

**In a State of Metamorphosis:  
Artistic Responses in the  
Legacy of the Residential School Experience**

by

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## ABSTRACT

### IN A STATE OF METAMORPHOSIS: ARTISTIC RESPONSES IN THE LEGACY OF THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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This thesis explores artworks created by established Canadian Aboriginal artists in response to the Residential School experience. The prototype Residential School was the Carlisle Indian Residential School in Pennsylvania founded by Captain Richard Henry Pratt who, although he liked Indians, had little use for Indian culture (Adams 51). Pratt's vision was to reform "the Indian," which stated his goal was to "kill the Indian and save the man" (Adams 52) through a comprehensive education and training program designed to make the Indian a citizen.

In Canada, the Canadian government adopted an "aggressive civilization" policy similar to that of the Carlisle Indian Residential School, upon graduation "the Indian" would have learned the English language, individualism, Christianity, and trades to function as a citizen. However, in Canada the driving force behind Residential Schools was not intended to reform "the Indian", but rather to outright exterminate Aboriginal culture through acts of genocide. The intentions behind assimilation were clearly stated by the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, "I want to get rid of the Indian problem.... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian Question and no Indian Department" (AFH, *Healing* 3). The goal for Residential Schools was to keep Aboriginal children separated from their culture for as long as possible and immersed in a "so-called" civilized environment of Residential Schools. This environment was

foreign, unfamiliar and frightening for Aboriginal children. The curriculum and vocational training were often accompanied by corporal punishment that left many Aboriginal children devastated by the Residential School experience.

This thesis focuses upon established Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal artists who have exhibited works in response to the residential themes. Artists such as Robert Houle, Adrian Stimson, Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Jane Ash Poitras, Lita Fontaine and Carl Beam seek to represent the emotional, physical and spiritual effects of the Residential Schools on Aboriginal lives and histories. There has been little research on the Aboriginal artistic response to the Residential School experience, and with this thesis I hope to fill this void.

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## **Abbreviations**

AFN	Assembly of First Nations
AHF	Aboriginal Healing Foundation
AIC	Amnesty International Canada
AJIC	Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission
DIA	Department of Indian Affairs
IRS	Indian Residential School
NCNTC	Nuu-Chan-Nulth Tribal Council
NGC	National Gallery of Canada
NRC	National Research Centre
SCES	Secwepemc Cultural Education Society
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
UNGC	United Nations Genocide Convention
WAG	Winnipeg Art Gallery

## **Introduction**

In 1879, Captain Richard Henry Pratt, of the 10<sup>th</sup> United States Cavalry, established the first Residential School. His Carlisle Residential School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, was intended to teach male Aboriginal students farming and agriculture, and female Aboriginal students cooking, cleaning and sewing, and the English language. Because Pratt believed that Indians were inferior in every way to Europeans, he had little use for Indian culture (Adams 51). However, he believed in reforming the Indian with so-called ideals of European civilization, and believed that through a comprehensive program of education he could make them more like white middle-class men and women. According to Pratt, these off-reserve schools would become successful in civilizing the Indian, and he recommended that “Indian children would have to be removed from the reservation environment altogether if they were going to be effectively assimilated” (Adams 55).

The Canadian government adopted a policy of assimilation to reform the Indian using a structure similar to that of the Carlisle Residential School (AHF, *Healing* 4; Furniss 25). Running Residential Schools in Canada was a joint venture between the government and the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches to enfranchise the Indian (Furniss 26). In 1920, Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, expressed his vision to commit cultural genocide against Aboriginal people by saying “I want to get rid of the Indian problem... Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politics and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department” (qtd. in AHF, *Healing* 3). The goal of Residential Schools was to keep Aboriginal children separated from their culture for as long as possible and immersed in a so-called civilized environment. The environment of the Residential School was foreign, unfamiliar and frightening for Aboriginal children. The curriculum and vocational training were often accompanied by corporal

punishment, and the abuses that occurred in the Residential Schools were not publicly exposed until 1990 by Aboriginal First Nations Grand Chief Phil Fontaine, who negotiated a Statement of Reconciliation and a healing fund for survivors of Residential School (TRC, *Remembers* screen; AFN, *Chronology* screen1).

In 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was formally established. The TRC Chief Commissioner, Murray Sinclair argued that “genocide had been committed” (MacDonald 6) and in a CBC television documentary series *8<sup>th</sup> Fire*, broadcast in February of 2012, Sinclair stated “to take children away and to place them with another group in a society for the purpose of racial indoctrination was – and is – an act of genocide” (qtd. in MacDonald 1), as defined by the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC) of 1948. The Indian Residential School system “was a violation of Article 2 [e] which prohibits the forcible transfer of children from one group to another” (MacDonald 1). Article 2 of the 1948 UNGC defines genocide as:

Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, such as:

- [a] Killing members of the group;
- [b] Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- [c] Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- [d] Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- [e] Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (MacDonald 5-6).

Before Article 2 was adopted into Canada, the original draft, in 1947, included the definition of cultural genocide as the following:

- [a] forcible transfer of children to another human group; or
- [b] forced and systematic exile of individuals representing the culture of a group; or
- [c] prohibition of the use of the national language even in private intercourse, or
- [d] systematic destruction of books printed in the national language or of religious works or prohibition of new publications; or
- [e] systematic destruction of historical or religious monument or their diversion to alien uses, destruction or dispersion of documents and objects used in religious worship (MacDonald 5).

Only section [a] of Article 2 was adopted by Canada; however, all five sections would have applied to Aboriginal people (MacDonald 5). Yet Canada uses the full definition of genocide to refuse entry to refugee claimants who have participated in acts of genocide outside of Canada, “but has no means to punish those guilty of UNGC genocide *within* the country” (MacDonald 9). On February 27, 2012, Sinclair tweeted on the Aboriginal People Television Network, “IRS policy was an act of genocide under the UN Convention. Canada however cannot be convicted of the crime” (qtd. in MacDonald 11) based on two arguments: first, “the full UNGC is not part of Canada law” (MacDonald 11), and second, “the government of Canada could be charged with genocide would be by being brought to the International Court of Justice by another state government” (MacDonald 11).

Functions sponsored by the TRC between May and August of 2012 in Ontario included a *Symposium and Healing Circles* in Muncey, two conferences - one entitled *From Indian Residential Schools to Truth and Reconciliation* at Trent University in Peterborough and the other *Shingwauk 2012 Commemoration Gathering & Conference Healing & Reconciliation through Education* in Sault Ste Marie - and a survivors’ walk entitled the *Truth and Reconciliation Walkers* in North Bay. These gatherings are not only necessary for survivors, but are also a means to remember those who did not survive (Kapyrka 15).

Another important response in which reconciliation is evident is in the visual arts. This thesis will therefore analyze the visual art work that artists created to respond to the Residential School experience. The artistic response to the Residential School experience has been wide and varied. It has happened among established artists with international reputations, newer less-established artists and members of the public participating in the TRC project. The TRC project described in chapter one is currently unavailable for public access and, therefore, cannot be

considered in this thesis; however, this material would be ideal for future study. Given the scope of this thesis, it was not possible to include newer, less-established artists especially when their works have not yet been published. Instead, this thesis focuses upon established Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal artists who have exhibited works in response to the residential themes. Artists include such as Robert Houle, Adrian Stimson, Carl Beam, Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Jane Ash Poitras and Lita Fontaine where chosen in order to analyze the significance of the Residential School experience to the artists themselves and, more generally, within the contexts of Aboriginal history and culture.

Robert Houle is of Sauteaux descent and attended the Sandy Bay Indian Residential School in Manitoba. Houle earned a BA in Art History from the University of Manitoba and in 1975 graduated from McGill University with a Bachelor of Education in Art Education. In his work, he experimented with modern art as a manifestation of spirituality by incorporating ideas of Native mysticism with monochrome paint colours (Rushing III 36). This experimentation led Houle to create a body of work which reflects his personal reconciliation with the Residential School experience.

The parents of Adrian Stimson met while they were employed at the Shingwauk Residential School in Sault Ste Marie. Stimson was born in the Sault, and is of Blackfoot decent. He spent his early childhood years engaged with Aboriginal students of the Shingwauk Residential School, and his family later returned to Alberta where he was enrolled in the Chief Old Sun Indian Residential School, an institution named after a distant relative. In 2005 Stimson graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a Masters of Fine Arts. His experiences inspired him to create two works of art with found objects from the Chief Old Sun Residential

School, which he combined with elements of nature to express a history of oppression linked to the Residential School experience.

Carl Beam (1943-2005) was of mixed ancestry that consisted of Ojibway and European descent. He had attended the St Peter Claver and St Charles Garnier Residential School for boys in Spanish, Ontario. In 1974, Beam graduated from the University of Victoria with a Bachelor of Fine Arts, and in the later 1980's created a work reflecting cultural genocide and a video to express reconciliation with oppression.

Joane Cardinal-Schubert (1942-2009) was of Blackfoot and German descent, and graduated from the University of Calgary with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1977. Cardinal-Schubert created an interactive installation piece that is two-fold; first it encourages healing for those Aboriginal people who attended Residential School, and second it is a memorial for those who want to remember someone who attended Residential School. However, it is unknown if Cardinal-Schubert was inspired to create this work because she or any members of her family had attended Residential School.

Jane Ash Poitras is of Cree descent and was orphaned at age six. She was adopted by a German woman and raised as a devoted Catholic in Edmonton, Alberta. After obtaining a Bachelor in Science in Microbiology and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Alberta, she graduated from Columbia University with a Masters in Fine Arts in 1985. While studying at the University of Alberta, Poitras reconnected with her birth family and learned of her Aboriginal identity. Given her deep interest in plant biology, she was fascinated by Aboriginal medicines, and combined natural and commercial medicinal materials to create a general historical artistic response to the Residential School experience. As with Cardinal-Schubert, it is not clear whether Poitras or members of her family had attended Residential School.

Lita Fontaine is of Dakota, Ojibwa and European descent, and graduated from the University of Regina with a Masters in Fine Arts in 2001. Fontaine's mother, Rose Anne Contois, attended the Portage la Prairie Residential School in Manitoba, and Fontaine created two works which express her mother's personal history and which commemorate Rose Anne Contois.

These particular Aboriginal artists have been awarded various medals for making a significant contribution to the arts and the Aboriginal community: the Commemorative Medal of Canada, Queens's Golden Jubilee Medal, and awards from the Manitoba Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, and the National Aboriginal Achievement Award. In addition, they have been awarded with Honorary Doctor of Laws, Alumni Awards, and inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy. Their work has been shown nationally and internationally, and is recognized among the Aboriginal community of Canada.

In order to explain the history of Residential Schools, the first Chapter discusses policies and conditions implemented by the Canadian government which allowed it to assert ultimate control over "the Indian", and which were intended to solve the "so-called" Indian problem. The government policy of "aggressive civilization" which "the Indian" would learn the English language, individualism, Christianity and trades. This policy was intended to transform the Indian into a useful member of society through education and training at Residential Schools.

Chapter two focuses on the forced conversion of Aboriginal people to Christianity in order to civilize the Indian. Works of art created in response to Christianity and civilization includes the series *Parfleches for the Last Supper* and the *Old Sun* installation. *Parfleches for the Last Supper* addresses a correlation between Christianity and Native mysticism in which the artist uses concepts related to skin and sacrifice in his work. The *Old Sun* installation is a

modern architectural structure symbolically layered with symbols of Native mysticism and foreign conquest to reflect a new hybrid identity.

Chapter three focuses on the education that Aboriginal students received inside the classroom in order to prepare them for citizenship, and focuses on language, which was a barrier between Aboriginal students and English-speaking faculty. The works under consideration include *Sauvage*, *The Lesson* and *Potato Peeling 101 to Ethnobotany 101*. *Sauvage* compares the cultural genocide of two nations in which one nation experienced an immediate loss and the other a long slow death. *The Lesson* examines colonial history from an Aboriginal perspective and commemorates Aboriginal people. *Potato Peeling 101 to Ethnobotany 101* documents a historical progression of Indian citizenship to include the successful academic achievement of Aboriginal people today.

Chapter four focuses on the vocational training of Aboriginal male and female students to become self-sufficient citizens. Gender training includes farming, agriculture and trades, and labour that took place outside the “home” versus the domestic arts practiced inside the “home” such as training in the kitchen, sewing room and dormitory space. In addition to gender training, Aboriginal male and female students were physically transformed to mirror white middle-class men and women, through school uniforms and hair styles, in order to begin the transformation from “savage” to citizen. A work that documents the transformation to citizenship is *Mom* and *Mom Too*, and the installation *Sick and Tired*, which depicts the broken spirits of Aboriginal children as the result of the Residential School experience.

## Chapter One: History of Residential Schools in Canada

This chapter discusses the implementation of Indian Residential Schools as an aggressive civilization policy that the Canadian government initiated to solve the so-called “Indian problem”. The history of this problem has been described in the Aboriginal Healing Foundations (AHF) literatures as:

For over 300 years, Europeans and Aboriginal peoples regarded one another as distinct nations. In war, colonists and Indians formed alliances, and in trade each enjoyed the economic benefits of co-operation. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, European hunger for land had expanded dramatically, and the economic base of the colonies shifted from fur to agriculture. Alliance of the early colonial era gave way, during the period of settlement expansion and nation-building, to direct competition for land and resources. Settlers began to view Aboriginal people as a ‘problem’. (AHF, *Healing* 3)

Therefore, this so-called “Indian problem” became an obstacle for European expansion. It became necessary for Europeans to find solutions in order to eliminate the “Indian problem”. A solution for this “problem” was proposed in 1857 when Upper Canada passed an *Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian*. This *Gradual Civilization Act* was designed to enfranchise the Indian and through this Act the government expected the Indian “to abandon their cherished life ways, to become ‘civilized’ and thus to lose themselves and their culture among the mass of Canadians” (Milloy 21). Within the *Gradual Civilization Act*, the government “replaced traditional government with ‘municipal government’ and gave extensive control of reserves to the federal government and its representative, the Indian Affairs Department” (Milloy 21). In other words, the institutionalization of this act enabled the government to have ultimate control over “the Indian” and, in addition, create whatever infrastructure was necessary to achieve assimilation (Milloy 21).

In 1879 Sir John A. Macdonald appointed Nicholas Flood Davin to investigate the operations of Indian Residential Schools in the United States (Miller 101). His recommendations

would be implemented in Canadian Residential Schools (Miller 101). The recommendations of the Davin Report were made to Sir John A. MacDonald, and Davin suggested that the Canadian government should implement a policy known as “aggressive civilization” for the Indian people of Canada (AHF, *Healing* 3). In his report Davin specifically recommended that Indians be provided with permanent homes on reservations, that they abolish all traditional practices, that they become citizens as soon as possible to be protected by the law, and that the government should be responsible for preparing Indians for citizenship by educating them in industry and domestic arts (AHF, *Healing* 3). Davin indicated that Aboriginal people were uncivilized, and pointed out that education would assist in destroying the Indian (AHF, *Healing* 3). Within the Davin Report, Colonel Pleasant Porter, an educator, explained that education provided for the Indian must include a “manual labour school” to teach “the Indian” how to work in farming, agriculture and trades (Davin 6). In order to do this, Aboriginal students at Residential Schools were required to perform manual labour work for two hours a day and half a day on Saturdays (Davin 7). The goal of this “manual labour school” was to make Residential Schools self supporting, and able to pay for themselves within a few years with little financing provided by the government (Davin 3). In addition to performing manual labour jobs, Indian students would learn basic English skills (Davin 6).

Davin estimated the types of equipment and building structures required for Residential School to include the following: a building for the school and its dormitory as well as a barn; farming equipment, livestock, seeds, food supplies for livestock; and beds, blankets, textbooks, etc. However, the Canadian government was concerned with the cost of food as it wanted students to be adequately provided for. At the same time, Davin recommended to the government that it contract the operations of these boarding schools to be contracted the church

and, in turn, that the church would assume responsibility for the food expenses (Davin 2). In this way the Canadian government could save on some of the expenditures: Davin reported an estimated cost for boarding one child for ten months a year would be 7.00 per month, therefore totaling 70.00 per student per ten months, the equivalent of an academic year (Davin 7). The Davin Report was primarily concerned with providing a list of expenses on the startup costs of Residential Schools, including recommendations on recovering those costs by implementing a manual labour program for its students to follow.

In 1883, following the Davin report, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald stated to the House of Commons that an education was good for the white men but, for the Indian, education would make him a “better man” and possibly a good Christian (Miller 103). The Residential School system officially began in Canada in 1892 (AHF, *Healing* 3).

Marlene Brant Castellano explains the misconceptions about Residential Schools when she asserts that Aboriginal people negotiated education in exchange for sharing their territories with Europeans (251). The government accepted this condition, and agreed to fund Aboriginal education, especially because Aboriginal people wanted these schools to provide skills to their children, just as the schools provided them to non-Aboriginal children (Brant Castellano 251). However, Aboriginal people did not request cultural assimilation, nor did they ask that their children be physically or sexually abused, deprived and humiliated which took place at Residential Schools across Canada (Brant Castellano 251). Therefore, education for Aboriginal people was not free, but rather was tied to the surrendering of their land, and to giving up their children to be assimilated into white culture.

## **Isolation Engendered by Indian Residential Schools**

Aboriginal children were taken from their families and communities and then placed in Indian Residential Schools, which were located in remote areas distant from their homes. This distance made it impossible for Aboriginal children to return home or have contact with family or have family members visit their children at Residential Schools.

Upon arrival at Residential Schools, Aboriginal children found themselves in a new and unfamiliar architectural setting. For instance, an anonymous survivor from the Kamloops Indian Residential School recalls when he arrived at Residential School, it looked huge, and he did not know how he was going to find his way around the school because everything was so big, strange and unfamiliar including the smell of the polished floors (SCES 82). Andrew Amos recalls being homesick and he had feeling of displacement upon his arrival at the Kamloops Residential School (SCES 25).

This new architectural space was designed to enable the “so-called” civilizing process. The school was an artificial environment that was dramatically different from the home of Aboriginal children; the physical spaces of the classroom, dormitory and dining hall were terrifying and alien. These spaces were large open areas filled with rows of desks, tables, chairs and beds, unlike the private spaces of their home. For example, “Alice”<sup>1</sup> in her first experience of the classroom at the Kamloops Residential School, recalls that on her first day of school, she and her classmates entered inside the classroom which they saw for the very first time, rows of tiny little desks, and they sat there wondering what was going to happen (Haig-Brown 62). In the homes of Aboriginal children, there are no large open spaces, but rather the rooms are small

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<sup>1</sup> The names “Alice”, “Leo”, “Charlie” and “Sophie” are pseudonym names to maintain confidentiality and conceal the identity of these Residential School survivors, however, the gender of the student and name of the Residential School are correct (Haig-Brown 143 & 145).

with a limited amount of furniture including the bedroom which may have one or two beds per room.

In addition to the alien physical environment of these schools, Aboriginal children were immediately stripped of their personal clothing, material objects and their long hair. This humiliating process contributed to their feeling of alienation, isolation, and loss of identity and connection to their community. Aboriginal children who attended these Residential Schools were forced to change their habits, learn a new culture, a new language and perform different chores previously unknown to them. They had to wear western style clothing, eat strange foods, and adopt different eating and sleeping patterns. These new and unusual policies and procedures were enforced onto each Aboriginal child, and the consequences for not following these rules resulted in harsh discipline and humiliating punishment. Furthermore, the education provided to Aboriginal children was equally alienating, and it included training in industry and the civilized or domestic arts, which were intended to make Aboriginal people “useful” in Western society.

In order to enable the successful assimilation into Western society, Aboriginal children were segregated by gender at Residential Schools, female Aboriginal students learned domestic skills and male Aboriginal students learned farming, agriculture and trades (Miller 159 & 164). Miller emphasizes that these gender specific roles mirrored European male and female duties (159).

Family ties were successfully broken by means of the “mental torture” and “physical torture” inflicted on family members who were not allowed to see or speak to their brothers and sisters. For instance, an anonymous survivor from the Christie Indian Residential School, recalls:

What I remember first is the loneliness for my sisters, because I, we weren't allowed to see them. We were segregated in Christie School.... We were punished if we were seen talking or looking to my sisters. I was punished for it.... strap on the forearms. (qtd. in NCNTC 16)

Another example, Daniel Short, a student of Christie Indian Residential School, explains he couldn't speak to his older brothers or sisters. This forced segregation which destroyed his family still continues today, as he explained they remain distant (NCNTC 16).

In other words, the government instituted a plan to divide and conquer Aboriginal people by means of a forced isolation from their homes, communities and within their families. For instance, the Residential Schools located in Spanish, Ontario, were segregated by gender, one for Aboriginal boys and one for Aboriginal girls. Both schools were opened in 1883, and closed in 1965 (AHF, *Directory* 22). Yet they were located within close proximity to one another, as illustrated in the archival photograph *St Peter Claver and St Charles Garnier for Aboriginal boys and St Joseph's Indian Residential Schools for Aboriginal girls* (Figure 1.1). This image depicts the schools surrounded by an ideal untouched landscape, a landscape which could represent a meeting point between wilderness and civilization, where wilderness represents nature and Aboriginal people, and the buildings represent progress and civilization. Residential Schools were often isolated in rural areas, and were separated by gender: for example, the St Peter Claver and St Charles Garnier Indian Residential School for Aboriginal boys located on one side of the road, and St Joseph's Indian Residential School for Aboriginal girls located on the other side of the road. This forced segregation left Aboriginal children suffering from separation anxiety, missing their siblings, parents, family members, language, food, home and community, all of which contributed to the isolation and loneliness of the child. As Vivian Ignace recalls:

I'd lie in my bed, it seemed like the only place where you could be with your thoughts and by yourself was in your bed after lights out, and cry myself to sleep. Always looking

for my Mom and Dad, my goodness, my brothers I'm sure they were going through the same kinds of things. (qtd. in SCES 156)

Thus, as a student of Kamloops Indian Residential School, Vivian Ignace cried out of pure loneliness and isolation from her family.

### **Traditional Roles and Gender Assimilation Training in Indian Residential School**

In Aboriginal societies the division of labour was separated along gender lines. Aboriginal women worked communally apart from the men. However, Aboriginal men and women were skilled in each other's tasks, whatever those might have been, therefore, they respected the work of each other (Anderson 59). In addition, within Aboriginal societies, Aboriginal women were economically independent, and had political and spiritual power within their communities. The economic conditions of the home and community benefitted from the work of Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women determined what was essential for the survival of the community (Anderson 61). For instance, Aboriginal women were the primary caregivers of children, they controlled food production and distribution, they owned the home and its furnishings, and they were involved in agriculture, they transformed raw materials into needed cultural items, and they decided what materials were not needed and gave these materials to the men to trade, therefore, taking only what was needed to sustain their community (Anderson 61).

Aboriginal men and women shared leadership and authority in their community. The authority was group orientated rather than having one individual leader or controlled by a dominant male authority. Aboriginal men and women were considered equal, and their opinions, regardless of gender, were highly valued in the decision making process (Anderson 65). However, Aboriginal women did embody spiritual power and spirituality was considered the life giving force that is female centered (Anderson 71). Women were thought to be an intermediary

force that links the spiritual world with the physical world. The act of giving birth was seen as a portal between these two worlds in which the woman brought new life from the spiritual world into the physical world (Anderson 73). For example, it was believed that the form of the sweat lodge resembled the shape of the womb, and that the sweat lodge ceremony was used to communicate with the spiritual world making it a place for purification (Anderson 73).

It is ironic, therefore, that forced gendered training in Residential Schools placed Aboriginal women in the same gendered category as middle-class white women in which white women have very little power compared to white men. This situation is unlike that of Aboriginal women who had economic independence, and spiritual and political power (Anderson 63). A Methodist educator provided a list of domestic skills to be learned by female Aboriginal students in Indian Residential School:

Housework, mending, sewing, darning, use of thimbles, needles, scissors, brooms, brushes, knives, forks and spoons. The cooking of meats and vegetables, the recipes for various dishes, bread making, buns, pies, materials used in quantity. Washing, ironing, bluing, what clothing should be boiled and what not, why white may be boiled and colored not, how to take stains from white clothing, how to wash colored clothes, the difference between hard and soft water. Dairying, milking, care of milk, cream, churning, house work. Sweeping, scrubbing, dusting, care of furniture, books, linen, etc. They should also be taught garden work. Our own women have to do a great deal of garden work, and it is of the greatest importance that the Indian girl should know how. Instruction should be given in the elements of physiology and hygiene, explaining particularly proper habits in eating and drinking, cleanliness, ventilation, the manner of treating emergency cases, such as hemorrhage, fainting, drowning, sunstroke, nursing and general care of the sick. Such an all-round training fits a girl to be mistress of her home very much better than if she spent her whole time in the class-room. (Miller 159)

In other words, it is not until Aboriginal women learned the domestic skills of white women that an Aboriginal woman would become a “good housekeeper”, ultimately solving one aspect of the “Indian problem”. This transformation is evident in the archival photograph *the kitchens: the preserve of female students and staff* (Figure 1.2) which young Aboriginal women are depicted engaged in the domestic habits of white middle-class women. These young Aboriginal women

are training to become domestic workers for white middle-class women and their families. In this image two students are dressed like civilized white women, they are wearing identical short sleeve dresses with a white apron over top and their hair pulled back under bonnets. The classroom is set up as a mock kitchen. The students are engaged in the art of baking, an act that indicates they are “good homemakers”, and which suggests they are knowledgeable in working with domestic appliances found in “the home”. This particular domestic training reflects gendered work, where women teach women domestic skills. This image clearly depicts the transformation of Aboriginal women into white middle-class women shown immersed in a new culture of domestic arts. In other words, this image affirms the status of white middle-class women by depicting Aboriginal women performing the same types of domestic work. The implication is that this training will make the homes of Aboriginal women “a better place”. Domestic work performed by white middle-class women was classified as the highest achievement of civilized culture in managing the home and, furthermore, for white middle-class women “the home” was the centre of civilization (Simonsen 67). Because Aboriginal women were trained in domestic skills in Residential Schools, their level of education was not suitable for post-secondary education. Skills such as preparing meals, serving table, scrubbing floors, knitting, sewing, repairing the clothes of other students, and darning were useful only for them as domestic workers for white middle-class families living near reserves (NCNTC 120). Therefore, the domestic training of Aboriginal women transformed their identity by integrating them into white middle-class values, making them both civilized women and domestic professionals.

Aboriginal men were also subjected to the government’s education plan. Anderson explains that traditionally Aboriginal men worked outside the community as hunters and warriors, and they owned nothing but their clothing, spiritual items, weapons and a horse for

hunting (61). Conversely, any goods or materials Aboriginal men brought into the community belonged to the women (Anderson 61). In this way, Aboriginal men provided for their families and community. However, a Methodist educator explained the education and training for male Aboriginal students in Indian Residential School in the following way:

It is not worth while trying to teach them trades and professions, in fact such an education would begin after the boy leaves an industrial school, since the Department require the discharge at the age of eighteen. It was best for an Indian boy to learn something of farming, gardening, care of stock and carpenter work. His agricultural training should be of an advanced character, covering stock raising, dairying, care and management of poultry, hogs and horses. (Miller 158)

In other words, Residential Schools provided an education in agriculture for Aboriginal male students. These students were immersed in various labour activities outside “the home” or even outside the Residential School. Manual labour school prepared Aboriginal males to be labourers, evident in the archival photograph *At the Chooutla School in Yukon, the furnaces required an enormous quantity of wood, much of it prepared by the boys in 1934* (Figure 1.3), which depicts a large amount of firewood cut by Aboriginal boys, necessary to heat the poorly constructed Residential Schools (Miller 260). The firewood was chopped, hauled, and stacked by Aboriginal male children, and represents enough wood to maintain the furnace of the school for two seasons (Miller 261). Charlie Mickey, a student of Christie Indian Residential School, recalls:

When I got to be maybe like 7, 8 years old, then I had to work, Work like a horse... We all had to work... I would say half a mile, over a mile, from the woods. I'd carry a piece of wood, split, I would split it up. It would have been about that size {indicates 5' length}, from a big log..... and I'd carry that. There was so many trips made that one day....we can't stay over there too long... we had to be right back. Work, work, work. (qtd. in NCNTC 116)

Providing firewood and maintaining the furnace of the school was a part of the training that male Aboriginal children received.

## **Food Served at Indian Residential Schools**

Meals were served to Aboriginal children in Residential Schools at scheduled intervals during the day, forcing them to adjust to the white man's schedule in order to become "civilized" (Adams 114). The dining hall was another space in which civilized behaviour was taught to Aboriginal children to learn middle-class table manners. For example, Frank Mitchell, a student of Carlisle Indian Residential School, recalls:

One of the problems we faced...was that we did not know how to eat at a table. We had to be told how to use the knife, fork and spoons. And when we started eating, we were so used to eating with our fingers that we wanted to do it that way at school, and we had to be taught. (qtd. in Adams 116)

In addition to eating new foods, Aboriginal students had to learn new methods of eating to conform to the white man's customs. Therefore, Aboriginal children learned how to use knives, forks, spoons, tablecloths, napkins and adopted middle class table manners.

The food served to Aboriginal students left them malnourished and hungry. For instance, William Brewer, a student of Kamloops Indian Residential School, recalls his arrival: "they took us to the dining room and they gave up a couple slices of bread and some jam and some milk. We were waiting for the main course and that was it" (SCES 40). Likewise, Mary John, a student of Lejac Residential School, recalls "I was always hungry. I missed the roast moose, the dried beaver meat, the fish fresh from the frying pan, the warm bread and bannock and berries.... I believed I was hungry for all the seven years I was at school" (qtd. in Grant 114). The commodities of fresh milk, eggs, butter, and harvested vegetables, material items made by Aboriginal women in sewing class, as well as the bailed hay cut and the animals slaughtered by male Aboriginal students were sold by the staff to white neighbouring communities (Churchill 47; NCNTC 119). The malnourished Aboriginal children were essentially slaves forced to engage in hard labour with little sustenance.

## Cultural Genocide

The implementation of Residential Schools was the first step towards civilizing the Indian (Adams 97). The civilizing process was designed to change the identity of Indian children (Adams 100). First, the Aboriginal child was removed from his or her home. Second, the Aboriginal child was required to be educated in white culture learning their ideas, values, and behaviors (Adams 100). Aboriginal children arrived at Residential Schools in elegant buckskin clothing which they were stripped of and then their long hair was sheared off. Long hair was a symbol of “savagism” and, therefore, although the cutting of hair was a traumatic experience for Aboriginal children, it was central to “civilization” (Adams 101). Thus, the main focus was on the visual appearance of Indian children, and grooming and dress were top priority to make them appear like white middle-class children (Miller 195).

During their time in Residential Schools, Aboriginal male students were dressed in identical military-style uniforms while Aboriginal female students were dressed in identical formal dresses (Miller 195). An example, of the transformation from a “savage” to a “civilized” person can be found in the photograph *Thomas Moore before and after attending Regina Industrial School* (Figure 1.4). These two images clearly illustrate the difference between a student prior to entering the Residential School and after entering having had his hair cut and wearing institutional dress. John Milloy provides this description:

There, in the photograph on the left, is the young Thomas posed against a fur robe, in his beaded dress, his hair in long braids, clutching a gun. Displayed for the viewer are the symbols of the past – of Aboriginal costume and culture, of hunting, of the disorder and violence of warfare and of the cross-culture partnerships of the fur trade and of the military alliances that had dominated life in Canada since the late sixteenth century. (3-4).

The juxtaposition of the two images reflects Canadian and Aboriginal codes (Milloy 4). These codes of past and future pay homage to the co-operation and sharing of Aboriginal knowledge

and skills with Europeans which enabled them to find their way and to prosper (Milloy 4).

Milloy points out that the Aboriginal way of life is historic, a part of the past and not the future

(4). Canada became a new nation in 1867 with its future being “one of settlement, agriculture, manufacturing, lawfulness, and Christianity” (Milloy 4). As Milloy says about the second images of Thomas Moore:

That future was inscribed in the photograph on the right. Thomas, with his hair carefully barbered, in his plain, humble suit, stands confidently, hand on hip, in a new context. Here he is framed by the horizontal and vertical lines of wall and pedestal – the geometry of social and economic order; of place and class, and of private property the foundation of industriousness, the cardinal virtue of late-Victorian culture. But most telling of all, perhaps, is the potted plant. Elevated above him, it is the symbol of civilized life, of agriculture. Like Thomas, the plant is cultivated nature no longer wild. (5-6)

For Milloy, this image was designed for social reformers in Canada; the “groomed” image of Thomas suggests that he had become a functioning member within Canadian society (6). In other words, the image of Thomas depicts the transformation of an Indian into a civilized member of society. The Canadian government, and the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and the Methodist Churches were all fond of these types of images because these photographs were used as propaganda to elevate the effectiveness of Residential School (Miller 195-196).

### **Indian Day Schools**

Before the Canadian government established Residential Schools, the government implemented Indian Days Schools which were somewhat different from Residential Schools. Indian Days Schools were located on or near Native reserves, allowing Aboriginal students to live at home and attend school during the day. The attendance at Indian Day Schools was relatively low and Aboriginal children were not retaining what they were being taught (Tobias 48). Therefore, this situation provided evidence that Indian Day Schools were less successful at

assimilating Aboriginal people and teaching them industry and civilized arts. This was a stark contrast to boarding schools or Residential Schools, where Aboriginal children were removed from their family and community. Aboriginal parents rejected the idea of having their children sent to Residential Schools which were located far from their family and community because this dislocation would inevitably alienate the child from his culture (Tobias 48). In 1894 the government responded to parents' anxiety by amending the Indian Act authorizing the Governor-in-Council to make changes as needed to commit Aboriginal children to Indian Residential Schools (Tobias 48).

### **Health Conditions in Indian Residential Schools**

In 1907, Campbell Scott asked the Head Medical Officer of the Department of Indian Affairs, Dr. Peter Bryce, to report on the health conditions of Aboriginal students in boarding schools (Bryce 3). He reported that tuberculosis was present in children at every age, and the "disease showed an excessive mortality in the pupils between five and ten years of age" (Bryce 5).

Dr. Bryce explained that he had experience and knowledge working with tuberculosis among Aboriginal students in Residential Schools, and that he was invested in improving the health of Indian people (Bryce 8). Campbell Scott had written a letter to Dr. Bryce explaining that his medical reports on the health conditions of Aboriginal students at Residential Schools were no longer required and that his salary and duties as Chief Medical Officer would consequently be reduced (Bryce 8). One year later Dr. Bryce was replaced by a retired physician who was inexperienced in dealing with Indian disease problems (Bryce 8). Dr. Bryce claimed that Campbell Scott had no interest in ever finding a solution to the tuberculosis problem in

Residential Schools (Bryce 8). As previously mentioned in 1920, Campbell Scott stated “I want to get rid of the Indian problem [...] Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada [...] and there is no Indian Question and no Indian Department” (Brant Castellano 253). As a part of this plan, Campbell Scott abolished the position of Chief Medical Inspector of Indian Residential Schools, and the government amended the Indian Act to include section 116 (1), making it a law in Canada that every Aboriginal child seven years old or more shall attend Residential School (AANDC, *Changes* screen 2). The Indian Act legally declared Aboriginal people wards of the state; therefore, they had no inherent rights under the law. The Indian Act was further amended in 1932 to include a new clause, section 119 (6), which allowed truant officers such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to use “as much force as the circumstances require” (AANDC, *Changes* screen 4) to remove the child from his or her home to Residential Schools (AANDC, *Changes* screen 2). This amendment to the Indian Act was made to maximize student enrollment in Residential Schools. This resulted in the overcrowding of Residential Schools where Aboriginal children were forced to live with strangers against their will. For instance, the inspection of the Ermineskin Indian Residential School in Hobbema in 1938, revealed that the basement was converted into new sleeping quarters to offset the overcrowding of the upper floor dormitory (Miller 310). This forced living arrangement with strangers contributed towards a loss in culture for the child, and overcrowding caused separation anxiety for the child that resulted in the profound loneliness of children who longed for their families (NCNTC 128; Miller 338).

## **Dormitory Space in Indian Residential Schools**

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (NCNTC) describes the dormitory space in Residential Schools as unlike the child's bedroom at home, which typically consisted of only one or two beds in a room (NCNTC 37). The school dormitory was a large open cold space that smelled of disinfectant, another reminder that they were in a "foreign place" (NCNTC 37). The floor space was set up with multiple rows of identical beds evenly spaced out. This meant that Aboriginal children were forced to sleep with numerous strangers. Robert Cootes, a student of Alberni Indian Residential School, recalls "it was all these other kids around, and lots of them crying, strange place, big room, and I couldn't sleep. I remember I couldn't sleep for days, I didn't sleep" (qtd. in NCNTC 39). Thus, being in a large strange space mixed with strangers created a terrifying feeling of fear and loneliness for Aboriginal children at night.

Each bed was made with identical blankets with the corners folded under the mattress resembling military style cots. There were no personal belongings such as teddy bears, dolls, homemade blankets, family photographs or material objects of personal comfort that might be found in a person's bedroom at home. The floors were highly polished adding to the cold sterile environment, and the windows in the dormitories were barred (NCNTC 37-38). The photograph *A dormitory at Shingwauk School, Ontario, 1936* (Figure 1.5), depicts an empty, clean space containing rows of perfectly made beds, as seen in military barracks, with a small row of lockers along the back wall. Each bed consists of a top blanket and a pillow leaning against the headboard, and there are no sign of personal belongings on top of or underneath their bed. The floor is highly polished with sunlight bouncing off it. The dormitory was classified as an interior space or domestic space of "the home" and, therefore, female Aboriginal students were responsible for maintaining its cleanliness.

## **Physical Genocide, Excessive Work in Indian Residential Schools**

The idea of forced labour was a recommendation from Davin for Residential Schools to recover their costs while at the same time encouraging Aboriginal students to become “civilized”. Aboriginal students were child labourers in Residential Schools and were not paid. Aboriginal male children were engaged in heavy labour equal to that of adult men and were expected to be responsible for that labour. For instance, Ralph Sandy, a student of Kamloops Indian Residential School, recalls:

You go to school only three hours a day and the rest of the time you’re out working, milking cows. You had to be up at five o’clock in the morning. Work until eight o’clock, then there was the breakfast. Some went to classes, some went to work, so age ten and eleven I was working out there like a slave. You figure it when you’re nine, ten, and eleven and working and slaving out there, it’s very hard for a person. I don’t go to bed until after midnight. (qtd. in SCES 126)

As a result of continuous forced labour, Residential Schools were inadequate in terms of preparing their students for the Canadian economy (Miller 168). This affirmed that Aboriginal people could not be self-sufficient, thus remaining a financial liability due to the lack of education they received in Residential Schools (Miller 168).

During the nineteenth century, the primary focus was to train Aboriginal male students in farming and agriculture to become self-sufficient. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the farming and agricultural industries were in decline, and there was a greater demand for skilled jobs in the modern economy found in urban centres (Miller 164). Therefore, the manual labour program was changed to include courses in blacksmithing and carpentry to meet this new demand (Miller 166). However, funding for vocational training at Residential Schools was hampered by the economic downturn of the Depression, and funds continued to decline further leading up to and during the Second World War (Miller 165).

Following the Depression and the Second World War, mainstream Canadians were concerned with the Canadian economy, and they became interested in post-secondary education (Miller 156). In turn, the government focused on funding post-secondary institutions for its mainstream Canadians, and at the same time was trying to get out of the Residential School business (Miller 165). Yet Residential Schools remained open, and Aboriginal students continued to work as labourers for the school (Miller 165). However, by the 1950's, the classroom instruction for some Residential Schools was reduced to a half-day system, and for other Residential Schools it was further reduced to two hours of academic education per day, and the remainder of the day was devoted to learning unusable skills (Miller 157). For example, Margaret Abel, a student of Kamloops Indian Residential School, recalls:

We all had our jobs marked out for us which were changed about once a month: cleaning the hallways, the church, recreation hall, which took up half the morning. Then it was lunch time. After lunch it was time for school, we all went to our classes. We had our own school and the boys had their own school. They kept us separate all the time. (qtd. in SCES 36).

Aboriginal students reported to their parents they were spending very little time in the classroom learning to read, write and speak English, and they worked a majority of their time performing housework activities and manual labour jobs (Miller 165-166). The parents of Aboriginal students subsequently began to complain that their children were not receiving an adequate education, and these types of labour jobs could be performed at home (Miller 166). In reality these unusable skills were extracting free child labour in order to sustain the financial operations of these Residential Schools (Miller 157), even after the government increased its funding by claiming that these schools were now better staffed and were better equipped (Miller 167). However, it was not the case; during the postwar economic boom in mainstream education in late the 1940s into the 1950s, professional teachers considered Residential Schools to be undesirable

places of employment because the schools were remotely located and poorly equipped (Miller 176). Professional teachers desired to work at non-Residential Schools (Miller 176). Therefore, at the end of the Second World War, Residential Schools wanted qualified staff (Miller 176). The government began closing Residential Schools in the 1970s but the last school remained in operation until 1996 (TRC, *Location* screen 1).

### **The Inquiry into the Treatment of Aboriginal Students in Indian Residential Schools**

It wasn't until 1990 that Grand Chief Phil Fontaine first publicly spoke of abuses in the Residential School which enabled other survivors to speak of their abuses in Residential Schools (TRC, *Remembers* screen 1). In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People recommended a public inquiry to investigate and document the abuses that occurred in Residential Schools (TRC, *Remembers* screen1). In January of 1998, Fontaine negotiated a Statement of Reconciliation and a Healing Fund for \$350 million for survivors of Residential School (TRC, *Remembers* screen1). On June 10, 2008, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered a full apology on behalf of Canadians for the treatment of children in the Residential School system across Canada (AHF, *Responsibility* 357). Harper confirmed that there were one hundred and thirty-two Residential Schools in operation across Canada that were a "joint venture" between the Canadian federal government and the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches (AHF, *Responsibility* 357). The objectives of Residential Schools were to "remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, tradition and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture" (qtd. in AHF, *Responsibility* 357), therefore killing the Indian in the child (AHF, *Responsibility* 357). Harper explained that Aboriginal children were "forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities" (qtd. in AHF, *Responsibility* 357), and that "many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed" (qtd. in

AHF, *Responsibility* 357). Harper acknowledged the courage of thousands of Residential School survivors who came forward to publicly speak about the abuse they suffered (AHF, *Responsibility* 357). In turn, Harper confirmed that the Government of Canada now recognizes the following: “it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes” (qtd. in AHF, *Responsibility* 358), and “it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities” (qtd. in AHF, *Responsibility* 358), and “separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow” (qtd. in AHF, *Responsibility* 358), and “we now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled” (qtd. in AHF, *Responsibility* 358). Post-apology, in 2005, the Canadian government, churches and the Assembly of First Nations began negotiations to resolve these claims, resulting in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement which was finalized in March of 2007. This settlement was the largest out-of-court settlement in Canadian history consisting of five components: a lump sum payment to former survivors of Residential Schools for which the government was jointly and solely responsible for operations; an independent assessment process to settle physical and sexual abuses claims; survivor support programs; memorial projects; and establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) (Regan 7; AFH, *Settlement* 1). The Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement was established in hope of repairing the damaged relations between Aboriginal people and European-Canadian settlers (Regan 6).

The TRC was formally established in 2008. The mandate for the TRC is to focus on historical experiences Aboriginal children were subjected to, to educate the Canadian public, and to enable participants to engage in truth-telling to help in the reconciliation process (Regan 8).

The TRC was created in a joint venture with the National Research Centre (NRC). The mandate of the NRC is to educate Canadians about what happened in these Residential Schools. The NRC will create a permanent record of the policies and operations of Residential Schools, survivor experiences, and the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement and its recommendations (TRC, *Open Call* screen 1). The NRC will compile the largest Canadian collection of oral history that will house millions of records of survivor statements, documents, and photographs alongside artistic expressions (TRC, *Announces Call* screen 1). The call for submissions of artistic responses is open to anyone who had a connection to Residential Schools to share their experience (TRC, *Share* screen 1). Artists are asked to submit their expression in any way that they choose; these may include but are not limited to: performance, dance, film, video, photographs, drawings, painting, sculpture, poetry, spoken words, novels, plays, music, and songs. The artist agrees to the terms set forth by the TRC and the NRC that their name, face, voice and other identifying information will be used in a broad context to help assist with public education on the history of Indian Residential Schools (TRC, *Open Call* screen 3). The TRC and NRC have a five year mandate, during which they are currently conducting a call for submissions in the form of art works until December 31, 2013, which will be used as a permanent record documenting the Residential School experience (TRC, *Open Call* screen 2).

The TRC hopes that this project will assist survivors and their families to celebrate their culture and resiliency, and the TRC believes that artists have the ability to produce profoundly meaningful works that generate dialogue and provide a voice for Residential School survivors. (TRC, *Share* screen 1). Therefore, the works of art can perhaps express meaning to those who are struggling with the Residential School experience, and thus assist them with reconciliation

because the TRC chair, Justine Murray Sinclair states “this must never happen again” (TRC, *Announces Call* screen 1).

The TRC project is currently accepting artistic responses from anyone who has had a connection to Residential Schools. However, in this study, these particular works will not be analyzed because of the ongoing nature of the TRC project. Instead, the artist responses from established Aboriginal artists will be examined in order to analyze the ways in which the Residential School experience affected Aboriginal students, and the creative responses to those experiences which enabled a sense of reconciliation in the artists themselves. For Adrian Stimson, his art work was his “way to exorcise and transcend the colonial project, a way to forgiveness, healing and obtaining a state of grace” (Stimson, *Used* screen 2). In the next chapter, the works of Robert Houle and Adrian Stimson are explored under the themes of the Christianity and Native mysticism in the civilizing mission, which merge from the Residential School experience itself, and can be considered as responses to that history.

## **Chapter Two: Christianity and Civilization**

The previous chapter dealt with the experience and legacy of the Residential Schools in Canada. This chapter delves more deeply into the broader rationale behind the advent of the Residential Schools within the discourse of the European civilizing process. As a tool wielded by both government and the church, the Residential Schools illustrate the dual tensions of citizenship and Christianity that dominant white culture saw as necessary to solve the “Indian problem”. The chapter focuses on the origins and implications of the civilizing mission and the ways Christianity was used to justify the eradication of Aboriginal identity in the interest of transforming Indians into citizens.

The British were primarily concerned with converting Indigenous peoples to Christianity and used colonization, and in particular, the “colonizing mission” to justify colonialism. This conversion process happened in Africa, India, Asia, the Caribbean and in North America. Christians distinguished European culture from Aboriginal culture. European colonizers argued that Christianity would rescue Aboriginal people from their “savage” state (Adas 35). Yet European colonizers did not blame Aboriginal people for their “savage” beliefs because they had not yet been civilized through Christian teachings (Adas 46). The European colonizers believed it was their moral duty to spread Christianity to Aboriginal peoples. However, some European colonizers believed that Indians should be rendered civil before they were capable of accepting Christianity (Adas 37). European colonizers viewed colonization as a positive step towards expanding Christian moral values in order to civilize a people.

The word civilization is used in the European civilizing process to differentiate Europeans, who possessed civilization, from “others,” such as Aboriginal people, who do not possess civilization. The process involved the “other” achieving civilization through citizenship

(van Krieken 299). However, the spread of European civilization was built upon the blood of non-European people whose raw materials the Europeans plundered for their own financial gain (van Krieken 300). The “civilizing process” was accompanied by aggression and violence against those who tried to resist (van Krieken 309). The primary objective of European civilization was to seize the land and make non-European people civilized or acceptable, which frequently led to the genocide of those who resisted. Aboriginal people possessed an abundance of land throughout North America: Europeans believed Aboriginal people were in need of being civilized, whereas Europeans considered themselves to be civilized but in need of land (Adams 6). Therefore, Europeans wanted to exploit the natural land resources of North America for themselves even though Aboriginal people stood in the way of European expansion. As can be expected, Indians became a “problem” and Europeans slowly developed an Indian policy to transform the Indian into a citizen in order to solve this “problem” (Adams 6).

First, Europeans convinced Aboriginal people of their inferiority, thus legitimizing the civilizing mission to educate the Indian by eradicating Indian history and culture (Moosavinia, Niazi, and Ghaforian 104). Europeans described Indians as “savages” who worshiped pagan gods, had simple organizational structures, and depended on wild game for subsistence (Adams 6). Therefore, they argued, Indians were in need of being civilized. This also reinforced a belief that Europeans were “superior” over non-European nations (Blaut 8). In order for civilization to occur, “savagism” must be eliminated and the Indian enlightened. Europeans believed that their culture the most civilized and believed it was possible for all human societies to achieve civilization with a little help to become self-sufficient to maintain citizenship (Lindsay 6).

It was agreed that educating Aboriginal people in Christianity and the civilized arts could be achieved simultaneously and that it was less expensive to educate an Indian than to kill an

Indian (Adams 20 & 37). In order to kill one Indian, it was estimated that it would cost nearly one million dollars in war expenditures such as purchasing equipment and supplies, training, feeding, dressing, and housing the soldier, whereas it would cost only \$1,200 to educate one Indian over an eight year period (Adams 20). Therefore, based on financial considerations, it was decided to educate the Indian in arts and industry. The Church would be involved in civilizing Aboriginal children in Residential Schools.

Education would provide the necessary skills and abilities for Aboriginal people to function and survive in a civilized world (Adams 21). Thus, education became the primary goal for Indians to achieve citizenship. However, it was determined that adult Indians would not be included in the education process, since they were already engrained with traditional spiritual beliefs and it would prove difficult to change their values (Davin 2). However, assimilating Aboriginal children could be possible and would take place over a period of a few short years. As a result, Aboriginal children would be fully civilized relatively quickly and assume the title of citizen with all its rights and privileges (Adams 19).

There were four aims for educating “the Indian”. The first aim was to provide basic skills in reading, writing and speaking the English language. Then they would learn science, history, arithmetic and arts (Adams 22). The second aim was to teach individualism which would teach the Indian the value of an “I” society versus a “we” community (Adams 23). Traditionally, Aboriginal people only took what they needed from the land and gave thanks every time they did so. Aboriginal people also worked as a community, sharing food, medicines and materials. The third aim of education involved Christianizing the Indian (Adams 23). By converting to Christianity “the Indian” would become a citizen, losing their Aboriginal status, rights and treaties. The fourth aim was concerned with training in citizenship such as learning

government policies, political structures and European history (Adams 24). Thus, civilizing Indians would make them a “better man” by transforming them from members of a “savage” society to those of a “civilized society”. From a European point of view, upon completion of citizenship, Aboriginal people would enjoy the benefits of European social life. Therefore, in order to enjoy the benefits of European social life, Aboriginal people would need to learn the necessary skills to exploit the land resources for personal financial gain and acquire skills to maintain personal wealth and private property (Adams 23).

Two important works from established Aboriginal artists engage with the theme of Christianity and civilization, the works *Parfleches for the Last Supper* by Robert Houle and *Old Sun* by Adrian Stimson, both of which incorporate the religious beliefs of Aboriginal people and their Christian colonizers in relation to the Residential School experience and which explore the fascinating tensions between both worlds.

### ***Parfleches for the Last Supper, Robert Houle***

The series *Parfleches for the Last Supper* consists of 13 paintings created for the exhibition *Troubling Abstraction: Robert Houle* in 1983. Each painting was constructed from handmade paper folded to resemble a parfleche. The term parfleche is a French Canadian word that originated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century and can be broken down to two words: ‘parer’ meaning to turn aside and ‘fleche’ meaning arrow (Torrence 20-21). This term was used to describe the untanned skin of an animal that had been transformed into a tangible object (Torrence 21). This term parfleche evolved over time and became the official name for these large, folded containers constructed of heavy rawhide elaborately decorated with natural pigments (Torrence 21). Rawhide is an untanned skin that had been treated to insure its

preservation; its surface is thick, tough, durable, waterproof and unbreakable, yet it is smooth and can be folded without cracking (Torrence 39).

The most common form of the parfleche was the folded envelope that could expand when filled (Figure 2.1). Other popular forms include the flat case, the cylinder and the box (Torrence 59). Aboriginal women were responsible for constructing these cases and decorating the exterior surfaces. They painted elaborate abstract geometric designs such as lines, triangles, diamonds and rectangles on the surface of these parfleches (Torrence 77), in geometric patterns linked to the designs found in quill work. Aboriginal men were responsible for hunting and skinning the animal. The hide was then given as a gift to their wives who transformed the hide into various objects such as parfleches and medicine bags. Parfleche containers were used to store precious personal items and sacred objects of ritual value (Torrence 49). However, creating medicine bags involved spiritual guidance from the creator obtained through a dream or vision (McMaster, *Persistence* 37). The dream instructed the owner on which personal medicines or charms to assemble in his bundle and then the owner would decorate the bundle itself with painted designs (McMaster, *Persistence* 37). To rephrase it, these bundles are sacred objects that are gifts received by the creator through dreams and visions in which the creator provided the owner of the parfleche with instructions on assembling medicines to help others. Therefore, medicine bundles are individually owned and their power is known only to their owners (McMaster, *Persistence* 37).

In the *Parfleche for the Last Supper*, Houle arranged his series in a row formation that mirrors the gathering at the Last Supper of Christ and his apostles. In this case, Houle's gathering includes the twelve apostles, Christ and the corresponding gospels that describe the events of the Last Supper. In the book *Indians from A to Z*, Houle provides the gospels that

corresponds to each title which are as follows from left to right: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #1: Matthew*, (Figure 2.2) “In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world” (John 17:33); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #2: James the Less* (Figure 2.3), “In a short time you will no longer see me, and then a short time later you will see me again” (John 16:26); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #3: Jude* (Figure 2.4), “If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #4: Simon* (Figure 2.5), “I have told you all this so that your faith may not be shaken” (John 16:1); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #5: Philip* (Figure 2.6), “To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, ‘Let us see the Father?’” (John 14:9); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #6: Andrews* (Figure 2.7), “A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #7: Bartholomew* (Figure 2.8), “If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you” (John 15:18); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #8: Thomas* (Figure 2.9), “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me” (John 13:16); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #9: James* (Figure 2.10), “I tell you most solemnly, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the man who sent him” (John 13:16); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #10: John* (Figure 2.11), “I give you a new commandment: Love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another” (John 14:34); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #11: Judas* (Figure 2.12), “And yet, here with me on the table is the hand of the man who betrays me” (Luke 22:21); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #12: Jesus* (Figure 2.13), “Then he took some bread and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which will be given for you; do this as a memorial of me’” (Luke 22:19); *Parfleche for the Last Supper #13:*

*Peter* (Figure 2.14), “I tell you, Peter, by the time the cock crows today you will have denied three times that you know me” (Luke 22:34) (Houle, *Parfleche* 45-46).

In Houle’s gathering, Jesus is not centred but rather is located at the far right end, specifically, second to last between Judas and Peter, which breaks the classical antecedents such as Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* ca. 1495-1498 (Figure 2.15). In the *Last Supper*, Leonardo da Vinci placed the following figures from left to right: Bartholomew, James Minor, Andrew, Judas, Peter, John, Christ, Thomas, James Major, Philip, Matthew, Thaddeus and Simon. Houle broke away from this traditional arrangement and representation by playing with dualities of Christianity and Native Mysticism in the *Parfleches of the Last Supper*. Within Christian doctrine, the thirteen parfleches depict twelve apostles and Christ. This arrangement frames a dramatic moment in European history when Jesus reveals to his apostles that one of them will betray him (Bacilon 343). However, the last supper can also be compared to the gathering of Aboriginal people engaged in a Sundance ceremony, a ceremony to help others. Both gatherings symbolize a unified people (Madill 27).

Houle’s parfleches combine Native Mysticism with each parfleche representing a medicine man. The parfleches are rendered in a row formation representing thirteen medicine men gathered together for a feast. In addition, each parfleche represents a medicine bundle containing sacred objects (McMaster, *Persistence* 40). The number thirteen has spiritual significance in Native mysticism because it represents thirteen moons. The moon teachings are associated with a twenty-eight day lunar cycle that can be compared to a woman’s cycle (Callahan 13). The lunar cycle begins in the East where life begins, plants begin to bloom and animals are born. The moons of the South represent warmth, love and growth. Plants grow into maturity (Callahan 17-19). The lunar cycle of the West represents preparations for the winter.

The moons of the North mark time for rest and renewal and preparations for rebirth to take place in the East (Callahan 23). Within each direction there are three moon cycles, and the thirteenth lunar cycle occurs when two moons fall within the same month, signifying a time of great change (Callahan 23).

Another association with the number thirteen includes the Aboriginal concepts of the seven generations back, seven generations forward, and “you”, Aboriginal person, located at the centre that overlaps and links the seven generations back with the seven generations forward. “You”, reflect back seven generations to see what your ancestors wanted for “you”, and “you”, in turn, decide what the next seven generations would want. Therefore, you are reflecting on the past to make decisions for the future.

Houle constructed each painting into two zones separated by a horizon line. This horizon line acts as an axis mundi that divides the land from the sky or the upper world from the lower world. The centre space of the parfleche paintings depicts the cosmological centre of the universe where all directions meet in perfect symmetry, reinforcing balance and interconnectedness (McMaster, *Symbolic* 79-80). The parfleche contains the dual meaning of death and rebirth in which the animal has sacrificed itself to help the people just as Christ was sacrificed for the good of the world and then rose three days later. The skin of the animal was transformed into material objects as needed, and the spiritual powers of the animal are transferred from its skin to the owner. Therefore, death and rebirth depict the interconnectedness of everyone and everything. Houle applied interconnectedness with the construction of *Parfleches of the Last Supper* to reconcile and balance his renewed interest in Native mysticism and his learned Christian beliefs engendered from his Residential School experience (McMaster, *Persistence* 44).

Renewed interest in Aboriginal tradition and culture can be explained in the decolonization process that was engendered from clusters of traumatic events experienced by Aboriginal people (Archibald i). The healing process contains five steps. In step one, one must create a safe environment for learning and understanding the history of Aboriginal people, colonial history, and the impacts of colonization, and then develop an interest in traditional culture, healing and spirituality (Archibald 28). In step two, one must learn to speak and grieve about personal experiences of abuse (Archibald 28). In this case, Aboriginal people must learn to speak about the Residential School experience, allow themselves to grieve about the experiences and forgive themselves on the condition that it was not their fault for being abused. In step three, one must explore culture, tradition and planning for the future (Archibald 28). In step four, one must rebuild relationships with family and community members (Archibald 28). For the final step, one must give back to family and the community (Archibald 28). Therefore, Houle created *Parfleches for the Last Supper* as a form of communication to help him move forward in the healing process from his Residential School experience during which he felt abandoned (McMaster, *Persistence* 39).

Houle carefully selected each colour to represent the mood of each apostle based on the description of its gospels (Hargitty 13). For instance, in *Parfleche for the Last Supper #10: John* (Figure 2.16), Christ states “I give you a new commandment: Love one another; just as I have loved you, you must love one another”, from John 14:34. This painting contains the original colours in the Aboriginal tradition of the four directions: red, yellow, blue and white. Painted across the centre is a thin horizontal line of connecting colours consisting of red, yellow and blue. The colour white represents the white nation, and the entire background has been painted a dominant monochrome white colour that could represent white superiority over the inferior

nations of red, yellow and blue (black). The colours red, yellow and blue connecting to one another may represent a forced assimilation of the civilization process, and the thin line could represent the vanishing races of the red, yellow and blue (black) nations which are blending into a white Christian society. The red, yellow and blue line appears to be painted parallel to a white line indicating that these lines do not cross, which may represent walking together on their own path unconnected. The horizontal line could represent a linear way of thinking, a white moral belief system compared to a holistic approach where all things are connected as seen in a web.

Porcupine quills are incised along the opening of the parfleche to suggest holding the parfleche together. The act of attaching porcupine quills to the skin of the parfleche represents two symbolic ideas. First the quills are used to pierce the skin of the parfleche, an act associated with the Sundance Ceremony in which the participant pierces his skin, sacrificing himself to show that the love he has for the person he is helping, and for the creator, renders him willing to offer his flesh to help another. The dancer connects himself with the piercings to the central pole which functions as an axis mundi, connecting himself to the lower, middle and upper worlds. Second, the maker calls upon the porcupine for its strength and essence when he uses the quills (Sams and Carson 13). The porcupine is located at the South door of the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel gathers the energy of all animals, Stone People, Standing People, two legged people, the Sky Brothers and Sisters and the Thunder Beings (Sams and Carson 21). This energy takes place in a ceremony to honour life (Sams and Carson 21). The Medicine Wheel is an ancient powerful symbol of the universe that teaches interconnectedness in which all things are dependent upon one another in order to grow (Graveline 55). The South door is a place of childlike innocence, humility and playfulness (Sams and Carson 85). The qualities of

the porcupine include the power of faith, the ability to move mountains, and the power of trust (Sams and Carson 85). The porcupine uses his quills for protection only when trust is broken between him and another creature (Sams and Carson 85). The quills create a piercing sensation through the skin of the parfleche (Madill 27). Rushing III compares this piercing to the crown of thorns that Christ wore for his crucifixion or possibly the lance thrust into his side (30).

Therefore, in the work of Houle, the quills could represent broken trust between the parents of Aboriginal children and the Church and government. Aboriginal children were verbally, mentally, physically and sexually abused by the teachers and staff at Residential Schools. The porcupine is a gentle reminder not to get caught in the world of greed, fear and suffering of adults, but rather to open your heart to joy, playfulness and the imagination of a child (Sams and Carson 86). Thus, Aboriginal children had their innocence stolen in Residential Schools and now they need to relearn to believe, trust and love themselves and others around them. Hence, the quills are holding the parfleche together in a symbolic struggle for healing and reconciliation. Therefore, this painting could suggest that people are all brothers and sisters of the red, yellow, black and white nations living on the same Mother Earth (Lane *et al.* 10).

Another example of the importance of colours is in the *Parfleche for the Last Supper #12: Jesus* (Figure 2.17). The upper background portion of this parfleche is painted white to represent the North door of the Medicine Wheel. White teaches truth and is associated with cleansing, renewing and purifying the mind, body and soul (Bear, Wind, and Mulligan 201 & 206). White is the colour of enlightenment, perfection, and advanced evolution, and projects feelings of purity, tranquility, peace and balance (Bear, Wind, and Mulligan 202). Houle has painted a large yellow cross in the middle of this painting. The colour yellow is associated with personal strength, courage, faith, discipline, and healing powers, and teaches responsibility of

power and of how to make decisions (Bear, Wind, and Mulligan 208). The cross has dual meaning: it represents Christianity as well as the four directions in Native mysticism (McMaster, *Persistence* 40).

This parfleche has been painted with a short red horizontal line at the neck of the cross that possibly represents a bloody gash at the throat suggesting the crucifixion of Christ (McMaster, *Symbolic* 85; Rushing III 30). White and brown fringes painted along the lower arms of the cross symbolically represent a warrior's shirt (McMaster, *Symbolic* 85). The Plains Indian Shirt, *Itazaiicho (Sans Arc) Lakota (Sioux)* ca. 1879 (Figure 2.18), is a warrior's shirt embedded with religious and physical attributes that give the shirt its power (Horse Capture and Horse Capture 29). Shirts were made from the skin of animals so that the power of the animal would be transferred from the skin to the wearer (Horse Capture and Horse Capture 12). The shirt is associated with a medicine bundle that identifies its owner and functions as a witness to the heroic deeds and battles won by the owner (Horse Capture and Horse Capture 29). When an owner sweats in his shirt, the shirt and owner become one and this is power (Horse Capture and Horse Capture 29).

Shirts were constructed with a great deal of consideration. The warrior's wife would transform the hide into a shirt for her husband. She would create colourful geometric designs using quills embroidered onto strips of hide. She would then attach these strips onto the chest, back and shoulders of the shirt, and the shirt would be a gift to the warrior from his wife (Horse Capture and Horse Capture 18). The warrior would then paint pictographs or winter counts to depict individual heroic deeds and outline battles won on his shirt. Winter counts function as a historical record used to document the most important events of a year and in some cases images are added to document historical events over decades and even centuries (Berlo and Phillips 120-

121). In addition to documenting winter counts, the warrior would attach hair locks, leather fringes, feathers and animal tails or paint images of specific animals onto the shirt, and these items embodied personal power for the owner (Horse Capture and Horse Capture 43).

Moreover, these power objects identify the spirit helpers of the owner. The shirt of the warrior can be linked to the Ghost Dance, as it was foreseen that a utopian world would come, a world without white people, and Aboriginal people would reunite with fallen warriors (Adams 167). Aboriginal people were instructed to create clothing that would protect their spirits from white people. This vision frightened white people, especially the prospect of a world without them, and ritual dances such as the Ghost Dance were subsequently outlawed.

The clothing for the Ghost Dance was constructed from animal hide and the skin of the animal would protect the spirit of the human. The spirit of the human would be released from the physical body when shot and the spirit was reunited with the spirits of past fallen warriors. Therefore, the skin of the parfleche conceals the body and the mind, protecting the inner values and spirit of a person (Madill 27). In the *Parfleche for the Last Supper #12: Jesus*, the abstract form is rendered in the likeness of a warrior's shirt. The shirt functions like skin protecting the spiritual essence inside the body. The shirt has been decorated with golden radiant light that represents Christ as Shaman of the Sun (Rushing III 30) and the figure can be compared to a Thunderbird, a spiritual being associated with the Upper celestial world. The Thunderbird lives with the spirits and is a messenger between the Thunder Beings and humans and has the ability to heal people (Callahan 32). Thus, the qualities of the Thunderbird can be compared to Christ who has a divine connection with God.

In the series, Houle is explaining some of the similarities in spiritual beliefs between Christianity and Native Mysticism. For Houle, parfleches represent birth and rebirth which he uses to reclaim his Aboriginal identity (McMaster, *Persistence* 40).

### ***Old Sun, Adrian Stimson***

The *Old Sun* (Figure 2.19) installation explores layers of meaning and emotion surrounding the Residential School experience (Hornsby, screen 2). This installation was created in 2005 using industrial materials from the Chief Old Sun Residential School. In the following excerpt Stimson clarifies the history of the Chief Old Sun Residential School:

Old Sun was a chief of the Blackfoot and a distant relative. My family has told me that he was a respected leader and distrusted the new comers greatly. He did not want to sign Treaty 7 preferring war to what at the time he considered the end of our way of life. I find it ironic that his namesake was used by the Government and Anglican Church to build a residential school on my Nation. A space that ensured the end of a way of life, many of my family members attended this school with stories happy, sad and tragic. The institution now called Old Sun College has made the transition from residential school to college yet remains as a colonizing symbol for many on my Nation. Over the years, various renovations have created fragments of material culture; I have been privileged in collecting some of these objects.

Old Sun is a sweat lodge replica constructed of metal with bison fur fragments arranged in a circle within the lodge, a residential school light is illuminated over the lodge. To represent the reconstruction of cultural icons, I've used the design of the sweat lodge, I have had it manufactured from steel, steel is an industrial material that drove imperial expansion.

It is a skeleton, a cage that shadows the struggle most aboriginal people face in reconciling traditional ways in contemporary Western Culture. I often used the bison as a symbol representing the destruction of aboriginal peoples way of life. I have pieced bison fur fragments together, an attempt at putting things back together, or trying to hold on to something that is rapidly changing. It is placed inside the sweat lodge, the womb for protection, yet it is also caged. I have placed the Old Sun light fixture above the sweat lodge. It shines downward interrogating the rest of the piece. As I believe that objects hold energy, this light that once shone above the heads of many children within the school is a witness to cultural genocide. The shadow created on the fragments of bison fur is the Union Jack, shadows of history haunts us, illumination of our history can

enlighten us and bring us out of the shadow. Old Sun is a sculpture that contemplates layers of history, shadows of the past and tension between light and dark. (Stimson, *Buffalo* 16-17)

The Sweat Lodge is a sacred place for ritual practices, purification and rebirth (McGarvie 13).

The architectural design of the Sweat Lodge consists of twelve poles and a covering, both containing spiritual significance.

Twelve willow sapling trees used as poles form the frame of the Sweat Lodge. The willow tree has a spiritual connection with flowing water. Water is essential for cleansing and associated with femininity and creation (Bruchac 30). The willow tree is a representative of the plant world, containing the power of resurrection, the ability to die and to be reborn (Bruchac 32). Therefore, the willow lends its spiritual powers to the Sweat Lodge for the power of rebirth. Furthermore, the willow trees can be bent easily into a circle without breaking (Bruchac 30). The arching of the willow represents the sky, and its framework acts as a rib cage for the Sweat Lodge (Bruchac 30). The rib cage can be compared to a turtle or a bear, both symbols for creation (Bruchac 30). The Sweat Lodge has been described as a womb, and leaving the Sweat Lodge is compared to being reborn (Bruchac 46). Large stones known as “grandfather rocks” are heated and placed in the centre of the Sweat Lodge (McGarvie 68-75). These stones represent the Stone People who were here before human people. According to the Lakota people, human life began with the rising of a great stone from the waters of creation (Bruchac 36). When the Sweat Lodge is heated, the act of sweating produces a powerful substance that combines human and spiritual powers, and the sweat from the skin is associated with creation (McGarvie 14; Bruchac 45). Therefore, when the stones of the Sweat Lodge are heated Aboriginal people return back to first creation (Bruchac 36).

Originally the Sweat Lodge was covered with buffalo hides or the skins of other animals. From inside the Sweat Lodge, the covering is compared to a night sky above one's head or the skin of a great animal or a mother's womb before one was born (Bruchac 34). Once the Sweat Lodge is covered, it becomes a living being, therefore, when inside the Sweat Lodge, one is inside the body of something alive and powerful and one returns to creation (Bruchac 34).

In contrast to the base construction and principle of the sweat lodge, Europeans were interested in the modernization of Europe, technological advancements, expanding capitalism, colonial power and world conquest. Yet Europeans were uninterested in Aboriginal culture (Blaut 50). Europeans believed they were more progressive than the rest of the world and that they could help uncivilized nations to reach Europe's level of civilization, thus modernizing the world (Blaut 53). It was not only Christianity that separated Europeans from Aboriginal people, so did technological advancements and European material cultural items (Adas 37).

Technology was an important source for European power (Adas 39). Europeans thought and believed that Indians lacked proper tools and the necessary skills and abilities to cultivate the land properly and effectively (Adas 35). As a result, Europeans felt that Aboriginal people were less advanced than Europeans and that an education in industry and technology would prove invaluable for the Indian to become self-sufficient and to participate in the European economy. Europeans had a goal to exploit and profit from all the natural resources in North America, thereby increasing the economic wealth of individual European settlers in the New World (Adas 43).

Technological advancements allowed for additional raw materials to be transformed into industrial materials. Stimson constructs a complex formal space of a Sweat Lodge in the *Old Sun* installation from refined industrial materials such as steel, glass and electricity and combines

the natural material of Bison robes with industrial materials to suggest the hybrid mixture of the modern life of an Aboriginal person.

The *Old Sun* Sweat Lodge is built on a modern architectural design that is divided into physical and metaphysical zones with the use of space and shadows. This modern architectural design consists of clean smooth lines appears to create a romanticized exotic past of beauty and mysticism in the frame of the Sweat Lodge. The sun is represented by a modern light fixture illuminated with electricity that shines down on the frame of the *Old Sun* Sweat Lodge. The frame is constructed from four strips of steel. The number four has spiritual significance for Aboriginal people containing teachings of the four directions of the Medicine Wheel (Lane *et al.* 12). Therefore, the steel frame seems to be constructed as being equally balanced, connecting and holding all things together.

The base of the Sweat Lodge contains four bison robes placed together to form a circle. The circle is a sacred space which contains the life force and energy of an individual, and this sacred space teaches movement between the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual states of being (Sams 53; Stimson, *Buffalo* 8). This lesson teaches Aboriginal people how to understand their place internally and externally (Stimson, *Buffalo* 8). The Medicine Wheel consists of spokes or pathways leading to different doors that every living being experiences.

As the sun shines down onto the frame, it casts a shadow of the Union Jack on the floor of the Sweat Lodge replacing the “grandfather rocks”. The shadow can be used as a metaphor for history (Kalbfleisch 166). In the work of Stimson, he is making an iconographic reference to the European colonizer and foreign conquest over the Aboriginal culture symbolized with the Union Jack emblem. The shadow could evoke an emotional response of terror, anxiety and

trauma which is a reality for many Aboriginal people who reflect back on the Residential School experience; therefore, the shadow has become an experience of reality (Perniola 3).

The Union Jack emblem is found on the flag that represents Scotland, England and Ireland. This emblem consists of three symbols, a white saltire cross representing St Andrew of Scotland, a red cross representing St George of England, and a red saltire cross representing St Patrick of Ireland, each of these saints was involved with converting nations of people of non-Christian beliefs into Christianity (Stewart 3-5). The emblem of St George was the first symbol used on the British flag which consisted of a white ground and red cross known as “Our Jack” (Stewart 6). The name “Our Jack” was derived from King James (Jacques) of England and the cross symbolized power and represents the crucifixion of Christ (Stewart 7; Cumberland 17 & 50). The religious icon of the cross formed the groundwork for the English flag and was used in the third great crusade to the Holy Land (Cumberland 46 & 47). However, in 1606 King James VI authorized a second emblem to be added to “Our Jack”, which was the saltire emblem, an a tribute to the patron St Andrew of Scotland (Cumberland 71). St Andrew considered himself unworthy of being crucified on a cross with similar shape to that of the Saviour and requested to be crucified with his legs and arms extended on a cross with an x shape, hence the saltire shape (Cumberland 71 & 72). Together the emblem of St George and St Andrew represented the union of Scotland and England and in 1707 ‘Our Jack’ of England became known as the ‘Union Jack’ (Cumberland 37 & 87). In 1801, Great Britain united with Ireland and incorporated the saltire emblem of St Patrick in the Union Flag, thus uniting Scotland, England and Ireland (Stewart 10). Therefore, the Union Jack became an “emblem of foreign conquest” (Cumberland 151). However, in the *Old Sun* installation, the Union Jack is not physically present in the frame, but rather as a shadow that acts as an emblem of past foreign conquest over a people. Therefore,

Stimson created a Union Jack image to symbolize colonial oppression and foreign conquest through the steel frame of his Sweat Lodge.

An alternative interpretation of the shadowed lines in the heart of the Sweat Lodge could be explained by the dream weave of energy lines in the legend of Grandmother Spider in Aboriginal storytelling. Grandmother Spider wove a web of the universe to show the people how they are connected to all things (Sams 10). When people begin to see and feel the web, they heal from fears and release themselves from old wounds by lifting up the veil of separation that was imposed upon them (Sams 10). Therefore, the legend of Grandmother Spider teaches resiliency.

Hence, the *Old Sun* Sweat Lodge seems to be depicted as a “cage” of oppression exposed for all to see. The cage refers to an experience of oppressed people living their lives confined and shaped by imposed forces and barriers that are not accidental but rather built to trap a people (Frye 4). The Medicine Wheel provides structure; it is a pathway to truth, peace and harmony and teaches self-awareness and symbolizes life (Sams and Carson 22). The *Old Sun* installation could be explained as it features a modern architectural structure above a circle of buffalo robes that could possibly represent the taming of wilderness and the triumph of a modern industrial civilization over a “savage” people; and the interior space of the Sweat Lodge reflects the interior of one’s space in a modern world linking past traditions with present European values to form a new hybrid identity of a modernized Indian caught between worlds.

This chapter focused on the civilizing mission, in which Christianity was used as a tool to justify eradication of the Aboriginal identity in order to solve the “Indian problem”. The works of Robert Houle and Adrian Stimson depict a tension between Christianity and Native mysticism which they used to reconcile the Residential School experience. The next chapter deals with

education that Aboriginal children received inside the Residential School classroom in order to prepare them for citizenship. The goal was to transform the Indian from “savage” to “citizen”.

### **Chapter Three: Cultural Assimilation Inside the Residential School Classroom**

The previous chapter dealt with a civilizing plan by European Colonizers for “the Indian” in order to solve the “Indian problem”, and the tension between Christianity and Native mysticism. This chapter focuses on civilizing the Indian in Residential School. The founder of Indian Residential School, Pratt explained that “the Indian will become civilized by mixing with civilization” (qtd. in Adams 53), in this case Residential Schools, and would introduce Aboriginal children to routine, structure and discipline of institutional life. Education took place in two spaces, inside the classroom and outside the classroom of Residential Schools. Pratt favoured Residential Schools located in civilized communities far from Indian Reserves versus Day Schools located on reserves. Pratt explained that going to Indian Day Schools would be interpreted by Indian children as meaning, “You are Indians, and must remain Indians. You are not of the nation, and cannot become of the nation. We do not want you to become of the nation” (qtd. in Adams 53). According to Pratt, Day Schools presented ideals of civilization which Aboriginal children would never experience (Adams 53). This chapter focuses on education that Aboriginal children received from inside the Residential School classroom in order to prepare them for citizenship.

The Residential School classroom was not a site for happy childhood memories for Aboriginal children, due to the terrifying experiences of forced learning imposed upon them. The classroom contained Aboriginal students, teachers, blackboards, chalk, desks, chairs, books, rulers and pencils. It was the teacher’s responsibility to reshape every aspect of “the Indian”. The curriculum provided in Residential School was taught from the perspective of the white man’s civilization while ignoring Native history. For instance, John Tootoosis, a student of the

Delmas Indian Residential School, explains that Aboriginal people were never educated about their rights or even why or how they were accorded 'Indian' status (Grant 169).

The first step towards citizenship was to teach Aboriginal children how to read, write and speak the English language, with which they had very limited knowledge when they entered Residential School (Grant 168). In teaching Aboriginal children to read English, Residential School teachers naturally assumed that the students would learn to speak and assimilate the English language. This proved difficult and challenging for Aboriginal children due to a linguistic gap between various Native dialects and standard Canadian English. Each Native language has its own linguistic features, vocabulary, syntax and even letter sounds (Adams 139). For instance, Isabelle Knockwood, a student from the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School, recalls spending hours and hours learning pronunciation, since she had difficulty pronouncing *th* words because the sound *th* does not exist in the Mi'kmaw language (Grant 169). She also recalls fellow students being beaten for saying the words "mudder" and "fadder" instead of "mother" and "father" and points out that it took at least four or five years of school training to get rid of the Mi'kmaw accent (Grant 169). Likewise, Jane Willis, a student of Fort George Indian Residential School, recalls that no one at the school could master the *th* sound (Grant 201). Willis explains that she had difficulties pronouncing *r* because there was no *r* in the Cree dialect (Grant 201).

Aboriginal students had difficulties understanding the meaning of English words because there was no corresponding word in Native languages, and meanings of particular words did not correspond to their experience from within their culture (Adams 140). For example, Willis explains she had difficulty learning English words, because it took time for her to make a connection between the word and its meaning (Grant 168). Therefore, Aboriginal children

could not relate to the meaning of the word because they had nothing to compare it to. Since Native languages were forbidden in Residential Schools, Aboriginal children did not have the opportunity to discuss the meaning of a word among themselves, and there was subsequently no way for Aboriginal students to communicate with one another until they learned the English language (Grant 191). In the United States, Residential Schools used educational techniques to teach language. For example, teachers at the Carlisle Residential School in Pennsylvania used physical objects such as books, pencils and shoes as visual aids to teach their students words, and students were tested with flash cards, and were able to identify images according to the names of these objects (Adams 137). Later, the Carlisle students were required to write the name of the object on the blackboard (Adams 137). Every lesson at the Carlisle Residential School was accompanied with drawings or actions to encourage learning (Adams 137). However, in Canada, Knockwood learned by trial and error, and observed and imitated the actions of others in the classroom was completely foreign for her (Grant 200). She wanted to understand the English language; however asking for clarification from other students in the Mi'kmaw language resulted in punishment (Grant 200).

During the same time Aboriginal students learned how to read English, they learned Christianity. Aboriginal children were not fully engaged in traditional spiritual teachings of their people, but rather entered into Residential Schools with partial understanding of their traditional teachings. These teaching could easily be dismissed if not nurtured, and the Church took advantage of this situation to aggressively train Aboriginal students in Christianity. Christian training consisted of moral instruction on ideas of chastity, monogamy, sin, guilt and punishment. Aboriginal students were taught to respect the Sabbath, and they learned how to pray and that there was only “one true God” (Adams 164 & 168). For example, Justa Monk, a

student of the Lejack Indian Residential School, recalls he lost count of how many times a day he had to pray. He explains that he and fellow students had to pray when they got up, before and after breakfast, and before and during class to become “good Christians” (Grant 173).

Language was a barrier to converting Aboriginal people to Christianity because Aboriginal children were unfamiliar not only with the English language, but also with the Latin language that was used to teach Christianity. Therefore, Aboriginal students struggled to learn English and Latin (Grant 173). In addition to language barriers, Aboriginal students had difficulties understanding the concept of a “Christian God” who stood above nature. According to the spirituality of Aboriginal people, “God” was understood to be part of nature (Adams 165). Aboriginal people believe that everything has its own spiritual essence and teachings. Native stories of spiritual beings can be compared to stories from the Bible. The goal of European colonizers was to use Christianity to help transform generations of Aboriginal children into model citizens who would no longer be able to communicate in their Native tongue with their parents or elders (Grant 193).

Three important works from established Aboriginal artists engage with the theme of Cultural Assimilation inside the classroom will be discussed: the work *Sauvage* by Carl Beam, *The Lesson* by Joan Cardinal-Schubert and *Potato Peeling 101 to Ethnobotany 101* by Jane Ash Poitras.

### ***Sauvage*, Carl Beam**

In 1988 Ojibway artist, Carl Beam created the work *Sauvage* (Figure 3.1) in response to the Residential School experience (Hill 25). *Sauvage* is a mixed media work that measures 308

cm x 190.0 x 15 cm, and consists of acrylic paint on Plexiglas, seven photo-emulsion transfers and a painted rifle encased in a curiosity case (NGC, *Sauvage* screen 1).

*Sauvage* resembles an old window that suggests Beam is looking back at his own memory and history as a student of Residential School (Hill 25). The window overlooks a graveyard that Beam photographed near the St Peter Claver and St Charles Garnier Residential School for boys at his reunion in 1988 (Hill 25). Beam paired two images: one of an early crucifixion scene and the other of a graveyard which he found to be a common theme between Christians and Aboriginal people; he explained, like Aboriginals, Christians were once persecuted for their religious beliefs, and Christians could make this connection if they understood their own experience (Ryan 194). Therefore, Beam is depicting a theme of persecution experienced by Aboriginal people and Christians.

Located beneath the window are six photographs that Beam used in previous works. The centre image captures an aerial view of the devastated city of Hiroshima following the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan in 1945 (Corrigan, screen 1). This photo graphically depicts the instant death of a people of one nation. Beam juxtaposed an image of instant death of one nation with the slow death of Aboriginal people over a long period of time in the image of the graveyard near St Peter Claver and St Charles Garnier Residential School. The image of the graveyard could be a tribute to the thousands of Aboriginal people who died from colonization, thus depicting two different modes of annihilation.

Located to the left of the image depicting the devastated city of Hiroshima is a double portrait of Christopher Columbus, and to the right is a photograph of Plains Cree Chief Big Bear, and an image of bees, and an image of an Apache Gaa dancer. The images are not laid out in linear format a common European mode the depiction of history in a linear format; instead the

layout creates a sense of time and history experienced by Aboriginal people (Fischer 15). However, these images themselves mark historical events for both Aboriginal people and Europeans. For instance, the double portrait of Christopher Columbus represents his arrival to new world (Fischer 14). The iconic image of Plains Cree Chief Big Bear refers to his refusal to sign a government treaty that would restrict the hunting rights of Aboriginal people and imprison Aboriginal people on reserve lands, and that would require Indian Agents to distribute food rations until Aboriginal people become self-sufficient in farming and agriculture (Janzen 5). Without using words or force, Big Bear physically turned his back on government officials, and this action demonstrated his disapproval of these conditions outlined in the treaty because he considered human freedom to be more important than any treaty (Janzen 5).

Located below Plains Chief Big Bear is an image of bees which Beam explains are a symbol of patterned behavior (Hill 25). However, this image of bees paired with those of Christopher Columbus reflects a passion for exploring, discovering, analyzing, and classifying objects that was a common practice for Europeans (Ryan 244). The carcasses of these bees are the physical remains of once living creatures, put on display, classified and analyzed (Ryan 244). Furthermore, bees are the ultimate colonizer, and bees therefore represent European ideas of colonization (Ryan 244).

Located below this image is a portrait of an Apache Gan dancer, a manifestation of a Mountain Spirit who possesses supernatural powers to assist the Apache people (NGC, *Gan* screen 1). In the Apache creation myth of the Gan, who were also known as a Supreme Being and a Mountain Spirit, they brought the Apache people from the spirit world into the physical world (Mails 129). The Gan possess creation power, the ability to give and to take life (Mails 129). The Gan taught the Apache people how to live a good life, and, before returning to the

spirit world, the Gan drew images of themselves on the rocks of sacred caves in full regalia performing ritual dances (Mails 129). Apache men therefore impersonate the Gan for the sole purpose of curing human illness.

In this work, Beam has written the word “*Sauvage*” in red paint across the lower images. The red paint could represent the blood of the red people, the Aboriginal people. He wrote in pencil explaining the salvage paradigm, a belief that it is necessary to preserve weaker cultures from the destruction of a dominant culture (NGC, *Sauvage* screen 1). Therefore, Beam is questioning who is the savage when he writes: ‘What is ‘Sauvage’?’, ‘Who is the savage?’ and ‘What should or can be salvaged?’ in his work (NGC, *Sauvage* screen 1).

Located at the bottom of this work is a painted rifle encased in a curiosity cabinet. The curiosity cabinet functions as a symbol of the kind of ethnographic display that once placed Aboriginal people in natural history museums to be endlessly “analyzed and theorized along with other carefully classified exotica” (Ryan 145) that were viewed for hours. This allowed viewers to interpret Aboriginal people as a strange mysterious vanishing race (Ryan 152). This museological idea that Aboriginal people were a vanishing race placed them in pre-history rather than as a living people functioning in modern society. As a result of being classified as a vanishing race, the material culture of Aboriginal people became highly collectable. These objects were considered artifacts, ecological specimens and fossils that reinforced the notion that Aboriginal people belonged in the same category as stuffed animals in natural history museums, rather than having their material objects displayed in fine art museums celebrate the cultural achievements of “civilization” (Fischer 15). This mode of display strongly suggested that Aboriginal people were a dying race, and increased the desire to collect as much material culture as possible, before it disappeared (Dubin 18). Thus, collecting Aboriginal material culture

became part of a European passion for acquiring exotic objects that explorers often displayed in their curiosity cabinets (Dubin 14-15). The painted rifle is a metaphor for conflict, both offensive and defensive, because it was a trade item that Aboriginal people adopted into their own culture from Europeans (Hill 26).

Located along the left side of this work are seven red hand prints. The red paint could represent human blood and may refer to the red people or Aboriginal people. These hand prints are located one above the other, with each hand print fading. The hand prints begin alongside the images of Christopher Columbus which could possibly represent the increased death rate among Aboriginal people engendered by the arrival of Europeans. As the hand prints continue upwards, and fade off into history, the hand prints are connected to bloody scratch marks that cover the entire work. The scratch marks signify an erosion of time and memory (Berlo and Phillips 232). The seven hand prints may reference the Aboriginal concept of seven generations back and seven generations forward and “you”, Aboriginal person, located in the centre. This could be interpreted as “you” questioning the effects of colonization. The blood lines could represent a connection with the past, present and future of Aboriginal people regarding the civilizing mission. In addition, the blood lines connect to the English alphabet, a tool that was used in Residential Schools to alter the identity of Aboriginal people. Throughout the work there are lightly penciled grid lines that overlay the entire piece. Barbara Fischer interprets the grid lines as referring to the measurement of time and movement, thus giving the work a web of inter-connecting events, meanings and experiences for Aboriginal people (Fischer 15). These grid lines could have several other interpretations. First, the grid lines could be associated with measurement, used to survey land and confine Aboriginal people to reside on reserve lands. Second, the grid lines contain axes which could be a reference for arithmetic, a subject learned in

Residential Schools. Therefore, *Savage* is a history painting that marks events of colonizing Aboriginal people.

### ***The Lesson*, Joane Cardinal-Schubert**

*The Lesson* (Figure 3.2), by Joane Cardinal-Schubert, is a mixed media installation of a mock classroom setting that addresses the civilizing process enforced on generations of Aboriginal children in Residential Schools (Cardinal-Schubert 40). This installation was created in 1993 and measures twelve feet by twelve feet. It originally began as a static piece that viewers walked through; however, *The Lesson* later evolved into an interactive piece allowing the viewer to become a participant. *The Lesson* was created in three sections: the front blackboard, the side memory board and the floor space.

The construction of the front consists of two small panels painted black, and each mirrors a blackboard that has been attached to a wall. The blackboard is a symbol associated with childhood learning in the classroom. Above the blackboard is the title *The Lesson* written in white paint, giving the illusion of white chalk. Cardinal-Schubert provides a written lesson of the day, “*This Is My History*”, a history from an Aboriginal perspective written in the English language that was imposed on Aboriginal children in Residential Schools. The history lesson begins on the left blackboard with the following:

In the beginning there were Native peoples across the land. When new people come they shared with them their knowledge and goods and the new people took what they wanted. They shared their things: their values, their religion, their languages, and their laws, then they took, took, took and the Native people were taken from. They gave them new things: values, religion, language, and laws. They gave them new land in fenced off areas. They gave their children new parents who taught them new ways....but when they ventured out into society they were treated differently. (Cardinal-Schubert 39)

In this passage, Cardinal-Schubert explains the impacts of colonial expansion from an Aboriginal perspective not shared by the colonizer. The words “ethics”, “integrity”, “responsibility” and “reality c. 89” are written along the edges of the blackboard, and reinforces a lack of consideration for Aboriginal culture. The history lesson continues on the right blackboard, where Cardinal-Schubert writes:

There were different rules, laws, values for Native peoples. The Native peoples knew this was wrong but since their philosophy is ‘live and let live’ they turned their other cheek and found sanctuary in their beliefs and traditions. But some could not overlook those gross injustices and sought relief by anesthetizing their rage with drugs and alcohol. Some moved into cities and became lost people. In 1969 a Cree Chief Robert Smallboy and a Blackfoot named Nelson Small Legs did much to create a cultural renaissance among Canadian Native people but true to a 100 year old prediction it was the artists: Morrisseau, Stump, Odjig, Reid, [...], Javier who gave [.....] back. (39)

This ‘lesson’ details how former Residential School students turned to drugs and alcohol to cope with various traumatic events experienced in Residential Schools. They had not found a safe space to begin their healing through the decolonization process. Yet alongside this passage, Cardinal-Schubert included the phrase “planning for the future” which could suggest that some Aboriginal people have come to terms with their colonial experience and are preparing to move forward.

The second section is constructed from four panels painted black arranged to form one large wall or memory wall. Participants can write the names of Aboriginal people they wish to remember. In addition, there are score lines that may represent the number of family members who attended Residential School.

The first memory board is located in the upper left corner with the names Lubicon, Bernard Ominayak, Helen Betty Osborn, Elizabeth, and Labrador, and fifteen score lines. The Lubicon Nation in Northern Alberta was overlooked when a treaty was negotiated with other nations in that region (AIC, *Lubicon* screen 1). Therefore, the Libcon people never surrendered

their land in exchange for treaty rights. However, the government of Alberta found oil throughout the Lubicon region, and considered the Lubicon land Crown land, and the government leased this Crown land to national and international oil companies to extract oil and gas (AIC, *Lubicon* screen 1). As a result, the construction and operation of these plants contributed to the decline in wildlife in the region which affected hunting and trapping in this region. The Lubicon Nation responded to the Alberta land registry by claiming their rights to the land (AIC, *Lubicon* screen 2). Bernard Ominayak, Lubicon Chief, points out that a generation ago they lived off the land hunting and trapping. The claim of the Lubicon was rejected, and referred to the Alberta courts, while at the same time, the government passed new legislation prohibiting land claims on Crown Land, therefore, the Lubicon case was thrown out of court (AIC, *Lubicon* screen 2).

Helen Betty Osborne was a member of the Cree Nation from Norway House in northern Manitoba and studying in The Pas to become a teacher. Osborne was a nineteen-year-old woman who was abducted on the night of November 12, 1971; while walking home after a dance, she was approached by four non-aboriginal men in a car who were looking for sex. When she rejected the idea of having sex with the men, they forced her into their car where she was beaten and sexually assaulted (AIC, *Osborne* screen 1-2). Osborne was then taken to a cabin where she was further beaten, and stabbed more than fifty times with a screwdriver, and her face was damaged beyond recognition (AJIC, screen 1). Sixteen years later, her assailants were found: Dwayne Archie Johnston was convicted and sentenced to life, Lee Colgan received immunity for testifying against James Houghton, who was acquitted, and Norman Mange was never charged (AJIC, screen 1).

The names written on the lower left memory board include Oka, Lasagna, and Minnie Sutherland, and ten score lines. In 1990 the Mayor of Oka wanted to expand the town's golf course that would have extended over a Mohawk burial ground. The Mohawk responded by creating a barricade to prevent this expansion (Bagnall, screen 1). A police officer was shot on site, and the military was called in and that led to a 78 day standoff (Bagnall, screen 1). The suspected shooter, Ronald Cross, known as "Lasagna" because of his mixed heritage of Native and Italian, was a masked participant involved during this confrontation, and Cross was arrested in September (Bagnall, screen 1). While handcuffed, Cross was beaten by former provincial officers (Bagnall, screen 1). He was later tried and found guilty for his participation in the standoff, and sentenced to six years in prison (Bagnall, screen 1).

Minnie Sutherland was a Cree woman who was hit by a car and died in an Ottawa hospital on January 11, 1989. The events of her death were unacceptable. Police at the scene described Sutherland as a "squaw" while they dragged her body from the middle of the road and placed her on a snow bank (Methot, screen 1). When the ambulance driver arrived, he refused to take her to the hospital under the assumption she was drunk and not injured (Methot, screen 1). While at the hospital, the hospital staff lost her purse, and could not identify her (Methot, screen 1).

The names written on the upper right memory board include: Gitskan, Rod Pelletier, Nelson Small Legs and Riel, and fifteen score lines. Written on the edges is the phrase "remember Minnie Sutherland remember, remember and remember". The Gitskan First Nation is addressing old land claims which would give them sovereignty over their land (Wa and Uukw, screen 1). The name Rod Pelletier was added to the memory board by someone who remembered him. The names Nelson Small Legs and Riel have a line crossed through them.

Louis Riel was famous for stating the following: “My people will sleep for one hundred years, when they awake it will be the artists who give them their spirit back” (qtd. in WAG 3). Riel was one of the most controversial historical figures in Canada, a hero for some, “a ‘Father of Confederation’, a Métis Statesman and ‘the Founder of Manitoba’” (Mattes, *Rielism* 13), while for others he was variously a “religious figure, a madman, and a rebel” (Mattes, *Rielism* 13). The term ‘Métis’ was invented by a Catholic priest, and was intended to mean “one and a half men”, specifically, “half Indian, half white and half devil”, and was used to describe children born from Aboriginal mothers and European fathers (Farrell Racette 47). Many European officials married Aboriginal women to strengthen trade relations between Europeans and Aboriginal Nations, and these marriage alliances produced a valuable commodity, their offspring, the Métis, that linked these nations together (Ng 53). Riel is known for two events in Canadian history; in 1870 he established the Métis Treaty known as the Manitoba Act, and, in 1885, he led the Métis Resistance to protest against the starvation of Métis people, loss of land rights, and the reservation system perpetrated by the government of Canada (Mattes, *Rielism* 13-14). Inevitably, the Métis people revolted against the Canadian government, and on November 16, 1885, Riel was executed for treason (Mattes, *Rielism* 14).

The name written on the lower right memory board is Old Man and Milton Born With a Tooth, and \*page 57, and ten score lines. Milton Born With a Tooth is a member of the Blackfoot Nation from Piegan, Alberta. In 1920, Old Man River was diverted to southern Alberta to benefit non-native farmers, and Milton Born With a Tooth went to jail in 1990 for attempting to divert the river back to its original course with a bulldozer (Horn, screen 1). \*Page 57 could reference page 57 from the book *Fireworks and Folly: How We Killed Minnie Southerland*, or perhaps a Canadian History text book.

When *The Lesson* evolved into an interactive piece, chalk became an important element, allowing participants to write the names of Residential School survivors and others they wished to remember on the memory wall. As *The Lesson* toured Canada, viewers added names, wrote phrases, and corrected spelling mistakes on the memory wall. This action allowed participants to move from victim to survivor (Bissley, screen 2).

The final section of this work is the floor space of the classroom. Located in the centre space are ten child size chairs placed in a mock classroom setting. The chairs could represent Aboriginal children as one homogenous group because each chair is painted black, suggesting uniformity among Aboriginal students in Residential Schools. However, nine chairs are kitchen chairs, in a variety of styles, and one is a combination student desk-chair. The variety of styles may represent various Aboriginal Nations of Aboriginal children in the Residential School classroom. The chairs are chosen quite deliberately; there is a set of four kitchen chairs and a pair of kitchen chairs, and four random chairs of different designs. This mixture of chairs could be interpreted as: 40% of Aboriginal children came from one nation, and 20% came from another nation, and 40% came from various Aboriginal nations. Kitchen chairs, however, are more commonly associated with domestic space, and not an academic setting. The selection of kitchen chairs could reflect the kind of training that Aboriginal students received in Residential Schools. Students reported they spent most of their day learning civilized arts in gender-specific training, and as little as 2 hours a day inside the classroom learning to read, write and speak the English language. Therefore, the nine kitchen chairs could represent 90% of training in industry and domestic arts that took place outside the classroom, and the student desk-chair combination could represent 10% of actual instruction inside the classroom learning to read, write and speak the English language.

Placed on the seat of each chair is a text book wrapped in white paper. Written on three book covers are the following letters: AB, BIB and All A. The white paper and the English lettering could represent white education taught to Aboriginal students. These books vary in size, and all but one has been placed in the same direction, which may suggest resistances from conforming into a Eurocentric belief system. Located on each book is a ripe red apple with a hook inserted on top. Within the installation the apples were left to rot (Bissley, screen 1).

In Christianity the apple is a representation of *The Fall of Man*. In this story, the serpent convinces Eve to eat a forbidden apple from a tree in the Garden of Eden, and Eve subsequently offers the apple to Adam (Genesis 3.0-3.4). After consuming the apples, Adam and Eve become more like God, and know the difference between good and evil (Genesis 3.5). They became aware and ashamed of themselves for being naked, and seek to cover themselves up (Genesis 3.7). As a result of their transgression, God punished Adam and Eve. As a woman, Eve was placed in an inferior category, destined to be ruled by her husband and, through her desire for him, to experience painful childbirth (Genesis 3.16). As a man, Adam's punishment was to return to the ground from which he was formed (Genesis 3.19), and to till the ground he came from in order to provide for his family (Genesis 3.23). Therefore, *The Fall of Man* reinforces the Christian God, of civilization, is a punishing God, and not a forgiving God. The Christian God placed men and women into gender specific roles which were enforced in the civilizing process in Residential Schools.

Another interpretation of the apple refers to a transformed Aboriginal person. The skin of the apple is a reference to the red skin of an Aboriginal person. The interior of the apple is white, and the colour white suggests the interior transformation of an Aboriginal person who adopted the qualities of a white moral value system. In this situation, if you slice an Aboriginal

person in half, the interior is white and the exterior is red compared to the slicing of an apple. The strategic placement of the apples reinforces the idea that Residential Schools were turning Aboriginal children into apples, and the hook on each apple refers to the ornamental use of Aboriginal people in Canada as a token of European Colonialism.

Located at the foot of each chair is a rope that ties one chair to the next. Cardinal-Schubert explains that the chairs hobbled together suggest that Aboriginal people were viewed as one and not as individuals, implying that they are all the same (Bissley, screen 2). The tying together could represent a gang chain used on prisoners, as many Aboriginal children believed that they were prisoners held against their will in Residential Schools.

*The Lesson* marks devastating events in the history of Aboriginal people from both inside and outside the classroom. Cardinal-Schubert uses the blackboard and memory board to evoke personal histories of Aboriginal people, and to promote healing.

### ***Potato Peeling 101 to Ethnobotany 101, Jane Ash Poitras***

The work *Potato Peeling 101 to Ethnobotany 101* by Jane Ash Poitras is a mixed media assemblage triptych measuring 9 feet high and 27 feet wide. The panels have been painted black to mirror blackboards in a classroom setting. However, Ash Poitras reverses the classroom so that the viewer becomes a part of the Residential School experience (McCallum 114). As viewers, we are confronted with a written foreign language, and unfamiliar images (McCallum 114).

The left panel depicts a visual record of forced assimilation by which Aboriginal children were taken from their families, and placed in Residential Schools. They were denied their language and culture while being trained to become labourers and domestic workers. The title

*Potato Peeling 101* (Figure 3.3) refers to the literal peeling of potatoes, a typical domestic task assigned to female Aboriginal students in Residential Schools because “they weren’t thought intelligent enough to learn anything else” (Eichhorn 20).

Stenciled along the top of this blackboard are the letters ‘A’ through ‘Q’, math questions, dates, words, and small amounts of English hand writings. Pages from a book are mounted on the blackboard. Written on these pages are words and numbers that are stenciled in red: ‘aboriginal’, ‘solution’, ‘normal’, and ‘Residential School number 459’.

Drawn on these pages are depictions that are similar to images found on winter counts. Winter counts were painted by warriors onto buffalo hides to document a calendar of historical events of a particular individual’s experience in various battles won, and successful hunting scenes (Berlo and Phillips 120). Winter count may include events that occurred over many decades, or even centuries (Berlo and Phillips 121). The winter count by Ash Poitras depicts warriors rendered in full regalia wearing war shirts, leggings and head dresses. The warriors are carrying their war shields, bows and arrows, and the warriors ride on red, blue, green, yellow and black horses. The scene represents a buffalo hunt where the buffalo is sacrificing itself to ensure the survival of Aboriginal people.

Attached are a variety of archival photographs, coloured images, writings, and paintings. Selected archival photographs provide historical evidence of the European civilizing mission, and the history of Aboriginal children in Residential Schools. For example, the archival photograph located on the far left, *Quewich and his children who attended Qu’Appelle School: the before and after contrast so beloved by missionaries* (Figure 3.4), depicts an Aboriginal father with his son and two daughters. The father is rendered stooped, wrinkled and dressed in traditional native attire, representing a figure from the past which has reached his limit of

evolution (Milloy 29). The father “appears to be decaying right in front of the camera, dying off, as was his culture” (Milloy 29). In contrast, his children are neatly dressed in European clothing, his son wears a uniform and a cadet cap which symbolizes citizenship, and can be compared to the image of *Thomas Moore before and after attending Regina Industrial School* (Figure 1.4) (Milloy 29). His daughters are dressed in formal European women’s dresses. The uniform and dress could represent a successful transformation of citizenship obtained through Residential School education (Milloy 29). Therefore, this image depicts traditional Indians as a vanishing race, and modern Indians as citizens.

In order to achieve the successful transformation into citizenship, the government legally enforced the separation of Aboriginal children from their parents, and kept them in Residential School for as long as possible which is an act of genocide (Milloy 30). Following this image is a number of archival photographs that validate various experiences of forced assimilation such as gender separation, gender training, and the physical spaces of Residential Schools.

Placed among the archival photographs is a section of writing, an image of floral beadwork, and three images that could represent individual ribbon shawls used in modern-day ceremonies based on historical rituals. The floral beadwork is associated with Aboriginal women’s decorative work, often featured on cultural material objects such as shawls. However, this particular floral pattern is associated with the kind of women’s embroidery that was learned in Residential School. This embroidery technique was adopted, altered and applied to contemporary beadwork patterns. The shawls are modern interpretations of a warrior’s shirt that is linked to the Ghost Dance. The first shawl is a black and white shawl located next to the image of floral beadwork. This shawl is depicted with triangle motifs along the upper edge followed by strips that may resemble traditional quill work. There are painted geometric forms

that may function as spiritual power for the shawl. The second shawl is dark blue on top, decorated with four red outlined crosses, and the bottom is depicted with light blue and red strips that could imitate geometric forms found in quill work. The third shawl consists of an alternating red and white striped background with symbols of red crosses with blue and yellow centre. The cross shape is a symbol that represents Christianity as well as the four directions. These modern-day shawls combine elements of past beliefs with present materials, patterns, and ideas, linking a modern day web of interconnectedness by combining Aboriginal mythologies with European ideas in order to formulate a hybrid identity of a modern Aboriginal person.

Point blankets were one used as a treaty item but were eventually used to spread illness. Located below this section of archival photographs are the iconic colours of the Hudson's Bay point blanket. The Hudson Bay point blanket links the textile manufacturing company in England to the practical needs of Aboriginal people (Tichenor 7). The strips located across the ends of these point blankets are the colours green, red, yellow and indigo, and each of these colours holds spiritual significance for Aboriginal people (Tichenor 16).

Point blankets were manufactured with short black lines along one edge called points. These points did not represent a dollar amount, but rather the size of the blanket to fit a child, man or woman (Tichenor 12). These blankets were adopted by Aboriginal people, and used as robes that were thrown over the shoulder or worn in a toga-like fashion (Tichenor 17). The point blanket was not only a trade item, but was included as a benefit in the treaty. In addition to annual annuities paid to Aboriginal people, point blankets were given to every man, woman and child (Tichenor 43). By the end of the nineteenth century, Hudson Bay point blankets were acquired through treaty payments and no longer used as trade items (Tichenor 47). Point blankets were rationed as a treaty right which was used to estimate the population of Aboriginal

people residing on reserve land and in Residential Schools. According to the treaty, every man, women and child received a blanket (Jones and Mattes 13). Therefore, blankets have a history linked to colonization, and were used in attempt to annihilate Aboriginal culture (Jones and Mattes 13). Blankets brought comfort, but they signified the death and destruction of a community in which blankets were employed as biological weapons to spread smallpox and tuberculosis among Aboriginal communities (Robertson 91). Depicted in the centre of this Hudson's Bay point blanket Ash Poitras includes is the symbol of the Union Jack, an emblem of foreign conquest.

The layout of *Potato Peeling 101* could symbolically represent Aboriginal people and culture in the centre being compressed by European forces. The English alphabet pushes down onto Aboriginal people and the Union Jack and Hudson Bay point blanket pushes up which could suggest Aboriginal people are powerless, and are held captive on their own land. Therefore, *Potato Peeling 101* could function as a winter count blanket depicting the sacrifice and the survival of Aboriginal people.

The centre panel (Figure 3.5) is a continuation that depicts a blackboard on top and the Hudson Bay point blanket on the bottom. Painted on the blackboard are red wild flowers. The colour red could represent Aboriginal people, and the flowers could represent medicines. However, located between the two is a curiosity cabinet containing specimens of sacred herbs known only to Aboriginal people (Eichhorn 21). Aboriginal people watched animals to learn the properties of these plants, and the knowledge of plants was passed down from one generation to the next which suggests Aboriginal children are naturally embodied with carrying the knowledge of traditional medicines and the healing wisdom of their ancestors, and the knowledge cannot be taken away (Buehler, screen 2). Therefore, the centre panel represents a combined study of

plants from a Western perspective and from a holistic perspective that could suggest a positive working relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans.

*Ethnobotany 101* (Figure 3.6) celebrates the academic and professional achievement of Aboriginal people today (Buehler, screen 2). The right panel is painted black that mirrors a blackboard. Depicted on the lower left corner is the end of the Hudson's Bay point blanket. Stenciled across the top are the letters 'R' through 'Z', and the numbers 1 through 7 which could represent Europeans having power over Aboriginal people. Located along the right side is a red strip is stenciled in black, with the title *Ethnobotany 101* written in descending order. Attached to the blackboard are coloured images and hand-written notes in white chalk.

The central image depicts a young Aboriginal male examining an x-ray. He is depicted with long braided hair, wearing a lab coat and latex gloves. This image depicts an Aboriginal male who is able to function in Western society while keeping his identity (McCallum 127).

Included are four small images of the red-top mushroom, and hand-written notes that discuss its history and its medical uses (Eichhorn 20). The names of the medicines are written in Ojibway but explained in the English language. This could be another example of Aboriginal people and Europeans working together. The lesson starts off in large lettering, but as you read the letters become smaller and unreadable. Ash Poitras writes:

*Amanita muscaria* (Fly Agaric) has been used by the Ojibwa Indians in their sacred Midewin religion. The mushroom is known as Oshtimish Wayashkwedo, red-top mushroom. The earliest forms of life on earth were plants. Plants preserved in fossils have recently been discovered dating back 3.2 billion years. Many plants are toxic, however Medicinal plants are useful in curing or alleviating culture's and people's illness because they are toxic. For eg. *Digitalis* improper dose represents one of our most efficacious and widely prescribed cardiac medicines, yet at higher doses it is a deadly poison.

Herbs were used in treatment of the sick and in the working of charms, and songs were sung to make the treatment and the charms effective. Indian Individuals often had their own names for the plants which they used as remedies. The names by which plants are

designated by the Chippewa are usually compared indicating the appearance of the plant, the place where it grows, a characteristic property of the plant, or its principal use.

This root was eaten by childless women in order to conceive. Poultice of pounded roots applied to the inside of mouth for mouth or..... (Eichhorn 15)

Therefore, *Ethnobotany 101* could represent a positive transformation by combining traditional spiritual beliefs of Aboriginal people with European knowledge. The blackboard could represent a new winter count of a modern Indian functioning in today's society.

The first step in citizenship immersed "the Indian" in a civilized environment of Residential Schools where Aboriginal children were forced to learn how to read, write and speak the English language. The work of Carl Beam reflects acts of cultural genocide leading up to and including the Residential School experience. The work of Cardinal-Schubert represents how Aboriginal children were marginalized in the classroom. The work of Jane Ash Poitras documents a history of Residential School and the successful academic achievement of Aboriginal people today. However, in addition to in classroom instruction, Aboriginal students required vocational training in industry and domestic arts to obtain citizenship. The final chapter deals with gendered training to transform Aboriginal boys and girls into young Aboriginal men and women that mirror the roles of white middle-class men and women.

## **Chapter Four: Cultural Assimilation Outside the Residential School Classroom**

The previous chapter dealt with the civilizing mission that took place inside the Residential School classroom. This chapter focuses on the physical transformation of Aboriginal children and vocational training for Aboriginal male and female students outside the Residential School classroom.

### **Physical Transformation**

Upon arrival at Residential Schools, Aboriginal children were segregated by gender, were stripped of their personal belongings, and received haircuts to look like white middle-class boys and girls.

Aboriginal boys and girls were segregated by gender as previously described in chapter one illustrated in the archival photograph *St Peter Claver and St Charles Garnier for Aboriginal boys and St Joseph's Indian Residential School for girls* (Figure 1.1). Forced segregation left many Aboriginal students suffering from separation anxiety from their siblings which contributed to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Aboriginal children had their personal clothing taken away and replaced with gender-specific attire during their education and vocational training at Residential School. For example, an anonymous male student of the Kamloops Indian Residential School recalls they had to wear pants, long brown stockings, Oxford shoes, and tunics over their t-shirts (SCES 169). At Saturday and Sunday church service they wore special outfits: a green outfit that included a green tam, a bright green tunic, a white t-shirt and long stockings; and a blue outfit that consisted of a blue tam, a blue sweater, a blue t-shirt and long stockings (SCES 169). Female Aboriginal students had to wear tunic-style dresses. Diane Sandy, a student at the Kamloops Indian

Residential School, explains that she and her classmates had to wear maroon colour tunic-style dresses with white or black bloomers and long brown socks (SCES 177).

Hair played a role in both European and Aboriginal history. Europeans wore elaborate wigs to symbolize authority and power in European history (Grant 18). The European colonizers practiced cutting the hair of their enemy and took lock of hair as a trophy; this act reinforced European dominance, and symbolized their position of power over a subordinate people or colonized people (Grant 17 & 18). An anonymous student of the Kamloops Indian Residential School explains as soon as the students arrived at the Residential School “they took our hair right off of us” (SCES 151). Therefore, European colonizers were exercising control over Aboriginal children by cutting the hair of Aboriginal children. This was perceived as an act of dominance over a conquered people.

For Aboriginal people, hair played an important role in Native mysticism. Aboriginal people believed their hair contained spiritual power, and wore it in long braids (Grant 18). The braid consists of three overlapping sections of hair, and the number three in Native mysticism represents the mind, body and spirit (Grant 19). The sections of hair braided together signified the strength of a united people (Grant 19).

When Aboriginal people cut their hair, it marked a transition in their life (Grant 18). For example, Dan Kennedy, a student of Lebret Indian Residential School, explains in the Assiniboine tradition, cutting the hair was a “token of mourning – the closer the relative, the closer the cut” (qtd. in Grant 19) and he thought his mother had died because his hair was cut so close to the scalp (Grant 19). When Europeans cut the hair of Aboriginal children, Aboriginal people believed Europeans assaulted Aboriginal culture (Grant 18). In this case, cutting the braids of Aboriginal children in Residential Schools destroyed the spiritual power of the mind,

body and spirit, thus, represented a destruction of Native mysticism (Grant 19). Sandy recalls how everyone at the Kamloops Indian Residential School received the same haircut: a straight cut with bangs that made everyone look the same. She recalls how they all cried on the first day of school when they saw their hair being cut off and left in a big pile (SCES 177).

Aboriginal children associated short hair with punishment and public humiliation (Grant 18-19). Having their head shaved in Residential Schools was the ultimate humiliation, and was considered to be more severe than being strapped (Haig-Brown 78). Knockwood recalls a group of young boys were caught trying to run away from the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School, and were subsequently punished by having their heads shaved (Grant 20). Likewise, “Alice” explains she was caught trying to run away from the Kamloops Indian Residential School, and was punished by having her hair cut as short as a boy’s (Haig-Brown 78). “Alice” was forced to kneel on the floor, and tell everyone that she was sorry for trying to run away (Haig-Brown 78).

Once Aboriginal students were segregated by gender, issued new clothing, and had their hair cut, they began their training in industry and domestic arts.

### **Vocational Training for Male Aboriginal Students**

At the beginning of the Residential School era, most middle-class European men performed heavy dirty manual labour jobs in the public sphere (Miller 222). In order to be employable, young Aboriginal male students at Residential Schools were trained as general labourers for the farming and agriculture industry, and they learned the role of head of their household (Paxton 177).

The division of labour consisted of heavy manual labour jobs that were given to senior male students and light duties that were given to junior male students at Residential Schools. For

instance, senior Aboriginal male students at the Kamloops Indian Residential School helped with the day-to-day operations of the school's farm where they took care of the livestock, and raised dairy cows, chickens and hogs (Miller 164; Adams 149). William Brewer and Andrew Amos, senior male students of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, recall getting up in the mornings at 5:30 to milk the cows (SCES 26 & 41) versus younger male students, like "Leo", a student of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, recalls he collected between three hundred to three hundred and fifty eggs a day from chickens. Despite these quantities of eggs collected, however, he remembered they were given only one egg to eat every second Thursday (Haig-Brown 64). Male Aboriginal students were trained in agriculture by working in the school's vegetable garden, and they learned how to plow and irrigate the fields, and how to plant seeds (Paxton 180; Adams 149). The types of crops planted include corn, oats, wheat, potatoes, cabbage, turnips, beets, parsnips, carrots, and fruit (Adams 149; Miller 259). "Charlie", a student of Kamloops Indian Residential School, explains they documented on a calendar when they planted the seeds, and when they tested the product for ripeness, and when they harvested the crops (Haig-Brown 68). In addition to the fall harvest, Aboriginal male students were responsible for providing firewood for the school's furnace. Male students cut down trees; they hauled, piled and split the wood as demonstrated in the archival photograph *At the Chooutla School in Yukon, the furnaces required an enormous quantity of wood, much of it prepared by the boys in 1934* (Figure 1.3).

By the late 1920's, Canada's economic conditions were changing, and the demand for general labourers in the farming and agriculture industry was on the decline, and a demand for trade labourers increased (Miller 165). As a result, Residential Schools responded by changing their vocational training program for male Aboriginal students to include blacksmithing,

engineering, carpentry, and boot, shoe and harness making skills, therefore meeting the demands of the new economy (Miller 220; Paxton 180; Adams 149). For example, “Leo”, a student of Kamloops Indian Residential School, explains as a child he learned carpentry skills at Residential School. He and fellow classmates were involved with maintaining the existing school’s building in which they installed a new gymnasium floor and ceiling. They installed the floor with nails, and finished it so that no one could see a single hammer mark (Haig-Brown 68). The boys built a high scaffold to complete the ceiling installation (Haig-Brown 68). “Leo” explained he was able to apply the carpentry skills he learned as a child from this project to build himself a house (Haig-Brown 68).

In addition to training in industry, male Aboriginal students cleaned their dormitory space: they made their beds, and picked up after themselves. They learned to maintain personal hygiene. They were taught how to tailor, how to clean laundry, how to prepare basic food, and how to bake (Miller 251; Paxton 180).

### **Domestic Training for Female Aboriginal Students**

For young Aboriginal female students, domestic training at Residential Schools was meant to transform them into “embodiments of Victorian womanhood”, and introduce them to the “cult of true womanhood” (Adams 175; Paxton 177). Young female Aboriginal students needed to learn what it meant to “be female” in European terms (Paxton 175). Europeans defined the term “good woman” to include characteristics of attentiveness and obedience; they needed to be polite, and maintain good hygiene (Paxton 183). The goals were to prepare young Aboriginal women to work as servants in the “home” of white middle-class families; to become “good homemakers”; and to become dedicated mothers for their family (Paxton 177). Working

in the private sphere of the home enabled Aboriginal women to “be seen” but “not heard”; they were not expected to express concerns over matters outside the home (Paxton 177). From a European view, females who showed “assertiveness” were classified as “unfeminine” and “undesirable” (Paxton 178). Thus, teachers at Residential Schools focused on the behaviour skills of white middle-class femininity to teach Aboriginal female students to be “ladylike”: keep themselves sweet and attractive at all times, and to speak in a soft voice (Paxton 178 & 180).

Although Residential Schools were not domestic spaces, young female Aboriginal students were trained in domestic arts of the kitchen, dining room, sewing room, laundry room and the dormitory. In addition to ‘lessons’ in these spaces; female Aboriginal students were assigned monthly cleaning duties (Haig-Brown 65). For example, in the kitchen, female students learned how to prepare menus, how to cook, how to bake, how to operate appliances, and how to clean the kitchen. “Sophie”, a student of Kamloops Indian Residential School, recalls that when one worked in the school’s kitchen as cooks’ helper, one was assigned certain duties such as: slicing bread for the lunches, churning butter or cleaning pots, pans and dishes (Haig-Brown 65). In the dining room young female students learned how to set the dining room table, how to serve food, how to eat with proper etiquette, and how to properly clear the dining room table. In sewing class, female students learned how to make and cut patterns. Female students made dresses, underwear and shirts, and performed patchwork. In addition, female students learned how to make quilts and pillow cases; and were taught to embroider, knit and darn. In the laundry room, female students learned how to wash and dry different types of coloured fabrics. In the dormitory, they learned how to make their bed, how to maintain a clean room, and how to wash, wax and polish the floor.

Some of these tasks were later transformed by artists into works that document various Residential School experiences as seen in the quilt *Crime Against Humanity*. This quilt consists of eleven individual quilt blocks that were created by different artists, and each quilt block reflects a Residential School experience. For example, Marion Beaucage created the quilt block *Domestic Diva* (Figure 4.1), and she recalls during her attendance at the St Joseph Residential School for girls in Spanish, Ontario, domestic chores were performed and rotated daily by the older female students; they worked in the kitchen, laundry and dining room (Robertson 102). Weekly chores were performed by the younger female students on Saturdays; they washed, waxed and polished the hardwood floors (Robertson 102). Beaucage explains that a nun would supervise the work of the younger female students; made sure the floor was properly washed, waxed and polished, and performed in silence (Robertson 102). However, Beaucage recalls polishing the floor was the fun part of the job because dust rags were tied to their stockings and they slid across the floor to polish it (Robertson 102). At this point, they were allowed to play tag in a quiet manner and talk to one another in soft voices (Robertson 102). The quilt block *Domestic Diva* depicts a young female Aboriginal student on her hands and knees washing the floor with a cloth. This young girl is rendered with a blunt, straight hair cut and bangs; she wears a simple-tunic dress with white socks and black dress shoes. Located in the lower right corner is the number 108 that identifies the St Joseph Residential School for girls in Spanish, Ontario (Robertson 102). Therefore, *Domestic Diva* depicts a specific young female Aboriginal student dressed in proper gender attire engaged in a domestic task associated with the work of white middle-class women.

The construction of quilts was a skill that was learned in the gender assimilation process at Residential Schools. The quilt provides comfort, however, the quilt is a metaphor for a unified

people constructed from pieces (Robertson 87). The pieces represent a fragmented nation that can easily be torn apart (Robertson 87). Therefore, an interpretation of this quilt could suggest that Aboriginal culture can easily be broken.

Upon graduation, young Aboriginal men and women would have the necessary skills and abilities as general labourers and domestic helpers in the general economy. These learned skills of Aboriginal men and women would not interfere with the competition of white middle-class men and women for high-paying skilled jobs (Haig-Brown 67). Aboriginal men would work as general labourers. Male Aboriginal students would not acquire enough education to compete as entrepreneurs against white middle-class businesses in farming, agriculture and trades. For example, “Leo” explains he learned very little about the farming and agriculture industry at the Kamloops Indian Residential School (Haig-Brown 67). As students, they received no explanation of why they performed particular farming and agriculture tasks, but rather teachers explained the processes of plowing, seeding and irrigation (Haig-Brown 67). “Leo” explains that he never learned business skills or how to own or operate a profitable business for the farming or agriculture industry, but rather simply to grow enough food to support his family (Haig-Brown 67). He recognized that he would only be able to obtain employment as a general labourer (Haig-Brown 67). Aboriginal women received enough education to provide them with employable skills to maintain the “home”; become “good housewives and mothers”; thus, “good citizens” (Robertson 87 & 100).

Therefore, vocational training in industry provided skills for Aboriginal men to obtain seasonal work as general labourers in farming and agriculture (Miller 256), while domestic training for young Aboriginal women provided them with sufficient domestic skills to find employment in maintaining the homes of white middle-class families. Three important works

from established Aboriginal artists are engaged with the theme of cultural assimilation outside the Residential School classroom: *Mom* and *Mom Too* by Lita Fontaine and *Sick and Tired* by Adrian Stimson, both of which incorporate the theme of transformation in relation to the Residential School experience.

### ***Mom, Lita Fontaine***

The work *Mom* (Figure 4.2) measures 91.5 cm by 102.5 cm, and was created by Lita Fontaine in 1998. The work consists of found objects, acrylic paint, and the repetition of an archival photograph. Fontaine defines her work as “‘montage’ meaning to build upon, layer by layer” (Mattes, *Lita* 20). The layering of work represents fragmented pieces brought together as in a quilt (Mattes, *Lita* 20).

Fontaine explains the archival photograph used in this work depicts her mother, Rose Anne Contois, and her mother’s classmates at the Portage la Prairie Residential School c.1926 (Mattes, *Lita* 16). Although the subject of the work is Fontaine’s mother’s experience of the Residential School, it does not focus on the classroom experience. Instead, the photo demonstrates how these young female Aboriginal students were made to look identical to one another, forced to wear the same style dress, and the same hairstyles that stripped them of their individual identity (Mattes, *Lita* 16). Having the same haircut and clothing promoted Aboriginal people as being all the “same” (Fontaine, *Spirit* 76). The archival photograph was enlarged twice with each image larger than the previous. The resulting images are arranged from smallest to the largest; the smallest photograph located in the front, and the largest image located at the rear. These images were then attached to a painted background.

The first image is the smallest image that is located in the centre of the work. This image is framed with alternating red and blue paint strokes. An interpretation of this small photograph could represent the arrival of Aboriginal students at Residential Schools as young children with the potential to grow. The second image is placed directly behind the small photograph. The border encasing this image consists of a blue ground with little yellow painted box motifs similar to those seen in Dakota quilts and beadwork (Fontaine, *Spirit* 75). A possible interpretation of these box motifs may represent stylized lightning and mountain patterns as seen in the work of the Dakota people. There are black squares framed in the colours of the Medicine Wheel; located in each direction (East, South, West and North) from the image is a black square. Located in the East is a black square framed in yellow; located in the South is a black square framed in black; located in the West is a black square framed in red; and located in the North is a black square framed in white. Although the yellow, black and red are not located in the correct position according to the Medicine Wheel, the colour position is not relevant but rather each colour represents a specific spiritual teaching according to the Medicine Wheel. These colours together represent positive growth and personal development (Lane *et al.* 23). This may suggest that young Aboriginal children have the potential for personal growth (Lane *et al.* 23).

The third image is the largest photograph that is placed behind the second image. This photograph is framed with the colours red, yellow, white, green, blue and black. A black square is placed in each corner; each square is framed with a colour: the square located at the top right corner is framed in red; the square located in the lower right corner is framed in black; the square located at the top left corner is framed in yellow; and the square located in the lower left is framed in blue. Along the right side of this photograph there are five coloured rectangles: black, red, blue, yellow and white. Each rectangle is framed in a variety of painted colours consisting

of green, blue, white and red. Each rectangle is followed by a black square framed with a yellow border. These colours represent multiple meanings associated with the Medicine Wheel; however, the colour arrangement that Fontaine uses is confusing for the viewer. One interpretation of this colour arrangement might suggest that upon arrival at Residential Schools, Aboriginal children possessed fragmented pieces of various spiritual teachings of which they were vaguely aware and are less experienced with interpreting its meanings.

The background is painted in two panels divided by a red line. The left panel is painted black and has two white stripes on its far right. The right panel is painted white with black dots and is framed with a black border with white dots. Clearly the background plays with the duality between white and black, yet the entire work is framed and coded with colours representing fragmented teachings of the Medicine Wheel which is unreadable and makes no sense.

According to Fontaine, *Mom* is a visual history of Rose Anne Contois (Fontaine, *Spirit* 76). It is possible, therefore, to interpret the work as depicting fragmented pieces of Aboriginal culture that have been put together to make a whole; this may suggest that Contois struggles to find balance between Native mysticism and Christianity. Fontaine explains that as a young girl, her identity as an Aboriginal person was in constant flux shifting between her Aboriginal and white heritage, and this left her confused and displaced about her identity (Fontaine, *Ikwe* 10). Fontaine points out that Contois was her role model who helped her to define and shape her understanding of what it means to be an Aboriginal woman (Fontaine, *Ikwe* 10). Furthermore, Contois's identity was shaped through the mandatory attendance at Residential School (Fontaine, *Ikwe* 10).

Therefore, an interpretation of the photographic enlargement process could be that it demonstrates the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth of an individual through their

determination to grow. The physical, mental, emotional and spiritual elements of the Medicine Wheel teach wholeness and balance. The Medicine Wheel explains how everything and everyone in the universe is interconnected; creation is in a constant state of change and nothing stays the same (Lane *et al.* 26-27). These changes are not random or accidental events, but rather connected to everything (Lane *et al.* 26-27). In order to use the Medicine Wheel correctly, one must position him or herself in the centre in order to be equally connected to all points on the wheel to maintain a healthy and well-balanced growth process (Lane *et al.* 40). For instance, if a tree cut into a thousand pieces and will not grow, yet if the conditions are just right the tree will begin to grow (Lane *et al.* 34). In other words, if the learning conditions in Residential Schools are right for its students, the students will have the opportunity to grow like the tree. An interpretation of the photograph enlargement could suggest endless possibilities of infinite human potential and growth. The layering of these images could represent flux.

### ***Mom Too, Lit Fontaine***

Fontaine created another montage work entitled *Mom Too* (Figure 4.3) between 1999 and 2000. This work measures 126 cm x 126 cm consists of found objects, acrylic paint, an archival photograph, and two copies of the Treaty One title page and a copy of the Bill C-31 title page.

*Mom Too* is divided into two sections: the left and the right section.

The left section consists of two copies of the Treaty One title page, and a copy of Bill C-31 title page, and painted squares, and an image motif at the bottom. Treaty One was implemented on August 3, 1871, between Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and the Chippewa and Swampy Cree Tribes (Daugherty 26). The Queen agreed to set aside land along the Red River in Manitoba for the sole and exclusive use of the Indians (Daugherty 26). The

land was measured and divided into one hundred and sixty acres for each Aboriginal family of five (Daugherty 26). Twenty-five square miles of land surrounding Indian reserves would remain unoccupied (Daugherty 27). The Queen agreed to provide and maintain a school on each Indian reserve upon request (Daugherty 29). Three dollars gratuity was given to each Aboriginal man, woman and child (Daugherty 29). Aboriginal families with five persons or more would receive an annuity of fifteen Canadian dollars (Daugherty 29). Annuity payments made to larger or smaller families could be made in the form of blankets, clothing, fabrics, twine, traps or cash if requested (Daugherty 29). In return for this treaty, Aboriginal people had to surrender their land; Aboriginal people were not allowed to interfere with the property rights or molest Her Majesty's white subjects (Daugherty 29). There was no provision outlined for hunting or fishing (Daugherty12).

In the work *Mom Too*, there are two copies of the Treaty One title page located one above the other. Fontaine explains the top copy has the letter "A" written on it and is used to represent her mother, Rose Anne Contois. The bottom copy has the letter "B" written on it and is used to represent her father. Furthermore, Fontaine says the Treaty One title page represents the legislation that her parents shared and were subjected to (Fontaine, *Ikwe* 11-12).

In addition to signed treaties, the Indian Act was established to legally identify registered Indians, and provide them with benefits: health care, paid education, social assistance and housing (Birizinski 8). However, with the growing number of inter-racial marriages between registered Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, this resulted in children being born of mixed races. Therefore, the Indian Act was amended to eliminate the status of registered Indians who married non-Aboriginal people, and their children would lose their Indian status. Once a registered Aboriginal person lost their Indian status, they were no longer entitled to the benefits

outlined in the Indian Act. According to the government's classification system in the Indian Act, one could only be, or not be, an Indian.

Section 12(1) (b) of the Indian Act discriminated against Aboriginal women by stripping them of their Indian status if they married a non-status man (Holmes 4). For example, children such as Fontaine who were born under Section 12(2) and who had a non-status father lost their status; and any child born that before that marriage also lost their status (Holmes 4). Section 12(1)(a)(iv) further stripped Indian status of children when they reached the age of 21 if their mother or paternal grandmother did not have Indian status before marriage (Holmes 4). Yet Section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act allowed Indian status men to keep their Indian status if they married non-status women (Holmes 4). In this case, a non-Aboriginal wife would "become" a status Indian and their children would obtain Indian status (Holmes 4).

Furthermore, the Indian Act placed Aboriginal women in a different category versus Aboriginal men. Aboriginal women could easily lose their Indian status through inter-racial marriages while non-Aboriginal women could obtain Indian status through inter-racial marriage. In addition to losing Indian status through inter-racial marriages, Aboriginal people were required to give up their Indian status if they wanted to join the Canadian Forces or vote in federal elections or if they refused to send their children to Residential Schools (Holmes 4).

Since Aboriginal women continued to be discriminated against, in July of 1980, Indian bands requested the suspension of Sections 12(1)(b) and 12(1)(a)(iv) of the Indian Act based on conditions outlined in the Canadian Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Section 15(1): "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on, race...or...sex." (Holmes 6). This led to the amendment of the Indian

Act regarding issues of equality for Aboriginal women (Holmes 6). This action resulted in a new bill in June of 1984, Bill C-47, intended to end discrimination against Aboriginal women but blocked three days later by the Senate (Holmes 7). On April 17, 1985 the “old” Indian Act was amended to include Bill C-31 that created a “new” Indian Act (Holmes 12). This “new” Act made it possible for Aboriginal women to reinstate their Indian status, and register their children as status Indians for the first time (Holmes 12). Bill C-31 was viewed as a positive change for the Indian Act because Aboriginal women would no longer lose their Indian status if they married a non-status man (Holmes 12). In addition, the amendment included that any non-Aboriginal woman who married Indian status man would no longer “become” a status Indian (Holmes 12). According to Bill C-31, Aboriginal people had to meet the following criteria to apply for Indian status: Aboriginal women who lost their Indian status such as Rose Anne Contois, who married a non-status man, qualified to have their Indian status reinstated; and her children, such as Fontaine, could be registered as a status Indian for the first time (Holmes 12). Any children born before marriage could be registered for Indian status. Aboriginal men and women who lost their Indian status because their mother and paternal grandmother gained Indian status through marriage could apply for Indian status (Holmes 12).

However, Bill C-31 continued to remain discriminatory against Aboriginal women because of blood quantum. For instance, the blood quantum outlined in a flow chart (Holmes 23) provides an example between an Indian Brother (an Aboriginal male) and his Indian Sister (an Aboriginal female) if each married a non-Aboriginal spouse and produced offspring. The offspring is affected by legislation defined in Bill C-31. Continuing with the flow chart, any children born of the Indian Sister will have less blood quantum compared to the children born of her Indian Brother. The child produced from the Indian Sister is said to have a blood quantum

of  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and this child is registered as a 6(2) status Indian compared to the child born of her Indian Brother. The child born of her Indian Brother will have a blood quantum of  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and be registered as a 6(1) status Indian (Holmes 24). Therefore, Bill C-31 continues to discriminate against Aboriginal women by having her children classified with less blood quantum compared to the children born of her brother in the same circumstance. Aboriginal people registered as a 6(2) status Indian have fewer rights than those who are registered as a 6(1) status Indian (Holmes 13). These rights may include access to government funded programs such as on-reserve housing, post secondary education, burial privileges and health benefits according to individual band membership (Holmes 18). The classification of a 6(1) and a 6(2) status Indian is a legal classification defined by the Canadian government to identify Indians within Bill C-31 of the “new” Indian Act. Section 6(1) of the “new” Indian Act explains that an individual born of Aboriginal descent can apply as a 6(1) status Indian if both parents are registered as Bill C-31 (Holmes 13). However, if one parent is registered as Bill C-31, an individual born of Aboriginal descent can apply to section 6(2) of the “new” Indian Act as a 6(2) status Indian (Holmes 13). Continuing with the flow chart, if each generation of offspring continues to marry a non-Aboriginal or a 6(1) status Indian or 6(2) status Indian, the children born of that marriage will continue to lose their Indian status until Indian status longer exists (Holmes 23). Bill C-31 continues to strip Indian status from Aboriginal people based on blood quantum; the reduction in numbers of registered band members can reflect the amount of government funding available for band assisted programs for its band members, thus phasing out the Indian Act.

In the work *Mom Too*, the title pages of Treaty One overlap with the title page of Bill C-31. An interpretation of this layout represents Fontaine who was born of mixed heritage; Bill C-31 connects her parents together. Furthermore, Fontaine explains that the title page of Bill C-31

represents the latest amendment to the Indian Act that reinstated Indian status to Aboriginal women like her mother, Rose Anne Contois; the legislation of Bill C-31 validated her as a “Bill C-31 er” (Fontaine, *Ikwe* 11-12).

Within this work, there are four large squares alternated with four small black squares framed in yellow that surround the title pages. Like the previous work, *Mom*, these large squares are painted in the colours of the four directions associated with teachings of the Medicine Wheel. These colours are again not placed in their correct position according to the Medicine Wheel. Traditionally, red represents the East; yellow represents the South; black represents the West; and white represents the North, but in this work, the colours white and yellow are reversed which is known only to the artist, and reinforces the notion that each Aboriginal nation has their own traditions and practices. Not every nation performs the exact teachings in the same way. Placed in the centre of each large coloured square is an equal sign that can be interpreted as the blood lineage of Fontaine connecting to her mother, depicted as Treaty One “A”, and her father, depicted as Treaty One “B”, thus equals Fontaine as Bill C-31. A possible interpretation of the red box could suggest a blood lineage that connects Fontaine with the picture frame of her mother, Rose Anne Contois, on the right side of this work.

Located below the white box is a green hand print with a Medicine Wheel painted over top. The colour green is a powerful healing colour that represents rejuvenation and renewal of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels of being (Bear, Wind, and Mulligan 205). Renewal is associated with new perspectives: a healthy attitude; an optimistic outlook on life; encouragement of healing; promotion of feelings of self-worth and prosperity (Bear, Wind, and Mulligan 205). The image of the hand is rendered as an unrealistic representation of a human hand with twisted fingers. The twisting can be interpreted as a forced change in identity.

Painted over the hand print is a representation of a Medicine Wheel. Located in the centre of this wheel is a cross symbol that could represent Christianity or Native mysticism. Painted on each side of this Medicine Wheel is an eagle feather which may represent Native mysticism.

The right panel includes an archival photograph encased inside a pink flower picture frame. Fontaine explains that this image is of her mother, Rose Anne Contois, as a young attractive woman wearing modern clothing, white gloves, a hat and high heels (Fontaine, *Spirit* 11). This image could represent Contois ready for work as she stands on the front steps of her employer's house. The top of the step is painted red, and the colour red can be interpreted as the "blood" sacrifice made by Aboriginal children in exchange for "citizenship". Depicted over the door is a symbol of a cross that could represent the Medicine Wheel or Native mysticism and Christianity. An eagle flies over her, a scene which is seen on funeral memorial cards of deceased Aboriginal people. The flying eagle, moving above and away could be interpreted as the spirit of a deceased Aboriginal person on its journey from the physical world into the spiritual realm; in short, the spirit is leaving the body. The square flower frame could represent a funeral tribute wreath arrangement with the phrase "*Woman Who Walks Alone*" painted on it, and the phrase connects the wreath to the black background. The words *Woman Who Walks* is painted in red, and the word *Alone* is painted in black. A possible interpretation is that the red paint represents Rose Anne Contois, as an Aboriginal woman, and the black paint represents an empty shell, suggesting that the spirit has left the physical body, thus, the spirit has left Rose Anne Contois. In addition to the writing on the frame, there are red scratch marks that can be interpreted as the blood of Aboriginal people. Therefore, an interpretation of this picture frame may function as a visual memory card of Rose Anne Contois. Fontaine explains that her mother

exists within this frame “as a shining example of what the residential school had shaped her to become – a counterfeit copy of a Caucasian woman, her Native heritage camouflaged by those symbols” (Fontaine, *Ikwe* 11). Thus, *Mom* and *Mom Too* depict the personal growth of Rose Anne Contois who successfully fulfilled her citizenship requirements in becoming an embodiment of Victorian womanhood.

### ***Sick and Tired, Adrian Stimson***

In 2006, the artist Adrian Stimson created the installation *Sick and Tired* (Figure 4.4) that represents a Residential School bedroom. Stimson explains that this installation explores Aboriginal identity, history and culture through industrial and natural materials to represent a colonial history of Aboriginal people (Stimson, *Used* screen 1). This installation consists of: three windows; a folded buffalo hide; a steel bed frame with a mattress; and a light.

The windows were acquired from the Chief Old Sun Residential School in Alberta. The windows are attached to a wall; filled with feathers; and lit from behind. As explored previously, the number three in Native mysticism is a metaphor representing the mind, body and spirit. In Aboriginal braiding, the three sections of hair are bound together forming one braid that represents the strength of a united people. However, the spirit of unity is missing in the triumvirate of windows which all exists independent of one another. This separation can be interpreted as a loss of strength and interconnectedness among a united people. The windows are equally spaced in a row formation making it possible to interpret them as mass burial graves. Confined inside each “burial grave” or window case are feathers; in the context of Aboriginal symbolism the feathers can be interpreted as spirits of fallen Aboriginal children who died at Residential Schools. Their spirits are trapped forever unable to reconnect with past fallen

warriors. Therefore, the windows function as a mass burial site for Aboriginal children because they lost their lives; their language; their spirituality; and their connection with Native mysticism in Residential Schools, therefore are unable to connect to their culture. A dim yellow light shines through the window which can be interpreted as a state of melancholy: feelings of loneliness, abandonment, confinement and fear. At Residential Schools, bedtime was the loneliest time for Aboriginal children, who longed to be with their parents (Haig-Brown 62). They missed the warmth of their bed and they longed for security they once had (Haig-Brown 62). Stimson explains that he can only imagine how many Aboriginal children peered out of these windows, longing to be home with their families (Stimson, *Used* screen 2).

Placed on top of the bed springs is a folded bison robe that represents an effigy of a human figure (Stimson, *Used* screen 2). This effigy can be interpreted as responding to the statement of Richard Henry Pratt: “kill the Indian in him and save the man” (Adams 52); Pratt believes the assimilation process will solve the “Indian problem” (Adams 52). Pratt explains that the environmental conditions one grows up in can define their beliefs; however, if the environment changes so will the belief system (Adams 52). For example, according to Pratt, Indians were accustomed to living in a “savage” environment; they adopted a “savage” language and live in a “savage” state of being (Adams 52). However, it was his theory that Indians could achieve civilization if they were brought up in a civilized environment such as Residential Schools (Adams 52). Pratt explains that his theory of growing up in a specific environment applies to both Indians and Europeans because both peoples are born with blank slates. Pratt says that “we” are all born without a language or ideas of savagery and civilization; however, it is the environment that transforms this blank state of being into “savages” or “civilized beings” (Adams 52). If one grows up in a “savage” state, he or she will possess a “savage language” and

“savage customs”, whereas if one grows up in “civilization” he or she will possess a “civilized language” and a “civilized life” (Adams 52). Therefore, this effigy figure could be interpreted as representing a “savage” state of being, and the hide stripped from an animal could suggest that this state of being is “dead” (Adams 52). An interpretation of the wrapped effigy figure symbolizes that this “so-called” “savage” state of being or Native mysticism has been forced out of Aboriginal people, leaving behind the physical body, thus, the “man” who has been “saved” from a “savage” state of being (Adams 52). Therefore, by removing Aboriginal children from their “savage” environment into a “civilized” environment, the Indian will become civilized, therefore solving the Indian problem (Adams 53).

The bed frame was acquired from an infirmary room at the Chief Old Sun Residential School. The mattress covering has deteriorated over time leaving behind its springs. Together the steel infirmary bed frame and effigy resemble a burial scaffold. A traditional scaffold burial frame was created by erecting four posts that stand approximately eight to ten feet high from the ground, and vines were woven together to make a flat surface to support the weight of the body (Carter 65 & 68). A ritual feast took place to honour the deceased and to provide strength for its spirit to travel into the spirit world (Carter 65-66). The body of the deceased was dressed in its best attire, adorned with personal material objects and medicines, and then wrapped tightly in a freshly acquired buffalo hide (Carter 68). The body was placed on top of the scaffold, where it remained in open air until its flesh was fully decomposed leaving only the skeleton (Carter 66). The skeleton would then be removed from the scaffold, and adorned with garments and ornaments (Carter 66). Finally, the body would be buried in a small bark house near its former residence with pots and other material objects to help the spirit on its journey (Carter 66). Aboriginal women were responsible for taking care of the dead by organizing the feast and the

burial site, creating the scaffold, wrapping and adorning the body, and preparing it for its final resting place (Carter 66).

Like the previous work by Stimson described in chapter two, *Old Sun* (Figure 2.19), light is used to create a shadow as part of the work. As the light shines onto the bed frame and bison robe, it creates a shadow of a stretched hide on the floor, yet there is no stretched hide present in the work. Stimson explains the shadow is a representation depicting the duality of life and death (Stimson, *Used* screen 2). Life and death refers to the Bison who sacrificed its life to help Aboriginal people: Aboriginal men hunted and skinned the buffalo while Aboriginal women transformed the hide into material objects such as parfleches, medicine bags, shirts, leggings, dresses, blankets and moccasins. Thus, the spiritual power of the buffalo was transferred from its physical body to material objects in which its spirit continues to live. Thus, the stretched hide reinforces gender specific roles performed by Aboriginal men and women.

In this installation, Stimson questions “how many people lay sick, tired, dying or dead on this bed” (Stimson, *Used* screen 2) during the history of Residential Schools. The answer remains unknown. Therefore, Stimson uses a steel bed frame to represent progress combining ideals of “so-called” “civilization” of the European colonizer with an effigy wrapped in natural materials together that could represent a forced change from “savagery” to “civilization” for Aboriginal people; this installation *Sick and Tired* could function as a memorial for fallen Aboriginal children, and the loss of Native languages, and connections with Native mysticism in Residential Schools.

This chapter dealt with physical transformation of Aboriginal children and the teaching of specific gender training skills to help young Aboriginal men and women function successfully in European society as citizens; these events can be seen in the work of Lita Fontaine. The work of

Adrian Stimson makes it difficult to forget the sacrifice that many Aboriginal children were forced to make to achieve citizenship.

## Conclusion

The Canadian government legally created the frame work that would have resulted in the outright extermination of Aboriginal nations across Canada. The academic education that Aboriginal children received in Residential Schools was unacceptable. For instance, Laura Marjorie Finn explains that her mother attended a Residential School in Saskatchewan, and says she wanted an education, however, throughout the ten years of being incarcerated in Residential School, she achieved the equivalent of a grade three education (Modjeski, screen 1). Vocational training in industry and domestic arts was supposed to make the “Indian” a useful member of society, thus, a self-supporting citizen (Milloy 25). However, Finn explains that her mother was “forced to work, with little food with no pay” (Modjeski, screen 1 & 2). Many Aboriginal children were expected and forced to perform heavy labour jobs similar to those of adult men and women in the labour force. Unfortunately, corporal punishment was employed to assist with the transformation of “savage” to “citizen”, and it was not until 1990 that Grand Chief Phil Fontaine publically discussed “abuses” in Residential Schools. Fontaine’s revelations confirmed that cultural genocide took place in Residential Schools across Canada that was aimed at destroying specific characteristics of Aboriginal people, thereby, forcing them to become something else. The oppressor, in this case the colonial government, deliberately caused the destruction of Aboriginal culture through acts of genocide as seen in the work *Sauvage* (Figure 3.1) by Carl Beam. There was, therefore nothing accidental when the Canadian government legally enforced the incarceration of Aboriginal children for their “so called” re-education that took place in Residential Schools between 1890 and 1996. In the words of Adrian Stimson, “residential schools were instruments of genocide; they created isolation, disorientation, pain and death and ultimately broke many human spirits” (Stimson, *Used* screen 1). It was foretold in the

story of the Sacred Tree that these things would come to pass and “the people would awaken, as if from a long drugged sleep” (Lane *et al.* 7) and begin “to search for the Sacred Tree” (Lane *et al.* 7). Likewise, Louis Riel stated “my people will sleep for 100 years, and when they awake it will be the artists who give them their spirit” (Mattes, *Rielisms* 3). In the wake of the exposure of “abuses” that occurred in Residential Schools, it was Aboriginal artists who began this search for a renewed spirit. Even before the initiative of the TRC project, established Aboriginal artists such as Carl Beam created works of art reflecting acts of cultural genocide (Figure 3.1) and he expressed ideas of reconciliation between the oppressed and the oppressor in the video *Burying the Ruler* (Figure 5.1).

The word ruler has double meaning; first, it refers to a common measuring instrument, and second, it refers to the locus of power held by the colonizer (Hill 25). Yet both interpretations of the ruler support notions of power and land controlled by the oppressor. Therefore, a possible interpretation of the ruler is colonial domination over displaced Aboriginal nations by the surveying and sectioning of their land for European expansion (Hill 25).

The video *Burying the Ruler* takes place in a landscape wilderness setting with light that shines through the darkness, illuminating the sky. As Beam approaches, he is confronted by a ruler on the ground. He picks up the ruler and uses it to dig a shallow grave in the ground. He then places the ruler into the grave and proceeds to bury it. The ruler is constructed from wood, and this may represent natural material returned to the ground from which it grew. Beam returns the ruler to nature, suggesting that the oppressed and the oppressor are related and “we” are a part of nature, and will return to the ground that “we” came from. The video ends with a burial and light emerging from darkness.

In addition to the interpretation of the ruler as an oppressor, the physical ruler itself was a tool that was once employed as an instrument of punishment in Residential Schools (Hill 25). The purpose of Residential Schools was to create a new society by assimilating and conditioning Aboriginal children. Yet Residential Schools did not achieve their aim of eradicating “the Indian”. Therefore, Beam symbolically buries the colonizer to reconcile oppression, and in the words of Robert Houle: “we must maintain the notion of change and movement, otherwise we will die. We’ve got to keep moving, following the herds” (Houle, *Persistence* 39). It is not the end of “our” journey where “we” learn to forgive and heal the best way “we” can, but rather it is the beginning of a new cycle.

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Figure 1.1: *St Peter Claver and St Charles Garnier and St Joseph's Indian Residential Schools.*

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Figure 1.2: *The Kitchens: the preserve of female students and staff.*

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Figure 1.3: *At the Chooutla School in Yukon, the furnaces required an enormous quantity of wood, much of it prepared by the boys in 1934.*

Miller, J.R. *Shingwauk's Vision, A History of Native Residential Schools*. Toronto, Buffalo and London: U of Toronto P, 2000. 262. Print.

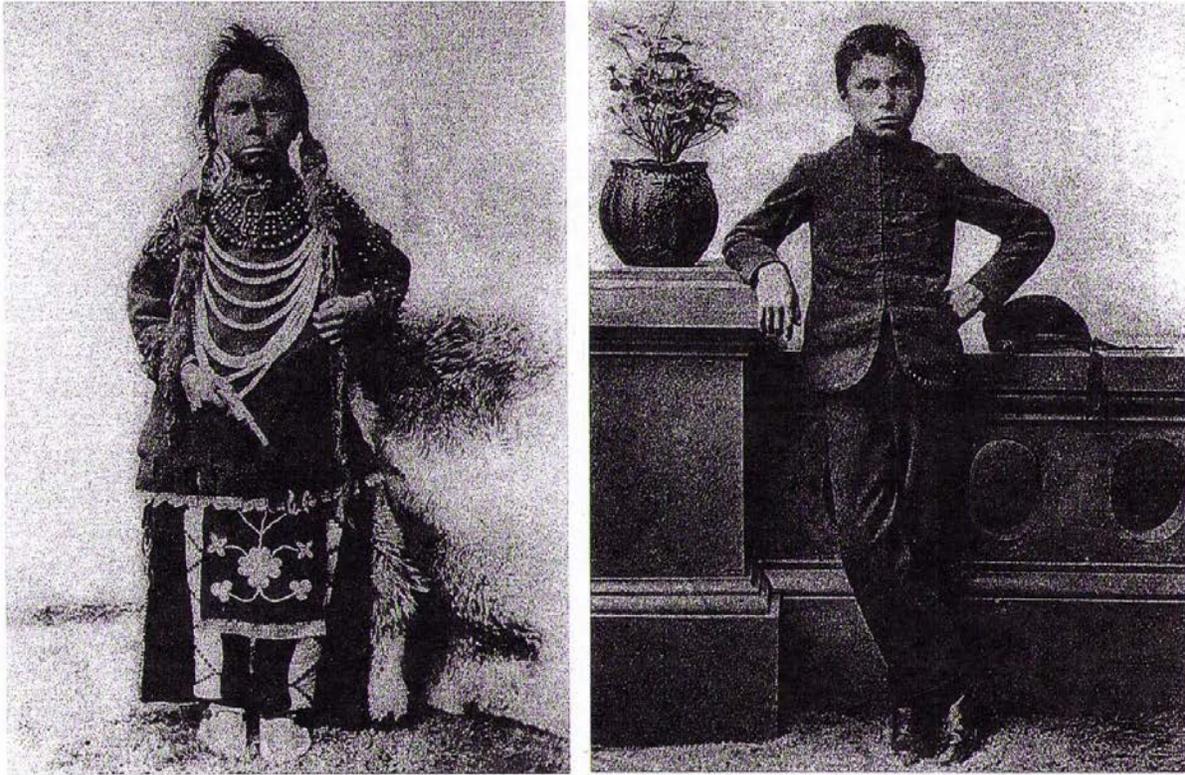


Figure 1.4: *Tomas Moore before and after attending Regina Indian Industrial School.*

Milloy, John S. *A National Crime, The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986.* Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 1999. 4-5. Print.

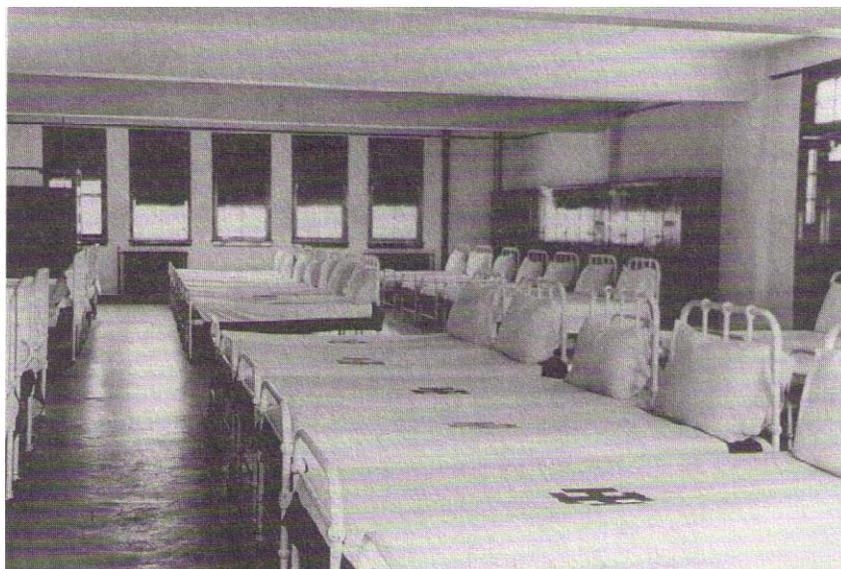


Figure 1.5: A *dormitory at Shingwauk School, Ontario, 1936.*

Milloy, John S. *A National Crime, The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986.* Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 1999. 136. Print.



Figure 2.1: *Blackfoot (Blood) envelope*, ca. 1885.  
Rawhide and pigment  
21 inches x 14 inches

Torrence, Gaylord. *The American Indian Parfleche, A Tradition of Abstract Painting*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1994. 183. Print.



Figure 2.2: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #1: Matthew*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle



Figure 2.3: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #2: James the Less*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 60. Print.



Figure 2.4: *Parfleche for the Last Supper*  
**#3: Jude**, 1983.

Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.

Robert Houle



Figure 2.5: *Parfleche for the Last Supper*  
**#4: Simon**, 1983.

Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.

Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 61. Print.



Figure 2.6: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #5: Philip*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

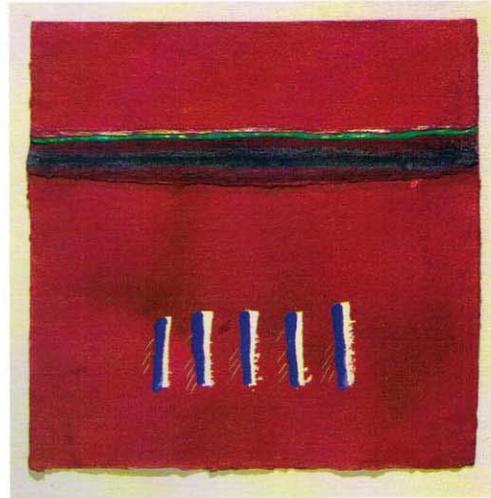


Figure 2.7: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #6: Andrew*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 62. Print.



Figure 2.8: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #7: Bartholomew*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

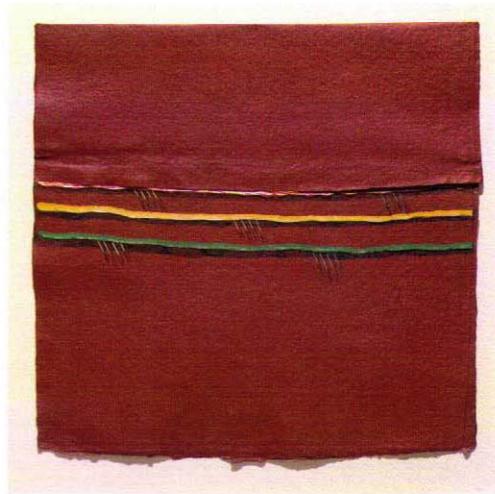


Figure 2.9: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #8: Thomas*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 63. Print.



Figure 2.10: *Parfleche for the Last Supper*  
**#9: James**, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle



Figure 2.11: *Parfleche for the Last Supper*  
**#10: John**, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 64. Print.



Figure 2.12: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #11: Judas*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle



Figure 2.13: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #12: Jesus*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 65. Print.



Figure 2.14: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #13: Peter*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 66. Print.

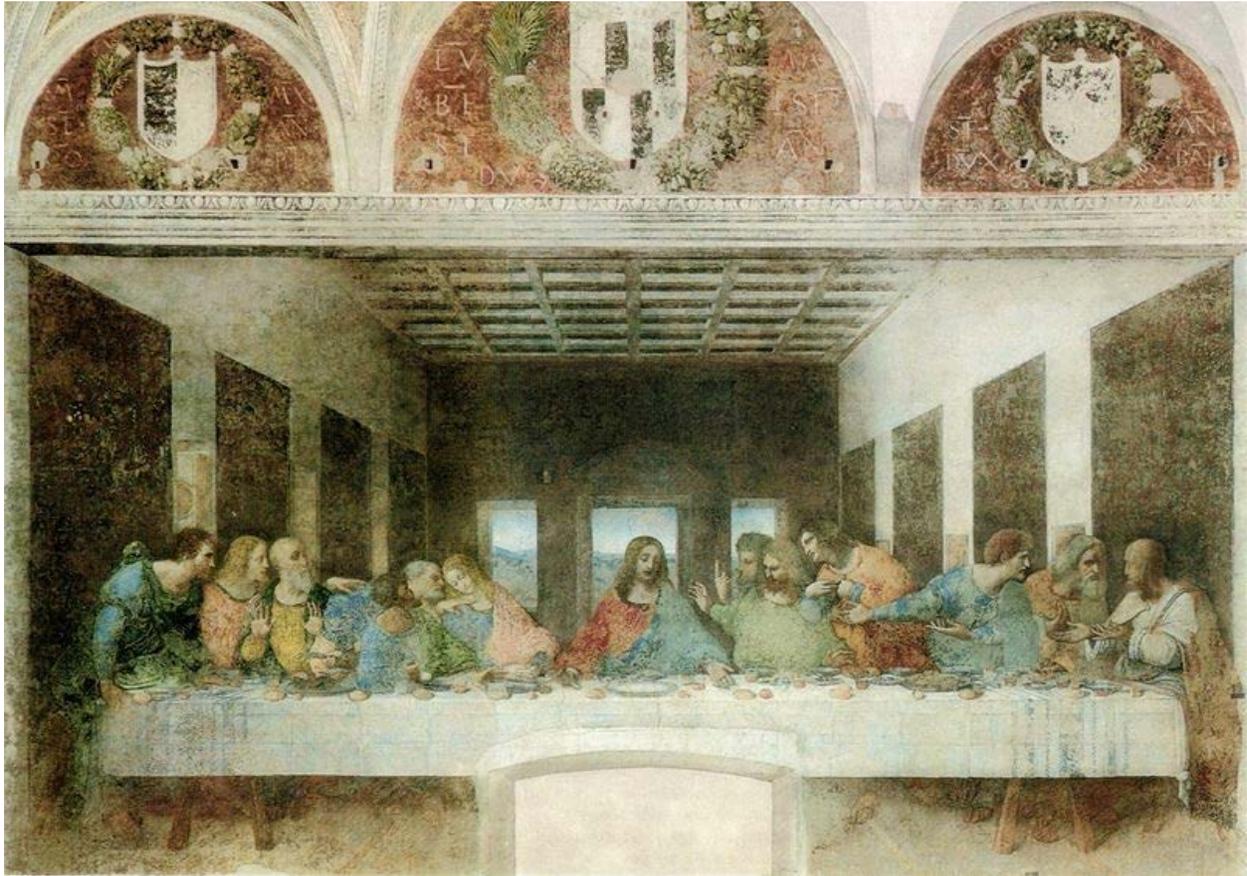


Figure 2.15: *The Last Supper*, 1495-1498.  
Tempera and oil on plaster  
15 feet 2 inches x 28 feet 10 inches  
Santa Maria dell Grazie, Milan, Italy  
Leonardo da Vinci

JayDax. *The Last Supper – A Study of the Painting by Leonardo Da Vinci*. JayDax Computer Information Centre. 2006: screen 1. Web. 16 May 2012.



Figure 2.16: *Parfleche for the Last Supper # 10: John*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper.  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 64. Print.



Figure 2.17: *Parfleche for the Last Supper #12: Jesus*, 1983.  
Acrylic and porcupine quills on paper  
56 x 56 cm.  
Robert Houle

Rushing III, W. Jackson. *Troubling Abstraction Robert Houle*. Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2007. 65. Print.



Figure 2.18: *Itazaiicho (Sans Arc) Lakota (Sioux), Plains Indian Shirt* (back view), ca. 1870.  
Rawhide, hair, quills and pigment.

Horse Capture, Joseph D. and George P. Horse Capture. *Beauty, Honor, and Tradition, The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts*. Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2001. 45. Print.



Figure 2.19: *Old Sun*, 2005.  
Mixed media installation.  
Bison hides, steel and found object from the  
Chief Old Sun Residential School (lamp).  
Adrian Stimson

Stimson, Adrian A. "Buffalo Boy's Heart On: Buffalo Boy's 100 years of wearing his heart on his sleeve." Saskatoon: U of Saskatchewan. Sept. 16, 2005: 15. Web. 6. Mar. 2012

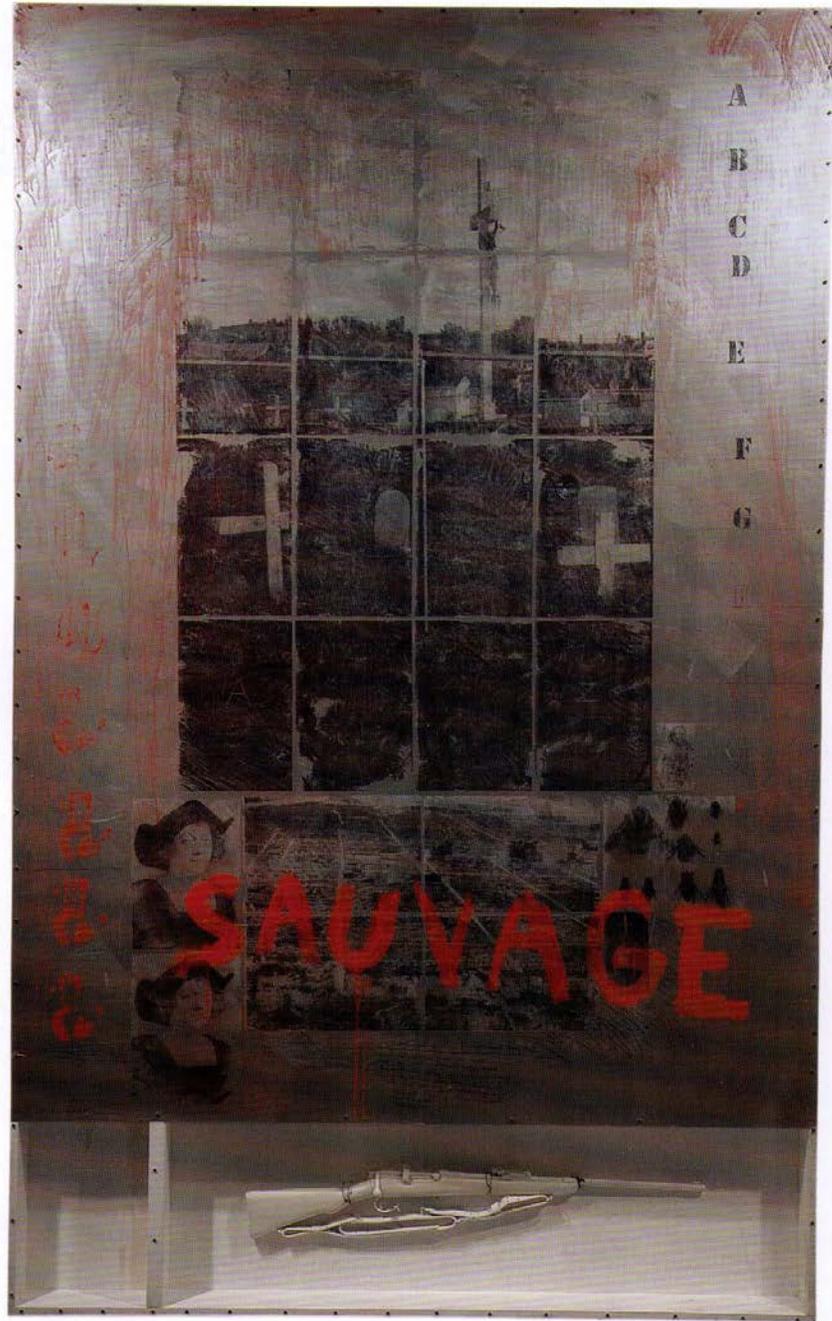


Figure 3.1: *Sauvage*, 1988.  
Mixed media on Plexiglas  
Painted wood and found object (rifle)  
308 x 190.9 cm.  
Carl Beam

Hill, Greg A. *Carl Beam: The Poetics of Being*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2010. 97.  
Print.



Figure 3.2: *The Lesson*, 1993.  
 Mixed media installation  
 12 feet x 12 feet.  
 Joane Cardinal-Schubert

Muttart Public Art Gallery. *Joane Cardinal-Schubert Two:Decades*. Thunder Bay: The Muttart Public Art Gallery, 1997. 39. Print.



Figure 3.3: *Potato Peeling 101*, 2004.  
(Left panel)  
Mixed media on canvas, triptych  
274.3 x 821.5 cm. (total triptych)  
Jane Ash Poitras

Eichhorn, Virginia. *Jane Ash Poitras, Consecrated Medicine*. Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 2004. 14. Print.



Figure 3.4: *Quewich and his children who attended Qu'Appelle School: the before-and-after contrast so beloved by missionaries.*

Milloy, John S. *A National Crime, The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 1999. 29. Print.



Figure 3.5: *Potato Peeling 101 to Ethnobotany 101*, 2004.  
 (Center panel)  
 Mixed media on canvas, triptych.  
 274.3 x 821.5 cm. (total triptych).  
 Jane Ash Poitras

Eichhorn, Virginia. *Jane Ash Poitras, Consecrated Medicine*. Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 2004. Cover. Print.

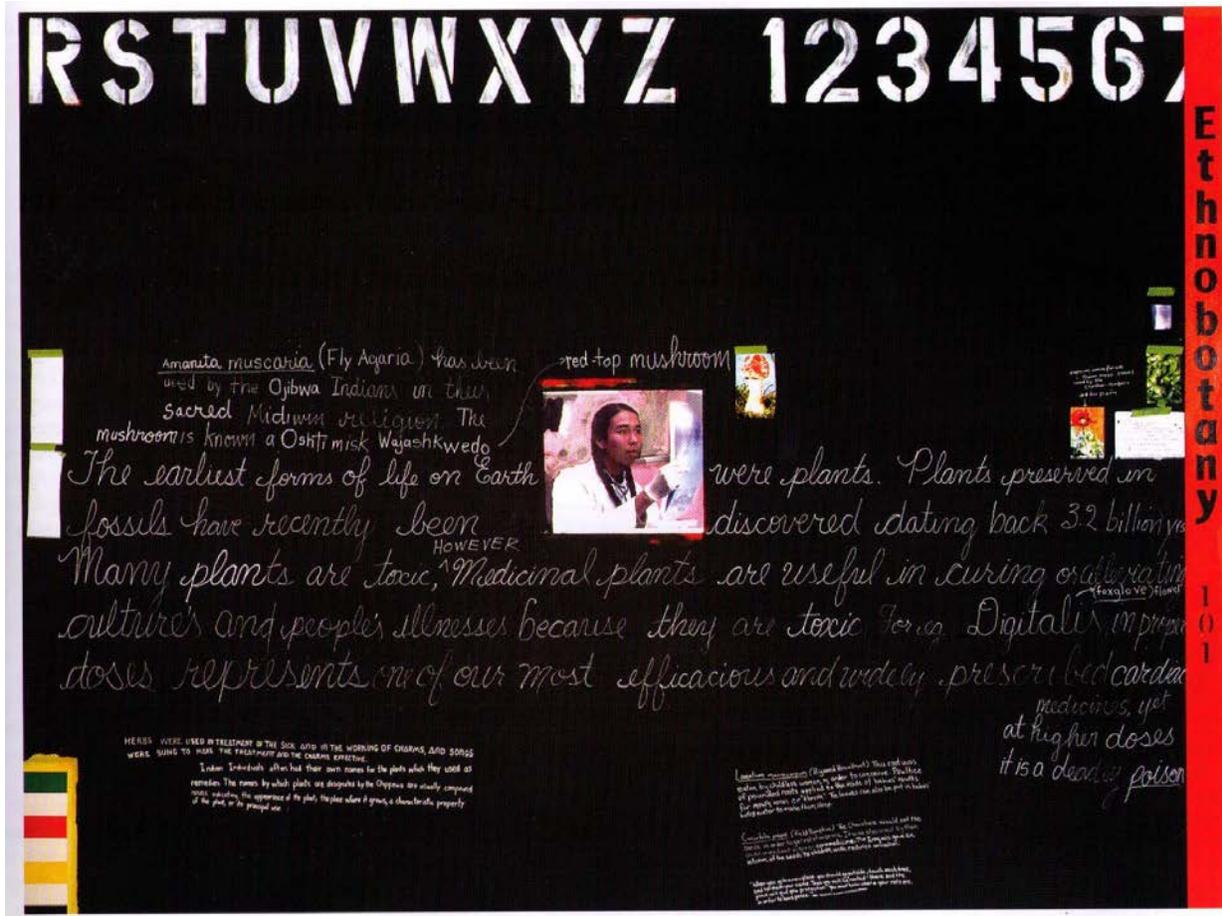


Figure 3.6: *Ethnobotany 101*, 2004.  
 (Right panel)  
 Mixed media on canvas, triptych.  
 274.3 x 821.5 cm. (total triptych).  
 Jane Ash Poitras

Eichhorn, Virginia. *Jane Ash Poitras, Consecrated Medicine*. Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 2004. 15. Print.



Figure 4.1: *Domestic Diva*, 2008.  
*Crime Against Humanity*  
Fabric.  
Marion Beaucage

Robertson, Kirsty. "Threads of Hope: The Living Healing Quilt Project." *English Studies in Canada (Aboriginal Redress and Repatriation)*. 35.1 (Mar. 2009): 102. Print.

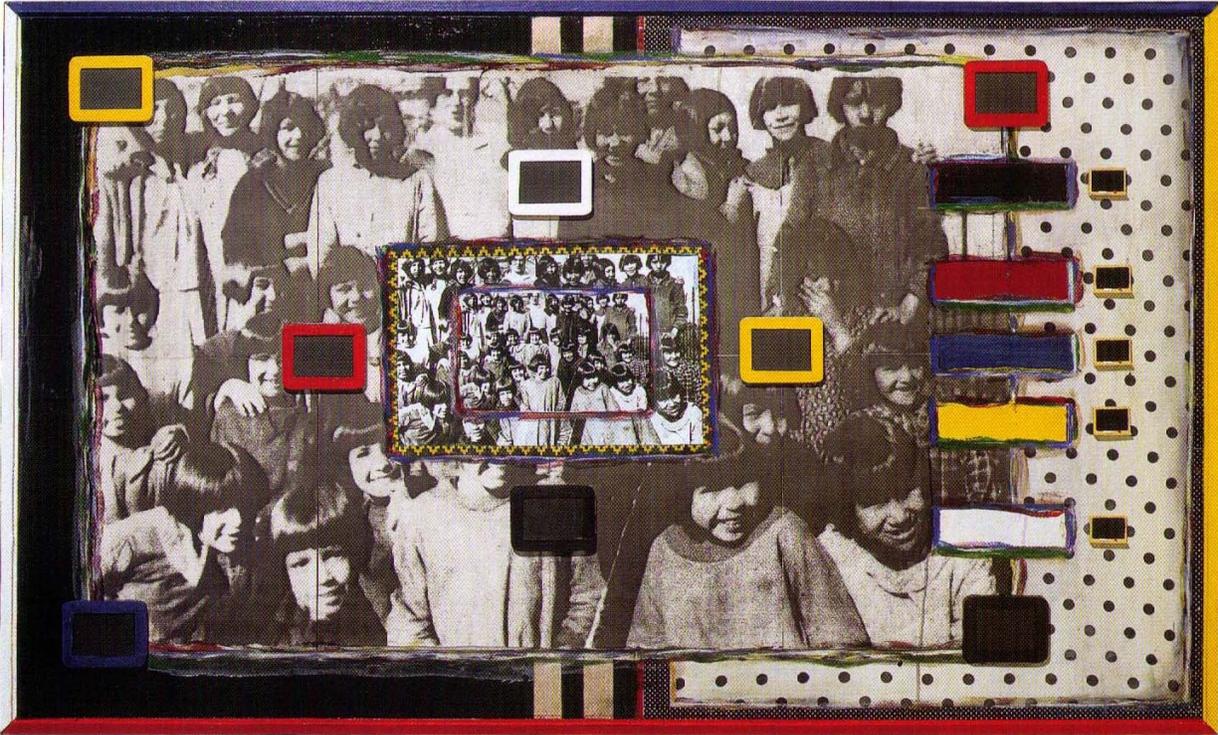


Figure 4.2: *Mom*, 1998.  
Found objects, acrylic paint, montage  
91.5 x 102.5 cm.  
Lita Fontaine

Mattes, Catherine. *Lita Fontaine: Without Reservation*. Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2002.  
7. Print.



Figure 4.3: *Mom Too*, 1999-2000.  
Found objects, acrylic paint, montage.  
126 x 126 cm.  
Lita Fontaine

Mattes, Catherine. *Lita Fontaine: Without Reservation*. Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2002.  
15. Print.



Figure 4.4: *Sick and Tired*, 2006.  
Mixed media installation.  
Buffalo hide and found objects from the  
Chief Old Sun Residential School  
(Bed frame and windows)  
Adrian Stimson

“Terrance Houle and Adrian Stimson, Sick and Tired and Paper Bag Princess.” *Burnt Magazine*.  
(3-25 Feb. 2006): 1. Web. 6 Mar. 2012.

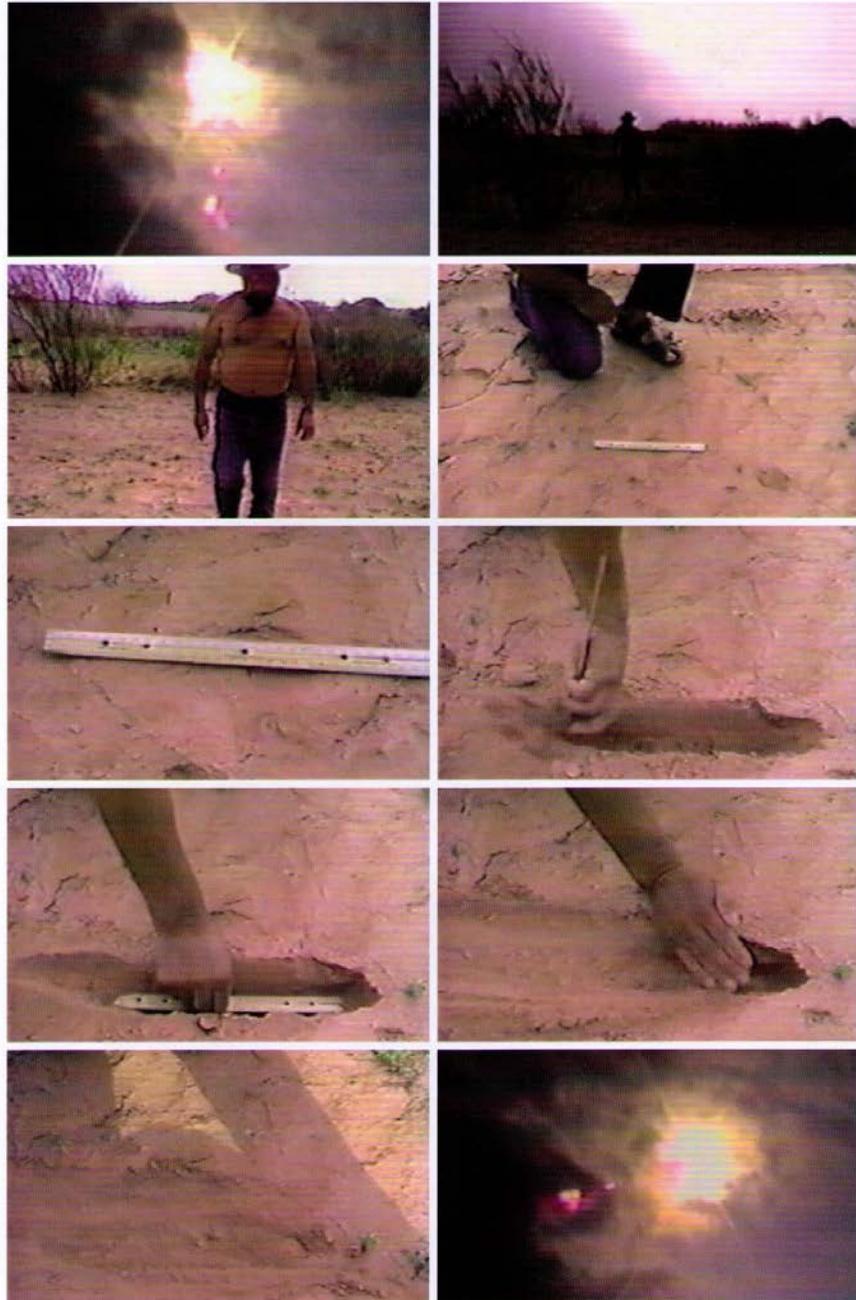


Figure 5.1: *Burying the Ruler*, 1989.  
Video, 1:58 mins.  
Carl Beam

Hill, Greg A. *Carl Beam: The Poetics of Being*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2010. 94.