

# **“To Instruct the Children of Said Indians as to Her Government of Canada May Seem Advisable”: The Implementation of Treaty 7 Education Promises from 1877 to 1923**

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Treaty 7 promised education to Indigenous peoples in Southern Alberta. However, the creation and management of these schools<sup>1</sup> reveals that education was not the primary focus of the Crown, and that Christianization and assimilation were the driving forces in the creation of Residential schools. This paper will focus on the creation and management of the schools in the Treaty 7 territories from 1877, the year Treaty 7 was “signed”,<sup>2</sup> to 1923, the year in which industrial and boarding schools were merged to form the new category of “residential school” and the decade in which government policy for schools for Indigenous peoples began to take a new, less ambitious direction.<sup>3</sup> The implementation of schools by the Department of Indian Affairs and their church partners, the type of education that was being offered to First Nations peoples, as well as First Nations responses will be examined. In 1920 Duncan Campbell Scott, the head of the Department of Indian Affairs in Canada, was adamant that the government’s plan to assimilate<sup>4</sup> First Nations peoples was the correct course. In his words:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are not able to stand alone... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed

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<sup>1</sup> See comprehensive chart in Appendix 1 for list of schools, dates, and their locations.

<sup>2</sup> Given that the Indigenous leaders who were present did not know how to read (and often speak) English, and that some argue that they simply touched the pen rather than actually signing, the word “signed” is placed in quotation marks. See Richard T. Price, *The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2014) and Amanda Nettelbeck, “We Should Take Each Other by the Hand: Conciliation and Diplomacy in Colonial Australia and North West Canada,” in

<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Pettit, “To Christianize and Civilize: Native Industrial Schools in Canada,” (PhD diss., University of Calgary, 1997), 335-336.

<sup>4</sup> Though assimilation was the term used by the Canadian government, it is more widely thought that residential schools were used to attempt to destroy Indigenous people and cultures as the government deemed them inferior to the European settlers and impediments to “progress”.

into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.<sup>5</sup>

It is clear that Scott viewed residential schools not as a means to educate First Nations peoples as one would expect of a school system, but rather as a method to obliterate what he and other government bureaucrats viewed as a "problem" that needed to be dealt with as inexpensively and expeditiously as possible.<sup>6</sup> This attempt to "educate" was not new, however. For decades the British and then the Canadian government in partnership with various churches had trumpeted the supposed strengths and utility of a system of schools for Indigenous peoples. What is perhaps surprising though, is that First Nations peoples in Canada also sought out schools but for very different reasons. Indeed, at the urging of both the government and the Indigenous Nations who negotiated Treaty 7, promises of a government-funded and organized school system were included in the text of the final treaty. Instead of bringing education and prosperity though, the education system that was provided for the First Nations children and youth living in the Treaty 7 territory left a negative legacy the effects of which are still being felt today.

Treaty 7 included a promise to provide education for Indigenous peoples in what would become southern Alberta. However, the written document did not reflect the oral promises that commissioners had made to First Nations peoples. Key to this paper is the education promise in Treaty 7 which stated that "Her Majesty agrees to pay the salary of such teachers to instruct the children of said Indians as to Her Government of Canada may seem advisable, when said Indians are settled on their Reserves and shall desire teachers."<sup>7</sup> Oral histories of First Nations elders suggest that in 1877 when the treaty was negotiated that there was an intentional dichotomy between verbal and written promises made during the treaty negotiations. While Indigenous peoples thought they would be able to prosper from integrating non-Native education into their traditional ways, the government instead sought to create a system designed to obliterate Indigenous culture and ways of knowing.

For better or worse, the Canadian government in partnership with the churches, set out to fulfill the education promises made in Treaty 7. From 1877, the year Treaty 7 was negotiated, to 1923, the year in which industrial and boarding schools were merged to form the new category of "residential school" and the decade in which government policy for schools for Indigenous peoples began to take a new, less ambitious direction, day, boarding and industrial schools would be built

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<sup>5</sup> Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian affairs, testimony before the Special Committee of the House of Commons examining the Indian Act amendments of 1920, Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC], Record Group 10 [hereafter RG 10], vol. 6810, file 470-2-3, volume 7, pp. 55 (L-3) and 63 (N-3).

<sup>6</sup> Noel Dyck, *What Is the Indian 'Problem' Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Indian Administration* (St. John's: Institute of Social & Economic Research, 1992), 77.

<sup>7</sup> Government of Canada, Copy of Treaty and Supplementary Treaty No. 7 between Her Majesty the Queen and the Blackfeet and Other Indian Tribes.

in the Treaty 7 territory. By the 1870s the federal government saw First Nations people as "uncivilized" and possibly unprepared for education parallel to that of non-Native society. What the Crown saw as "advisable" meant that the federal government would choose how education was administered and would ultimately dictate the Crown's educational goals for First Nations.

*The Davin Report and the Decision to Build Industrial and Boarding Schools*

There are many theories as to why schools were implemented in Canada for First Nations peoples. At the time church and government officials argued that First Nations groups realized they needed to assimilate to settler culture, as their own traditional ways were not feasible anymore. The view of Indigenous peoples in the late nineteenth-century was similar in that they saw European education as an asset. These two views differ once analyzed further. While First Nations saw the importance of European education, they were unaware that they would be forced to give up their traditional Indigenous knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Settlers, meanwhile, from the beginning planned to use education as a means to eradicate Indigenous cultures. Ultimately, the type of education and terms of education orally promised to First Nations during negotiations for Treaty 7 were not implemented in the schools that were created by the churches and the federal government.

In addition to numerous day schools, by the time of Treaty 7 there were already a number of manual labour schools in central Canada that provided First Nations people with education that focused on farming and trades. The first to open was the Mohawk Institute in Ontario in the 1830s, which focused on manual training in mechanics, tailoring, carpentry, and farming for boys, as well as domestic arts for girls.<sup>9</sup> Other industrial schools such as Shingwauk Home in Sault Ste. Marie, the Wikwemikong School on Manitoulin Island, and the Mount Elgin Institute in Muncey were opened shortly after. While these schools in their early years were instigated and funded largely by the churches, the federal government saw the value of partnering with the churches to extend a similar education system to western Canada.

As in central Canada, day schools were also erected on reserves in Treaty 7 territory. These schools, however, were viewed by the government as undesirable. Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior between 1896 and 1914, believed day schools were the least effective of all school types because "the Indian children are not removed from the surroundings which tend to keep them in a state of more or less degradation."<sup>10</sup> Sifton heralded the boarding school model as being the most effective because it provided a moderate education to a larger number of children. To Sifton, the plan was "not to give a highly specialized education to half a dozen out of a large band of Indians, but if possible to distribute over the whole band a moderate amount of education and intelligence, so that the general status of the

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<sup>8</sup> Price, *Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties*, 142.

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Pettit, "From Longhouse to Schoolhouse: The Mohawk Institute, 1824-1970." MA thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1993.

<sup>10</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1899, cols. 740-99, July 14, 1899 in Gregory P. Marchildon, *Immigration and Settlement, 1870-1939* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2009), 190-191.

band would be raised."<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Hector Langevin, a cabinet minister, stated "[t]he fact is, that if you wish to education these children you must separate them from their parents during the time they are being educated. If you leave them in the family they may know how to read or write, but they still remain savages, whereby separating in the way proposed, they acquire the habits and tastes...of civilized people."<sup>12</sup> Boarding and industrial schools then, were the favoured model and were erected under the perception that Indigenous people were "unclean", and that the schools would help "save" Indigenous children from the influences of their traditional home life.<sup>13</sup>

Sifton and Langevin's thoughts on the potential of boarding and industrial schools were shaped in no small part by the Davin Report written in 1879 by Nicholas Flood Davin who had been commissioned by Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald to study how industrial boarding schools in the United States functioned, with the hope of implementing the same system in the western provinces. Industrial schools had been implemented in the United States through a "policy known as that of 'aggressive civilization'"<sup>14</sup> Davin recommended that similar schools should be built in Canada, as the influence of traditional culture "was stronger than the influence of the school."<sup>15</sup> Davin explained that the experiences in the Dominion of Canada were similar to the experiences in the United States regarding the "Indian"—that "not much can be done with him." Davin wrote that "he can be taught to do a little at farming, and at stock-raising, and to dress in a more civilized manner, but that is all."<sup>16</sup> Further into his report, Davin summarizes a meeting he had with Colonel Pleasant Porter, a principal man of the Creek Nation in Washington on the ability of First Nations to understand colonial education. Mr. Porter was quoted as saying that "the children made good progress in the ordinary branches of an English education, but not in the higher branches of study. It was impossible to show the Indian the utility of advanced studies."<sup>17</sup> Davin concluded his report by giving thirteen suggestions regarding the implementation of Indian schools in Canada beginning with the suggestion that the government should utilize existing schools, and sign contracts with religious bodies. He suggested that teachers needed to be

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<sup>11</sup> *Debates*, 1899, cols. 740-99, July 14, 1899 in Marchildon, *Immigration and Settlement*, 190-191.

<sup>12</sup> Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*, 5<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> session, vol. 14 (1883), 22 May 1883: 1376. Given the focus on boarding and industrial (residential) schools, they are the focus of this paper rather than the day schools.

<sup>13</sup> Mary-Ellen Kelm, "'A Scandalous Procession': Residential Schooling and the Re/formation of Aboriginal Bodies, 1900-1950," *Native Studies Review* 11, no. 2 (1996) 51-88. 51.

<sup>14</sup> Report on industrial schools for Indians and half-breeds – The Davin Report, March 14, 1879, 1843-1901, University of Alberta Libraries, [https://archive.org/details/cihm\\_03651](https://archive.org/details/cihm_03651), 1. The original of this document can be found in LAC, RG 10, Volume 6001, File 1-1-1. See also David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1873-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> The Davin Report, March 14, 1879. 1

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

paid according to their qualifications, that the teachers' morality was vitally important, and that the schools should be inspected regularly.<sup>18</sup> It is evident throughout the report that the abilities of Indigenous peoples was marginalized and that the education system that would be implemented would not be equal to European education, nor would it meet the expectation of First Nations peoples. Davin's proposal was based on education through assimilation and a process of re-socializing First Nations to function in non-Indigenous society. Industrial and boarding schools in the west (including the Treaty 7 territory) thus began as a joint venture between the Department of Indian Affairs and Christian churches. While the churches ran the schools and were responsible for building maintenance, the Department of Indian Affairs was typically in charge of building, furnishing, and paying for all major repairs to the schools.<sup>19</sup> The schools that would be built, the ways in which they were managed and how they sought to eradicate Indigenous languages and cultures, was not what was envisioned by the Indigenous signatories of Treaty 7.

*Indigenous Expectations for the Schooling System*

Traditionally, the education of Indigenous peoples of Treaty 7 relied not on a uniform, formal means of education such as a school system, but rather on family and community, with knowledge being passed down from elders. Unlike formal European education, Indigenous learning stemmed from "indirect and non-coercive means."<sup>20</sup> Much of this learning is done through traditional "rites of passage", ceremonies, and rituals such as the annual Sun Dance.<sup>21</sup> Traditional Indigenous education focuses on a holistic approach, which did not need a building or a structured education program for people to learn. This traditional education is believed by First Nations groups to teach "values and traditions of [their] people."<sup>22</sup> It was assumed by Indigenous peoples that this traditional education could be complemented and not replaced by the European-style schools that the government and church proposed during the treaty negotiations. First Nations people expected to receive education parallel to the settlers, learning to farm and ranch, and that they would be able to utilize the other educational benefits that non-Indigenous society offered them in order to obtain a new economic livelihood.<sup>23</sup> Wallace Mountain Horse stated that "we found the White man's way of life [was] good... We thought the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Kelm, "A Scandalous Procession," 54.

<sup>20</sup> J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Treaty 7 First Nations Education Systems, "Shared Voices and Visions: Treaty 7 First Nations Dialogue on Education," *Native Education Policy Review, Alberta Learning* (April 2000), 7.

<sup>23</sup> Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Walter Hildebrandt, Sarah Carter, and Dorothy First Rider. *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997. 79, 81, 123, 211, 271.

White man's way of life was O.K.... We wanted the good life they had."<sup>24</sup> Most importantly, the First Nations perception was that they would be taught to read and write, and there was a high value to them in learning English. First Nations were most concerned about their future generations and how they would fare in this new society. First Nations wanted to ensure that their children would be taken care of and able to survive; thus, schooling and welfare were of the utmost value.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, many First Nations peoples welcomed the proposed new school system. Camoose Bottle of the Blood Reserve recalls that they were told, "the Queen will hold you. You will be her children and she will take care of you. Whatever you ask for will be given to you."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, according to Tom Twoyoungmen "schooling was promised for children, and this gave hope to the Stoneys, who were concerned about future generations."<sup>27</sup> Wallace Mountain Horse also spoke about the role of a treaty and that once something like education promises in a treaty are agreed upon, that the treaty could not be renegotiated or changed. Pat Weaselhead stressed that even though the written treaty was not what was agreed upon verbally by First Nations peoples, that Indigenous peoples assumed that treaty promises, as they understood them, were meant to be kept.<sup>28</sup> Yet, very quickly it appeared that this was not the case.

On April 13, 1879, Father Scollen, a Catholic priest, wrote to Major Irvine, Assistant Commissioner of the North-West Territories. Scollen stated that he had several discussions with the local Mounted Police and Treaty 7 First Nations groups, and he thought that the First Nations groups did not understand Treaty 7, and that the reason why they did not understand it was simple:

[b]ecause previous to the treaty they had always been kindly dealt with by the Authorities, and did not wish to offend them: and although they had many doubts in their mind as to the meaning of the treaty, yet with this precedent before them, they hoped that it simply meant to furnish them with plenty of food and clothing, and particularly the former every time they stood in need of them; and besides this, many outside influences were brought to bear upon them; but I repeat, they were not actuated by any intuitive comprehension of what they were called upon to do.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*, 120.

<sup>25</sup> Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*, 79, 81, 123, 211, 271.

<sup>26</sup> Price, *Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties*, 132.

<sup>27</sup> Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*, 122.

<sup>28</sup> Price, *Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties*, 129.

<sup>29</sup> Father Scollen to Major Irvine, 13 April 1879, LAC, RG 10, vol. 3695, file 14,942.

Scollen goes on to explain that this miscomprehension was due in part to interpreters who had lacked the skills needed for negotiations. The letter also mentions that several resource promises made by the Crown had not taken effect, such as promised farming equipment that had not been sent.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, this would be only one of many broken promises and disappointments, not the least of which was education.

*A School System Begins*

Schools and reserves were not immediately provided after Treaty 7. Instead, the government sent Edgar Dewdney, a former Member of Parliament and a newly-appointed Commissioner, and Col. Macleod to the Treaty 7 territory to "carry out the policy of the Government." Dewdney noted that "reports as to the scarcity of the buffalo had not been exaggerated, and numbers of Indians...and Blackfeet were awaiting the arrival of Col. MacLeod and myself" and that Macleod told the Indigenous groups they encountered that "the Government expected they would work and earn their own living, and that I was sent up to show them how to live." At Blackfoot Crossing he found "Indians in a very destitute condition, and many on the verge of starvation."<sup>31</sup> The Blackfoot Nation said in an address that they welcomed change and wanted farming, schools, etc. to begin immediately:

The beneficial measures you have proposed to us in the name of the Government we all accept, and guided by your advice and care we hope to fulfil them to the satisfaction of the Government. Our ancestors were tillers of the soil, but our warlike and nomadic habits have unfitted us for their ancient calling and industry; however, we hope with patience and time that our children may get the benefit of honest labour, and enjoy the more secure means of existence than the precarious mode of living of a hunter of the wild.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Father Scollen to Major Irvine, 13 April 1879.

<sup>31</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1879, 78.

<sup>32</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1879, 79-80.

In response, Dewdney provided various farming equipment and farming instruction, but overall government officials seemed in no hurry to implement schools and were unsympathetic to the plight of the Treaty 7 Nations.<sup>33</sup>

The first mention of a boarding and industrial school system for First Nations peoples in the Treaty 7 area was in Morleyville (now Morley, a small First Nations settlement west of present-day Calgary). In 1875 John and George McDougall opened a mission and a school for the Stoney Nakoda. Morleyville schoolhouse would be converted to a boarding school in 1886. By the 1880 several other schools were erected for Treaty 7 children. For example, without government aid, Reverend George McKay built a school on the Piikani reserve in which he taught eighty boys and girls a variety of subjects.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1880 described how Reverend Samuel Trivett had built a schoolhouse for the Kainai as he was sent out by the Church Missionary Society to teach English, the alphabet, figures, and writing to a daily attendance average of thirty-five children.<sup>35</sup> These schools though, were not government schools but instead were built and equipped with teachers and supplies by the various churches. The Indian Agent at Fort Macleod in 1880 urged the government to act, claiming that "as the Piegans, Bloods and Stoneys are so far settled, it would be advisable to establish schools on their reservations. No government assistance has been given as yet, in this direction."<sup>36</sup> Government bureaucrats such as the Indian Commissioner though, instead highlighted the problems they faced when trying to open schools: the desolate locations of reserves; difficulties securing teachers; indifferent parents; and a lack of clothing for the children. He did though, also point out that the school at Morleyville and on the Kainai reserve "have been conducted with marked success"<sup>37</sup> and annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs for the 1880s reveal that schools continued to be opened to the point that the Piikani, Siksika, Kainai, Tsuu T'ina and Nakoda Nations all had access to schools.

#### *Government Involvement*

By 1883 the government decided that at least one government-sponsored school should be built in every treaty area; for the Treaty 7 territory that first government school would be in High River under Roman Catholic management in 1884.<sup>38</sup> Government funding would also be provided for the McDougall Orphanage. Both of these were considered to be manual labour or industrial schools and were

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<sup>33</sup> See Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1880. 98.

<sup>35</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1880, 98-99.

<sup>36</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1880, 98.

<sup>37</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1882 xviii-xix.

<sup>38</sup> Brian Titley, "Dunbow Indian Industrial School: An Oblate Experiment in Education," *Western Oblate Studies* 2(1992): 95-113.

"Dunbow Indian Industrial School."



much preferred by the government over day schools.<sup>39</sup> By 1923 when boarding and industrial schools merged<sup>40</sup> to form the new category of "residential" school, a number of boarding and industrial schools were constructed on Treaty 7 lands.<sup>41</sup> In the Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1889, the High River Industrial School was mentioned as being well attended by First Nations students, especially the Blackfoot; twenty one out of forty-nine children in residence at the school were Blackfoot.<sup>42</sup> The report also noted that education was of high importance to many of "the Indians of the North West... and this has been followed by their children being voluntarily sent to day schools, or entered at the boarding or industrial institutions."<sup>43</sup> However, the report also stated that there was often a fluctuation in attendance due to children being admitted to the school and then being removed after a short time by their parents. One must question why, if First Nations peoples were known to place a high value on education, they would remove their children from these schools so quickly after being admitted.

One reason for discontent was that Davin's suggestion of a boarding/industrial school model proved very quickly to not be feasible economically. The 1890s saw a cut in grants for First Nations schools, which were already inadequately funded, and thus the schools increasingly began to rely on child labour to raise funds.<sup>44</sup> To make matters worse, a shortage in supplies that permitted the students to work was an issue. For instance, in 1905 James Back-Looking, principal of St. Mary's school on the Kainai reserve, sent a letter on behalf of his male students to the Department of Indian Affairs that read:

Dear Sir, Trusting in your kindness, that is well known to us by what our kind teacher tells us we take the liberty of asking you a favour today, convinced that in doing so will not be refused. Garden time is coming and we have neither hoes nor rakes for this purpose, if you could let us have a few, it would render us a great service, and we would work like little men with them.

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<sup>39</sup> Pettit, "To Christianize and Civilize," 2.

<sup>40</sup> Some schools began as day schools and were eventually merged or closed down due to a lack of funding and other models being preferred more-so than day schools. One example is McDougall Orphanage that began as a day school in 1873. In 1883 the school became the Methodist Orphanage and Training school. In 1885 a new day school was opened up, however, between 1890 and 1895 the day school closed as it merged with the Orphanage. In 1905 the Orphanage closed due to overwhelming debt. The Morley Industrial School in 1922 after another unsuccessful attempt to resurrect the Day School model in 1909. In 1926 the Industrial School became a Residential School. See: DIA, Annual Report, 1887, 1887, 1888, 1894-96, 1901-1912, 1925-1931.

<sup>41</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>42</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1889, xxviii.

<sup>43</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1889, xxviii.

<sup>44</sup> Bull, "Indian Residential Schooling," 11.

Hoping that our letter will please you, and that you find us cute enough to be worthy of this favour.<sup>45</sup>

Shortages of resources such as food and educational materials for the students were also commonplace.<sup>46</sup>

By 1910 Duncan Campbell Scott, Superintendent of Indian Education, reached an agreement with churches in which they agreed to phase out the most inefficient industrial schools, and move the focus towards improved day and boarding schools.<sup>47</sup> Scott explained that the school system should not be shut down entirely because he believed that First Nations would become "a dangerous element in society" if this were to happen and said that it "was never the policy, nor the end aim of the endeavor to transform an Indian into a white man." Instead, the goal was "to fit the Indian for civilized life in his own environment."<sup>48</sup>

Yet concerns over the quality of education continued. In 1918 Indian agent J. Markle wrote in an Old Sun's School inspection report that "many parents are not pleased with the lack of progress that the children are making."<sup>49</sup> Likewise, in 1916, an Inspector at Old Sun's School commented that the students got "too little time at their studies."<sup>50</sup> The Department also noted that a lack of employment after graduation was an area that needed to be addressed and as well as the quality of education being received by First Nations students.<sup>51</sup> In 1903 a Kainai Indian agent stated that "any lad who has never left the reserve, is... far better off than a lad who has been in schools for years, and what is more is very much more self-reliant and able to make his living as easy again as any of these schools lads."<sup>52</sup> This theme would continue well into the mid-twentieth-century as yet another inspection report of the Crowfoot School in 1923 by M. Christianson reported that "the boys on leaving school have had practically no experience along the lines of farming or stock raising and are placed upon a reserve where they are supposed to make their living from this source, without any experience."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The Boy Pupils of the Boarding School, Blood Reserve, written by James Back-Looking to R.N. Wilson, 25 March 1905, LAC, RG 10, volume 3695, file 14,942.

<sup>46</sup> See principals' reports from the various schools throughout this era.

<sup>47</sup> J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 267.

<sup>48</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1910, 273.

<sup>49</sup> Benson to Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 23 June 1903, LAC, RG 10, vol. 3919, file 116751-1A.

<sup>50</sup> Provincial Inspection Report, Old Sun's School, by W. Frame, 1935, LAC, RG 10, vol. 8452, file 772/23-5-002, MR C 13801.

<sup>51</sup> DIA, Annual Report, 1909, xxxiv.

<sup>52</sup> Old Sun's Inspection Report, by J. Markle, 1918, LAC, RG 10, vol. 8452, file 772/23-5-002, MR C 13801.

<sup>53</sup> Report on Crowfoot School, by M. Christianson, 16 April 1923, LAC, RG 10, vol. 6348, file 752-1, MR C 8705.

Qualifications of teachers were also an issue as instructors spoke English and occasionally French, while First Nations students spoke their traditional languages. Many students began school never having heard English previously and yet were required to speak only English, and were disciplined harshly if they spoke their traditional languages at school. Teachers then, needed to be fluent not only in English, but also several Indigenous languages. Inspector J. Boyce noted this challenge and stated that teachers needed to be specialized and well qualified in order to educate the students. He wrote that

with regard to the teacher of an Indian school it is quite evident that a special type is required. As I size up instruction for Indian Children, the problem is very much more difficult than the average school of foreign speaking children. Normal training, wide experience, broad human sympathy and missionary zeal are very desirable but in addition an investigative and experimental turn of mind is the most necessary qualification in order that special study and special tests be made of the problem of education of Indian Children.<sup>54</sup>

In reality, the qualifications of teachers in schools for Indigenous peoples were minimal and not parallel to that of non-Native schools.<sup>55</sup>

Poor treatment at the schools including physical, emotional/spiritual and sexual abuse was also a significant cause of parental and student discontent, as was the ban on Indigenous languages and traditional ceremonies and religion. Historian Mary-Ellen Kelm explains that "the struggle between the schools' commitment to cultural imperialism and the First Nations' ability to mediate the forces of that imperialism [was] inscribed on the bodies of the children who experienced residential schooling."<sup>56</sup> The refusal by church and government officials to find meaningful ways of teaching children who came from an oral rather than a written culture was also a noteworthy issue.<sup>57</sup> It is important to remember that for Indigenous students in these early years the concept of reading and writing was new to them. In 1923 inspector J. Boyce's report on the Old Sun School reminded officials that the Department needed to be "mindful of the fact that Indian children have no literacy background... and as a consequence it would not be fair to the Indian children to expect the same degree of attainment in classroom work."<sup>58</sup> Yet, government and church officials had expected much more (and much more quickly)

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<sup>54</sup> Old Sun's Inspection Report, by J. Boyce, 1923, LAC, RG 10, vol. 8452, file 772/23-5002, MR C 13801.

<sup>55</sup> Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 135.

<sup>56</sup> Kelm, "A Scandalous Procession," 51.

<sup>57</sup> This abuse is detailed in works such as Milloy, John S. *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 1999, and *Shingwauk's Vision*.

<sup>58</sup> Old Sun's Inspection Report, by J. Boyce, 1923.

of the boarding and industrial school system. This frustration combined with mounting costs would lead to significant changes in the system in the 1920s.

*Beginning of a "Residential" School System*

In 1923, motivated by the high costs and poor return of the school system, government officials decided to merge boarding and industrial schools. By this time about half of the industrial schools had closed and the overall impact of boarding and industrial schools had not been what officials had expected. Likewise, about half of the industrial and boarding schools on Treaty 7 lands had closed by the 1920s.<sup>59</sup> In 1907 the first school to close was the Calgary Industrial School, which had only been open for a decade. Its closure was due to low attendance as First Nations students had several other school options in the area. Red Deer industrial school was the second to close because of its supposed inefficiencies, and it would be replaced by a boarding school in Edmonton. Three years later in 1922, the High River Industrial School would also be closed, without a replacement school. In the next few years several school closures would follow since Indian Affairs deemed the schools to be economically inefficient.<sup>60</sup>

In this new model of schooling, industrial schools and boarding schools would now be known as "residential" schools and attendance would be mandatory.<sup>61</sup> Fewer trades would be taught than had been the case in industrial schools and cost-saving measures would be enacted at the boarding schools. Child labour was ultimately allowed and encouraged by the Department in order to subsidize funding, resulting in overworked and under-taught students. Abuse continued, as did poor quality education. Clearly, much remained to be done before it could be said that the government had fulfilled the education promises they had made in Treaty 7.

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<sup>59</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>60</sup> Pettit, "To Christianize and Civilize," 347.

<sup>61</sup> Pettit, "To Christianize and Civilize," 335.

## Appendix

### 1.

Name	Location	Opened	Closed
High River Industrial (Dunbow/St. Joseph's)	High River	1884	1922
Immaculate Conception Residential School (a combination of Immaculate Conception Boarding School and Blood Indian Residential School)	Stand-Off	1884	1926
McDougall Orphanage and Residential School (Morley Indian Residential School)	Morley	1873	1949
Peigan Indian Residential School (Victoria Jubilee Home)	Brocket	1892	1965
Red Deer Industrial School	Red Deer	1893	1919
Sarcee Indian Residential School	Calgary	1894	1930
Old Sun's Boarding School (a combination of North Camp Residential, White Eagle's Boarding, and Short Robe Boarding Schools)	Gleichen	1894 – this school burned down in 1912 and was re-opened in 1929	1971
Calgary Industrial School	Calgary	1896	1907
St. Barnabas Indian Residential School	Sarcee Reserve	1899	1922
St. Cyprian's Indian Residential School	Brocket	1900	1962
St. Paul's Indian Residential School	Cardston	1900	1972
Crowfoot Indian Residential School	Cluny	1909	1968
Immaculate Conception Boarding School (a combination of Blood Indian Residential school and St. Mary's Mission Boarding School)	Stand-off	1911	1975

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