elected school boards. This ensured, according to political scientist Jennifer Wallner (2014), that school systems were more responsive to the local community, that they were democratically run, and that far off administrations were not trying to manage schooling from afar.

And as the 19th century came to an end, more and more young people were included in schools. In 1867, for example, Canada had a public school enrolment of 682 000 learners; by 1915, this jumped to over 1.5 million (Wisenthal, 2014). As schools were becoming an option for more learners, the debate over its purpose grew in intensity. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the coming of the First World War, the debate about the purposes of education began to take shape. Arguments emerged linking education to the pipeline into factories, arguments suggesting for citizenship making, and others around nation building, assimilation, and insidious systems of apartheid and genocide (Buri, 2016).

Schooling by the first decade of the 20th century was responding to the urbanization and industrialization of the country. For boys, the curriculum focused heavily on manual training and for girls its purpose was to imbue skills related to the home (Axelrod, 1997). But schools “were obliged to teach more students than ever...,” and “they were expected to enrich students’ minds, perfect their bodies, and attend to their health” (p. 108).

Radically changing public schooling in Canada requires substantial shifts in how we theorize school, schooling, and education. A serious examination of current structures and forces

which marginalized learners and families requires frames of thought and intellectual lenses that counter the colonial narrative.

Public Education in Manitoba

The creation of compulsory public education in Manitoba is unique in some sense as it propelled a constitutional crisis in Canada's early development. Following Manitoba's inclusion in Confederation with the introduction and passing of the Manitoba Act in 1870, public education was not on the minds of the early inhabitants of the small province. It should be noted that the Manitoba Act, negotiated between the Dominion of Canada and the provisional government led by Louis Riel, enshrined both French and English as official languages in the province. In terms of education, two funded school systems emerged from the 1871 Manitoba Schools Act: a protestant one serving English children and a Catholic one serving French children. Henley and Pampallis (1982) argue that while compulsory education in North America entered a "symbolic phase" in the early mid to late 19th century, formal public and compulsory education was not actualized throughout the continent until the late 1890s. But Manitoba does represent an outlier, in the sense that unlike other provinces, a fierce debate over public education erupted prior to the passing of compulsory education legislation in 1916 (p. 59).

By 1889, the provincial Liberal government led by Premier Thomas Greenway was under some pressure from the increasingly large anglophone and Orange population that was flooding the province and the city of Winnipeg. According to Henley and Pampallis (1982), "the three most powerful Protestant churches – Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican – allied themselves with the Liberal Party to inaugurate a policy of anglo-conformity through the new system of 'national' schools...." (p. 63). Bigoted perceptions of French Manitobans coupled with sentiments of Protestant superiority prompted a national crisis between French and English. In

Manitoba, French citizens were told that funding of French schools would no longer be a state activity, but that French citizens would still have to pay taxes for English schools. It was not until 1896 that the Greenway and Laurier Liberals were able to reach a compromise that would ultimately create a public school system that recognized both English and French:

When ten of the pupils in any school speak the French language (or any language other than English) as their native language, the teaching of such pupils shall be conducted in French (or such other language), and English upon the bilingual system. (Gregor & Wilson, 1983, p. 1)

French Canadian and Mennonite communities at the turn of the 20th century still had issues with an increasingly secularized education as class, language and religion were seen as drivers of division and the marginalization of minority groups (Gregor & Wilson, 1983, p. 21). But by 1916, the Norris Liberals formed government and saw the need for making education in Manitoba compulsory. Amendments were made to the public Schools Act which made it compulsory for students aged seven to fourteen to attend school – making the province the last one in the Federation to do so. The Norris government also repealed the right of French language instruction, prohibiting Manitoba schools. It was not until 1947 that French returned to public schools in Manitoba.

The period following the start of WWI marked the beginning of a realization that public education was less about creating a workforce and more fully about creating democratic citizens who were in better physical shape. As Ken Osborne posits,

As the superintendent of Winnipeg schools noted in 1913, the traditional educational goals of what he called ‘culture and discipline’ – by which he meant mental and intellectual discipline – were no longer enough. In a new world of

industry, nationalism, and democracy, education had also to produce in children a sense of civic duty, a patriotic spirit, good health and preparation for jobs. In other words, schools existed to train citizens. (1999, p. 9)

The post WWI era in Manitoba witnessed a new *raison d'être* for public education that not only saw the need for more collegiate institutes – or university preparatory schools – but a need for vocational schools. Following the Great Depression and WWII, Manitoba entered the period that historian George Buri refers to as reconstruction – that is “In Manitoba, education reform was regarded as nothing less than a panacea for accomplishing the goal of reconstructing society....” (2016, p. 6). The mid 20th century saw posturing from progressives and conservatives who equally saw public education as a means for establishing an hegemonic bloc.

Critical, Indigenist, & Transsystemic Theory

On December 3rd, 2020, the Canadian government introduced legislation into Parliament to begin implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (Government of Canada, 2020). In the Declaration, the following rights are asserted for Indigenous Peoples throughout the world, including those in Canada:

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State. (United Nations 2008, Article 5, p. 5)

While created in 2007 and adopted by most member states to the United Nations, Canada has taken over a decade to begin the process. What the above-mentioned article argues is that all Indigenous peoples not only can engage in Canadian society, but that the state needs to remove

barriers which hinder or oppose Indigenous reclamation. This conception of reconciliation moves past simply speaking of diversity and equity, but forces Canada as a state to create the conditions and remove barriers whereby Indigenous peoples are able to reclaim land, language, culture, and power.

While Clark, de Costa, and Maddison (2016) argue that an undefined understanding of reconciliation is efficacious, as it allows for debate and evolution, the subjectivity for Indigenous Peoples and accomplices can render it what Tuck and Yang (2012) refer to as a move to innocence. More specifically, they argue that “The desire to reconcile is just as relentless as the desire to disappear the Native; it is a desire to not have to deal with this (Indian) problem anymore” (p. 9). Historian Sean Carleton (2017a) referred to this move to innocence as settler anxiety – that is a movement in Canadian colonial history where settlers and the state feared Indigenous resistance to the point it formed state genocidal policy. The term of reconciliation then is fraught, as Indigenous peoples may understandably distrust the intentions of white settlers. Without interruptions to the state, its policies, and its actions, reconciliation possesses few transformative teeth. For scholar, lawyer, and activist Pam Palmater (2018), poorly conceived reconciliation is a path towards a watered-down process of settler innocence based on anxiety. In a lecture entitled *Truth and Reconciliation: If it Feels Good, it's not Reconciliation* given at the University of Regina shortly following the Colton Bushie verdict, Palmater (2018) elegantly but simply equates the process of reconciliation to that of a child's apology. When the child commits a harm, they enter a legitimate process of apology. They first attend to the victim and offer an apology. Not one, as Palmater suggests, carved out by lawyers or PR firms, but one which admits the act, outlines the harm, and acknowledges the hurt. The next step is listening.

The victim is able to bear witness to the harm and the child listens. From there, the child accepts the facts as told by the victim as fact. Then the child makes a promise to never do it again, to make amends, and to continue the relationship as relatives. It is through this analogy that Palmater penetrates the heart of meaningful reconciliation and substantive social justice. In this framing, reconciliation moves beyond simply checking off Calls to Action, land acknowledgements on morning announcements or board meetings, and the tokenistic presence of art, a medicine wheel, the Seven Teachings, or Indigenous language on the walls.

For Battiste (personal communication, January 15, 2021), reconciliation is simply a first step. An invitation to begin a conversation. But for her, we must move beyond notions of equity, diversity, and inclusion, as equated with the gestures mentioned above. These are important but demonstrate a shallow, yet not unimportant, desire to enter into a process of harm recognition, apology, amend making and relationship building. Moving beyond the invitation conceptualization of reconciliation compels us to contemplate decolonization. For Tuck and Yang (2012), decolonization is a disruption. They posit that the work of decolonizing must interrupt, disrupt, and unsettle. Decolonization “in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneously to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always been differently understood and enacted” (p. 7). Similar to Palmater, Tuck and Yang envision the process of reconciliation leading to decolonization as a substantive action that shakes to the core the settler state.

Critical race theory has addressed to some degree the theorizing of the colonial experience in Canada. Ladson-Billings and William (1995) first theorized a critical theory of race by revealing that there are three foundational pillars which produce inequity in the United

States: race, property rights, and the intersection of these two. While the settler colonial experience in Canada is attributed to what Toews (2018) argues as racial capitalism, critical race theory in general and other critical theories do not necessarily account for the genocidal acts of the Indian Act, Residential Schools and the full intersectional impacts on race, gender, class, labour, language, culture, family, and ways of being. Grande (2003) rejects the idea of the grand narrative in the decolonization process, and firmly situates decolonization within the experience of Indigenous Peoples. For Grande, “decolonization begins with the understanding that the collective oppression of indigenous women results primarily from colonialism – a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism” (p. 329). As such the complexity of colonialism, both past and present in Canada, is not taken into account in Ladson-Billings and Williams’s initial theorizing. It does not consider the severe intersectionality, settler-colonial, and genocidal context of racial capitalism.

Indigenist theory, while primarily situated in the world of research, moves beyond critical theory and critical race theory. According to Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020), an Indigenist agenda is a

discourse that makes space for non-Indigenous peoples to situate themselves as being responsible to taking up Indigenous issues in diverse ways. In this way, all principals, irrespective of their cultural heritage, in the spirit of reconciliation, can adopt an Indigenist agenda through deepening their relationships (with Indigenous people, with the land, etc.) and attending to the accountability of these relations. (p. 58)

Battiste (2013) argues that an Indigenist framework is both ontological and epistemological in nature. She asserts that an Indigenist framework and paradigm in education, evolving from feminist and critical foundations, seeks to “include and privilege Indigenous voices,” and that “is not claimed by anyone but it’s a way of sharing ontology and a practice that contributes to the empowering of Indigenous peoples” (p. 74). An Indigenist stance demands that white settler accomplices provide the ethical space which allows for a fundamental power shift. A shift towards, in the context of K-12 education, privileging the voices of Indigenous educators, learners, families, and communities. While most, if not all, of the positioning of an Indigenist paradigm has been centred on academic research (Wilson, 2003, 2007; Smith, 1997), I attempt here to argue that the same meaning of Indigenist can be applied to the design of schools. Circling back to the UNDRIP quote that I inserted above, the notion of Indigenous knowledge is directly related to rights. Wilson (2007) argues that the use of an Indigenist paradigm – a paradigm that privileges the voices of Indigenous peoples – “creates Indigenous knowledge” (p. 194). As a society, if we are to accept the invitation to decolonize through the TRC Calls to Action, then public schools need to be the ethical spaces in which Indigenous knowledge and voices are privileged and where Indigenous knowledge is created. The process of decolonizing education systems, school divisions, and schools needs to begin with an intentional consideration of Indigenous voices and knowledge. Schools who subscribe to an Indigenist stance must restructure how learners learn, how teachers teach, and how knowledge is perceived. It is through the space of communicative action, experience, and relationship where we begin to see the promise of an Indigenist school design. As Welton (1993) highlights, “a democratic public ought to provide ‘mechanism for the effective representation of the distinct voices and

perceptions of those of its constituent groups that are approved within it” (p. 200).

Communicative action and the subsequent justice it provides is less about allowing Indigenous learners to participate in a western system, but rather properly founded on a transsystemic foundation.

The review above sets the foundation for the principal work of this dissertation. It is essential that a firm grounding of the Calls to Action are outlined for the reader, as they form the rationale and purpose for this project. The historiography as it relates to the Indian Residential School System and western forms of public education also are critical points for the researcher and the reader, as the dialectic between the two is omni-present in 2024. The conflict between white-settler and Indigenous worldviews persists in the silencing of Indigenous voices -- particularly in the public education system. And lastly, setting the context for transsystemic and Indigenist theory is paramount to this project, as Indigenous theory speaks to the moments in Manitoba history when communities have reclaimed their education. These moments offer pathways forward for creating trans-systemic schools where Indigenous voice, worldviews, and knowledges are privileged. By trans-systemic, I refer to the conceptualization as offered by Battiste and Henderson (2021) who posit that trans-systemia in academia and in education move beyond simply the melding of Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledge systems, but rather work together to expose gaps, contradictions, fallacies, and misconceptions in the human experience. Far from a theory bathed in relativism, they argue that trans-systemia seeks a living, regenerating field of inquiry that balances complementary and contradictory descriptions, assumptions, and knowledges, performative enactment of processes of knowing, issues of knowledge production

and dissemination and their ongoing ceremonies, rituals, and renewals,” and that “It is an unbroken field of mutually-informing thought.” (p. viii)

These theories also form the basis for the theoretical framework, which will be discussed in Chapter 4 and emerges with the use of Gramsci’s notion of the subaltern and Trouillot’s theorizing of the silencing of the historical sources, archives, and narratives.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The questions of methodology for this project relates to what counts in and as historical knowledge *and* who determines what matters. This epistemological challenge is one that is raised by both Gramsci and Trouillot – who is able to contribute to their history? How is it silenced? And what is the work of the historian to make space for silenced voices? Is this the historian's task? This is not an attempt at creating an epistemological dispute. That is, whose facts are correct and whose are not. Rather, given the theoretical framework devised earlier, the thought experiment pertains to identifying what facts, voices, knowledge, and perspectives were withheld from certain accounts and an overall grand narrative? Fundamentally, methodology in this dissertation helps to uncover what has been articulated, what has been received, and what has been historically, whether implicit or explicit, silenced from the canon. To assist with this thought experiment, a way of viewing what historians do and how they incubate questions needs to be employed to counter the grand narratives constructed over the last century in Manitoba. The task is ultimately a thinking task and subsequently, thinking tool state in order.

Historical Thinking

A central underpinning to the process of answering the two research questions, that being What does *The Manitoba Teacher* tell us and how did Indigenous Peoples resist and reclaim, is through historical thinking. The six historical thinking skills or concepts are a teaching and learning framework that is used throughout Canada and the United States in K-12 education. But for the purpose of this project, they lend themselves well to the aims of this dissertation – namely to upset the taken-for-grantedness of settler narratives of public education. More recently, the

Critical Thinking Consortium (Seixas & Clark, 2006), a major contributor to the thinking and application of Historical Thinking in K-12 in Canada, has spurred on research as it relates to historical thinking and Truth and Reconciliation (Gibson & Case, 2019). As a teacher of historical thinking in secondary schools, I believe that these six concepts help learners understand what it is that historians do while providing the tools to notice, wonder, and pursue answers to these wonderings in substantive and sophisticated ways.

Historical thinking was developed and introduced to the educational landscape in Canada principally by educational scholar Peter Seixas. Seixas (1996) began to theorize how learners in public schools could make sense of history – fully conceptualizing history as a collection of experiences and our interpretation of said experiences. Seixas argues that “organizing our collective experience of the past – i.e., the traces and presentations we encounter in the present – in such a way that they provide a meaningful context for our present experience, is thus the central task of historical understanding” (p. 767). He also identifies a distinction between simply learning history and the *doing* of history. Learning history is what one might perceive as history as information. Seixas and Clark (2006) posit that,

If history is an informational subject, its content is to be passed on by teachers and remembered by students. There is little need to question or problematize the received narratives. Teaching history as an informational subject typically means presenting an account – often framed as *the* true story of events – which students learn and accept by absorbing the relevant factual details laid out in the textbook.

In short, history becomes a body of information teachers can transmit. (p. 2)

Here we see the inherent gap in the informational practice of teaching or reading history. In this pedagogical paradigm, we take for granted someone else's' historical narrative. If “histories are

the stories we tell of the past” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 2), the blind acceptance runs the risk of silencing voices, perpetuating hegemonic blocs, and at the very least, making the learning history static and boring and inert. Seixas and Clark (2006) push back further against informational methods of teaching history for two reasons. First, “students cannot properly understand history unless they know what is involved in thinking deeply and critically about it;” and second, “students are more likely to be engaged in the study of history if they are encouraged to think critically about the subject matter” (pp. 2–3). If history is the interpretation of past experiences, then the learner must be charged with both a method of thinking about the production of history along with the ability to think about various accounts of history, evidence analysis, and ethical reasoning within secondary accounts. Historical thinking takes into account what historian Howard Zinn (1982) argued about the reproduction of history:

It is not that the historian can avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others. This is as natural to him as to the mapmaker, who, in order to produce a usable drawing for practical purposes, must first flatten and distort the shape of the earth, then choose out of the bewildering mass of geographic information those things needed for the purpose of this or that particular map. My argument cannot be against selection, simplification, emphasis, which are inevitable for both cartographers and historians. But the map-maker's distortion is a technical necessity for a common purpose shared by all people who need maps. The historian's distortion is more than technical, it is ideological; it is released into a world of contending interests, where any chosen emphasis supports (whether the historian means to or not) some kind of interest, whether economic or political or racial or national or sexual. (p. 27)

Learners must understand that the accounts they encounter are ideological and that their own accounts carry ideological currents. To guide learners with this level of sophisticated thought, Seixas and Clark (2013) developed the Six Historical Thinking Concepts as a means for the learner to interpret accounts and evidence, while simultaneously it (HT) “eschews the teaching of a fixed grand narrative, and instead focuses on teaching students to assess and construct historical accounts and interpretations with increasing sophistication” Mile & Gibson, 2019, p.

9). These thinking concepts include:

- Historical significance – “How do we decide what is important to learn about the past.” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 10) How do we determine what should be included or not? Why are some things important or not? To whom are some things important? Who gets to decide?
- Evidence – “How do we know what we know about the past.” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 10) What emphasis should we place on which sources? What should be included as part of an analysis? How were sources silenced? How did secondary accounts use primary pieces of evidence?
- Continuity and change – “How can we make sense of complex flows of history?” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 10) What has changed and what has remained the same – and to what extent? How did changes impact certain people or not? What were positive or negative changes?
- Cause and consequences – “Why do events happen, and what are their impacts?” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 11) What impacts did certain movements, people, or forces have on later events? How widespread were these impacts felt? Were these impacts intentional or not?

- Historical Perspective – “How can we better understand the people of the past?” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 11) Can we imagine the experience of someone else? Can we empathize with someone else’s plight while avoiding presentism? What would it have been like to have been an historical actor at the time?
- The Ethical dimensions – “How can history help us to live in the present?” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 11) What ethical judgements are being made within the primary and secondary sources? What are the historical contexts for these judgements and how might we make ethical claims based on evidence?

This dissertation leans heavily on three of the six historical thinking concepts as a means to answer the two primary research questions: What does *The Manitoba Teacher* tell us about the historical narrative of Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba as related to public education over the past century and how have Indigenous Peoples resisted colonial oppression and reclaimed their right to educate their own children? Historical significance is used to determine how *The Manitoba Teacher* intentionally selected specific events, movements and people to highlight or silence between 1919 and 2009. What emphasis did the publication place on Indigenous Peoples or not and what was the impact of this inclusion or exclusion. Similarly, as Indigenous records are analyzed to counter the settler narrative, what significance does a particular letter, document, publication, or meeting agenda offer to a counter narrative? These questions help determine what is included or not within this dissertation. Seixas and Morton (2013) outline the following guideposts for historical significance which are used in this analysis:

- “Events, people, or developments have historical significance if they are **revealing**. That is they shed light on enduring or emerging issues in history or contemporary life.” (p. 10)

- “Historical significance is constructed. That is, events, people, and developments meet the criteria for historical significance only when they are shown to occupy a **meaningful place in a narrative.**” (p. 10)

These two guideposts are central to the methodology pursued in this inquiry as both settler and Indigenous sources are analyzed to determine what they reveal about particular issues both in the past and the present, while questioning the overall grand narrative by way of determining in Indigenous sources what people and events may have been important at the time.

Second, I use the concept of Ethical Dimension to help make sense of the actions and decisions of people featured in this interpretation of the past. Specifically, I employ the following historical thinking guideposts related to ethical reasoning as put forth by Seixas and Morton (2013):

- “Authors make **implicit or explicit** ethical judgments in writing historical narratives.” (p. 11)
- “Reasoned ethical judgements of past actions are made by taking into account the **historical context** of the actors in question.” (p. 11)
- A fair assessment of the ethical implications of history can inform us of our **responsibilities to remember and respond** to contributions, sacrifices, and injustices of the past.” (p. 11)

The analysis of historical sources needs to take into account the ethical judgements the authors and actors were making at the time. Whether through *The Manitoba Teacher* or through Indigenous sources, judgements were being made about society in an historical and contemporary context. Part of my responsibility is to determine what judgements were implicit or explicit and is my assessment of these judgements fair, given the historical context.

Finally, I lean heavily on the historical thinking concept of Evidence – that is fully relying on primary source material to surface noticings, questions, and answers to the research questions posed. The following guideposts provided by Seixas and Morton (2013) are used to help make sense of the sources:

- “**Asking good questions** about a source can turn it into evidence.” (p. 10)
- “Sourcing often begins before a source is read, with questions about **who** created it and **when** it was created. It involves inferring from the source the author’s or creator’s **purposes, values, and worldview**, either conscious or unconscious.” (p. 10)
- A source should be analyzed in relation to the **context of its historical setting**: the conditions and worldviews prevalent at the time in question.” (p.10)

Through the analysis of all four sources – *The Manitoba Teacher*, The Indian and Métis Friendship Centre of Manitoba fonds, The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg fonda, and the Verna Kirkness fonds – questions about the source of the records are posed. One critical question is the difference between a published source, like *The Manitoba Teacher* – a curated collection of articles and an official communication piece of a large teacher union – and various letters, minutes, reports, meeting agendas, etc. of Indigenous groups and organizations. How do we compare and contrast the significance of a loose collection versus official publications and how does this disparity acknowledge the gap in articulation and reception? Analyzing sources and documents through the lens of significance, ethical reasoning, and evidence better enables one to place each source into its own context, calling into question issues of gaze and othering, and perhaps making space for reception.

Analysis of Materials

Access to the University of Manitoba archives, which holds the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre (IMFC) and Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg (ACW) fonds, was made available on August 16th, 2021. Given this, the initial phase of the dissertation began with the analysis of *The Manitoba Teacher* in September and October of 2021. The Verna Kirness fonds, held by the Archives of the University of British Columbia, were accessed in August, 2021. The archives were scanned for articles and documents which include observations of Indigenous learners and articles written by Indigenous educators. If articles or documents made mention of education or schooling, they were included in the project. The initial phase of the project focused on chronologically analyzing *The Manitoba Teacher* against larger movements and events in Manitoba and Canadian history while also determining what historical significance can be derived from what is said and what is left unsaid. As part of this analysis, the journal articles selected from *The Manitoba Teacher* were juxtaposed with significantly historical events as they related to Indigenous-Settler relations to argue that teachers in Manitoba did indeed mirror the attitudes of the Canadian settler state. At the same time, the archives of *The Manitoba Teacher* were carefully analyzed to identify Indigenous-designed educational experiences and which actors and ingredients were significant in this work.

Following the analysis of *The Manitoba Teacher*, in November and December of 2021, the archives of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg were assessed and analyzed at the University of Manitoba's archives. Correspondences, reports, conferences, programme proposals, and meeting minutes were located and analyzed to not only corroborate some of the findings within *The Manitoba Teacher*, but also to surface new sources, actors, and generate new narratives that previously were silent. The vast majority of the archival documents from the Aboriginal Council

of Winnipeg focused on both the Aboriginal [Sic] Teacher's Committee, a group of approximately seven Indigenous teachers in the Winnipeg School Division, and various documents from the Thunder Eagle Society.

In January and February of 2022, the archives of the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre were analyzed through the University of Manitoba's archives. In a similar process to that of the ACW archives, these were scrutinized to not only corroborate or de-silence critical moments within *The Manitoba Teacher*, but also to shed light on moments of reclamation not featured in the teacher union narrative. A similar methodology was followed to that of the ACW archive, whereby sources/historical actors, archives, and narratives will be analyzed to identify what has been included and what has been excluded. As L'Eplattenier (2009) argues, there is no clear and systemic path for examining archival records. Much of what historians do, in terms of the "how" can be equated to what she equates to "serendipity." But a road map to begin to make sense of the sheer volume that is contained in all three archives was useful. As such, borrowing from the methodologies and method encapsulated by Ramsey et al. (2010) my method of analysis followed the following steps:

- Collection of Materials -- collecting materials as they relate to the research question and general themes of education, schools, colonialism, reclamation, oppression, perceptions, assumptions, and characterizations of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous learners, and Indigenous-settler relations.
- Coding and Categorization -- The creation of broad to specific themes that were uncovered within a specific archive. The cross-referencing between archives occurs at a later point. Broad codes included terms such as education, schooling,

vocational training, while specific codes focused on terms such as language, land, culture, community, northern, urban, on or off reserve, youth programming, etc.

- Contextualization -- Situating specific documents in historical context and the process of determining historical significance as it relates to the research question.
- Cross-referencing -- The process of cross-referencing documents with other archives and with events, movements, and people within the same time period.
- Creating the narrative -- The process of determining what the materials and documents say, determining cause and consequence, determining continuity and change, imaging historical perspective, surfacing ethical implications, and beginning to weave response to the research question.

Following the analysis of all three archival collections, an attempt to compare the narratives within the archives was undertaken as a means to identify the chasm between the settler,-hegemonic narrative and the moments of Indigenous resistance, resurgence, and reclamation, and the key ingredients for these movements. From May to August 2022, a clearer picture of who was ignored and silenced in the past century by the Manitoba Teachers' Society was formulated while detailing tangible examples of the historical actors, regional movements, and community-driven initiatives which can speak to a pathway forward at present. A timeline was developed that maps significant events from *The Manitoba Teacher*, the IMFC fonds, the ACW fonds, and the Verna Kirkness fonds. Parallel to these events, national and provincial events, as documented in key federal reports, such as the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991), were overlaid as evidenced through key reporting documents. The timeline paints a picture to the extent the historical erasure occurred, where moments of resistance manifested themselves, and how these movements influenced settler thinking and consciousness.

Finally, several images and figures have been selected from the archives to help provide context to the reader while also honouring the human experience embedded in the boxes, files, and pages of the past. Indigenous people have been silenced in Manitoba. Figures have been carefully selected to support the textual argument but also make attempts to surface the very real attempts to silence and the significant victories of resistance, resurgence, and reclamation.

Chapter 5: The Manitoba Teacher – 1919- 2009

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This chapter serves as an investigation of *The Manitoba Teacher*, the journal of the Manitoba Teachers Society, and how educator perspectives of Indigenous learners changed or remained the same throughout the past hundred years. *The Manitoba Teacher* is and has historically been edited and written by teachers for a membership of approximately 15 000. Extensive research has been conducted in the United States into white teacher expectations of Black learners (Gershenson et al., 2016; Pringle et al., 2010; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Much research has been conducted in Australia and New Zealand in particular. Several scholars have investigated educational expectations of and attitudes towards Indigenous students (Riley & Pidgeon, 2019; Hynds et al., 2016). Less work has been done in Canada, although Riley and Ungerleider (2008, 2012) have also highlighted expectations and attitudes from a Canadian perspective. A better sense of the discourse about Indigenous learners in Canada can be gleaned through an examination of *The Manitoba Teacher*, the main voice of public school teachers within the province of Manitoba.

The analysis of *The Manitoba Teacher*, within the context of the history of colonialism and public schooling in general in Manitoba and Canada, demonstrates a significant presence through time of Indigenous learners in the public school system, particularly in Winnipeg, and a

substantial presence of Indigenous educator voices, particularly following adjustments to *The Indian Act*, for example, after 1951. The resurgence of Indigenous voices corresponds with key events such as those involving Helen Betty Osborne and J.J. Harper as reported on through the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991), and Oka, as discussed in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), in Canadian history. The analysis also uncovers a need to assess the expectations of and attitudes about Indigenous learners that white settler educators have had and currently hold for Indigenous learners, while making the argument that a greater emphasis on Indigenous reclamation is warranted to implement the *Truth and Reconciliations Commission of Canada Calls to Action* (2015) in education. From this analysis, it is further argued that what has remained a constant thread in history is a lack of control of Indigenous peoples in designing their own education. There is also continuity in white settlers determined to design a system of education for Indigenous children. There has been and remains a tension between these two realities.

Very little is known about how educators and schools in Manitoba have and do perceive Indigenous learners, what expectations they generally have, to what extent Indigenous learners are included in the system, and what the ramifications are for Indigenous education, save for a groundbreaking study in 2002 by the CCPA entitled *Aboriginal Education in Inner City High Schools* (Silver et al., 2002). The authors discovered that, “Approximately one-half of our high school respondents do not feel that their school treats Aboriginal students with respect, and do not feel that teachers understand Aboriginal students...” (p. 29). While this research focused on Indigenous youth experiences, there has yet to be a significant study of the perspective from educators and the system itself. A need to understand the expectations and viewpoints of teachers is paramount.

Manitoba's capital city, Winnipeg, has the largest urban population of Indigenous peoples in Canada, accounting for 12% of the general population, or 108 000 people (Statistics Canada, 2022). Historically speaking, Winnipeg also presents a critical lens of investigation given its nineteenth-century transition from Indigenous lands to an industrial and capitalist-based Western city that is predicated on racial and social divides.

The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Calls to Action* pertaining to education advocated for the following: the closing of educational achievement gaps, improving learning and attainment levels, and enabling parents and families to participate in the system, to name just a few (TRC, 2015). These calls to action identify a deep seeded need to ensure all learners are provided with equitable, rigorous, and culturally appropriate educative experiences so that they can acquire the means for a decent life. *The Calls to Action* also surface the need to provide learners with the literacies required to disrupt the polis.

The Manitoba Teacher

The Manitoba Teachers' Society was born in years of labour strife and conflict in Canada. Created in 1919 by teachers marking provincial exams, the first issue on May 24th of that year outlined the intent of the Society: "For some time it had been felt that a more definite, energetic and united effort among teachers was needed in order to improve the status of the profession" (p. 1). Born at the height of the Winnipeg General Strike and the Progressive era, the founders felt a need to have a say in the development of the profession, a move directly related to a burgeoning middle class following the Strike, a global pandemic, and the return of soldiers. In particular, these teachers sought to have a say in shaping the purpose of education in Manitoba. The fallout from the First World War was still fresh in 1919, and according to the president of the Society,

H.W. Huntly, “The motives of those entering are of the very highest. They feel that in the past teachers have gone on with their work quietly, sacrificing without complaint with a high sense of duty. Now, the war is over and the time for reconstruction is here” (Huntly, 1919).

Set in the midst of two major European wars and the Great Depression, the Manitoba Teachers’ Society was born in what historian Buri (2016) refers to as the “great catastrophe” (p. 4). To Buri, and more specifically related to the inter-war period and second European conflict, the issue of reconstruction concerned not only the immediate reintegration of veterans and the transition to a peacetime economy but a rearrangement of relationships between capital and labour, between men and women, between government and citizens, and between Canada and the wider world.” (p. 4)

MTS was launched into a tumultuous time that not only recognized a need for greater organization, but a need to reconstruct society through education.

Indigenous learners are rarely mentioned in the early *Manitoba Teacher* issues, which is no great surprise. By the interwar period, the Indian Residential School system had been firmly entrenched throughout Canada to remove Indigenous peoples from their land and assimilate children into Canadian society. MTS would have little connection with these schools as Residential Schools were outside of the purview of the public school system. Winnipeg’s urban Indigenous population would have been significantly smaller compared with today, despite small pockets of Métis settlements scattered throughout the city and its outskirts.

First Years of *The Manitoba Teacher*

In the February 1925 issue of *The Manitoba Teacher* there was a small piece entitled *A Visit to Birtle Indian School* which was the first published piece related to Indigenous learners

(H.M, 1925). The author, simply known as H.M. (It is unclear why the author remains anonymous), took account of a visit by a group of teachers to the southwestern Manitoba residential school which was established in 1894 by the Presbyterian church and funded by the Government of Canada. Upon arrival, the educator was pleased by what they saw: “the teachers were introduced to and welcomed individually by thirty-three little Indian boys and girls, who were all dressed alike and behaved very similarly to thirty-three little white boys and girls.” The members of MTS were pleasantly surprised that Indigenous children were not

Figure 1

Birtle Indian Residential School 1908, Manitoba Historical Society



wild, rude, or dressed in “uncivilized” ways. Their articulated fears were put to rest once they realized Indigenous children conformed to British and Canadian norms and had abandoned what the visitors assumed to be Indigenous ways of being.

In the same article, the teachers, through the eyes of H.M., were also inspired by the fact that the children not only went to school and studied the same curriculum that other Manitoba children did, and that the children at the Indian Residential School performed non-academic and physical labor. According to the author, "There they follow the same course of studies as a white child and, in addition, the girls are trained in housework and the boys in farming" (para 4). The teachers who visited surfaced this very tension in a settler state, whereby education for those who are colonized is determined by the colonizer. The inherent tension is irreconcilable. But at this point, Indigenous voices are heavily silenced in the publication, not only at the source, but through the narrative. The tension arises from the tacit ignoring of the experience of children at the Residential School. When leaving Birtle Indian Residential School for the last time, H.M. recounts: "After a cosy cup of tea, as the teachers descended the long hill to Birtle, they decided that the Indian child is as responsive to education as any other and therefore entitled to equal advantages."

The Manitoba Teacher — 1960s

For the next several decades, there is no mention of Indigenous learners in *The Manitoba Teacher*. The article from 1925 suggests that Residential Schools and the *Indian Act* put Indigenous learners out of sight, out of mind, in a form of education that was tightly controlled by Church and State. Following major adjustments to *The Indian Act* in 1951 (allowing increased mobility), however, more and more Indigenous learners began to participate more fully in the public education system as more and more families began to enter urban centres and as Indian Affairs began to see provincial systems as a more efficient way to educate learners at the secondary level. Both Rutherford (2021) and Toews (2018) note that despite efforts of capital

blocs of colonial-settlers, there was also a strong desire from First Nations families to move into urban areas and resist the development of suburban expansion.

By the 1960s, one might think that, given the political climate in the United States and the Civil Rights movement, some conversation might have begun among urban teachers in Winnipeg. While there is a report of a Civil Rights lecture offered by Clarence Mitchell from the Washington Bureau of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the Spring 1965 issue, there is no mention of Indigenous learners.

The December 1968 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher* marks a turning point in discussions not only of Indigenous learners' participation in the public school system, but also of voices which push back against the status quo in education and society. These voices of resistance are most often generated from rural and northern communities and school divisions. The preeminent article in the winter of 1968 edition features the voice of D. Bruce Sealey, a veteran principal in Winnipeg who also was a member of the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Indian-Eskimo Association, and had extensive experience working for Indian Affairs before entering the teaching college at the University of Manitoba. Sealey's master's thesis, entitled the *Effects of Oral English Language on School Achievement of Indian and Metis High School Students* demonstrates a clear passion for working with and for Indigenous learners and communities.

In his article in 1968 entitled *Lo! The Poor Indian!*, Sealey explains the evolution of the Frontier School Division, an act of provincial legislation in 1965 where one appointed trustee reported to the Department of Education – a significant difference in the governance models of other school divisions, which were managed by an elected board of trustees (Sealey, 1968, pp. 4–6). In the article, Sealey advocates for better educational opportunities for learners in the North,

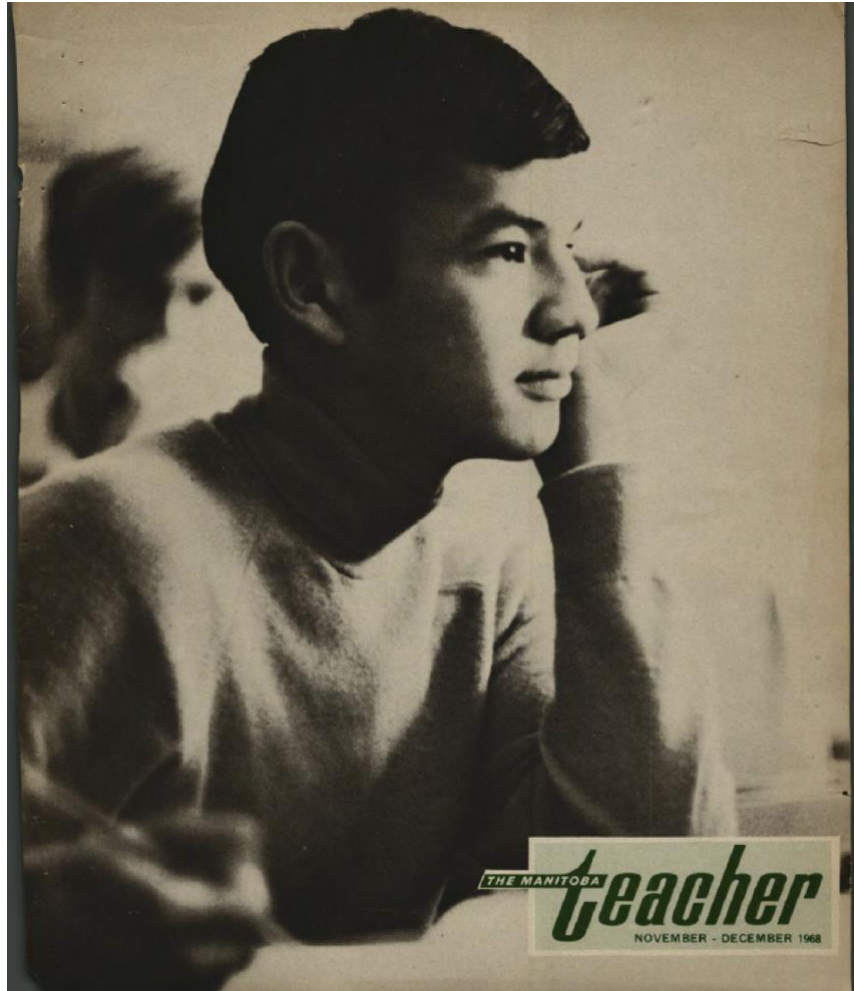
highlighting that since 1951, there has been some improvement: “In a narrow educational sense, the lot of the Indian and Metis has to a certain extent improved over the past two decades” (p. 4). Sealey explains how the Frontier School Division’s partnership with Indian Affairs had allowed more children to attend school, retain more teachers in northern communities, and provide better facilities. But according to Sealey (1968), there were still substantive problems with this relationship:

The problem lies in the basic attitude of society towards non-whites. The individual of native ancestry is somehow imagined to be a quaint combination of museum piece and an adult with the intellect of a child. This persistent stereotype has brought about an attitude of paternalism which, coupled with administrative bureaucracy, has been the curse of the Indian Affairs Branch since its inception. Only recently has the Branch made a conscious effort to do things with rather than for the Indian. The return of control over his own destiny has already helped the Indian break down the lethargy and apathy which characterized so many Indian communities. (p. 4)

Sealey’s comments revealed a number of developments in perceptions and expectations since 1925. The first was the emergence of voices advocating for some degree of Indigenous self-determination. Second, Sealey (1968) revealed a general sense of where Manitobans stood in terms of Indigenous education: most whites had a disparaging perspective on Indigenous people and that, in his own words, “Perhaps, despite verbal protestations to the contrary, people do not really believe that the Indians and Metis are capable of running their own affairs” (p. 5).

Figure 2

Front cover of The Manitoba Teacher, December 1968



Sealey's condemnation of Manitoba society did not exclude the influence of Manitoba teachers. In the same article, he lashed out against his colleagues, as he argued: "It seems reasonable to assume that the teachers of Manitoba, through their professional society, would be eager to see these wrongs righted" (p. 5). He added, "I have waited in vain to hear a voice raised in protest or even a resolution discussed during the annual general meeting" (p. 6). Sealey

reveals that general societal expectations for Indigenous learners were low in 1968 in part because of the assumption that Indigenous Peoples did not hold the same capacity as whites to learn. He also laments the fact that teachers in Manitoba had no interest in these struggles. The voice of the MTS on Indigenous learners and teachers was close to non-existent at this point. Sealey speaks to the very notion of the subaltern – where certain groups are viewed and treated in ways that remove them from the dominant culture and strip away their ability to effectively contribute to the formation of their own historical narrative. As a Métis scholar and educator, Sealey is attempting to counter the historical erasure that has occurred since the inception of *The Manitoba Teacher*, with a significant rebuke of settler attitudes and a condemnation of his colleagues throughout the province.

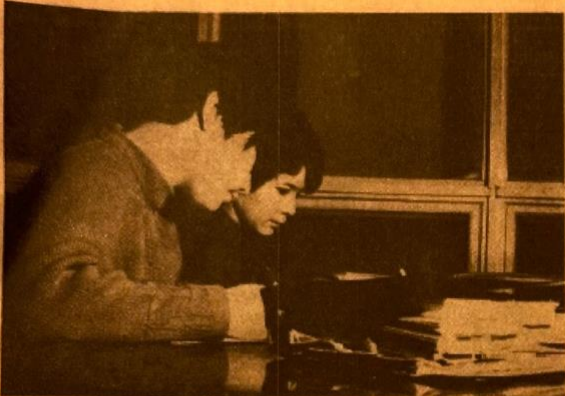
In the same issue, a series of other articles seem to justify Sealey's accusations of paternalism and racism in the teaching profession. Ted Revel, principal of Teulon Collegiate since 1959, described and lauded a program which saw 50 learners from Norway House, Island Lake, Fisher River, and Berens River attend school in the southern Manitoba town. According to Revel, "All are happy and have apparently adjusted well to a situation with a certain uniqueness" (1968, p. 7). The article proceeded to applaud the inroads the integration programme had created, including the involvement of learners on student committees, in town life, and even dating life. With a lack of student voice, Mr. Ravel exclaimed that, "Integration has become part of life," and that "The collegiate staff would heartily endorse the establishment of ten to 12 such systems throughout Manitoba" (p. 8). The contrast between Ravel and Sealey in the same issue of the *Manitoba Teacher* brings forth the dichotomy between forces of Indigenous resistance via Sealey, and the overarching desire of settler society to erase Indigenous people from the historical narrative. Ravel's desire to expand the practice of integration speaks to the colonial

and genocidal desire to erase those who have been fully removed from the means of production and from those who perpetually been suppressed and oppressed and fundamentally prohibited from cultivating their own culture, language, and history.

The Teulon experience suggests that Indigenous learners were valued when they conformed to western standards of success. In the photos, learners are dressed in suits, have short hair, and participate in Sadie Hawkins dances. Funded by the United Church, the programme saw learners leave their homes and engage in settler programming activities that were seen as of greater significance to Indigenous ways of being.

Figure 3

Indigenous Children at Teulon collegiate in The Manitoba Teacher, December 1968



Two Grade IX students enjoy a study period together in the library at Teulon Collegiate. At left is Harriet Towers who has come to Teulon from Norway House. Beside her is Ida Mitchell whose home is at Poplar River.

photo by Bruce Charter



A group of Grade XII commercial students at Teulon Collegiate get together over books and lunch. In the foreground from left are Millie Hryciw, Lillian Paupanekis, Gail Kwasny, Joan Isaacs and Alice Fankiw. In the background is Bruce Tait, the subject on this issue's cover.

Integration — A Way of Life Here

by TED REVEL

WHEN approximately 20 students of Indian extraction arrived in town in 1960, Teulon Collegiate in the Interlake School Division became an integrated school. At the same time, two residential homes, owned and operated by the United Church of Canada, became home-away-from-home for native students from the northern reserves. The program has expanded and today there are 50 students from the reserves of Norway House, Island Lake, Fisher River and Berens River. Of these 50, 15 are in private homes. All are happy and have apparently adjusted well to a situation with a certain uniqueness.

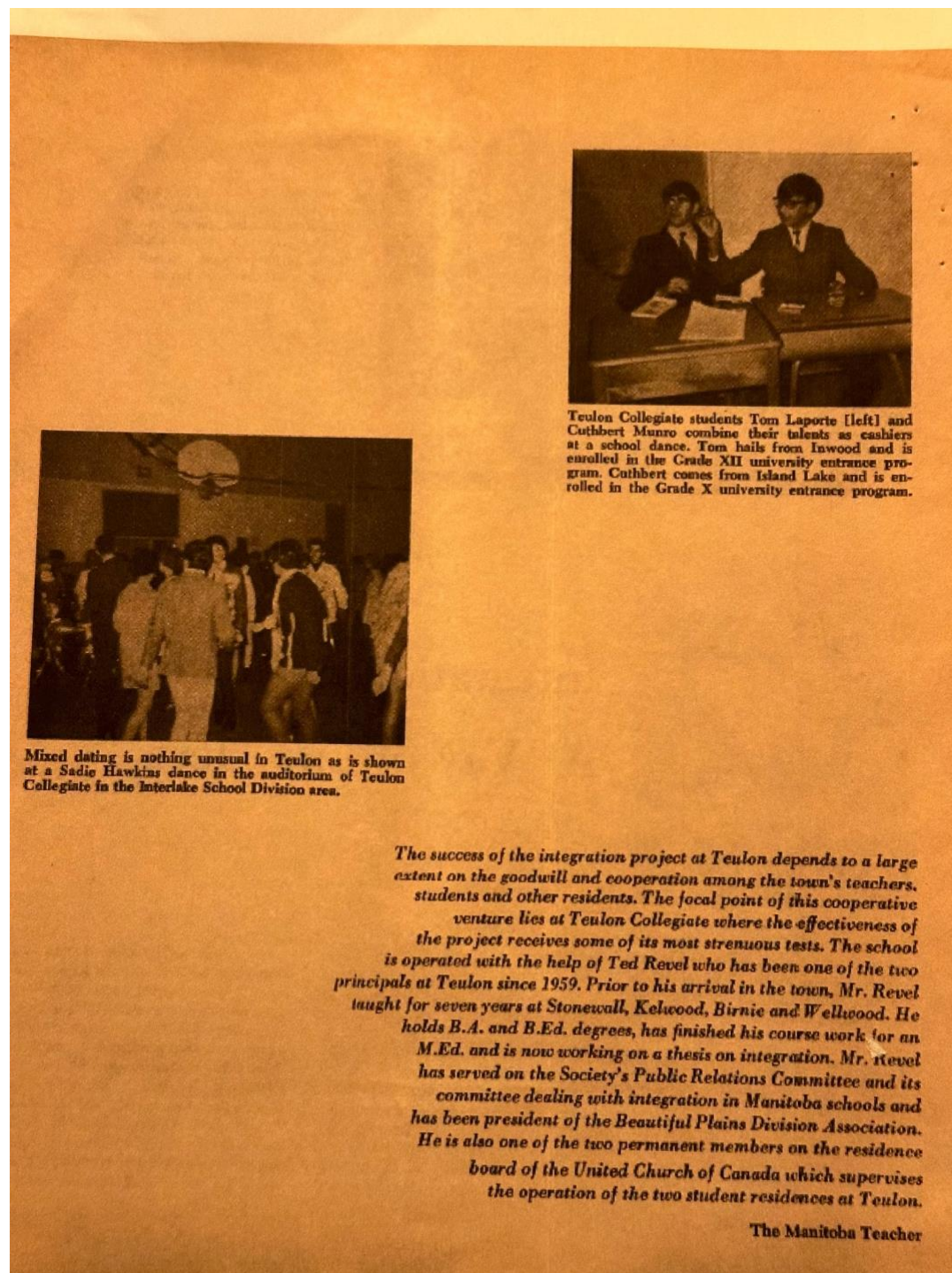
What makes this situation unique? As a start, the program is based on three-fold cooperation. It is co-sponsored by the community, the church and the school. The two residences, housing each from 16 to 18 boys and girls, are managed by a superintendent and housemother assisted by cooks and general purpose

November-December, 1968

7

Figure 4

Indigenous Children at Teulon collegiate in The Manitoba Teacher, December 1968



The Manitoba Teacher — 1970s

There was again very little commentary from teachers and urban teachers specifically about Indigenous learners in the 1970s. In the Spring 1970 issue of *The Manitoba Teacher*, Gloria Purves, a teacher at Camperville Elementary School in Manitoba, wrote a charged letter outlining her disappointment in the system. In her article entitled “...because we are Metis,” Purves (1970) explained how her children had been denied an opportunity to participate in an exchange program, simply because they were too poor. Angry about the way her Métis learners were viewed, Purves wrote: “My purpose for the year is defeated. Our one opportunity to show these children there is something better in life -- that they need not stay here drained of pride and dignity. Shattered.” (p. 7)

In 1971, Frontier School Division was pushing inclusive and locally designed notions of Indigenous education within the province. In the Spring 1971, *The Manitoba Teacher* reported on a pilot program at Pelican Rapids that taught learners in their Cree language in nursery school so that they were better prepared for integration into English Kindergarten (MTS, 1971). The author explained that the transition into schools was cushioned through their first language: “Students are gradually moved into an English-speaking world” (para 5). The end goal, despite the progressive sheen, was to assimilate Indigenous learners into Canadian society. By learning the English language, learners showed their worth and moved one step closer to a detachment to their culture, the land, and their history.

In 1975, however, a short article appeared in the February issue written by Art Rempel (1975) entitled *What Native Students Need Most: Well-prepared Teachers*. Working at that time for the Native Education Branch of Manitoba Education and a former teacher in Frontier School Division, Rempel demanded that teachers in the North needed to be open to working with the

community, to acknowledge and honour the experience of learners, and to speak the language of the learners. According to Rempel, “We, educators, can do much to eliminate the notion that Native people should assimilate and promote an education system, reflecting our cultural mosaic” (p. 3). He went on further to argue, “It is in our classrooms where our Native children and others with backgrounds different from the typical middle-class white Canadian can be given the special help they need” (p. 3). While Rempel advocated for a certain level of settler-understood self-determination and acknowledged some Indigenous knowledge and experience, his language still revealed a notion of Indigenous helplessness.

Rempel’s progressive albeit deficit-minded advocacy could have been driven by the recent publication of *Wahbung* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971) and Dr. Verna Kirkness’ *The Shocking Truth of Indians in Textbooks* (1971). Kirkness served as the Director of Education for the National Indian Brotherhood at the time. Both publications were reflections of the Indigenous resurgence movements that were erupting in both rural and urban areas of the province. *The Shocking Truth*, according to Carleton (2017b), “powerfully illustrates that ignorance, racism, and prejudice are not natural; they are learned, and in settler colonial countries such as Canada, they are often taught in school” (para 6). This movement in the 1970s would further reveal itself in Manitoba society writ large in later decades, but urban educators seemed to be absent from any discussion related to Indigenous learners.

The Manitoba Teacher — 1980s & 1990s

The most striking revelation from my analysis of *The Manitoba Teacher* is the absence of any mention of Indigenous learners, teachers, or schools in the 1980s. The absence of voices, leaders, and significant events is glaring given the significant Indigenous population in both Manitoba and Winnipeg. Even as the Winnipeg School Division and the North End community

was engaged in developing an Indigenous High School, Children of the Earth, there is no mention of issues facing Indigenous peoples.

In *The Manitoba Teacher*, the tension between Indigenous resurgence and colonial forces was exposed in a critical point in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Several key events, movements, and people propelled Indigenous issues and voices to the forefront of Canadian mainstream society. The first was the conviction of five white men in 1987 for the heinous kidnapping and murder of Helen Betty Osborne in The Pas, Manitoba almost two decades earlier in 1971. Coupled with the 1988 murder of J.J. Harper in Winnipeg by an RCMP officer, this conviction led to an unprecedented examination of the relationship between Indigenous peoples, the RCMP, the Manitoba government, and the settler state in general. In response to this tension, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (1991), led partly by future Senator Murray Sinclair, was created in 1988 and rendered its final report in three parts in the fall of 1991.

At the same time, national events were also influencing the tensions between Indigenous and settlers in Canada. The first is what many refer to as the “Oka Crisis.” In the summer of 1990, as Ellen Gabriel, a Mohawk activist who is and was a leader at Oka thirty years ago, recounts: “the Kanienâ-keh:ka Nation were denied their fundamental human rights without any just recourse. Thirty years later, the Rotinonhsesh:ka are still fighting the same issues, while Canada, Quebec and Oka collude to continue their land fraud under the auspices of development based on institutionalized racism” (Gabriel, 2020). Local, provincial, and federal forces besieged the Mohawk community as it was attempting to resist the development and expansion of a golf course with condominiums. The “Oka Crisis” Indigenous peoples, supported around the world, defending unceded territory.

The second involved Elijah Harper, a Cree New Democratic Party MLA in Manitoba, supported by the National Indian Brotherhood, who filibustered the provincial legislature to stall the Meech Lake Accord -- constitutional amendments that would acknowledge Quebec as a distinct society (Bergman, 1990). Harper and the NIB had major objections to being excluded from discussions related to nationhood. Harper's famous eagle feather response would ignite a chain reaction and eventually shut down the constitutional process.

But it was the murders of Helen Betty Osborne and J.J. Harper where a correlation between the Manitoba Teachers' Society desire to include Indigenous voices in its publication reveals itself. In the March 1990 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher*, where the cover and the central focus is on the theme of "peer-coaching", three articles speak to three different perspectives on cognitive imperialism and colonial forces in public education. The first is an article by Marshall Murdock (1990), who at the time was the Native Education Advisor of the Winnipeg School Division at the Elmwood Educational Resource Centre entitled *We can beat racism, if we work together*. In a response to the establishment of both a Winnipeg School Division task force on race relations and an MTS committee devoted to anti-racism, Murdock unveiled that racism is alive and well: "Racism is a reality. It needs to be addressed by the school system and community" (p. 9). He further argued that "Individuals in the mainstream of society often talk about minorities and native people needing to be integrated" (p. 9). But he challenged this by arguing that Indigenous learners did not have the same opportunities for education and employment and learning in the rest of society.

As alternatives, Murdock spoke to the development of "Aboriginal Survival Schools" and Indigenous teacher education programmes (p. 9). Survival school was a term used to identify schools whose focus was on preserving Indigenous ways of life and knowing. Children of the

Earth School, an all-Indigenous secondary school, had been in the works since 1988. Through leadership from North End community groups and the Winnipeg School Division it opened in 1991. He also pointed to post-secondary opportunities that had been developed through the University of Winnipeg's ACCESS programme, BUNTEP (Brandon University Native Teacher Education Program) and the University of Manitoba's Winnipeg Education Center. As Murdock explained, "These programs are designed primarily for Indian and Métis students who have been deprived of educational opportunities for social, economic and cultural reasons" (p. 10). A handful of programs designed to train Indigenous teachers in their communities, including BUNTEP, PENT (Project for the Education of Native Teachers), and IMPACTE (Indian - Métis Project for Careers through Teacher Education) sprouted up in the early to mid 1970s as a reaction to what Sealey saw as a dearth in Indigenous teachers in the north and rural areas of the province. This form of reclamation is evidence that Indigenous communities were desperate for local teachers who were from community, knew the language, and came with traditional teachings.

The essence of Murdock's message in 1990 was that alternatives must be found for Indigenous education because integration does not work, and "We must continue to explore new approaches to native education. The pursuit of alternatives and new concepts must become top priority -- without jeopardizing the equality of programs and program delivery necessary to meet the needs of native students" (p. 10).

In the March 1990 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher*, potentially propelled by the recent high-profile acts of violence on Indigenous people in Manitoba (Hellen Betty Osborne and J.J. Harper), an article entitled *Someday We'll Graduate* appears. Three Indigenous learners described their experience at Rising Sun High School, an off-campus program developed

through R.B. Russell Vocational High School and Rossbrook House. The programme still exists, although the partnering school is now Gordon Bell, an inner-city school in Winnipeg. In the article, the learners bore witness to growing up in the inner city. They spoke of the difficulties dealing with the omnipresent forces of poverty and racism and asked the fundamental question: “Why do so many of us have a hard time finishing school?” (p. 14). Inner-city is a term for the core-area or downtown neighbourhoods of Winnipeg. These neighbourhoods today are part of the Winnipeg School Division and include some of the poorest postal codes in Canada.

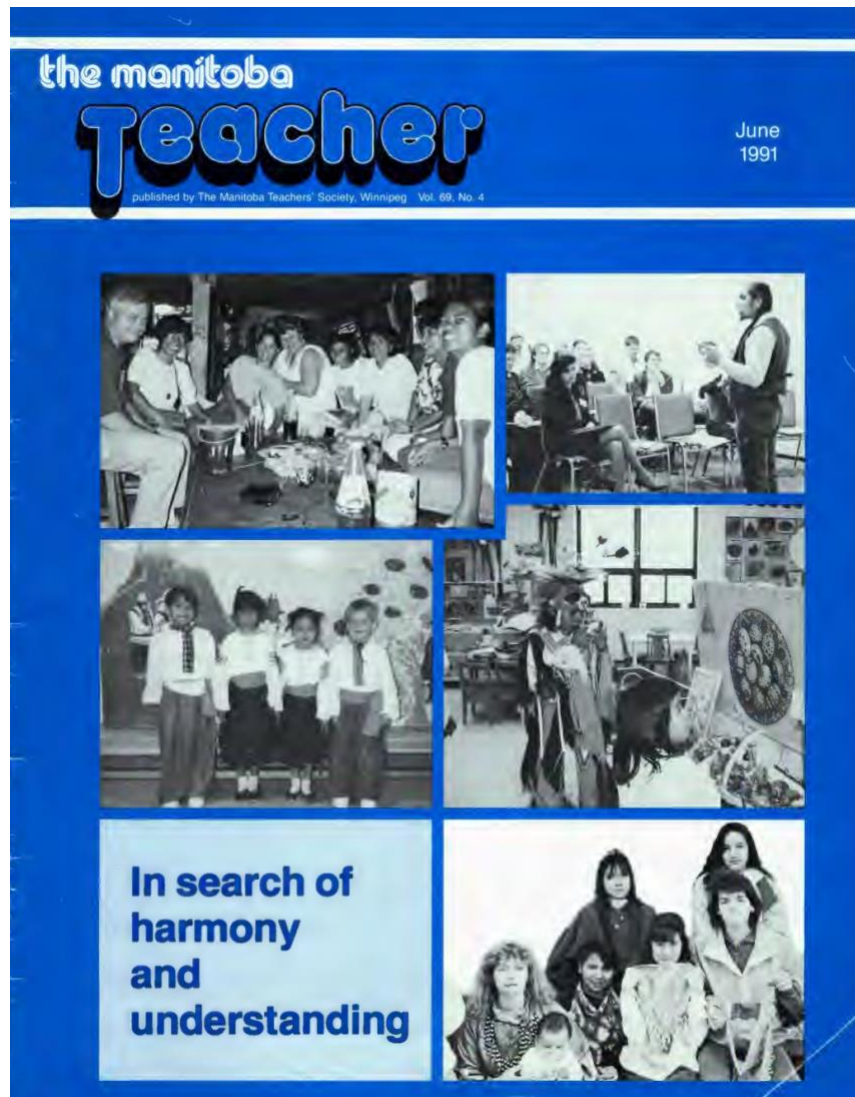
Rising Sun School is described as a school situated in a house. Classes were small, but the learners followed the same curriculum that all other learners do in Manitoba. They enjoyed their experience as they were able to engage in the culture:

The last few years we have been given an opportunity to learn Ojibway from a teacher in the neighbourhood. Another teacher comes to the school to teach us native crafts. Also, we have participated in pow-wows and workshops on native spirituality. (p. 15)

There was a sense of pride in their words, despite the challenges that they were presented with living in Winnipeg. The students said, “We like going to school at Rising Sun where we can feel at home and where we can learn at our own pace. It will make it possible for us some day to graduate” (p. 15). The off-campus programme serves as an attempt to reclaim Indigenous education, language, and culture. It was and is an attempt by the community to resist cultural erasure by contributing to not only their own history, but the larger societal narrative.

Figure 5

June 1991 cover of The Manitoba Teacher



The last article of note was in the June 1991 issue, written by Caroline McCaig, a teacher at Stony Mountain Elementary School and a member of the Manitoba Teachers' Society's task

force on racism. McCaig (1991) outlined for the first time in *The Manitoba Teacher* an urban settler perspective on racism in the education system. While her critique was problematic with regards to token notions of multiculturalism, she did identify the reality for racialized learners:

Fundamental prejudices are universal. A study in Great Britain and the United States has shown that teachers expect less from non-white children. Low expectations tend to result in low achievement. Studies have also shown that the majority of students in vocational and lower-level academic programs come from visible minorities. Educators need to develop realistic expectations of all students to make sure that prejudice does not interfere with the academic achievements of students. (p. 13)

This critique of the colonial system from an urban context was relatively novel and an important moment. The March 1990 and June 1991 issues of *The Manitoba Teacher* were significant in featuring voices from Indigenous teachers, Indigenous learners, and settler teachers. Each offers a perspective that is unique and each fundamentally asks for a different or alternative form of education.

The June 1990 edition also featured an article on BUNTEP (Brandon University Teacher Education Programme). Agnes Grant, one of the faculty members, described the Indigenous education programme 20 years in the making. While she noted much success in the programme, she offered some caution: “Historically, and to some extent even today, they have been criticized for being watered down” (Grant, 1990, p. 4). Despite this perception, Grant asserted that all the off-campus teacher education programmes were successfully running, ensuring that Indigenous learners in rural areas had Indigenous teachers.

A year later, Indigenous education came back into focus in *The Manitoba Teacher* with the June 1991 edition entitled *In Search of Harmony and Understanding*. Situated in the early days of multiculturalism, the edition featured several stories on cultural programmes, including Ukrainian bilingual schools, teacher connections in Africa and Thailand, and editorials on inclusion. The first article that referred specifically to Indigenous learners is a profile on Gary Robson, Native Awareness Consultant with the Native Education Branch, Manitoba Education and Training in Winnipeg. In the profile, Robson's views on education were quite clear:

Mr. Robson says he believes that academic success goes hand in hand with self-esteem and that Native students will “become proud and self-confident if they are encouraged to seek the facts about their heritage” and learn basic skills and knowledge within a context that acknowledges and builds on their culture. (van Raalte, 1991, p. 14)

When training and connecting with teachers, Robson offered a two-pronged approach. In the first, Indigenous learners were connected with elders in their communities but were also supported by teachers at school. The second emphasis for Robson was on teachers. Robson argued that it was important for teachers in schools at the time to acquire some knowledge of and insight into the ways of Indigenous people for centuries raised and educated their children and young people. Robson placed the onus on the educator to engage with the learner -- with the experience of the learner and acknowledging that these experiences were valid. Robson's design called for a direct inclusion of culture and language in schools.

The other article in the June 1991 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher* of interest was one entitled *Multi-purpose Project Helps Native Students* (van Raalte, 1991). The article focused on a unique programme at Hugh John Macdonald School that was predicated on raising the self-

esteem of learners through various “activities that allow students to experience a measure of success and (b) discussions that enable them to share their concerns and gain new knowledge.” (p. 2). Counseling and beading rested at the core of the programme: “Native students who have trouble coping with their lives in and out of school” connected with an Indigenous artist, supported by a school guidance counselor. By assigning “culturally relevant tasks,” the artist “makes sure that the tasks she assigns can be handled by the students to whom she assigns them so that the student will experience a sense of accomplishment” (p. 2).

In the fall 1992 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher*, an article appears entitled *Beedabun — A Chance for Students to Start Anew* (McLellan, 1992). Written by Joe McLellan, the teacher who offered the programme, that article described another off-campus programme situated within the Winnipeg School Division. Beedabun was described as a junior high school experience that served Indigenous learners who might have been deemed, “low skills, unmotivated, lost, lonely in school setting, troubled, withdrawn, shy, economically disadvantaged, difficult home situation, involved in legal system, transient” (p. 5). This deficit-based description is a central theme of programming specifically within the Winnipeg School Division at this time. Situating Indigenous learners as tragic specimens and less-than students led to low expectations and programs set on separating troubled youth from more academically inclined peers. The trend of low expectations speaks powerfully to the gap identified in this dissertation between settlers denying learners rich learning experiences and in lieu, offering substandard versions. The expression of “transient” also implies that Indigenous learners are not attached to property. That their value is diminished based on their distance from the means of production and land. Programming of this nature exists today – in the form numerous off-campus

programs designed to separate Indigenous youth from peers, shorten the day, and inflate the impact of low expectations.

Located in the Pritchard Drop-in Centre, Beedabun offered cultural and language education, in both Ojibway and Cree, while it provided remedial educational opportunities: “Initially, the staff sees to it that they learn the survival skills — reading, writing, form completion and mathematics” (p. 5). The author and instructor determined success through the elevated self-confidence of the learner, despite admitting that many learners dropped out. McLellan’s measure of success is whether the learners continued to high school. In the words of McLellan, “Not all students in the Beedabun program become successful but many have gone to senior high school and are succeeding” (p. 6). The reasoning offered by McLennan presents two unique problems related to the impact of settler-colonialism on Indigenous youth in schools. The first is that there is limited value in Indigenous ways of learning and knowing. The measure of success proposed by McLellan is that at least a handful of learners head to high school. Not that learners have connected to language and land. Not that learners have connected to culture and have developed their own identity and history through meaningful intellectual challenge. The second problem relates to the sentiment that Beedabun and the school cannot be expected to impact all students. That only some will have success, and for those who do not go to highschool, there is a rationalized justification that some kids might not make it. That there is a reasonable and justifiable number of kids that simply will fall through the cracks. And that this phenomenon is not the fault of any one system or organization.

The period at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s marked a significant transition in Canadian society reflected in discussions related to Indigenous learners. Through the analysis of *The Manitoba Teacher* during this period, we see that strong voices from northern

and rural parts of the province still exist, but a new urban voice is beginning to develop and resist within Winnipeg. The *Manitoba Teacher* reflected changes in the approach to education in Winnipeg, such as the development of the Winnipeg School Division and MTS task forces on race relations. There was a shift in focus from assimilatory policies to the creation of separate educational experiences for Indigenous learners. Through off-campus programs, school programs, and survival schools like Children of the Earth, the desire on the part Indigenous peoples to resist colonial forms of education is documented in the publication. But the notion of the off-campus programming is a problematic constant as well — a tool that is used by the Winnipeg School Division to this day.

McLellan (1992) speaks of learning styles and working at the pace of the child. This is a common thread we find at Rising Sun and Hugh John Macdonald that amounts to separating learners from peers and reducing learning expectations. Cognitive engagement could possibly be exchanged for a curriculum that is set on separating the learner from society. In lieu of providing learners with rich experiences, high quality programs, and elite educators, off-campus programs tend to shorten the day, reduce expectations, and become a depository for educators who are unable to be effective in larger school contexts. Although adult intentions may be noble, there is a potential to relegate learners to the basements of youth centres, schools, and houses.

Through Oka and Meech Lake, Indigenous resistance and reclamation, while partially silenced from the historical narrative present, briefly became visible through *The Manitoba Teacher*. It was clear that some educators in Winnipeg and throughout the province were engaged at some level in conversations about race, Indigenous education, and expectations. There were parallel forces which raised questions about teacher expectations at this time. The

first was the debate over separating Indigenous learners from mainstream education programmes and the second involved changing perspectives on success.

At the time, led by community activities and organizations, this separation may have been propelled by a need to rebuke and reject generations of genocidal policies. As Simpson (2014) argues, “Nishnaabewin did not and does not prepare children for a successful career path in a hyper capitalistic system” (p. 23). The goal is not to produce a handful of high school learners. Rather it is focused on an education that is fully outside the realm of settler-capitalism. While much ground was made during this period by Indigenous educators, learners, and leaders, to what extent did it actually shift the expectations of settler teachers in Winnipeg? Have the perceptions and attitudes of white educators substantively changed in 2024?

The Manitoba Teacher — 2000s

By the 21st century, it appeared that national voices began to permeate through the pages of *The Manitoba Teacher*. In the June 2005 edition of the journal, there was much coverage of a conference devoted to what was then-called Aboriginal education. With reports on keynotes from Dr. Martin Brokenleg, the concept of the Circle of Courage was brought into the vernacular of educators in Winnipeg and Manitoba. Coupled with the Circle of Courage is Brokenleg’s use of “at-risk” and the claim that “All kids are at-risk at sometime in their lives” when describing learners (Stephenson, 2005, p. 3). On the same page, Dr. Cindy Blackstock, executive director for the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, was afforded a smaller inset where she is quoted once.

On subsequent pages, the MTS Aboriginal education conference was recounted. One article, entitled *Townhall Showcases Sage Advice from Aboriginal Leaders*, describes a panel discussion featuring Cindy Blackstock, Fred Sanderson, and Susan Swan. Sanderson and Swan

spoke of their experience as young learners in school and the violence they endured: “Sanderson recalled the huge impression a violent incident left on him when he was in Grade 3. He and some other classmates were forced to kneel in front of the class and were beaten with a pointer because of an incident at an outdoor sandbox” (Job, 2005, p. 5). While the history of Residential Schools did not surface explicitly in the issue, accounts of violence and injustice began to emerge prior to the striking of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2008.

The Aboriginal education conference did not appear on the front page of *The Manitoba Teacher*. Despite the energy that went into the development of the conference, including the inclusion of Brokenleg, and Blackstock and moderator Ian Hanomansing from CBC (although it is unclear why he was selected as moderator), there was a sense from the Manitoba Teachers’ Society that the conference was a substantive demonstration of interest in Aboriginal education.

By the Winter 2009 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher*, student learning appeared on the pages of the journal. In an article entitled *Reading Writing Relevance*, the voice of Wade Houle, an Indigenous teacher at Maples Collegiate, was featured. In the article, the author explained how Houle was focused on engaging his learners in his Native Studies course on Indigenous learners. A Métis person himself, Houle stated, “Reading and writing is pretty low among Aboriginal people,” and “I think it’s important that if this is going to be a class on native studies, then there should be reading and writing elements” (Owen, 2009, p. 4). Houle made some large generalizations about the abilities of his learners, but there was a desire to bring Indigenous literature, authors, and stories into his teaching. At the height of the TRC, Houle was ensuring that his learners were engaged in books which reflect to some degree his learners. Despite his best efforts, however, Houle admitted difficulty in having his course recognized by Manitoba Education and society writ large. The article revealed that “Houle wants to attract more students

so he's trying to get the course changed to an 'S' designation so students can use it toward university entrance" (p. 4). The Native Studies course at Maples Collegiate did not qualify as a university entrance credit. Indigenous children were being told that their culture was not valued, or worthy of formal credit. Subsequently, Indigenous educators were told that their pedagogical approaches and ways of teaching were not valued.

Figure 6

Wade Houle at Maples Collegiate in The Manitoba Teacher, 2008

"What (Campbell) goes through, a lot of Aboriginal people go through," says Houle, a University of Manitoba graduate. "The first time I read it, I totally related to it, so maybe that's what happened there (with his students). And that's a good thing, right? Everyone reacts differently."

Maples Collegiate has had a native awareness program for about 10 years. When Houle took over in his first year of teaching three years ago, he introduced an Aboriginal literature unit for a Grades 11/12 split and added Grades 9/10 last year.

"Reading and writing is pretty low among Aboriginal people," says Houle, who grew up in Vogat, a Métis community along the northeast shore of Lake Manitoba's lower basin.

"I think it's important that if this is going to be a class on native studies, then there should be reading and writing elements. There's such great literature. I mean, *Half-Breed's* unbelievable."

Houle has 15 students registered in the native awareness course. Next semester, 40 students registered for the Grades 9/10 course, the highest ever.

In three years, only two non-Aboriginal students have enrolled.

have similar people.

The students laugh, and describe some of the characters they've known while growing up in places such as Beren's River, Sagkeeng and Peguis.

The native awareness program also covers art, research of indigenous cultures around the world, history of residential schools and famous Aboriginal women role models.

One of the assignments Houle hands out is for the students to enter the Aboriginal Youth Writing Challenge. Two of his students have placed in the top 10 across Canada. In 2008 it was Alyssa Bird and in 2007, Nicole Selkirk.

"They both told me, 'We would never have won if you didn't assign it,'" Houle, 28, says.

Yet it's not really a goal of his to inspire the students to become authors.

"Not necessarily," he says. "I just want them to read these books to

She took the course last year in Grade 12. When she returned for upgrading this year, she wanted to take it again.

"I want to get more knowledge and maybe get more people aware of what you do in here," she says.

"Last year in Grade 12, we went on a trip to South Dakota and went to different Aboriginal places. It is a great opportunity."

Reading other Aboriginal people's stories, it shows you what they went through and then you can compare it with your own life of being Aboriginal.

Wade Houle

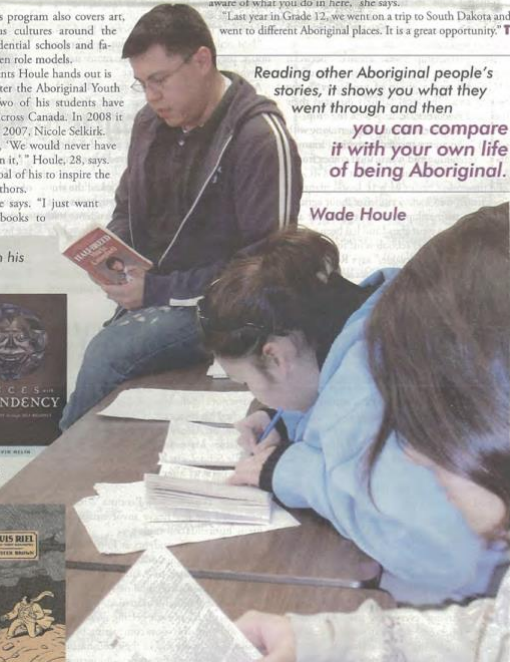
Maples Collegiate teacher Wade Houle uses books such as these in his Aboriginal literature unit. (Suggested grades in brackets).

Dances with Dependency: Indigenous Success Through Self-Reliance
By Calvin Helin
Helin is a member of the Tsimshian Nation from the northern B.C. community of Lax Kw'alaams (Port Simpson). The son of a chief is a successful business leader who offers a business-oriented solution for impoverished Aboriginal communities. (Grade 12)

Half-Breed By Maria Campbell
The Métis author grew up in northern Saskatchewan and writes about her life and the racism faced by Métis people. She married a white man at age 15 and openly writes about her identity insecurities, drug addiction and how her Cree great-grandmother supported her. (Grades 11–12)

Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography
By Chester Brown
This biography of the famous Métis leader uses a comic-strip format that makes it more attractive for young students. (Grade 9)

Medicine River By Thomas King



Conclusion

This chapter argues that a critical tension remains between the problem of Indigenous peoples not having control over the design of their own education and white settlers providing education from a colonial perspective. This inquiry is by no means a condemnation of teachers in

Winnipeg, in Manitoba, or in general. Rather, it asks all educators to think about our practice and how we engage with Indigenous learners, their experience, external and internal forces, and how we design for equity so that all learners have the means for a decent life. As the author, I acknowledge my positionality: that is of a settler who carries with him a significant amount of privilege, hegemony, and attitudes that constantly need to be checked. I habitually make mistakes, both in the classroom and the boardroom, and perpetually fall into the trap of what Roberts (2012) suggests is a grave danger: the desire of teachers to emancipate their learners. Namely, “experience as praxis, done poorly, can be more damaging than maintaining more ‘traditional’ curriculum orientation” (p. 82). According to Freire (as cited in Roberts), a “dialogical experience which is not based in seriousness, in competency, is much worse than a banking experience where the teacher merely transfers knowledge” (p. 82). The danger is situated in the educator seeking to emancipate or *save* the learner. To avoid this pitfall, settler educators need to fully understand the forces of oppression – to become wide awake, as Maxine Greene (1977) would argue. At the same time, educators need to fully understand how community, culture, land and language need to be at the core of their design. Where the community is invited in. Where land and language are central pillars in a pedagogical stance. And where culture emanates from the problematizing and inquiry of learning communities. Lastly, educators need to remove barriers, as allies and accomplices. Removing the obstacles that are presented to Indigenous youth and families as they relate to school.

Despite a few voices from the North, the belief that Indian children can be saved from the wilds persisted throughout much of the 20th century. Sealey’s (1968) revelation that most Canadians perceive Indigenous Peoples as less than capable persists. As urban and mostly white educators, to what extent do we still hold onto these attitudes and this silence? To what extent do

we perceive our role is to save the “Poor Indians” or simply not to speak of them at all? How are we positioned in 2024 to walk with our learners, colleagues, and communities to honour experiences and learn from and with each other?

Anishinaabe scholar and activist Leanne Simpson (2014) argues in *Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation* that for education to become decolonized, Indigenous education needs to occur outside of the imperial context: “Nishnaabeg must stop looking for legitimacy within the colonizer’s education system and return to valuing our individual and collective intelligence on its own merits and on our own terms” (p. 22). While not pushing Western education aside completely for Anishinaabe children, Simpson points out that Indigenous children “are spending 40 hours a week in state run education systems,” and that “Next to none of that takes place in a Nishnaabeg context” (p. 23). Despite Canada’s best efforts to reconcile its relationship with Indigenous children, there exists an omnipresent desire to assimilate and legitimize success through conformity and erasure.

And this very real vector of assimilation and integration through the praise of the adoption of western practices and ideologies in the form of low expectations is seen through the history of education in Manitoba. Through *The Manitoba Teacher*, it is evident throughout the 20th century that success was determined by the degree to which an Indigenous child could emulate European values. We are curiously pleased when Indigenous children can moderately participate in settler society.

A second voice that informs this analysis is that of Marie Battiste, University of Saskatchewan scholar. In her work *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, Battiste (2013) brings to the forefront the notion of cognitive imperialism, arguing that:

Cognitive imperialism is not just symbolic cultural assimilation, but wholesale cognitive whitewashing, working through the loss of Aboriginal languages that themselves inform the perspectives and values and world views of the peoples. As a result, success has been closely associated with Aboriginal students' losing their languages and cultural connections; many often do not see the merit of holding to Aboriginal language systems, cultures, or world views, nor understand the wealth of knowledge within their own systems. This self-doubt, coupled with racism, continues to sabotage their expectations for their own future. (p. 162)

Success in the minds of the colonizer has not and is not about what Simpson (2014) describes as an education system designed to “create self-motivated, self-directed, community-minded, interdependent, brilliant, loving citizens” (p. 23). Rather, success is defined by one's ability to engage in a neoliberal system designed to assimilate Indigenous peoples into a foreign political, social, economic and historic paradigm. Emdin (2020) argues that “the best teachers don't just keep teaching. Instead, they use their pedagogy as protest: They disrupt teaching norms that harm vulnerable students” (para 5). That is, they co-construct experiences and enter into dialogue with their learners with vigour and rigour. Emdin (2016) surfaces a dilemma not only in Winnipeg schools, but throughout the world where colonization, slavery, genocide and oppression have (and do) occur(ed):

As long as white middle-class teachers are recruited to schools occupied by urban youth of color, without any consideration of how they affirm and reestablish power dynamics that silence students, issues that plague urban education (like achievement gaps, suspensions rates, and high teacher turnover) will persist. (p. 9)

Much of the evidence from the journal also substantiates the powerful voices of Indigenous resurgence and resistance which have always existed. From Verna Kirkness and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, to community organizations attempting to reclaim education within urban contexts through the design of their own schools, there has always been a powerful voice that often surfaces in periods of political resurgence. With this comes change. We see the greater inclusion of Indigenous learners, not only within rural contexts, but within Winnipeg. Finally, the MTS itself began to acknowledge that Indigenous learners are at least within the public school system in the 1960s and 1970s. The voices of Indigenous educators began to permeate the pages of the journal, as we see more Indigenous educators contribute to the larger conversation in the 1990s and 2000s .

The continuity and change of how Indigenous learners are included or not in the education system in Winnipeg and Manitoba reveals two areas of future inquiry. The first pertains to the attitudes and expectations of educators in Winnipeg of Indigenous learners. The second relates to the implementation and the Calls to Action related to education. If the education system is to close the learning gaps and offer equitable educative experiences to all learners, how can frameworks of decolonization and reclamation help design schools and experiences where Indigenous learners are able to learn the literacies necessary to resist the historic and oppressive forces which have denied so many for so long? This, perhaps, is the aspiration and the promise of public education in Canada.

The investigation of *The Manitoba Teacher* also reveals the gap between the speaking of Indigenous Peoples and the failure of those who controlled the publication to hear these voices. The cracks of light demonstrated by Sealey, Murdoch, and Houle suggest that indeed Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba were resisting colonial control of education, but *The Manitoba Teacher* did

not capture the significance of this resistance. By failing to listen to the voices of Indigenous Peoples, MTS through *The Manitoba Teacher* silenced voices at the source, through the archives and ultimately through the grand narrative that was created over close to a century of publication. Significance is an epistemological and ideological imperative. Failing to include the spoken voices of Indigenous Peoples within the pages of *The Manitoba Teacher* reveals both implicit and explicit desires to exclude Indigenous voices from the educational conversation in Manitoba.

But the cracks of light do indicate an anti-colonial movement. What if greater significance was placed on other sources? On other voices? What if space was made to allow for Indigenous voices, ways of knowing and being to create a different historical narrative that could inform contemporary public education in the province of Manitoba. It is this task to which we turn our attention.

Chapter 6: The Manitoba Indian & Métis Friendship Centre – 1954-1969

The Red River Resistance, a moment in time during the winter of 1869 and 1870, embodied the first example of Indigenous reclamation in what is called Canada in contemporary terms. Led by Louis Riel, a trained scholar from the community (who received his training in Quebec), the Métis and community members resisted encroaching imperial forces and negotiated Manitoba's entry into Confederation. The Manitoba Act, the piece of legislation designed and passed to usher in Canada's fifth province, explicitly ensured that the Métis would be granted land, or capital, as part of the transition.

This dream of Indigenous control of land at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers was merely a flash in the pan. Shortly after entering confederation, Canadian troops, under the leadership of General Garnet Wolseley, drove Riel and the Métis out of the community. The Orange Society would begin to create what Toews (2018) calls the bloc, a collection of Winnipeg's elite which began and continues to control much of the land in Winnipeg and ultimately the fates of urban Indigenous people who suffer at the hands of poverty and colonialism. This disenfranchisement would begin a cycle of disillusionment for Indigenous people living within the boundaries of Winnipeg, but also Indigenous peoples leaving their communities for better fortunes in the city in later decades. With no land, networks, or access to concrete social services, Indigenous peoples coming to Winnipeg following World War II would have great difficulty accessing quality housing, proper healthcare, and the education and training required to survive a rapidly industrialized world and city.

But this reality is not to suggest that Indigenous Peoples and allies were not working furiously in 20th century Winnipeg to reclaim the land and opportunity lost when Canada seized control of the territory that was exploited and then vacated by the Hudson Bay Company.

Canada's control of present-day Manitoba ushered in the Indian Act and the Indian Residential School system – two weapons intentionally designed to remove Indigenous communities from the land. In 1972 E.A. Levin, Director of Planning for the City of Winnipeg, authored a report entitled *Neeginan: A Proposal for the Urban Indian and Métis*. The report was based on decades of community activism and work on the part of the Indian and Friendship Centre and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg to ameliorate the conditions of Indigenous peoples migrating to Winnipeg. In 1972, however, Levin argued that there should be one centre, the Neegian centre, where Indigenous people could access a myriad of services related to housing, health, and education. Levin (1972) proposed the Neeginan as a response to the complex nature of settler-colonialism:

There can also be no doubt that this group represents the single most urgent and difficult social problem that exists in the city. It is not merely that most of the Indians and Metis are poor; there are many whites who also suffer the privations of poverty and whose problems remain a shameful stain on the rest of society. The Indians and Metis suffer the additional tragedy of cultural disorientation. Their own culture has been destroyed by the white man and the white man's culture is not accessible to them. They can find in the city, therefore, no basis for self-identity and no basis for social and economic motivation. (p. 1)

Despite this dilemma, stemming from the Red River Resistance but fully manifesting itself following World War II, there is no evidence in *The Manitoba Teacher*, as previously argued in Chapter 5, that educators in the province were not aware of the challenges faced by urban Indigenous peoples nor was there a recognition of the community activism focused on

reclamation, particularly as it relates to education, schooling, and youth work. This chapter seeks to surface the intentional work and energy initiated by Indigenous Peoples in the city of Winnipeg beginning in the post-war era as a means to identify the erasure that occurs in settler worldviews and subsequent publications. Through the archives of the Manitoba Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, there is ample evidence to suggest that Indigenous Peoples and allies were active in reclaiming and consolidating social services, including education and services devoted to youth in the urban core. With specific attention to the fourteen annual conferences of the Welfare Planning Council of greater Winnipeg and the Indian Métis Friendship Centre between 1954 and 1968, a strategic, calculated, and collaborative movement emerged to provide services, advocate on behalf of, and ameliorate the conditions for Indigenous peoples living in Winnipeg. Created in 1947, the Welfare Planning Council evolved from the Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies, a non-profit organization erupting from the turmoil of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike and general poor living and working conditions in Winnipeg. (Kehler, 2015; MacKinnon & Mallett, 2023)

The 1951 amendments to the Indian Act dramatically reduced the control that Canada had on Indigenous Peoples, specifically First Nations. More geographic freedom existed for people and ceremonies were no longer outlawed. Greater road and communication structures allowed for greater movement of rural and northern people into urban centres throughout Canada (Venne & Hinge, 1981). It is of note that *The Manitoba Teacher* does not report on the dramatic movement of Indigenous People from rural and northern communities. How could the movement of thousands of people from rural to urban areas not meet the threshold of newsworthiness of the Society? Through an analysis of the mastheads of various editions of *The Manitoba Teacher*, no Indigenous people were included. Despite this erasure, people were moving, and according to

Leslie Hall, whose Master's thesis and subsequent contribution to historians' Gerald Freisen and Eysyllt Jones' tome entitled *Prairie Metropolis*, remarks that "...combined with population increase and a lack of employment on reserves, resulted in a young, mobile group of Aboriginal people, many of whom moved to the city seeking jobs, education, and an escape from the residential school legacy" (Hall, 2009, p. 224). By 1950, Winnipeg had received approximately 5000 Indigenous migrants and that would mushroom into an estimated 17 000, as reported by Levin (1972), by the early 1960s.

Hall argues that "Aboriginal people feel outside existing policies, both within urban centres and on reserve as related to health, education, housing and other services" (p. 224). Life was difficult for Indigenous people who were making the difficult decision to leave their land to try and find work in the city. The prospects of a decent life on reserve were bleak and as freedom of movement became a reality, more and more came. Now without federal status and living off reserve, urban First Nations people did not have family, community, and the paternalistic support that came with the Indian Act. In the 1950s in Winnipeg, if you were Indigenous, you were on your own. The dearth of collaborative social, housing, and educational services was stark and attracted the attention of various stakeholders.

One of these stakeholders was the Welfare Planning Council of Greater Winnipeg – a settler-conceived organization of church members, community development workers, and volunteer government workers from both the provincial and federal governments. Urban settlers began to take notice of the "Indian Problem" with the movement of Indigenous Peoples of large centers such as Winnipeg. While there was certainly shifts in post-war legislation that allowed for greater movement and freedom experienced by Indigenous people (e.g., passes were no longer required to leave reserves, prohibitions of ceremonies were abolished), settler recognition

for the economic reality for Indigenous people was not recognized until the problem presented itself in their backyards. As Hall (2009) posits, “The move to urban centres made the relative poverty and higher level of social and economic problems experienced by Aboriginal people more visible to the rest of Canada” (p. 25).

The fourth Annual Conference on Indians and Métis, “Community Responsibility to Indians in Town” took place between January 23rd and 25th, 1958 at the Manitoba Legislative Building. Organized and sponsored by the Welfare Council of Greater Winnipeg, the purpose of the conference was declared as such:

Today, more Indians than ever before are leaving their reservations and communities, to live in urban areas. There are special problems for many Indians going to the city in addition to the usual ones associated with making a new home. They are required to live among people who have a different way of life, different sets of values.... These problems not only affect the Indian themselves.

Officials and speakers at the 4th Conference included co-chairpersons C.K. Rogers and Beatrice Brigden, Jean Lagassé, both Rev Alberts from the United Church and Rev Renaud from the Indian and Eskimo Welfare Commission, and Frank Bastin, Chairman of the Education Committee (IMFC Fonds Box 2, Folder 19). Bastin, who was a graduate of Laura Secord and Gordon Bell schools in Winnipeg, would later become a Rhodes Scholar and father of current Manitoba Liberal leader Dougald Lamont. A lawyer by trade, Bastin had no direct connection to the management of education. The 1958 conference marked the confluence of the Winnipeg Welfare Planning Council, the Urban Indian Association, and the Provincial and Federal governments.

Entitled “Community Responsibility for Indians in Tough”, the proceedings were highly significant for both settlers and Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg. The Welfare Planning Council of Greater Winnipeg at this meeting in 1958 decided to open a referral centre. Drawing upon the wisdom of elders who were part of the Urban Indian Association, the precursor of the Friendship Centre Indigenous council and the later Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, several resolutions were put forth that addressed counseling, employment, housing, and education. The central resolution that ushered in the Indian Métis Friendship Centre (later to be realized in 1959) read as such: “Be it resolved that a referral service for Indian and part-Indian newcomers to Winnipeg be established to guide and counsel on matters of employment, housing, education, health and other community services”. The resolution was carried and was subsequently supported by other resolutions which focused on improving housing conditions, counseling services, and general welfare. But of equal significance was the push for greater access to and higher quality education for Indigenous and Métis families, both within Winnipeg and outside. Five resolutions from 1958 focused solely on education:

6. Whereas many Indian and Métis children do not have more than a Grade VIII education, and whereas specialized training is needed to make a living in modern society; be it resolved that pre-technical vocational training courses be developed to fit qualifications and needs of such students.

7. Whereas many Métis children live in areas where the numbers of people are too small to warrant a local high school, and whereas these people are not financially able to send their children out for further education; be it resolved that the Provincial Department of Education be requested to provide scholarships,

sufficiently large to enable worthy students from underdeveloped areas to take further education.

8. Whereas many Métis and Indians are now moving into urban areas and, whereas growing population and diminishing economic opportunities locally will cause this movement to increase; be it resolved that the Federal Indian Affairs Branch and the Provincial Department of Education institute a short factual course at the local school on “Urban life and its requirements.”

9. Whereas Manitoba has many well-defined cultural groups including Indian, and whereas these groups have much to offer Canada, be it resolved that our social studies program in schools be revised to give students a wider understanding of and respect for cultural groups, including Indians.

10. Whereas teachers in Manitoba come from well-defined ethnic group areas, and whereas new teachers often have to work with other ethnic groups, be it resolved that our teacher training institutions give more training to students about differing cultures, why cultures differ and how to utilize these differences in their work.

All five motions passed and spoke to the pressing need for a shift in the delivery, pedagogy, teacher training, and accessibility of education for Indigenous youth. The Indian and Métis Conference, while established by settlers, included the voices of Indigenous leaders from Winnipeg and rural parts of Manitoba which would result in an Aboriginal advisory council. Despite the progressive intentions of the Welfare Council, there was still a desire to keep affairs well within the confines of colonial power. This desire would begin to wane following the establishing of the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre in 1959.

These resolutions are historically significant for a number of reasons. First, they represent a profound departure in the consciousness of settlers in Winnipeg, influenced by Indigenous leaders, that the status quo simply cannot abide. In the 1950s, there was a demonstrable push back against the colonial, capitalistic, and industrial movements that had been intentionally attempting to remove Indigenous people from land. These five resolutions represent a paradigm shift in Indigenous-settler relations. Second, there is a fundamental recognition that the playing field for Indigenous youth in Winnipeg needed to be leveled. The realization that oppressive forces, be them economic, cultural, or social, were at the root cause of the disparity between settler and Indigenous educational opportunities, is a powerful insight into a critical look at the plight of those who have been marginalized by state and market forces. All of this took place with no mention in *The Manitoba Teacher*.

In 1959, the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre was opened with funding from the Winnipeg Foundation and grants from both the Provincial and Federal governments. The Centre opened its doors on Donald Street and quickly became the hub for a variety of services for Indigenous people living in Winnipeg. According to Hall (2009), the Winnipeg IMFC opened in 1959 “to answer these needs by providing referrals and counseling on employment, housing and other concerns, in addition to providing a welcoming place where Aboriginal people could socialize and attend cultural educational events” (p. 223). Furthermore, “The Centre functioned well because of the collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal IMFC members and because of the strong leadership provided by Aboriginal community members” (Hall, 2009, p. 223).

By 1960, the Indian and Métis Conference had Indigenous people as part of the organization committee. Chief Alfred Cook and Mary Guilbault (the latter becoming a

stronghold in Métis advocacy in Winnipeg) would join forces with several Members of Legislative Assembly, and the usual suspects of Protestant church ministers and community development workers (IMFC, Box 2, Folder 19). Urban Indigenous People were noticing that these significant conferences were organized and run by settlers in a traditionally academic manner. Marion Meadmore, amongst others, decided to take control of the conferences through the Urban Indian Association (UIA). It was through this body and the activism of Indigenous leaders like Meadmore and Guilbault that, as Toews (2018) argues, “urban Indigenous organizers flipped settler scripts of the so-called unprepared urban Indian, imagining a decolonial city that would be prepared for – and by – them instead” (p. 132). Taking place from February 24th to 26th, 1960, the preface of the conference indicates the purpose of the 6th annual meeting: “This conference affords an opportunity for people of Indian descent [sic] and others to come together to discuss mutual problems in an endeavour to find solutions” (Box 2, Folder 19, p. 1). Taking place at the Manitoba Government building at 469 Broadway, the 6th annual conference addressed similar topics as past ones. General headings of fishing, employment, housing and education were addressed through various position papers and eventual resolutions, but there was also a dramatic shift in the intensity and complexity of topics. Twelve of several resolutions focused on education, running the gamut from adult education to non-treaty education to specific curriculum. The discussion at conferences was represented a more nuanced engagement in policy and practice and education resolutions come to the floor in the following forms:

15. Education Metis, non-Treaty Indians & Settlers

Whereas many Indian and Metis children do not have more than a Grade VIII education, and

Whereas special training is needed to make a living in modern society, and

Whereas this Conference recognizes with appreciation the steps already taken in Duck Bay Family Development Project of the Department of Education, therefore

Be it resolved that this kind of project be established in other districts.

(IMFC, Box 2, Folder 19)

Resolution 15 offers a new complexity to the demands of conference attendees, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Out of the 29 resolutions moved and carried at the 1960 conference, a full 13 are devoted to education. But it's the realization that public education is a catalyst for a better and decent life and that an example of success, Duck Bay, should be scaled for non-treaty Indigenous people. Resolution 22 also decries the racism felt by First Nation and Métis people within the education system and society writ large, citing that "we deplore the tendency among radio and newspaper people to identify the ethnic background of criminal offenders..." and that the "Indian and Métis Conference express its disapproval" (Box 2, Folder 19, p. 9). The Indian and Métis Conference became a political organization at this time, demanding that the "Provincial Government be asked to provide capital grants sufficiently large to provide needed facilities". Resolution 23, to which the plea to the government referred, highlighted the unfair practice of assessing a certain amount of school board revenue from local property tax assessment, a practice that exists today in Manitoba.

But the most impactful resolution is that of Resolution 16, simply entitled "Education General." It reads as such:

Whereas better results can be obtained in graded schools in all subjects,
there

Be it resolved that every effort be made to consolidate all schools, both Federal and Provincial, in one area into one graded school.

This simple resolution in February 1960 placed a line in the sand for public education in Manitoba. The leadership argued and argues today that the outcomes for Indigenous learners need to be at the forefront of the political discussion. The 1960 conference infers a degree of desperation and intensity – that if Indigenous learners are to have a chance to survive and thrive, that Education needs to be accessible and of high quality. Too many learners were falling through the cracks between federal and provincial jurisdictional responsibility and too many communities felt the pull between urban opportunities and community connection. While this intensity was palpable at the 1960 conference, no mention is made in *The Manitoba Teacher*. A conference focused on the welfare of Indigenous people living in Winnipeg did not land with editors and organizers of MTS. As Trouillot (1995) argues, silencing happens first at the source. Whether intentional or unintentional, the ignoring of these conferences speaks to the hegemonic forces entrenched to silence Indigenous people and exclude them from their own history.

By 1962, the complexity of the discussion grew. Motions and resolutions regarding education, health, fishing, housing, farming and employment dug deeper into the root causes of poverty and pointed at settler colonial capitalism. The 7th annual conference fully called upon both federal and provincial governments to fund Indigenous education equitably in Manitoba. The Province of Manitoba is clearly called to task with Resolution 12:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this 7th Indian and Métis Conference ask the Provincial Government to approach the Federal Government with a request for an early assumption of full responsibility

by the Province in the education of all Treaty as well as non-treaty Indians in Manitoba. (IMFC, Box 5, Folder 2)

Well before the publication of Trudeau's White Paper and the advocacy by the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, settlers and Indigenous peoples at the 1962 Conference were calling on Manitoba to take full control of education for Indigenous learners. There was a clear recognition that the Federal government was failing to provide adequate services both on reserve and off for those with treaty status AND for those caught in between systems. According to George Munroe (MacKinnon & Mallett, 2023), an Indigenous activist at that time and fierce advocate for the Friendship Centre, the 1960s proved to be an instrumental time of resistance and decolonization. The Centre itself was located at 376 Donald Street, and this period was "a critical time of consciousness-raising and 'agitation' that led to a sea of change" (p. 60).

The late 1960s witnessed the full transference of power from settlers to Indigenous peoples of the IMFC at the 1967 conference, hosted at the Marlborough Hotel in Winnipeg. The representatives, delegates and committee members become far more inclusive and representative of the local Indigenous community. Verna Kirkness was co-chairperson of the Meeting of Women and Indigenous and it featured names made up the majority of those present and part of the organizing committee (IMFC Fonds Box 2, Folder 19). The motions at the 15th conference in 1967 also begin to make more mention of women and youth participation at said conferences. Following the passing of a number of resolutions pertaining to the education of prospective teachers, textbook quality, and transportation to school, the chair of the education committee, Mr. Cuthand, made the following comments via the minutes:

In closing, noted that the young people of Indian ancestry who attended some of the sessions of this conference are our future leaders. In the past,

old people had no use for the ideas of the young and would not let them speak their mind... This attitude toward the young people must change; teaching methods must change, too, to allow youth to do their own research and thinking.

1967 also saw the Friendship Centre move from 376 Donald Street, “the lightning rod for all changes that took place, including the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, national and provincial associations and other Friendship Centre” (MacKinnon & Mallett, 2023, p. 60). By the following year, 1968, the IMFC had fully been taken over by an Indigenous board, releasing itself from the overreach of settlers who had established the conferences and the initial IMFC a decade prior.

With full control over the Friendship Centre and the conference themselves, the IMFC, Manitoba Métis Federation and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood joined forces to programme future conferences. Although the three organizations would compete for funding from provincial and federal governments. At the 1968 conference, with renewed energy, greater emphasis was placed on youth and education. In a resolution submitted by the Youth Delegation, there is a significant push to ensure that young people are at the forefront of organizing and focus of the conferences and of the Friendship Centre itself:

Whereas we, the young Indian people attending the 13th annual Indian and Métis Conference, finding cause to believe that Indian youth expression and participation has been neglected and further also believing that the session without you at this Conference was too inadequate and too structured,

Be it hereby resolved that the Indian youth be a part of future Manitoba

Indian and Métis Conferences,

That moneys be raised to provide transportation for youth delegates to this

conference from Indian communities,

That Indian youth be a part of the initial planning committee,

That Indian youth be able to outline their own agenda,

That meeting facilities be made accessible to Indian youth at future

conferences, and

In order that Indian youth in this province know these resolutions

presented here,

Be it further resolved that these resolutions be made available to Indian

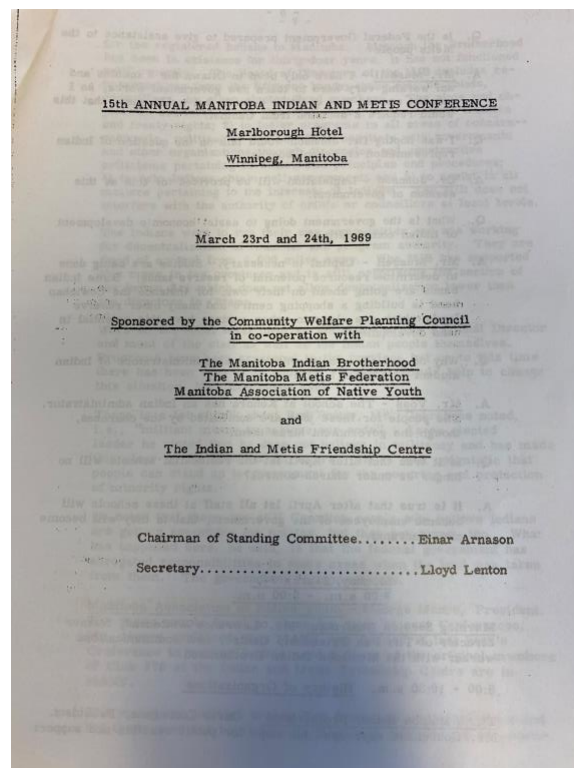
youth through the best communication media.

The upsurge of Indigenous voices speaks to the growing activism fueled by global, national, and international events - -namely in Canada to growing resistance to the Trudeau government's desire to rid itself of the Indian Act and its responsibility for the past four centuries of genocidal policies. This demand from youth at the conference also is clear evidence that Indigenous youth did indeed speak – or were articulating their desire to be part of a larger conversation about their future. It also speaks to the impact that the Friendship Centre had on displaced Indigenous populations coming into the city from other parts of the province and who were also displaced from within the city. Families were accessing resources, whether housing, social services, education, or simply connection over tea and bannock, that was creating a generation of politically active youth. This political activism manifested itself in the final resolution in 1968 pertaining to to education:

Be it resolved that a greater effort be made to remove all impediments for Indian Youth in the securing of education, training and employment to the end that they may take their place in society on a basis of equality. And further that every effort be made to have the history and the Indian's way of life presented in proper perspective and in a more favourable light in our history books, on TV, the in the movies and in the newspapers so that both Indian and non Indian children will grow up with a true knowledge and respect for the ancestors and history of the Indian and Métis people, and that we may even learn something about the Indian's former way of living which might be incorporated into our present day society.

Figure 7

Manitoba Indian and Métis 15th Annual Conference, 1969



The language in these resolutions marks an historically significant moment in urban Winnipeg Indigenous activism, resistance, and resurgence. There is a clear demarcation between the management of the conferences and the Friendship Centre itself from white settlers to Indigenous stewards. Second, the Red Power movements had organized youth meetings in 1966 at the University of Manitoba. A new youth consciousness was growing. This wide awakesness was palpable at the 1969 conference, co-sponsored by the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Manitoba Association of Native Youth and the IMFC. The 15th annual conference was held in March at the Marlborough Hotel.

George Munro, then president of the Manitoba Association of Native Youth (MANY) outlined the above-mentioned awakening:

The young people found no place for them at past Conferences, Mr Munro explained; thus MANY was formed at last year's Conference in answer to this need. The Young are inclined toward Red Power as an Indian Movement but there need not be violent implications, rather it is an awareness and recognition of the need for positive action to solve problems. MANY is not revolutionary or violent. Violence occurs, said Mr. Munro, when people have become sadly disillusioned and must advocate violent measures in order to achieve stability. It will be society which will determine the course that any of the native organizations will follow. (IMFC, Box 2, Folder 19, p. 8)

Munro then read out a series of statements uttered by a Grade 8 class in Manitoba on the subject of "Indians". These statements included comments such as, "Scalping should be made illegal," and "Why don't they work at jobs, like everybody else?" Munro's comments are

evidence of a focused intention coming from the IMFC to radically confront racism and the oppression that urban Indigenous people had and have faced. The turn to Red Power, coincided with the upcoming Red Power resistance protests in Kenora in the summer of 1969, reactions to the White Paper, and the further organization of the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood.

Further into the 1969 Indian and Métis conference, Munro once again spoke on behalf of the Manitoba Association of Native Youth. He laid out a pragmatic plan for the intense and steadfast organization to which he spoke earlier: “MANY plans to hold regional and provincial training conferences for the organization of social and recreational activities. They also intend to establish interest groups, coordinate resource centres, keep the public informed of action and maintain ties with MIB and MMF” (p. 22). Another member of MANY, Gerove Lavalee, representing Club 376, the Friendship Centre itself, suggested that the purpose of the space “was to instill in society’s mind that we know our problems and how to alleviate them, also to retain the Indian culture through such means as lectures. We are presently organizing the whole club” (p. 23). This conference and the voices from MANY represent a radical shift away from a settler-controlled narrative pertaining to the “urban Indian problem” to one of resistance and resurgence. And while the Manitoba Teacher was providing space for Bruce Sealey in the North and settler perspectives in Teulon, there is no recognition of the significant organization in Winnipeg, despite settler newspaper recognition.

For example, the April 9, 1968 edition of the *Winnipeg Free Press* paid special attention to the 14th conference. David Courchene, Chief of Sagkeeng First Nation (known then as Fort Alexander Reserve) was quoted as stating at the conference: “We understand from history that people, in order to accomplish something, have to organize. For the first time we are organizing

in Manitoba” (*Winnipeg Free Press*, IMFC Fonds, Box 2, Folder 19, 1968). On the same day, competing news outlet the *Winnipeg Tribune* reported on the 14th annual conference. Clearly these conferences and the Friendship Centres were significant events in Winnipeg, occasions where educators, systems, and the Manitoba Teachers’ Society might take notice of the resistance and resurgence. Again, whether intentional or not, the hegemonic state refused to include Indigenous people in the creation of their own history and culture.

The IMFC remained strong throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, developing countless programmes, including Kineo Housing, and moving to larger locations. Sadly, its role in the community began to ebb and the IMFC shuttered its doors in 2017. In 2023, there is a new board and plans to reopen. Despite these difficulties, the conferences themselves represented a significant transfer from settler influence to Indigenous control at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, paralleling a moment in Manitoba and Canada that saw massive organization to take back control of education and other social services, one of which was recorded in *The Manitoba Teacher*.

Chapter 7: Verna Kirkness and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood – 1969 - 1974

Dr. Verna Kirkness, born in Kenora, Ontario in 1935 and raised in Fisher River, Manitoba, has had a significant impact on educational policy, curriculum, and design in Manitoba and Canada. As a public school teacher, school principal, school division consultant, director of education for the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and the National Indian Brotherhood, she developed a pathway forward during the half decade between 1969 and 1974 towards decolonization, Indigenization, and Indigenous school control. The pathway towards Indian control of Indian education, according to Kirkness, is based on the following principles which have been advocated by her through her career: “local control; parental engagement; Indigenous knowledge, culture, and language; Indigenous teachers; and better-prepared non-Indigenous teachers....” (Pidgeon et al., 2013, p. 5). It is these tenets that create a pathway to creating just education systems in Manitoba and Canada.

As a Cree speaker living in community, Kirkness developed a keen understanding of these principles and why Indigenous control was imperative. Her own experience as a young learner in Fisher River, in a white community for high school, and then her initial experience teaching at the Birtle Residential School, taught her why parents and community are critical to Indigenous education: “I knew instinctively that parents should be involved in the school. I thought the parents should know what their children were doing so that they would be more interested in sending their children to school” (p. 7).

Following her time at the Birtle Indian Residential School from 1959-1961 as a classroom teacher, Kirkness returned to northern Manitoba where she began teaching at the Rossville Indian Residential School, just outside the Cree community of Norway House. It was

here that Kirkness began to fully develop the theory to have parental involvement and language at the roots of effective education within Indigenous communities:

I held parent-teacher meetings with the parents of the day-school students. It was even more important here that the meetings be conducted in the Cree language, as it was very much the language of day-to-day communication. In fact, children often entered school knowing only Cree. (Kirkness, 2013, pp. 35–56)

Following a few years in Norway House, Kirkness moved to Winnipeg and worked for Indian Affairs as a counselor for learners from northern communities who had to come to the city to finish their education. In 1964, Kirkness was ensuring the Indigenous youth who were making the unthinkable move to leave family, culture, and the land at home had the housing and support they needed to complete their education. A daunting task to say the least, Kirkness admitted that there were extreme challenges: “I felt a sense of failure for every student we lost. As I look back at all the positions I have held, I would have to say that this was the most difficult” (p. 44). The lack of connection to community, land, language and family was a significant obstacle, and one which exists today, to ensuring that public schools in Manitoba are places where Indigenous learners feel they belong. Kirkness’ early experience both in Indigenous communities and then in a large urban centre provided the basis for her to begin to theorize how schools and systems might be more responsive – specifically when controlled by Indigenous peoples.

In 1967, Kirkness answered a job advertisement placed in the *Winnipeg Free Press* for the position of Supervisor of Schools in the Frontier School Division. In this capacity, Kirkness worked with over 200 northern school teachers, ensuring that these teachers were evaluated, verifying attendance rates, and ensuring general quality control.

It was during this time that Kirkness began to make presentations to various faculties of education as a means to recruit potential Indigenous teachers and settler-teachers who would be knowledgeable about Indigenous communities. To the soon-to-be teachers, Kirkness (1969) threw down the challenge: “It is very likely, then, that wherever you teach, you could very well have Indian and Métis children in your class. (I would hope that isn’t (sic) a frightening thought: We aren’t really wild anymore!)” (p. 2). Tongue firmly in cheek, Kirkness’ sense of humour but unabashed courage came through in her talk. But she quickly became serious and laid out the problem for the new grads – a problem that would be later articulated in her work with the MIB and the National Indian Brotherhood. Kirkness outlined that, “With the Indian’s natural resources becoming depleted and facing an economic depression, a greater stress is being put on education today” (p. 2). Beginning in 1969, there was a critical connection made between the fallen promise made by settlers of the numbered treaties and the institution of the Indian Act. That both were used as means for genocidal removal from the land, resources, and what it means to be Indigenous. For Kirkness, the assimilatory process needed to end with education, however. This is an important moment, where she began to fully theorize why and how Indigenous education needed to be under Indigenous control. As she exclaimed to grads in smoke-filled lecture halls at Brandon University and the University of Manitoba:

Only when they leave their home communities does the full impact hit them. They are confronted with what the general public assumes Indians are like... It can be said for any race of people that if they have an identity

and a sense of pride in their racial origin, they are better equipped to face the world at large. (pp. 5–6)

It was also during her tenure with Frontier School Division that Kirkness helped to create the Program for the Education of Native Teachers in 1969. PENT allowed Indigenous educational assistants (EAs) the opportunity in the summer to work towards a teaching certificate, contributing to Indigenous teachers remaining in their home communities. Kirkness saw a genuine need for Indigenous learners to be taught by Indigenous teachers. In her memoir, Kirkness (2013) argues that,

I firmly believed, and still do, that having Native teachers from the local community in the classroom provides a more stable teaching force because the non-native teachers who came to the northern isolated communities tended to start for only a year or two. Seeing their mothers, aunts, or sisters working in the classrooms would show that they could do the same. (p. 57)

And this sentiment penetrated her address to the teacher candidates at Brandon University and the University of Manitoba. She impressed upon them in 1969 to fully understand the experience of the Indigenous learner: “It is true, however, that to teach Indian children well, a teacher should have some background as to Indian culture” (Kirkness, 1969, p. 4).

Kirkness’ career with Frontier School Division was heavily impacted by D. B. Sealey, a Métis colleague who was charged with special education at the end of the 1960s. Sealey had written extensively in 1969 in *The Manitoba Teacher* about the plight of education in northern communities (Henderson, 2022). Kirkness and Sealey would become good friends and would engage in several critical projects that would impact Indigenous education in Manitoba.

(Kirkness, 2013, p. 59). The first of these projects was a supplement to the Social Studies curriculum in order to make it more relevant for Indigenous learners in northern communities. While they both worked for Frontier School Division, Sealey and Kirkness began to develop this reformed curriculum that had the following objectives in mind:

- 1) To assist the child of Indian ancestry to learn in a more meaningful fashion the contribution to man's progress of Indian Individuals and groups from prehistoric to modern times.
- 2) To assist the child of Indian ancestry to more clearly see his role in relation to the dominant culture.
- 3) To assist the child of Indian ancestry to develop an appreciation of his history and culture. (Department of Education, 1971, p. 1)

The Social Studies Supplement Grades 1, 2, and 3 would be published by the Manitoba Department of Education in 1972. Coupled with parental engagement, community control, and Indigenous teacher training, Kirkness (1969) saw a need for a curriculum that was relevant. In her address to the new grads, she asked rhetorically, "How meaningful, for example, are cars, streets, split-level homes, ballet, etc. to children from Brochet or South Indian Lake?" (p. 5). Kirkness, as early as 1969, was beginning to formulate the conditions, attitudes, and environments required to decolonize the education system.

By 1970, Kirkness was moving on once again to another position. After Bruce Sealey decided to leave the Department of Education for the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, Kirkness would take his place without an interview. During her brief time with the Department, Kirkness developed the Native Language Instruction Pilot Project, which would later become the Manitoba Native Bilingual Program in 1976. Through her experience working

in Cree communities, Kirkness made the observation that Cree learners needed to have their prior learning experience and language honoured if they were to be successful in school.

Speaking to the genesis of the program, Kirkness remarked later in an Indian Affairs report that “The program is based on the assumption that the utilization of a child’s native language during his early school years will facilitate his cognitive and linguistic development,” and that “learning materials based on the child’s day to day experience and which reinforce his relationship with his home and community will further facilitate his overall development” (Kirkness, 1976, preface). Easing the learners into school using their language, according to Kirkness, was and is critical to later school success.

While with the Department of Education, Kirkness and Sealey teamed up again to produce in early 1971 a report entitled *Education for and about Children of Native Ancestry*. The purpose of the report was to propose “a general philosophy concerning the education of Indians and Métis” (p. 1). Of particular relevance is clear demarcation between integration and assimilation:

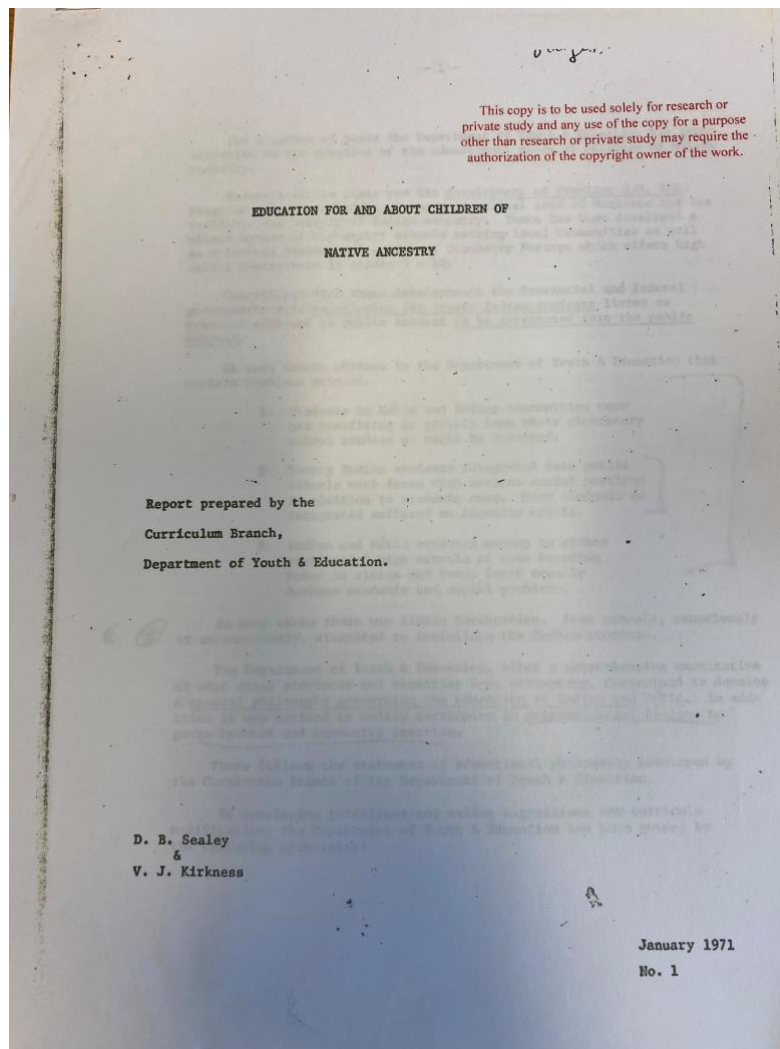
The Indian or Métis child must enter the culture of the majority group to the extent that he understands it well enough to cope with it in terms of earning his living. He must become fluent in the language, socially at ease with its costumes, and adjust to its employment demands. He need not, however, adopt all its basic values and attitudes. Nor need he lose his own language, music, art and history. (p. 3)

The 1971 report would be the precursor for a more comprehensive report solely written by Kirkness in 1972 in her role as Director of Education with the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood. The latter report under the same title would be a manual as to how to implement the above mentioned

philosophy. Through a comprehensive guide on teacher training, curriculum development, and pedagogical design, Kirkness had fully shaped her theory into practice as it related to creating an educational system that met the needs of Indigenous learners and communities in Manitoba. But despite the quick transition from the Department of Education to MIB in 1971, it is important to take a step back and closely examine this period – for it is instrumental in developing Kirkness' theory on Indigenous school control.

Figure 8

Education for and About Children of Native Ancestry, 1971



In 1969, the Trudeau Liberal government issued the White Paper, or officially named the *Government of Canada's Statement on Indian Policy 1969*. In the document, the government put forth a framework for dismantling the Indian Act – the paternalistic legislative monolith that subjugated Indigenous people in Canada from 1876 to the present day. In response to the White Paper, provincial assemblies of First Nations produced their own position papers. Following her brief stay with the Department of Education, Kirkness was asked in September of 1971 by the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, the precursor to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, to be their Director of Education and head up the education section in its position paper. This position paper would be called *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* and remains a living, breathing document in Manitoba today. Delivered to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs in the community of Rivers, Manitoba in October of 1971, *Wahbung* was a reassertion of the original treaty relationships established by the numbered treaties in Manitoba. In terms of education, under the direct leadership of authorship of Kirkness, *Wahbung* offered the following positions:

We, the Indian people of Manitoba believe in education;

- As a preparation for total living, and in this context it extends far beyond the boundaries of what is conventionally considered schooling;
- As a prime means of improving our economic and social conditions;
- As a means of providing that which should be the right of every citizen: namely, the choice of where to live and work. The essential provision of these required skills that will allow this privilege of choice;
- As a means by which we can be enabled to participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement;

- As comprehensive program which must be designed to meet the needs of the total community by including offerings to people of all ages.

(Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971)

Through *Wahbung*, Kirkness asserts the need for some trans-systemic integration into western culture as a means for social and economic development, but that this is done through Indigenous control. This would mean direct control over curriculum, school design, parent engagement, the development of adult education facilities, the establishment of preschool and early years bilingual programs and more. *Wahbung* was the pinnacle of Kirkness' theorizing as to how to create a coherent and impactful education system for and by Indigenous people. The idea was to create a system that "relates to the total community...that provides a focal point for community advancement and community activities...and that provides for constant involvement and commitment of the local population in both the design and operation of the educational system (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971). The reclamation to which Kirkness speaks counters the silencing of Indigenous voices. Kirkness is advocating for a source of educational design by Indigenous-led and that the assembly of education is an act of creating an historical archive – source and archives, as Trouillot (1995) argues.

The immediate result of *Wahbung* was that a relationship was created between Manitoba's Department of Education, Indian Affairs, and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood. These tri-party relationships oversaw how Indigenous learners who were under federal responsibility were transferred to the provincial system. It was during this time that Kirkness began to fully focus on how the education system was failing learners. Also coming out of *Wahbung* was a report written by Kirkness entitled *Education is Failing Indians* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1972). The report was in direct response to *Wahbung*, which called for "a

comprehensive study of the total ramifications of the educational process including all the constraints that inhibit its growth” (*Wahbung*, as quoted in Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 35). The central aim of the survey was to get a sense of how many Indigenous learners were in various systems in Manitoba and to determine why the high school dropout rate of learners between 1966 and 1972 was at 90% (Kirkness, 1972). The current graduation rate of Indigenous learners in Manitoba is approximately 50% – a dramatic improvement but also a reminder at the continued disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians (Manitoba Education, 2022).

Kirkness and her colleagues surveyed learners who had dropped out of high school and came to a number of conclusions, by including the voices of these learners in the report, as to why learners were leaving. The most common reasons, based on the survey, for dropping out were:

- a) Not interested
- b) Social problems, e.g. drinking, trouble with the law
- c) Unknown
- d) Fear of failing (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 20)

What is of most interest, is that the report suggests that “Unknown” is the most frequent reason why learners drop out of high school. According to Kirkness and her team, “it was found that most reasons are unknown or given as unknown,” and that “One of the workers expressed an observation of this by stating, ‘Many students do not fully comprehend their problem because they are barraged with many and various difficulties and therefore are unable to articulate cut and dried reasons” (p. 21). The conclusions echo the sentiment from the worker.

This 1972 report points to an omnipresent force which seeks to exclude Indigenous learners from meaningful education that cannot be qualified easily or drawn out in a simple survey. This force is composed of both the state and the ruling class, as Gramsci (2021) argues. The force is hegemonic and has been focused on the eradication of Indigenous peoples since contact, and specifically in Manitoba, through the Indian Act and Residential Schools. The Indian Act created a federally funded education system that was inadequately designed and resourced, deliberately. The exclusion also refers to the silencing of the source, as argued by Trouillot (1995). Learners in 1972 were complaining and bearing witness to their experience. Trouillot suggests that this experience is central to the de-silencing of the subjugated peoples. For Trouillot, chronology is not enough: “As heuristic devices, they (chronologies of silences) only crystallize aspects of historical production that best expose when and where power gets into the story (p. 28). Further, as Trouillot relates, “In history, power begins at the source” (p. 29). The experience of the learner in this case, as ignored by the hegemonic classes, is a deliberate attempt to silence Indigenous voices. Kirkness and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood were not minor actors in 1972, but the reporting of the experience of Indigenous learners was not only a function of societal exclusion, but also a product of the marginalization of inclusion within the large historical narrative. Kirkness, based on the survey results, but also based on her experience as a learner away from home, a teacher at residential schools, and a counselor in Winnipeg for youth coming from up north, sums up the barriers faced by Indigenous youth in 1972 as a such (a large quote has been included to capture this sentiment):

When they get to a certain age, they begin to realize whether they are Indian or non-Indian, and in many instances, they also begin to “integrate” and therefore, experience the prejudice and negative attitude that is

applied to them by other groups. This perhaps could be the cause that retards the progress in their education, because this has a tremendous psychological effect on their lives. They are criticized for their nationality and for the colour of their skin. They are hampered by their lack of capacity with the English language and are continually being accused of not being taxpayers. They learn all the good things about the white race in history books, but practically nothing about the Indian. They begin to feel that they have very little or nothing to be proud of and many try to pass as being other than Indian. (p. 43)

The recommendations offered in *Education is Failing the Indians* come back to the central pillars of Kirkness' theories – Those are Indigenous control of education, parental engagement, Indigenous educators well-trained to work in communities, and the inclusion of language. Perhaps these pillars have been further solidified through this study.

While still with the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, Kirkness also collaborated with other territorial and provincial Indigenous organizations to create an official national response to the White Paper through the National Indian Brotherhood (1972), the predecessor to the Assembly of First Nations. *Indian Control of Indian Education* was a collective position paper approved by the NIB as a means to enter into an agreement with the Federal Government for the management of schools. Completed and approved by the NIB in August of 1972 and presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in December, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, according to Kirkness (2013), “was the first concerted national effort issued by the Indians to challenge the government's direction” (p. 74). Rather than a manifesto which sought to have government cede all responsibility, *Indian Control* was a mechanism to ensure that community

and parents were rooted in the education system of Indigenous children. For Kirkness, “We saw ourselves free to create a new system: a system where we learn to read, write, do all the things we have to do, such as science, but based on our Indigenous knowledge as the foundation to our learning” (Pidgeon et al., 2013, p. 7)

While still working for the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, Kirkness teamed up again with her friend and colleague Bruce Sealey. Sealey, who by 1973 was a faculty member in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, was still an instrumental advocate for Indigenous education and specifically for education in northern communities. Together, they edited a collection of works entitled *Indians Without Tipis: A Resource Book by Indians and Métis*. The book is clearly a response to a dearth of literature written by Indigenous peoples for settlers. Kirkness and Sealey introduced the intent of the volume by asserting that,

when our historians and social scientist know how much of the history, manners and more of the past, it is apparent that the biggest task to the Indians and their friends is to discard the stereotypes of the past and to allow the light of truth to project the true picture of the Indian as he was and is” (Sealey & Kirkness, 1971, p. xi).

Chapters in the book are offered by Sealey and Kirkness, as well as Dave Courchnene, the president of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, George Munroe, and several other prominent Manitobans. Kirkness offered two key chapters. The second chapter written by Kirkness is entitled *Integrating into an Indian-Métis Community*. In it, she differentiated between the concepts of integration and assimilation and makes the case that settlers need to integrate into Indigenous culture:

Integration appears to be regarded as a one-way street with only the native people moving. Is it because of white ethnocentrism? Perhaps the native position would not be as bad as it is today if the Whites in native communities had accepted the Indian and Métis as their equals by showing respect for the natives' way of life. It is a different way of life, but not necessarily an inferior one. (p. 191)

The largest of her work which supports her cause was the publication of *The Shocking Truth about Indians in Text Books!* (1977). A project that was brought forth following a survey of Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba spurred by *Wahbung*, Kirkness began a full analysis of how Indigenous People were represented in textbooks in Canada. Of particular interest were textbooks associated with social studies education. Her previous work with Sealey paid special attention to social studies, as this domain offers a transdisciplinary lens where learners are asked to think like historians, anthropologists, economists, sociologists, linguists, and so on. In the *Shocking Truth*, Kirkness takes educators and authors to task, outlining the severe harm that an untruthful depiction of Indigenous people can have on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners:

If a student encounters in his studies material which is derogatory toward a race of people, he will undoubtedly adopt these same attitudes, probably for life. If the derogatory material concerns the student's own race or nation of people, the result will be bitterness and a negative self-image that may undermine the productive potential in a student's character.

(Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1977 p. i)

Conclusion

The short yet historically significant period between 1969 and 1974 in Kirkness' work not only carved critical space for Indigenous educators, pre-service educators, and learners at the time, but has also provided a map as to how contemporary education systems begin to decolonize, indigenize, and create trans-systemic learning communities. Through parental engagement, community involvement, and a foundation on language, land and culture, education systems, whether in urban or rural centres, can begin to create learning environments where Indigenous children can build a sense of identity. It is these elements that are the basis of the Calls to Action related to education held within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 report. In order for reconciliation to be possible, there needs to be an emphasis on family, language, land, and culture. Kirkness' courage, leadership, and wisdom were essential ingredients to creating highly significant documents which should inform Manitoban and Canadian education policy moving forward.

What is of significance is the fact that Kirkness and her colleagues in schools, with Manitoba Education, the MIB or the NIB, were most certainly speaking. They were articulating their displeasure with colonial forms of education and were resisting through policy development, position papers, and the development of Indigenous-led programs within public education. Kirkness' work is significant as it had and still has significant impacts on the lives of Indigenous children in public schools. But *The Manitoba Teacher* failed to listen, despite the substantive changes ignited by Kirkness – including the 1973 policy shift as articulated in the *Indian Control of Education*. Kirkness managed to change how Indigenous education would operate on reserve, without mention in *The Manitoba Teacher*. While historical thinking cautions us to see evidence within an historical context, it seems egregious that the impact of Kirkness is

ignored by The Manitoba Teachers' Society. When her work is mentioned, it is through the voice of her male counterpart, Bruce Sealey. The hegemonic bloc was not interested in hearing Kirkness speak due to her Indigeneity and because she was a woman.

Chapter 8: Urban Indigenous Educational Reclamation in Winnipeg: Children of the Earth and Indigenous Control of Indigenous Schools

The initial appearance of Indigenous Peoples in *The Manitoba Teacher* came primarily from rural and northern accounts within the province of Manitoba. As indicated in Chapter 5, the first account came from an article where teachers from MTS visited the Birtle Indian Residential School in 1925. The second account came from a 1968 article written by Bruce Sealey, Métis educator and scholar who worked for both Manitoba Education and the newly minted Frontier School Division. It was at this time that he met Verna Kirkness and they began their work together.

The historical erasure created by *The Manitoba Teacher* for educators who consumed the publication suggests that Indigenous people were not active in reclaiming education for Indigenous people. While Kirkness' influence, as indicated in Chapter 7, is historically significant, her evidence suggests a greater influence on northern, rural, and federally funded programs. Given this, the erasure from *The Manitoba Teacher* might also create a narrative whereby Indigenous peoples were not actively engaged in reclaiming education at any given point prior to the 1990s in Winnipeg, Manitoba's largest urban centre and home to the largest population of Indigenous peoples in the country.

In 1954, as indicated in Chapter 6, Indigenous peoples began immigrating to Winnipeg in increased numbers for a variety of reasons. Prior to World War II, the number of Indigenous peoples migrating to Winnipeg was relatively low. This was due in part to lack of infrastructure. Poor and few roads meant that people were simply unable to acquire the necessary bus or air transportation to make the herculean expedition. Similarly, the lack of communication infrastructure inhibited the connection-making necessary for people to even contemplate leaving

the reserve for Winnipeg. It was not until following World War II that new infrastructure projects began in Manitoba to connect rural and northern reserves to Winnipeg. The maps below demonstrate the significant difference between the accessibility to areas even marginal north of the city. Prior to the war, communities and reserves on the southern basin of Lake were difficult to access and the interlake was sparsely supported (Figures 6 & 7).

Figure 9

Manitoba Road Map, 1954 from Government of Manitoba,

http://content.gov.mb.ca/mit/maparchive/high/1954_map.pdf

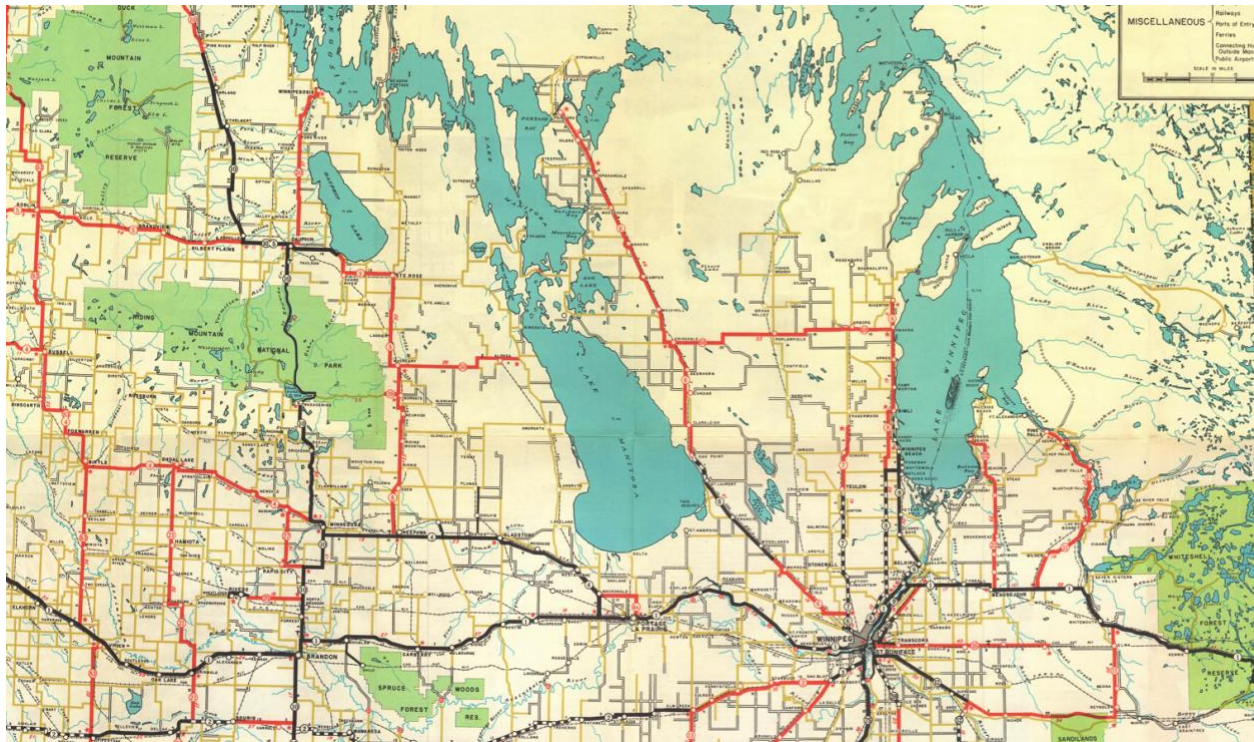
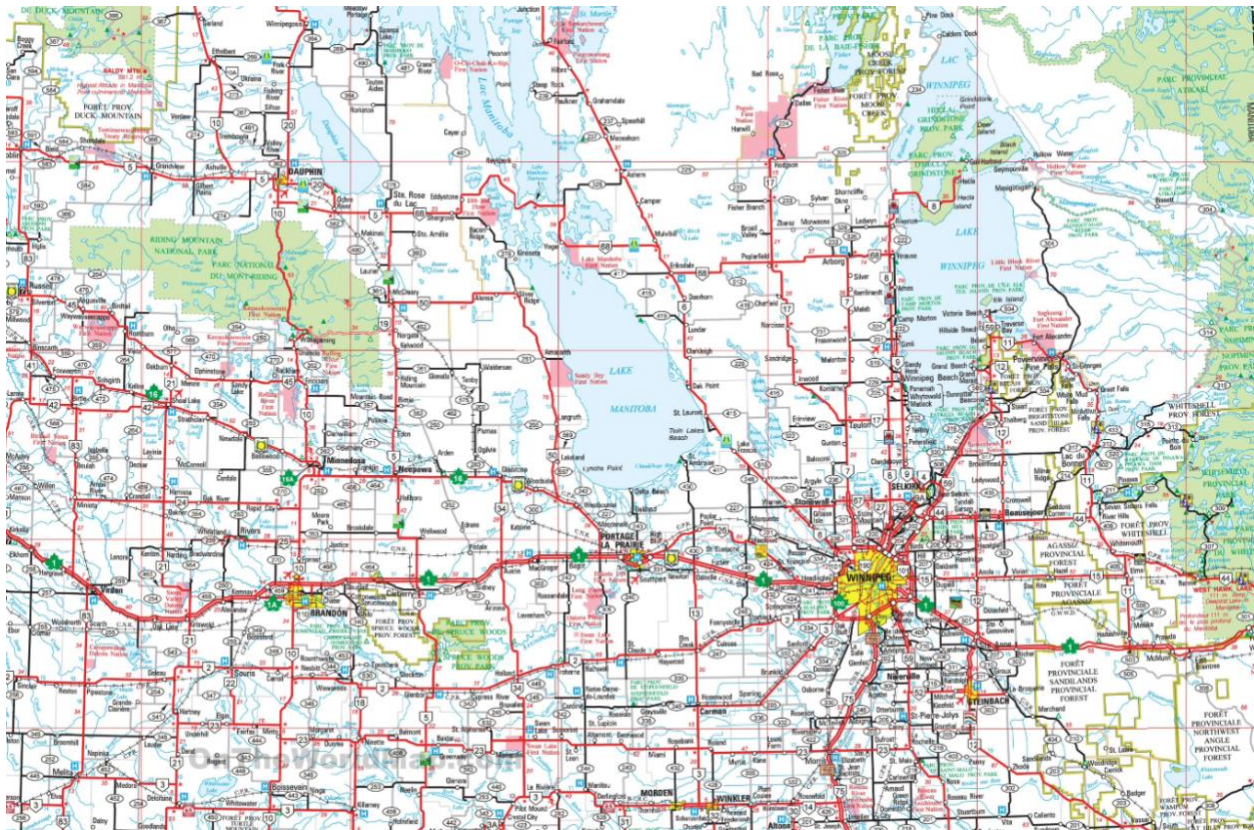


Figure 10

2023 Manitoba Road Map, <https://ontheworldmap.com/canada/province/manitoba/map-of-southern-manitoba.jpg>



The proliferation of the automobile during and after the war also made Winnipeg a more significant migratory target. WWII contributed to the development of more accessible vehicles with more powerful engines, smoother transmissions, and a price accessibility that began to demand more roads and highways. As laying rail was becoming cost prohibitive following the War, buses became a relatively efficacious means of transporting people throughout the province. These infrastructural phenomena led the way to an increased flow of Indigenous people into Winnipeg.

The post-WWII modernization also called for the creation of the Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada in 1950, which was tasked to look at the “problem” of urban Indigenous migration. The organization of Indigenous groups, be it First Nation, Métis, or Inuit, began to take root in the early part of the decade – including the Urban Indian Association, the IMFC, the MMF, and the MIB.

In 1972, the City of Winnipeg developed a call for proposals to respond to the massive migration of First Nations and Métis peoples into Winnipeg (Levin, 1972). According to the 1971 census, the number of Indigenous Peoples was approximately 35 000 people, mostly residing in the downtown core (Damas and Smith Limited, 1975). Due to limited opportunities on reserve and the increasing population pressure in many communities, many Indigenous people have seen Winnipeg as a centre with greater potential for economic success. But Damas and Smith (1975) suggests that many were not confronted with opportunity: “When he arrives in the city, however, the native person, both Indian and Métis, finds he has not left his problems behind him, but that he has merely exchanging one set of problems for another, and that if anything the new ones are even worse than the old” (p. 1). As Kirkness remarked, the destruction of the Indigenous ways of life and knowing have led to a collapse to community living and the subsequent migration to the city core – a city that did not have the capacity, culturally or politically, to respond to the needs of people looking for a new life. Citing the Manitoba Indian Brotherhoods’ housing survey from 1971, Damas and Smith (1975) provide evidence of the plight of many people who arrived in Winnipeg in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s:

It soon becomes apparent to the Indian new-comer that his problems have not been left behind him but in fact have relocated with him, although now they are more subtly manifested. Upon arrival in the city — usually with

the most meager of personal possessions and minimal financial resources, the Indian's primary concern is in locating accommodation. If he is alone, his chances are markedly improved. If, however, as in a considerable number of instances, he is encumbered with a wife and several children, his potentialities are infinitely reduced. (p. 3)

As reserves were becoming overpopulated, families were heading to Winnipeg for a better life. But without community connections within the city, the family's prospects were less than desirable – leaving the family to fend for itself in a foreign world. Very few organizations and services had been developed to support Indigenous people coming into Winnipeg at that time, save for the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre and the Manitoba Métis Federation, there were no band-specific or nation-specific organizations or services designed to address the immediate needs of folks arriving in the cold Winnipeg downtown in the 1970s.

Based on this need, Damas and Smith (1975) prepared the Neeginan feasibility report for the newly minted Neeginan corporation as a response to the reality on the street. Neeginan, a Cree word for “our place”, was fully realized in the 1990s. Originally called the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg, the name changed to Neeginan in 2015 based on the original concept outlined in 1972. A group of Indigenous organizations were able to acquire enough funding to buy the old CPR station in Winnipeg's downtown in 1992. The intent was to house a variety of social services for urban Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg. According to the first CEO, Bill Shead, the initial few years were precarious but critical to the Indigenous resurgence movement taking place at the beginning of the decade:

We knew that if Indigenous people were moving to the city, well, you're going to need services, like a bank to cash a cheque, get a loan, and people needed to know

how to do that. The same thing applies to when you're looking at people who are getting ready to get a job. We built it (the service hub) up unit by unit, and the number of units that it took, those are all the agencies. We came together and co-operated, and we managed it under one roof. (Paul, 2017)

The significance of Neeginan coincides with the development of a number of organizations, including the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. At the beginning of the 1990s the Urban Indian Association (recall its influence in the development of the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre) and the Winnipeg Council of Treaty and Status Indians. The amalgamation of the two organizations centralized not only certain services at the new CPR station location, but also coalesced critical advocacy and organizing support. The current mission of the ACW reads as such:

The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg (ACW) is an advocacy and leadership entity, operating as a not for profit in the City of Winnipeg since the early 80's. Located in Neeginan Centre, the ACW has been instrumental in creating a cohesive and effective network of Indigenous support services that provide a broad array of services for urban Indigenous peoples. Multilateral partnership development and working across many public sectors; provides opportunity for ACW to advocate on behalf of Indigenous citizens and organizations in Winnipeg, Manitoba. (Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, 2024)

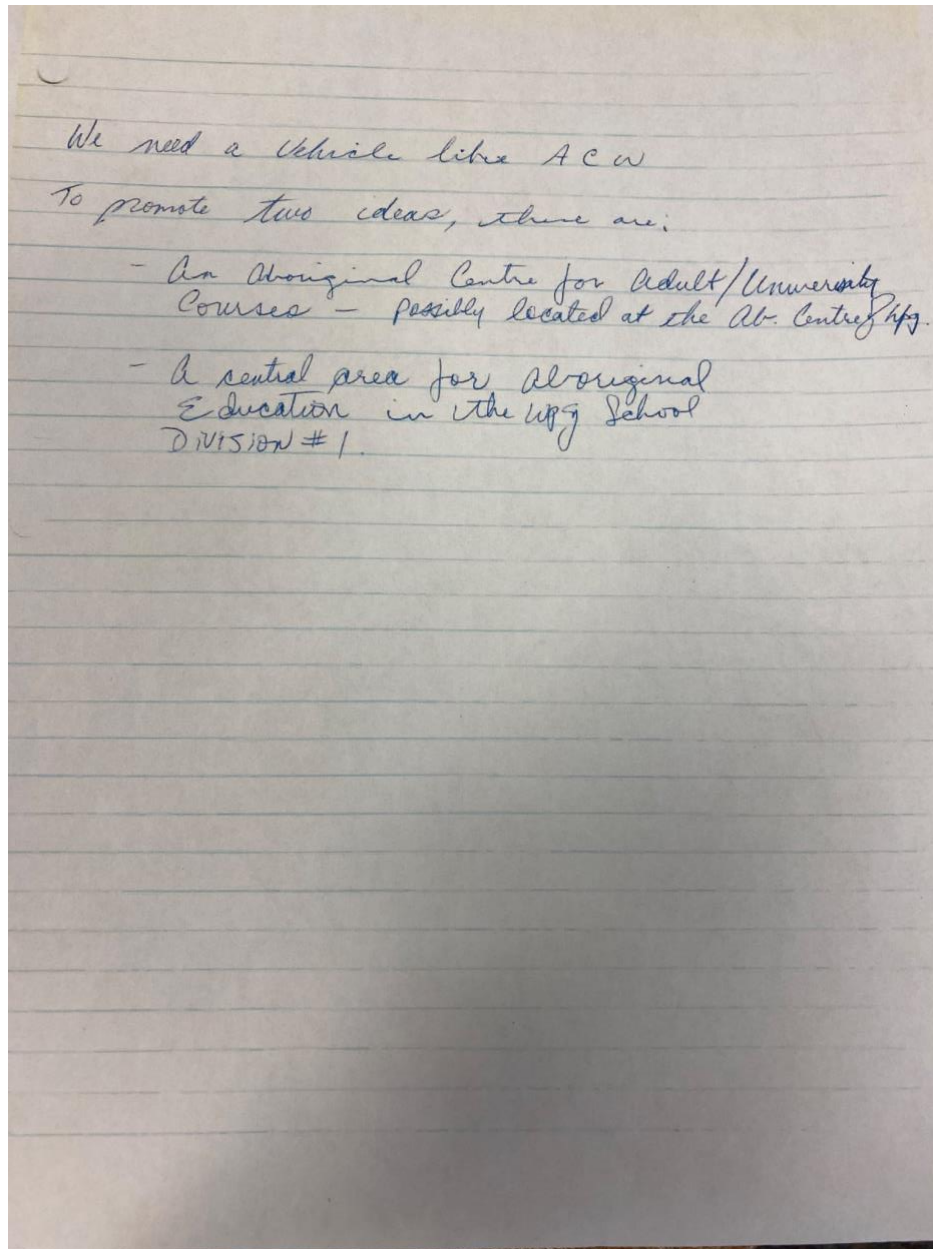
Out of Neeginan Centre and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg came a movement to create a survival school in the North End of Winnipeg. The creation of Children of the Earth School on Salter Street and Selkirk Avenue Winnipeg's core – a geographic area located in the central part of Winnipeg – in the 1980s and early 1990s is an historical symbol pointing to the

energy, tenacity, and cultural reclamation that was occurring within Indigenous communities in Winnipeg. Children of the Earth School would become the only school of its kind in Canada; a school for Indigenous learners, staffed by Indigenous teachers and principals, and focused on Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Despite this significance, there is no mention of the development of the school or the events leading up to it in *The Manitoba Teacher*. As discussed in Chapter 5, during this time, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was underway and trying to account for the discovery of the murder of Helen Betty Osborne and the shooting of J.J. Harper. It is difficult to comprehend, given the articles on racism which do appear in the publication, that the development of the COTE project would not impact the content and editorial decisions. Despite this, through the archives of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, we can begin to develop a deeper content and understanding of the level of resistance and reclamation occurring.

In one box of the ACW fonds from 1987, there is an undated and unnamed piece of looseleaf paper that simply describes the need for basic pillars required to propel a movement: “We need a vehicle like ACW. To promote two ideas, these are: an Aboriginal Centre for Adult/University Courses – possibly located at the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg. A central area for Aboriginal Education in the Wpg School Division #1.” (Figure 11, ACW Fonds, Box 001, Folder 57) This simple note expresses a profound need for basic requirements like transportation for educators and learners, and a need for a specific space for professional development and K-12 learning for Indigenous Peoples. There is a deep recognition of what it means to resist colonial control over education and the means to break out of this system. Freedom of mobility, to associate, and most notably to have space where Indigenous learners could come together became a central theme in urban Indigenous resistance and educational reclamation in the 1990s.

Figure 11

Undated note from the Aboriginal Teachers Committee, Box 001, Folder 57



The conclusion of the 1980s witnessed the emergence of the Aboriginal Teacher's Committee, also known as the Aboriginal Circle of Educators – a collection of teachers in Winnipeg's core area who came together in 1988 to “develop and promote curriculum materials,

strategies, and programmes that incorporate awareness as well as providing appropriate resources essential to ensuring successful Aboriginal students enrolled in Core Area schools” (Aboriginal Teachers Committee, Box 001-57). The ATC developed a project entitled *Our Children – Our Tomorrow*, perhaps creating synergy with *Wahbung*, as a means to address the challenges faced by Indigenous learners in Winnipeg School Division. The collection of schools in the Core Area and the North End (St. John’s, R.B. Russell, Sisler, Tec Voc, Daniel McIntyre, and Gordon Bell) were underserving learners through off-campus programmes, low expectations, and a lack of language, culture, connection to land and community. This dearth of inclusionary practices was reflected in the central goals and objectives of the project:

- 1) Act as a support and resource network for Aboriginal teachers in Core Area schools;
 - 2) Share, develop, and promote (implement) culturally appropriate curriculum materials, strategies, methodologies and other resources based on Aboriginal heritage, culture, language and contemporary lifestyle for core Area teachers
 - 3) Boost current low levels of Aboriginal students' general low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence through self-identity and cultural awareness sessions, workshops, and camps based on culturally appropriate curriculum materials and resources.
 - 4) To identify plausible effective educational programs that will ensure greater numbers of Aboriginal graduates;
 - 5) Encouragement of parent groups in schools through P.T.A, elders, language classes, etc.
- (ATC, Box 001-57)

The ATC was centred on learner success through the inclusion of language, Elders, family, language, and culture. Similarly to Verna Kirkness’ work in the North, this collection of teachers recognized that in order for learners to engage in the idea of school, the right elements

had to be in place and the community needed to reclaim its education. This group of teachers planned to achieve their aims through the formal establishment of their group and a focused professional development plan for Indigenous teachers in the Winnipeg School Division heading into the 1989/90 school year. The organization of Indigenous educators in the Division at this time manifested in a letter sent to Bob Ramrattan, Chief Policy Advisor for the then-Minister of Education, Len Derkack. The letterhead of the hand-written document indicated that the ATC was ultimately run out of an apartment in the Tyndall Park area of Winnipeg and was developed and signed by the ATC chair, Debra Beach and Vice Chairperson, Brenda Longclaws. Other members of the ATC would include Mary Courchene and Violet Okemaw. In the letter dated 1989, the ATC outlined to the Minister of Education that one third of the learners in Winnipeg School Division were Indigenous while 25 out of 2500 teachers were Indigenous. They also surfaced the fact that of the \$104 million budget of the Division, \$30 million was devoted to Indigenous learners. Beyond the stark under representation of teachers and funding for programming, the ATC also wrote the Minister to reveal significant issues related to programming for Indigenous learners, including, “High Dropout/ Absenteeism, Streaming into alternative program as well as Tec Voc programs, Low self-esteem, self-worth, lack of relevant programming/curriculum.” (ATC Letter to Ramrattan, Box 001-57).

The ATC also revealed issues with Winnipeg School Division staff, outlining that non-Indigenous teachers had poor attitudes when it came to Indigenous learners and colleagues: “Very negative towards Native issues.” Similarly, they reported that non-Indigenous teachers were not educated on Indigenous issues and culture and that there was a lack of apprenticeship and support for new Indigenous teachers. Witnessed here is the perpetual struggle faced for Indigenous educators – a struggle founded on racism, disrespect, and a desire to silence the

voices of Indigenous peoples. The deliberate development of programs which sought to create low expectations is rooted in Trouillot's (1995) four silences. Indigenous voices were silenced at the source – that is, any real participation in the education system was rejected and a second rate, at best, education system was created in Winnipeg School Division. The second silence relates to “fact assembly” (Trouillot, 1995, p. 26). *The Manitoba Teacher* did not capture the resistance and attempts by the Aboriginal Teachers' Committee to push back against the Winnipeg School Division and advocate for their own schools. The members of the ATC were also members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the very union that was to represent the interest of all teachers and the very union that was called out by Bruce Sealey (1968). Coupled with issues related to human resources, the ATC also wrote to the Minister identifying that “school [sic] are not equipped to accommodate Native programming” and that “Native parental involvement in schools' ' was lacking. The inability to practice ceremony in the schools was not only an infrastructure and capital issue, but also limited the ability of parents and families to want to come into schools. As many parents and family members would have experienced the Indian Residential School system, the idea of entering a Eurocentric school was unlikely at best.

In the same letter, the ATC offered solutions to the problems they had identified related to urban Indigenous education to the Minister through Bob Ramrattan. The first and most predominant solution was the creation of a “Native school.” Coupled with this, the teachers also proposed to Manitoba Education to have more Indigenous staff, whether “teacher, principal, resource, aid, secretaries, janitors, councillors [sic]....” The ATC clearly wanted to address the dearth of adults who reflected the learners in Winnipeg School Division schools and saw a targeted personnel strategy as a means to develop a sense of belonging for learners while increasing self-esteem and a sense of identity. Coupled with this, the ATC proposed that greater

human resources needed to be offered by the Winnipeg School Division in the form of an expansion of the Native Advisor's position, a position that might be deemed a consultant today. In addition, the proposal asked to equip this Divisional advisor with "qualified professionals and larger staff complement." (ATC Letter to Ramrattan, Box 001-57) With calls for greater professional development for all staff on Indigenous issues, history, and "teaching strategies," the ATC demanded language programs in schools, scholarships to create post-secondary pathways, better relationships with the Child Welfare agencies and greater and more intentional student supports.

But the most glaring comment within their proposal to the Ministry reveals desperation and frustration. The final bullet point ended as such: "Total review of Winnipeg School Division in regard to Native Education." Signed by ATC chairperson Debra Beach and Vice Chairperson Brenda Longclaws, the teachers demanded that the Province of Manitoba, through Manitoba Education, take a deeper look at the practices and policies of Manitoba's largest school division as it related to the teaching and care of Indigenous learners. The resistance to colonial education continued in a letter that the ATC wrote to Pauline Clarke, then-Superintendent of the Winnipeg School Division on March 13th, 1989. The letter was a follow up to a meeting that Debra Beach had had with the superintendent on March 2nd. The letter referred to the fact that they had approached Winnipeg School Division "to sponsor our application to the Core Area Initiatives program, so that an opportunity to formalize our Aboriginal Teachers Committee would become a reality" (ACW Fonds, Box 1, Folder 57). But the request for sponsorship seems to have been skewed. In the letter, Debra Beach writes, "After much deliberation, we decided that the conditions attached to our pressing request would greatly compromise our vision for the educational development of Aboriginal students in Winnipeg School Division No. 1". At the

March 2nd meeting, Pauline Clarke clearly stipulated specific conditions if the Division were to sponsor an application to the Core Area Initiative. In a prime example of colonial overreach, the superintendent, rather than supporting the drive for educational reclamation, attempted in some manner to contain the ATC. The frustration from the teachers is hyper-apparent in their reasoning to Pauline Clarke:

The students are frequently held responsible for the failure of our schools to positively contribute to their educational needs. The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 should review its current cost of education programs that were established without Native input and have resulted in 3 out of 10 Native students graduating from the grade 12 level. This is a challenge that needs a unique culturally appropriate academic solution that builds on images important to our children's growth in all aspects.

And then the next paragraph proclaims:

Further, we have decided to seek support from major Native organisations that represent our people and their concerns as opposed to the consideration presently provided by your office. (Beach, 1989, ACW Fonds, Box 1, File 57)

On March 7, 1989, the ATC would come together at the Indian Family Centre to review the meeting with Pauline Clarke and the subsequent letter. The invited guest to this meeting was Carl Riddle, vice-president of the Manitoba Métis Federation who was asked to join in the conversation about creating a "Native school owned and controlled" by Indigenous peoples and the community. The MMF was being sought out as one organization that might sponsor the

ATC's bid to become a formalized organization and help to pursue the dream of creating schools for and by Indigenous people. The minutes of the following meeting on April 5th, 1989 indicate a further desire to connect with the MMF but also to reach out to the Urban Indian Association for sponsorship. The Urban Indian Association and the Winnipeg Council of Treaty and Status Indians, two organizations devoted to representing and serving the needs of urban Indigenous peoples, were predated in the 1960's by the Winnipeg Indian Council. In 1990, the two organizations would amalgamate to become the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. At the April meeting, the members present included for the first time Mary Courchene, who then was a teacher at R.B. Russell school in the North End but would later become Children of the Earth's founding principal. At this meeting, the ATC also committed to submitting another letter to superintendent Pauline Clarke. The purpose of the meeting with Clarke would be to "request for more 'release time' for teachers to attend workshops" (ACW Fonds, Box 1, Folder 57). There was also an update on an upcoming Indigenous education conference to be hosted by the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre entitled "The Indian and Métis Parents Education Conference" that was scheduled to be held on April 15th, 1989 at Holy Family Hall in Winnipeg where the ATC's proposal for a new school would be outlined.

Figure 12*Minutes from April 5, 1989 Aboriginal Teacher's Committee*

file
001-57

ABORIGINAL TEACHER'S COMMITTEE
33 - 81 Tyndall Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2X 2W2

M I N U T E S

DATE: April 5, 1989

LOCATION:

IN ATTENDANCE:

Debbie Beach	Mary C.
Brenda Longclaws	Violet Okemaw
Donna D.	

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at a.m/p.m.

PREVIOUS MINUTES: Debbie read the minutes of March 14th. meeting.
Correction of minutes were/were not needed.

Motion was made to accept minutes of March 14th. meeting by
_____. All in Favor - Minutes accepted.

SHARING: For members information, some up-coming events include:

- a) Native Language Festival
- b) Inner City Pow-wow
- c) Argyle Arts and Crafts Show

PROPOSAL UPDATE per U.I.A./M.M.F: Both the Urban Indian Association
and the Manitoba Metis Federation have been contacted
for sponsorship. Letters of support from various native
organizations are forthcoming. Some letters have already
been received.

Motion made to submit revised proposal of Aboriginal Teacher's
Committee to funding agency as soon as possible.

Motion moved by Mary.
Seconded by Donna.
CARRIED.

The ATC was not the only organization advocating for a school exclusively designed for Indigenous learners and families. The current description of the school on the Winnipeg School Division website reads:

In 1988, the Winnipeg School Division, in consultation and cooperation with various community groups such as the Thunder Eagle Society, Urban Aboriginal Educational Advisory Committee and parent groups, began what was then considered a bold undertaking. They established a high school in Winnipeg's North End that emphasized Indigenous culture, language and academics. A school that harkens back to the lessons of our ancestors, and made valid the concept of Aboriginality in the education system. It allowed First Nations youth the freedom to practice their culture in a place where it was once prohibited, in schools. In 1991, it opened as the "Aboriginal High School" and after consultation with its educational community the name "Children of the Earth" was submitted by a student, and adopted. (Winnipeg School Division, 2024)

The description of the historical context assumes a collaborative process, whereby the settler school system was fully engaged with Indigenous organizations to develop a survival school. But the evidence from the ATC demonstrates a different side of the story. Both the Winnipeg School Division and *The Manitoba Teacher* exclude the critical voice of resistance, reclamation, and resurgence that were central to the creation and implementation of not only Children of the Earth, but the K-8 neighbouring school, Niji Mahkwa.

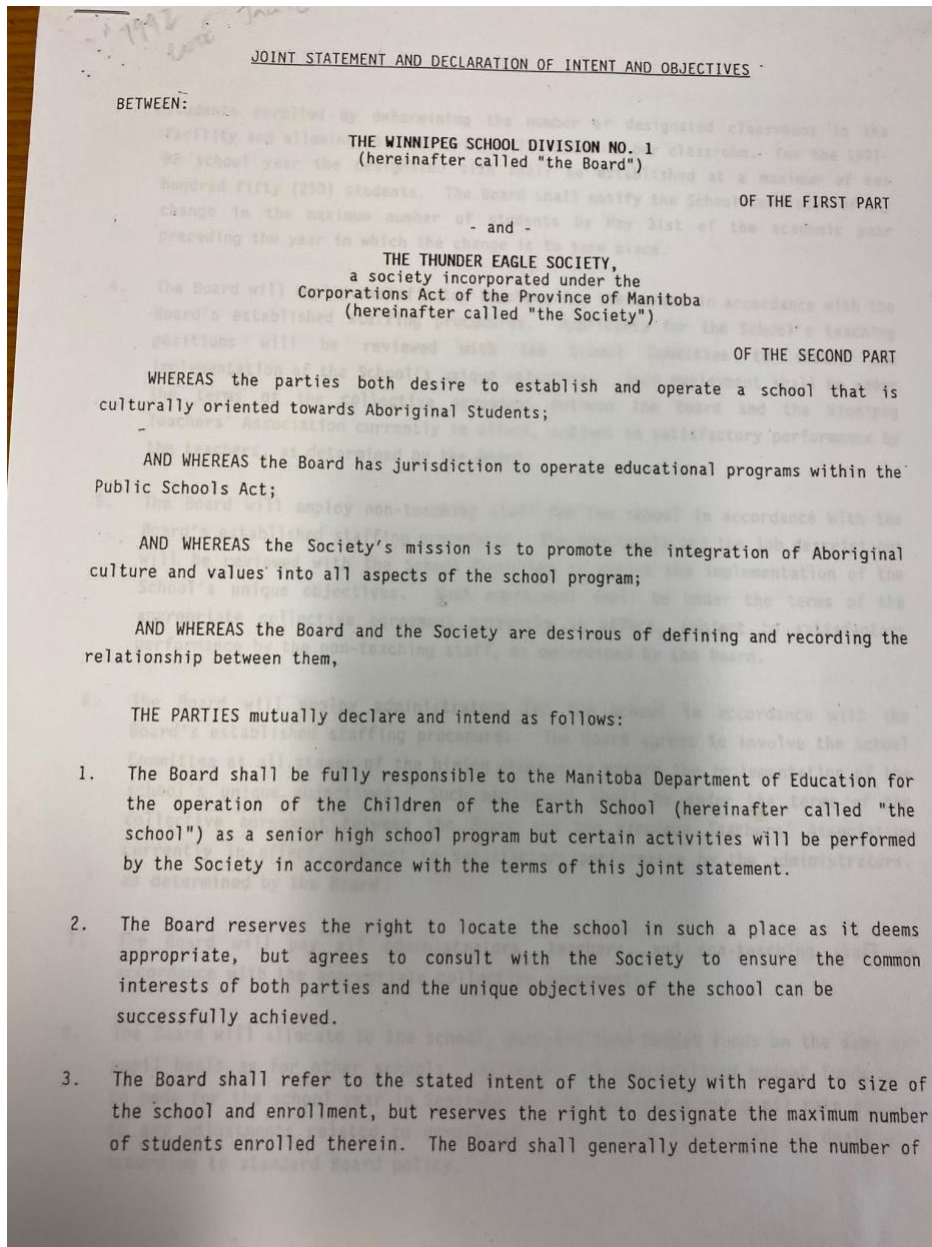
As MacKinnon and Mallett (2023) argue, "Children of the Earth and Niji Mahkwa schools did not result from a school division-led process of community consultation" (p.115). Furthermore, "the schools would not exist if not for the determination of Indigenous activities and the grassroots Thunder Eagle Society" (p. 115). The Thunder Eagle Society was an organization led by Vern Morrisette and David Blacksmith, who were part of the youth

movement stemming from the Friendship Centre and Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. MacKinnon and Mallett (2023), who interviewed Morrisette as part of the Indigenous Archive Project, shed light on the fact that it was the youth, those in high school at the time, who were demanding that there be high schools exclusively for Indigenous learners, managed by Indigenous teachers. Through these accounts, MacKinnon and Mallett (2023) argue that the Winnipeg School Division was “initially resistant, if not hostile, to the conception of an Aboriginal school” (p. 117). Even following the adoption of the idea of Children of the Earth in January 1991 by the Board of Trustees of the Winnipeg School Division, “The Division was dragging its heel” (Vern Morrisette as cited in MacKinnon and Mallett, 2023, p. 122). In fact, the Winnipeg School Division had initially made plans for Children of the Earth to be situated in an older building closer to the downtown core occupied then and now by Argyle Alternative School. The brand-new building at Salter and Flora, now the current location of COTE, was originally destined to house Argyle. The community and Thunder Eagle Society protested this move and demanded that the new Indigenous school received the new building. Following the selection of Mary Courchene as the new principal and the opening of the school in fall 1991, the Thunder Eagle Society still had to advocate for proper resources for the school. Courchene’s recollection of the school opening is damning of the Division:

...so I go into this school, brand new school...brand new building, there was not a thing inside the building, not one desk, nothing... and this was in the middle of July. So we only had from that time to the end of August to get ready for this, this grand opening. And he (the Superintendent) said, well, you’ll have your community to help you. (MacKinnon & Mallett, 2023, p. 125)

Figure 13

Joint agreement between Winnipeg School Division and Thunder Eagle Society



The demand for Indigenous survival schools, their development, and management are all clear indications of the significant and substantive resistance and activism that was present in

Winnipeg at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. Educators, students, and community members were fully engaged in the resistance to colonial control over education. Despite the desire for the school division to silence the voices of Indigenous peoples, chiefly through the Superintendent of Inner-city schools, there was a powerful force determined to counter and surmount the white-settler inertia. Vern Morrisette's words capture not only the significance of the schools in 1992, but also now:

The most important thing...maintain our identity. Remember the qualities of our ancestors. [Otherwise] we will lose our way...People don't know the full story...We got it, we got a school – Children of the Earth High School – and we were so proud and we were so happy. Unless you [tell the] history, it gets lost. (MacKinnon & Mallett, p. 129)

Gaskell and Levin (2012) also make the case of not only significance for the development of the schools, but also Winnipeg School Division's unease or hostility to the idea. Brian O'Leary, a WSD principal at the time and now superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division in Winnipeg, remarked that,

A big feature of the history of the inner city in the Winnipeg School Division was slowness in responding to a rapidly growing Aboriginal population. By 1990, Winnipeg had a very conscious approach to Aboriginal issues, partly, I must say, due to pressure from the community.” (p. 63)

According to Gaskell and Levin (2012), the Board of Trustees and the senior administrative leadership had significant objections, some pragmatic in nature, over handing complete control of a school to the community. But they also conclude that “The creation of these two schools were important symbolically, but the political struggle exhausted all parties and the issue died

down” (p. 66). Children of the Earth, with a current enrolment of only 162 learners (Winnipeg School Division) and Niji Mahkwa are still the only two survival schools in Winnipeg and struggle with student attendance. (Winnipeg School Division, 2024) Despite the challenges, however, Gaskell and Levin (2012) also conclude that:

Many of our respondents, looking back on these years, seemed disappointed that more progress had not been made. However, there were some important and lasting achievements, including new modes of teacher preparation, increased outreach to the community, a much stronger focus on Aboriginal education, growing sensitivity to the diversity of the population, and a stronger set of principles and teaching practices to guide inner-city schools.” (p.67)

In *The Manitoba Teacher*, there is no mention of the Aboriginal Teachers Committee, Children of the Earth, or the community demand for an Indigenous school. The story of the activism and resistance seems to be lost to the teachers' union. Despite the articles related to the development of anti-racism committees within both the Winnipeg School Division and the Manitoba Teachers Society, there is no mention of the resistance reclamation and resurgence exemplified by the community and the Aboriginal Teachers Committee, Thunder Eagle Society, or the Youth and community activists who fought the Winnipeg School Division for not only schools, but also the resources to adequately manage them. Editorial decisions are ideological decisions, and despite the prominence of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, *The Manitoba Teacher* took no interest in the powerful voices of resistance – as if these voices had been erased. It is perplexing and fascinating that the first schools created by and led by Indigenous people in Canada makes no ripple in the pages of *The Manitoba Teacher*. If one were to take the publication at face value, the stories of Mary Courchene and Vern Morrisette would be lost to the

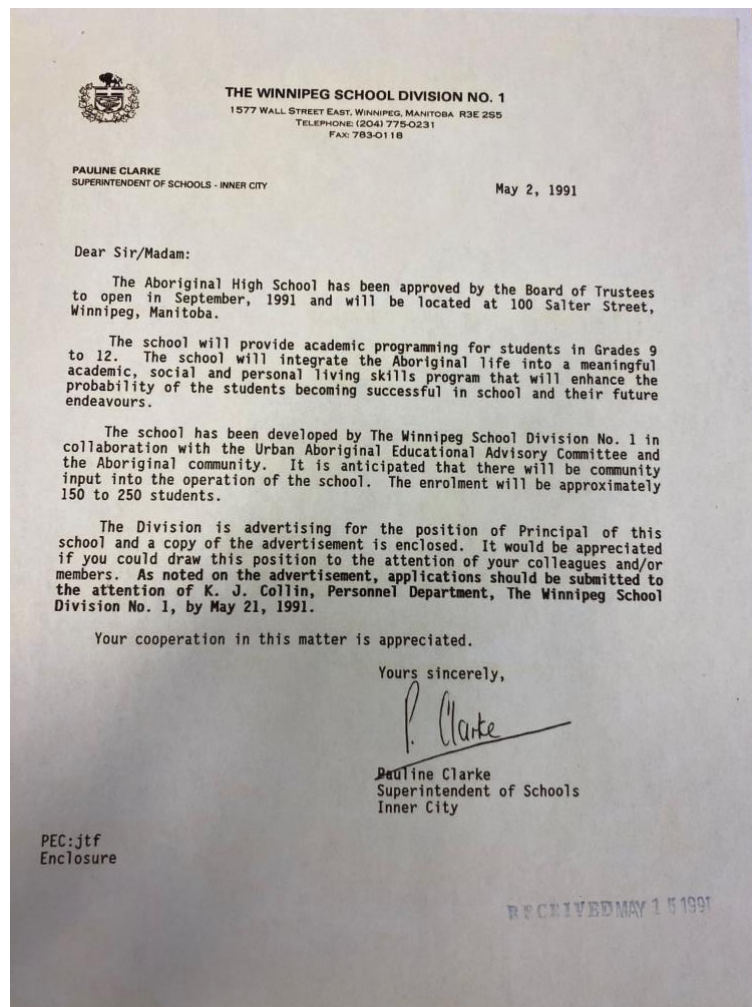
ears and minds of teachers throughout Manitoba. Scholar Ricardo Tranjan (2023) argues that “The best-known narrative presents a largely harmonious society led by enlightened politicians and noble public servants” (p. 63). In the case of Children of the Earth, two phenomena have occurred. The first is that the School Division, based on its official website, has created an historical narrative that would suggest the development of the schools was fully collaborative – settlers and Indigenous peoples united to create a social good. But as noted from the archives of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, this was not the case. Using the Aboriginal Teachers Committee, or the Aboriginal Circle of Educators, as one small example, a significant movement of resistance, reclamation, and resurgence existed within Winnipeg.

Children of the Earth and the people and energy that were at the heart of its development, were related to the position of the subaltern. While the resistance and reclamation were taking place, Indigenous educators and community members of Winnipeg’s core area neighbourhood were unable to contribute to the larger historical narrative as related to public education. Gramsci (2021) argues that there is often a unification between the ruling classes and the state – or in this case public institutions like education. For Gramsci, “The historical unity of the ruling classes is found in the state” (p. 24). The erasure of Indigenous people from educational history is not only demonstrated through the editors of *The Manitoba Teacher*, but also through the administration of the Winnipeg School Division, who are resistant to the development of Indigenous and community-led schools. Gramsci argues further that, “For the subaltern classes the unification does not occur; their history is intertwined with the history of ‘civil society’” (p. 24). Ruling classes and state institutions form a hegemonic barrier for full or even partial participation in the inclusion of Indigenous voices in the larger historical narrative, allowing and encouraging erasure and racist policies.

The second phenomenon is that there exists a political infrastructure to create more survival and community-led schools. But as I subsequently demonstrate, a central element to educational reclamation features land. Where land is central, there is a realization of full reclamation. Where land is ignored or not given prominence, the resistance and reclamation can often stall and fizzle.

Figure 14

Letter from Pauline Clarke announcing opening of Children of the Earth



Chapter 9: Conclusion

The education currently being provided by the public school system falls short in what we need to be providing for our children. We have to define the narrative. Learning their identity, spiritual values, and skills for survival should be the foundation of their education (David Courchene Jr., in Courchene et al., 2021)

In the June 2022 and June 2023 issues of *The Manitoba Teacher*, not one Indigenous learner or educator was featured in the magazine. This omission occurred during the National Indigenous Month and in the month prior to the papal visit, in the context of 2022. Reading the inside cover and the masthead, there are no contributors of Indigenous background. Similarly, the MTS leadership team does not include anyone who identifies as First Nation, Inuit or Métis. Indigenous people and their experiences are still forgotten, ignored, and marginalized.

Figure 15

Covers of *The Manitoba Teacher*, June 2022 & 2023



This research project began by surfacing a void within the chronicles of *The Manitoba Teacher*, the principal publication of Manitoba's teacher union (the Manitoba Teachers' Society). A primary observation took place when the MTS archives were scoured. Since 1919 and the first publication of *The Manitoba Teacher*, Indigenous learners, educators, and families have been virtually erased from history. Between 1925 and 1968, there is no mention of Indigenous education. But future articles in the late 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s hinted at Indigenous organization not fully captured in the settler publication. Given this finding, this dissertation asks

what does *The Manitoba Teacher* tell us about the historical narrative of Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba as related to public education between 1919 and 2009 AND how have Indigenous Peoples resisted colonial oppression and reclaimed their right to educate their own children?

This project has also sought to answer the following questions: 1) What are the historic and contemporary barriers to Indigenous reclamation, resistance and resurgence, 2) how have these barriers manifested themselves, and 3) what are the pathways moving forward to Indigenous reclamation? Through this inquiry, it is apparent that Manitoba has a disturbing history of prohibiting Indigenous peoples from managing their own education, while at the same time forcing colonial means of education upon them. Through the lens of subalternity and Indigeneity, historical thinking, and the silencing of history, it is clear that there has been a significant gap between the articulation of Indigenous Peoples and the failed ability of settlers to receive these voices. *The Manitoba Teacher* is evidence of how a settler publication can ignore the voices of Indigenous Peoples, despite a significant and rich record of resistance, resurgence, and reclamation.

The findings speak for themselves. The first is that Indigenous resistance and reclamation has always been present as it relates to education (and all other domains and ways of being impacted by colonialism). The second is that, despite the campaign to erase the voices of Indigenous people from the annals of settler teacher publications, this resistance impacted the consciousness of settler editors and writers. Lastly, and perhaps most significant, is that the Indigenous resistance and reclamation that occurred in Winnipeg and northern Manitoba was fully based on land, language, culture and community. Recall the discussion in the introduction as it relates to the Calls to Action (TRC, 2015). The “Legacy” and “Reconciliation” sections of the Calls to Action clearly outline the pathway to reconciliation – through the protection and

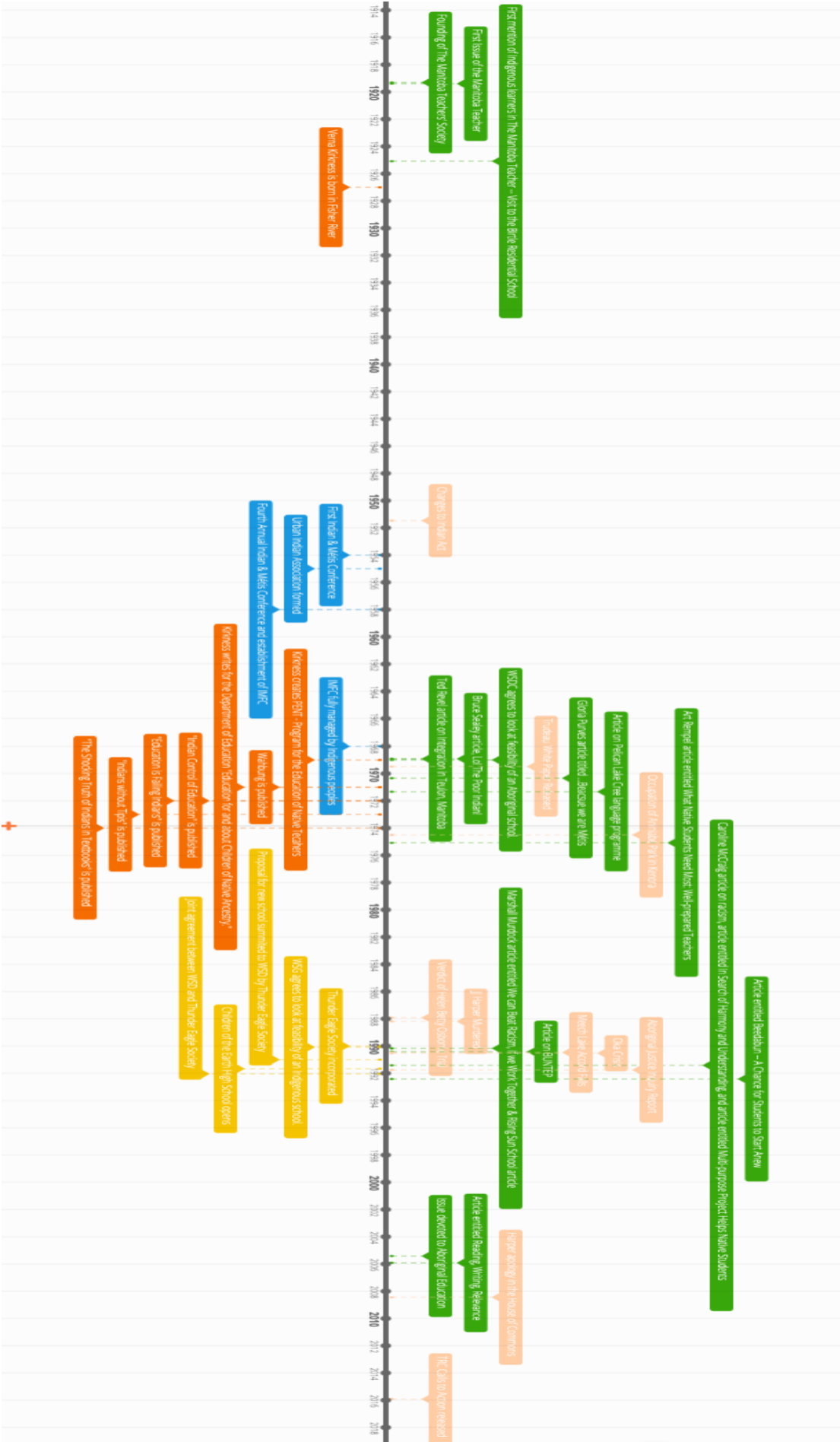
promotion of language, the involvement of parents and family, the development of experiences and curricula that is relevant to the learner, and where land is central (p. 2).

Findings

As per the methodological approach outlined in Chapter 4, a brief analysis of the archival records identifies some key findings. Figure 16 juxtaposes the timelines of the four archive sets and critical events in Canadian History which coincide with evidence of resistance and reclamation in *The Manitoba Teacher*.

Figure 16

Timeline of archival analysis (<https://time.graphics/line/811911>)



The green events represent issues of *The Manitoba Teacher* when Indigenous learners and/or educators are mentioned. The first event was in 1925, marking the visit of teachers to the Birtle Residential School. The next entry is the Bruce Sealey article from 1968, a gap of 42 years. Following 1968, there are a few articles between 1968 and 1974, indicating perhaps resurgence on the part of Indigenous communities and a greater consciousness of barriers to reclamation on the part of settler educators. The second emergence of articles in *The Manitoba Teacher* occurs in the 1990s, with several articles focussing on racism and the development of specific programming for Indigenous youth. There is no mention of Indigenous learners in the publication in the 1980s. The 1990s articles coincide with larger events of provincial and national significance, including the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Oka Crisis, and the Meech Lake Accord. Figures 17 and 18 outline the 43 year gap between 1925 and 1968.

Figure 17

First issue of The Manitoba Teacher in 1919 and first mention of Indigenous learners in 1925

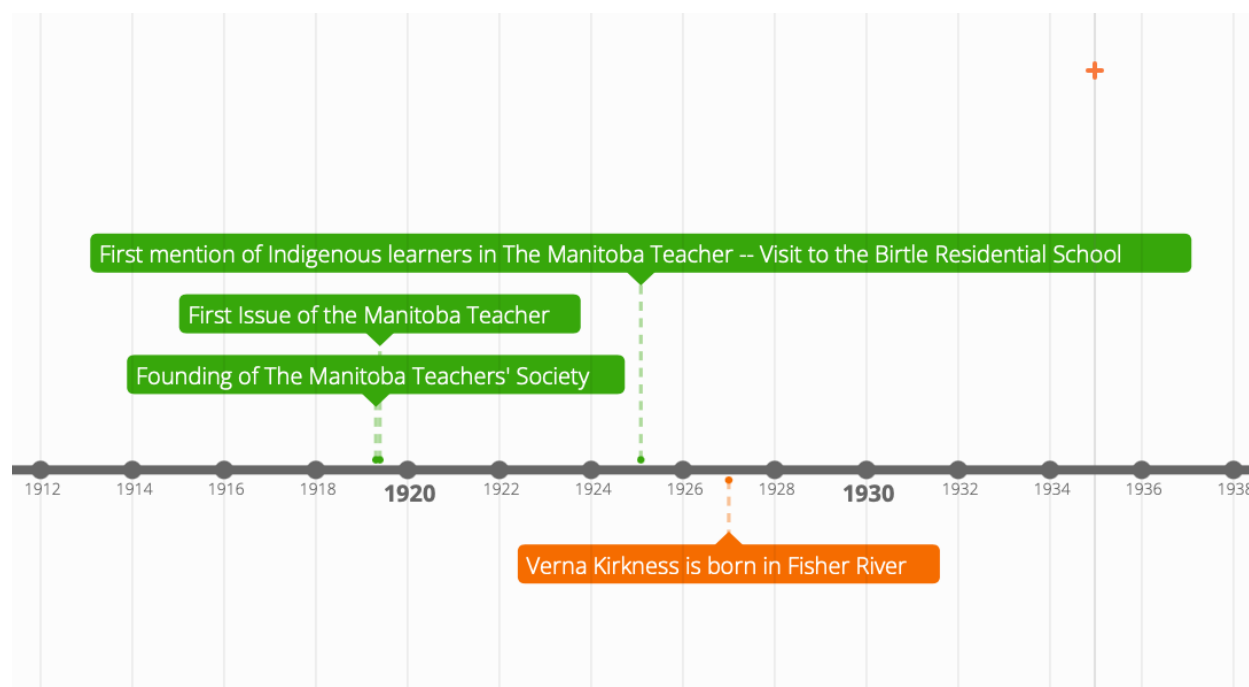
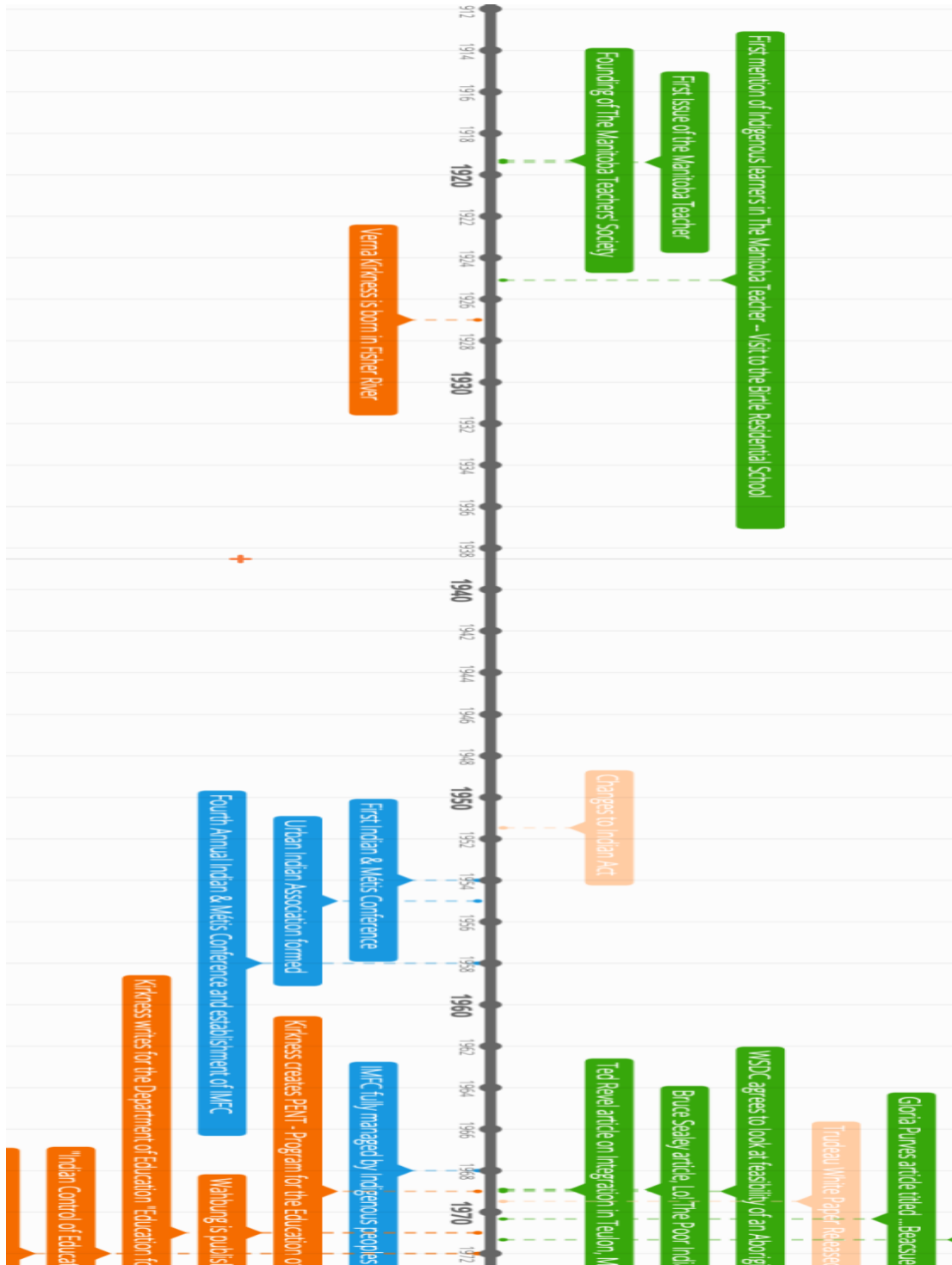


Figure 18

43 year gap between 1925 and 1968 issues of The Manitoba Teacher

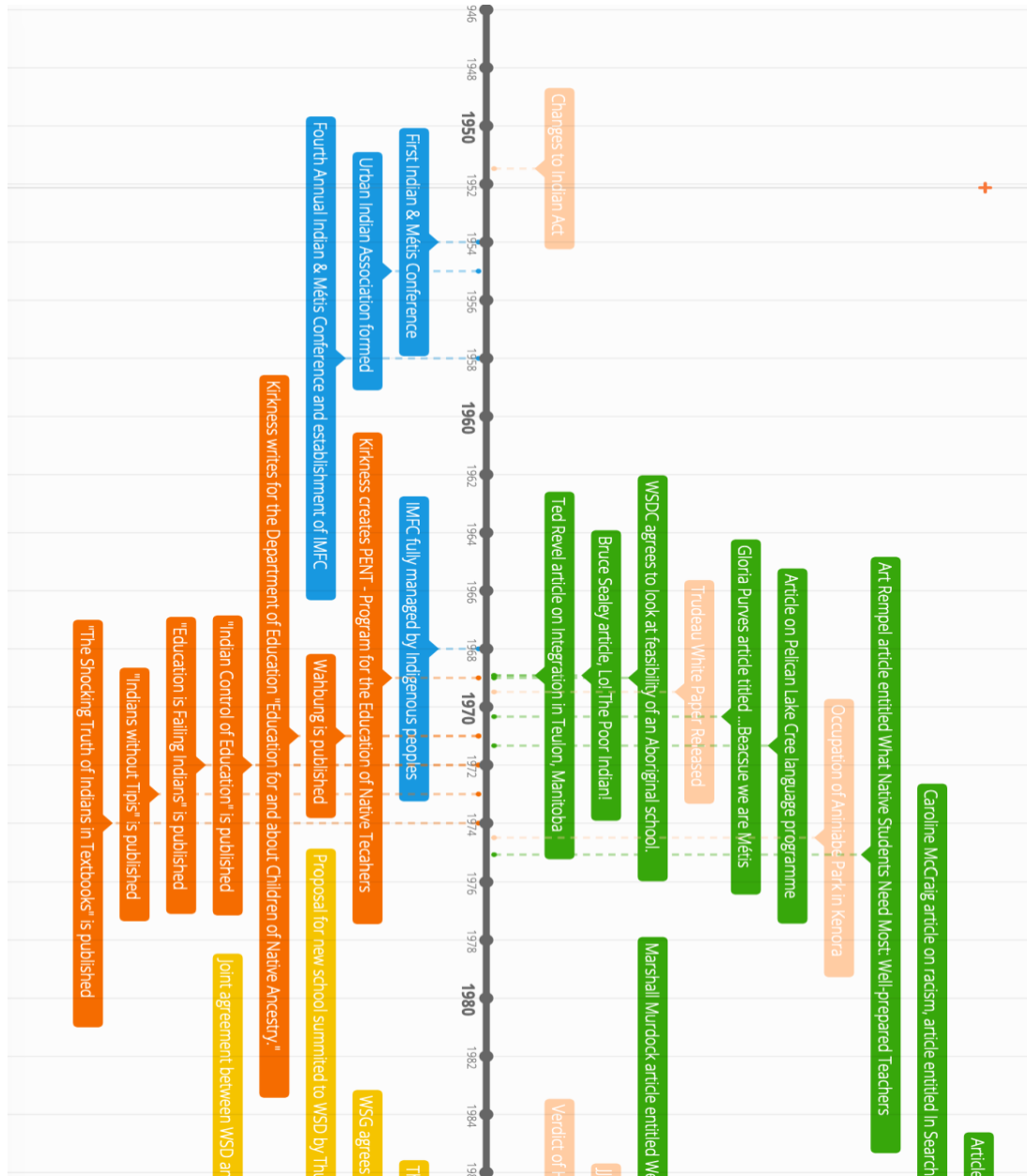


The blue entries on the bottom of the timeline are key moments surfaced from the archival evidence from the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre fonds. Beginning in the early 1950s, the Urban Indian Association and Social Planning Committee initiated the first Indian and Métis conferences, starting in 1954. A tension realized from settler control of the initial conference should be noted, as the archives from 1954 to 1968 are fully influenced by settlers. Also included on this segment of the timeline is a pink entry from 1951, indicating substantial shifts in the Indian Act. These changes significantly impacted mobility and ceremonial rights on Indigenous peoples, resulting in an influx of migration to urban centres, such as Winnipeg. What is remarkable from this portion of the timeline, is that despite the notoriety of the Indian and Métis conferences, *The Manitoba Teacher* takes no notice. This despite the significant conversations pertaining to education that took place.

Moving to Figure 19, two unique phenomena are apparent. The first is the emergence of several articles written by and about Indigenous peoples in *The Manitoba Teacher*. The 1968 edition features Bruce Sealy's article entitled *Lo! The Poor Indian* and the article creating assimilation at Teulon Collegiate by Ted Revel.

Figure 19

1960s and 1970s Historical Analysis



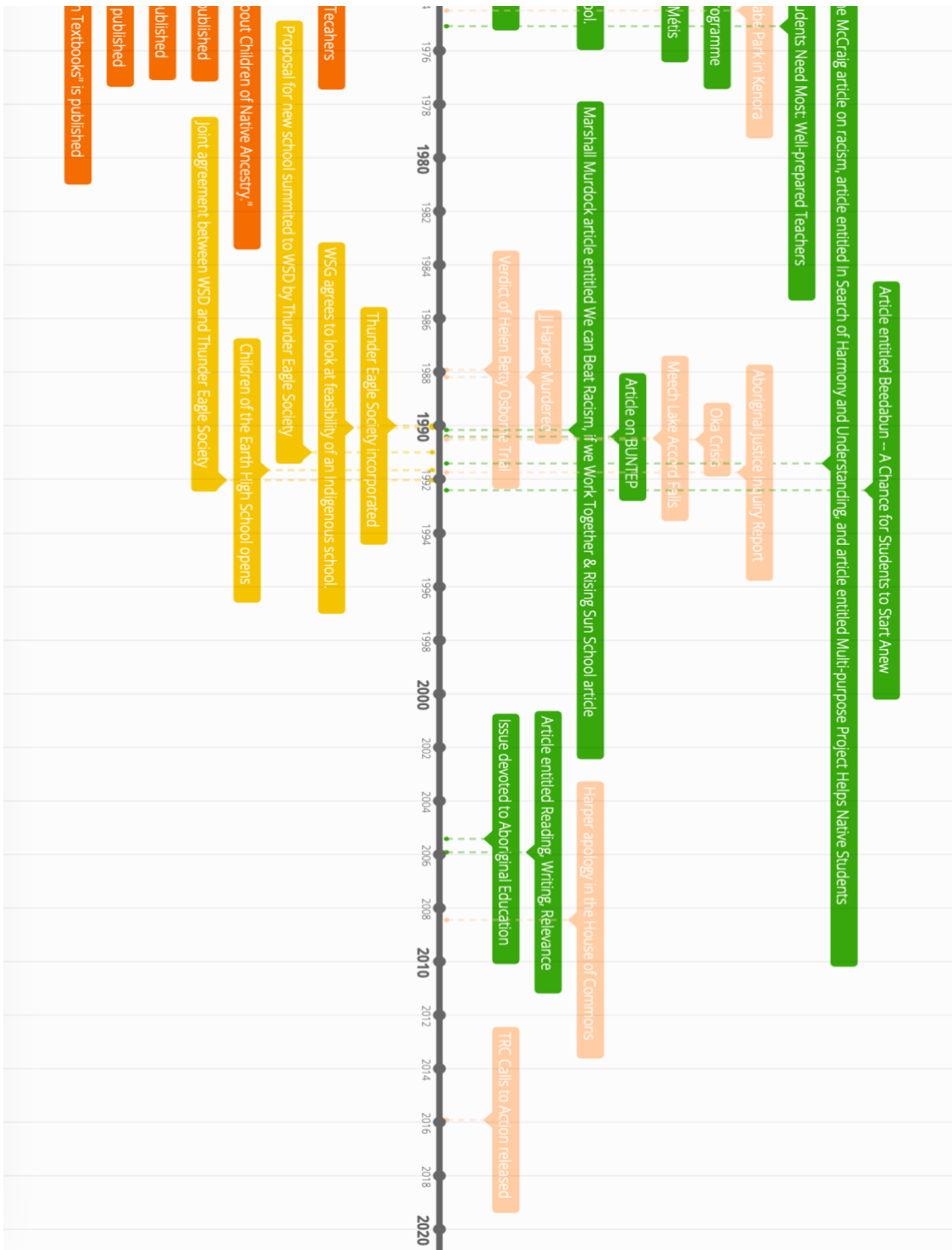
The second phenomena involved the development of the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre in 1958 and the eventual management of the Indian and Métis conferences by Indigenous people, manifesting itself in the collaboration between the IMFC, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the

Manitoba Indian Brotherhood. And while this reclamation took place in Winnipeg, the influence of Verna Kirkness and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood province-wide is beginning to take shape. The end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s are significant. This time period offers critical publications – conceived by the MIB at this time, demonstrating significant resistance to federal control of education (amongst other social goods). Perhaps this is why there is a greater prevalence of articles pertaining to Indigenous peoples in *The Manitoba Teacher*. While few speak to national and provincial events, there appears to be a new consciousness devoted to the plight and organization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Despite the erasure that occurs throughout the century in *The Manitoba Teacher*, there appears to be a tangential influence on the minds of those contributing to the publication in these specific years.

The erasure of Indigenous voices was clear in the 1980s, with no mention of Indigenous people in *The Manitoba Teacher*. It is as if Indigenous learners and educators did not exist at all. But by the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, Indigenous resistance and reclamation erupted, once again influencing the settler publication. Figure 20 demonstrates the relationship between the engagement of the Aboriginal Teacher's Committee, community organizations, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and a surge of articles in *The Manitoba Teacher* pertaining to anti-racism work and specific programming within schools and at off-campus sites.

Figure 20

1990s and 2000s Historical Analysis



The analysis of the various archives informs the central goal of this project by demonstrating that indeed historical erasure did occur within *The Manitoba Teacher*, but perhaps more importantly, how the resistance, resurgence, and reclamation of Indigenous peoples and communities influenced the consciousness of settler educators. Coupled with this, national and provincial events had a significant impact on the prevalence of articles related to Indigenous learners and educators in *The Manitoba Teacher*. The simple exercise of plotting these events is evidence of a progressively more radical response from Indigenous educators and organizers that culminates in the 2005 edition of the publication – where we see the first mention of the residential School experience and where Martin Brokenleg and Cindy Blackstock are featured prominently. But the greatest finding is that despite the erasure of Indigenous voices in *The Manitoba Teacher*, Indigenous people, communities, and organizations were pushing back against colonial control, both in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba. And these movements manifested themselves with a focus on land, language, culture, and community. The resistance and reclamation movements of the 20th and 21st centuries all had these four elements in mind as a means to fully Indigenize education in this province.

Land. The purpose of the Indian Act, reserve system, and the Residential School system was to remove Indigenous Peoples from their land. In recent years, the call back to land-based learning has been significant, with the advent of the Seven Oaks School Division Aki Centre, as one example amongst many. The call, however, to land-based education was less overt in the historical record in Manitoba. What is obvious is that Indigenous communities wanted to ensure that their learners and teachers remained in the community – on the land – as means of manting ways of knowing and being. As indicated in Verna Kirness’ memoir, her experience counseling

learners from up north who needed to venture to Winnipeg to complete their high school education was a miserable experience for all. Various programs were created to ensure that Indigenous teachers were trained and retained in northern and remote communities, including PENT (Program for Educating Native Teachers, IMPACTE (the Indian and Métis Program for Careers through Teacher Education), BUNTEP (Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program) and WEC (the Winnipeg Education Centre). All of these programs were geared to ensure that qualified teachers were from home communities. According to an article in the June 1990 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher* (Grant, 1990):

Virtually all PENT and BUNTEP graduates are employed, most in teaching positions in their home communities. This has had a profound effect on helping Native communities obtain and successfully operate locally controlled schools. Every Native community in Manitoba now has at least several role models or children to emulate and some.” (p. 4)

One tension that exists, however, is that very few programs developed in the north, in rural regions, or in urban centres such as Winnipeg refer to the need for educative experiences to be centered on the land. The limited scaling of Children of the Earth and Niji Mahkwa in the Winnipeg School Division may be an indicator that the land as a teacher is missing. Children of the Earth today is not at capacity and the Division itself reports a 70% graduation rate (Manitoba Education, 2022), poor mathematics outcomes for Indigenous learners, and the simple fact that the Division has struggled with absenteeism during COVID (Macintosh, 2022).

But where we do see success centres back to land and the notion of home. Verna Kirkness remarked that her experience learning away from home had negative effects on her life. Her later experience teaching at the Birtle Residential School confirmed this sentiment. When

she began teaching in the community in Norway House, there was a stark realization that being home and learning was crucial to the well-being and development of children. This emphasis should include language, culture, and community.

The Indian and Métis conferences focused on mitigating the impacts of Indigenous migration to Winnipeg – or as was originally conceived, “The Indian Problem.” At the 1965 Indian and Métis Conference, William Wuttunee, famed Indigenous lawyer and member of Tommy Douglas’ Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government in Saskatchewan, offered the keynote speech. Despite Wuttunee’s hardline support of Indigenous integration and equalled support for Trudeau’s White Paper (Robertson, 2015), he summarized the overall research problem associated with the conferences and the Friendship Centre itself:

The idea of Indians moving into cities to live presents different problems to the Indian and to non-Indian. For the latter it means that the newcomer must learn to adapt to the ways of an industrial society; he must dress as the white man does and learn to speak English and in every way he must learn to conform. From the Indian point of view it means that he must leave the security of life on the reserve and at first he feels intense homesickness. (IMFC, Box, Folder)

While land-based learning was not part of the educational vernacular in the 1960s or 70s, both Wuttunee and Kirkness suggest that home, the land, is central to not only powerful educational programming and outcomes, but a pathway to a good life. In *Wahbanang*, a response to *Wahbung* 50 years later, Indigenous leaders make the case for the centrality of land (Courchene et al., 2021):

Wahbanang Call to Action 8

Develop ceremonially led, land-centred approaches to teaching our languages.

Encourage full immersion approaches. (p. 284)

The link between land and language is intentional and powerful. One cannot have one without the other. The interconnectedness suggests that language is learned through the land. Any and all language programmes need to be fully supported by the land and the relationships that it nurtures. The lack of land has been a significant gap in many educational designs over the last century.

Language. Language is a consistent theme for all archival sets. *The Manitoba Teacher* provides a glimpse in 1971 of how Indigenous communities and organizations were taking back control of education through language programs. The April/May edition of the publication speaks to the Cree language program implemented in the community of Pelican Lake within the Frontier School Division. The article reported back on a study that began in 1969 which sought to answer whether or not “native language instruction improves the educational progress of Indian and Métis children” (p. 4). Children were provided with Cree instruction in pre-school who subsequently demonstrated greater confidence in school when they entered kindergarten. Given the success of the 1969 experiment, Frontier, under the guidance of both Kirkness and Sealey, established language programs well into the middle years. Kirkness was fully aware of the need to provide education in Indigenous languages and by 1972 was proposing a provincial education system that offered schooling in Cree and Ojibway:

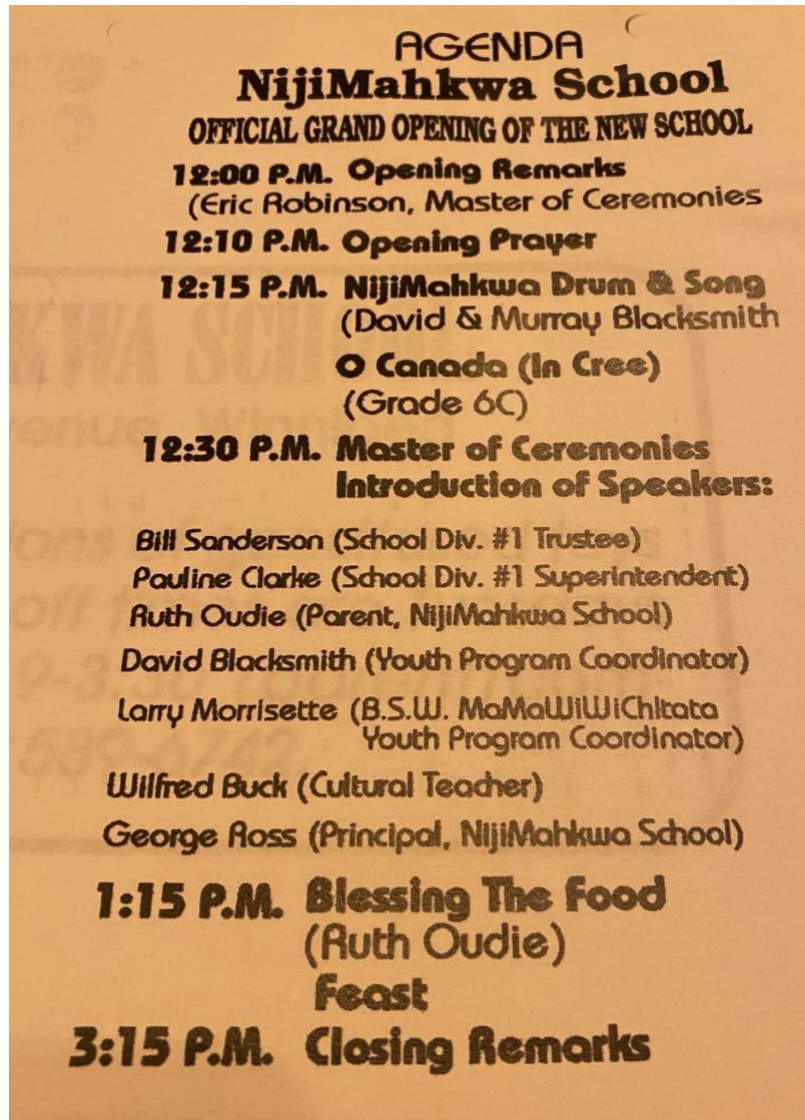
Language is a very important aspect of culture. It is a valuable gift, a living thing, special way of looking at the world. The education system over the years has failed to recognize the importance of native languages. Unless the native

languages are taught in schools by sensitive teachers, and given the prestige that goes with recognition, the languages are condemned to a slow death. When a language dies, much of the vitality of a way of living and thinking dies with it. It is this realization that brings us to promote native language studies in Manitoba Schools. (Kirkness, 1972)

The impulse and need to develop two fully Indigenous-led schools in Winnipeg's core area, Children of the Earth and Niji Mahkwa, are also significant manifestations of the need to provide Indigenous language education in schools as a means to reclaim education. A Winnipeg School Division document outlining the vision and objectives of Niji Mahkwa, simply called "Aboriginal Elementary School (N-8)" in September 1993, outlined one key goal out of several: "To ensure preservation and appreciation of Aboriginal languages by offering Cree and Ojibway language instruction as compulsory subjects" (ACW Fonds, Box 29, Folder 44). Niji Mahkwa school hosted its grand opening in November of 1993 with O Canada sung in Cree. And the legacy of Kirkness' work has further manifested itself in Cree and Ojibwe bilingual programs in both Winnipeg School Division and the Seven Oaks School Division. Language is a critical component to the development of schools that not only resist colonial control, but also foster Indigenous resurgence, organization, and advocacy within the community. Kirkness makes the clear connection between language and culture – that the two are interconnected and one fosters the conditions for the other.

Figure 21

Agenda for November 1993 opening of Niji Mahkwa School



Culture. Culture is a significant feature in Call To Action of the TRC's Calls to Action (2015).

In his 1968 article in *The Manitoba Teacher*, Bruce Sealey does not mince words. This first

example of a rebuke of colonial control over education is heated and demonstrates a certain degree of frustration on the part of the author. Sealey (1968) writes:

For generations, white people have tried to find solutions to the so-called Indian problem. After 400 years the problem still exists and appears to become more acute with every generation. The difficulties are basically economic and cultural. Apparently the public is not prepared to spend the money to overcome the economic problem and therefore all effort is concentrated on the cultural aspects. The social or cultural element is defined differently by different groups but the solution invariably reflects the underlying arrogance of Euro-Canadians. If people of native ancestry would only act, behave and believe as white men do, everything would be perfect. (p. 4)

Sealey's tongue-in-cheek rebuke of colonial attitudes bemoans centuries of genocidal policies with the advent of assimilationist solutions to the ever-present "Indian problem." When Indigenous communities are able to design schools that are culturally relevant, Sealey comments further: "The return of control over his own destiny has already helped the Indian to break down" colonial control (p. 5). Similarly, an inset within the Sealey article describes a recent meeting at the Canadian Teachers' Federation conference. An Indigenous delegation called for a number of substantive changes, including one that focused fully on cultural relevance: "The Indians called for...g) public support for Indian proposals for the education of their own children..." (p. 5). The focus on culture also rings loudly two years later, in Sealey's colleague Verna Kirkness' contribution to *Wahbung: Our Tomorrow*. In it, she argues that:

The present system of education is to be noted for its irrelevance to the culture and environment in which people live; by its lack of involvement by both parents and

students; by its inability to achieve its purpose without concurrent estrangement of the student from his environment. (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971)

The articles from *The Manitoba Teachers* in the early 1990s speak to a desire to ensure that culture is at the heart of Indigenous education. The story of the learners at Rising Sun School located in Rossbrook House (March 1990 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher*), the beading programming at Hugh John Macdonald School (June 1991 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher*), attempts to offer culturally relevant experiences for learners. In the context of Rising Sun, the learners who wrote the article offer the following reflection:

At Rising Sun we can become proud of our native culture. The last few years we have been given opportunities to learn Ojibway from a teacher in the neighbourhood. Another teacher comes to the school to teach crafts. Also, we have participated in pow-wows [sic] and workshops on native spirituality. (p. 15)

Similarly, the Hugh John Macdonald program designed for young girls who have demonstrated challenges with “coping with their lives in and outside of school” attempts to develop self-confidence in a relevant environment. Miss Kiiskéntum, the program leader, “talks to them about the objects they are creating and their significance within the context of Native culture and heritage” (van Raalte, 1991, p. 12). Both the Rising Sun and the Hugh John examples demonstrate attempts by schools to engage learners in culturally relevant activities, but there is an underlying tension that persists pertaining to whether these activities have impacts on the lives of youth. An additional tension rises with the practice of off-campus programs, as in the case of Rising Sun, or exclusionary programs where learners are pulled out of classrooms. Questions as to the effectiveness of these practices and the ethical implications point to further areas of study beyond the scope of this project.

In contrast, the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre and Children of the Earth sought to be hubs and immersive meeting places where culture was fostered in community. Nicole Lamy, in her forward to *Indigenous Resistance and Development in Winnipeg 1960–2000* (MacKinnon & Mallett, 2023), recounts Louise Chippeway's reflections on the purposes and impact of the Friendship Centre:

She described the IMFC as the place where everything was happening and where Indigenous activism was centered. This was the place that taught her to be proud to be an Indigenous person. The IMFC was a place where Indigenous people moving to the city could access support and resources such as housing. People were able to get involved in all aspects of the centre, which provided a safe place for social activism and support (p. 10).

For Lamy (In MacKinnon & Mallett, 2023), the IMFC had even greater impact:

The history of the Indigenization of the IMFC was particularly inspiring for me. I fondly recall many different community gatherings at the centre at the corner of Robinson Street and Dufferin Avenue. There I attended many pancake breakfasts, holiday events, and some of my favourite socials. I recall volunteering at the IMFC for the Christmas holiday celebration, where I helped in the kitchen to feed over 500 people. I recall proudly attending my cousin's first CD-release party at the IMFC, featuring his band's traditional Métis fiddle music. (p. 9)

The IMFC represented a substantial example of direct organizations and action that took control of a settler initiative and transformed it into a culturally relevant hub managed by and for Indigenous people. This seems to be central to the success and the difference between the

Friendship Centre and the previously mentioned school programs. Culture was created by community and community was nurtured through culture.

Community. The vision that is carved out in *Wahbung* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971) speaks directly for the need of community involvement. It argues that a positive education program includes “constant involvement and commitment of the local population in both design and operation of the educational system.” (p. 28) This too was a central theme in the development of Children of the Earth. Both the Aboriginal Teacher's Committee and the Thunder Eagle Society made demands and took direct action for a community designed and led survival school. *Wahbung* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1971) fully argues for full community engagement in the design:

The time has come for a drastic change in the orientation of education in order to pursue a program of education in its broadest context, a program designed to include all aspects of the community so as to ensure that all people have adequate opportunity to improve their knowledge and expand their options. (p. 28)

Art Rempel, writing in the February 1975 edition of *The Manitoba Teacher*, emphasizes the need for community: “More opportunities for learning should be sought outside the schools. At the same time, schools should be opened to the community at large to a greater extent than they are present” (p. 3). In March 1990, Marshall Murdock, an Indigenous educator in Winnipeg school Division, clearly painted a picture of what was needed to design schools where Indigenous learners would feel they belonged. A year before the establishment of Children of the Earth, Murdock (1990) wrote about the development of an advisory committee to help the Division with development of survival schools: “such a committee should, among other things, advise the

division's board of trustees on matters pertaining to the education of aboriginal students attending Winnipeg schools and propose directions regarding policy..." (p. 10). He wrote further that the new school "would require creation of a partnership between the division and the native community... Various members of the native community see a native survival school as an alternative for native students to complete their education" (p. 10). Both Murdock and Rempel, at key times in Canadian history, fully understood and articulated the need for the community to be fully invested in the development of schools and educational initiatives.

The prime example of cultural reclamation could be with the development of the Indian Métis Friendship Centre in 1958 itself and the full takeover by Indigenous peoples in 1968. In the early 1950s, there was a recognition that social services, including those pertaining to education, needed to be consolidated within the boundaries of Winnipeg. Although initiated by settlers, the Indian and Métis conference, the Friendship Centre itself, and the direction of both were fully managed by Indigenous community members and organizations. The buffering against perpetual settler intentions to provide educational services is a critical theme in the resistance of colonial oppression and cultural and political reclamation.

50 years after the publication of *Wahbung*, elders and chiefs in Manitoba published *Wahbanang: The Resurgence of a People: Clearing the Path for our Survival* (Courchene et al., 2021). *Wahbanang*, in Anishinaabemowin, meaning "going back to the beginning," takes stock of the progress and challenges that have arisen throughout the past few decades. Accounting for the fact that the public education system still fails many Indigenous learners, the authors of *Wahbanang* continue the visioning process that *Wahbung* began. As it pertains to education, the elders and chiefs who contributed to the volume envision a system that is founded and nurtured through land, language, culture and community:

Youth would learn about their purpose, their vision, and what is required in following a dream. Training youth as guardians and stewards of the land, leaders in ceremony, leaders training others how to survive climate change through ancestral Indigenous approaches, and developing Indigenous leadership in rotating stewardship approaches for generations to come could also be an outcome” (Courchene et al., 2021, p. 233).

Reflecting on the gains made in 1971 and the unfulfilled dreams, Wahbanang makes the powerful case for an education system that counters western versions. Western forms of education produce greed and violence and a new path needs to be forged and cultivated. This path has manifested itself in several key calls to action:

Wahbanang Call to Action 6

Practice our ceremonies and bring our children and families to the ceremonies (p. 284).

Wahbanang Call to Action 7

Prioritize revamping our education system. Develop our own Indigenous models of education and implement them in communities. Prioritize Indigenous education as the first education for our children, teaching our way of life, language, kindness, our values, duties and responsibilities, and connection to ceremony and land.

Wahbanang Call to Action 12

Focus on youth as a target group for teaching about our way of life. Ensure youth receive mentorship from female (Ogimaakwe) and male (Ogichita) mentors knowledgeable about our way of life.

Culture is the consolidation of intellectual, social, and spiritual power developed in parallel with land, language, and culture. Culture is what is stripped away by dominant

classes and what early editions of the Indian Act intended to do. The voices from all four archival sets of this study have made it unequivocally clear that culture needs to be central in any educational design. It must be the curriculum, the foundation, and the very essence of school life. Though almost erased in Canadian history, the leaders throughout the past century in Manitoba have kept Indigenous culture alive and a central focus of educational reclamation.

Erasure and the Subaltern

To downplay the historical erasure in *The Manitoba Teacher* then and now would be both a betrayal to the Indigenous voices who have resisted colonial control over education through the past century and to this project. What ignited this project was the central noticing that Indigenous people were essentially left out of the settler-dominated narrative as it pertained and pertains to education in this province, as noted here:

Capital owns history too. Not the real history, the history of common people, in common places, in common and extraordinary circumstances, but the recorded history that is told aloud, taught to children, and reproduced by mainstream culture. This history is capital's most precious asset. (Tranjan, 2023, p. 66)

Deliberate at times and the very nature of settler-capitalism at others, Indigenous voices were partially and fully erased from the historical record in the main educational publication. Between 1925 and 1968, there was no mention of Indigenous learners, educators, or communities in *The Manitoba Teacher*. And perhaps some might argue that this phenomena of erasure was symptomatic of the times – that Indigenous voices were silenced in most if not all settler publications, but the work of the IMFC and educators in the north tells a different story. There was a movement of resistance. This resistance, prompted however by settlers, Frontier School

Division in the North and the Social Welfare Planning Council in Winnipeg initially, sought to mitigate the immediate ruptures created by colonial oppression. Gramsci (2021) makes note of this process, where groups who have been silenced and have had their history erased “seek unification” but that this struggle for unification (and tendency as he refers) “is continually interrupted by the initiative of dominant groups and, therefore, can be demonstrated only if a historical cycle completes its course and culminates in success” (p. 6). Furthermore, Gramsci cautions us to think about the influence of dominant and colonial forces, even in the resistance work: “Subaltern groups are always subject to the initiatives of the dominant groups even when they rebel and rise up; only ‘permanent’ victory breaks their subordination, but not immediately” (p. 6). The moments in *The Manitoba Teacher* where Indigenous voices penetrate the silence perhaps are those moments where permanent victory has not been achieved; they are still moments of rebellion that are still mitigated and influenced by the dominant group. As Gramsci posits, “even when they seem triumphant, subaltern groups are only in an anxious defensive state” (p. 6). Were the resistance movements of Kirkness and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood in the North merely symptoms of a defensive state? Were those who took control of the Indian and Métis conferences and the Friendship Centre in Winnipeg acting in defense? Were members of the Aboriginal Teacher’s Committee and the Thunder Eagle Society only anxiously defending themselves against a dominant state? No. The story that emerges through the *The Manitoba Teacher*, when juxtaposed with Indigenous archives, is that Indigenous people were having a tremendous impact on the dominant culture – albeit implicit and subversive, yet highly successful.

Gramsci is helpful in the sense that he helps to identify, throughout the trajectory of our species, that dominant groups deliberately engage in the practice of erasure and that the fate of

non-dominant, or subaltern, groups are negatively linked to the dominant class during these periods of erasure and oppression. In *Notebook 3*, Gramsci (2021) argues dominated groups cannot become fully realized until they become self-actualized. They “cannot be unified until they are able to become a ‘state’” (p. 10). For this project, statehood is defined by one’s ability to write one’s own history. To push beyond the shackles of hegemonic forces that would otherwise silence the cultural, linguistic, social, and territorial claims of groups are engaged in resistance. Statehood acquisition is the process of resurgence and reclamation. To move forward, take back, and ensure that a history is told.

The story of *The Manitoba Teacher* is twofold. The first lesson is that the dominant class in Manitoba has made and continues to make considerable efforts to erase the history of Indigenous people in this province. As Tranjan (2023) argues, “Most people encounter history, through brief references to the past made here and there in media sources” (p. 64). Settler educators have created and been influenced by a settler-colonial version of education. Where Indigenous learners and teachers have either been erased or at the very least pushed to the margins – merely making brief appearances when the national consciousness might allow.

But the second story that emerges from this project is that the journey to “statehood” manifests itself in the power of land, language, culture and community. We witness a burst of energy when, as Gramsci (2021) suggests, there is a “crisis of hegemony” or a “crisis of the state as a whole” (p. 103). When the dominant group is exposed for its genocidal position, as in the case of *Wahbung*, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, there is a momentous and radical retelling of history. Gramsci (2021) suggests that there is transition in these historical moments that defies a fatalistic process. That fatalistic or deterministic process outlines, erroneously the following steps:

...the “subaltern” who yesterday was a “thing” is now no longer a “thing” but a “historical person”; whereas yesterday he was not responsible because he was “resisting” an extraneous will, he is now responsible, no longer a “resister” but an active agent. But was he ever mere “resistance”, mere “thing”, mere “nonresponsibility”? Certainly not. (p. 61)

For Gramsci (2021), resistance is far more complex to explain historically. He argues that “In reality...this will is active, it intervenes directly in the ‘force of circumstances’ albeit in a more covert and veiled manner” (p. 61). But for Gramsci, the process of resistance is not represented as easily in binary and tight conceptualization. The counter-hegemony between 1954 and 2009 in all the archives examined in this project, demonstrates the need, desire, and mechanisms for structural change within the constraints of the ideological institutions and values. Alliances were made between and within Indigenous groups and allies to challenge the hegemonic narrative that had infused the state, the education system, and the publications that supported ideological dominance.

Conclusion

Based on what emerges from Indigenous resistance movements of the past and the Calls to Action with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, several key recommendations can be brought forward. Fundamentally, the development of Indigenous survival schools and public schools that are transsystemic in nature need to be developed from community in partnership with allies, if asked for. But there are four key ingredients for the success of Indigenous educational design based on the theorizing and praxis demonstrated by Indigenous leaders in Manitoba throughout the past century.

First, education needs to be developed and led by the community. This means that staff, teachers, and administrators need to come from the community. Principals, teachers, and all staff need to look like the children that attend the school and need to know and understand the needs of the community. This means that a permeable membrane needs to be created where schools and communities are blurred – where elders are part of the community and the school. Schools must be responsive to the needs of the community and vice versa. Schools should not simply address the “Indian Problem” through a colonial lens, but through Indigenous ways of knowing and being that have survived the last 500 years of contact.

Second, an education system that is educative for Indigenous children needs to include language. Indigenous languages need to be heard, seen, and lived throughout the school day. This means the development of bilingual and immersion programs led by those who can speak, in the context of Manitoba, Cree, Michif, Lakota/Dakota, or Ojibway. A relationship with post-secondary institutions must be developed so that Indigenous teacher candidates are receiving training in languages and the teaching of languages.

Third, culture needs to envelope schools. Indigenous culture needs to be at the core of the school day – where ceremony, song, dance, the drum, and language need to ooze from the walls. Elders need to be embedded in the daily operations of school life and from morning announcements to graduation pow wows. Life at school should begin and end with culture. With explicit intent, both language and culture were targeted by colonial governments, and yet survived genocidal policies of both the Indian Act and residential schools. The presence of culture is paramount to resist assimilation and reclaim Indigenous education.

Last, land and a deep connection to it needs to be foundational to all education. The removal of people from land has created a deep cultural chasm for many Indigenous learners in

Manitoba and specifically in Winnipeg over the past century. From the Birtle Residential School, Teulon Collegiate, and several off-campus programs in Winnipeg, the notion and meaning of land was fundamentally removed from the educational experience of the child. Verna Kirkness' work in the latter half of the 20th century to keep Indigenous educators teaching in their home communities and her recognition that learners coming to Winnipeg for education as a travesty are clear indications for the need of connection to the land. But more importantly, there is a spiritual connection to land that is critical for educational reclamation. According to *Wabahnang* (2021), land is central to everything:

From an Indigenous perspective, land is central to our relationship with all those who have arrived on our homeland. We see ourselves as caretakers of the land, and likewise, there is an expectation that all who come into our territories also take care of the land, and create a relationship with it. Our spiritual and natural laws are there to guide the relationship we have both with the land and with each other. Relationship with the land is viewed in terms of reciprocal relationship with a living entity and all living entities that live on it, which is imbued with sacred duties and responsibilities. (p. 249)

Land-based education is more than simply just having children on the land. It is also something that has been fundamentally absent in many iterations and interventions to address immediate calamities. The work of those who have come before (Coulthard, 2014; Kirkness, 2013; Simpson, 2014) demonstrates what happens when land and the relationship power of it are not central to reclamation movements.

These four recommendations represent the lessons learned from the leaders, educators, elders, and community members who have worked incredibly hard to resist colonial control and

erasure over the past century in Manitoba. The courage, tenacity, and fortitude to oppose the destruction of Indigenous ways of life cannot possibly be imagined by settlers – and particularly this settler educator. But the lesson for settlers within the education system is to know the history. Make room for the full narrative and remove barriers for Indigenous people to claim control over schools. Offer partnership and allyship when wanted but move to the side when not. What the past century has taught us is that settler control over education has not only been genocidal in nature but has stunted the relationship and progress of the education system in the province of Manitoba. The hope for the future rests in what Edler Mary Courchene always says to Indigenous youth when speaking to and with them in Seven Oaks School Division: “This is *our* time.”

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