

The Kamloops Residential School: Indigenous Perspectives and Revising Canada's History

by

Jenna K. Foster

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Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Julien Vernet, Department of History

Author's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Honours Chair's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Abstract**

The goal of this thesis project is to reveal a part of Canadian history that is not widely known to the general Canadian public, the history Canada's residential schools. The study examines the Kamloops Indian Residential School (KIRS). This thesis examines a variety of government, Oblate, testimonial records, and newspaper articles which each give a glimpse of the Canadian government's assimilative objective for residential schools and the effects it had on KIRS students. Both the Canadian government and Oblate school instructors believed that Indigenous cultures and languages were inferior to those of Euro-Canadians. Through a carefully designed school curriculum KIRS instructors aimed to modernize and assimilate Indigenous students by teaching manual skills and agriculture to male students, and by teaching female students home economic skills. Although the students gained skills to adapt to Euro-Canadian society at the KIRS, the process had negative effects on their languages, traditions, and communities. Only recently have scholars and government officials begun to address these acknowledged detrimental effects of residential schools.

**Dedication**

This thesis project is dedicated to the students who attended the KIRS and all the Canadian residential school survivors. I would like to thank the staff at the Kamloops Museum and Archives and the Secwepemc Museum for all their help and interest in my research. Also I would like to express appreciation to my thesis supervisor Julien Vernet for advising me and reading over numerous drafts of my thesis. I would also like to express sincere gratitude to my family and friends for all their support and encouragement throughout my thesis project.

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## **1. An Introduction to Canadian Residential Schools**

The first time I saw a residential school was on a family camping trip to Alert Bay, just off Vancouver Island, British Columbia. At twelve years old I questioned: What was this building? Who used to fill the seats of this empty school? And why was the school abandoned? Eleven years later entering into the Kamloops Indian Residential School (KIRS) I felt those same emotions. The Canadian public school system never answered my questions about residential schools or Canadian history for that matter. I learned about the great Canadian Prime Ministers, such as, John A. Macdonald and William Lyon Mackenzie King, and about the European explorers who discovered North America and Canadian Confederation. It was not until a year after I finished high school that I would once again question the validity of Canadian history and the history of Canadian residential schools. The aim of this thesis project is to uncover a part of Canadian history that has been largely hidden from or ignored by the general Canadian public, the history of Canada's residential schools. This study will focus on one residential school, the Kamloops Indian Residential School (KIRS). Through the examination of government, Oblate, testimonial records, and newspaper articles it is clear that the KIRS was a tool of assimilation for the Canadian government and Oblates and had negative effects on the students' languages, traditions, and relationships with their families and communities.

The KIRS opened in 1890 and closed in 1977. This brief history of the KIRS focuses on the years between 1935-1965. It is essential to examine the school's policies to determine the effects assimilation had on Indigenous families and communities within Kamloops and surrounding areas. Many students, through the process of colonization, became ashamed of their language, culture, and roots causing many traditions and histories to be hidden from further generations. Many Indigenous families and communities in Kamloops are now trying to rebuild

their heritage, culture, language, and traditional skills. Indigenous students went from a life of rich culture and close knit families to an isolated life with little compassion in the KIRS.

Historians continue to debate definitions of Canadian history. Many Canadian traditional historians like, Jack Granatstein and Michael Bliss argue that Canada's national history is becoming lost with the "fragmentation" of narrow histories.<sup>1</sup> Many social historians pose the question, "Whose nation are they referring to?"<sup>2</sup> Traditional histories focus mainly on nationalistic figures, state formation, and governmental narratives without focusing on the everyday lives of Canadian people or places.<sup>3</sup> The history of KIRS examines the everyday lives of residential school students and their activities. It also sheds a new light on the roles of the Canadian government and church within the Canadian state hopefully provoking Canadians to question and rethink their histories. Only up until the last few decades has the history of residential schools filled in the blanks of Canada's colonial history but also focuses on the lives of Canadian Indigenous Peoples, who were generally ignored in traditional and nationalist historical discourses.

In 2007, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged the injustices that have been inflicted on Canadian Indigenous People throughout the residential school era. Much of the apology highlighted the racist laws and policies the Canadian government and various Church organizations exerted over Indigenous Peoples. Harper also acknowledged that the residential school system had detrimental effects on Indigenous families and communities.<sup>4</sup> Although it is

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Bliss, "Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, no. 4 (1991): 5.

<sup>2</sup>Linda Kealey et al., "Teaching Canadian History in the 1990s: Whose National History are we Lamenting?" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27 (1992): 129.

<sup>3</sup>Bryan Palmer, "Of Silences and Trenches: A Dissident View of Granatstein's Meaning," *Canadian Historical Review* (1999): 684.

<sup>4</sup>Jacqueline Hookimaw-Witt, "Any Changes Since Residential?" *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 22, 2 (1998):160.

largely agreed in scholarly circles that residential schools were a tool for the government of Canada to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into Euro-Canadian culture; scholars differ as to the exact impact residential schools may have had on Indigenous communities.

Many Canadian scholars argue that residential schools were a form of cultural genocide because the objectives of the schools were to eliminate Indigenous language, culture, and traditions. J. R. Miller, author of *Shingwauk's Vision*, admits that many students adapted successfully to Euro-Canadian culture, even though the residential schools were a way for white newcomers to refashion and culturally eliminate Indigenous Peoples.<sup>5</sup> Miller uses an impressive array of church and government archival records; however, the voices of those who attended the schools are not present in his analysis.

Historian Celia Haig-Brown, author of *Resistance and Renewal*, calls residential schools an intentional genocide.<sup>6</sup> According to Haig-Brown, the purpose of the schools was to eliminate Indigenous languages and cultures from the schools.<sup>7</sup> Haig-Brown further states the inherent notion of hierarchy within capitalism caused the teachers, priests, and government to believe they were superior to Indigenous Peoples.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Miller, Haig-Brown used both archival sources, such as church records and testimonies from students from the KIRS. Her research uncovers more truths about the actual effects of the schools because she used student testimonies. Both Miller and Haig-Brown acknowledge that residential schools were a form of cultural invasion and a way for the Canadian Government to control Indigenous communities.

Historian for the Cariboo Tribal Council of Williams Lake, Elizabeth Furniss wrote *Victims of Benevolence: The Dark Legacy of the Williams Lake Residential School*. Furniss

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<sup>5</sup>J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 10.

<sup>6</sup>Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 126.

argues that the government and church agents believed that the “Indian problem” would no longer exist if Indigenous Peoples lived as Euro-Canadians.<sup>9</sup> Furniss believed the Williams Lake residential school benefited the Catholic Church and Canadian government because they enabled them to carry out their goals of assimilating Indigenous Peoples into mainstream society.

Indigenous scholars argue that cultures were stolen rather than lost. Roland Chrisjohn author of *The Circle Game*, argues that Indigenous cultures were stolen.<sup>10</sup> To support his claim, Chrisjohn explains that the term “lost” makes it sound like absent-mindedness or carelessness on the part the Indigenous Peoples.<sup>11</sup> Chrisjohn states that Indigenous People of Canada did not simply lose their culture, because residential schools were intended also to isolate Indigenous students from their families, communities, and traditions.

Other scholars argue that residential schools were not the only colonial legacy that caused a destruction of Indigenous cultures and that not all aspects of cultural genocide can be blamed on residential schools, but rather should be attributed to the colonial process. Sam McKegney, scholar of Indigenous and Canadian literature and author of *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School*, points out that Indigenous People today cannot blame all their problems on residential schools, because this is just one component of the cultural genocide experienced by Indigenous Peoples.<sup>12</sup> Indigenous Peoples in Canada have undergone various human rights issues. There are other scholars who question if Indigenous Peoples are still being negatively affected by residential schools.

The debates around cultural genocide in Canada have caused various scholars to question

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<sup>9</sup>Elizabeth Furniss, *Victims of Benevolence: Discipline and Death at the Williams Lake Indian Residential Schools, 1981-1920* (Williams Lake: Caribou Tribal Council, 1992), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Chrisjohn Roland, Sherri Young and Michael Maraun, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1997), 20.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Sam McKegney, *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 16.



if residential schools negatively affected three generations of Indigenous Peoples. John Milloy, author of *A National Crime*, concludes that many adult survivors returned to their families and communities and manifested the silent tortures they experienced from the direct attack on their languages and spirituality in the residential schools.<sup>13</sup> What a variety of the critics have not considered is that an entire generation of Indigenous Peoples were not directly affected, but their communities are continuing to experience the aftermath of the effects of residential schools. Historian Robert Manne, author of *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, argues that the term generation is used as a metaphor for a collective experience to explain the generations of soldiers who lost their lives fighting in World War One.<sup>14</sup> It is problematic to argue that Indigenous Peoples have not experienced a cultural genocide because not every member of the generation attended residential school.

UBC-Okanagan Indigenous Studies professor Greg Younging contends the new generations of Indigenous Peoples to come will feel the devastating effects of residential schools, and he supports his case through blood memory.<sup>15</sup> Younging describes blood memory as closely linked to the Indigenous idea of the present generation in transition between the past and future generations. The present generation has the responsibilities of honouring their ancestor's legacy and safeguarding the rights and well being of future generations.<sup>16</sup> Younging related this back to his own blood memory through his mother's experience at residential school.<sup>17</sup> This is because Younging feels the pain of his mother's residential school experience even though he did not

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<sup>13</sup>John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 295.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Mann, *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right* (Melbourne: Black Ink, 2001), 84.

<sup>15</sup>Greg Younging, "Inherited History, International Law, and the UN Declaration," in *Response, Responsibility and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*, eds. Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, Mike DeGagné (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2009), 327.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

attend residential school. Thus the experience of blood memory can be linked to Younging's inherited family history and the history of the residential school system.

The ongoing debate regarding what constitutes genocide has triggered some historians to question if the Canadian Indigenous Peoples have experienced a cultural genocide. Inga Clendinnen admits that people usually think about genocide as deliberate mass murder.<sup>18</sup> Genocide, however, is not just a form of direct killing. Robert Mann argues that to be informed by a government that there was no act of cultural genocide in residential schools is similar to telling the Jewish People that there was no Holocaust because Hitler's victims died by gas or gun and not by fire.<sup>19</sup> In December of 1946, the United Nations adopted a resolution on the *Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. It stated one form of genocide means "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."<sup>20</sup> Even with a clear statement from the United Nations, scholars still debate to what degree residential schools constituted as an act of genocide.

There is much controversy around Indigenous testimony and many critics question the validity of testimony and Indigenous oral histories. The historical understanding of personal testimonies representing trauma stirs up a debate because many scholars view testimonies as subjective. Indigenous testimonies, however, are not only useful in revising history but in establishing evidence for government documents, and vice versa.<sup>21</sup> Testimonies are valuable historical sources and can also be a useful tool to empower Indigenous Peoples in their struggle

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<sup>18</sup>Dirk Moses, "Coming to Terms with Genocidal Pasts in Comparative Perspective: Germany and Australia" in *Polyculturalism and Discourse*, eds. Anja Scharz and Russell West-Pavlov (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2007), 253.

<sup>19</sup>Mann, 84.

<sup>20</sup>United Nations, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," *International Journal of Human Rights* 4 (2000): 337.

<sup>21</sup>Deirdre Gilfedder, "Testimonial and the Stories from the 'Stolen Generation' in Australia," in *Eye to Eye: Women Practising Development across Cultures*, eds. Susan Perry and Celeste Schenck, 205 (London: Zed Books, 2001).

for rights and freedoms. The use of testimonies, government, and church documents are very important for a well rounded analysis of the history of a residential school so all of these types of sources will be used in this thesis project.

It is essential to Canadian citizens that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples write about their experiences in residential schools. In order to understand the injustices of the past Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples need to share their histories because the histories of residential schools are the stories of its citizens and the world.<sup>22</sup> A critical study of residential schools is not only necessary in order to revise Canadian history, but also to learn from the past and to find new ways to deal with the negative impacts of historical events.<sup>23</sup> Indigenous testimony is a way to retell many histories. Testimonies formulate a kind of historical counter-narrative and challenge globally and nationally accepted stories of European settlement and myths of nation-building.<sup>24</sup> Testimonies allow suppressed groups of colonized countries to begin to tell their stories and allow for other marginalized groups to tell theirs. An example of this is Canadian Chief Phil Fontaine, who began to talk about the sexual abuse he experienced in residential school, setting off a chain reaction of police investigations.<sup>25</sup> Testimonies need to be heard so that the lives, histories, and struggles of the “other” take centre stage.<sup>26</sup> If people have the courage to tell their stories, this allows others to have the strength to speak out and to uncover the past. The telling of residential school histories will help Indigenous Peoples and Canadian citizens speak against the injustices of the Canadian government.

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<sup>22</sup>Milloy, xvii.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 304.

<sup>24</sup>Martina Horáková, “Alternative Histories in Stolen Generation and Residential School Narratives: Reading Indigenous Life Writings by Doris Pilkington and Shirley Sterling,” *BNO Studies in English* (2002): 144.

<sup>25</sup>Milloy, 297.

<sup>26</sup>Celia Haig-Brown, *Taking Control: Power and Contradiction in First Nations Adult Education* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1995), x.

Examining the education in the KIRS allows for the analysis of education as a tool used by governments to transform its citizens into Euro-Canadians. Education became an agent of assimilation.<sup>27</sup> In residential schools, students learned that adults often exert power and control through abuse.<sup>28</sup> The control and power exerted over students in the schools has caused Indigenous students to continue to struggle with their identities after years of being taught to hate themselves and their culture.<sup>29</sup>

At the turn of the nineteenth century Indigenous Peoples were no longer valued for their skills in the fur trade or their proficiency in warfare and they were seen as an obstacle to European settlement and Canada's nation-building policies.<sup>30</sup> With settlement in mind, Canadian government officials thought missionaries could influence the Indigenous Peoples, such as the Shuswap, to take up an agrarian lifestyle and abandon their culture.<sup>31</sup>

The Shuswap of Kamloops, British Columbia experienced, an adjustment from their migratory lifestyle after British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871, and again when the establishment of the St. Louis Mission School for girls in 1878 was created.<sup>32</sup> This was the beginning of religious education for the Shuswap of Kamloops, and subsequently the KIRS was built, in 1893.<sup>33</sup> The Canadian government and the Catholic Church used education as a tool for creating new Christians and Canadian citizens.

The Indian Act of 1876 was a policy that sped up the residential school process in Canada. N.F Davin's who was a conservative MP created a report that established industrial

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<sup>27</sup> Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill, eds., *Indian Education in Canada Volume 1: The Legacy* (Vancouver: University Of British Columbia Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>28</sup> Milloy, 299.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Milloy, 62.

<sup>31</sup> Haig-Brown, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 36.

schools for Indigenous Peoples in the United States of America and this became a model for residential schools across Canada.<sup>34</sup> The main conclusion from Davin's report was that Indigenous children needed to be separated from their parents in order to learn the ways of the white man.<sup>35</sup> The enforcement of mandatory attendance did not come until a few decades later in Canada. It was not until 1920 that amendments to the Indian Act made it compulsory for Indigenous children to attend residential schools.<sup>36</sup> The Indian Act allowed the government to successfully control the KIRS, and many other residential schools in the rest of Canada. The revising of the Indian Act in 1946 did not immediately cause changes to the residential school system; however, it did mark the beginning of the end for many residential schools, because it allowed for Indigenous attendance in the public school system.<sup>37</sup> The institution of the residential school was successful in many cases in the assimilation of Indigenous students into Canadian culture.

The government played a key role in the establishment and funding of the KIRS. The early goals of the Canadian government were for Indigenous Peoples to gain skills so they could be self sufficient.<sup>38</sup> As a continuation of the Indian Act policy, the government believed it was essential in educating the "Indian to an agrarian lifestyle."<sup>39</sup> An Indigenous student's school day at the KIRS was broken up into half a day of work, and the other half for school lessons. The Canadian government's goal was not only the training of the mind, but also the discrediting of knowledge that Indigenous students learned from their elders."<sup>40</sup> The federal government promoted the assimilation of Indigenous students through Christianization and civilization; but

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Haig-Brown, 29.

<sup>40</sup> Haig-Brown, 30.

turned the task of education over to the religious orders of priests and teachers.

The Catholic Church became a tool for the government to carry out the practice of Christianizing and civilizing Indigenous students at the KIRS. Oblate missionaries had been in the Kamloops area starting in the mid nineteenth century before the development of the KIRS. In 1842, Father Demers, was the first Oblate missionary to visit Kamloops.<sup>41</sup> As mentioned previously, the Oblates had operated a school for girls at the St. Louis Mission School, but they took full control of the KIRS in 1893, and Father A.M Carison served as the director of the school and remained in charge until 1916.<sup>42</sup> The Oblates recognized the advantages of isolating children from their parents in order to conduct daily Catholic religious participation and instruction in moulding young minds.<sup>43</sup> The Oblate missionaries' objective for the students was to give up their Secwepemc religious beliefs and to stop their migratory lifestyles; residential schools were an excellent tool for their endeavours.<sup>44</sup> The primary goal of the government and Catholic Church was training Indigenous children while they were young.<sup>45</sup> The greatest impact the Oblates had on the Kamloops Indigenous students was the direct attack on their languages and isolation from their families who were connected to their communities and culture.

It is evident that the Canadian government and Catholic Church maintained a basis for the establishment of the KIRS school, which was to assimilate Indigenous students through Christianization and civilization. During the period that the KIRS operated, many different Oblates managed the school with the support of the Canadian federal government. In 1923, the school was destroyed by a fire and a new brick building was constructed in its place, which still

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 32

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 29.

stands today.<sup>46</sup> Students from all over the Kamloops district were required to attend from southern Shuswap Bands of Bonaparte, Chu Chua, Skeetchestn, Adam Lake, Chase, Neskonlith and several bands from the Thompson Nation.<sup>47</sup> The KIRS had detrimental effects on the students. Before 1893, Shuswap students had experienced little instruction in European schooling.<sup>48</sup> Indigenous learning was very different to European learning. Schooling from many Indigenous societies in Canada comes in three main processes: looking, listening and learning.<sup>49</sup> The government policies of the KIRS ultimately removed Indigenous children from their parents and elders and placed them in a system where they could no longer listen to their stories, and or havr traditional knowledge passed down to them from their families. It is essential to focus on the motives behind the establishment of the school, the education, and daily lives of the KIRS students, teachers, and government, in order, to understand the history of the KIRS school.

The Canadian government and Oblate records examined in this thesis all portray the KIRS in a positive light. Assimilating Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture was seen as a benevolent act of both government officials and Oblate instructors. Government officials and instructors encouraged students to succeed in Euro-Canadian lessons but directly condemned the students' languages and their traditions. The government and Oblates argued that it was necessary for students to sever their connections to their language and to their traditions in order to the KIRS students to assimilate into Euro-Canadian culture.

The KIRS students' testimonies differ significantly to that of government and Oblate records. Many students explained that they were forbidden to speak their languages and practice their traditions and used various methods to cope with their treatment at the school. In the past

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>49</sup> Miller, 10.

two decades scholarship on residential schools has begun to examine the Indigenous perspective and experiences in the school and currently the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* has begun to educate all members involved in residential schools. By revising Canada's history to include critical analysis of residential schools like the KIRS the general Canadian population will come to understand the detrimental effects residential schools had on Indigenous Peoples and hopefully support Indigenous educational initiatives to allow all Canadian students to learn about Indigenous languages and cultures.



## 2. The Establishment of the KIRS and the Motives of the Federal Government of Canada

With the decline of the fur trade and increased European settlement in the Kamloops area the prospect of providing education for Indigenous students was suggested soon after the establishment of the first schools for settlers' children.<sup>50</sup> In a letter to the *Inland Sentinel* on September 1884, by Indian Superintendent James Lenihan advocated setting up three Indigenous schools in the Interior in Chilliwack, Williams Lake, and Kamloops.<sup>51</sup> Lenihan felt agriculture should be taught to the boys, as well as academic subjects.<sup>52</sup> He specifically suggested that some of the children should be trained as teachers, so they would be able to run small village schools, and eventually the Indigenous population would become educated and receive the same opportunities as settlers' children.<sup>53</sup> By 1887, the Canadian Government recognized the need for a school near Kamloops and Indian agent J.W. Mc Kay reported that the "Indians were anxiously awaiting definite arrangements," and that "difficulties in connection with the selection of a suitable site were the cause of the delay."<sup>54</sup> It is difficult to determine if the Indigenous Peoples of Kamloops and surrounding areas welcomed the opportunity of the school, as there are no Indigenous voices in the government documents or local Kamloops newspapers.

I.W. Powell decided on the location where the KIRS would be built. In a letter dated July 30, 1888, he described in detail his inspection of St. Louis Mission, a large school built in 1882 two miles west of Kamloops, which had never really been used or operated by locals.<sup>55</sup> He did not favour this place, since the land was subject to frequent flooding, and because the owner,

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<sup>50</sup> Mary Balf, *The Early Days of the Indian School*, No. 37, Kamloops Museum, Archives Report.

<sup>51</sup> "Indian Superintendent Advocates for Indian School," *Inland Sentinel*, September 1884.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> "Indians anxiously wait for School," *Kamloops Sentinel*, March 18, 1887, pg 3.

<sup>55</sup> I.W. Powell to H. Moffatt, and D.C Scott, July 30, 1888, "Indian Office, Correspondence," Kamloops Museum and Archives, Kamloops, British Columbia.

Bishop d'Herbomez, wanted ten thousand dollars for it; while the government's planned budget only allowed for seventy-five hundred dollars, including maintenance.<sup>56</sup> This caused Powell to look elsewhere for a suitable location. Powell wrote, "I took several days in examining the reserve opposite Kamloops, [discussing] with the Indians and have selected a site which is certainly a very superior one in every respect."<sup>57</sup> The location chosen is where the KIRS still stands today. Powell's reasons for choosing this location were because it was situated on the south side of Mount St. Paul, and because the South Thompson provided good drainage and an unlimited supply of good water.<sup>58</sup>

Powell noted that "the Indians were delighted to hear of the proposed establishment of the school and my visit among them was of a most satisfactory character in other respects."<sup>59</sup> The price of the land which sat on an Indian reserve was ten thousand dollars but only a portion was required as a down payment, and the balance would be due the following year without interest.<sup>60</sup> There was one inhabitant who lived on the land that was proposed for the school. The occupant was widow of a voyageur named Le Roux, but she agreed to leave if she was reimbursed for the cost of moving. The plan was accepted on April 1889, and Mrs. Le Roux received one hundred and sixty-five dollars compensation for moving.<sup>61</sup>

The site for the school was cleared and construction began. It was not expensive to clear the land and build the school. The total amount for clearing the ground and building a stable, fence and dwelling, was one hundred and sixty-five dollars.<sup>62</sup> The rough area of the KIRS was

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> "J.D. Ross to Build \$10, 000," *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 13, 1889, pg 5.

<sup>61</sup> I.W. Powell to H. Moffatt, and D.C Scott, July 30, 1888, "Indian Office, Correspondence," Kamloops Museum and Archives, Kamloops, British Columbia.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

about one hundred and sixty acres and there were three buildings along with a stable and chicken house.<sup>63</sup> The government was responsible for all the costs of the establishment of the KIRS but the school was run for eight decades by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Sisters of St. Ann orders of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>64</sup> The original school consisted of many different sections and was first run by Principal Michael Hagan. The original school was a wood frame building and included administration offices, dining room, dormitories, sisters' quarters, and a kitchen.<sup>65</sup>

There were three two-storey buildings, and the central building had two large schoolrooms, an office, two rooms for the Superintendents and a frost-proof storage cellar.<sup>66</sup> There was a separate male and female building, a three-room cottage for employees, and other outbuildings.<sup>67</sup> Water was obtained from the river, but there was no fire protection safety measures until a new school was built in 1924. In 1890, the KIRS was built on the Kamloops Indian reserve.<sup>68</sup> The school started under the guidance Michael Hagan.<sup>69</sup> In 1893, the school was taken over by the Oblate Missionaries.<sup>70</sup>

The old school was destroyed by fire on December 1924, but the new residential school was already under construction.<sup>71</sup> There were no injuries but a good deal of equipment intended for the new school was lost in the fire, as well as the clothes and valuables of the staff.<sup>72</sup> The origins of the fire were thought to be an overheated stove, one of twenty-eight wood stoves used

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<sup>63</sup> "Description of School," *The Inland Sentinel*, December 28, 1889.

<sup>64</sup> Ken Favrhodt, "Residential School's History dates back to 1890s," *Kamloops Daily News*, March 5, 1984.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Leona Thomas, "Residential School: Education or Ordeal?" *The Kamloops Daily News*, June 23, 1990, S6.

<sup>69</sup> "Hagan Appointed Principal," *Kamloops Sentinel*, February 8, 1890, pg 4.

<sup>70</sup> "Hagan Resigns: School on Vacation," *Kamloops Sentinel*, June 4, 1892, pg 8.

<sup>71</sup> "Industrial School Building Destroy by Fire," *Kamloops Sentinel*, December 30, 1924, pg 1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

to heat the old wood building.<sup>73</sup> The new building was designed by R. Guerney Orr, of the architectural branch of the Department of Indian Affairs.<sup>74</sup> The Claydon Company of Winnipeg, however, built the girl's wing and the cost of the new school was calculated to be two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.<sup>75</sup> The site was carefully considered. The building faced south toward the river but was above the floodplain, and the administration block was in the centre with two dormitory wings on either side.<sup>76</sup> The dining rooms were capable of holding two hundred and fifty students and at the north end of the dining hall were two rooms reserved for the workers' dining rooms and on the south end were the dining rooms for the nuns and priests, however, this would have changed over time with the increase of student's attendance.<sup>77</sup>

The construction of the school also had a religious element to it because it was run by the Roman Catholic Church. The main central building featured a chapel holding thirty-six pews, which could accommodate two hundred and fifty two pupils, seven in each pew, evenly divided between boys and girls.<sup>78</sup> The sanctuary included an altar and vestibules on either side.<sup>79</sup> The ground floor of the main building included the principal's room, other staff rooms, store rooms and a parlour.<sup>80</sup> The lower floor included the dining room for the school, a large kitchen with a skylight, laundry, storage, and the boiler room and coal room for the building.<sup>81</sup>

The girl's wing was erected in 1924, forming a block attached to the east side of the main building. The ground floor comprised classrooms, sewing rooms, staff sitting room and

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> "Tenders call for New School," *Kamloops Sentinel*, July 17, 1923, pg 8.

<sup>75</sup> Ken Favrhodt, "Residential School's History dates back to 1890s," *The Kamloops Daily News*, March 5, 1984.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

bedrooms.<sup>82</sup> The first floor consisted of a girl's dormitory; clothing rooms and staff bedrooms and the second floor comprised the girl's dormitory and bedrooms for the supervisory staff.<sup>83</sup> The basement floor included recreation room as well as a room for fumigating clothes and the electrical supply was obtained from the city power plant.<sup>84</sup> Water supply for the building and the farm was drawn from the river. With a historical background of the establishment of the school completed an examination of KIRS students' schedule is needed.

The student's schedule did not change until the 1950s. Before the 1950s the students experienced a half-day of school and half a day of work, mostly in agriculture. The KIRS had a farm that covered about one hundred and sixty acres; the students mostly males grew alfalfa, corn, beets, potatoes, cabbages, and fruit.<sup>85</sup> In 1930, there were twenty-one Jersey milk cows, seven yearling heifers, a bull, seven horses, four hogs, and 103 chickens.<sup>86</sup> The boys were also given instruction in shoe-making, carpentry, and agriculture, and the girls learned cooking, butter-making, sewing, knitting, and preserving fruits and vegetables. From the time the school first opened until the early 1950s, student were subjected to the "half-day" system in which half the day was spent on manual labour and the other half on academic and religious lessons.<sup>87</sup>

Rev G.P. Dunlop, a missionary priest in Kamloops from 1944 to 1950, assumed the position of principal of the KIRS in 1944. The KIRS was said to be the largest institution of its type in Canada, having eighteen classrooms and enrolments of four hundred and forty children up to grade twelve in 1958.<sup>88</sup> In 1948, the final three grades of high school education were added

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

to the curriculum of the KIRS, allowing students to receive a high school diploma.<sup>89</sup> Prior to 1948, the Indian Department would sanction only half a day's schooling.<sup>90</sup> The first high school graduates of the KIRS were eight students from 1950 to 1951.<sup>91</sup>

At one time, Indigenous children worked and the profits of this work supported the school.<sup>92</sup> By 1976, however, only fifty six children attended the school and the profit from student agriculture and other production had greatly decreased.<sup>93</sup> The phasing out of the KIRS can be attributed to the great costs of keeping the school running. The main reason for the closure of the school was it became too expensive to run. Ken Manuel pointed out the largest portion of the operating budget went for wages, not to the students.<sup>94</sup> The Kamloops Indian Residential School formally closed in 1977 and the buildings now house various Indigenous organizations and businesses, including the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society.<sup>95</sup> The aim of the Education Society was to preserve and enhance Shuswap language, history and culture.<sup>96</sup> The Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) turned the site and building over to the Kamloops Indian Band, because the school is located on the reserve.<sup>97</sup>

The government expenses for residential schools and Indigenous education steadily increased from 1950 to 1960. In the Indian Affairs report, *The Indian in Transition*, the expenditures of Indigenous education showed in the fiscal year of 1950-51 expenditures

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<sup>89</sup>Tony Robb, "High Education Standard at Kamloops Indian School," *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 8, 1959, pg 3.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Leona Thomas, "Residential School: Education or Ordeal?" *The Kamloops Daily News*, June 23, 1990, S6.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Jamie Bowman, "Indian School Closed: Time Takes Toll," *Kamloops Daily News*, March 14, 1977.

amounted to \$7,394,147 and in 1960-61 they had increased to \$27,746,859.<sup>98</sup> The federal Indian Affairs Branch noted that the per capita cost of education for an Indigenous child was higher than that for non-Indigenous children and concluded that the maintenance of pupils and transportation costs were the cause for the greater cost of Indigenous education.<sup>99</sup> In 1947, the estimated cost per student was twenty five dollars in order for the school to operate.<sup>100</sup> In 1957, the budget records gross operating costs were \$137,527.26 and the average attendance of students were 408 students.<sup>101</sup> In 1958, the gross operating cost increased greatly to \$160,188.61 with an average attendance of 309 students.<sup>102</sup> The reason for this increase was the rise in the teachers' salaries from \$33,156.40 in 1957 to \$59,604.37 in 1958.<sup>103</sup>

KIRS staff members were always writing letters to the federal government for more supplies and funding. In one instance, the DIA blamed a church official of being manipulated by a student's mother. The correspondence indicates that the mother of the child was attempting to use various means to get her hands on the money which was believed to be property of the boy.<sup>104</sup> All that the mother was asking for, however, was a winter coat for her son, which the Oblates could not afford.<sup>105</sup>

Although the federal government's primary involvement was in the establishment and funding of the KIRS and the education of the Indigenous students was primarily turned over to the Oblates. The Oblates believed that the KIRS students were receiving a better education than

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<sup>98</sup> Indian Affairs Branch, *The Indian in Transition*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962), 5.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> "Kamloops Agency Kamloops Residential School: Quarterly Returns School Files Series," April 13, 1947, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Volume 6446, file 882-1, part 3.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> "Kamloops Agency Kamloops Residential School: Quarterly Returns School Files Series," January 13, 1950, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Volume 6446, file 882-1, part 3.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

Euro-Canadian students because they were “taught to respect and accept authority.”<sup>106</sup> Father G.P. Dunlop, principal at the KIRS, reasoned that students at the KIRS were being educated at a “higher standard of civilization than the white child” because unlike white children, “Indian students realize that authority is one of the basic tenets of civilization.”<sup>107</sup> The Oblates, however, did not always have the same views as the Canadian government.

The federal government and the Oblates who ran the KIRS had differing opinions on Indigenous culture. Rev. James Mulvihil argued that, “the government thinks that they can change the Indian culture by educating the children, that’s a fallacy.”<sup>108</sup> Mulvihil further went on to explain that “the adults on the reserve should be educated on a par with their children and the students are getting more than schooling at residential school but are shown a different way of life.”<sup>109</sup> He argued that “when two cultures, in this case Canadian and Indian, meet, the dominant culture will prevail over the other.”<sup>110</sup> Criticism of the government’s simplicity of solving the “Indian problem” was also mentioned in a *Kamloops Sentinel* article. Rev. Mulvihil went further to say that “culture will only change according to fixed patterns,” and “here the government will meet its first difficulty, because culture is more than the arts, it is behaviour, attitude, and even the way of life” and “it is easy enough to change an exterior but far harder to change character.”<sup>111</sup> Although the Oblates and Canadian government had disagreements over the KIRS, the main goal for both parties was to integrate KIRS students into Euro-Canadian culture.

This goal of assimilation was shown in the CBC documentary, “The Eyes of the Children.” This film shows KIRS students at Christmas in 1962. There are examples of imposed

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<sup>106</sup>Tony Robb, “High Education Standard at Kamloops Indian School,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 8, 1959, pg 3.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> “Using Education to Change Indian Culture ‘A Fallacy,’” *Kamloops Sentinel*, March 18, 1958, pg. 3.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.



order: when the children go to bed, they all line up to brush their teeth and then kneel beside their beds to say a prayer.<sup>112</sup> Racial, religious, and nationalistic ideologies are also portrayed in the film clip. A teacher at the school, for example, comments that the students “cannot do any worse than their parents.”<sup>113</sup> The teachers at the KIRS clearly believed that they were superior role models to that of the KIRS parents. Much of the KIRS school lessons openly discriminated against students’ parents, which also occurred in government records.

The Indian Affairs publication of 1962, *The Indian in Transition*, argued that the goals of Indigenous education were not encouraged by Indigenous parents. It was argued that not all “Indigenous parents appreciated the new opportunities the Canadian government provided their children.”<sup>114</sup> The parents’ lifestyles and characters were criticized by the Department of Indian Affairs. For example, it suggested that the “parents themselves lacked education, and too much emphasis on parental education, rather than school instruction.”<sup>115</sup> It was also believed that the parents resented the schools. The reasoning behind this was that the Indigenous children would return with “non-Indian ways, unfamiliar with the traditional pursuits of hunting and fishing, and would sometimes question their parents’ viewpoints and Indigenous culture.”<sup>116</sup> Most of the rhetoric from *The Indian in Transition* shows the government’s inadequate knowledge of Indigenous culture.

*The Indian in Transition* presents the designs the federal Government of Canada had for Indigenous students. The aim of the Indian Affairs Department in Canada, “was to raise the standard of living of Indigenous people through providing them with skills and education to

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<sup>112</sup>CBC Digital Archives, “The Eyes of the Children”, *CBC Television Special*, 1962, <http://archives.cbc.ca/society/education/clips/4016/#>

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Indian Affairs Branch, *The Indian in Transition*, (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962), 5.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 6.

enable them to integrate fully, if they so [desired], in off-reserve life.”<sup>117</sup> The three main goals were to grant Indigenous children with the opportunities for academic, social, and economic progress that were available to non-Indigenous students, which would allow both Indigenous and non-Indigenous to integrate socially and economically into the Canadian nation.<sup>118</sup> Indian Affairs argued that Indigenous education was a “difficult task” because the Indigenous populations of Canada were dispersed throughout the nation and different Indigenous bands were at “widely different stages of development.”<sup>119</sup>

A great concern of the federal government was that Indigenous students were not like Euro-Canadian students. Indigenous students needed to be absorbed into building a modern nation and this was a great worry to the Canadian government. As cited in the Indian Affairs book, some pupils had never seen “water flowing out of taps,” experienced central heating of building, or “encountered electric lighting.”<sup>120</sup> Also “planes were familiar to many students but not cars, trains, or bicycles.”<sup>121</sup> Another problem the government felt Indigenous students experienced was understanding the language and symbols within the schools. All the textbooks were written in a language foreign to the students and texts also incorporated symbols and a way of life foreign to them. The government also argued students were “familiar with hunting equipment but not with vacuum cleaners; they knew about caribou but were unfamiliar with escalators.”<sup>122</sup> Also they did not understand the “subtleties of children’s stories or the reasoning about real estate or interest rates.”<sup>123</sup>

There were many racial stereotypes about Indigenous children in Canadian government’s

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

records and books. It was proposed that Indigenous children “lacked a competitive nature and were products of a civilization which respected skills needed in a nomadic way of life; which did not value highly material possessions.”<sup>124</sup> It was said that Indigenous Peoples were extremely “proud, sensitive, and easily hurt and could not stand ridicule and were extremely considerate of the feelings of other peoples.”<sup>125</sup> Indian Affairs believed it was up to the Non-Indigenous citizens of Canada to make sure Indigenous Peoples assimilated into Canadian culture. The reasoning behind this was, “Indians are generally too shy to make the first gesture so it is up to the non-Indians to do so.”<sup>126</sup> It was noted that in the past decades, more and more, Canadian Indigenous Peoples decided to remain in the non-Indigenous community, and those “who [did] return to [their] ancestral reserves are imbued with a richer understanding of Canadian life.”<sup>127</sup> In order to understand how the Canadian federal government and the Catholic Church carried out these assimilative policies, this thesis turns to an examination of the school curriculum at the KIRS.

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

### 3. The Oblates and Government's Reflections of the KIRS Students' Progress

All the government, church, newspaper reports of the KIRS are presented in a positive light to the Canadian public. The records highlight the Oblates' achievements of the assimilation of Indigenous students into Euro-Canadian culture. It is important to note, that the students' perspectives of the school are absent in all these reports. These sources are vital, however, in understanding the motives of the Oblates and the Canadian government through interpretation of the school curriculum at the KIRS.

An article published in the *Kamloops Sentinel* titled "Indian Industrial School Opened with Ceremonial, Many Citizens Attending" documented an open invitation for the public to view the school. Thirty-two Indigenous children, "aged seven to ten were intent on copying English into exercise books."<sup>128</sup> As they worked, the students were supervised by a "soft-spoken and quiet moving nun, [with a] fresh complexion."<sup>129</sup> The nun, "with modest pride explained that 32 of these 32 children could not speak English last September and yet all were now writing it with ease."<sup>130</sup> Much of the curriculum for the younger children was designed to enable students to become fluent in the English language. The invitation was also a chance for the Oblates to show off their hard work and convince the Kamloops public that the KIRS was a well-run school.

Although educating the KIRS students to read and write in English was a major achievement to the Oblates, it was not one for all the KIRS students. From KIRS students' testimonies, the majority of KIRS students felt fluency in English was not important. One of the

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<sup>128</sup>"Indian Industrial School Opened with Ceremonial Many Citizens Attending," *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 19, 1929.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*

students was home sick and did not think receiving a Euro-Canadian education was worth being taken from her family, community, and language.<sup>131</sup>

The Oblates and the Canadian government saw a strict structure in the daily activities as a tool to mould the KIRS students into Canadian citizens. Another *Kamloops Sentinel* article described that the class room was equipped with individual desks, similar to mainstream Canadian public school. There was over “thirty girls between seven and nine years of age, all in neat blue uniforms received instruction,” and were learning words from the blackboard and then pasting them on pasteboard squares.”<sup>132</sup> In another room, “girls between nine and seventeen in several grades were having lessons in language, grammar, health and foods.”<sup>133</sup> In the opinion of the teachers, the students’ artistic abilities improved as a result of their attendance at the school. As reported, passing through the classrooms, there was a varied sample of artistic ability of “these young Indians” and they “decorated the walls with numerous squirrels, birds and rabbits drawn, cut out and painted on paper.”<sup>134</sup>

Cleanliness was another important quality taught at the KIRS. The dormitories for the children were described as “spacious and clean, with little beds with a typewritten name at the head for each, with wash basin, glass and toothbrush.”<sup>135</sup> It was mentioned in the article that it was natural to wonder if there was horseplay going on in the dormitory at night, but “the priest who was taking the visitors round assured them that while discipline was not rigid, the Indian girls at any rate were not so boisterous and were very amenable.”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Agnes Jack, ed., *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* (Penticton, B.C: Theytus Books Ltd, 2000), 73.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> “Finest Work at Indian School,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, June 27, 1930.

<sup>135</sup> “Indian Industrial School Opened with Ceremonial Many Citizens Attending,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 19, 1929.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

The implementation of hygiene in the KIRS curriculum was frequently mentioned in Canadian Indian agents' letters to the various principals at the KIRS. In a letter to Rev Thos. M. Kennedy, J.D. Sutherland insisted that hygiene be included in the curriculum.<sup>137</sup> Sutherland argued that "hygiene [was the] most important subject for Indian children, and the department [desired Rev. Thos. M. Kennedy] to arrange with the teachers to give regular instruction on this subject and, to assist in this regard, an order [was] placed with the Government Stationery Office of 6 copies of *Success and Health*."<sup>138</sup> The text was used in all Canada residential schools in the late 1930s.<sup>139</sup> The medical Superintendent, Dr. P.S. Tennant, was surprised hygiene was not on the curriculum and replied: "If we ever hope to improve hygiene conditions on our Reserves, such improvement will be accomplished through our school children only."<sup>140</sup> He then wrote to see if it were possible to obtain from the Department of Health in Ottawa either slides or reels of educational value in teaching hygiene and public health because the KIRS had a "moving picture machine and also a magic lantern."<sup>141</sup>

It was also noted in 1945, that the students at the KIRS had diet sheets. The children were "continually under the supervision of Dr. Tennant and diet sheets [were] drawn up [to observe] the need of vitamin values," which would then be submitted by the Principal for the doctor's approval.<sup>142</sup> Although there is not much record about the overall health of the pupils of the KIRS, it was noted that there was time lost in 1945 due to a measles epidemic, but classroom work was

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<sup>137</sup> "Rev. Thos. M. Kennedy to J.D. Sutherland Ottawa," January 21, 1935, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 822-1, part 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> "Extract from Letter of Dr. P.S. Tennant, Medical Superintendent, Dated December 12, 1934 regarding the Kamloops Indian Residential School," December 12, 1934, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 822-1, part 2.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> "Quarterly Report Ending September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1945, On Kamloops Agency-Education," September 20, 1945, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 822-1, part 3

noted to be average.<sup>143</sup>

Hygiene through the perspective of the government was crucial to the training of the KIRS students. The main objective of teaching hygiene at the KIRS was so that the students would clean up their reserves when they returned back to their communities. The KIRS curriculum was based on the modernization theory that Indigenous students would eventually transform into happy healthy Canadian citizens if they only assimilated to Euro-Canadian values.

Female and male students' curriculums at the KIRS were separate. Like the Canadian public schools, the males were taught agriculture and manual training and the females were taught home economics training. Male students not only learned agriculture, but "carpentry, blacksmithing, and the maintenance and operation of machinery."<sup>144</sup> The girls were given "special training in housekeeping, cooking, and sewing, while both sexes were taught first-aid."<sup>145</sup> It was said that "the Indian child enters the school when he is seven years of age, and is discharged upon reaching the age of sixteen, [and] during these formative years he reaches the eighth grade in the classroom and, in addition, receives special technical training."<sup>146</sup> During the boys last years in school he takes a course in agriculture.<sup>147</sup> Agriculture justified the implementation of mandatory attendance at the KIRS. "The Indian" for example, was "no longer the hunter and trapper of yore and today his livelihood came from the soil on the *rancherie* on the reservation."<sup>148</sup>

The main learning objective at the KIRS was to enable the students to become

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<sup>143</sup> "Kamloops Indian Agency: Agent's Report for Quarter ending December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1945," December 31, 1945, Library and Archives Canada,, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 822-1, part 3, (Indian Affairs:).

<sup>144</sup>"In 50 Years Kamloops Indian School Has Grown From Tiny To Most Modern of Its Kind," *Kamloops Sentinel*, May 23, 1940.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

independent and self-sufficient after they had left the school. A *Vancouver Province* article goes into great detail about the agricultural training of the students of the KIRS. During “harvest time at the [KIRS], students and staff [were] busy gathering grains, fruits, vegetables and honey in preparation for winter’s table needs.”<sup>149</sup> The school had a staff of twenty four persons and three hundred and six students required a balanced diet, which justified all the agricultural work that was taught.<sup>150</sup> In 1947, approximately 175 acres of land were under intensive cultivation, producing tomatoes, McIntosh apples, plums, grapes, beans and peas.<sup>151</sup> The students of this year “canned ten tons of fruits and vegetables; half a ton of sauerkraut; half a ton of honey; and filled a one hundred foot root house with apples, carrots, and other vegetables.”<sup>152</sup> There were also forty head of purebred Holsteins, which supplied all the milk and butter required for the children.<sup>153</sup>

Farming was thought to promote an independent spirit and foster competition, qualities which would erode the tribal unit.<sup>154</sup> Agriculture would teach an “appreciation of private property and impart a will to own and master nature.”<sup>155</sup> This was a widely held belief during the residential school era. Agriculture and private property were believed to allow “the Indians the opportunity to climb the remaining steps to civilization within the space of a few generations, greatly speeding up the process that had been so gradual in other cultures.”<sup>156</sup> The KIRS goal through agricultural training was to speed up Indigenous Peoples’ evolutionary process.

Male students’ training was more varied than that of female students. Training was also

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<sup>149</sup> A.J. Dalrymple, “Big School across River Seeks To Make Indians Self- Supporting,” *Vancouver Province*, Sept 15, 1947.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 18.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.



in blacksmithing, mechanics, and shoe repair for males. They learned to service the school's car, truck, and tractor.<sup>157</sup> Training was done with hand tools, also with power equipment, which included a "planer, band-saw, joiner, table-saw, drill press, and lathe."<sup>158</sup> Every male student had "definite hours of technical training every week, and it was the policy of the school to give instruction in the proper care and use of tools and to teach the boys how to make articles of furniture which will be useful in their own homes."<sup>159</sup>

Agricultural training was a major component of the KIRS students' curriculums, especially for males. All the food was raised on the school farm, such as "beef, pork, milk, butter and eggs."<sup>160</sup> The boys learned the proper care of all the animals and Indian agent H.E. Taylor wanted goat herds to be established. Through his efforts, a small goat herd was introduced at the school for the instruction of the boys.<sup>161</sup> A pig barn was also built on what is known as the "Danish system," and the barn was, "extremely compact and the pigs [kept] themselves dry and clean."<sup>162</sup> The boy's work was not directly supervised but their work was inspected and this was said to help them "develop greater dependability."<sup>163</sup>

Females were taught how to make better homes with a particular emphasis on sewing.<sup>164</sup> Indigenous women as well as men would acquire a new set of values and code of conduct through an agricultural, settled life. The "Indian woman would be the mistress of her home, no longer a servile, degraded beast of burden."<sup>165</sup> Through this training, Indigenous women "would acquire modesty and cleanliness, virtues impossible in a nomadic society, and she would pass

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<sup>157</sup> "Greater Emphasis Being Place at Indian School Training; Boys Learn Farming, Mechanic; Girls Home Arts," *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 12, 1944.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Carter, 19.

theses attributes on to her children.”<sup>166</sup> Indigenous women were to learn the skills of farm wives, such as raising poultry, gardening and butter and cheese making, but they would also have time for the gentler arts, such as needle work, quilting, and knitting.<sup>167</sup> Female students, for example, would take raw wool grown on the school farm, “wash it, tease it, cure it, and then spin it into yarn” and then they would use the yarn to knit sweaters.<sup>168</sup> The boys would make spinning wheels, and the wheels would stay at the school until graduation, and then the female students would take them back to their homes.<sup>169</sup>

It was also argued that even though the KIRS students should receive schooling, they had “little opportunity to put [their] knowledge to use during the years immediately after school,” because they had “little chance to possess land in [their] own right until [they were] almost middle-aged.”<sup>170</sup> According to teachers at the KIRS, agricultural training at the KIRS would help students live successful lives when they went back to their reservations.<sup>171</sup> Major McKay, the Indian commissioner for British Columbia, Capt. Barry the Inspector of Indian schools, and Father O’Grady school principal wanted to “develop what might be called an extension department of the school, to keep alive and fresh in the mind of the Indian youth that which he [had] learned at the school, and to further continue his education.”<sup>172</sup>

Andrew Paull, the President of the North American Indian Brotherhood, felt there was too much emphasis on manual training rather than academics. Paull wrote a letter to Hon. T.A. Crerar J.C.H.P. Minister of Mines and Resources, about the need for more time spent in the

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> “Greater Emphasis Being Place at Indian School Training; Boys Learn Farming, Mechanic; Girls Home Arts,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 12, 1944.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> “In 50 Years Kamloops Indian School Has Grown From Tiny To Most Modern of Its Kind,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, May 23, 1940.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

classroom at residential school. Paull wrote, “while Rev.Father O’Grady O.M.I. is one of the best principals of Indian schools in the Dominion, in order to attain what was necessary for the school it would appear that he was forced to employ the services of the pupils, which would bear out my submission that insufficient money is voted by Parliament of the schools.”<sup>173</sup> He continued to write that theoretical training was “necessary but too much time spent in manual labour [was] absenting the pupils from the classrooms, and this should not be necessary in order to make the required improvements in the schools.”<sup>174</sup>

In response to Andrew Paull’s letter, Hon. T.A. Crerar sent several newspaper articles from the *Kamloops Sentinel* to demonstrate that the KIRS curriculum was more than satisfactory. All articles portrayed positive benefits to technical training. According to the school staff, “technical training [was] aimed at providing the boys and girls with knowledge and skill which [would] enable them to better their living conditions when they returned to their homes.”<sup>175</sup> Father O’Grady reported “the boys and girls [were] keen on it.”<sup>176</sup> What was not revealed in the *Kamloops Sentinel* articles was that KIRS students had to leave their traditional ways of life in order to move through the proper stages of evolution.

What is not further articulated in the *Kamloops Sentinel* article is why the KIRS students had few opportunities after they graduated. Manual training was frequently incorporated into residential schools because a commonly held belief was that Indigenous Peoples were unqualified for, or poorly served by, a traditional academic education. This prejudicial policy

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<sup>173</sup> “Andrew Paull, President North American Indian Brotherhood to Hon. T.A. Crerar J.C.H.P Minister of Mines and Resources,” July 18,1944, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 822-1, part 3.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> “Greater Emphasis Being Place at Indian School Training; Boys Learn Farming, Mechanic; Girls Home Arts,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 12, 1944.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

generally limited residential school students' opportunities for social mobility.<sup>177</sup> The idea that the KIRS students could be intelligent and still retain their traditional values challenged the concept of the KIRS system. School officials wanted to portray the modern skills the students acquired at the school and this was accomplished through public exhibitions.

Many citizens of Kamloops during a public invitation saw female students at the KIRS busy in a large sewing room with a score of sewing-machines.<sup>178</sup> The news reports commented that "mere babies' work was seen and a tiny square with very even stitches [were] done by a little girls of three years [of age]."<sup>179</sup> In some cases, the female students' craft and artwork were put on display. It was reported in a *Kamloops Sentinel* article that, "in the large sewing-room were exhibits of every kind of needle work, and the junior section had samples of darning, patching, mending, and cross-stitch work."<sup>180</sup> Students were encouraged to use modern techniques. In sewing, the children learned "the method of using the machine" and "hanging on the walls were numerous dresses of contrasting colours, sizes and shapes, table cloths with excellence embroidery work and hemstitching and table napkins, aprons, doilies with handmade lace to trim them."<sup>181</sup> Putting the female students' work on display at exhibits not only gave the students a way to demonstrate their talents but was also a way for the general public to see the non-Indigenous skills students had acquired. The progress of the students represented in the exhibits allowed the Oblates and federal government to justify the operation of the KIRS to the citizens of Kamloops and the Canadian public.

At the exhibit, the boys displayed "benches, waste paper baskets, unique candlesticks,

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<sup>177</sup>Elizabeth Hutchinson, *Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 68.

<sup>178</sup>"In 50 Years Kamloops Indian School Has Grown From Tiny To Most Modern of Its Kind," *Kamloops Sentinel*, May 23, 1940.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid.

<sup>180</sup>"Finest Work at Indian School," *Kamloops Sentinel*, June 27, 1930.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid.

and electric light holders and a book case and cupboard combined.”<sup>182</sup> It was also mentioned that the male students did put on a “fine exhibition,” and this was credited to their skill with tools.<sup>183</sup> All the best exhibits were shown in the Kamloops Fall Fair in “September and at Vancouver later in the year.”<sup>184</sup> The exhibitions were seen as a way to let the general public see for “themselves the wonderful work these children [were] taught by professional teachers.”<sup>185</sup> The exhibits reinforced the benevolent acts of the Oblate instructors and portrayed the KIRS positively.

There was an intriguing comment *Kamloops Sentinel* about Indigenous art. It was “to be regretted that the [Indigenous students] own natural art of basket weaving and making wearing apparel out of buckskin [was not] taught as so many of the younger generation have no idea how to do this ancient practice like their forefathers.” However, great credit was given to the Oblate teachers for instructing them so “ably in modern craft.”<sup>186</sup> Labelling Indigenous art as an “ancient practice” was to say that Indigenous art no longer existed or was vanishing and not considered useful.<sup>187</sup> There was no mention in the newspaper report of the students’ elders or community members teaching Indigenous arts at the KIRS. The exhibits demonstrated instructors’ and students’ skills, as did the opening of a new school building.

For the opening of the new residential school building, 200 girls and boys in neat blue uniforms stood in a great semi-circle outside and sang a welcome song and later turned to the flag and sang “O, Canada,” and saluted the flag after they were done singing.<sup>188</sup> The teachers themselves wanted the Indian children to partake in “traditions which they themselves had

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<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> “W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Commissioner for B.C Present. Mayor Takes City Wishes: Speeches Show How Important \$300,000 Building Is,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 19, 1929.

learned in their childhood days.”<sup>189</sup> The mayor of Kamloops, quoted in the *Kamloops Sentinel*, rationalized the costs of residential schools because he believed he saw Indigenous students moving “towards a higher state” which would allow them to “take their place in the commercial life.”<sup>190</sup> The instructors at the KIRS portrayed their assimilation achievements not only through students’ exhibition, but also at school concerts.

Students of the KIRS were encouraged to take part in music and athletics. The students showcased many of their talents in school-held events and events outside the school. On one occasion the students had a concert for the opening of the new auditorium at KIRS. The concert was said to “reveal some of the splendid training [the] Indian children [were] receiving in an above standard school curriculum.”<sup>191</sup> Also, the students’ accomplishments in music and gymnastics were mentioned, especially the school’s fife and drum band and the rhythmic band of the marching boys.<sup>192</sup> Gymnastics routines were also part of the concert. “A neat assortment of mat work” was showcased, and a “young lad stood on his head while the entire class dove between his legs.”<sup>193</sup> The girls also performed their home economics training through interactive songs. The “action songs [were] ‘Little Cooks,’ complete with aprons and mixing bowls,” and an “Indian huntress drill with orchestral accompaniment,” and the girls were dressed in “pretty brown costumes and feathered head dresses, carrying bows and arrows and went through an elaborate dance, drill and a little pantomime.”<sup>194</sup> The songs performed by the girls at the KIRS, “little cooks” and “Indian huntress” showcased the two widely held beliefs of Indigenous Peoples at the time. These songs reinforced the widely held view that female students could

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> “Children Open all with Concert,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, June 14, 1938.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

either modernize into housewives or remain in their earlier primitive state.

The biggest performance the students at the KIRS were involved in was the Jubilee to celebrate the KIRS operation for fifty years. The Kamloops Indian Residential School was said to be the “most modern and the largest of its kind in the dominion.”<sup>195</sup> The Golden Jubilee “began on Thursday with (Corpus Christi) and a solemn mass on the school grounds and the procession of the “Most Blessed Sacrament.”<sup>196</sup> On Friday, Empire Day there was “a Tribute to Our King and Country,” a banquet and afternoon long program of field sports.<sup>197</sup> The item on the elaborate program drew the praise of all including that of Father J.P. Kane, Vernon personal representative of Archbishop W.M. Duke, head of the Catholic diocese of Vancouver and on several occasions during the festivities Rev. Fergus O’Grady, O.M.I, principal of the school, the members of his staff and the Sister of St. Ann, were publicly and privately congratulated on what they have accomplished in the “educating and evangelizing of the Indian over the years.”<sup>198</sup> The “Indian lads and lasses also were praised for their parts in the great program, [and all] the efforts of the Oblate Fathers and the Sisters during the last half-century were justified.”<sup>199</sup>

The author of the Sentinel article stated that, “most of the Indian population [and] a good many white people attended.”<sup>200</sup> The event was so well done it was said to have “kept several score of white people and hundreds of Indian parents and pre-school children entertained from 7:30 until nearly 10:30 pm.”<sup>201</sup> The author drew a clear distinction between the Indigenous and Euro-Canadian audiences. The Indigenous audience was described as “all Indians of the

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<sup>195</sup> “Golden Jubilee of School Celebrated Over Two Years Fiftieth Birthday of Institution Across Rivers is Royally Kept,” *Kamloops Sentinel*, May 30, 1940

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

surrounding districts from shrivelled grandmothers to it seemed the most recent addition to the tribe” and “the audience in itself was a colourful spectacle that occasionally, drew the eyes of the white audience away from the youthful entertainers.”<sup>202</sup> The Indigenous audience was regarded as different from the rest of the audience which caused a divide among the Euro-Canadian citizens and Indigenous parents of the students.

The objective of the Golden Jubilee was to celebrate the progress the Oblates and government had made in their efforts to provide the KIRS students with a high level of education and assimilate them into Euro-Canadian society. This high level of education was proven through “the ability of the Indian children to complete, without faltering, an intricate choral presentation.”<sup>203</sup> The colourful final of, “The Allies’ Flag Drill,” was said to be a “surprise to friends and strangers alike and without pause or mis-step the lads of the schools used bolts of coloured cloth to form the flags of the Allies ending with a difficult, but perfect, Union Jack, while the school’s brass band played “Rule Britannia,” [a] patriotic demonstration.”<sup>204</sup> Father O’Grady, principal of the KIRS, said, “That the school [had] been in existence over several generations and definite progress in the education of the Indian peoples can be seen” and he predicted in his speech that there “would be even more definite progress in the years to come.”<sup>205</sup> This demonstrated that the Oblates believed they had made progress and wanted to continue to do so.

While the Kamloops public and Indigenous community were invited to the KIRS for concerts, sports games were also held to allow students to gain acquaintances and friendships outside of the school. Indian Agent H.E. Taylor concluded that his arrangement for the students

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.



of KIRS to “play ice hockey and field games with white children from the Kamloops City” would promote “friendly rivalries and instil a code of sportsmanship.”<sup>206</sup> There were also athletic events held with the Kamloops Band and former students of the KIRS. Taylor believed athletic contests between students of the KIRS and the Kamloops reserve would help maintain contact with “ex-pupils, and undoubtedly helped preserve harmonious relations with the Indian band; some whom [were] often hypercritical of the residential schools.”<sup>207</sup> The goal of this involvement in athletic competitions was to convince the local band that the KIRS was needed in order for Indigenous Peoples to properly assimilate into Canadian society.

Many of the KIRS staff were credited with teaching Indigenous children to become Canadian citizens and their efforts were praised by citizens of Kamloops. A Kamloops resident openly expressed admiration for the Oblates work in a letter to Rev. Father O’Grady, “I would never forgive myself if I did not write to you and express my appreciation of the wonderful example you have presented to the public of the well behaved children, quiet and demure in their manners before the public.”<sup>208</sup> The Kamloops resident added, “I have no doubt it is a pleasure to teach and instruct in the fundamental laws of Truth, Honesty and Christian precepts.”<sup>209</sup> Finally, the Kamloops resident praised the assimilative goals of the KIRS; “I am not speaking of that physical training so necessary to develop the body, I am only referring to the minds you are so painstakingly moulding and shaping so that they can take their place in society as real men and women trained in all these branches of learning which will form the necessary attributes to that

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<sup>206</sup> “Kamloops Indian Agency: Agent’s Report for Quarter ending December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1945,” December 31, 1945, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 822-1, part 3.

<sup>207</sup> “Agency Report for Quarter Ending June 30, 1946: Education,” June 30, 1946, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 882-1, Part 3.

<sup>208</sup> “Sgd. Geo. Beete to Rev. Father O’Grady,” June 25, 1950, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 882-1, Part 3.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

future welfare.”<sup>210</sup> This attitude was expressed not only by some citizens but also by educators.

Rev. O’Grady also wrote a letter to Indian Agent, Mr. Hoey, on his dedication to the cause of Indigenous education. O’Grady wrote, “We, who are engaged in the education of the Indian children, have always felt that in yourself we have a kind and sympathetic leader always anxious to improve the condition of the Indian people in order that they may become able citizens of this country” and continued to write, “your devotedness to the cause of the Indian work since you have held office has been outstanding.”<sup>211</sup>

All the positive rhetoric expressed in the letters to and by KIRS staff about the schools in the government documents and British Columbia newspapers reflected the view of those outside of Indigenous communities. Many of the sources from the government, church, and public portray positive changes in students’ lives. The Oblates and government justified the removal of students from their communities and culture, because they were giving them education and manual training that would allow them to support themselves.

The various exhibits and concerts held at the school were designed to display the modern skills the students’ acquired at the school and to prove the school was successful in assimilating Indigenous students into Canadian society. A closer look at the KIRS students’ perspectives is needed, in order, to gain a fuller understanding of the history of the KIRS and the histories that have gone unheard in the past decades.

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> “Mr. Hoey to F. O’Grady O.M.I, Principal,” March 13, 1948, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6446, file 882-1, Part 3.

#### 4. Curriculum, Conditions, Abuses and Resistance

*What did I do to cope? What could you do? You just did what you were supposed to do.*<sup>212</sup>

The opinions of the students on the education and conditions at the KIRS severely differ radically from those of the Oblates and the federal government. Many students explained that they had a simple and a good life before they attended residential school.<sup>213</sup> The process of being taken from their families and communities was devastating for both the students and their families. One surviving student remembers how her parents drove both her and her siblings up to the intersection of Highway 97 and Westside Road. A cattle truck arrived at the intersection and they all piled in the back.<sup>214</sup> Several students support this statement that they too were hauled away in a cattle truck.<sup>215</sup> When the students arrived at the school, their belongings were taken away, and they were given brown uniforms and a number.<sup>216</sup>

One particular event almost all of the students remembered was their hair being cut by the Oblates on their first day of school.<sup>217</sup> A student recounts a nun telling her she “stank” and grabbed her by the hair and told her to sit on a stool and then cut all her long hair off.<sup>218</sup> This process made her feel stripped of everything, except her spirit.<sup>219</sup> Another student attributed the motive of this introduction process to making the students ashamed of who they were, “Indian,” forcing them to consider everything Indian to be “of the devil.”<sup>220</sup> Students would only feel more loneliness once they went through the KIRS system.

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<sup>212</sup> Agnes Jack, ed., *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* (Penticton, B.C: Theytus Books Ltd, 2000), 3, 20, 38, 74, 139.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 33,188, 132.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 15, 47, 150, 165, 175, 211.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 36, 47, 136, 139, 146, 173.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

There was strict segregation of students from their siblings at the school and to the opposite sex. Four students recalled there was one huge dining room, with two long rows for the girls, and a separate two rows for the boys; it was understood this would prevent flirtation between the sexes.<sup>221</sup> Students also remembered not being able to talk with their siblings of the opposite sex because they would be punished.<sup>222</sup> To strongly enforce the segregation of the sexes there were separate school buildings for females and males. Two students explained the males and females were kept separate all the time.<sup>223</sup> Students were not only segregated through sex; but also separated from the communities they came from.

Many students experienced a great culture shock when they attended the KIRS, not only because they were learning a new language and culture, but because many students came from all over British Columbia. There were many clashes of students from different regions.<sup>224</sup> Many students formed cliques and there are many cases of bullying, especially if a student was not part of a group. Within the KIRS, all the students spoke different dialects as well.<sup>225</sup> It does not appear that the Oblates took into consideration that the Indigenous students came from different Indigenous communities and had different cultural practices. The Oblates grouped the KIRS students into one group and their cultural backgrounds were nonexistent within the KIRS system. In addition to difficulties associated with fitting in at the school students faced problems as they dealt with an unfamiliar curriculum.

Many students testified that religion was constantly taught along with home economics for the girls and manual training for the boys. “We did a lot of praying then,” one student stated,

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<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 135, 141, 143.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 57, 143, 167, 198.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 21, 168.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 10, 110, 141.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

and added the students would pray when they woke, before meals and at bedtime.<sup>226</sup> On Sundays the students went to High Mass and around four o'clock they went to benediction.<sup>227</sup> Many students felt the Oblate teachers did not care about the curriculum or the student's higher education because they only wanted students to learn prayers and discipline.<sup>228</sup> Students found the school curriculum to be extremely difficult because many had never spoken English before and they did not understand it.<sup>229</sup>

Many students found it difficult to understand Latin. One student wrote that students who went to morning mass went so they could be first in the breakfast line and that many could not care less about mass because it was conducted in Latin, which no one could understand.<sup>230</sup> This was also a common problem for Euro-Canadian students who attended Catholic schools. Students found learning the English language difficult and learned their lessons better when they went home during the summers. One student wrote: "It was pretty scary the first year because most of us did not really know English; we didn't know what we were in for."<sup>231</sup> Another student had such a difficult time learning the lessons taught at the KIRS, she did not learn how to tell time until she went home for the summer.<sup>232</sup> She concluded that she learned a lot faster through her parents' teachings in Shuswap than the teachings in English at the KIRS.<sup>233</sup> One student stated, it took her two years to learn how to print and learn the alphabet, because she was not taught at home before she attended the KIRS.<sup>234</sup> Students were not only punished for speaking their own language but also for not doing well in their lessons. A student, for example,

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, 11, 159.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

remembers in grade one and grade two, the teacher whipped students' knuckles when they did not get their addition and subtraction problems right.<sup>235</sup> A different student did not find the school work difficult and just remembered being asked questions about the bible.<sup>236</sup> Another student had to take grade one for two years because she did not understand English.<sup>237</sup>

Students expressed how difficult their first years at KIRS were because many could not speak or were not fluent in English. The nuns would say a word and many students would not understand.<sup>238</sup> The teachers could not speak Shuswap so students could only rely on other students help for translations. One student, for example, testified that his friends helped him and when the teacher would ask him a question they would tell him to answer "yes" or "no" and they would help him with other English words.<sup>239</sup> They also helped him with the children's reader, *Dick and Jane*; however, despite his friend's help he failed grade one. Another student recalls being taught the *Dick and Jane* in grade three.<sup>240</sup> She did not understand why they were teaching "Indian kids" stories about these "upper middle class people driving fancy cars" and wondered, "who are these people and who lives like that?"<sup>241</sup> The curriculum taught at the KIRS was not relevant to the students' needs or backgrounds. This was also demonstrated in the books the students had to read.

Much of the curriculum, especially on the book lists were based on European narratives; such as, *Treasure Island*, *Robison Crusoe*, and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.<sup>242</sup> Other titles included,

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 189.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> "Requisition for School Material," July 6, 1947, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Volume 6447, file 882-4, part 1.

*The Last Buffalo Hunter, The Old World found the New, and The Growth of America.*<sup>243</sup> The books and curriculum used at the KIRS did not focus on Indigenous language and culture.

The female student's program of study at the KIRS was home economics.<sup>244</sup> One student remembers cleaning and fixing the beds in priests' rooms.<sup>245</sup> Another student reported that the jobs they had would change each month, which consisted of cleaning hallways, the church, and recreation hall and then in the afternoon they would go to their classes.<sup>246</sup> Much of the domestic duties consisted of laundry, cooking, cleaning, and sewing.<sup>247</sup> They would sew ripped sheets, darn socks, mend shirts and patch pants.<sup>248</sup> One female student remembers learning to sew "dresses and underclothes," whereas, another student sewed "aprons and boys' shorts."<sup>249</sup> In home economics classes and through various chores female students gained skills. A student wrote she benefited from the school because of working in the kitchen she learn how to cook, clean, sterilize, load a washer and dryer, iron, make a bed, and they were taught table manners.<sup>250</sup> There was literature used to accompany the female student's home economic training.

The book, such as *The Canadian Mother and Child*, was a required publication for home economic courses for the older girls.<sup>251</sup> The book consists of four parts: Care of the Expectant Mother, The Baby's Arrival, The Care of the Baby, and The Ideal.<sup>252</sup> The book highlights the importance of being a mother and all the necessary procedures a woman needed to take when she

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Agnes Jack, ed., *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* (Penticton, B.C: Theytus Books Ltd, 2000), 17, 21, 39, 44, 129, 130, 140, 184.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 39, 44, 130, 140.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 22, 31.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>251</sup> Bernard F. Neary to Kamloops Residential School: *The Canadian Mother and Child*, October 17, 1946, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6447, file 822-4, part 1.

<sup>252</sup> Ernest Couture, M.D., Ottawa: *The Canadian Mother and Child*, Department of National Health and Welfare, 1949, v, vi, vii.

became pregnant. Although the Oblates designed a special program for female students in home economics, the male students training differed.

Unlike female students, the male students learned farming techniques. They had to wake up early to milk the cows and clean gutters at 5:30 am in the morning but that changed in 1957 to 7:30 am.<sup>253</sup> They did the milking and had to separate the milk.<sup>254</sup> Many of the boys also tended to the cattle, pigs chickens, and the vegetables in the garden.<sup>255</sup> In the fall time they would go to North Kamloops and pick apples for the school and then store them in the root cellar.<sup>256</sup> One male student wrote he did art and carving when he attended the school.<sup>257</sup> In order to get ideas for his carving he would get books from the library on different Indigenous works from around British Columbia; however, he wrote “back then there were not too many books on it and they were really hard to come by.”<sup>258</sup> Another student had a positive experience because he was able to work with a carpenter and help him build a house which enabled the student to build his own house when he left the school.<sup>259</sup> Although some students learned useful skills the staff and curriculums at the school discriminated against the students’ cultures and communities.

Surviving KIRS students argued that the curriculum not only discriminated against their Indigenous culture but caused them much shame about their histories and families. On rare occasions students would watch Walt Disney and Elvis movies on their Friday night movie nights.<sup>260</sup> Before movie nights became a regular occurrence students would go into town on special occasions to see films. The first film one students remembers watching was about

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<sup>253</sup> Agnes Jack, ed., *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* (Penticton, B.C: Theytus Books Ltd, 2000), 11, 132.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 168, 205.



Jesus.<sup>261</sup> The predominant films shown at the KIRS; however, were Westerns.<sup>262</sup> The movies would show the “Indian” always losing to the cowboys.<sup>263</sup> The main actors in the western films were: John Wayne, Clint Eastwood (Rowdy Yates), Gene Autry and Gabby Hayes.<sup>264</sup> One student found the films unrealistic because “John Wayne would be shooting a six shooter, and [be] standing there for half an hour shooting and never reload and it would only take him one shot and six Indians would die.”<sup>265</sup> The student also wrote that “Indians were always the bad guys.”<sup>266</sup> One student recalled being so scared of the images of the “Indians” and they would “always cheer for the cowboys and not the Indians.”<sup>267</sup> Looking back, a student was astonished of how the KIRS system made her hate “Indians,” and caused her to think that she was “not an Indian anymore.”<sup>268</sup> Although the Oblates main objectives was to mould KIRS students into Euro-Canadians, the students were treated as inferior by the staff at the school.<sup>269</sup> One student, however, felt a sense of empowerment watching John Wayne movies. He came to a realization about his grandfather’s teaching about the unfair treatment and misrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples and no longer saw John Wayne as a hero.<sup>270</sup> The Oblates did not only use films to discriminate against other races, but were overtly racist themselves.

Students remember instructors at the school taught them to fear other races. One student remarked that, “there was a war breaking out because [the nuns] were saying that the Japanese or Chinese were going to come and torture us.”<sup>271</sup> The nuns would stick things under the students’

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<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 168, 14, 205.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 89, 205

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 205, 134.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 205

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

fingernails and say this is how the Japanese or Chinese would torture them.<sup>272</sup> The student who remembered these disturbing events and wrote “When you’re tiny and you’re hearing all this, I was thinking where could I hide, where could I hide, could I hide in my locker?”<sup>273</sup> Another student remembered “having a fire practice at two o’clock in the morning” and wrote, “The nuns were scaring us, they told us the Japanese or Chinese were going to get us, the bomb was going to get us.”<sup>274</sup> The conditions at the school were not just discriminatory against student’s race but physically abusive through students being inadequately fed.

The food the students received at the KIRS was less than satisfactory. One student wrote, “if the milk was not sour, it was burnt.”<sup>275</sup> There were many complaints about eating porridge all the time which was old, without milk or with sour milk.<sup>276</sup> They would also receive mush that had big lumps for lunches or dinners. The students had to eat all their food or they had to sit there until they did.<sup>277</sup> Students would break into the kitchen and take food because they were not given enough to eat.<sup>278</sup> One student lost some of her teeth because of the food. She lost some of her teeth because the young children who cleaned the beans and would not wash away the little rocks in them.<sup>279</sup> The KIRS staff ate at a different table and had different meals than the students. Many students account that the priests and nuns had good food.<sup>280</sup> Students were not only malnourished at the school but disciplined through physical punishment.

There are many cases of punishment at the KIRS. These methods of punishment were similar to those used in Canadian public schools. A common punishment for the student was to

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<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 74, 129, 144, 166, 182, 192.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

be hit on the head, with a stick, usually a willow stick.<sup>281</sup> Students would also be strapped ten to fifteen times on each hand if they could not succeed at the work of the other students.<sup>282</sup> One of the caretakers at the KIRS punched a student in the head.<sup>283</sup> A bunch of girls were caught in the recreation room and the Father punished them by having them lie face down on benches and then strapped one after another.<sup>284</sup> Students were also punished for wetting their beds.

Bed wetting was treated in a harsh matter at the KIRS. Students who wet the bed had to wash their own sheets and if you were a boy this was particularly humiliating because you had to cross over to the girl's side to the laundry room, which allowed everyone to know you were a bed wetter.<sup>285</sup> The staff would also take the student's sheet and wrap them around their head and make them walk down the hall past other students, who would tease them.<sup>286</sup> Bedwetting was a type of physical and emotional abuse. Other students as well experienced emotional abuse at KIRS.

The emotional abuse described by the students at the KIRS has caused detrimental effects to many students. Many survivors have trouble expressing their emotions. A student summarized the impact residential school had on his life, and he still cannot show his inner feelings towards family or for people in pain.<sup>287</sup> A common feeling of the students was they became isolated. Many are angry because it has affected their relationships not only with their children and spouses, but their grandchildren.<sup>288</sup> Many students lost strong connections with their parents and communities. One survivor reports, "I didn't really know my parents much after being down

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<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 61.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

[there] for seven years.”<sup>289</sup> There was much confusion as to why the students were sent to the school and many were angry at their parents because they thought they sent them out of choice. A female student did not understand why she was sent to KIRS because she had a good home and strong bonds with her family and elders.<sup>290</sup> This sense of abandonment affected students’ relationships with their parents.

The separation of the KIRS students from the parents severely affected the strong bonds they had had when they lived in their Indigenous communities. Testimony from one student expresses the hurt feelings she had about her mom and dad and thought they gave her away.<sup>291</sup> It was not until she went to a treatment centre that she realized her parents were coerced into sending her to the KIRS and the student felt immense pain for her parents’ loss.<sup>292</sup> One student felt great sadness for his grandmother who travelled sixty kilometres by foot from Skeetchestn to Kamloops see him only to be turned away from the KIRS.<sup>293</sup> The student believed they turned her away because she only spoke Shuswap, and they probably could not understand her.<sup>294</sup> Many students experience great mistreatment at the school. One particular abuse most hidden at the KIRS was sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse at the KIRS could be under recorded due to the shame associated with it and privacy of the students. Male and female students were both subjected to sexual abuse; however, there is more testimonial evidence that female students were more likely to be sexually abused. Many girls grouped together in order to avoid sexual abuse. A female student

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<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

commented that her female friends all “hung out together” and would stay in groups.<sup>295</sup> In this particular case there was one staff member described as a “big tall guy,” and named Anthony who worked in the basement and was known to sexually molest girls.<sup>296</sup> One female student recalls her sister telling her to stay away from him because, “he [had] these girls, he [got] them by themselves and he sexually [molested] them downstairs in the basement.”<sup>297</sup> Another student remembered “there was time when I saw girls that were abused downstairs in that one room.”<sup>298</sup> One girl reported the abuse she experienced to the teacher but they told her, “he was working at the residential school for a long time and I had to keep quiet and they would talk to him.”<sup>299</sup> It was not until ten other girls made a pact that they would never leave each other’s side that the abuser would walk the other way when he saw that there were too many girls together.<sup>300</sup> In order to cope with the conditions at the school many students resisted the Oblates control.

Many students remember they were not allowed to speak their language or practice their culture at the KIRS, so they spoke it in secret. One student wrote they would speak Shuswap out in the playground when the nuns and priests could not hear them.<sup>301</sup> A group of students from Penticton stuck together and hid so the nuns and priests would not hear them speak their language.<sup>302</sup> Another student remembered her sister would get strapped if she talked in her language and the only time they learned the Shuswap language was when they went home on holidays.<sup>303</sup> Traditional games were also suppressed by the Oblates. Students tried to play

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<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 49, 77.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 48,49.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

traditional Shuswap stick games but told it was of the devil.<sup>304</sup> Many students became convinced that their culture and language was evil. The teachers, for example, called the students “savages” and one student remembered that a nun told her, “Dirty Savage, you’ll learn.”<sup>305</sup> This made her associate herself with being “dirty” and the nuns as “pure and clean.”<sup>306</sup> The direct attack on the students of KIRS languages and cultures was a common occurrence at the KIRS.

One way for students to resist was through writing letters to their relatives. One student, tried to write letters home to his parents to tell them the Oblates were not treating him well.<sup>307</sup> After the Oblates discovered that the student had criticized them he was no longer allowed to write letters home.<sup>308</sup> Another student remembered that the teachers would write a letter on the black board for the student to copy, and they were not allowed to add anything else or they would not send it.<sup>309</sup> She remembered it well, “it said “Dear Mother and Father, How are you? I am fine” and then they left a blank for the name.”<sup>310</sup> Other students coped with the harsh conditions of the school through extracurricular events.

Many students found school life so difficult they turned to music and sports as an outlet to cope with their situations. Various male students used competitive sports and the female students used dancing to survive the daily routine of life at the residential school.<sup>311</sup> A male student wrote he expressed himself “through sports because there were rewards through special privileges and meals.”<sup>312</sup> The special privileges were the opportunity to travel to sporting events

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid, 11.

around B.C., such as, “Vancouver, Vernon, Lumby, Mission City or just across Kamloops.”<sup>313</sup>  
The treatment was good as long as you excelled sports.<sup>314</sup>

The two main sports at the KIRS were basketball and boxing. KIRS had an excellent basketball team but they could not compete with other schools because they were under the federal government.<sup>315</sup> The KIRS boxers were very successful. One male student wrote, “We were sort of treated special and I was accepted in Kamloops.”<sup>316</sup> He was the 135 pound BC champ in 1958 and runner up at the BC Championships in Vancouver where he was able to meet Jay Silverheels a Mohawk actor and stunt man, also known as Tonto.<sup>317</sup> There were also two other male students who turned professional, one in England and the other in Los Angeles.<sup>318</sup> Roger Adolph had a film about his successful boxing career, which began at the KIRS. In the six part- series, *Chiefs and Champions: Chief Roger Adolph*, examines the life of Adolph and the racial prejudice he faced in residential school and in the Canadian boxing circuit. The main reason Adolph was so successful in boxing was that he wanted to prove his teacher at the KIRS wrong. The KIRS teacher told Adolph that, “he should pick a different sport because he was not good enough at boxing.”<sup>319</sup> From that day on Adolph worked hard to show his teacher that he could be a professional boxer.<sup>320</sup> Unlike the males’ participation in sports, dance was the activity for the female students to cope with the KIRS conditions and both sexes participated in music.

Music and dance were also other outlets for the students at the KIRS. The girls that were dancers seemed to get rewards but they had to work hard for them. One student recognized, “We

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> “Chiefs and Champions: Chief Roger Adolph, a six-part series,” Produced by Ken Malenstyn & Annie Frazier Henry, 24 minutes, Tribute Film Production, 2004, DVD.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

were not honoured that we were Native children doing Native dancing, but were honoured to do European dances.<sup>321</sup> The students in the school band were able to travel all over B.C. A student wrote, “I played the snare drum in the band. I remember that one because we travelled to Port Alberni down to Campbell River and we went right down to the ocean.”<sup>322</sup> It is also noted that there were many bands from different residential schools. There were bands from “Lytton, Mission, Port Alberni, and Campbell River,” and it was not all Indigenous students.<sup>323</sup> One of the songs that all the bands played, a student recalled was, “Amazing Grace.”<sup>324</sup> One year before the school closed some students were able to go to Toronto and Montreal. The trip was funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and students raised money through various ways.<sup>325</sup> They worked really hard to raise money through beading, leather work, bake sales, bannock sales and car washes.<sup>326</sup> They also had an auction where a student would be sold to the highest bidder and they would clean homes and cut lawns on and off the reserve.<sup>327</sup> Some forms of coping, however, had negative effects.

Family relationships were restricted under the residential school policy and many Indigenous students’ resisted the system by running away or quitting the school. One student recalls on his sixteenth birthday telling his father he wanted to quit school and his father agreed.<sup>328</sup> Another student said she did not run because she knew her father would have taken her back.<sup>329</sup> A KIRS student ran away three times attempting to make it back to her home.<sup>330</sup> In most

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<sup>321</sup> Agnes Jack, ed., *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* (Penticton, B.C: Theytus Books Ltd, 2000), 208.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.



cases the students would be found by the police or the school staff themselves.<sup>331</sup> Other coping mechanisms for the KIRS survivors were alcohol and drugs.

Alcohol and drugs were tools KIRS survivors used to cope with their experiences at the KIRS. One student commented she stopped drinking when she was younger and was glad that she quit because nine of her friends from the KIRS all died of alcoholism.<sup>332</sup> Many attribute the high rates of alcoholism to the emotional, physical and sexual abuses experienced at the KIRS.<sup>333</sup>

Some who survived the negative experiences at the KIRS have focused on reviving their cultures, languages and on obtaining higher education. A great importance is placed on the Shuswap language. One former student believes, “We have to revive the language because if we lose that, we lose all identity of who we are as Shuswap people.”<sup>334</sup> One former student went to university and received his Master’s Degree at the University of British Columbia despite his teacher at KIRS telling him he was aiming to high and should try to get into “sign painting” or be a “caboose man.”<sup>335</sup>

Although not all the testimonies describe the experiences at the KIRS as negative, the majority of the stories do. A common feeling from the students was the Canadian government and Oblates programmed the students “to assimilate or die.”<sup>336</sup> Many feel the courts will not look at residential schools, and the government and church will deny their attempts of assimilation.<sup>337</sup> The students’ testimonies are crucial to the history of the KIRS because they allow Canadians to view the history of a residential school from a different perspective. As one former KIRS student wrote, “If you step back and you get away from all the defensive positions [you can see]

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<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 51, 75.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

residential schools as a way of modifying people.”<sup>338</sup>

It is clear that instructors at KIRS encouraged students to forget their languages and traditions. Because of this, and because they lived away from their communities, students’ relationships with their families were damaged. Unlike the government and Oblate records, many students’ testimonies portray the KIRS in a negative light. It is apparent that the goal to modernize the students in order to assimilate them into Euro-Canadian society had negative effects, and this was demonstrated through the students’ methods of coping with the school’s conditions.

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<sup>338</sup> *ibid.*

## **5. Revising Canadian History to Include Histories of Residential Schools**

It is clear that the main objectives of the government were to assimilate KIRS students into Canadian society while attempting to convince the Canadian public that the residential schools were of great benefit to Indigenous students and the nation. It is crucial that all Canadians understand the role of all of those involved at the KIRS. Analysis of government records, newspaper articles, and Indigenous testimonies, are necessary for a balanced history of Canada's residential schools.

When simply looking at government documents and Kamloops newspaper articles the KIRS appears as a benevolent institution successfully maintained by the Canadian government and the Oblates. This is clearly not the case when former students' testimonial accounts are included as part of the KIRS history. For too long have Canadian historians focused on the Canadian government, church officials, and Indian agents in their histories. Students, like those of the KIRS, however, are important and without their testimonies the history of residential school is incomplete, because these students reveal the wrongs that have been committed against Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

To obtain the funding from the government of Canada to operate the KIRS the Oblates had to justify the importance of residential schools. This helps to explain why all the literature written about the KIRS for the Canadian public presented the school as a great success. When Indian Agent J.W. McKay stated, "that Indians were delighted to hear of the proposed establishment of the school," he attempted to convince himself and the government that the Indigenous Peoples welcomed European ways and believed the only way to adjust to their

circumstances was to assimilate into Euro-Canadian society.<sup>339</sup> What is not mentioned was that this was not a widely held belief in Indigenous communities. The Canadian government and Oblates validated their motives and did this through confirming that they were teaching children how to read and write and were providing Indigenous students with skills that would benefit them socially and economically for the rest of their lives. The negative effects of the KIRS, such as the isolation from family and community, elimination of Indigenous language, and the various abuses that many students experienced were never mentioned.

In order to assimilate Indigenous Peoples, the Canadian government and Oblates rationalized that Indigenous Peoples were inferior, and this was accomplished through pseudo-scientific theories, religion, and through nation building. In the *Indian in Transition*, Indigenous Peoples were portrayed as inferior, and it was claimed that the only way for them to survive in Canada was to assimilate to Euro-Canadian society and this could be accomplished through education. Students needed to take on agriculture lifestyles because agriculture was viewed as a key stage in man's evolutionary progress.<sup>340</sup>

An analysis of the program of study taught at the KIRS reveals that the government's and Oblate's goals were to eradicate Indigenous cultures, languages, families, and communities. It is clear that "one way of getting rid of a language is to get rid of all the speakers."<sup>341</sup> This was the number one goal of both the Oblates and government. Students were forbidden to speak their languages and practice their culture in the KIRS and by punishing students for speaking their languages they were not only alienating students from their families and culture but were attempting to eradicate their cultures.

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<sup>339</sup>"Indians anxiously wait for School," *Kamloops Sentinel*, March 18, 1887, pg 3.

<sup>340</sup> Carter, 19.

<sup>341</sup>Valerie Galley, "Reconciliation and the Revitalization of Indigenous Languages." in *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*, 243-258, eds. Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, Mike DeGagné (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation), 243.

The literature students read at the KIRS all focused on characters who were not Indigenous. Many asked if the characters in these books were real people.<sup>342</sup> Other students could not relate to the characters because their problems seemed so insignificant to their own. The curriculum was not relevant to the students because it was not taught in their language and not significant to their culture.

Many students testified to watching westerns that portrayed unrealistic images of Indigenous peoples. In some instances, students were scared of the “Indians” in the films and some even rooted for the cowboys.<sup>343</sup> In other cases, students understood the motives of the films and found the portrayals to be unrealistic and hurtful.<sup>344</sup> The aims of these films were to make Indigenous Peoples into stereotypes and to cause students to view themselves, their communities and their culture in negative ways. Showing the cowboys as the “good guys” and heroes reinforced that Euro-Canadians and their cultures were superior to Indigenous cultures.

Despite the fact that Indigenous students had no control over the curriculum and conditions at the KIRS, it is important to recognize that they were not helpless victims and were active agents in their history. Too long have colonial historical narratives in Canadian history treated Indigenous Peoples as helpless victims. The students reacted to their environment. Through participating in sports, dance, music, speaking their languages in private, grouping together to avoid abuse, and attempting to write letters to their parents, they resisted the KIRS system.

The history of the KIRS and Canadian residential schools continues. At this time the *Truth and Reconciliation Committee* has begun to examine the effects residential schools have

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<sup>342</sup> Agnes Jack, ed., *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* (Penticton, B.C: Theytus Books Ltd, 2000), 166.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

had on Indigenous Peoples. The purpose of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* is to help educate both church members and others about the history and experiences of residential school students and the impacts colonization has had on Indigenous Peoples and their communities. This is why revising the history of residential schools is so important. Canadian citizens need to understand their history, so systems like residential schools are never established again.

Although the *Truth and Reconciliation Committee* has begun to address the tragedies of residential schools that does not mean the histories of residential schools will disappear. Through understanding the history of the KIRS and other residential schools, Canadians will come to understand abuses Indigenous Peoples suffered. The history of Canadian residential schools, consequently, must include a critical examination of their impact of the students who attended them.

It is also important that the creation of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* is not a “concerted effort to manipulate our perception and understanding of what is happening and what happened.”<sup>345</sup> Reconciliation cannot be an attempt to insinuate “a revised and bogus history” of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous relations in Canada and means that, “once upon a time, Indigenous Peoples and settlers lived in peace and harmony, working collaboratively toward shared long-term goals, only to have residential school (which began with only the best of intentions) rear its ugly head and drive a wedge between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples.”<sup>346</sup> It is crucial, therefore, that the history of Canadian residential schools represents all of those involved and all evidence is treated equally. Indigenous testimony, is a way to retell many histories and testimonies formulate a kind of historical counter-narrative to challenge nationally

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<sup>345</sup> Roland Chrisjohn and Tanya Wasacase, “Half Truth and Whole lies: Rhetoric in the “Apology” and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” in *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Journey*, 219-229, eds. Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, Mike DeGagné (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation), 219.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

and globally accepted stories of European settlement and the myths of nation-building.<sup>67</sup>

What many Canadians are unaware of is that Indigenous Peoples across Canada are struggling to develop and maintain elementary and secondary schools to revitalize critically endangered language and cultural knowledge for their children with very little support from mainstream society.<sup>347</sup> Has the legacy of residential schools actually ended in Canada? Many Indigenous scholars argue that it has not.

Jacqueline Hookimaw-Witt, author of “Any Changes since Residential School?,” and Marie Battiste, author of “Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education,” argue that Indigenous students are not taught in their languages and the public school curriculum is still not connected to their cultures, causing them to be unsuccessful in the Canadian public school system. Battiste supports her argument with evidence that the federal government has done little to modify the public school curriculum to meet local Indigenous students’ needs and that the curriculum continues to be taught in an ethnocentric manner.<sup>348</sup> Battiste’s conclusion is that if Indigenous students continue to learn from Eurocentric principles, they will continue to be deprived of valuable Indigenous knowledge.<sup>349</sup>

Hookimaw-Witt makes two arguments about education. Her arguments are that education is not neutral and that Canadian educators must understand there are many societies within Canada.<sup>350</sup> Hookimaw-Witt’s claims that Indigenous students have suffered cultural deprivation,

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<sup>347</sup> Natalie A. Chambers, “Truth and Reconciliation: A “Dangerous Opportunity” to Unsettle Ourselves,” in *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Journey*, 285-305, eds. Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, Mike DeGagné (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation), 302.

<sup>348</sup> Marie Battiste, “Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education,” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 22, no. 1 (1998), 19.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>350</sup> Jacqueline Hookimaw-Witt, “Any Changes Since Residential?” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 22, no. 2 (1998):160.

meaning that Indigenous cultures are viewed as so inferior in Canadian society that Indigenous Peoples must give up their culture in order to be successful in Canadian education.<sup>351</sup>

Hookimaw-Witt identifies the real problem of the high dropout rate among Indigenous students as a lack of exposure to their own culture.<sup>352</sup> She argues that the limited amount of exposure to Indigenous culture and spirituality in the Canadian school system is a contributing factor in low graduation rates for Indigenous students.<sup>353</sup> The high dropout rate amongst Indigenous students could be a form of resistance towards a system that does not fit their ideologies or needs.

Today history courses in the Canadian public schools continue to focus on Euro-Canadians. A teacher in the Vancouver public system found that overall the teachers rejected a revision to the curriculum which would make the public school system more relevant for Indigenous students. Many teachers did not know about Indigenous issues or said they did not have time to research them.<sup>354</sup> Curriculums in the Canadian public school system need to be revised to include history of Indigenous Peoples, so that students can have a broader understanding of the pasts of all peoples who have lived on the North American Continent.

It is now time for the Canadian government, various church organizations and the Canadian public to acknowledge the history of the KIRS and residential schools throughout Canada. It is through inclusive histories of the KIRS and other residential schools that Canadians can come to understand the struggles that Indigenous Peoples have experienced and are continuing to experience. In understanding the histories of residential schools all Canadians

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>354</sup> Paul Orłowski, "“That Would Certainly Be Spoiling Them”: Liberal Discourses of Social Studies Teachers and Concerns about Aboriginal Students," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 31, no. 2 (2008): 116.



should be supportive of the revival of Indigenous languages, cultures, and education.

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### **Audiovisual media:**

*Chiefs and Champions: Chief Roger Adolph*, a six-part series. Produced by Ken Malenstyn & Annie Frazier Henry. 24 minutes. Tribute Film Production, 2004. DVD.