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# "Were It Not for the Spirit of the Boys… There Would Have Been No Story": Memory and Childhood in Residential School Narratives

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ABSTRACT
This article examines how the policies and practices of the residential school system refracted the conceptual dynamics of childhood in twentieth-century Canada and shaped the lives of Indigenous children in that system. In particular, I discuss how the racializing logic of the residential school system totalized or disrupted broader conceptual shifts in the relationship of childhood to the public domain and to adulthood. In this context, I draw on three residential school narratives to argue that memory played an essential role in the lives of the Indigenous students as a crucial site of creative agency, and in the residential school system's strategy of assimilation. These narratives make a certain twentieth-century Indigenous child knowable to history, one that relies on a set of relationships, held together by memory, among the child, the adult, and the familial and communal narratives in which they are situated.

RÉSUMÉ
Cet article examine la façon dont les politiques et les pratiques du système des pensionnats indiens ont contourné la dynamique conceptuelle de l'enfance dans le Canada du vingtième siècle et ont façonné les vies des enfants autochtones au sein de ce système. J'analyse plus particulièrement la façon dont la logique racialisante du système des pensionnats a totalisé ou interrompu de plus larges changements conceptuels dans le rapport de l'enfance au domaine public et à l'âge adulte. Dans ce contexte, je m'appuie sur trois récits de pensionnats pour démontrer que la mémoire a joué un rôle essentiel dans la vie des élèves autochtones, à la fois comme site crucial d'agentivité créative, que dans la stratégie d'assimilation du système des pensionnats. Ces récits permettent la reconnaissance historique d'un certain enfant autochtone du vingtième siècle qui s'appuie sur un réseau de relations, préservé par la mémoire, dans les récits de l'enfant, de l'adulte, familiaux et communautaires dans lesquels il se déploie.

The turn of the twentieth century marks a pivotal moment in the conceptual history of childhood in North America. A host of new socio-political institutions and intellectual movements emerged and expanded to influence the lives of children and

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mould popular attitudes towards children in significant ways. Child welfare programs and systems of public education developed rapidly to bring unprecedented numbers of youngsters under new modes of state responsibility and supervision. The child-centred educational philosophy of John Dewey and the developmental psychology of Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson emphasized childhood as a separate stage of life, shaped by distinctive exigencies, interests, and capacities.[1] These institutional and intellectual trends effected two significant transformations, among others, in the prevailing conceptions of children and childhood. First, they redefined the relationship between childhood and adulthood. The period of childhood acquired new definition as a stage of life categorically distinct from adulthood.[2] Second, these twentieth-century movements reconfigured the child's relationship to the private and public domains of modern life. Traditionally relegated to the domestic domain of parental authority, children increasingly became a matter of public concern.[3] As a growing literature in the history of childhood has demonstrated, the rise of the "modern child" is the rise of the "public child" in the North American imagination.[4]

Yet the particular conditions, characteristics, and protections of childhood's progressively distinct, progressively public status did not apply to all children in the same way. In the glow of growing public interest in society's children, the lives of many Indigenous children were paradoxically publicized and concealed according to a racialized dynamic of modern public childhood that animated the residential school system as an instrument of professedly public interest and nation-building. On the one hand, the students of the residential schools were wards of the state and featured in photograph-filled pamphlets and presentations that trumpeted the system's success in assimilating Indigenous girls and boys into the language, culture, and mores of Canadian settler society. On the other, the reality of what took place within the walls of residential schools was concealed from societal scrutiny.[5] How much more hidden were the interior lives of the children, the invisible happenings of their minds, hearts, and spirits?

Indigenous children and childhood are frequently studied separately from the history of broader social, conceptual, and political developments in Canada. Indeed, significant contributions to the burgeoning literature in the history of Canadian childhood frequently acknowledge this and related omissions, tending to focus primarily on developments in English or French Canada.[6] These studies have been instrumental in providing nuanced and detailed insights into the lives of many Canadian children. Nevertheless, the lives of Indigenous children are an essential component of the history of childhood in twentieth-century Canada. In the 1980s and 1990s, certain scholars began to broaden the study of Canadian childhood by focusing on various dimensions of Indigenous childhood and colonial schooling, including the residential school system.[7] This important work has accelerated in the last twenty years. Several recent studies have shed further light on the lives of Indigenous children and sought to situate them in relation to different aspects of the broader historical milieu, including the medical establishment, child welfare and the Sixties Scoop, and the juvenile justice system.[8] This paper seeks to build on these efforts, pursuing a twofold purpose. First, I examine the ways in which the modern social logic of the

public child, refracted through the racializing lens of the residential school system's constitutive policies and practices, shaped the lives of Indigenous children in that system. Second, I explore how the distinctive childhoods of Indigenous boys and girls become knowable and reconstituted through residential school narratives, as acts of public remembering. These narratives shed light on certain internal dimensions of the experience and lives of these children. They provide glimpses into the private life of the public child.

Children tend to leave sparse historical records, posing a particular challenge to historians of childhood. Children are even less likely to leave records that reveal their own thoughts and reflections on the realities they face. For this reason, many histories of childhood are in fact histories of shifting cultural attitudes towards children.[9] This methodological problem becomes even more pronounced when trying to approach the lives of children who, like the Indigenous girls and boys enrolled in residential schools, were marginalized further according to their race, gender, or economic standing. How does an understanding of the modern public child in Canada come to reflect the lives and stories of Indigenous children? Or put another way, how does the Indigenous child of the residential school system speak in history and become knowable to the broader history of childhood?

Despite the methodological obstacles discussed above, children do leave traces of their experiences in the memories of their adult selves. By sifting through the autobiographical fragments of their earlier years, these adult selves create narratives of their lives and can speak for children that can no longer speak for themselves. The "re-membered" child of the remembering adult is always, of course, a subjective construction to some extent, rather than the recovery of an untouched, excavated artifact. And the collection and presentation of memories in a narrative, literary form can grant to life events a coherence that was, at the very least, imperceptible at the time of their occurrence.[10] Yet, these constructions can still provide valuable insight into the lives of children, even filtered through the lens of hindsight. Memories recounted by adults, in fact, can sometimes provide the only means for accessing certain kinds of historical information about childhood. As Neil Sutherland has convincingly argued, drawing on childhood memories is unavoidable if historians ever hope "to get 'inside' childhood experiences" and gain insight into the private thoughts and subjective feelings of children from past decades.[11]

The history of childhood has benefited significantly from approaches that analyze the autobiographical memories of adults.[12] Sutherland's seminal *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television*, for example, draws on hundreds of interviews with adults that reflect on the reality of their childhoods in the first half of the twentieth century.[13] Moreover, practices of collective remembering have illuminated the history of the residential school system in recent years through, among others things, the survivor testimonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the creation of national monuments and community archives.[14] My analysis will build on this growing literature by focusing on residential school narratives — memoirs and autobiographical novels that tell the story of a child's (usually the author's) experience as a student in a residential school.

Several volumes that compile the recollections of former students,[15] along with memoirs from a recent surge of publications all provide potential narratives for such a study.[16] To allow for in-depth analysis, I have chosen to limit my focus to three book-length narratives from different decades and different regions of Canada. *Indian School Days* (1988) is a memoir by Anishinaabe writer, educator, and scholar Basil Johnston. The book tells the story of his years at the St. Peter Claver School for Boys in Spanish, Ontario. *My Name Is Seepeetza* by Shirley Sterling is an autobiographical children's novel based on the author's experience in the 1950s at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in the traditional territory of the Secwepemc people (British Columbia). The novel takes the form of a year of secret journal entries written by the title character Seepeetza, which is Sterling's Nlaka'pamux name. Theodore Fontaine's *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools* (2010) is a memoir of the author's ten years at the Fort Alexander Residential School in the territory of the Sagkeeng First Nation (Manitoba).

By engaging with two book-length memoirs and one novel, I have deliberately chosen works that emphasize the narrative, even literary, dimensions of childhood recollections. These two genres are indeed different, as novels are explicitly works of fiction and thus have the licence to invent characters, events, and so on. Yet I follow Sutherland's suggestion that, for the purposes of historical research, there is more generic continuity between autobiographical fiction and memoir than discontinuity, because of their shared concern with the experience of the author and with the artistic merit of the finished product.[17] The continuity is all the more pronounced in cases like Sterling's novel, which strives for historical realism and draws explicit connections between the author and the title character. Despite the methodological challenges that such sources clearly present, this article is primarily concerned with the experiential dimensions of childhood depicted in residential school narratives and does not mine them for details about specific events or historical figures. Some critics might nonetheless argue that the shared literary and narrative quality of these memory texts undermines their historical value, seeing their narrativity as an adult accretion of hindsight on authentic childhood experiences. The relationship between narrative and "the real world" of actual events is an ongoing debate. Whether narrative structure "inheres in the events themselves," as philosopher David Carr has argued, or whether it plays a decisive role in the ongoing "construction of reality," as Jerome Bruner put forward, the assumption that life stories derive their narrativity entirely from the subjective imposition of the one who remembers is a reductive position that dismisses out of hand the phenomenology of the life cycle experience.[18] Moreover, part of the argument I develop in this essay (and discuss most explicitly in the conclusion) is that the preservation and presentation of these memories in story form represents an important feature of the child's experience and agency in the culture of forgetfulness fostered by the residential school system. As Cherokee literary scholar Daniel Heath Justice writes, "our lives are incarnations of the stories we tell, the stories told about us, the stories we inherit."[19] The pronounced narrative features of these memories themselves tell us something important about the experiences of the Indigenous children in the residential school system. Narrativity is an inextricable

part of their experience. The selection of two memoirs and a work of autobiographical fiction thus seeks to draw out and underscore the agentic and narrative dimensions of survivor recollections.[20] Nevertheless, the selection of texts published at different periods in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as belonging to different genres and reflecting distinct stylistic sensibilities seeks to minimize the influence of literary or recollective convention in my analysis and conclusions.

The essay will unfold in two principal parts. In the first section, Racializing the Child, I will provide a brief preliminary analysis of how the policy and public discourse that gave rise to the residential school system viewed certain aspects of the childhood of their Indigenous students, with particular attention given to the racialized blurring of key categories of modern childhood—private and public, and childhood and adulthood. The second section, Remembering the Child, will analyze key passages from the three residential school memory narratives. This analysis will demonstrate the ways in which memory and the act of remembering played an essential role in the residential school's assimilative strategy, in the lives of the Indigenous students and their exercise of agency, and in the ongoing efforts of survivors to recover and rebuild from the harmful effects of the residential school system. These narratives, I will argue, make a certain twentieth-century Indigenous child knowable to history, one who relies on a relationship, held together by memory, between the child, the adult, and the familial and communal narratives in which they are situated.

## Racializing the Child

Before delving into the specific dynamics of the remembered children of the residential school narratives under review, I will briefly discuss some of the ways in which the conceptual language of childhood contributed to the vision and consequently the practices of the residential school system. When we examine this language, we can observe how the residential school system relied for its possibility, at least in part, on a radical reconfiguration of both the public and private domains of society, and the life cycle categories of childhood and adulthood. These reconfigurations are especially apparent in the language of racialized childhood employed throughout the government documents that advocated for the residential school system. That is, when we examine the policies and public discourse concerned with the residential school system, we come into contact with a racial trope familiar across numerous colonial contexts, wherein conceptions of childhood and adulthood were applied according to racial and religious categories as much as to stages in the life cycle of an individual.[21] According to this conceptual scheme, Indigenous peoples as a whole were conceived of as unruly children in need of cultivation by the state's benevolent parentage. This racialized "child" could only reach adulthood and maturity through systematic assimilation into Christian civilization and white settler society.

With the passing of the Indian Act in 1876, the Canadian government became legally responsible for providing for the education and integration of Indigenous youth into Euro-Canadian society and made all Indigenous people wards of the state. The growing administrative machinery of the nascent Dominion was indifferent to

the military and economic contributions made by Indigenous peoples to its own political power, so recently won.[22] Observing the shifting socio-political climate, many Indigenous leaders and families advocated schooling for their children, not as a replacement for their own educational and parenting practices, but as an additional preparation for the changing circumstances of a growing state.[23] Policy-makers and civil administrators, for their part, increasingly saw education as a means to assimilate Indigenous people into the "Canadian mainstream," and thus promote their self-sufficiency in an expanding agricultural and commercial economy.[24] Different models of schooling for Indigenous children proliferated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including residential schools, day schools, and even integrated public schools.[25] These approaches to state-sponsored schooling advanced according to a range of collaborative dynamics with missionary groups and religious organizations and entailed varying degrees of separation between children and parents. In 1879, the "Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds," also known as the Davin Report, recommended the widespread adoption of the industrial school system.[26] It is arguably the document most closely associated with the standardization and spread of the system of residential schools.[27] In order to justify the mandatory and prolonged separation of children from their parents and the need for industrial education, the report draws heavily on language and imagery related to childhood.

First, the Davin Report reconfigures the child's relationship to the private and public domains of human life. In its opening paragraph, it declares that simply bringing Indigenous children into the school's environment for periods of each day was insufficient to achieve "Indian education's" aim of "aggressive civilization."[28] Drawing on the United States's experience with industrial schools, the report states, "it was found that the day school did not work, because the influence of the wigwam was stronger than the influence of the school."[29] The domestic sphere of the home is presented here in a way that marks the private realm as a racialized realm by the use of "wigwam." As such, the school as the public instrument of the state's assimilation policy is set in opposition to the racialized domestic realm of the Indigenous family and community in a competition for influence. It follows that the public must overwhelm, overtake, and ultimately vanquish the racialized private sphere. That is, by advocating for the complete immersion of the Indigenous child in the institutional life of the school, the Davin Report recommends the public institution of the school assume all responsibilities of the family and community to put an end to their influence. With the private absorbed entirely into the public, the school becomes the Indigenous children's new "home,"[30] and also assumes the role of surrogate parent, required to provide, as the Davin Report mentions, "the care of the mother."[31] State suspicion about the influence of the home in the lives of students was not confined, of course, to policies regarding Indigenous children or residential schooling. For example, Egerton Ryerson, the architect of Ontario's public school system and an influential promoter of boarding schools for Indigenous children, employed the language of parenthood to describe the state's relationship with all the nation's youngsters: "The state, therefore, so far from having nothing to do with children, constitutes their collective parent and is bound to protect them against any

unnatural neglect or cruel treatment, on the part of the individual parent to secure to them all that will qualify them to become useful citizens of the State."[32] In juxtaposing the school and the wigwam, the Davin Report demonstrates the racialized, colonial variation and extension of a powerful current in modern thought about education and the public child.

The Davin Report also reconfigures the relationship between the adult and the child as stages of life.

> The Indian is sometimes spoken of as a child, but he is very far from being a child. The race is in its childhood.… There is, it is true, in the adult, the helplessness of mind of the child, as well as the practical helplessness; there is, too, the child's want of perspective; but there is little of the child's receptivity; nor is the child's tractableness always found.[33]

In this passage, the report suggests that the adult Indigenous person is not literally a child, but rather Indigenous people as a whole should be conceived of in terms of childhood. It describes the ways in which the metaphor of childhood is apt but limited with respect to the adult Indigenous person. Most importantly, according to the Davin Report, the Indigenous adult shares the child's state of helpless dependency, intellectually and practically. Yet, the attributes of childhood that the adult lacks are those which ensure the growth and development of the child. That is, the adult lacks the teleological qualities of childhood that impel it inexorably towards adulthood. Paradoxically, the adult Indigenous person, according to the Davin Report, is *not* a child only insofar as he or she is *always* a child, lacking the essential quality of childhood that promises its own impermanence.

The model of education that is entailed by this passage then, and which the residential school system enacted, is one in which the Indigenous child is educated so that she or he might enter into maturity, into adulthood, a state which is tantamount to assimilation into white Christian, Canadian society.[34] To do so, the child must shed the qualities of "Indianness." In a remark often attributed to former superintendent of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott, the schools must "kill the Indian within the child."[35] Because of its association with perpetual childhood, killing the Indian within the child becomes killing the child within the child, leaving nothing but a historyless adult without a childhood past. The residential schools effected, at a discursive level at least, an inversion of the generational divisions that structure the life cycle, rendering the adults into children through a professedly benevolent paternalism, and the children into adults through their potential advance towards absorption into "mature" Euro-Canadian society.

As we shall soon see, one of the ways in which the schools enacted this advance towards a racialized "adulthood" was by fostering a kind of targeted forgetfulness of the Indigenous children's racialized childhood. That is, these children were encouraged to forget those things which, according to the creators and perpetuators of the residential school system, linked them to their indigeneity — their families, their language, their community, their cultural practices, their forms of knowledge. As the

deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs put it in 1889, "Every effort should be directed against anything calculated to keep fresh *in the memories of children* habits and associations which it is one of the main objects of industrial institutions to obliterate."[36] Memory is a primary medium of the self, of family, and of culture. And it was against this fundamental human medium that the residential school system in Canada directed many of its attacks. Moreover, the residential school narratives to which we shall shortly turn demonstrate that this enforced forgetfulness did not simply disrupt a racialized conceptual construct of childhood employed by the engineers of the residential school system, but profoundly influenced the lived childhoods of the survivors of that system.

What would it mean to be an adult without the memory or the memories of childhood? How does the "forgotten" child speak to the history that will later speak about her or him? Within the context of a coerced institutional amnesia, the dynamics of memory and remembering assume an important historical role on two levels. First, the child's memory becomes a multifaceted site of creative agency, serving as a space of survival, spiritual resilience, self and familial constitution, healing, and resistance. Second, public and collective remembering becomes a powerful and restorative voice in the making of a history of modern childhood. As the remainder of this essay conveys, these published remembrances of survivors make visible and knowable a twentieth-century child previously hidden, and for whom memory itself served a constant and critical function. The following section will begin by exploring how these narratives recount the remembered childhoods of the narrators and shed light on the elements of modern childhood highlighted above. I will discuss how these narratives portray the residential school's absorption of the private, domestic realm of home, family and community, and the ways memory and the memory narrative itself serves to protect and repair the relationship. I will also analyze the ways in which these narratives demonstrate the school's reconfiguration of the child-adult relationship, and, again, how memory serves to reconstitute the forgotten child and make it knowable to a public audience.

## Remembering the Child

### *The Public and the Private*

Regarding the residential school's overriding of the domestic life of the child, the narratives under analysis provide compelling, first-hand accounts. In his memoir, *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*, Theodore Fontaine reflects on the moment his parents dropped him off at Fort Alexander Residential School and the fundamental transformation it enacted in his life: "From this point on, my life would not be my own. I would no longer be a son with a family structure. I would be parented by people who'd never known the joy of parenthood and in some cases hadn't been parented themselves."[37] In familial language that echoes the vision of the Davin Report, Fontaine describes how the school permanently altered his relationship to the domestic realm, removing him from the family structure in which he had been embedded. The institutional substitutes for his parents had no first-hand

knowledge or emotional experience that might make them capable of fulfilling such a parental role. Yet, we might ask, what is it that erects the family structure and maintains its integrity? What sustains the bonds among its members, while allowing, at least to an extent, the residential schools to dismantle it? Such bonds are not sustained by physical proximity alone, nor are they guaranteed by legal protections. While there are certainly numerous ways to answer these questions, the residential school narratives suggest repeatedly the decisive role that memory plays in maintaining, damaging, and repairing the family structure.

In one chapter of his memoir, Fontaine describes his friendship with an Elder, Alfred Mann, who lived near his grandparents.[38] Fontaine recalls how, in the time before his enrolment in the residential school, he would sit on the front porch and chat with Alfred while he smoked his pipe. He notes how later in life he learned that Alfred was not only a friendly Elder, but that they were in fact blood relatives. Neither knew of their familial bond, however, because the generational ties across extended family networks had been severed by immersion in the residential school system. He writes, "Mom had lost her closeness with her father's side of the family; going to school when she was only four or five had completely alienated her from her knowledge of them. I think the church and school destroyed almost completely her memory of her Indian heritage and family."[39] Indeed, such relations require more than mere biological affinity. The family structure hangs, of course, not just on genes, but on the shared stories of family history, in which each member enters as a character at their birth, and which are renewed through their recollection and retelling from generation to generation.

Moreover, this process of renewal can only pass through particular channels, those minds and mouths that carry the memories of a family heritage. For Fontaine, his connection to these narratives, and thus to his family heritage, was his mother, whom his father called *att soo kay quay* or "storyteller woman."[40] Fontaine recalls early mornings before residential school when she would tell stories as she made him breakfast.

> Through this early-morning togetherness I began to know her family, not fully realizing that it was mine, too. If only I'd known then that it would be impossible to relive these moments after I'd gone to school. Perhaps I'd have paid more attention if I had understood that these history lessons were unique and that only my mom could relate them.… I didn't learn most of this family history because of being isolated at residential school.[41]

The severance effected by the residential system was not simply experienced as a physical separation, but as an alienation from the familial networks through which the self-constitutive stories of family flow.[42]

In this context of institutional insulation from familial relations and narratives, the Indigenous child's own active remembering can become a practice of self-preservation and familial reconstitution, helping to reinforce ties that the residential school's total absorption of the child's domestic life sought to dissolve. Shirley Sterling's children's novel, *My Name Is Seepeetza*, draws heavily on the author's experience at the

Kamloops Indian Residential School.[43] The title character's journal entries, which comprise the novel, go in between two principal settings, drawn in maps at the outset of the book — the residential school where she is enrolled and the Joyaska Ranch where she and her family live. The maps are signed with two different names. The Joyaska Ranch is signed by Seepeetza and the "School Map" is attributed to Martha Stone, the name she is forced to use while at school.[44] Even though Seepeetza relays a roughly equal number of stories about both settings, only twelve of fifty-one entries are written from her home. In the rest of the chapters, she is remembering her home with great longing as she writes from school.

It is clear from her entries that Seepeetza remembers in order to escape the harsh environment of the school she attends and "spend time" with her parents and siblings. This recollective daydreaming often gets her in trouble, she writes, as when one of the school's supervising nuns snaps her out of a daydream and locks her in a broom closet as punishment: "She said, 'Don't let me catch you daydreaming again, you lazy amathon.'[45] I can't help it. I can't stop thinking of home. I keep remembering what it's like to go riding horses all summer and help my dad put up the hay."[46] On one level, the teachers and administrators trivialize such remembering as a "daydream," a kind of idle fantasizing. They associate it with inactivity and indolence. Yet this internal activity is also dangerous, subverting the assimilative agenda that relies upon the severing of familial ties and that seeks to remove the child from the narrative of her family history, in which she has a name that she recognizes as her own. The residential school system sought to inhibit the flow of memories that connected the children to their Indigenous families and heritage. Punishment of the kind recounted above was one approach to achieving this aim. Although it is internal and invisible, the Indigenous child's remembering is an *act* and an important practice of creative and moral agency. Memory becomes an important power of the child to preserve the familial bonds that the racialized excesses of the logic of modern childhood sought to disintegrate. As the novel's structure suggests, Seepeetza tells the reader that she spends most of her time while at school in such a state of internal retreat and transportive remembering.

The kind of remembrance practised by students like Seepeetza, however, depends on certain conditions for its experience. Namely, accessing these memories of home and family require personal moments of silent contemplation that were largely denied the children of residential schools. The possibility of such moments was undermined by the residential schools through the immersion of the children in various dimensions of the public realm. In a chilling passage from his memoir, *Indian School Days,* Anishinaabe writer Basil Johnston describes the "never-ending surveillance" of the Indigenous student at the residential school, from the moment he woke up until after he had fallen asleep.

> The eyes began their surveillance in the morning, watching the washing of hands and faces. The eyes followed all movements in the dressing of the beds; the eyes were transfixed on the backs of worshipers during mass. Throughout the day the eyes traced the motions of hands at table; the eyes glared at the

> figures bent and coiled in work; the eyes tracked the flight of ball and puck and the movement of feet during play; the eyes were trained on the prints of pencil on paper; the eyes censored letters received and letters written. The eyes, like those of the wolf, peered in the dark in watch over still, sleeping forms. The eyes were never at rest.[47]

Following the racialized logic of public childhood, the Indigenous child becomes a prisoner in a kind of a pedagogical panopticon, an object of the school's absolute public oversight and supervision. This constant institutional scrutiny is one of the means by which the residential school system subjected its students to the exhausting glare of the public and blocked access to moments of privacy, wherein the powers of memory and imagination can flourish. The possibility of privacy was further inhibited by fostering an ever-present public of other children and a constant stream of structured activities. Sterling's book expresses this feature of residential school life in a journal entry written by the narrator after contracting chicken pox: "This morning everybody got up and went to Mass, but Sister told me to stay in bed because I still have my spots. It's quiet in the dorm with everybody gone. Usually, the only time in my life when it's quiet is when I am home."[48] It is clear from these passages that the principle of public absorption of the private realm effected by the residential school system was not simply reflected in a set of institutional arrangements and the physical separation from parents and the home. Rather, the reconfiguration of public and private seeped into the sensory experience of the child, creating a kind of ambient publicity that discouraged the transportive remembering described by Seepeetza.[49]

Even when the students were able to gain some relief from the ambient publicity of the school day, the cold institutional setting and the prolonged separation from family frequently turned remembering into a painful experience. The pain of remembering is attested to in all three residential school narratives. Johnston describes the quiet scene at the end of each day as the boys of the residential school lay down and tried to sleep.

> In the silence and the darkness it was a time for remembrance and reflection. But thoughts of family and home did not yield much comfort and strength; instead such memories as one had served to inflame the feelings of alienation and abandonment and to fan the flames of resentment. Soon the silence was broken by the sobs and whimpers of boys who gave way to misery and sadness, dejection and melancholy, heartache and gloom.[50]

Despite the restorative and constitutive power of remembering, this nightly routine demonstrates how the school's environment gradually turned the students away from their own memories, and created the desire to return to the mental "white noise" of ambient publicity. We might wonder whether the sobs and whimpers in the darkness that then prompted the belittling taunts of older students[51] were in fact issued as a way to stop the silence that invited such distressing memories. In such a context, tactical forgetting becomes a means of survival, a way to distract temporarily from

the sorrows that surrounded the children. Seepeetza writes in her journal about the distraction provided by the school's dance classes after one of her childhood friends died unexpectedly: "I'm glad now that Sister makes us dancers practise and practise for concerts. It helps me forget about Charlie. I don't even mind when she locks me in the linen room to learn folk dances out of books and teach them to the other dancers.… I just want to keep busy."[52] When memory is a wound, distraction and forgetfulness are a welcome salve. It is important to note, however, that this forgetting is a temporary practice of self and communal preservation, as we will soon discuss and as the memory narratives themselves testify.

Given the centrality of memory to community and family relations, it is perhaps not surprising that the children in Johnston's narrative understood the rare occasions when their parents brought them back home from the school as an act of remembrance; and when they had to stay at the school over a holiday period, for example, the boys felt it was because they had been forgotten. For if you live in a public space closed off from memory, can you be remembered by those outside of it? In such a condition, the act of parental remembrance represents a reaching into the Lethe-like space of the school's enforced forgetfulness and restores the substantive experience of familial and communal life. When Johnston is suddenly sent home, he describes his classmates' despondency thus: "And though they laughed and joked, they were very sad, not so much to see me go, but because they were not going home, because no one had remembered them."[53] It is significant then that the boys ask Johnston to tell others about them when he returns home: "Just before I left, someone whispered, 'Basil! When you get home tell everybody what it's like here. Tell the other boys never to come here."[54] Despite Johnston's desire to completely forget the residential school once he had left, to never return, "not in person, not in memory," the reality of injustice and the ties of friendship with the boys demanded an ongoing act of remembrance. Remembering in this context becomes a moral responsibility, an act of duty towards his friends and "fellow inmates." Indeed, the memoir itself serves as an expression of this responsibility, providing a written testimony to the lives of his unforgotten classmates. In the appendix to *Indian School Days,* Johnston lists the names of all the boys and girls that attended the residential school in Spanish, Ontario. He makes it clear that he has compiled the list from memory, stating "I had no records to work from."[55]

The foregoing paragraphs discuss the ways in which the residential school system reconfigured the domains of public and private, absorbing the child into an overwhelming public that sought to separate them in body and mind from their parents and community. Since memory plays an important role in protecting and maintaining these ties, the residential school system undermined the child's memory on a variety of fronts to foster a comprehensively public space devoid of private remembering. In this context, the Indigenous child's invisible act of remembering becomes a rich source of creative agency towards self-preservation, familial and communal restoration, and moral responsibility. We can now turn to examine the ways in which the residential school system disrupted and reconfigured the life-cycle categories of childhood and adulthood among its students, and the role that memory plays in this

disruption and in the child's response to it. Of course, when I refer to the reconfiguration of childhood and adulthood, I am not referring to a literal reconfiguration. Rather, the racialized inversion of the child-adult relationship suggested by the Davin Report informed the residential school system at a conceptual and metaphoric level. The paragraphs that follow explore the ways in which this conceptual blurring impacted the lives of the Indigenous children of the residential school narratives.

### *The Child and the Adult*

Since the architects of the residential school system conceived of the adult Indigenous population in terms of an interminable childhood, that system saw its mission as transforming a generation of actual Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian adults. The boundaries between adulthood and childhood for the Indigenous child in the residential system were thus racialized, blurred, and inverted. One of the ways the residential school system sought to enact this elision of categories was through a culture of manual labour marked as "adult" in various ways.[56] A significant portion of every student's day, and over half the day for adolescents, was dedicated to various kinds of work needed to sustain the operation of the school. This work included tending to livestock, cleaning, plumbing, tailoring, electrical work, and metalwork.[57] In Johnston's memoir, we find an especially evocative demonstration of the culture thus created. When the winter was approaching, the boys in the school's tailoring department would prepare coats for the student population. He relates that, as the days became colder, the tailors were still working on preparing the coats and the rest of the boys began to complain: "'When we gonna get coats, anyway? Not til somebody freezes to death or gets sick?'… 'What's the matter with youse guys, anyway? Can't you make them coats an' mitts on time? We got our winter stuff last year 'fore this. What youse guys doin' in the tailor shop anyways… playing?'"[58] When the second-hand coats had finally been tailored, and later the hats, they were too big for the boys, since their original wearers were adult soldiers in the Boer War. First, the suggestion that the tailors were simply playing is noteworthy in its use of "play," an all but universal feature of childhood, as a sarcastic taunt. Of course, we do not want to lean on a romanticized notion of a universal play-centred childhood that denies the significant economic role children have played and continue to play in numerous cultures and historical periods.[59] However, this sensitivity should not lead us to ignore the strange "adultness" of a group of child tailors working to provide for the rest of the school's child and adolescent labour force of farmers, electricians, plumbers, and carpenters.[60] The subsequent image of these boys clothed in oversized army apparel imported from a British imperial conflict only serves to reinforce the racialized reconfiguration of childhood and adulthood that the residential schools sought to enact.

Fontaine's *Broken Circle* memoir provides an even more explicit account of this dynamic. In the fall, when the crops that fed the student population were ready for harvest, the boys in grade 4 and older were exempted from class to work in the fields. Fontaine describes his experience as a younger child observing these 10-year-olds at work.

> I would watch with envy as they wandered out with their bags, pails, hoes and rakes to begin their day-long chores. When they came back to the refectory for the noon meal… we all watched as these "working men" joined us little boys and stood at their designated places at the long tables. Once, as grace was being said by a priest, I envisioned myself standing on that very spot with rumpled overalls, well-worn boots and rough, calloused hands, taking a break from an important chore.[61]

This excerpt clearly conveys the extent to which the nature of the labour demanded of the children at the residential school turned them from "little boys" into "working men." Moreover, the adult transformation that the day-long labour brought into effect was incentivized through the exemption from regular class activities. This performance of adulthood became an object of envy and the acceleration through childhood became an aspiration. And while the harvest represented in some ways an annual break from the regular routine, Fontaine nonetheless makes it clear that the everyday work of the residential school student operated according to a similar logic: "Jobs normally done by school employees, like piling wood in the furnace room for hours at a time in the winter and on cold days, ensuring that the furnaces were full of fresh wood, and sweeping and washing dormitories, playrooms and washrooms were all part of our 'education' at school."[62] Indeed, the schools sought to turn these children into tradesmen, thrusting them into the real labour of ensuring the institution's self-sufficiency.[63] Alongside the immediate entry into markedly adult forms of work, other features of life typically reserved for adulthood, including the normalization of grief at the frequent death of peers,[64] were imposed upon the Indigenous students at an institutional level by the conditions prevalent in the residential system. The growth and maturation of the child was upset, and they were impelled to perform a racialized adulthood. Given these dynamics, it is not surprising that many of these authors discuss their childhood as something lost in need of recovery. As Sterling writes in the opening dedication of her novel, "To all those who went to the residential schools… May you laugh and find your child again."[65]

The distinction between childhood and adulthood in modernity, however, is not simply marked by different kinds of activity. Even though it is the authors themselves who describe their childhood experience in ways that emphasize the elision of childhood and adulthood, we should still be wary of generalized conceptions of life-cycle categories that rely on a dichotomous relationship between play and work and that stem from particular cultural and historical locations. The residential school system disrupted the relationship between childhood and adulthood not simply by effecting the students' rapid immersion into certain forms of adult activity. Associating the Indigenous culture of their parents and ancestors with a permanent childhood, the schools aimed to kill the racialized "child" within the child by inhibiting the practices of remembering that tied her or him to home and history. The schools aimed to create a kind of "newborn" adult without the memory or memories of childhood.

To return to a question posed earlier in a somewhat modified form, what does it mean to be without the memory or the memories of childhood? On the one hand,

newness or natality, as Hannah Arendt has put it, is an inherent, defining characteristic of childhood that orients children more significantly to the future than the past, and ought to shape the nature of any educational process.[66] Yet, the movement from childhood to adulthood cannot be strictly future-oriented, requiring the gradual building of self-constitutive memories and, as we have already seen, the participation in a network of familial and/or communal narratives. Indeed, childhood's advance towards adulthood requires not only futurity, but also history; memory in addition to expectation. To quote the provocative Ciceronian maxim, "To be ignorant of the past is to remain a child." Or, as Arendt discussed in her essay on the American "Crisis in Education," children need to be educated into the old world as it is, and not simply into a new world of revolutionary change.[67]

In this context, we can examine how the residential school narratives speak to the ways in which the childhood-adulthood relationship was not only disrupted by stopping the flow of memories of family, but by creating a culture of active forgetfulness. We have already touched on how the scrupulously regimented schedule of a residential school day filled with religious exercises, classes, and manual labour served to distract from painful memories of loss and separation.[68] Beyond this power of distraction, the extent to which the day was routinized and scheduled down to the minute enacted a transformation in the students' very conception and experience of the passage of time. While all three books under examination dedicate space to cataloguing the daily schedule at the residential school, the temporal dynamics thus created is most evocatively described in Johnston's *Indian School Days.* He spends his entire fourth chapter ("A Day in the Life of Spanish") breaking down the daily timetable, with (almost) each new element of the schedule introduced with the "Clang! Clang! Clang!" of the school bell.[69] At the end of the chapter, right before laying the daily schedule out in the form of a timetable, Johnston explains,

> Though some days were eventful and were memorable for some reason, most passed by as the seconds, the minutes and the hours mark the passage of time, in work, study, prayer and proper play. Were it not for the spirit of the boys, every day would have passed according to plan and schedule, and there would have been no story.[70]

This excerpt prompts a series of observations. First, Johnston describes a kind of bureaucratic, calendrical, "empty time,"[71] in which one day was indistinguishable from another and progress was marked according to the passing of particular temporal markers (that is, minutes, hours, class periods, semesters) rather than the lived substantive experience of any particular moment. In this way, the residential school not only submerged the child in an overwhelming glare of ambient publicity that inhibited the recollection of life before the residential school, it also promoted a routinized monotony that, on its own, hampered the formation of new memories and narratives by which one could make sense of the experience and make sense of oneself within it. Since it is such narratives and memories that build towards a coherent life and secure the connections between one's experience as a child and as an adult, the insulation

of the Indigenous child within a space protected from memory access and formation served to distort further the relationship between childhood and adulthood.

Yet, despite this culture of active forgetfulness, the Indigenous children did indeed form memories, enough, as we can see, to fill numerous memoirs. Johnston attributes this outcome to the resilient "spirit" of his classmates that breaks into the ordinary passage of the institution's timetable temporality and creates the possibility for remembering, storytelling, and growth. Moreover, this spirit is explicitly marked as belonging to childhood through the use of the diminutive "boys." That is, there is something about this spirit that is peculiar to the life stage of these children, that is specific to their "childness." The authors convey this spirit in the episodes of their narratives, and through the girls and boys who are their principal protagonists. In an environment marked by cruelty and oppression, this spirit manifests itself in an almost ecstatic mischievousness directed towards the priests, nuns, and administrators of the school;[72] an acute sense of the injustice that defined their life and that erupted in scenes of enraged indignation[73] on the one hand and serenely peaceful defiance[74] on the other; a resilient hope and courage that eagerly sought out opportunities to create justice,[75] to escape,[76] and to find quiet moments of relief and relative freedom;[77] an independence and sense of initiative in carrying out or strategically avoiding certain tasks;[78] an abiding love and longing for home and family;[79] and a solidarity and friendship among classmates.[80] These qualities of the Indigenous children and the memories they created are a further expression of their creative, spiritual agency. Moreover, such qualities have the power to preserve these children in memory and history, causing them to emerge as a distinct voice in the silence of the past.

Fontaine's memoir provides another significant example of the ways in which the residential school system and its various attacks on the memory of the Indigenous child blurred and distorted the relationship between childhood and adulthood.

> Memories of happy times surfaced a lot in my first year at school, particularly at night and in the dark. Eventually they came less and less often — perhaps mercifully… and later I thought perhaps they were only a dream.… Fortunately, my healing journey has enabled me to treasure these remembered moments, and I have smiled, laughed and, yes, cried about them. I think Mom and Dad, and my departed siblings, smile down at me as I become more and more the spirited, carefree boy I was.[81]

In this passage, we can see how the environment of the residential school system has the effect of gradually wearing away the memories of family and home that preceded entry into the school. In fact, the memory-less empty time of the school is so erosive that Fontaine questions whether they ever even happened except in a dream. The memories cease to be conceivable as memories in a state of alienation from the relationships that gave rise to them and in the memory-less empty time of the residential school. It should not surprise us then that Fontaine, forcefully separated from the knowledge of his heritage, reflects at numerous points on how the trauma of his residential school experiences left him for many years feeling as if he were "emotionally

and psychologically" the same age as when he had entered the residential system.[82] By removing the child from the memories of childhood and cultivating a culture of forgetfulness, the residential school sought to deny the Indigenous students their childhood while at the same time prolonging the experience of it through the trauma it inflicted. Yet, as the passage above relates and the memoir itself signals, Fontaine describes the gradual recovery of these memories since exiting the school, allowing for a healing process such that the child Fontaine once was has also been recovered and incorporated into his adult life.

## Conclusion

After analyzing how a set of residential school narratives depict the residential system's deployment of some of the emerging conceptual dynamics of childhood in the twentieth century, we have come to see, among other things, the crucial role that memory played in the advancement of that system's assimilative agenda as a primary object of attack, in the recovery and reconstitution of self by its survivors, and in the very concept of childhood itself. Informed by this analysis, we might, by way of conclusion, ask a series of questions. What happens when these private, restorative remembrances are written out as a book-length story and published as an autobiographical novel or a memoir? How does this act of public, narrative remembering affect the child's (now an adult) relationship to the domestic sphere of family and community eroded by the residential school's culture of forgetfulness? And how does it make knowable to its audience a modern, public child that is frequently absent from the dominant narratives of twentieth-century childhood?

"Were it not for the spirit of the boys… there would have been no story."[83] In this excerpt, Johnston suggests certain deep connections among the spirit of the children of the residential schools, the memory to which that spirit gives rise, and the emergence of a story that gives expression, coherence, and meaning to both. The works of Johnston, Sterling, and Fontaine are not collections of imagistic fragments of memory, chaotic flashes of moments from their past. They are stories and thus serve to enhance and extend the powerful constitutive function of memory. In the well-known words of novelist Thomas King, "The truth about stories is that that's all we are."[84] Like string through a bracelet, narrative threads the fragments of our memory together, creating something more coherent, more affecting, and more beautiful than a disorganized heap of many coloured beads. And like a bracelet, the patterns and motifs that define the finished artifact may, through context or contrast, give fresh insight and perspective into the individual beads that make up the whole. In this way, according to Daniel Heath Justice, texts such as these can serve to configure a set of relationships within the self, with community, with the land, that create paths of "meaningful being in whatever worlds we inhabit."[85] In addition to giving coherence to memory and embedding the individual self in a wider set of relationships, autobiographical narratives can also enhance our remembering and spur on the retrieval of previously forgotten memories. As Nancy K. Miller has argued, we can think of the genre of memoir as a kind of recollective prosthesis that assists

with the process of remembering. Memoirs, according to Miller, "support you in the act of remembering."[86] The residential school narratives thus function as a kind of *aide-mémoire*, fostering and propelling the remembering process of the individual survivor. As Fontaine writes, "Each time I remember and talk about an experience, more and more comes back to me."[87]

Given the centrality of memory and story as media of the self and the family, as well as the extent to which the destabilization of those constitutive memories operated as an important strategy of the residential school's program of "aggressive civilization," this practice of progressive memory expansion through narrative writing serves to re-constitute the self and buttress the family or communal structure that supports and makes possible that self. On one level, autobiographical writing lends a narrative coherence to the life cycle, thus helping to restore the relationship between one's childhood and adulthood that the residential system sought to undermine. On another, the practices of remembering fostered by memoir facilitates the reinsertion of the self into a collective narrative of family and community that, through its written publication, resists the disruption or decay caused by the death of its individual storytellers. Reflecting on his own lack of knowledge regarding his mother's early life before marriage, Fontaine again writes "I don't know anything else about Mom's life up to that point, and she never talked to any of us about her experiences. I shudder to think how she was brought up, but her story can never surface now, at least not in this world."[88] The publication of the residential school narratives eliminates, or at least drastically reduces the likelihood, of this possibility, allowing for the continuity of memory's constitutive function through subsequent generations. Moreover, it allows the voice of the muted Indigenous child, hidden in the glare of the overwhelming public "concern" for the modern child, to speak through the distance of decades, and make herself and himself knowable to history. Such narratives thus represent, in an important way, both a continuation and a fruit of the creative, spiritual agency of the Indigenous child.

Finally, in the words of Miller, "memoir is the record of an experience in search of a community."[89] That is, memoirs and autobiographical narratives serve a performative function of constituting a community of those who remember. They call into being a particular kind of public that remembers together and contributes to a culture of remembering.[90] The fact that these memory narratives are written texts — they are not, as Pamela Klassen has put it, "stories from the mouth"[91] — conditions the nature of the publics they convene. Perhaps paradoxically, Thomas King has suggested that there is a heightened private dimension to written stories and their audiences. The performance of oral stories initiates a public happening and unfolds in the context of collective attention and experience.[92] "But the act of reading," King writes, "is a private act. And no matter how many people have read a book or an article or a poem or a short story, each person reads that story themselves, by themselves."[93] While these readers exist within a public audience, the encounter with the individual writer's story is a private one, more akin to listening in a one-on-one interaction than hearing a lecture in a crowded auditorium. The encounter with the author's childhood memories through the solitary act of reading necessarily triggers the personal memory of the

reader: "When you read the lives of others, you can't help but remember your own."[94] When I read the memory narratives of Johnston, Sterling, and Fontaine, I remember my own childhood and note the many ways in which it differed from the students at residential schools. I was not separated from my parents at a young age, nor did I experience the forms of cruelty and abuse suffered by these authors. Yet I also see in "the spirit of the boys" points of resonance and commonality: the acts of joyous mischief carried out by me and my group of friends, the wonder and exuberant abandon experienced running through fields and forests, the overwhelming fear and anxiety brought on by angry and aggressive adults. In reading such texts, we encounter a crucially common humanity and, as Justice has written, "abide in human presence beyond the flesh and blood of personal experience."[95] In this way, these residential school narratives construct a broad culture that counteracts the legacy of enforced forgetfulness enacted by the schools. In gathering a public of privately remembering readers, moreover, these narratives contribute to the process of self-constituting recollection for others, and thus open the possibility for the discovery of other hidden, public children of the last century.

## Notes

1 James Marten, *The History of Childhood: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916); Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: The 1905 Edition*, ed. Phillipe Van Haute and Herman Westerink, trans. Ulrike Kistner (London: Verso, 2016): Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (London: Paladin, 1987).

2 Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001); Rolf E. Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence*, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996); Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, First Vintage Books Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1982); Cynthia R. Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of a Modern Canada, 1920–1950* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006).

3 Comacchio, *Dominion of Youth*; Laura Landertinger, "Child Welfare and the Imperial Management of Childhood in Settler Colonial Canada, 1880s–2000s" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2017); Dominique Marshall, "The Language of Children's Rights, the Formation of the Welfare State, and the Democratic Experience of Poor Families in Quebec, 1940–55," in *Contemporary Quebec: Selected Readings and Commentaries*, ed. Michael D. Behiels and Matthew Hayday (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 49–77.

4 See, for example, Mona Gleason, "From 'Disgraceful Carelessness' to 'Intelligent Precaution': Accidents and the Public Child in English Canada, 1900–1950," *Journal of Family History* 30, no. 2 (April 2005): 230–41. These conceptions of childhood are certainly not the only ones that developed in the opening decades of the twentieth century. For influential discussions of other important conceptual changes, see, for example, Marcel Danesi, *Forever Young: The "Teen-Aging" of Modern Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Da Capo, 2007); Mona Gleason, *Small Matters: Canadian Children in Sickness and Health, 1900–1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Postman,

*Disappearance of Childhood;* Theresa R. Richardson, *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989); Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985). For a discussion of developments in the history of Indigenous conceptions of childhood, see Kim Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011).

5 John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879–1986*, 2017 ed. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 45.

6 For a helpful summary and analysis of this trend in histories of Canadian childhood, see Kristine Alexander, "Childhood and Colonialism in Canadian History," *History Compass* 14, no. 9 (2016): 397–406.

7 See, for example, Jean Barman, "Separate and Unequal: Indian and White Girls at All Hallows School, 1884–1920," in *Indian Education in Canada,* vol. 1, *The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 110–32; Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill, eds., *Indian Education in Canada,* vol. 1, *The Legacy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986); Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988); J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Milloy, *National Crime*.

8 Mona Gleason, *Small Matters*; Cindy Blackstock, "Residential Schools: Did They Really Close or Just Morph Into Child Welfare?," *Indigenous Law Journal* 6, no. 1 (2007): 71–78; Margaret D. Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Laura Landertinger, "Child Welfare and the Imperial Management of Childhood"; Allyson D. Stevenson, *Intimate Integration: A History of the Sixties Scoop and the Colonization of Indigenous Kinship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020); Veronica Strong-Boag, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves: English Canada Encounters Adoption from the Nineteenth Century to the 1990s* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2006); Veronica Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation: Canada Confronts Its History of Childhood Disadvantage* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Joan Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family and the Law in Ontario, 1920–1960* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2001); Joan Sangster, *Girl Trouble: Female Delinquency in English Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Joan Sangster, "'She Is Hostile to Our Ways': First Nations Girls Sentenced to the Ontario Training School for Girls, 1933–1960," *Law and History Review* 20, no. 1 (2002): 59–96.

9 Heywood, *A History of Childhood*, "Introduction." See also Mona Gleason, "Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education," *History of Education* 45, no. 4: 446–59.

10 Cf. Liesbeth Korthals Altes, *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation: The Negotiation of Values in Fiction* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 45–47.

11 Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 13.

12 For example, April Mandrona and Claudia Mitchell, *Our Rural Selves: Memory and the Visual in Canadian Childhoods* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 4; Delyth Edwards, *Cultural, Autobiographical and Absent Memories of Orphanhood: The Girls of Nazareth House Remember* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017).

13 Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up*, 15.

14 See, for example, Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, edited and abridged (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016); Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *They Came for the Children: Canada, Aboriginal Peoples, and Residential Schools* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012); Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The use of memory to recover and disseminate the stories of children at the residential schools has not taken the form of oral or written testimonies alone, but has also included various material practices, including the creation of community archives and national monuments. See, for example, Krista McCracken, "Archival Photographs in Perspective: Indian Residential School Images of Health," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 2 (2017): 163–82; Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan, "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing," in "Radical Empathy in Archival Practice," eds. Elivia Arroyo-Ramírez, Jasmine Jones, Shannon O'Neill, and Holly Smith, Special Issue, *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 3, 1–17; Carey Newman — Hayalthkin'geme and Catherine Etmanski, "Truthful Engagement: Making the Witness Blanket, an Ongoing Process of Reconciliation," *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching and Learning* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 235–43.

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17 Sutherland, *Growing Up*, 16.

18 Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1991): 1–21; David Carr, "Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity," *History and Theory* 25, no. 2 (1986): 117–31. Cf. Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 291–319.

19 Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018), 35.

20 For an interesting discussion of the concept of "narrative agency," see Sarah Drew Lucas, "The Primacy of Narrative Agency: Re-Reading Seyla Benhabib on Narrativity," *Feminist Theory* 19, no. 2 (2018): 123–43.

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24 Helen Raptis, *What We Learned: Two Generations Reflect on Tsimshian Education and the Day Schools* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 27.
25 Milloy, *National Crime,* 7; Jean Barman, "Schooled for Inequality: The Education of British Columbia Aboriginal Children," in *Children, Teachers and Schools in the History of British Columbia*, ed. Jean Barman and Mona Gleason, 2nd ed. (Edmonton: Brush Education, 2003), 55–81; Ken Coates, "A Very Imperfect Means of Education: Indian Day Schools in the Yukon Territory, 1890–1955," in *Indian Education in Canada*, vol. 1, *The Legacy,* ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don N. McCaskill (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 132–47; Raptis, *What We Learned*; E. Brian Titley, "Indian Industrial Schools in Western Canada," in *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, ed. Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson, and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 133–53; Sean Carleton, "Colonizing Minds: Public Education, the 'Textbook Indian,' and Settler Colonialism in British Columbia, 1920–1970," *BC Studies* 169 (2011): 101–30.
26 Nicholas Flood Davin, "Report on Industrial Schools For Indians and Half-Breeds," March 14, 1879, https://archive.org/details/cihm_03651/page/n5.
27 Milloy, *National Crime,* xxxviii.
28 Davin, "Report," 1.
29 Davin, "Report," 1.
30 For a discussion of the residential school as "home," see Milloy, *National Crime,* 41–42.
31 Davin, "Report," 12.
32 Ryerson, quoted in Leo Van Arragon, "'We Educate, They Indoctrinate': Religion and the Politics of Togetherness in Ontario Public Education" (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2015), 125.
33 Davin, "Report," 10.
34 The Indian Act's provision (1876) that anyone gaining a university education was automatically enfranchised into Canadian citizenship, thus revoking their Indian status, is an example of such an educational model. See John Milloy, "Indian Act Colonialism: A Century of Dishonour, 1869–1969," Research Paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance (National Centre for First Nations Governance, May 2008), https://fngovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/milloy.pdf.
35 There is some dispute about the accuracy of this attribution. However, there is little doubt that the language of "killing" and "exterminating" the Indianness of an Indigenous person was relatively commonplace. See Robert L. McDougall, "Duncan Campbell Scott," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, August 11, 2008), https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/duncan-campbell-scott. See also Mark Abley, *Conversations with a Dead Man: The Legacy of Duncan Campbell Scott* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2013).
36 Hayter Reed, quoted in Milloy, *National Crime,* 43. Emphasis added.
37 Theodore Fontaine, *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools* (Victoria, BC: Heritage House, 2010), 20.
38 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 66–70.
39 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 68.
40 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 40.
41 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 40.
42 An important and growing body of literature on "intergenerational trauma" explores related long-term damage instigated by the residential schools in the language and methodological frameworks of psychology. See, for example, Brittany Barker, Kali Sedgemore, Malcolm Tourangeau, Louise Lagimodiere, John Milloy, Huiri Dong, Kanna Hayashi, Jean Shoveller, Thomas Kerr, and Kora DeBeck, "Intergenerational Trauma: The Relationship between Residential Schools and the Child Welfare System among Young People Who Use Drugs in Vancouver, Canada," *Journal of Adolescent*

*Health* 65, no. 2 (2019): 248–54; Amy Bombay, Kim Matheson, and Hymie Anisman, "Intergenerational Trauma: Convergence of Multiple Processes among First Nations Peoples in Canada," *Journal of Aboriginal Health* 5, no. 3 (2009): 6–47; Amy Bombay, Kimberly Matheson, and Hymie Anisman, "The Intergenerational Effects of Indian Residential Schools: Implications for the Concept of Historical Trauma," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 51, no. 3 (2014): 320–38; Katie Cowan, "How Residential Schools Led to Intergenerational Trauma in the Canadian Indigenous Population to Influence Parenting Styles and Family Structures over Generations," *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth/Le Journal canadien de famille et de la jeunesse* 12, no. 2 (2020): 26–35; Peter Menzies, "Intergenerational Trauma and Residential Schools," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, March 24, 2020), https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/intergenerational-trauma-and-residential-schools. For a brief but helpful video introduction to the concept of intergenerational trauma and the residential schools, see Historica Canada, *Intergenerational Trauma: Residential Schools*, YouTube, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWeH_SDhEYU.

43 Renate Eigenbrod, "'For the Child Taken, for the Parent Left behind': Residential School Narratives as Acts of 'Survivance,'" *ESC* 38, no. 3–4 (2012): 287–88.

44 Shirley Sterling, *My Name Is Seepeetza* (Toronto: Groundwood Books/House of Anansi, 1992), 18–19.

45 "Amathon" is an insult that the sisters in *My Name Is Seepeetza* use towards the students. See also Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 25 and 8. I have not been able to find a clear explanation of this term.

46 Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 35.

47 Basil H. Johnston, *Indian School Days* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 137–38.

48 Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 65.

49 For a related discussion of the creation of "ambient faith" in public spaces of secular society, see Matthew Engelke, *God's Agents: Biblical Publicity in Contemporary England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), especially 37–64.

50 Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 45.

51 See Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 91.

52 Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 98.

53 Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 162. Also see 92: "And as their spirits took flight into the heights of anticipation, so did ours, in direct proportion, descend to the depths of despondency. For them someone cared; for us… we were forgotten."

54 Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 163.

55 Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 250.

56 For the corresponding transformations in broader Canadian society, which saw a move to incorporating forms of manual labour into the school day, according to the Froebelian educational ideals of "learning by doing," see "Schooling in the Industrial Age" in Paul Douglas Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 104–22.

57 Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 33.

58 Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 72.

59 Daniel Thomas Cook, "Pricing the Priceless Child: A Wonderful Problematic," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 5, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 468–73.

60 Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 33.

61 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 140.

62 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 139.

63 Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 26; Barman, "Schooled for Inequality", 55–81.

64 For example, Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 97.

65 Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 7.

66 Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Education," in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Penguin, 1954), 174.
67 Arendt, "The Crisis in Education," 178.
68 For example, Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 91.
69 Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 28–47.
70 Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 47.
71 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1983), 22–24.
72 For example, Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 28–29; Sterling, *Seepeetza*, 14; Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 118.
73 Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 83, 85; Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 109.
74 For example, Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 107.
75 Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 139–44, 159; Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 143.
76 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 36, 101; Johnston, *Indian School Days*, 103–15;
77 Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 101, 95; Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 130; Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 11.
78 Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 33, 147, 82; Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 61.
79 Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 33–34, 85; Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 71–72, 78.
80 Sterling, *Seepeetza,* 21, 37–39; Johnston, *Indian School Days,* 53, 156.
81 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 90–91.
82 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 179.
83 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 47.
84 Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2010), ch. 1, Kindle.
85 Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 34.
86 Nancy K. Miller, "But Enough about Me, What Do You Think of My Memoir?," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 13, no. 2 (2000): 432.
87 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 20.
88 Fontaine, *Broken Circle,* 26.
89 Miller, "But Enough about Me," 432.
90 See Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 49–90.
91 Pamela E. Klassen, *The Story of Radio Mind: A Missionary's Journey on Indigenous Land* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 5–11.
92 For a discussion of the concept of "joint attention" as an inherent characteristic of language, see Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 56.
93 King, *The Truth about Stories,* "Afterwords."
94 Miller, "But Enough about Me," 424.
95 Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 36.