ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

WHEN MYTH OVERSHADOWS HISTORICAL ARTEFACTS:

A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS USING CROWN PHOTOGRAPHY

BY

IVY KATHERINE SHAWL-SONG

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION IN OPEN, DIGITAL & DISTANCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ATHABASCA, ALBERTA

November 1, 2024

© Ivy Shawl-Song

This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Athabasca University
Faculty of Graduate Studies

Approval of Thesis

The undersigned certify that they have read the thesis entitled

**WHEN MYTH OVERSHADOWS HISTORICAL ARTEFACTS:
A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS USING CROWN PHOTOGRAPHY**

Submitted by

Ivy Katherine Shawl-Song

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education in Open, Digital, and Distance Education

The thesis examination committee certifies that the thesis
and the oral examination is approved

Supervisors:
Dr. Cynthia Blodgett-Griffin
Athabasca University

Dr. Pamela Walsh
Athabasca University

Committee Member:
Dr. Susan Bainbridge
Athabasca University

External Examiner:
Dr. Emily Doyle
Athabasca University

November 1, 2024

1 University Drive, Athabasca, AB, T9S 3A3 Canada
Toll-free (CAN/U.S.) 1.800.788.9041 ex. 6821
fgs@athabascau.ca | fgs.athabascau.ca | athabascau.ca

Dedication

For Adeltraut, my German nanny and empathic, enlightened witness. I have never forgotten your confident, reassuring voice.

For Mr. John Thompson, my mentor and friend as a co-facilitator with The Norma J. Morris Centre for Healing from Child Abuse. John cared deeply for educational research into child advocacy and inspired people to be kind and courageous activists for the protection of children. He was adamant about finding his own way through the dark and this courage often called to me as I struggled through the challenges of completing this research. We lost John during the 2020 pandemic, and I can still feel the visceral shock and grief of waking to a message announcing his passing at the age of 78. I miss you Mr. Thompson and thank you. As I find my own way through the dark, I will end this dedication by sharing the final lines of his signature quote (emphasis by John):

Only the dead have seen the end of war *and child abuse*.

George Santayana (attrib. Plato) *and John*

Acknowledgements

Dr. Diane Iona Persson's Doctoral thesis informed crucial missing context and insight relevant to this research. I am grateful for her thorough work that presents all sides.

Thank you, Dr. Cynthia Blodgett-Griffin for tracking me through the abyss. Dr. Susan Bainbridge and her confident, encouraging "You're doing it girl" continues to resonate and inspire me. I am so grateful to my peers who shared supportive feedback and voted this research People's Choice Award at AU's Graduate Student Research Conference; I wish you all well with your projects.

Dr. Pamela Walsh's generous donation of the Wayne Perry MEd (DE) Student Research Award and her timely, thoughtful mentorship made all the difference. Thank you also to Dr. Emily Doyle for coming on as External Examiner and taking an interest in my research. The Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship and The Provincial Archives of Alberta and their exhaustively helpful staff were invaluable in supporting this research.

There are seniors among us that walk just a beat ahead of the shadowy aftermath of a fearful childhood. Helen Chernoff Freeman and David McCann never hesitated in granting permission for the use of their images in this research and, hence, reigniting their childhood experiences of enforced institutionalization. I wish you both well and thank you.

I need to acknowledge the work of Semiotician Roland Barthes (b. 1915–d. 1980) that presents the value of exploring embedded assumptions by pushing through to second-order semiotics. While the outcome of this research was unexpected for me and

may cause tension, the value of Barthes’ work facilitates respect for the semiotic resource—in this case, five voiceless human beings in an historic analogue photograph.

Finally, thank you to Phoebe Hunter, my best friend, academic peer and sounding board who engaged with me for countless hours on this research topic. Her deep empathy for children I can only aspire to.

Abstract

The go-to images representing the history of Canada's Indian Residential Schools (IRS) are of identifiable Indigenous children—often digitized Crown photography now used to teach difficult history. The choice of digital image in online education may perpetuate the exploitation of children and distract from historical context that facilitates critical inquiry among learners. This social semiotic research analyzed a Crown photograph for paradigmatic relationships with similar themed images to answer the question of missing context and its effect on truth value around a society's ideologies. Second order semiotics informed by Barthes' Signification process ending in myth reveals false beliefs associated with images of children and the IRS: enforced institutionalization, child advocacy, presentation of a comprehensive history, and cultural genocide. Notably, image presentation is habitually contrary to social norms related to the protection of children. Further research into ethical reflexivity of digital image choice in education is warranted.

Keywords: social semiotics, Crown photography, child advocacy, difficult history, digital, online images, values and ethics, archival practices, distance education, residential schools

AI Disclaimer

The information provided in this thesis is the author's original work, and no content was created using generative artificial intelligence technologies.

Preface

The Indigenous children displayed in Crown photography retain no agency over the use of their images originating from the Indian Residential School (IRS) system. In this regard, guidelines from the Copyright Board of Canada as well as culturally informed advice[1] from an Indigenous Elder were sought as an appropriate path forward to honor, respect and advocate for the children (see Figure 1 for PAA Artefact #1). The Copyright Act of Canada recognizes the rights of the photographer first and subsequently, the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) as Crown copyright holders. In saying that, the PAA also participates in what is referred to as *The Commons*. This means that the PAA maintains their copyright status while choosing not to exercise control or restrictions.[2] These are the current guidelines for PAA Artefact #1 where users must still follow the photo attribution request from the PAA (see Figure 1 Note). Regardless, either permission was obtained for image use or their source cited under Canada's Fair Dealing for Educational Purposes.[3]

Responding to my inquiries, an Indigenous Cree Elder confirmed the identity of two of the five girls in PAA Artefact #1.[4] While this led to the identity of all five students and crucial missing context relevant to this research, it also led to the realization that not all five girls are Cree. Ever mindful of not standing in for their voices, I have chosen to omit their names beyond what is already publicly available online from the PAA and in school yearbooks.

---

[1] TCPS2-2022, Article 9.2, Sec. 8 (https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/documents/tcps2-2022-en.pdf)

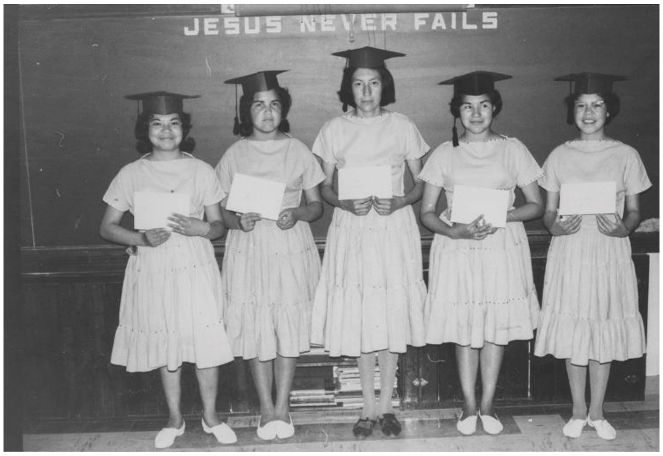
[2] https://www.flickr.com/commons/usage/

[3] https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-42/Section-29.html#:~:text=29%20Fair%20dealing%20for%20the,satire%20does%20not%20infringe%20copyright.

[4] Documented email correspondence.

Figure 1

PAA Artefact #1

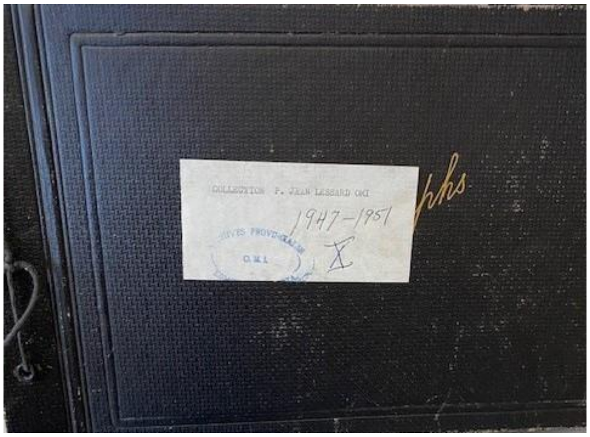


Note. Photo PR1973.0248.909, JESUS NEVER FAILS, appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Although the title of this research may imply a study of Indigenous children, it is a study of a semiotic resource in the form of an historic analogue photograph created by the adults responsible for the children. Adults included, among others, school principals and teachers who photographed children, shared the photos amongst themselves and preserved them in photo albums and scrapbooks. These albums are now archived in provincial, federal and private institutions that now digitize these images and upload them to the World Wide Web. It was a common practice for a Crown employee's possessions to eventually pass to archival institutions (see Figure 2) and include a photo album containing images of Indigenous students.

Figure 2

Fr. Lessard, OMI, Photo Album



Note. Photo Credit: The Author, with permission from Provincial Archives of Alberta.

The driving force behind this research includes child advocacy and the digitization of photos both on archival websites and social sharing sites. These girls could still be alive today, unaware that their childhood image has been uploaded to the photo sharing platform Flickr by the PAA to represent the IRS system; a system that they are not responsible for. At least one of the five girls is confirmed to have passed away and may never have known that her image is on a social sharing site. While other class photos outside of the PAA's Flickr album have been uploaded by a student in the image reminiscing over their school days—seemingly eager to connect with old friends—PAA Artefact #1 came from a provincial archives' *fonds* formerly in the possession of a teacher and nun, Sister (Sr.) Annette Potvin. The photo of the five girls was not uploaded to be included in any school days' celebrations. It was uploaded to a folder titled Blue Quills Residential School under a brief explanation that an injustice was inflicted upon the students (PAA, 2014).

Table of Contents

FGS Approval…………………………………………………………………………………..ii

Dedication.. iii

Acknowledgements iv

Abstract vi

AI Disclaimer.. vi

Preface vii

Table of Contents x

List of Tables xiii

List of Figures..xiv

Chapter 1. Introduction 1

  Semiotics..1

  Crown Photography 6

  Blue Quills Residential School 10

  Problem Statement...14

  Purpose Statement 18

  Research Question 18

    sub–Research Question 1 18

    sub-Research Question 2...19

  Significance of the Study...19

    TRC Calls to Action 19

    Visual Repatriation of Digitized Crown Photography...19

    Copyright..20

    Values and Ethics..22

  Limitations and Delimitations..23

  Definitions of Terms...25

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature...29

  Crown Photography..30

  Visual Methodologies...32

  Teaching Difficult History..34

  Social Stratification 36

  Summary of Key Findings 38

Chapter 3. Methodology 40
  World View and Philosophical Assumptions 40
  Interpretive Framework 41
  Role of the Researcher 50
  Personal Perspective 51
  Research Design 53
    Instrumentation 54
    Data Collection 54
    Data Analysis 56
    Ethical Considerations 57
    Reliability and Validity 59
Chapter 4. Analysis 61
  Difficult History and Common Curriculum 61
  Process of Analysis 62
    PAA Artifact #1 63
      Technical. 63
      Compositional. 64
  Social Modality 65
    Four Paradigmatic Relationships 66
Chapter 5. Results 87
  Introduction 87
  Research Question 88
  sub–Research Question One 88
  sub–Research Question Two 89
    Second Order Semiotics: Institutional Pattern 89
    Second Order Semiotics: Child Advocacy Pattern 93
    Second Order Semiotics: Habitual Use Pattern 94
    Second Order Semiotics: Cultural Relationship Pattern 96
  Semiotic Mythology 98
    An Inquiry into the Connotation of Cultural Genocide 98
Chapter 6. Discussion 109
  An Issue of Class and Wealth 109

  A Semiotic Theory 112
  Recommendations for Future Research 113
  Conclusion 114
REFERENCES 117
Appendix A – Paradigmatic Relationship–Culture 127
  PAA Artefact #1 127
  UCO Artefact #1 128
  BC Artefact #1 128
Appendix B– Paradigmatic Relationship—Institutionalization 129
  CND Artefact #1. 129
  MCCANN Artefact #1 129
  DOUKHOBOR Artefact #1 130
Appendix C – Common Images Used to Teach Difficult History 131
  PMRA Artefact #1 131
  UCCA Artefact #1 131
  PAS Artefact #1 132
  LAC Artefact #2 132
  AUA Artefact #1 133
Appendix D—Ethical Considerations vs. Copyright Considerations (Figure 1) 134

List of Tables

Table 1 Philosophical Assumptions 40

Table 2 High/Low Modality Judgement Example 50

Table 3 Institutional Relationships 67

Table 4 Child Advocacy Relationships 69

Table 5 Habitual Use Relationships 73

Table 6 Cultural Relationships 79

Table 7 Mythic Signification - Enforced Institutionalization 92

Table 8 Mythic Signification - Child Advocacy 94

Table 9 Mythic Signification - Habitual Use 96

Table 10 Mythic Signification – Loss of Language and Culture 97

List of Figures

Figure 1 PAA Artefact #1 viii

Figure 2 Fr. Lessard, OMI, Photo Album viii

Figure 3 Father Lacombe's Pictorial Catechism (Lacombe’s Ladder) 1896 4

Figure 4 Crown Copyright Guidelines (Cropped) 8

Figure 5 Little Cousins, Sucker Creek Reserve, Alberta 10

Figure 6 PAA Artefact #2 11

Figure 7 Historic Treaties - Government of Canada 13

Figure 8 PAS Artefact #1 Thomas Moore Kusick 31

Figure 9 LAC Artefact #1 44

Figure 10 MCC Artefact #1 44

Figure 11 Cursive Writing in Ink: Blue Quills School 64

Figure 12 Fr. Jean Lessard, O.M.I. 75

Figure 13 Sr. Annette Potvin, Grey Nuns 76

Figure 14 Stanley Redcrow, Cree First Nations 77

Figure 15 Rev. Fr. Lyonnais, OMI, Principal Blue Quills School 78

Figure 16 Blue Quills School 1963 Grade 8 Class 82

Figure 17 Blue Quills School 1964 Gr. 8 Graduating Class 82

Figure 18 Moccasin Telegram Newsletter 1938 84

Figure 19 Little Girls in Indian Drill & Junior Indian Drill 1951- Blue Quills School 84

Figure 20 Delight Makers’ Indian Festival, Blue Quills Yearbook 1965 86

Figure 21 Effigy of Father Lacombe, St. Albert, AB 99

Figure 22 Blue Quills 1939 Newsletter Back Cover Illustrations 101

Figure 23 Blue Quills School Pageant 105

Figure 24 Cree Syllabic Typewriter...105

Figure 25 Cree Review, OMI, 1906...106

Figure 26 Cree Calendar, OMI, 1963...107

Chapter 1. Introduction

The presentation of PAA Artefact #1 as an injustice as stated by the PAA (2014) may shock some viewers. The now–grown children did not present their image themselves yet some of the students could still be alive today and unaware of how it is being used. While the PAA's archivists who digitized the image were following Crown copyright protocol and even facilitating public access to archives, there may be an unavoidable question that asks why the faces of Indigenous children are identifiable. Social norms in Canada are more likely to blur the faces of children when presenting them alongside a topic involving an injustice. This is where social semiotics can offer an invaluable window into ethics of image use in education.

This chapter will introduce semiotics, Crown photography, and the educational institution connected to PAA Artefact #1. Additionally, further explanation of the research problem, purpose and questions will be covered along with the significance of the research, limitations and delimitations. The chapter ends with a section defining common terms and themes used throughout the study.

Semiotics

Theo van Leeuwen (2005) refers to semiotics as the collection of historic resources and their "use in specific historical, cultural and institutional contexts … and how people teach them, justify them, critique them" (p. 3). These historic resources or signs (images, photographs, advertisements, illustrations, art, for example) are a representation of the ideologies, conflicts, celebrations, and policies of the people—often the dominant group among a population. Gillian Rose (2016) describes this representation as a site facilitating the construction of social differences. The digital images included in this research are aptly defined as semiotic resources as they are "artefacts we use to communicate" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3) about a certain topic.

The analysis of an image to uncover its social effects and the beliefs that it may stand for is known as social semiotics. The subsequent beliefs uncover what Roland Barthes (2012) described as semiotic mythology or the conscious realization of connotation. This conscious realization is a key element of semiotics in that the semiotician is not declaring connotation as explicitly true or untrue but presenting truth along a scale between low (perhaps true) and high (is true) modalities (van Leeuwen, 2005). Simply put, modality judgements in relation to this research express the degree to which a digital image truly represents what it claims to represent. These connotations reveal societal myth that "inserts itself as a non-historical truth … Myth is thus a form of ideology" (Rose, 2016, p. 131). This conscious realization of connotation will inform the semiotic outcome in this research.

Linguistically and allegorically, one of the earliest representations of a social sign may be found in the words "A sign from God." The sign was usually a natural event (a flood or solar eclipse, for example) that came to be associated with spiritual meaning intended to impress upon the declarant's followers some form of guidance or warning. Further to a linguistic analysis, Gunther Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) and Barthes (2012) refer to visual grammar as a theoretical analysis independent of text. Father Albert Lacombe's Pictorial Catechism/Tableau Catechisme of 1896[5] is an example of the power of visual grammar. Also known as Lacombe's Ladder, Fr. Lacombe designed the pictorial in Alberta and used it to evangelize First Nation and Metis peoples where language was a barrier in communication (See Figure 3). The pictorial was used as a "visual reconstruction of church 'history' beginning with creation and the Old Testament" (Persson, 1980, p.71). The images on the right of the pictorial may depict the path to a terrifying, demonic, fiery hell for Indigenous people who resist conversion to Christianity. Missionaries are depicted on the path to Heaven and American Indians are depicted on the path to Hell. A social semiotic analysis of this pictorial may uncover meaning making not only by the creator of the image but by the viewer of the image as well.

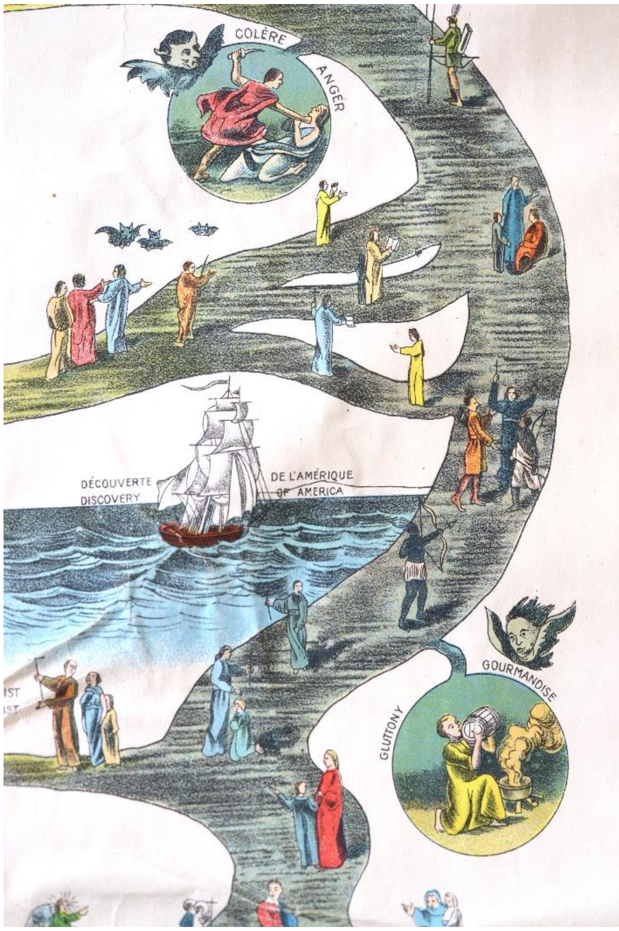
---

[5] https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/tableau-catechisme-pictorial-catechism-1896 to enlarge The Oregon Historical Society's digital copy of Father Lacombe's visual teaching aid of the Lacombe Ladder.

The pictorial is an example of an illustration full of signifiers such as "words, phrases, signs and symbols, and what they stand for [signifieds]" (Faizan, 2019, p. 137). For example, the path on the left is paved in golden yellow and the path on the right is paved in black. Use of these colors by the creator could signify right and wrong, good and evil, prosperity and destitution. Lacombe's Ladder and similar variations were used to teach catechism in Canada's Indian residential/day schools and in Indigenous communities where no common language was needed (Persson, 1980). A copy of Lacombe's Ladder hung prominently in Blue Quills residential school for many decades (Persson, 1980). It stood apart from other ladders being used by Christian missionaries in that it included images of American Indians. One such image appears on the right as a man threatening a group of Christians with a bow and arrow at the sin marked gluttony and the point in history titled "Discovery of America" (see Figure 3). Significantly, the only images entering the grips of hell are Indigenous men with spheres and bows drawn and a primitive man with a club. This one example sums up Rose's (2016) earlier description of a sign representing the dominant social group's ideology while denoting structural differences in class and worth.

Figure 3

Father Lacombe's Pictorial Catechism (Lacombe's Ladder) 1896


COLÈRE
ANGER
DÉCOUVERTE
DISCOVERY
DE L'AMÉRIQUE
OF AMERICA
GOURMANDISE
GLUTTONY

Note. Photo Credit: Phoebe Hunter with permission from Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Why do semiotics matter? As technological advances continue to facilitate the digital documentation of archival records, the process of digitizing historical photographs is growing exponentially within Canada's archival institutions. Consequently, online educators are looking more to the internet for resources, including social media sites (Miller & Hunt, 2022) and public sharing sites such as Flickr to enhance teaching resources.[6] As open, digital, distance education proliferates so does the need for digital resources and, unfortunately, choice of resources is not always done with a critical or ethical mindset (Miller & Hunt, 2022). Semiology facilitates the critical, ethical mindset needed to analyze what an image is communicating beyond what is literally being presented or denoted (Azizah & Andriyanti, 2023).

This same mindset may view the apparent signs in Lacombe's Ladder as unethical, harmful or coercive or, in the case of an Indigenous Elder, view the signs as meaningfully related to Indigenous ceremonies such as the Sun Dance (Steltenkamp, 1993). Social semiotics can shine a light on how this imbalance of power is perpetuated in the teaching model's illustrations and, consequently, uncover connotation (Azizah & Andriyanti, 2023) or the varied abstract meanings dependent on individual perspectives. For example, missing context reveals that the pictorial was also an important part of religious studies where Indigenous Pipe traditions were blended with Christian traditions by Indigenous missionaries such as Black Elk, a Catechist, who called the pictorial the "Two Roads Map" and taught with it throughout his life: "One road was black and is the devil. The other is yellow—the very good road to heaven" (Steltenkamp, 1993, p. 101).

This analysis of a socially common way of seeing can highlight issues of child advocacy and critical analysis of the use of images of children to teach difficult history. A semiotician is initially interested in what the photographer or creator was intent on communicating and for whom. In the case of this research, the owner of a collection or fonds and the archival institution’s digital guidelines are now added elements around intent. Beyond what is literally seen in the image, the semiotician arrives at a social semiotic theory describing a social group’s ideology (Rose, 2016). The semiotician is moving from the visual effects to the visual meanings.

---

[6] https://www.flickr.com/

Ultimately, the outcome of a semiotic analysis serves to uncover connotation and the truth value of a belief that, in the context of this research, may protect those responsible for difficult history and/or those now using and disseminating the images (perpetuating an imbalance of power) while forever defining a child’s experiences without their consent or acknowledgement. This is the meaning making of an image. For example, Rose (2023) presents a brief semiotic analysis of an advertisement for the telephone that connotes technological efficiency and a “clear case of ideology: knowledge that legitimizes unequal social power relations” (exercise question 9). While the advertisement celebrated technology as the hero, the final semiotic analysis revealed missing context involving the female operators who were the true heroes driving efficiency; women who were never recognized in the advertisements. The following section on Crown photography provides an overview of the semiotic resources involved in this research.

Crown Photography

On December 19, 2014, the PAA (2014) uploaded seven photos of Indigenous children to the public online photo sharing platform Flickr under a folder titled Blue

Quills Residential School.[7] These photos are part of 2,244 digitized photos from 64 folders that represent Alberta history as presented by the PAA. PAA Artefact #1 stood apart from the collection for me due to the black graduation caps on their heads in an era and location where girls wore white graduation caps. Additionally, the five girls were photographed in 1963, and I felt an immediate sense of intrusion upon the lives of women who may still be alive today. The five girls are unnamed and appear to be wearing matching dresses while each holding a piece of paper front and center (see Figure 1). While we may be accustomed to seeing images of IRS students from over 100 years ago, this image was created and disseminated within my lifetime under direction of the Crown. Presenting an understanding of Canada's IRS system through images of children calls for a critical analysis of provenance, social power, and hierarchies, for example (Rose, 2016).

The online Flickr platform houses a wealth of digitized photographs from every genre imaginable. These include original contemporary works as well as analogue to digital copies uploaded by members all presenting their own way of seeing an historic topic. My overall review of class photos on Flickr found that they typically come from former students and their yearbooks, whereas the PAA chose a personal photograph from a former teacher's possessions.

My in-person visit to the PAA (Edmonton, AB) uncovered a complete set of Blue Quills Residential School newsletters, yearbooks, Codex Historicus (daily diary of school life), admission/discharge records and the personal photo album of Fr. Jean Lessard

---

[7] https://www.flickr.com/photos/alberta_archives/albums/72157649831501971 to review all seven images.

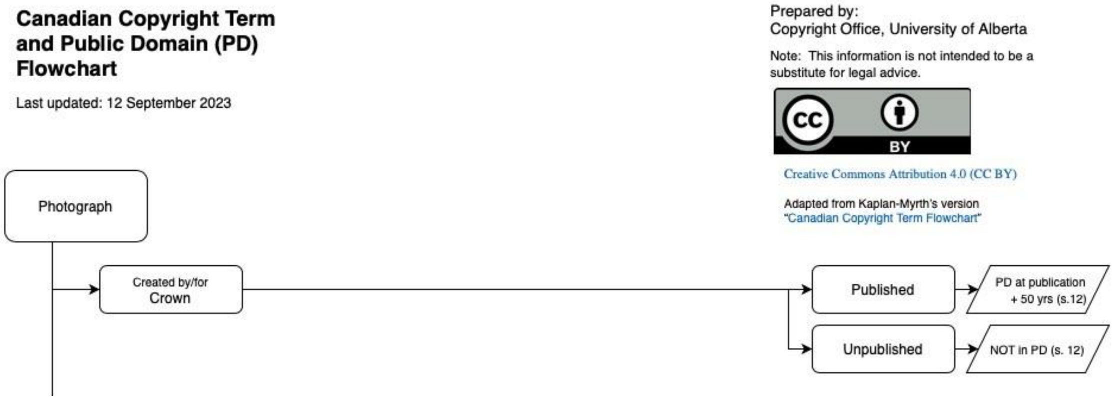
(principal circa 1950’s) spanning 1939 to 1970. These archives include images and names of principals, teachers, supervisors, employees, and Indigenous community members.

There is an abundance of documentation that identifies the adults involved in the IRS system. There are also annual photographic depictions of school life as presented in yearbooks created by students under the supervision of teachers. And so, the social in social semiotics begins. For example, class images on Flickr typically originate from yearbooks. For the IRS class, a teacher’s personal photograph was chosen even though the same group of girls is present in the 1963 yearbook. Additionally, the PAA did not upload images of the adults responsible for the injustice described on Flickr. A social semiotician may ask why the IRS yearbook images were not chosen considering that this may be the social norm with the lowest expectation of privacy. Addressing harms and injustice, a semiotician may also ask why the images of children stand in for the adults responsible.

Images taken by and for the Crown maintain their own copyright guidelines and conventions separate from other photographs (see Figure 4). PAA Artefact #1 is considered unpublished and will never be available in public domain. Hence, the PAA charges a fee payable to the Crown for image use permissions. This may also include newsletter, yearbook or document and photo album images originating from Blue Quills School’s managers and operators. These circumstances are very different from mainstream school yearbooks and the photographer’s ownership of copyright.

Figure 4

Crown Copyright Guidelines (Cropped)


Canadian Copyright Term and Public Domain (PD) Flowchart
Last updated: 12 September 2023
Prepared by:
Copyright Office, University of Alberta
Note: This information is not intended to be a substitute for legal advice.
BY
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 (CC BY)
Adapted from Kaplan-Myrth's version "Canadian Copyright Term Flowchart"
Photograph
Created by/for Crown
Published
PD at publication + 50 yrs (s.12)
Unpublished
NOT in PD (s. 12)

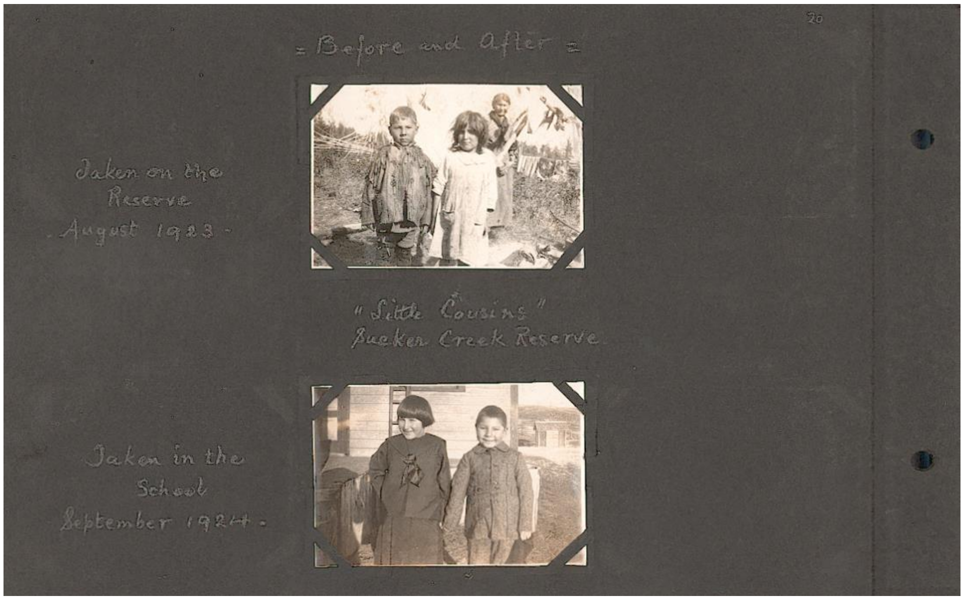
Note. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0, University of Alberta.

The photographic documentation—albeit staged—of Indigenous children attending segregated schools was not necessarily done by parents. It was often done by principals, teachers and contracted photographers as is evident in the archival holdings of the PAA and Glenbow Archives, for example. Principals preserved photographs of the children under their supervision in leather bound paper booklets that also included personal photographs of family, friends, and colleagues.

In the case of Fr. Lessard, numerous images of students and their families outside the school fill his photo album. The same can be found in the album of Principal William James Kent of St. Peter's Mission residential school in Lesser Slave Lake, AB—now preserved in Glenbow Archives. Before and after images of very young children were common (see Figure 5). Historically, images of Indigenous people and Indian schools were developed as postcards and shared as objects of attraction, curiosity or accomplishment (review the postcard border of Figure 6). These vintage postcards can still be found in antique stores, used bookstores and online through collectors.

Figure 5

Little Cousins, Sucker Creek Reserve, Alberta


20
= Before and After =
Taken on the Reserve - August 1923 -
"Little Cousins" Sucker Creek Reserve
Taken in the School September 1924 -

Note. Photo PD-341pp20 appears courtesy Glenbow Archives, Alberta.

The digitization of images of these children without their consent as adults and without their ability to exert agency over their image may continue to render these human beings as artefacts possessed by others. Without context, it is difficult to understand the origins of images of Indigenous students except that students living in residence fell under guardianship of the principal so boundaries may have been quite different compared to mainstream schools. Regardless, PAA Artefact #1 remains under Crown copyright in perpetuity as it is considered unpublished and created by a Crown employee.

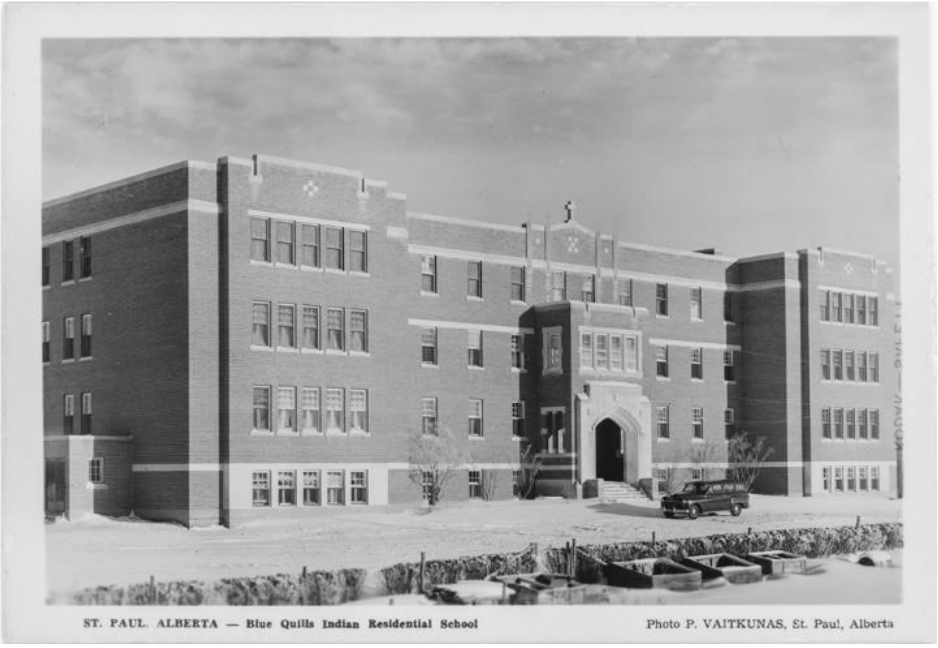
Blue Quills Residential School

Blue Quills Residential School existed in St. Paul County, East Central Alberta (Treaty 6 signatory of 1876). The school was originally on Saddle Lake Reserve as St. Joseph’s Indian Residential School until its off–reserve location from 1931 to 1970 (see

Figure 6). The school was federally funded and managed by the Grey Nuns of Montreal from 1898 to 1931 when management was transferred to the Roman Catholic Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI). Blue Quills, the school's namesake, was a Cree Chief leading Saddle Lake First Nation in St. Paul County.

Figure 6

PAA Artefact #2


ST. PAUL, ALBERTA — Blue Quills Indian Residential School
Photo P. VAITKUNAS, St. Paul, Alberta

Note. Photo PR2010.0475/1 ST. PAUL ALBERTA BLUE QUILLS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

This county's language demographic was primarily French and Cree with a growing influx of Ukrainian immigrants. Following the Treaty 6 signatory between the Crown of Great Britain and the First Nations of this region in 1876, Chief Blue Quills settled his community at Lac La Selle/Saddle Lake Reserve (see Figure 7). He was instrumental in the development of a day school with the Grey Nuns—a French Catholic religious order. By 1931, plans were in place to move the children and nuns closer to the town of St. Paul in order to admit children from neighboring Indigenous communities outside Saddle Lake.

The intention behind the operation of the new Blue Quills School was to prepare Indigenous children "to assume an increasingly important role in our national life"[8] and entrench the children in the Roman Catholic faith. This would be accomplished initially through a colonial ideology of protection and isolation of the Indigenous child from non-Indigenous communities and differing Christian faiths but by 1945, post-colonial belief systems shifted to focus on integration of the child into Canadian mainstream schools (Persson, 1980).

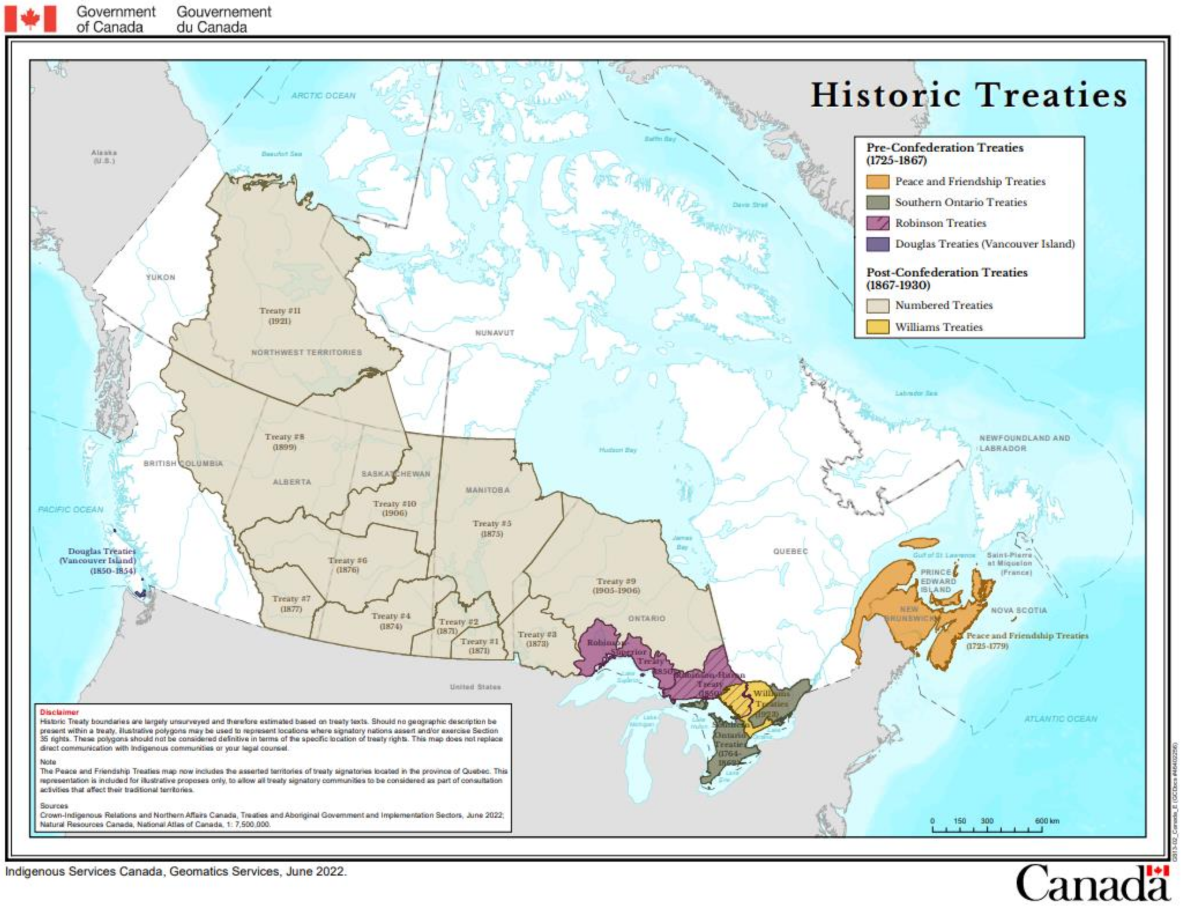
In 1970, the Blue Quills Native Education Council took over management and operation of the school with the Crown covering all operating expenses and the Roman Catholic Church terminating its involvement (Persson, 1980, Appendix C). The impetus behind this take-over, the details of which are extensive and outside of the scope of this research, may be summed up in a number of points: reluctance to accept closure of the facility and its employment opportunities for Indigenous people and the wish to control all aspects of the children's education including hiring and administrative practices (Persson, 1980).

---

[8] Address of R. F. Battle, Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Alberta & The Northwest Territories., January 1957, PAA Artefact PR1971.0220.5765AC.pdf.

Figure 7

Historic Treaties - Government of Canada


Government of Canada
Gouvernement du Canada
Historic Treaties
Pre-Confederation Treaties (1725-1867)
Peace and Friendship Treaties
Southern Ontario Treaties
Robinson Treaties
Douglas Treaties (Vancouver Island)
Post-Confederation Treaties (1867-1930)
Numbered Treaties
Williams Treaties
ARCTIC OCEAN
Beaufort Sea
Alaska (U.S.)
YUKON
Treaty #11 (1921)
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
NUNAVUT
Baffin Bay
Davis Strait
Labrador Sea
Hudson Bay
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALBERTA
SASKATCHEWAN
MANITOBA
Treaty #8 (1899)
Treaty #10 (1906)
Treaty #5 (1875)
Treaty #6 (1876)
Treaty #7 (1877)
Treaty #4 (1874)
Treaty #2 (1871)
Treaty #1 (1871)
Treaty #3 (1873)
Treaty #9 (1905-1906)
ONTARIO
QUEBEC
James Bay
PACIFIC OCEAN
Douglas Treaties (Vancouver Island) (1850-1854)
Robinson-Superior Treaty (1850)
Robinson-Huron Treaty (1850)
Williams Treaties (1923)
Southern Ontario Treaties (1764-1862)
Lake Superior
Lake Michigan
Lake Huron
Lake Ontario
Lake Erie
United States
Gulf of St Lawrence
Saint-Pierre et Miquelon (France)
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
NEW BRUNSWICK
NOVA SCOTIA
Peace and Friendship Treaties (1725-1779)
ATLANTIC OCEAN
0 150 300 600 km
Canada

Disclaimer

Historic Treaty boundaries are largely unsurveyed and therefore estimated based on treaty texts. Should no geographic description be present within a treaty, illustrative polygons may be used to represent locations where signatory nations assert and/or exercise Section 35 rights. These polygons should not be considered definitive in terms of the specific location of treaty rights. This map does not replace direct communication with Indigenous communities or your legal counsel.

Note

The Peace and Friendship Treaties map now includes the asserted territories of treaty signatories located in the province of Quebec. This representation is included for illustrative proposes only, to allow all treaty signatory communities to be considered as part of consultation activities that affect their traditional territories.

Sources

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Treaties and Aboriginal Government and Implementation Sectors, June 2022; Natural Resources Canada, National Atlas of Canada, 1: 7,500,000.

Indigenous Services Canada, Geomatics Services, June 2022.

Note. Open Government License image htoc_1100100032308_eng.pdf, appears courtesy Indigenous Services Canada–Geomatics Services.

In the Blue Quills Residential School era of the PAA photograph, approximately 200 Indigenous students spanning from North Central Alberta to the border of Saskatchewan (Saddle Lake, Beaver Lake, Cold Lake, Whitefish/Goodfish Lake, Frog Lake, Heart Lake, Kehewin and Onion Lake) were registered with the school, surrounding Indigenous day schools and high schools within the neighboring town of St. Paul. Students living in residence at this time were “orphan children, children from broken homes and those who because of isolation or the migratory way of life of their families, are unable to attend day schools" (Indian Affairs as cited in Hawthorn, 1967, p. 34). Students attended Blue Quills up to grade 8 and then bussed daily to mainstream schools in St. Paul or returned to their communities and nearby schools. This order of the Roman Catholic Church and their management of schools, orphanages, and hospitals, dates to the turn of the 20th century and spanned from Sturgeon County in Central Alberta to the County of St. Paul in Eastern Alberta.

Problem Statement

The use and dissemination of Crown photography, in this case children from Canada's IRS system, while omitting historical context, runs the risk of perpetuating false beliefs. Canada's IRS system is now synonymous with institutional abuse of children (TRC, 2015). Habitually, photographs of Indigenous children become the go–to image used to teach difficult history and inform media (See Appendix C). Omitting context can include the absence of images of those adults responsible for the topic that is being communicated. Missing context may also include the bigger picture surrounding the image that may inform additional social meanings: era and original purpose of the photograph, owner and/or photographer, identity of the image's subjects and why and how the image is being repurposed today (Rose, 2016). The image of a group of Indigenous students has become conventionalized regardless of anything else in the image. Gross (2014) cautions that "we cannot underestimate the power of interpretive beliefs to conceal as much as a photograph might reveal" (p. 457).

Why does missing context matter? A common story recounted about an incident at Blue Quills can be traced back to an online 2021 article published by Mount Royal

University.[9] The article opens with an image of a school that is unnamed with no photo attribution. A reverse Google image search (generally accurate) identifies the school as Kamloops IRS in BC—close to 1000 km away from Blue Quills School. As a learner reading this article, I am already uncertain of the message.

A former student, Eric Large, who attended Blue Quills at the same time as the students in PAA Artefact #1, describes another student's account of her father witnessing a supervisor pushing a student down the stairs. This student died as a result of the fall. Aside from the absence of archival documentation on the death of a student in this way, supervisors included former students and family members of students. Neither the dead child nor the supervisor are identified. This crime was never reported or investigated by authorities and never subsequently documented by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) for Blue Quills School (NCTR, 2004). My uncertainty is growing.

The journalist, E. Kondo, explains in the same article that senior students were bussed daily to Racette High School in St. Paul while at the same time stating that they were locked up 24/7 and never saw outside people. Additionally, Kondo describes Eric Large as being removed from his family while also including a digital copy of his application for enrollment. My review of this application reveals that Eric's mother was deceased and his father, along with an Indigenous community witness, signed for guardianship of his son to pass to the principal of Blue Quills. Only children who were orphaned, neglected, living remotely, or with parents who travelled for work qualified to be admitted to the residential school (Persson, 1980; Newman, 1967; Hawthorn, 1967).

---

[9] https://article-1.ca/issue-1/overcoming-residential-school-trauma-the-story-of-eric-john-large/

Without context, Kondo's assertion that children were removed may be taken by a reader to mean against their will and/or the will of their guardians when it was the child's guardian that had to make the application for enrollment and wait for approval. Omitting context may create a void in knowledge that can also result in, as is evident from this article, a cognitive dissonance or uncertainty leading to the risk of inciting conflict or demoralizing anyone involved in the story. Missing context may also serve as valuable evidence that provides all sides of a story accurately while facilitating mutual respect.

James Miles (2019) studied secondary school students' perceptions of photographs representing Indian residential schools. All six photographs presented to the students were of Indigenous children (see Appendix C). While the title of the study includes the words "photographs of Indian residential schools," none of the photographs were of a residential school. This lends validity to the problem of images of children becoming synonymous with objects. In other words, an image of children now stands in for an object as an objectified identifier. Miles' (2019) study found that "the pedagogical function of photographs of difficult histories remains in flux and indeterminate. I maintain that images are not the cure for a lacuna of traumatic history in the curriculum" (p. 491). His findings were based on the students' indifference to the images. The study's six images—described as images of difficult history—are common curriculum content.

The study concludes with a focus on the secondary school students and how their responses need to be examined. I propose a focus on the choice of image. Would the students have had the same indifferent responses to images of the inside of a residential institution such as the dormitories and their lack of privacy and personal belongings, or images of the principal, teachers, supervisors, Indian Band Council members or Chief Blue Quills?

Following the TRC (2015) findings and published report, it may be unimaginable now to view an image of Indigenous children and not relate that image to isolation, lack of agency and rights, loss of family and culture and horrific child abuse. The danger of perpetuating a single perspective to a group (monolithic thinking) adds layers of dissonance that may silence former students, staff, family and communities who advocated for the IRS system and were instrumental in facilitating and supporting it. The following two quotes demonstrate this dissonance between how an IRS was perceived decades prior to the TRC (2015) report:

> Two years later, the Blue Quills Residential school moved for the last time; this time to a site near the town of St. Paul. Unlike the move from Lac LaBiche, the decision was heartily agreeable to the Native population who happily offered their help with the move. December 6, 1931, the last Sunday spent at Lac LaSelle, the house was filled with Natives who came to bid farewell and to organize the transportation of students, employees and sisters. They had moved most of the furniture, trunks and boxes the previous week by horse-driven wagons, trucks and cars, a total of 27 trips. (Castonguay, 1999, p. 117)

> Welfare problems had become more serious on the reserve and the Band Council [Saddle Lake] stated that housing, roads, and welfare concerns would have to improve before their children could live at home and attend day school. (Persson, 1980, p. 194)

As historical documentation becomes digitized, how can we move forward with public education around Canada's IRS system without exploiting the students of that system? Referring back to E. Kondo's article (see footnote 8), digital images of Eric Large are included but he is not alone in the images. Not only are fellow students and a nun in one image; they are also named. The graduating class photo that is included is from Racette High School in St. Paul. Is it being assumed that the other children agree to link their images to the topic of harms against children? There are no sources cited for either photograph. A critical analysis may also ask why Eric Large did not choose images from his school's yearbook that includes teachers, administrators, supervisors, general staff and Indigenous community members.[10] In perhaps no other examples of the institutionalization of children are those responsible so faceless and nameless, while identifiable children stand out.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to uncover meaning making around the habitual use and dissemination of digital images of Indigenous children (Crown photography) used to teach difficult history.

Research Question

What context is missing from the habitual use and dissemination of digitized Crown photography of Indigenous children to teach difficult history (Canada's IRS system)?

sub–Research Question 1

---

[10] https://indianresidentialschoolrecords.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Blue-Quills-Yearbook-1963.pdf

Does absence of context affect truth value?

sub-Research Question 2

What, if any, connotations are constructed through the use of images of Indigenous children?

Significance of the Study

TRC Calls to Action

Included with the TRC's (2015) findings are several calls to action "In order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation" (p. 1). A brief list follows of a number of calls to action.

1. Education for Reconciliation and points 62, 63 and 65 that outline the call to educate teachers on the integration of Indigenous knowledge, identify teacher-training needs and establish a national research program to advance understanding of reconciliation.
2. Museums and Archives and point 69 that calls for public access to records and increased resources supporting public education materials and programming on residential schools.
3. Media and Recognition and point 84 that calls for online public information resources that include the "history and legacy of residential schools and the reconciliation process" (p. 9).

Visual Repatriation of Digitized Crown Photography

With the advent of digitized historical images comes the realization that power structures are still at play through the choices made regarding which images to digitize that inform history education. The digitizing of photographs of Indigenous children to represent the IRS system is only one way of seeing as chosen by a dominant power structure such as the PAA, for example. A study of that way of seeing and the consequent social effects of that vision can serve to advocate for the protection of a child’s history while offering new ways of seeing that comprehensively represent difficult history.

Photographing Indigenous children by Crown employees was a common practice as is evident in the photo albums now housed at provincial, federal and private archives. Visiting agents and church officials were often met by children posing on the steps of the institution for a photo opportunity. These report cards, so to speak, in the form of imagery, have now become archival documentation. Alexandra Giancarlo et al. (2021) addresses the emerging call for visual repatriation in their photo elicitation study of sport images of boys from residential schools. The purpose is to put the child’s story into the hands of the child. While Crown photography remains in the control of the Crown as is the example for the PAA, the source community is powerless as to how those images are used. Visual repatriation or the return of images of Indigenous children to their source community as digital copies may be significant in facilitating healing and agency over a person’s life story.

Copyright

Crown photographs, formerly in analogue form, are now being scanned into a digital format to be effortlessly uploaded to the World Wide Web for public use. Erroneously, there may be an assumption that a digital photo found on the web is available for public use and dissemination. Regardless of whether a photograph is in digital or analogue form, the photographer owns copyright until 70 years following their death.[11]

In the case of photographs created by representatives of the Crown and subsequently donated to federal or provincial Canadian archive institutions, copyright passes indefinitely to the Crown if the image was never published. If the image was published, Crown copyright ceases 50 years following the date of publication.[12] In saying that, private archives such as Pacific Mountain Regional Archives or archives held by religious organizations such as Sisters of Saint Ann maintain rights and permissions for their holdings in perpetuity. Additionally, even though the NCTR (2004) Archives is publicly accessible, all digital images must be traced back to the physical copy. Every holder will have their own unique guidelines around credit attributions and permissions for use.[13]

Educational and research use of an image may only fall under Fair Dealing guidelines until the author seeks publication beyond completion of the work, or simply goes public with their research as in conference presentations. The people appearing in the images have no agency over their image, unless as is common today, the person in the photograph is also the photographer (a selfie). Even though archives and museums have shared copies of images with the NCTR Archives as requested, the holders of the originals still exercise the last word on the future use of an image. For example, the online NCTR Archives and its digital images include the location of the original photograph and information governing usage and reproduction.[14]

---

[11] https://cb-cda.gc.ca/en/copyright-information for comprehensive guidelines pertaining to Canadian copyright laws.

[12] As per https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/crown-copyright-request.html#mm3.

[13] As per September 2023 NCTRrecords@umanitoba.ca, Reference and Access Intake Coordinator.

Values and Ethics

It is reasonable to suggest that children and their families could not object to their photos being taken by the managers and operators of the IRS. Significantly, this research hopes to contribute to a call for ethical guidelines on the use and dissemination of Crown photography regardless of where the original image is housed or who the photographer was. Guidelines may inform educators, students, librarians, archivists and course designers on the need for critical analysis around utilizing Cown photography of children to inform online curriculum and assignment materials.

Even though there are Indigenous children in Crown photography that may still be alive, they are not considered human participants when the image is being used for research or education. This study was exempt from review by a Research Ethics Board as the TCPS2-2022 does not account for children in images.[15] Although a core principle outlines respect for persons, the persons are assumed to be human participants engaging with a researcher.

There are currently dozens of images of Indigenous children being circulated in the media and used as curriculum resources without appropriate permissions or attributions. Case in point, an article written and published under the umbrella of academia presents an image of an Indigenous boy having his hair cut by a nun while stating that there are no restrictions on the use of the image.[16] Further examination of usage conventions uncovers that the image is in the private collection of Sister Liliane (Library and Archives Canada) and no permission for use of the image will be granted (see Appendix C, LAC Artefact #2). This same image is used regularly in Canadian schools to teach difficult history (Miles, 2019). Is unethical practice being perpetuated? The little boy may still be alive and the photographer prohibits use. If reconciliation includes mutual respect both for the experiences of these children and photographer copyright, this study could serve to inform ethical usage conventions that spotlight Cown photography.

---

[14] See https://archives.nctr.ca/S00062-001-073 for convention examples.
[15] https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html

Limitations and Delimitations

Most signs are polysemic or contain multiple meanings (Rose, 2016) depending on the social and/or cultural background of the creator and viewer: "Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world … hierarchically organized into dominant or preferred meanings" (Hall as cited in Rose, 2016, p. 133). I am limited in my semiotic analysis to my own sociocultural background as a Canadian, same generation as the girls in PAA Artefact #1 and a resident of Alberta. This limitation is also what makes semiotics unique in that the analyst brings along a perspective formed by personal and professional life experiences. Semiotics invites anyone into the critical analysis and/or debate around a society's norms and behaviors. Additionally, in the search for missing context, no material was uncovered that described PAA Artefact#1 beyond what is only apparent in the image, written on the back of the analogue photograph and identified through a school yearbook.

---

[16] McGregor, 2013, https://thenhier.ca/en/content/how-does-%E2%80%98seeing%E2%80%99-past-intersect-historical-thinking-use-art-and-photography-classroom.html.

Delimitations reflect the conscious and purposeful choices that I have made in order to align with my research problem and questions. I have chosen to highlight one out of the seven PAA IRS images for its rich supply of additional social signs that increase the semiotic potential. This potential includes the additional resources that inform the context behind the photograph's era: class lists, newsletters, school staff and administrator lists and images, enrollment, yearbooks, and demographic information. In keeping with the unavoidable connection between a semiotician's world view and the resource's message, the image is dated 1963; an era I grew up in. The image was also the one photograph of the seven that I experienced an instant affinity to in regard to questioning the rights of the girls in the image, agency over their own life story and how their image was being presented.

I have also chosen to exclude human participants as this is not an analysis of third–party reflections on actions already conducted. While there is a place for critical discourse analysis on this topic, this study focuses on developing a semiotic theory from social and educational norms in action as already presented for audience viewing. In this case, one Indian Residential School in North Central Alberta in circa 1960's and the documentation that corresponds to that context.

Additionally, including survivor testimonials runs the risk of other voices standing in for the five girls in PAA Artefact #1 which, ethically, could further violate their privacy and autonomy. There is also the risk of trauma disclosure which may harm the person disclosing and the recipient of the information (Zingaro, 2009). I am not prepared to facilitate that risk. Finally, every school was unique in its management, operation and subsequent available documentation and so it was not reasonable or manageable to cover more than one educational institution.

In the search for missing context every effort was made to access all publicly available archives related to Blue Quills Residential School, both digitally and in person at the PAA. Statements from former students, staff and families were excluded unless those statements were presented within the archival documentation. This purposeful choice ensures the integrity of this research by directing any interested researchers to the same archived, documented, validated and vetted sources available to everyone.

Definitions of Terms

Term	**Definition**
Alberta Compulsory School Attendance	Circa 1960’s compelled all children aged 7–15 to attend school full-time.
Analogue Photography	Information represented in physical form. Analogue photography is also film photography. An image is captured, through chemical processes, onto film.
Annotation	Additional information that explains a note, term or image at its surface meaning.
Artefact	A human creation, usually of cultural and/or faith-based significance, on display for decoration or education, for example.
Assimilation	Adopting one culture while rejecting the person’s origin or heritage culture.
Connotation	The abstract meaning of a phrase or term or image being communicated.

Crown Photography	In the context of this research, photography of Indigenous children taken by and for the Crown.
Culture	Described by Hall (as cited in Rose, 2016) as a collection of practices that create meaning and share that meaning between its members. In other words, for a culture to thrive, the members are constantly “interpreting meaningfully what is around them, and ‘making sense’ of the world” (p. 2).
Denotation	Literal meaning.
Difficult History	An aspect of history that may shine a negative light on a society’s national identity as it may include examples of injustice and trauma.[17]
Digitization	The act of interpreting an existing analogue text or photograph and representing it as digital while reading it electronically. For example, scanning an “ink-on-paper” document and interpreting it as a PDF that is retrievable from a hard drive or scanning a physical photograph and interpreting it as a JPEG that can then be read electronically.
Fonds	A collection of documents and/or photographs that originate from the same source—archival in nature and so preserved within an archives.
Historiography	The work or historical writings on a topic.
Ideology	Beliefs or philosophies of a person or group.
Invisible Perpetrator	Difficult history describes a wrongdoing without identifying the persons

---

[17] https://www.historymuseum.ca/wp-teachers-zone/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Teaching-Difficult-History-EN_Final.pdf .

	responsible for that difficult history. The focus is primarily on the victim.
Indian Residential School (IRS)	Federally funded institutions – operated by religious organizations - where First Nations, Inuit, Metis Nation and non-Indigenous children boarded at the schools full-time. Post WWII, many residential schools were modified into day schools with senior students bussing to local municipal schools and only boarding in cases of neglect in the home, orphans or children commuting from isolated rural areas (Persson, 1980). The institutions operated into the 1990's across Canada – ending as both day and boarding schools.
Institutional Abuse	Child abuse is committed by adults/peers within professional organizations serving children. In most instances, there are multiple victims dating back decades.
Integration	Adopting one culture while continuing to practice the person's origin or heritage culture.
Liturgy	In Christianity, for example, the practice of worship as in Baptism.
Modality	The exploration of truth or how true something is on a scale ranging from objective to subjective, possible or impossible, for example.
Monolithic Thinking	The assumption that Indigenous peoples, for example, are a homogeneous group instead of the multicultural, multilinguistic, multispiritual and multi sociopolitical reality that is for Indigenous people.
Social Stratification	The sorting of people into levels of value based on class and wealth.
OMI	The Oblates of Mary Immaculate who were a Roman Catholic order of priests

	tasked with the administration and management of Blue Quills residential school as well as missionary work on Saddle Lake reserve in St. Paul County.[18]
Social Semiology	The study of signs or resources and the meanings behind those signs within a social context.
Visual Repatriation	When “historical images from museum or private collections are returned to source communities for re-interpretation” (Giancarlo et al., 2021, p. 406). Also includes digital repatriation.

---

[18] OMI fonds can be accessed – with some restrictions – through the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Fonds includes diaries and records of missionary work documented for OMI Lacombe Canada which represented western Canada. The majority of records are in French.

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

Introduction

The weight of this research was conducted through late 2022 and into 2024 through a number of databases that provided access to academic, peer-reviewed research and eBooks relevant to Semiotic Theory and the teaching of difficult history in Canada: Google Scholar, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Education Research Complete, EBook Collection (EBSCOhost), Communication and Mass Media Complete, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost). These searches provided a wealth of resources related to imagery analysis, including Miller and Hunt's (2022) article that informed the impetus of my research topic: *A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: Visual Microaggressions in Teacher Education.* Their work introduced me to semiotics and the work of Gillian Rose (2016). Following a review of semiotic analysis, a number of social scientists appeared repeatedly in my searches to inform my theoretical framework and methodology, including Rose (2016), Kress and van Leeuwen (2021), Barthes (2012), Sajid et al. (2019), and Zou et al. (2022).

Narrowing down the research topic as it relates to digitized Crown photography and difficult history informed a search through Flickr's folders using the search term "residential schools" to imagine curating a library of images—like Young et al.'s (2022) call to collect examples of online imagery to inform critical social science. At this point I happened across PAA Artefact #1 and was flooded with questions around child advocacy and the ethics around digital archives and the Copyright Act of Canada. Focusing on the critical analysis of digitized Crown photography depicting Indigenous children uncovered a wealth of resources available through the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Namely, Blue

Quills Residential School images and the connection between the archives and digital images used in education. Subsequently, McKee and Forsyth (2019), Giancarlo et al. (2021) and Miles (2019) inform the study of images of Indigenous students and their use and dissemination.

Finally, the concentrated search for images from Blue Quills school led to Dr. Persson's (1980) Doctoral thesis that delved into conflict theory and social stratification as societal functions that can explain the development of the IRS system and, notably, the institutionalization of children and habitual use of images of children. Persson's (1980) resource led to numerous relevant academic, federal and provincial surveys, assessments, reports and research initiatives that provided valuable context related to PAA Artefact #1: Newman (1967), Carstens (1971), Hawthorn (1967), Milloy (1996), and Castonguay (1999). The following sections break down the most informative themes related to this research's purpose and questions around missing context and truth value: Crown photography, visual methodologies, difficult history, and social stratification.

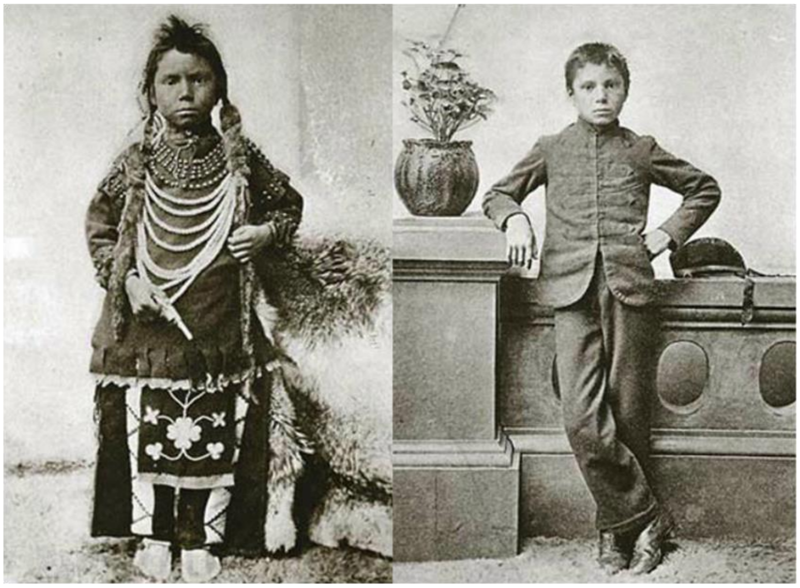
Crown Photography

Perhaps the most recognizable Crown photographs are the before and after images of Thomas Moore Kusick (surname spellings vary) (see Figure 8) that originally appeared in the 1895 Department of Indian Affairs sessional report on education. Miranda Brady and Emily Hilz (2017) completed an archaeology of the image in order to understand "the conventions under which they were originally constructed" (p. 61) while reimagining a new way to interpret and use the image. This process of archaeological analysis is very similar to a semiotic analysis that also uncovers missing context that may include who Thomas was, where he lived and how he came to be a student at Regina Indian Industrial

School at the turn of the 19th century. The purpose of the archaeological analysis is to ultimately approach the image from the perspective of the child in the photograph and not from the photographer. Semiotics adds another layer related to past and present intentions behind use of the image. While Brady and Hilz's (2017) article opens with the statement that the image was intended to present an example of assimilation, social semiotics would search for validation of that intention through missing historical context. For example, did the authors who compiled the federal sessional report commission the photograph or repurpose a photograph from an already existing portfolio.

Figure 8

PAS Artefact #1 Thomas Moore Kusick



Note. Photo R-A8223 (1) (2), Department of Indian Affairs, THOMAS MOORE BEFORE AND AFTER ADMISSION TO REGINA INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, 1895, appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

This approach is again reinforced with McKee and Forsyth's (2019) analysis of residential school sport's images with the phrase "Don't let these pictures fool you" (p. 175). Their analysis addresses "photographs of residential school sports, especially in the context of truth and reconciliation, play an important role in reinforcing colonial narratives about Indigenous–settler relations that continue to position Indigenous people as the fortuitous recipients of dominant sporting interventions" (p. 177). Notably, the images chosen for digitization do not immediately invoke thoughts of human rights abuses and this is what the authors claim is a diversion from reality. The authors label the photographs intentionally codified to appease settler sentiment and create a "false sense of equivalence" (p. 185).

While social semiotics would also approach an analysis from the perspective of the children in the images, as in the students in PAA Artefact #1 may still be alive, it cannot speak for the children, stand in for their voices or determine subjective conclusions as facts. Crown photography may have become synonymous with a staged look of European influence and loss of culture but a crucial missing piece of context that can be realized through the semiotic paradigmatic element is that Crown photography also includes dozens of images of the same children in Indigenous regalia practicing *Indian Drills* in school, for example.

Visual Methodologies

Clark and Morriss' (2017) article comprises a synopsis of visual methodologies over a 10-year period related to international social work. Participant generated photographs contribute to the most common source of data. Similar to Roxas and Velez's (2019) use of photovoice, Clark and Morriss describe several studies employing photovoice. Creative data included calligraphy, clay sculpting, doll making, painting, quilting, collages, and filmmaking. The deeper level of perspective that visual methodologies afford was a common finding by the authors as “visual materials and data may enable a deeper perspective on the world” (p. 36).

Glaw et al. (2017) focus on the visual methodologies of auto photography and photo elicitation. Participants experiencing “clinically diagnosed depression and people without depression and their ideas about sources of meaning in life” (p. 1) were compared. Auto photography consists of the participants’ own photographs and photo elicitation involves the researcher choosing a photograph to elicit an emotional reaction. Using photographs added value and depth beyond the traditional verbal interview. Participants experienced the process as “immensely cathartic, enjoyable, and beneficial to their own lives” (p. 6). Participants who may have struggled to express themselves in verbal or written formats were able to communicate fully in the study by expressing themselves through photographs. This expression through photographs has become, arguably, most poignant for Canada’s history and Crown photography as analogue images become digitized for inclusion in curriculum. No verbal explanation may be necessary when presenting an historic image of Indigenous students.

Socially, Sajid et al.’s (2019) study offers a semiotic analysis to highlight how the Pakistan army is represented in newspaper images. Their findings show a significant correlation between a social world and print media discourses, “reflect[ing] the social, political and cultural scenario of a given society” (p. 1381). Their finding that reality can be distorted in order for the dominant group—in this case the army—to present the desired narrative directly informs my research and the questions around missing context.

Zou et al. (2022) took a different route in reflecting a given society by researching the communicative interaction between museum displays and visitors who participate in the "construction of national identity" (p. 3). This study is a valuable example of how signs derive their meanings from the participation of an audience. Miller and Hunt's (2022) participatory audience demonstrated a similar reflection of society by studying preservice teachers and their choice of images for an online project related to social issues affecting students and their families. A number of findings showed that participants demonstrated deficit ideology, "teaching as a white profession … white saviorism, and reinforced negative stereotypes about poverty" (p. 1). A discussion of the findings outlined the "dangerous intersection of bias in online images and limited visual literacy skills" (p. 21). Further research points to the need for a focus on critical analysis of digital images.

Finally, the methodological process in this project is primarily informed by Rose (2016) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) for their comprehensive inclusion of social modality. This element addresses the research question around missing context, truth value and subsequent societal myths. Social modality pays attention to not only what is in the image and who created it but how the image is being used, perceived and how it is travelling—from the historical context of 1963 to digital in the 21st century in the case of PAA Artefact #1.

Teaching Difficult History

Wallace-Casey (2019) describes the state of education on difficult history in Canada as a pedagogical crisis. Following the TRC's Calls to Action around education, Seixas' (as cited in Wallace-Casey, 2019) framework advocating for historical thinking or approaching history with a critical mindset has been taken up by educators across Canada. The crisis develops when Indigenous world views (two-eyed seeing, remembrance learning) and the discipline of studying historical documentation collide. This is a valuable article for its summarization of Seixas' six concepts of historical thinking.

In relation to the archival documentation that informs this research, Anderson's (2018) study of how the Canadian Museum of Human Rights curates and manages exhibits of difficult knowledge describes the museum or dominating entity as the "intermediary between past atrocities and present social justice … function[ing] as authorities on history whose selective spatial and representational narratives strategically define the parameters of citizenship and nationhood" (p. 321). A section on Canadian context around the treatment of Indigenous peoples adds a valuable resource describing the salvage paradigm. This is an anthropological term critiquing a dominant culture's actions in preserving what is believed to be a vanishing race and culture. This may be evident in the PAA's Flickr folders that highlight professional photographers and their portfolios of Indigenous people in traditional regalia.

Cynthia Wallace-Casey (2022) critiqued four pedagogical approaches to education on Canada's residential school system for students ranging from 9–15 years old, the same age range for the Miles' (2019) study mentioned earlier. The focus of all the approaches was to disrupt any possible myths that the students may believe in by listening to survivor testimonies, among other exercises that purport to facilitate empathy. None of the approaches considered whether the students had access to adequate historiography.

Samantha Cutrara (2018) deconstructs an aspect of Peter Seixas' theory on historical thinking to highlight just how difficult it will be to realize reconciliation without decolonizing settler grammar. In other words, teaching difficult history must also include teaching "racism and coloniality" (p. 252). Cutrara asserts that the discipline needed to exert historical thinking leaves no room for Indigenizing the past while Seixas (as cited in Cutrara, 2018) considers Indigenous epistemologies as disruptors of the history teaching process. Consequently, the author calls for more research into whether programs combining reconciliation and historical thinking are effective. Unfortunately, a deeper critique of the curriculum materials that the students are viewing is not analyzed by the researcher. Social semiotics may ask why images of children are being used. Notably, current Canadian history curriculum leaves little room for interpretation or critical thinking on behalf of students (Gibson & Case, 2019).

Social Stratification

Diane Iona Persson's (1980) Doctoral thesis (University of Alberta) on conflict theory and Blue Quills Residential School is an invaluable and balanced resource that fills in context from the point of view of former students, their communities, school staff, Indian Agents, and other government officials. Although this resource is over 40 years old, it captures historical context from the time of PAA Artefact #1 as well as federal and provincial documentation and reports. Findings address the influence of social stratification on the institutional system related to children. This resource may be a valuable example of adequate historiography for its comprehensive historical content.

Naydenov et al. (2023) provide a summary of systems of social stratification at varying degrees of openness that include the slave system, property systems, caste systems and class systems. As all societies are stratified, the authors briefly describe its functions, benefits, and harms to people within the different dimensions of stratification: wealth, prestige, and power. Findings discuss the argument within conflict theory that stratification “is not a necessary condition for society’s survival, but rather an exploitive one resulting from a continuous struggle between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ (p. 198).

Reva Yunus (2022) addresses “deeply stratified schooling” (p. 104) and the public policies that strengthen inequalities and stratification and the discriminatory treatment of what is termed labour class students by teachers in India. This study informs how social stratification benefits those in power while creating a helpless and dependent mindset in children and their families deemed to be lowest in the social order. Notably, the research challenges the argument that education is the answer to moving vertically up the social order.

Finally, Alan Kerckhoff (2001) provides a comparative review of a number of stratification studies focused primarily on how educational systems function as a “sorting machine” (Spring as cited in Kerckhoff, p. 3). As educational systems are so varied throughout the western world, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States are compared for the ways in which their systems stratify students. Within this context, the author is defining educational stratification by curriculum content and how achievement connects with opportunities beyond school (higher education, vocational/trades training, for example). While this literature may be dated and current educational systems may be modified, the article provides insight into differing degrees of stratification for a clearer understanding of the processes and consequences.

Summary of Key Findings

Every society at every level is socially stratified and further stratified within defined social groups. In most cases, people are not only born into a social class (a condition) but experience being stratified (a process) as a result of the condition. This condition and process is valuable in understanding educational decision–making for children anywhere from within the home to the child's community to federal government guidelines. Within the context of this research, the process of creating, preserving and eventually digitizing images of identifiable children provides an opportunity to critically examine whether this is an ordinary thing to do with all children or does the process fall within social stratification.

Wallace-Casey's (2019) description of a pedagogical crisis is apt and determines that a crisis happens when Indigenous and non-Indigenous world views conflict. Perhaps subtle underlying themes present in the literature on IRS images and difficult history are the assumptions that non-Indigenous world views and perspectives are harmful and that decisions were made for children apart from their communities and leaders. A social semiotic analysis can counter this by stepping back in time to immerse oneself in missing context and figuratively ask what all sides were thinking.

Remarkably absent from all the literature on digital images are any references to images of the adults involved in the IRS system or any reference to the possible gaps in images that would present a robust and balanced perspective up for critical inquiry. Absence of balance may signal to the learner that critical inquiry is not welcome as it involves "drawing inferences, weighing evidence, identifying embedded assumptions, assessing causal claims, detecting biases and fallacies" (Ku et al., 2013, p. 252) which may be difficult when context is omitted. This research offers a unique call to question whether IRS curriculum is adequate or not.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The following chapter highlights key components of interpretivism as related to a social semiotic process by first describing the philosophical assumptions that guide the resulting framework (see Table 1), tying them to the social construction of an image and its intended meaning and then outlining four interpretive elements of semiotics: Saussure’s signification, Halliday’s linguistic theory, Barthes’ signification and the concept of modality. Finally, an overview of the role of the researcher, personal perspective, research design and issues of ethics and validity complete this chapter.

World View and Philosophical Assumptions

Table 1

Philosophical Assumptions

WORLD VIEW	EPISTEMOLOGY	ONTOLOGY	AXIOLOGY	METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH
Interpretivism	What counts as reality is co-constructed between the Semiotician, the digital image and its historical context.	There are multiple subjective perspectives relative to time, place and circumstance.	Analysis is approached from a position of mutual respect and empathy for everyone involved.	Focus on context through analysis of historical documentation.

Interpretive Framework

Interpretivism

From the perspective of interpretivism, learning and knowing are created from social, cultural, and environmental interaction and activity resulting in a subjective reality (Neuman, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is an ongoing process of learning the social ropes, for example, between educator and learner, mentor and mentee, peer to peer. Additionally, people also construct meaning from their environment as in objects. Interpretivism, also referred to as social constructivism, is crucial in understanding that learning does not happen in isolation but through the social interactions between people and their environment. Perspective is everything.

Roya Jafari Amineh and Hanieh Davatgari Asl (2015) discuss the origins of constructivism from several psychological and philosophical perspectives that may be summed up as a process of discovering meaning through analysis or the ongoing practice of questioning to facilitate learning. The social world enveloping an individual affects the learning process and while notable theorists on constructivism such as Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget (as cited in Amineh & Asl, 2015) differ in their positions on the process, both stress the influence of society on an individual's construction of knowledge. Nowhere is this more obvious perhaps then in the representation of difficult history around the IRS system.

Learners "make sense of new information by associating it with what we already know, that is, by attempting to assimilate it into our existing knowledge" (Amineh & Asl, 2015, p. 10) until we cannot and must construct new knowledge as in entering a "higher level of thinking” (p. 10). As societal norms and ideologies mediate the actions of journalists, educators, and archivists, for example, in their presentation of images, a passive learner that just accepts the information without questioning never reaches a higher level of thinking that may facilitate an evolved learner and just society. In the same vein, a passive educator acting on societal norms and ideologies without demonstrating a critical mindset does a disservice to themselves, learners, the truth behind the difficult history being conveyed and the people, if any, in the images.

The interpretivist framework supporting this research understands that the answers to research questions will be revealed as historical context is filled in so the researcher should be approaching their exploration mindful of parking what Ku et al. (2013) call embedded assumptions. This focus on historical context in order to understand a people, time and place is also known as hermeneutics (George, 2020).

Hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics reveals knowledge as produced and understood by filling in missing context relative to a culture and creator in a moment of time, for example. Even though it was commonly associated historically with the analysis of biblical texts, it values knowing from the perspective of the creator of a piece of knowledge and the language used to articulate that knowledge (George, 2020, paragraph 2.1). The purpose is to connect context to the bigger picture in order to “reveal deeper meanings” (Neuman, 2006, p. 87).

Semiotics, within this research, is looking for meaning in an image and this includes understanding who created and disseminated the digital image and why. What is the perspective of the Crown employees producing these images, the archivist who is digitizing the image and the course designer/educator who is choosing the image? Simply put, where are they all coming from?

Considering that these analogue photographs are now being digitized and uploaded to the web to be exposed to a new generation of viewers, hermeneutics also addresses how a historical creation would now affect a modern audience. The double take on understanding the creator and the audience's interpretation of an image only informs a part of the whole picture as this semiotic research also considers the impact on the children in the photograph as well. The following example demonstrates not only the value of context but how a historical image may be affecting a modern audience.

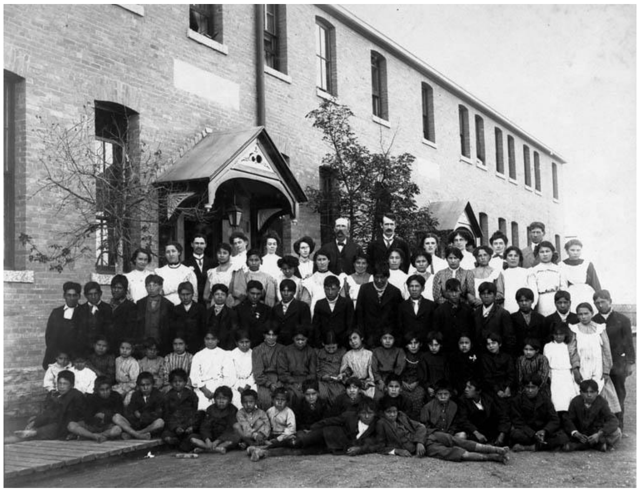
A *Counterpunch*[19] online article written by a scholar explains the death from exposure of Duncan Sticks following his escape from St. Joseph's Mission Residential School on Vancouver Island, British Columbia (BC). It presents an image of Indigenous children taken in 1908 from Regina Industrial Indian Residential School (RIIS) in Saskatchewan (see Figure 9). In all fairness, the author most likely had nothing to do with an editor's choice of image considering that *Counterpunch* regularly uses the same image. Passive learners and educators may assume that Duncan Sticks is in the photo of the children except Duncan Stick's residential school was in Williams Lake, BC and enrolled children from Shuswap, Carrier, and Chilcotin First Nations (see Figure 10).

---

[19] https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/03/09/they-stripped-us-of-our-clothes-and-assigned-us-a-number/

Figure 9

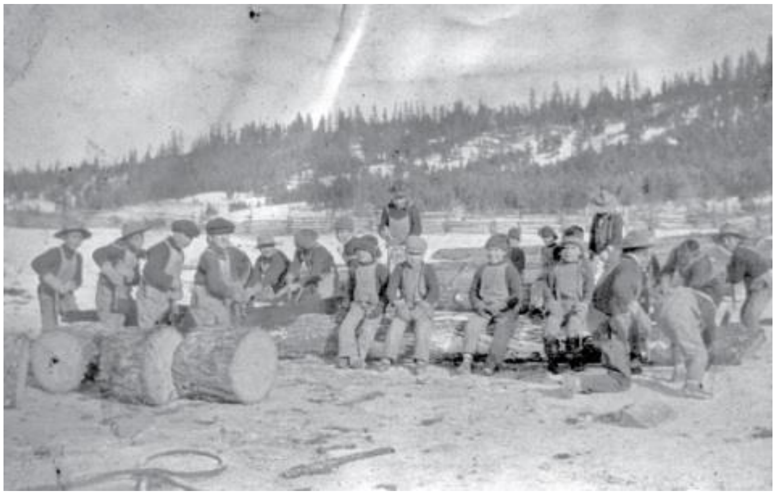
LAC Artefact #1



Note. Photo 3316050, Indian Residential School Students and Staff, Regina, Saskatchewan, CC Attribution 4.0, creator John Woodruff, 1908, appears courtesy Library and Archives Canada E010949763.

Figure 10

MCC Artefact #1



Note. Photo St. Joseph's Mission Residential School, BOYS CHOPPING WOOD, appears courtesy Museum of Cariboo-Chilcotin, Williams Lake, BC.

In contrast, the industrial school in Saskatchewan enrolled children from Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota First Nations. Active learners and educators could construct new knowledge in realizing the consequences of monolithic thinking that is at play where it is assumed that Indigenous people are a homogenous group. Notably, Duncan Sticks died in 1902, and the RIIS image was taken six years later in 1908. Under the umbrella of social constructivism, an understanding of the reality of an incident at a residential school (societal occurrence) has been erroneously constructed between educator and learner due to a lack of higher order thinking (habitual use of an inappropriate image) that includes critical thinking skills (Demiral, 2018). Constructivists seek to understand what it means to habitually use an image of a child, for example, by understanding and interpreting the historical context around the image and what that image stands for socially today (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Communication Through Construction of an Image

The purpose of this study is a fit for social semiotics as the creators and users of both the analogue and subsequent digital copies are influenced and driven by their social world and its history (Rose, 2016). A semiotic theory focuses on the social interaction between the resource and its audience and is often referred to as a multimodal form of communication as it can include text, images, video, live performance, and speech, for example (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). This study explores a digital image and its potential as a visual language with the "capacity to stir people's emotions … to get their message across to a socially and linguistically heterogeneous population" (Kress & van

Leeuwen, 2021, p. 33). In other words, regardless of the different languages spoken or cultural traditions inherent in a community (Canada), it may be agreed that an image of a group of Indigenous school students is understood to communicate the IRS system. Social semiotics is interested in what was meant to be communicated through the construction and presentation of an image, including who or what constructed it with an audience in mind.

The social in semiotics involves two approaches (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021): The sign must be “maximally understandable in a particular context … [and] most apt and plausible in the given context” (pp. 14–15). In other words, there must be very little to no ambiguity and the connection between the sign and the message being communicated require little effort to interpret. Put another way, socially, everyone gets it. The following three notable semiotic theories along with the concept of modality break down the main elements of a social semiotic analysis as related to this research (Rose, 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021; Barthes, 1988; Barthes, 2012).

Ferdinand de Saussure’s Signification.

Saussure articulated the communicative significance of the relationship between an image (sign), for example, what is presented in the image (signifiers) and the resulting concept or idea (signified) understood or agreed upon by the user and recipient of the image. Saussure is notable for influencing the analysis of signs through language and their meaning. The sign has become the foundational steppingstone of communication along with its signifier and signified parts. Socially, people need this sign in order to communicate a message through an image.

Halliday Linguistic Theory.

Halliday’s linguistic theory is a valuable inclusion in this study in that it informs the truth value of an analysis or outcome. The semiotician is not claiming to discover reality but rather demonstrating that “a given representation of some aspect of reality, visual, verbal or otherwise, is represented as true or not” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021, p. 150). In other words, how true is some aspect of reality. Halliday described the grammar of modality or credibility of an analytical outcome, for example, through low and high modality judgements or statements.

Let me take you back to the opening lines of this paragraph for an example. The phrase “is a valuable inclusion” is written as a modality judgement and would be considered high modality since it is presented as a certainty. Conversely, if the phrase had been written as “may be a valuable inclusion,” it would be considered low modality since the word “may” leaves the topic open for negotiation. Low modality judgements are simply more open statements within the context of social semiotics. While contemporary semioticians prefer to replace the term modality for validity, it is understood that both modality and validity are “based on the values, beliefs and social needs of social groups” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021, p. 154) and so semiotics is relative and that should be reflected in the language describing an analysis.

Roland Barthes Signification.

The final outcome of a semiotic analysis involves uncovering false beliefs or myths, also referred to as second order semiotics (Rose, 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021; Barthes, 2012). Myth is a message created by human beings and can best be described as the cultural understanding of a sign. It is intended to teach while serving the interests of those in control of sending a message. Myth ignores historical facts and entrenches itself into the very essence of a society to the extent that it may eventually seem like there was no alternative to the myth (Barthes, 2012). The mythical outcome of an analysis is considered second-order semiology since it relies on the first-order containing the sign, signifiers and signified. Finally, this second-order connotes signification, or the abstract meaning of the sign as understood within a society's ideologies. Signification will sum up the final results of this research (Rose, 2016).

Concept of Modality Within Interpretivism.

This research is grounded in the concept of modality considering that it is reasonable to suggest that any image of a group of Indigenous students in an historic Canadian educational context means Indian Residential School and all that those words connotate, regardless of anything else that is presented in the image. All that is needed is for the viewer to recognize that the school children are Indigenous. A social semiotic analysis then needs to measure that connotation against historical documentation related to the image in order to express truth value or modality in what the image is meant to represent. When it comes to the IRS message in Canadian culture, it may be nationally understood without any additional text needed in the image.

van Leeuwen (2005) describes modality as the question of truth and "questions of social interaction, because the question of truth is also a social question—what is regarded as true in one social context is not necessarily regarded as true in others" (p. 160). In other words, a similar image of Indigenous students from eastern Russia may not connotate the same meaning. Social interaction can be understood as the interaction between the user of the image and the viewer or audience. Did the message or intention get across? Is the viewer on board, so to speak? van Leeuwen (2005) stresses that modality judgements are not simply true or false but how true or false.

For example, to state that an image of a group of Indigenous students means the IRS system is high modality in that the statement is not open to question. Once missing context is added, for example using PAA Artefact #1 and 1963 Alberta, the modality judgement may shift from high to low:

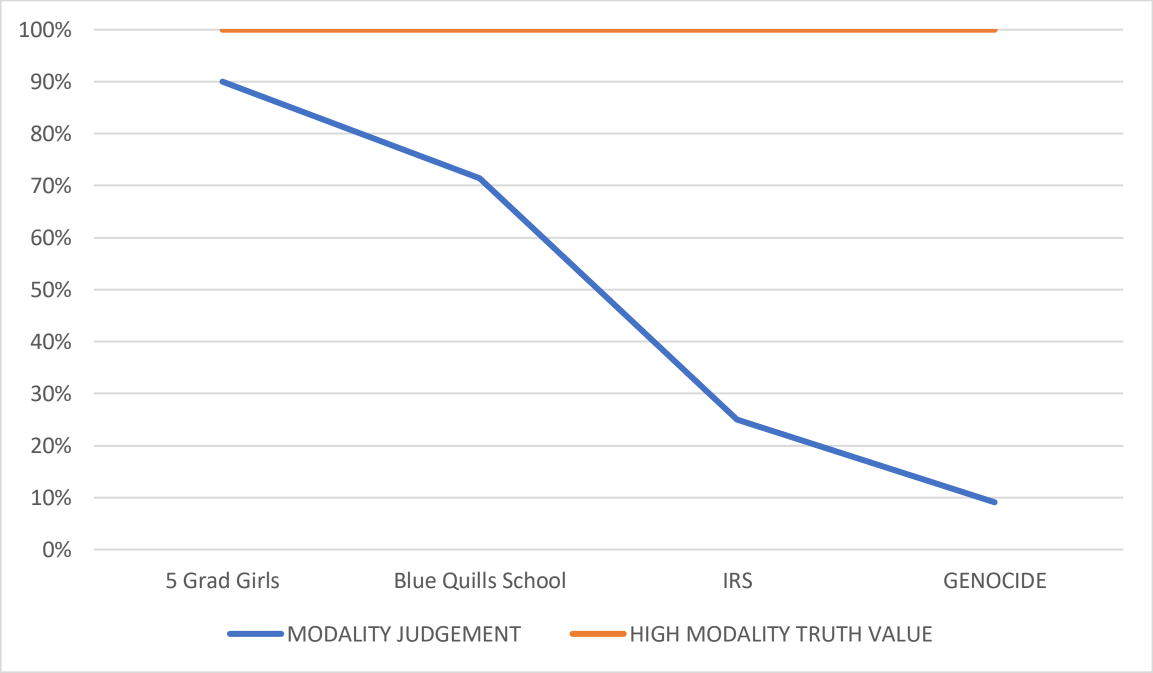
- Students attending Indian day schools but boarding at an IRS totaled 130.
- Students attending non-Indian day schools but boarding at an IRS totaled 248.
- Students attending an IRS daily without boarding totaled 1,305.
- Non-Indian students attending Indian schools totaled 178.

Based on these documented statistics (Gordon, 1963), can the viewer of PAA Artefact #1 now be sure that the 5 girls represent everything that IRS connotates, including boarding, segregation and indigeneity? If not, the modality judgement now modifies itself lower to “the image of a group of students may represent the IRS system.” The modality judgement is now open to question.

In summary, modality judgements fall along a scale from high to low truth value depending first on contents, then on the creator and audience’s perceptions and then on additional historical documentation or missing context (see Table 2). As the analyst moves from what is literally denoted to the connotation or Barthes’ (2012) signification, the truth value plummets, and the expression of modality should reflect that. A low-modality judgement is simply more open to inquiry and less certain than a high-modality judgement.

Table 2

High/Low Modality Judgement Example



Note. © Ivy Shawl-Song

Role of the Researcher

In May of 1996, Dr. J. S. Milloy submitted a research paper on Canada's residential school system to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. As Dr. Milloy grappled with what he called trespassing as he is not an Indigenous man and had never experienced institutional confinement as a child, he recalled a former student declaring to an Indian Affairs agent that the residential school story was not his own story but the story of predominantly white people: "The residential system was conceived, designed and managed by non-aboriginal people … The system is not someone else's history … It is critical that non-Aboriginal people study and write about the schools" (Milloy, 1996, pp. 5-6).

This research narrows in on one school and the context surrounding the school circa 1960's. It is conducted and presented to a general audience that includes educators, archivists, curriculum designers and ethics boards. A semiotic researcher is not in a privileged position over this general audience, but rather is responsible for presenting a point of view intended to open an enquiry (Bopry, 2002). The semiotician and subsequent semiotic findings cannot be separated. Imagine a hallway full of doors being held open by individual semioticians for an audience to peer in, take note and enquire: "Within a semiotic point of view there is no avoiding personal responsibility for one's own reality" (Bopry, 2002, p. 16). The semiotician chooses the door. The audience chooses to engage, negotiate, accept or decline what is behind the door.

Finally, this research involves an analogue photograph from 1963 now in digital form and presented in the 21st century. Out of respect for the students in the image, the researcher must backtrack to the day that the 5 girls posed in front of a blackboard; being mindful of the meaning of the photograph on that day before it travelled into the personal possession of a teacher and subsequently the Crown archives to be repurposed. How close can the researcher get to what the children and the photographer left behind?

Personal Perspective

I am acutely aware of the lengths and means that adults will go to create the façade needed to justify an aspect of history through photography. There is nothing unusual about this. Familial photographers routinely line up their children with the command to smile for the camera, and children routinely obey. Nowhere is this more evident than with Crown photography. Photographs that were likely never shared with the children or their families are now housed in provincial, federal, and private archives as the property of others.

What makes Crown photography of Indigenous children different from familial photographs of all children is that they are now poster images or cultural signs for institutional abuse as reported by the TRC (2015). For former students, these images may be all that is left of them as a child, now in digital form and beyond their grasp. Could these students have ever imagined that one day their likeness as children would be used to signal child abuse on the World Wide Web? In child advocacy circles, this is known as a digital tattoo—the mark is permanent once an image is uploaded.[20]

Coming across the image of the girls from Blue Quills residential school stunned me. These girls share my own lifetime and could still be alive today. They are clearly identifiable. My personal and professional perspective grounds me in the belief that childhood trauma at the hands of others is first a story about the others and not the children. In essence, where is the visual representation of the adults responsible for the children and "their motives, and the institutions that harboured them … precisely the knowledge on which truth commissions should concentrate if the harms … are to be properly understood" (Niezen, 2016, p. 935).

I am always looking for what or who is hiding behind the children and reflecting upon how and why I see what I do. It is a lifetime practice of critical reflection and education in order to recognize social norms and ideologies that may continue to exploit powerless human beings.

---

[20] https://childethics.com/

Research Design

Constructing the process of a qualitative visual methodology is as creative as the sources up for examination and the semiotic processes that an analyst may choose from (Rose, 2016; Bopry, 2002). This research includes no human participants and relies on digital images already in existence. Rose (2016) describes the critical analysis of images with three key considerations that include taking the image seriously, exploring the social conditions tied to the image and reflection upon the part of the analyst as to how they are seeing the image. While it may seem obvious that a researcher take an image seriously, this point goes beyond just context to awareness of the effect of the image on an audience.

While Rose (2016) outlines the critical analysis involving technological, compositional and social sites up for interpretation, the technological and compositional sites are only used briefly here in order to fill in where the image came from and why. The social site is the critical site that responds to the research problem, purpose and questions and so makes up the weight of the analysis. This social analysis was completed using paradigmatic relationships with other digital images of similar era, theme, composition, use and dissemination in order to construct meaning and fill in missing context (Rose, 2016).

Starting with PAA Artefact #1's purpose in presenting the difficult history of the IRS system, common curriculum topics were identified first in order to validate choice of image for the paradigmatic relationships and the completion of first-order semiotics.

Second-order semiotics was completed by expanding on the first-order findings to determine Barthes (2012) signification. In keeping with visual methodologies, further images were used to validate the findings in second-order semiotics. Further explanation of this process is described under data analysis.

Instrumentation

Data in the form of digital images were collected virtually from online archival holdings. The additional collection/order of analogue to digital images and/or documentation was done in-person at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. All image use agreements/contracts were secured through online applications or email correspondence.

Data Collection

The most common images sourced to inform curriculum around the IRS system continue to be images of Indigenous children (Miles, 2019). An internet search using the words “residential schools” presents hundreds of historical photographs of children commonly grouped together on the steps of a foreboding looking institution. While the name of the school is often cited, the photographer or adults responsible for the children remain largely anonymous. A semiotic analysis of a photograph is richer for including the context surrounding the photographer as well as some familiarity on the part of the researcher and their audience with the era of the photograph: “Locating images in their social contexts need(s) to be acknowledged … so that the impact of their constructed meanings could be more efficiently analysed” (Aliakbari & Kamalvand, 2023, p. 10).

Sr. Annette Potvin’s photograph of the five graduating girls was taken within my lifetime. Some of the now grown children may still be alive today. This history is closer to home, so to speak, and includes a wealth of context that is readily accessible through the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Additionally, PAA Artefact #1 has been transformed from analogue to digital form within the PAA's Flickr folder on the history of Alberta. It is now readily accessible for online educators, adding to "online platforms awash in visual resources. Images are parts of social life that reflect cultural memory, a society's symbolic order, and people's physical existence" (Aliakbari & Kamalvand, 2023, p. 10).

Once the foundational image was decided on, paradigmatic images within similar themes (institutionalization of children, child advocacy, culture, for example) were sourced as part of the visual methodology. These included graduation photos from another IRS managed by the OMI and Grey Nuns as well as a mainstream school managed by the OMI. New Denver's Institution for Doukhobor children, St. Joseph's Training School for Boys and Congregation de Notre-Dame's private school for girls complete the paradigmatic relationship with the institutionalization of children.

While addressing child advocacy and the teaching of difficult history, images were sourced from legacy and social media in order to reveal social norms around the protection and privacy of children. All of these images include children that may still be alive today.

Finally, digital images of Crown photography spanning over 100 years were sourced in order to present context and validity to the demographics of the foundational image: Father Lessard fonds, Blue Quills School yearbook and newsletter images, OMI managed Cree Review newspapers and common Crown photographs currently used to teach about the IRS system in Canada. All images include an image use agreement, permissions, or allowances if required. All images inform the social semiotic process related to uncovering social norms and ideologies.

Data Analysis

The foundational analysis of resources depended on the primary tasks of any social semiotician which includes gathering resources and determining how those resources are being used (van Leeuwen, 2005):

- First-order semiotics' identification of the sign, its signifiers and signified (denotation).
- Identification of wider social implications through missing context and paradigmatic relationships.
- Second-order semiotics' identification of connotation.
- Validation or rejection of the connotation with further resources and/or artefacts.

The analysis results in a social semiotic theory describing a society's ideologies and corresponding truth value in using images of children to teach difficult history.

Semiotics analyzes the social connection and subsequent meaning between this image of five girls and the viewers. The analytical process is broken down into three main modalities that lead to ideologies and theories around the topic of the image: technological, compositional, and social (Rose, 2016).

The technological stage describes analogue or digital properties, how the image was made and how or with whom it travelled. This includes who kept possession of it and how it found its way to the Flickr folder and, subsequently, the viewers. This stage could best be described as the evidential stage. The analyst may objectively describe properties, locations, owners, photographers, place and dates.

Compositional modality dives a little deeper into what is apparent in the image. How and where were the five girls situated and what props were used to inform the theme of the image, for example. Signifiers at this stage communicate to the viewer the photographer's message. For example, the five girls have black graduation caps placed on their heads, and they appear to be holding a piece of paper in front of their bodies. The caps and papers as signifiers may communicate a graduation milestone as the signified. Signifieds could also include "Grade 12" and celebration. Notably, the identification of signifieds is culturally specific and forms the foundation for the final stage.

The final stage of social modality involves "the range of economic, social, and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used" (Rose, 2016, p. 26). In other words, when the image is presented and under what social themes or inferences it is being used.

Ethical Considerations

Images of children are on display as part of this research. Many of these children may be in their late 70s or early 80s today without any agency over the use of their images. The Tri-Council Policy Statement's (TCPS2 2022) core principles of respect for persons, their welfare and the principle of justice inform the justification of the use of these images as driven by the research question and the purpose of the study.[21]

Considering that all data sources are readily available to the public, their inclusion in this research does not aggravate further the presentation of these images. Rather, it highlights the prevalent use of Crown photography. This research accesses publicly available artefacts that are already identifiable by location, collection and circumstances as determined by archival institutions.

---

[21] https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2022_chapter1-chapitre1.html#b

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or UNDRIP[22] and TCPS2 2022, chapter nine (see Footnote 14) advising on research involving First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Peoples of Canada stress that "engagement with community is an integral part of ethical research involving Indigenous peoples" (p. 148). Please see this paper's preface describing community engagement.

Ensuring the ethical use of all the artefacts in this research was done by tracing digital images back to the original and, subsequently, the holder of the analogue copy to obtain image use agreements.[23] Every holder was supplied with research details: researcher name, address, contact information, thesis title and research purpose including future publication in Athabasca University's thesis repository, and potential publication in academic journals. Provincial Archives of Alberta, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Archives, Congregation de Notre-Dame, Agassiz-Harrison Museum and Sam Waller Museum requested copies of the completed thesis as a courtesy. Finally, every credit convention includes confirmation, where relevant, that an image use agreement is in place. This may mitigate the unfair and unethical use of the image by anyone accessing the completed thesis or subsequent academic articles.

---

[22] https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/U-2.2/

[23] As advised in a phone conversations with Esther Bonin, Senior Clerk at Copyright Board of Canada.

Reliability and Validity

In Judith Williamson's (as cited in Rose, 2016) semiotic analysis of visual advertisements, she explains that the preferred meanings or ideologies discovered in an image come from the people and their cultural order receiving the image, not simply from the signifieds that have been pulled from the signifiers. It is the viewer who gives meaning but "there is never any assumption that any act of semiotic design is necessarily successful, in the sense that the same meaning is shared by both the producer and the interpreter of semiotic resources" (Rose, 2016, p. 141).

This meaning must be verified through "historical research—and analysis to corroborate key findings on the 'meanings' of particular images" (Aiello, 2020, p. 378). Key findings in this research mean the truth value of what the image represents as corroborated through paradigmatic relationships and missing context: a boarding school, a Doukhobor institution, a reform institution, common curriculum images, common media practices around the presentation of an image of a child and historical documentation.

Roland Barthes (as cited in Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) stressed the facilitation of validity by drawing on textual modes wherever possible as "images are, he thought, too 'polysemous', too open to a variety of possible meanings … language must come to the rescue" (p. 20). Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) describe the historical transition from illustration dominating the sharing of information up to approximately the 17th century and then the gradual dominance of text or language anchoring the illustrations, if any at all. Anchoring in this research is drawn from historical documentation directly informing PAA Artefact #1. Rose (2016) offers an example of anchoring in her online semiotic analysis exercise that uses a visual advertisement for a telephone that includes text in the image that she describes as “more effective than the images at creating the meaning of the advertisement”.[24]

In essence, the researcher or viewer/analyst of the image is also a research participant laying their cards out on the table in the hopes that, ethically, policy and practice around the digitization and use of Crown photography may be informed and a growing practice of social semiotic analysis may inspire facilitation of digital repatriation (Giancarlo et al., 2021), mutual respect, and ethical comprehensive curriculum content.

---

[24] https://study.sagepub.com/rose4e/student-resources/chapter-6/exercise

Chapter 4. Analysis

This chapter completes the first-order social semiotic analysis of PAA Artefact #1 by first determining the common social and cultural meanings associated with Canada's difficult history as presented through the image of these Indigenous children. Following a brief description of the technical, compositional and social properties of the image, the common meanings then inform four paradigmatic relationships to PAA Artefact #1. Missing context follows from each relationship in order to answer the research question and sub questions.

Difficult History and Common Curriculum

Informing the overall analysis are the common curriculum summations around Canada's IRS system. The TRC (2015) findings, a pivotal resource that now informs course designers, concluded that the residential school system was an attempt at cultural genocide: "Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed … Families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next" (p. 1). This TRC finding concludes with the statement that all of this was done against the will of the Indigenous people. Further to the TRC's conclusions, Canada's House of Commons unanimously acknowledged on October 27, 2022, that the IRS system was genocide, dropping the word cultural. This means that the IRS was intent on the destruction of an ethnic group:

> By unanimous consent, it was resolved, that, in the opinion of the House, the government must recognize what happened in Canada's Indian residential schools as genocide, as acknowledged by Pope Francis and in accordance with Article II

> of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of the United Nations”.[25]

Finally, in relation to PAA Artefact #1 and its presentation on PAA’s Flickr folder informing on the residential school system, a brief summation accompanies the image describing the historical context:

> The policy of these schools was to remove Aboriginal children from their families and culture and to assimilate them into dominant Canadian culture. The Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission has now been established to address the injustices that were inflicted upon the Aboriginal populations of Canada by residential schools”.[26]

In summary, cultural genocide, genocide and isolation from family, language and culture inform this social semiotic analysis and its search for missing context and truth value of these high modality judgements.

Process of Analysis

The following process briefly describes the technical and compositional modalities with the bulk of analysis dedicated to social modality and where those modalities are most meaningful (the sites or locations that include where the image was created, for whom and how it travelled) (Rose, 2016). Within the scope of this research and its focus on the social modality, the technical and compositional are still needed to provide a clear understanding of how the image came to be, what the image represents, and how it is being used today. The conclusion of this analysis focuses on answering the research question around missing context and its effect on truth modality related to the curriculum summations noted previously and the social (ethical, cultural) implications of digitizing this analogue photo for the purposes of teaching difficult history.

---

[25] Journals No. 119 - October 27, 2022 (44-1) - House of Commons of Canada (ourcommons.ca)

[26] https://www.flickr.com/photos/alberta_archives/albums/72157649831501971/.

PAA Artifact #1

Technical.

The original analogue photo of the five students was created within a classroom at Blue Quills Residential School in 1963. The photographer remains anonymous as the final person in possession of the image was Sr. Annette Potvin who had transferred out of the school four years earlier.[27] We may only be able to infer that the image was given to her, or she returned to take the image herself. In 1963, Sr. Potvin was completing her University of Ottawa Master's thesis on an aspect of Blackfoot Indigenous spirituality and so returned to Alberta. Her family of origin were also located in the community of Legal. St. Paul County lays between these two communities so it is reasonable to suggest that Sr. Potvin may have visited Blue Quills school while on her travels.

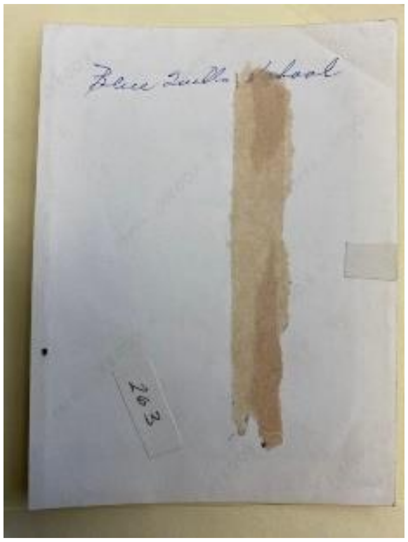
The only identifying information on the photograph are the handwritten words "Blue Quills School" in ink on the back of the photo (see Figure 11). Additionally, there is a strip of what appears to be the remnants of glue and parchment across the back of the photograph. This may be indicative of the photo being peeled from a scrapbook or photo album page. This element of visual technology informs what Rose (2016) describes as the relevance of not only how the image is made but also “how it travels and how it is displayed” (p. 25).

---

[27] See https://searchprovincialarchives.alberta.ca/the-moccasin-telegram-blue-quills-residential-indian-school-st-paul-vol-16-1-2 Moccasin Telegram January - June 1959, page 3.

Figure 11

Cursive Writing in Ink: Blue Quills School



Note. Photo Credit: The author with permission from Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Compositional.

Compositional modality delves deeper into what Rose (2016) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) describe as the set-up of the image. How was it composed for the benefit of an audience or the students in the frame? Clearly, there is a milestone being recorded as the students are wearing black grad caps and holding a piece of paper. It is a more formal composition as the students are not caught in an unguarded moment but are rather posed side by side in front of a blackboard under a sign reading “Jesus Never Fails.”

The camera has captured the students from head to toe suggesting that what they are wearing—matching dresses—may be significant. A thorough compositional analysis, outside the scope of this project, would address where the students are gazing, how they are arranged in a pyramid formation, facial expressions, etc. While these elements and relationships are insightful, this research is exploring use and dissemination of the digital image to teach difficult history. The children are identifiable Indigenous students and as such, this brief overview will now inform the final social modality.

Social Modality

Once the film was developed into analogue form, the photograph was meaningful enough to be preserved as a keepsake. This can be inferred from the remnant of perhaps a scrapbook page left on the back of the photograph. Further research into how the image travelled from Sr. Potvin’s possession to the PAA reveals that the image was part of her estate that was archived with the Grey Nuns of Montreal. From there, any photographs relevant to Canada’s IRS system were transferred to the PAA and into copyright possession of the Crown. Unfortunately, the Grey Nuns Archives has confirmed that Sr. Potvin’s scrapbooks no longer exist and so it is not possible to examine whether she may have written any further description of PAA Artefact #1 on the scrapbook pages.

A copy of the image cannot be found in any existing school yearbooks or newsletters, suggesting that it was not for the benefit of the students or their families. This is not to say that perhaps copies were provided to the students. Once the image was digitized by the PAA to a Flickr folder highlighting the IRS system, the question of where the image travels from there may never be fully resolved as digital copies appearing on the World Wide Web are effortless and ongoing.

The following four paradigmatic relationships will answer the question of missing context and truth value around using digital images of Indigenous children to teach difficult history. All of the relational patterns inform some aspect of missing context: institutionalization, child advocacy, habitual use, and common cultural practices or social norms. These patterns are by no means exhaustive. Finally, the culmination of an analysis of these relationships will be presented in the next chapter’s second order semiotics revealing what Barthes (2013) refers to as societal myth or false beliefs (Barthes Signification) apparent in the use of PAA Artefact #1.

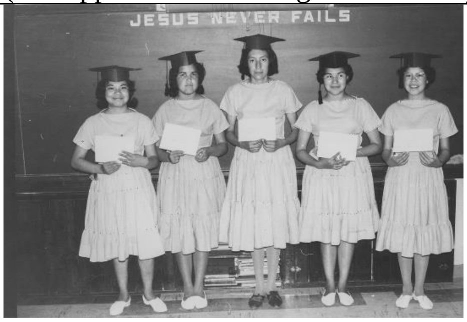
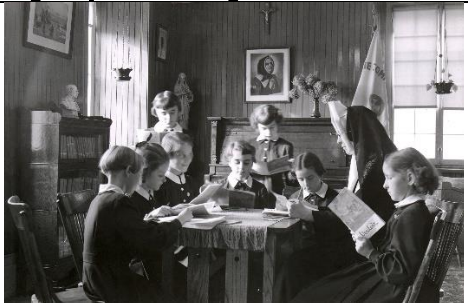
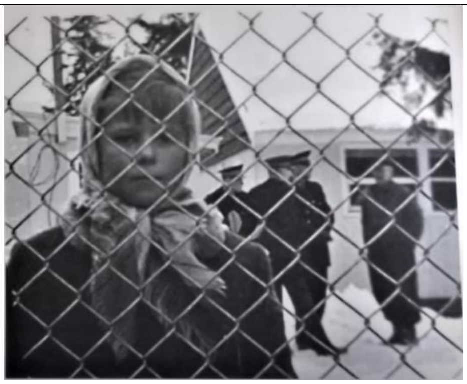
Four Paradigmatic Relationships

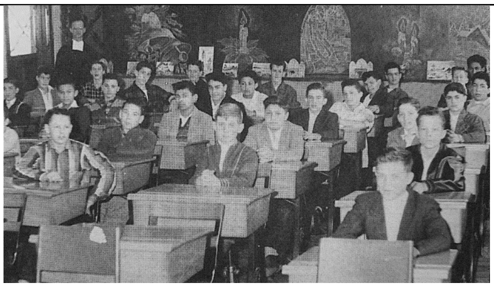
Using paradigmatic relationships to analyze the meaning of an image offers a glimpse into a society’s social makeup and norms by presenting examples of a similar theme, in this case institutionalized school children, and comparing them in relation to the context of the foundational image (Rose, 2016). The word relationship signifies that the images are connected in one or more ways and can be related back to PAA Artefact #1: era, theme, use.

Relationship Tables 3 to 6 below are considered first order semiology which highlights what is being denoted in the images. First–order semiology results in a sign that leads to Barthes’ (2012) signification in second–order semiology (see Tables 7 to 10, Chapter 5). These signs are the result of identifying a signifier or aspect of the image that is signaling a message to the viewer. These signifiers are usually culturally specific and commonly understood (Rose, 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) as previously described using the graduation caps in PAA Artefact #1. Relevant missing context concerned with PAA Artefact #1 follows the presentation of each paradigmatic relationship below.

Table 3

Institutional Relationships

SIGNIFIER **Ethnicity,** **Segregated & Boarding**	**SIGN** **Residential Institution (Canada 1955-1965)** (see Appendix A for image attributions)	**SIGNIFIED** **Isolated From Community**
Indigenous YES	 Blue Quills Residential School Agency over image: Crown	NO (Persson, 1980; Hawthorn. 1967; Castonguay, 1999; Newman, 1996, NCTR, 2004)
French European YES	 Congrégation de Notre-Dame Agency over image: Roman Catholic Church	NO (https://www1.cnd-m.org/en/history/)
Doukhobor Russian YES	 New Denver Institution for Doukhobor Children Agency over image: Helen Chernoff-Freeman	YES (https://bcombudsperson.ca/assets/media/Public-Report-No-38-Righting-the-Wrong-The-Confinement-of-the-Sons-of-Freedom-Doukhobor-Children.pdf))

Multi-Ethnic YES	 St. Joseph's Training School for Boys Agency over image: David McCann	YES (Green, 1996)

The Indian Affairs Branch Report on Education includes detailed statistics for Indigenous children attending any available school options from boarding and attending within a residential school to attending daily at non-Indian schools in Alberta and across Canada (Gordon, 1963). Within the era of PAA Artefact#1, "more than 50% of the Indian school population of Canada attended integrated schools" (Hawthorn, 1967, p. 31). Post WWII, all Indigenous and non-Indigenous children were compelled to attend school under Canada's Compulsory School Act with additional legislation that included recognition and respect for the "free choice of the [Indigenous] parents" (Hawthorn, 1967, p. 34) to choose denominational schools for their children.

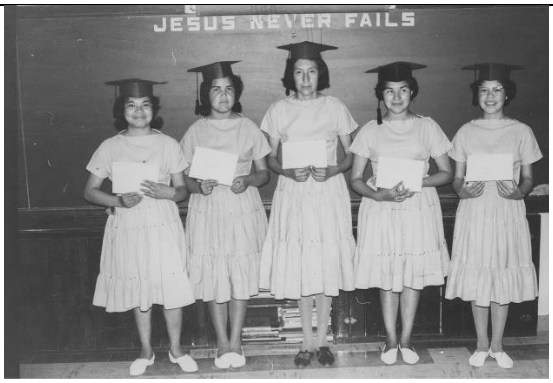
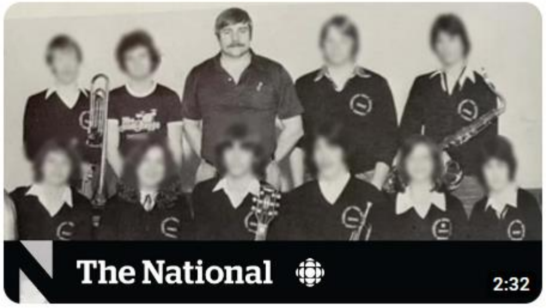
The call for compulsory school attendance dates back over 100 years in Canada and assumed that it may, for example, benefit the welfare of the child, lower crime, improve health and potential future earnings (Oreopoulos, 2005). Additionally, the Hawthorn (1967) survey on Indian Education states throughout the report to the Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa, that parental rights and community influences also benefit the Indigenous child.

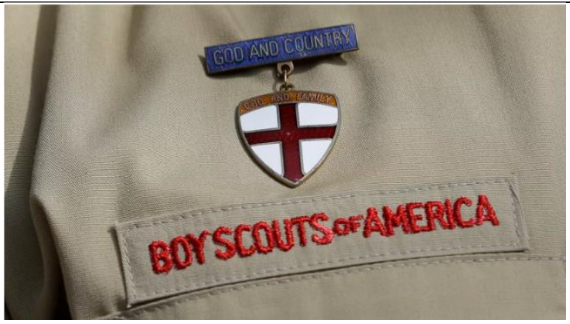
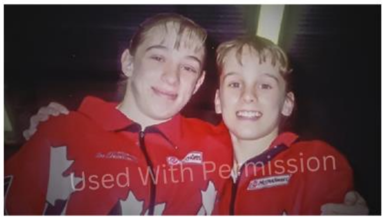
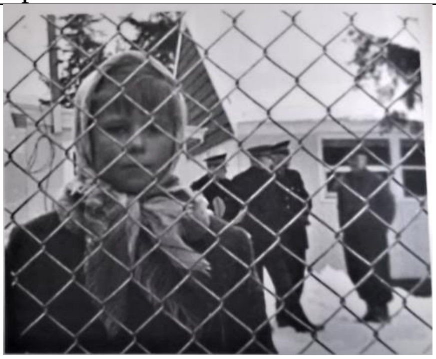
Alberta’s Truancy and Compulsory School Attendance Act of 1910 included children between 7 and 14 years of age. By the time of PAA Artefact #1, the school leaving age had been amended to 15 years of age. Although violation of the attendance laws included the penalty of fines, “many exceptions were allowed, and authorities failed to enforce, especially in rural areas” (Oreopoulos, 2005, p. 8). This lack of attendance enforcement is confirmed from Hawthorn’s (1967) report on the high drop-out rate of Indigenous children and the summation of Section 118 of the Indian Act of 1960 where “The government may appoint truant officers whose main duty is to compel young Indian children to attend school” (p. 64). To perhaps compel a child to attend school is markedly different from the implication that Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families.

To place the paradigmatic relationships of Table 3 into context, the children of New Denver’s Institution for Doukhobor children and the children sentenced by law to St. Joseph’s Training School for Boys were forcibly removed by legal authorities with no recourse for parents as cited within the Table’s contents. This missing context speaks to the erroneous implication that accompanies PAA Artefact #1 on Flickr that includes the words “removed” and “injustice” compared to “The educational system administered by the Indian Affairs Branch attempts to provide a complete educational program for every Indian child according to individual needs, local circumstances and the wishes of the parents” (Hawthorn, 1967, p. 32).

Table 4

Child Advocacy Relationships

SIGNIFIER **A Group of Children**	**SIGN** **Harms, Injustice, Trauma [Canada 21st Century Digital Use]**	**SIGNIFIED** **Difficult History Involving Children**
Identifiable without Consent– Social Media (Flickr, Wikimedia)	 (see Appendix A for image attribution)	Blue Quills Indian Residential School, Canada
Identity Protected – Media (CBC News: The National, 2023)	 [*screenshot* under Copyright Act of Canada, Fair Dealing S.29]	Anonymous Secondary School, Canada
Identity Protected – Media (Martinez, 2023)	[*screenshot* under Copyright Act of Canada, Fair Dealing S.29]	Military Service Academy – Cadet Training

Identity Protected – Media (Romo, 2021)	 GOD AND COUNTRY BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA [*screenshot* under Copyright Act of Canada, Fair Dealing S.29]	Boy Scouts of America
Identifiable image supplied by students – Media (Mitchell, 2023)	 Used With Permission Photo ‘Canadian Athletes’ appears courtesy Abby Spadafora and Melanie Hunt	Gymnastics Canada
Identifiable image supplied by student – World Wide Web	 (see Appendix B for image attribution)	New Denver Institution for Doukhobor Children, Canada

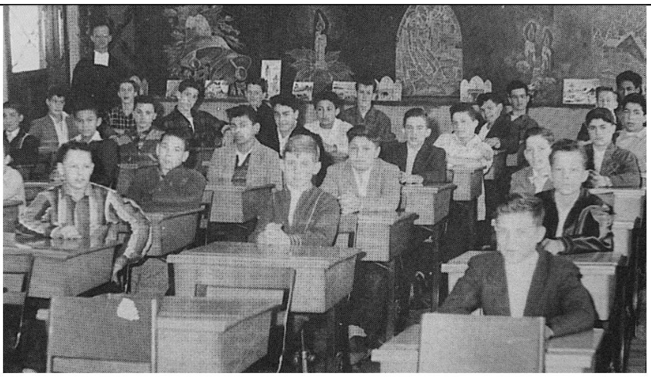
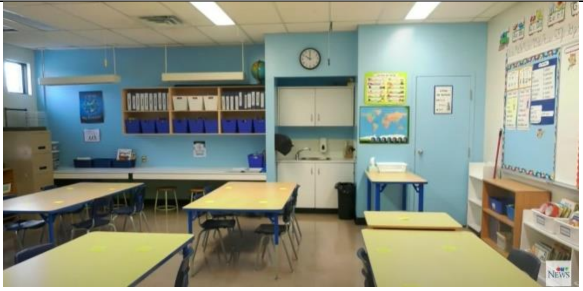
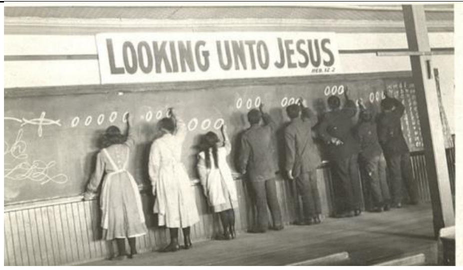
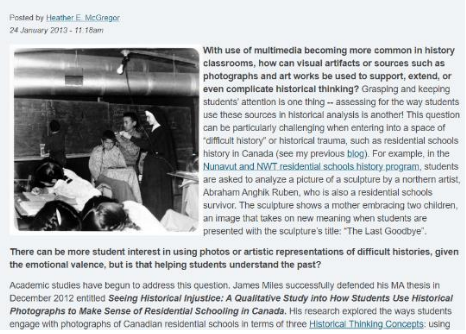
Identifiable image supplied by student – World Wide Web	 (see Appendix B for image attribution)	St. Joseph's Training School for Boys, Canada
Identity Protected – Media (CTV News, 2024)	 [*screenshot* under Copyright Act of Canada, Fair Dealing S.29]	Anonymous Ottawa School, Canada

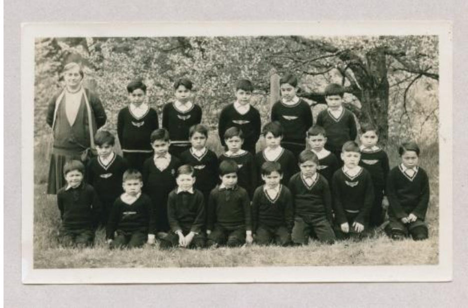
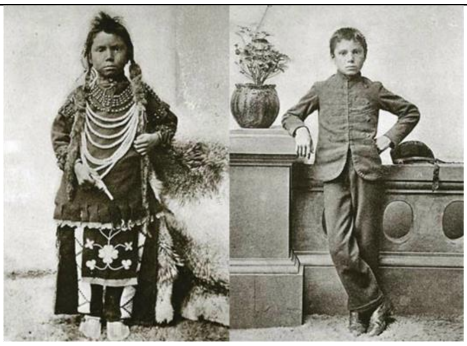
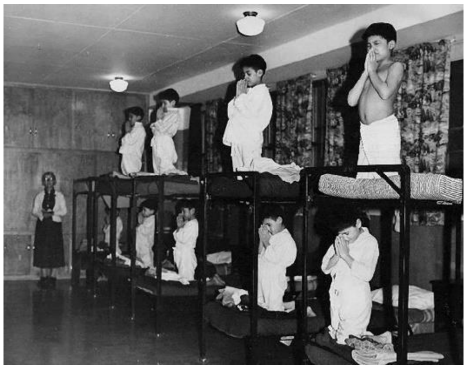
Table 4 presents an example of the social construction of digital images of children tied to difficult history. Missing context starts by asking why the faces of Indigenous children are identifiable. In all other instances presented in Table 4, the children are either invisible, their faces altered to protect against identification or identifiable by consent of the child in the historic analogue photograph. When Canadian society deals with the presentation of harms involving children, it is reasonable to say that the social norm is to protect the child's identity and identify those responsible. This is not a consideration when presenting images of students who attended the IRS system (see Appendix C for further examples of non-consenting identifiable children).

All of the children being referred to in Table 4 may still be alive today but only the children outside of the IRS system can demonstrate protection and privacy of their identities and agency over images. This context speaks to a society's false belief in the practice of child advocacy as it may also be concluded that it is a social norm to not protect the identity of Indigenous children in images.

Table 5

Habitual Use Relationships

SIGNIFIER **Indigenous School Children**	**SIGN** **Common Curriculum Content (Miles, 2019)** (see Appendix C for image attributions)	**SIGNIFIED** **Difficult History**
Circa 1919	 UCCA Artefact #1	NO focus on adults responsible
Circa 1958-1964	 Posted by Heather E. McGregor 24 January 2013 - 11:18am **With use of multimedia becoming more common in history classrooms, how can visual artifacts or sources such as photographs and art works be used to support, extend, or even complicate historical thinking?** Grasping and keeping students' attention is one thing -- assessing for the way students use these sources in historical analysis is another! This question can be particularly challenging when entering into a space of "difficult history" or historical trauma, such as residential schools history in Canada (see my previous blog). For example, in the Nunavut and NWT residential schools history program, students are asked to analyze a picture of a sculpture by a northern artist, Abraham Anghik Ruben, who is also a residential schools survivor. The sculpture shows a mother embracing two children, an image that takes on new meaning when students are presented with the sculpture's title: "The Last Goodbye". **There can be more student interest in using photos or artistic representations of difficult histories, given the emotional valence, but is that helping students understand the past?** Academic studies have begun to address this question. James Miles successfully defended his MA thesis in December 2012 entitled ***Seeing Historical Injustice: A Qualitative Study into How Students Use Historical Photographs to Make Sense of Residential Schooling in Canada.*** His research explored the ways students engage with photographs of Canadian residential schools in terms of three Historical Thinking Concepts: using [*screenshot* under Copyright Act of Canada, Fair Dealing S.29] LAC Artefact #2	NO focus on adults responsible

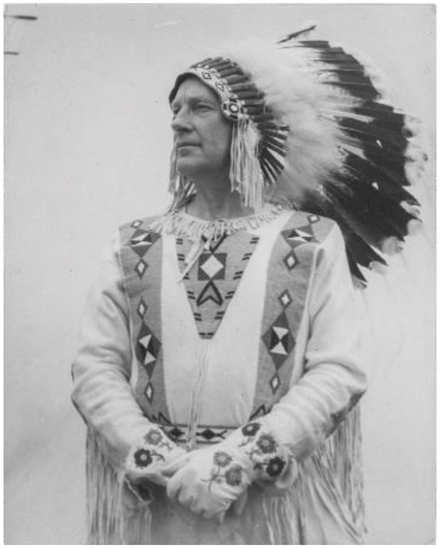
Circa 1960	 PMRA Artefact #1	NO focus on adults responsible
Circa 1890’s	 PAS Artefact #1	NO focus on adults responsible
Circa 1958	 AUA Artefact #1	NO focus on adults responsible

Missing context reveals that the image focus in Table 5 is on Indigenous children instead of the adults responsible for the children. This context further informs child advocacy and the teaching of difficult history that encourages critical inquiry through all sides of a conflict (Gross, 2014). In other words, if difficult history involves children, who was responsible for those children? Who is the woman in the background of Table 5’s AUA Artefact #1, for example? Critical inquiry addressing child advocacy would most likely place the woman in the foreground instead of the vulnerable children. The identity of vulnerable children is considered protected (see Footnote 20). Table 5's PAS Artefact #1's photo attribution would include the photographer's name which is currently unknown. Additionally, PMRA Artefact #1's photo attribution would name the teacher considering that the class does not belong to the boys as inferred by the current title of the photograph.

The following images that do place the responsible adults in the foreground inform missing context as related to PAA Artefact #1 (see Figures 12, 13, 14, 15).

Figure 12

Fr. Jean Lessard, O.M.I.

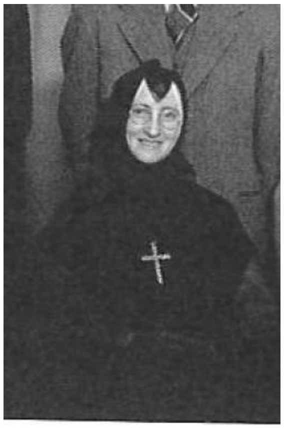


Note. Photo PR1973-0248864 box 18 (1) appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Fr. Lessard regularly visited the students of Blue Quills school. He studied, spoke and taught Cree to teachers and missionaries: "Fr. Lessard gave public lectures in St. Paul on Indian folklore and history, usually wearing the ceremonial dress of a Blackfoot Chief" (Persson, 1980, p. 131). This ceremonial dress was created and gifted to Fr. Lessard by the Blackfoot community. He encouraged "the preservation of their full culture and traditions which he considered as a human treasure" (Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 1966, p. 4). He passed away in 1966 at the age of 54.

Figure 13

Sr. Annette Potvin, Grey Nuns

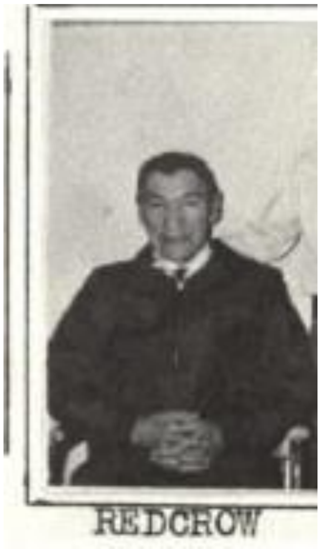


Note. Photo (cropped) appears courtesy of Histoire de Legal History Association, Town of Legal, Alberta.

Sr. Annette Potvin was the grade 8 teacher at Blue Quills school until 1959. She completed her Bachelor of Education at University of Alberta and her Master of Arts at University of Ottawa. Her archival fonds are preserved in the Alberta archives and include PAA Artefact #1. She was a prolific writer of liturgy and family history and the editor of Blue Quills school's newletters that were written and illustrated predominantly by the children from all grade levels. This quarterly newsletter included school and community events and was distributed to family and friends of the students. Surviving original newsletters are now preserved in the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Sr. Potvin passed away in 2003 at the age of 86.

Figure 14

Stanley Redcrow, Cree First Nations



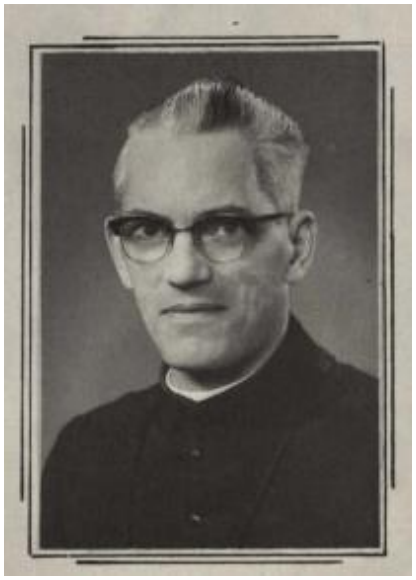
Note. Photo (cropped) 1968 Blue Quills Yearbook, PR1971.0220.5782AC appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

By late 1960, the Indian Affairs Department was phasing out Blue Quills school due to a regional High School being built in St. Paul and students being integrated into mainstream day schools. Mr. Redcrow, a member of Saddle Lake First Nation who shares the same surname as one of the girls in PAA Artefact #1, was an employee of Blue Quills for almost 20 years as the senior boys' supervisor. He was instrumental in organizing the Blue Quills Native Education Council to take over management and operation of the residency in 1970 with the Indian Affairs Department continuing to manage the school classrooms (Persson, 1980, Appendix C, number 33). In effect, Blue Quills became an

Indigenous managed residential school. Mr. Redcrow passed away at the age of 89 in 1999.

Figure 15

Rev. Fr. Lyonnais, OMI, Principal Blue Quills School



Note. Photo PR1971.0220.5781AC- p. 41 (cropped) appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Fr. Lyonnais is perhaps the most controversial agent to come out of Blue Quills School and the wider County of St. Paul communities. He began his missionary work on Saddle Lake Reserve decades before becoming Principal of Blue Quills school in 1962. It was at this time that attendance by female students dropped unusually (Persson, 1980). An investigation subsequently documented in the Newman (1967) report and corroborated by the Indian Affairs Branch revealed that the “Priest in charge” (p. 86) at the time was unreasonably strict with some children while permissive with some girls:

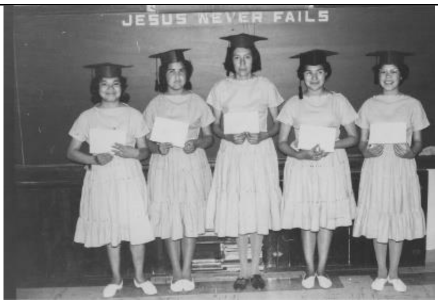
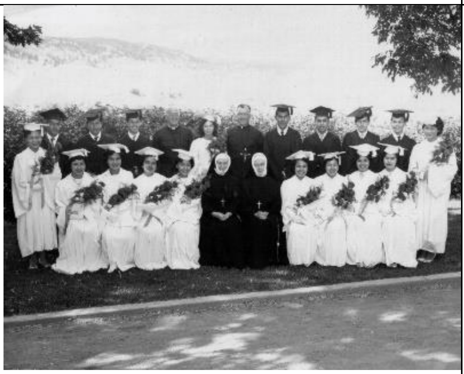
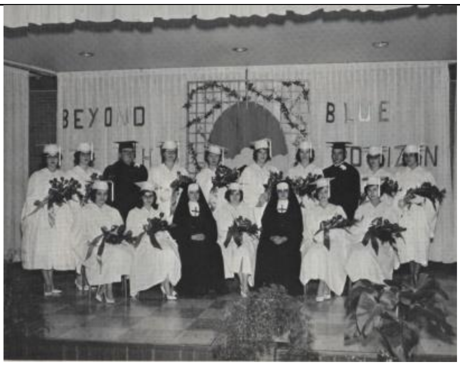
> Some of these girls have been permitted to visit their parents more than the one weekend per month that is the rule of the school, and some have received gifts of extra money and clothing from the priest. His [M. Newman] two female interviewers spoke to five of the teenage girls who have left school, and they all stated that advances made to them by the priest had been the main reason for their leaving. (p. 86)

It should be noted that in every instance that describes Newman’s findings, Fr. Lyonnais is never named. He is also never named in either Persson’s (1980) or the NCTR’s (2004) accounting of the incident. I have identified him by connecting Fr. Lyonnais’ transfer to the Indian Missions of the Meadow Lake district in Saskatchewan in 1966. This transfer was a documented consequence for the priest in charge (Newman, 1967). Fr. Lyonnais passed away in Edmonton, AB in 1987.

Table 6

Cultural Relationships

SIGNIFIER	**SIGN**	**SIGNIFIED**	**SIGNIFIED**
Ethnicity, **Graduation Caps**	**OMI Managed School** (Circa 1963 Canada) (see Appendix A for image attributions)	**Indigenous Culture Omitted from Curriculum**	**Formal High School Graduation**

Indigenous YES	 1963 O.M.I. managed, Blue Quills Indian Residential School, Alberta	NO (Persson, 1980; Hawthorn, 1967; Blue Quills Yearbooks,[28] NCTR, 2004)	NO
Indigenous YES	 Circa 1960's O.M.I. managed, Kamloops, B.C. Indian Residential School	NO (Hawthorn, 1967)	YES
Multi-Ethnic (French, English, German, Ukraine, Metis, First Nation) YES	 1964 O.M.I. managed, Morinville, Alberta Mainstream Day School	YES (Thibault 1965 Yearbook, Morinville, AB.)	YES

Missing context notably reveals that PAA Artefact #1 may not be a formal graduation photograph in relation to the other images presented in Table 6. It is a photograph of the grade 8 class of 1963 (see Figure 16) who may also be displaying their completion of a comprehensive sewing curriculum. Hence, the matching dresses. It is reasonable to suggest that the photographer felt it was meaningful to capture the students from head to toe for a reason compared to the image of the Grade 8 graduates the following year who are presented from the waist up (see Figure 17). Additionally, Figure 17 appears in the yearbook while PAA Artefact #1 was preserved in the teacher's personal papers and so perhaps signifies something beyond Grade 8 graduation. The image of the five students in matching dresses could be indicative of the home economics program available at the school: "In the sewing room you started with mending and graduated to sewing. By the time you left school [Grade 8] you were able to make anything, even a suit" (anonymous student as cited in Persson, 1980, p. 82).

---

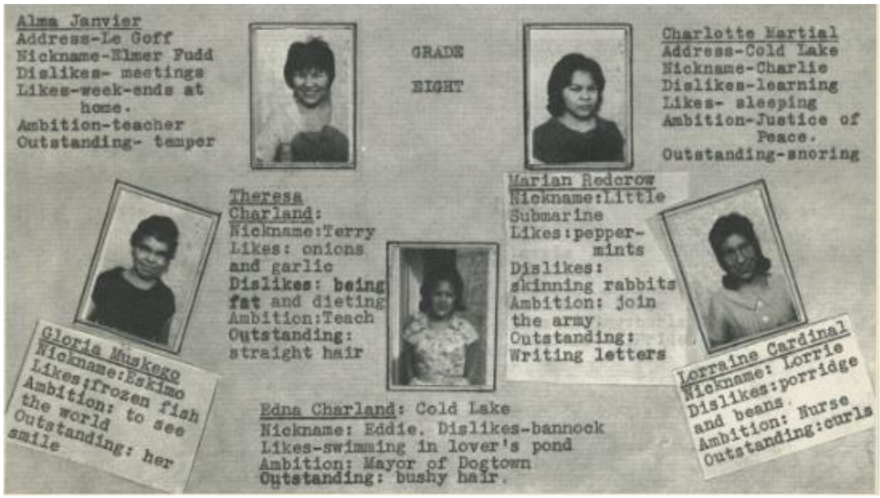
[28] https://indianresidentialschoolrecords.com/student-activities/ for newsletters and yearbooks.

Going on to achieve grade 12 for these five students meant bussing daily to schools in the neighboring town of St. Paul, Alberta if they qualified to remain in residence (Hawthorn, 1967). Otherwise, senior students returned to their communities to finish their education or, in some instances, boarded in Edmonton to complete high school at Alberta College, for example.

Socially, viewers of the image on Flickr may recognize it as a sign of five girls graduating Grade 12. The paradigmatic relationships presented make it clear that the social ritual of graduation from high school in circa 1960's from similar managed schools looked quite different. Without this cultural context, the students may be presenting as marginalized compared to the graduates from Table 6's Kamloops residential school, for example. Can the viewer now be sure that the girls are finished their childhood education?

Figure 16

Blue Quills School 1963 Grade 8 Class



Alma Janvier
Address-Le Goff
Nickname-Elmer Fudd
Dislikes- meetings
Likes-week-ends at
home.
Ambition-teacher
Outstanding- temper

GRADE
EIGHT

Charlotte Martial
Address-Cold Lake
Nickname-Charlie
Dislikes-learning
Likes- sleeping
Ambition-Justice of
Peace.
Outstanding-snoring

Theresa
Charland:
Nickname:Terry
Likes: onions
and garlic
Dislikes: being
fat and dieting
Ambition:Teach
Outstanding:
straight hair

Marian Redcrow
Nickname:Little
Submarine
Likes:pepper-
mints
Dislikes:
skinning rabbits
Ambition: join
the army
Outstanding:
Writing letters

Gloria Muskego
Nickname:Eskimo
Likes:frozen fish
Ambition: to see
the world
Outstanding: her
smile

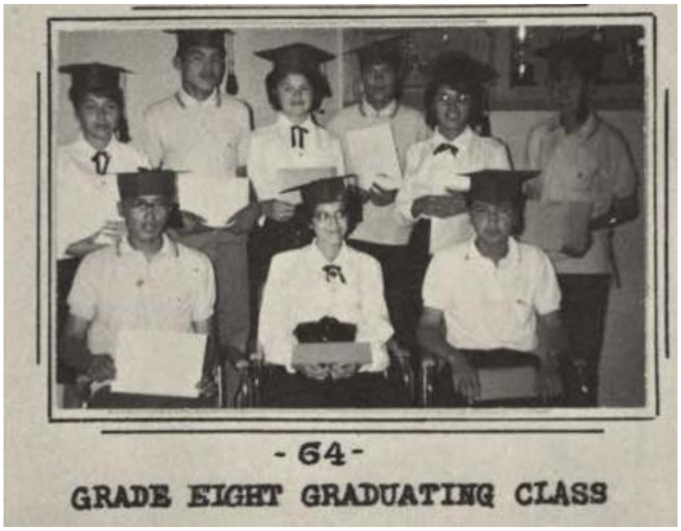
Lorraine Cardinal
Nickname: Lorrie
Dislikes:porridge
and beans
Ambition: Nurse
Outstanding:curls

Edna Charland: Cold Lake
Nickname: Eddie. Dislikes-bannock
Likes-swimming in lover's pond
Ambition: Mayor of Dogtown
Outstanding: bushy hair.

Note. PAA Artefact #9, Image PR1971.0220.5780AC, 1963 Blue Quills Yearbook, p. 47, GRADE 8, appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Figure 17

Blue Quills School 1964 Gr. 8 Graduating Class



Note. Photo PR1971.0220.5781AC appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta

Perhaps the most meaningful way to address missing context for Table 6's paradigmatic relationships is by presenting the culture of a school through images previously published in the school's yearbooks, newsletters[29] and Fr. Lessard's photo album.[30] These records are rich in depicting extracurricular activities that include both Christian and Indigenous spirituality as well as curriculum enhancement efforts such as public speaking, organized sports, student's union, yearbook and entertainment committees, theatre, concerts, talent competitions and 4-H Club.

What is missing from the IRS history curriculum today are the images preserving Indigenous culture. The following Figures 18, 19, and 20 were chosen for their eras spanning from 1938 to 1965 which are indicative of the decades that Blue Quills School was in operation and OMI managed. This context confirms that Indigenous language and culture were always a part of school life. These images were sourced from a Blue Quills newsletter, yearbook and photo album and represent the students' participation in and presentation of Indigenous culture. Figure 20 appears in the same yearbook that presents the images and names of the five girls in PAA Artefact #1. Could these girls also be in Figure 20? Can the viewer now be certain that the girls represent loss of Indigenous culture?

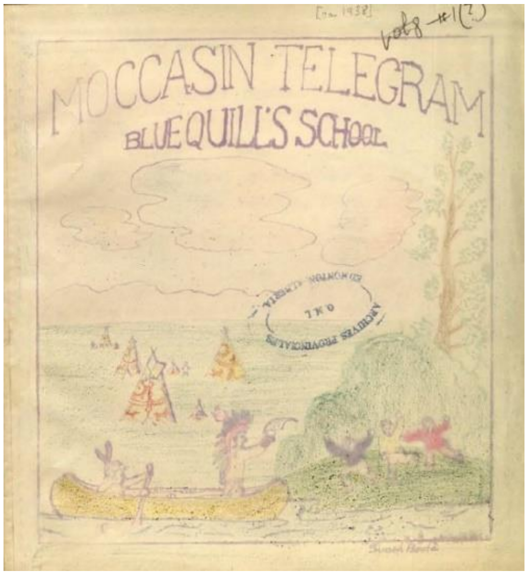
---

[29] Blue Quills yearbooks and newsletters are available to view in print and digital form at Provincial Archives of Alberta (https://searchprovincialarchives.alberta.ca/saint-paul-ab-blue-quills-school-annuaire-yearbook-2).

[30] Fr. Lessard's photo album is available to view in print form at Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Figure 18

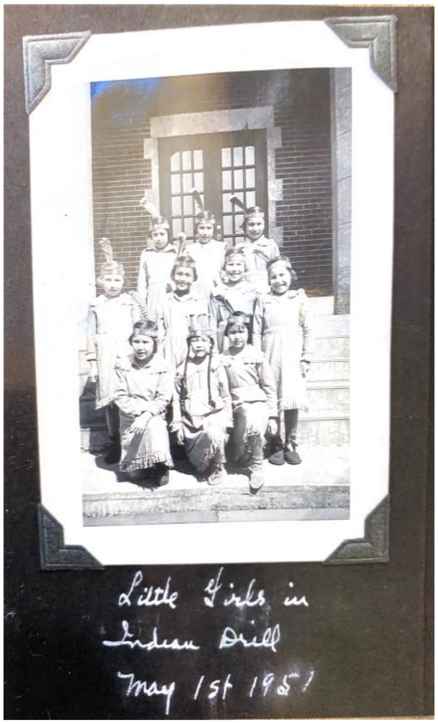
Moccasin Telegram Newsletter 1938



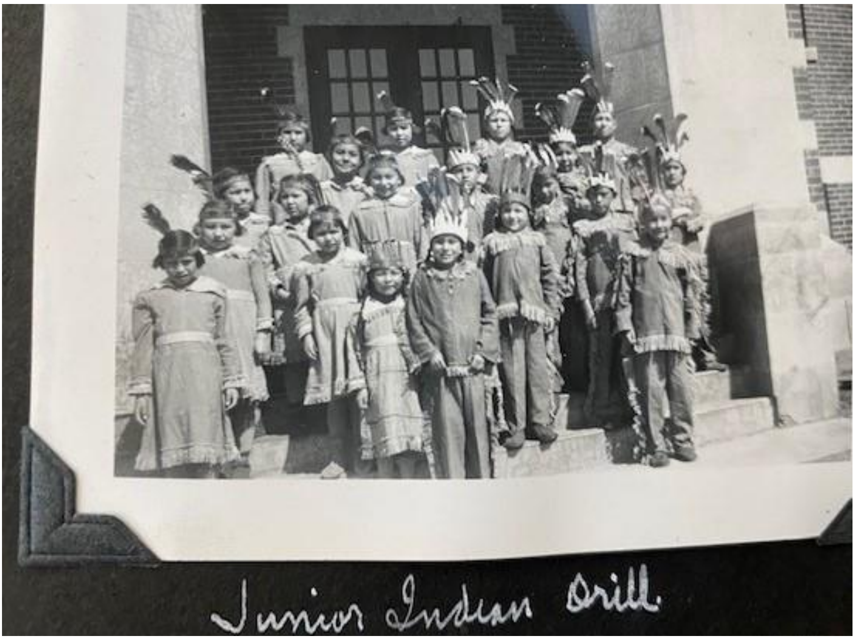
Note. ACC 74.156, 1938 Cover Illustration by Susan Houle appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Figure 19

Little Girls in Indian Drill & Junior Indian Drill 1951- Blue Quills School



Little Girls in
Indian Drill
May 1st 1951



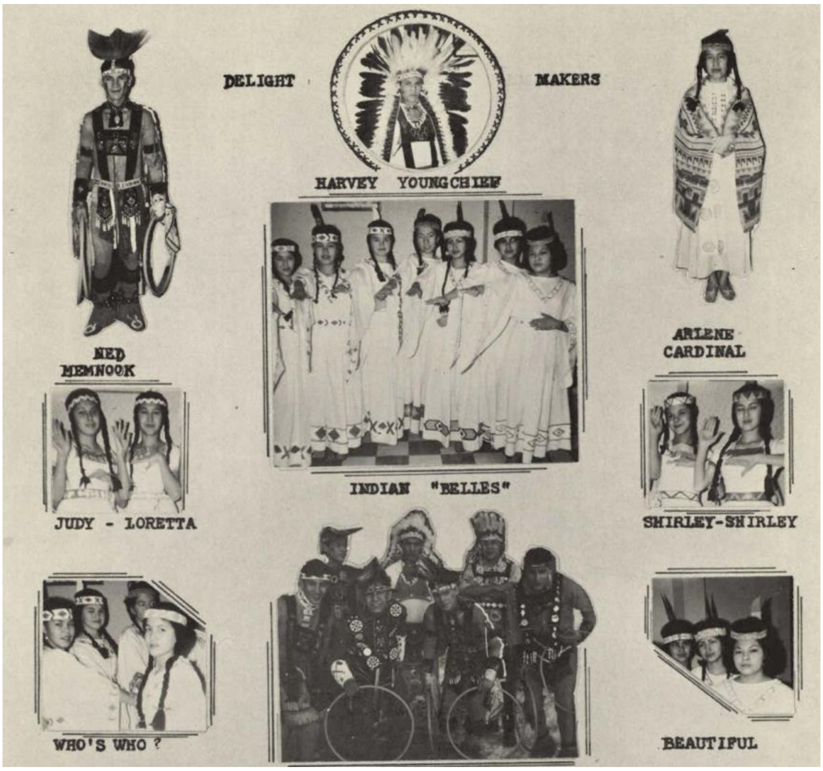
`

Junior Indian Drill

Note. Fr. Lessard Photo Album PR1973.0248.0864 appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Figure 20

Delight Makers' Indian Festival, Blue Quills Yearbook 1965


DELIGHT
MAKERS
HARVEY YOUNGCHIEF
NED
MEMNOOK
ARLENE
CARDINAL
INDIAN "BELLES"
JUDY - LORETTA
SHIRLEY-SHIRLEY
WHO'S WHO ?
BEAUTIFUL

Note. Image PR1971.0220.5781AC (cropped page 71) appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Chapter 5. Results

> In the end it is only the victims of misfortune who are visible, even if they are rendered nameless by virtue of being atomized to a single example of numbers so large as to be incomprehensible … the facelessness of the systems of dominance and privilege that force so many outside is constructed as ubiquitous and institutional, leaving no mark of individual responsibility for those in the mainstream. (Zingaro, 2009, p. 40)

Introduction

To only make visible the victims of misfortune as Zingaro (2009) describes above ignores missing context and the presentation of history from an adequate historiography (Smith, 2022; Niezen, 2016). As evidenced in this research analysis, there are numerous digital images that remain underutilized that were originally created to preserve a photographic history of Blue Quills school and its Christian and Indigenous cultures. Rupar et al. (2024) stress the facilitation of reconciliation by realizing that both sides of a conflict must be studied, presented and in communication with each other once the society is in a post-conflict stage. In essence, everyone involved must be present at the table.

The following chapter answers the research questions and summarizes the results of each paradigmatic relationship pattern to finally inform second order semiotics and Barthes' signification or the "culturally shared meanings" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 37) as the final outcome of a semiotic analysis (Rose, 2016; Barthes, 2012).

Research Question

What context is missing from the habitual use and dissemination of digitized Crown photography of Indigenous children to teach difficult history (Canada’s IRS system)? The following list is informed by provincial, federal and academic archival holdings as cited throughout this research and presents an understanding from everyone involved:

- Yearbook and newsletter images relative to the era being studied.
- Political and social context of the era being studied.
- Documentation from all sides of a conflict.
- Identities of responsible adults.
- Student admittance and discharge records.
- Culture, faith and linguistic perspectives and practices relative to the era being studied.
- Treaty implications for families involved in their child’s education.
- Municipal school board implications for families involved in their child’s education.
- Federal vs. provincial governance of education.
- Child welfare governing admittance to a residential school.
- Federal, provincial and municipal governance of integration.

sub–Research Question One

Does the absence of context affect truth value? Truth value, measured on a scale from high to low modality as a judgement is only emphasizing the consequences of missing context within this semiotic analysis. This analysis is only the beginning as the purpose of semiotics is to open an enquiry (Rose, 2016; Bopry, 2002; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021; van Leeuwen, 2005). Clearly, missing context affects truth value. Notably, the accompanying text to the PAA's Flickr folder (as quoted earlier on page 62) describes assimilation or the rejection of a child's heritage culture as associated not only with PAA Artefact #1 but the IRS system Canada-wide.

sub–Research Question Two

A number of connotations are constructed through the use of images of Indigenous children:

- lack of choice and autonomy
- child abuse
- adequate historiography
- loss of language and culture

Second Order Semiotics: Institutional Pattern

Residential schooling for children in Canada was a cultural pattern that included private (Congregation de Notre-Dame's school for girls, see Appendix B) and federally funded institutions in partnership with religious organizations. Children of various religious, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds were enrolled in these institutions (as presented in Table 3). Institutional care for children in Canada can trace its ideological roots back to Europe as is evident from the letters of Canada's Superintendent of Education in the mid-19th century, Rev. Egerton Ryerson, to his assistant, J. George Hodgins (1883):

> While I devoted the year 1845 to visiting educating countries [Belgium, France, Italy, Bavaria, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, United Kingdom] and investigating their system of instruction, we have been enabled to build up the most extensive establishment in the country, leaving nothing, as far as I know, to be devised in the completeness of its arrangements, and in the good character and efficiency of its officers. (p. 352)

This 1845 tour included an industrial school for children from “poor” families in Hofwyl, Switzerland where Ryerson (1898) described it as “ a blessing to hundreds of peasant youth, and a model of all similar establishments” (p. 75). This ideology was not unusual for its time and also included orphanages such as Nova Scotia’s Home for Colored Children.[31]

Regarding the education of status Indigenous children residing on reserves, the Treaty 6 signatories (Chiefs, Headmen, Band Councilors and representatives for the Crown) agreed that the Crown would be responsible for maintaining “schools for instruction in such reserves hereby made as to Her government of the Dominion of Canada may seem advisable whenever the Indians of the reserve shall desire it” (Duhame, 1964, paragraph 15). In other words, the Crown was obligated to Status Indians when a school was requested. In the case of Blue Quills residential school, Chief Blue Quills of Saddle Lake Reserve did just that in the late 19th century. This pattern fills in missing context around the false belief that Indigenous children were forced into institutional education against the will of their guardians and community—a common assumption imbedded in history curriculum.

---

[31] https://restorativeinquiry.ca/

Historic federal and provincial documentation and reports on Indian education verify that established schools were optional for Indigenous children (Newman, 1967; Hawthorn, 1967; Gordon, 1963). The federal government's Education Division of the Indian Affairs Branch documented annual reports on the reasons for Indigenous children withdrawing from school which included Class A, B and C destinations: continuing education elsewhere, including post-secondary and public mainstream schools, employment, marriage, helping at home, death or disability or corrective institutions. For example, in the same era as PAA Artefact #1 for the province of Alberta, approximately 60% of students withdrew for continuing education reasons and 38% for other reasons. Of all eligible/school age Indigenous children enrolled in Indian schools (day or boarding) in 1960 Alberta only 38% were enrolled in a residential/boarding school.[32] This does not account for Indigenous children enrolled in mainstream public schools. This context further demonstrates that continuing enrollment in an Indian residential school was a choice.

Additionally, admitting children into institutional care had to be justified as a social need:

> With reference to your letter of September 17 (1953) regarding the re-admission of the five children to the Blue Quills Indian Residential School, please advise the

---

[32] STATISTICAL REPORT ON DESTINATIONS OF PUPILS WITHDRAWING FROM INDIAN SCHOOLS, JUNE 1960 [ALBERTA], PAA – ACC. GR 1982.197, BOX 2 ITEM 000023, Table 33, p. 34-35

> necessity for institutional care for these children as it is noted that in all instances the children's parents live on reserves where day schools are accessible.[33]

While the students appearing in PAA Artefact #1 were not forcibly incarcerated, there were children legally removed from their homes and sentenced to institutional care as in the Doukhobor children of New Denver, BC and children deemed criminals or delinquent as in Ontario's St. Joseph's Training School for Boys (as presented in Table 3). This social comparison distinction is valuable in establishing how forcible confinement was defined, expressed and understood within the context of circa 1960's Canada. Consequently, using images of Indigenous children as a sign connoting forcible institutionalization perpetuates the false belief that the children were removed and isolated from their communities against their will (see Table 7).

Table 7

Mythic Signification - Enforced Institutionalization

1st ORDER SEMIOLOGY (Denotation or Literal Meaning)	SIGNIFIER	Ethnicity, Segregated & Boarding
	↓	
	SIGNIFIED	Isolated from Community
	↓	
	SIGN	Residential Institution *(becomes the signifier at 2nd Order)*
	↓	↓

---

[33] Indian Affairs School Files, RG10, Volume 6347, File 751-10, part 5 (Digital Public Archives/Archives Publiques).

2nd ORDER SEMIOLOGY – Level of Myth (Connotation or Deeper Meaning)	SIGNIFIER ↓	Residential Institution
	CONNOTATION ↓	Lack of Choice and Autonomy
	MYTH	Enforced Institutionalization

Second Order Semiotics: Child Advocacy Pattern

The missing context apparent in the child advocacy pattern is that the Indigenous children being used to represent difficult history are identifiable. This is not the social norm for Canada—even North America—when publicly reporting on adults responsible for difficult history as is apparent in the relationship comparisons of Table 4. Social norms encompass acceptable and expected behaviors (Rupar et al., 2024). Blurring the face of a child is an expected social norm that may signify advocacy, protection or respect for the privacy of that child where it is understood that the story is about an adult responsible or perpetrator. Habitually, this level of protection is not afforded to Indigenous children; even children who may still be alive today as is evident from the digital images uploaded to Flickr by the PAA (see Footnote 7).

Former analogue photographs of children attending residential schools are now digitized to the World Wide Web primarily through provincial, federal, post-secondary and religious archives. From there, for example, the images are spreading to Wikimedia where Sr. Annette Potvin fonds can now be found. This essentially invites distance educators and course designers to lift these images and use them to teach difficult history. While easily accessible now to the public, ethically, the students may be alive today and continue to hold no agency over the use of their image. Consequently, using images of identifiable Indigenous children as a sign connoting difficult history perpetuates the false belief that society advocates for children (see Table 8).

Table 8

Mythic Signification - Child Advocacy

1st ORDER SEMIOLOGY (Denotation or Literal Meaning)	SIGNIFIER	A Group of Children
	↓	
	SIGNIFIED	Difficult History Involving Children
	↓	
	SIGN	Harms, Injustice, Trauma *(becomes the signifier at 2nd Order)*
	↓	↓
2nd ORDER SEMIOLOGY – Level of Myth (Connotation or Deeper Meaning)	SIGNIFIER	Harms, Injustice, Trauma
	↓	
	CONNOTATION	Child Abuse
	↓	
	MYTH	Child Advocacy

Second Order Semiotics: Habitual Use Pattern

Missing context may be most notable around appropriate attribute conventions and absence of images of responsible adults in Table 5. These common images correspond to how PAA Artefact #1 is now being represented. Of the five images in Table 5, four are of identifiable children. Table 5's LAC Artefact #2 is restricted from use yet continues to be included in secondary school curriculum with no evidence of that missing context being included in teacher instructions as is evident from the image description in James Miles' (2019) article. None of the children have agency over the use of their image and only one image, PAS Artefact #1, identifies the child as Thomas Moore.

The habit of reaching for an identifiable image of an Indigenous child to teach difficult history may be a distinct social norm that shapes “intergroup relations in post conflict societies, and specifically reconciliation” (Rupar et al., 2024, p. 1). Although Rupar et al.’s (2024) study deals with post conflict Kosovo, their research is relevant to post conflict Canada’s intergroup relationships between Indigenous peoples and European descendants. Most notably, Rupar et al.’s research addresses the crucial consideration of both sides of a conflict in order to realize reconciliation. Table 5 highlights the habitual presentation of only one side.

Newman’s (1967) study involving former Blue Quills School students and the summation of conflict explaining the high dropout rate includes an example of everyone at the table: overly-strict administration staff, poor management of supervisory staff on the part of OMI and “poor educational environment of the reserve homes” (p. 85). Allowing only one side to dominate the story of the residential school without presenting “other forms of evidence, a lacuna opens up between versions of the past based on personal testimony and other, largely documentary evidence” (Smith, 2022, p. 291). Perpetuating only the dominate story can be described as inadequate historiography or failure to examine all sources in order to cinch up those gaps (Smith, 2022; Niezen, 2016). Consequently, using only images of Indigenous children as a sign of adequate historiography perpetuates the false belief that a comprehensive history is being presented (see Table 9).

Table 9

Mythic Signification - Habitual Use

1st ORDER SEMIOLOGY (Denotation or Literal Meaning)	SIGNIFIER ↓ SIGNIFIED ↓ **SIGN** ↓	Indigenous School Children Difficult History Common Curriculum Content *(becomes the signifier at 2nd Order)* ↓
2nd ORDER SEMIOLOGY – Level of Myth (Connotation or Deeper Meaning)	SIGNIFIER ↓ CONNOTATION ↓ **MYTH**	Common Curriculum Content Adequate Historiography Presentation of Comprehensive History

Second Order Semiotics: Cultural Relationship Pattern

Without context, the audience viewing the digital image of five girls with graduation caps on may assume that they graduated high school at Blue Quills School. The image and its text referring to Jesus may be a distinct sign of Christianity and academic rituals of graduation. The missing context related to the image fills in a broader view of the culture of the school and speaks to the value of social semiotics, paradigmatic relationships, and the connection between the analyst's perspective and the image.

For example, coming across five girls from an OMI managed Roman Catholic school in 1963 Alberta and the wearing of black grad caps immediately invoked a sense of confusion on my part. Black grad caps were worn by senior boys. While many rural

Canadian children only achieved a Grade 8 education in the early 20th century (Hawthorn, 1967), presenting a 1963 graduation image in digital form in the 21st century without context may be misleading. The ritual of graduation simply meant that Blue Quills did not offer Grades 9 to 12.

While the digitized PAA Artefact #1 is described as representing Blue Quills School, the analogue image was never published in the school's yearbooks or newsletters which contain a wealth of images representing Blue Quills School. These archives, along with OMI Cree newspapers and a principal's photo album provide the weight of historical context that include the practice of preserving and celebrating Indigenous language and culture that the students and their families actively participated in. Consequently, using images of Indigenous children as a sign connoting loss of language and culture perpetuates the false belief of cultural genocide (see Table 10).

Table 10

Mythic Signification – Loss of Language and Culture

1st ORDER SEMIOLOGY (Denotation or Literal Meaning)	SIGNIFIER ↓	Ethnicity, Graduation Caps
	SIGNIFIED ↓	Formal Graduation, Indigenous Culture Omitted from Curriculum
	SIGN ↓	OMI Managed School *(becomes the signifier at 2nd Order)* ↓

2nd ORDER SEMIOLOGY – Level of Myth (Connotation or Deeper Meaning)	SIGNIFIER	OMI Managed School
	↓	
	CONNOTATION	Loss of Language/Culture
	↓	
	MYTH	Cultural Genocide

Semiotic Mythology

An Inquiry into the Connotation of Cultural Genocide

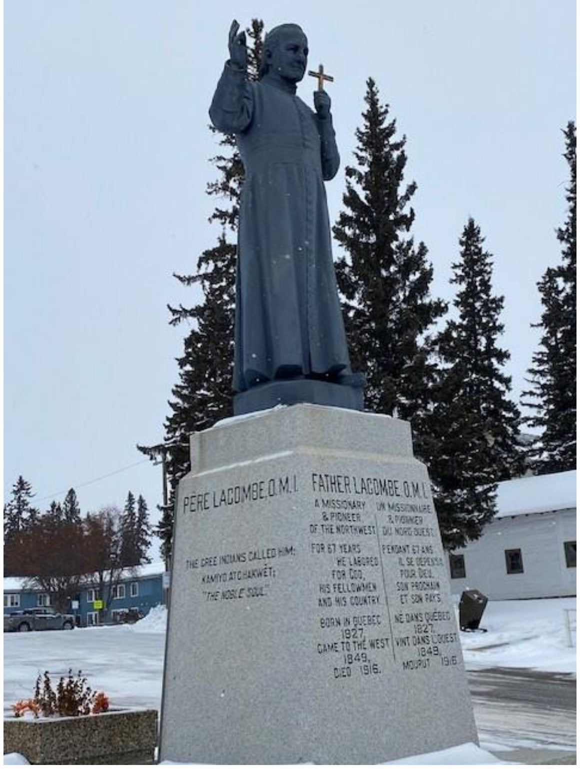
The TRC (2015) findings included loss of language and culture under the umbrella of genocide even though earlier NCTR (2004) summations of Blue Quills School acknowledge Indigenous language and culture in the school. This final connotation is perhaps the most widely utilized and familiar theme used by curriculum designers, educators and researchers on the subject of the IRS as Miles' (2019) study confirmed that "the majority of students were familiar with Indian Residential Schools because of growing public awareness brought about by the TRC" (p. 485). Conversely, the NCTR (2004) summary of Blue Quills School history acknowledges the Cree language as part of curriculum and extra-curricular initiatives and the active involvement of students' families with the school. The following summations inform the research question around missing context and its effect on truth value.

Perhaps one of the most notable and enduring historical figures responsible for Indigenous education in this region of Alberta was Father Lacombe (b. 1927–d. 1916) and his illustrations in Lacombe's Ladder specific to teaching catechism to Indigenous people. He was instrumental in translating the New Testament to Cree and wrote a Cree dictionary. His religious missions were entrenched in Cree and Blackfoot communities where he was subsequently named Kamiyo Atchakwet (The Noble Spirit) by a Cree Chief. The Blackfoot called him “The Man with a Good Heart” or Ars–Oskitsiparpiw.

Fr. Lacombe’s French, Cree and Blackfoot names can still be viewed in the City of St. Albert, Sturgeon County, Alberta upon an effigy to the man that greets visitors upon arrival to the Roman Catholic Oblates Mission (see Figure 21). This is the location of the original Father Lacombe Chapel which still stands. This is also the final resting place of the Grey Nuns of Montreal and OMI priests and brothers who managed Blue Quills School. Fr. Lacombe and his European and Indigenous followers’ reverence for and preservation of Cree and Blackfoot languages and culture supports the research outcome of cultural genocide as a myth.

Figure 21

Effigy of Father Lacombe, St. Albert, AB


PÈRE LACOMBE, O.M.I.
THE CREE INDIANS CALLED HIM:
KAMIYO ATCHAKWÊT;
"THE NOBLE SOUL"
FATHER LACOMBE, O.M.I.
A MISSIONARY
& PIONEER
OF THE NORTHWEST
FOR 67 YEARS
HE LABORED
FOR GOD,
HIS FELLOWMEN
AND HIS COUNTRY
BORN IN QUEBEC
1927,
CAME TO THE WEST
1849,
DIED 1916.
UN MISSIONNAIRE
& PIONNIER
DU NORD OUEST.
PENDANT 67 ANS
IL SE DEPENSA
POUR DIEU,
SON PROCHAIN
ET SON PAYS.
NÉ DANS QUÉBEC
1827,
VINT DANS L'OUEST
1849,
MOURUT 1916

Note. Photo Credit: The Author

Between 1899 and 1905, residential school inspector W. J. Chisholm reported that the students boarding at St. Joseph's residential school—the initial school located on Lac La Selle (Saddle Lake) that would later relocate as Blue Quills residential school—conduct themselves admirably as "the pupils' conduct is excellent … they are intelligent and attentive … the attendance much improved, and the children healthy and happy" (Castonguay, 1999, p. 112). Accounting for staged presentations for visiting inspectors, these reports demonstrate the absorbing of European culture close to 70 years before PAA Artefact #1. Students attending Blue Quills School in 1963 were coming from Christian Indigenous communities going back generations (Newman, 1967). The practice of evangelizing Indigenous families was already a century gone by.

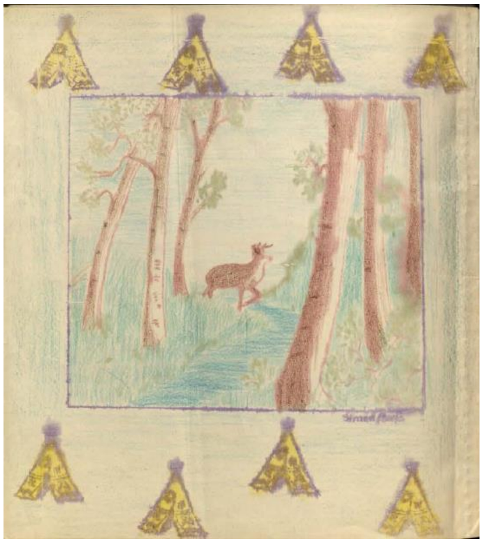
Following the transfer of Blue Quills' newsletter editor, Sr. Potvin, the yearbooks take on a broader tone beyond religion and into social and community activities and academic accomplishments. It is perhaps a sign of the times as the school culture was participating in numerous community activities outside of the school (public speaking tours, hockey tournaments, Indigenous art shows, for example). All students enrolled in Blue Quills School were coming from multi-generational Roman Catholic families but not necessarily speaking English on the first day of school. Their first language continued to dominate throughout the 20th century. Subsequently, as reported in Hawthorn (1967), parents sent their children to school with the expectation that they learn English.

Additionally, students exhibited their cultural arts and crafts both within the Indigenous schools in St. Paul County and publicly going as far back as 1893 at the Chicago World Fair (Castonguay, 1999). The Blue Quills' newsletter (Moccasin

Telegram) began in 1937 and was written and illustrated by the children including images rich in Indigenous culture and traditions (see Figure 22).[34]

Figure 22

Blue Quills 1939 Newsletter Back Cover Illustrations



Note. PR1971.0220.5667AC appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Illustrations of Indigenous symbols can be found throughout the publications, including the work of a child named Alex Simeon Janvier who would go on to complete Grade 12 at St. Thomas College North Battleford and become a renowned First Nation artist:

---

[34] To review digitized copies of originals now kept at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, see https://searchprovincialarchives.alberta.ca/saint-paul-ab-ecole-blue-quills-exemplaires-de-la-publication-moccasin-telegram-12

> Father Principal asked the pupils of our class to draw a border design that could be painted on the walls of the corridor [Blue Quills School]. We all tried our best, but of course Alex won, because he is the best drawer".[35]

Alex drew a recurring motive of eagle feathers. In anticipation of a visit from students at another school, Alex Janvier recounts how they were all taught to sing O Canada in Cree.

The Grey Nuns of Montreal and OMI Priests that established Blue Quills Residential School were French Canadians. Fluency in Cree and English were a condition of early employment (Persson, 1980). As newsletters flourished post-war between schools, they began to include Cree syllabics. The students were instructed in catechism in Cree and Chipewyan and encouraged to write to their parents in their first language.[36] It was common for English to be the second Language for both student and teacher:

> Father Larden read the gospel in English and then he preached a sermon in Cree. We all understood him very well and we enjoyed his sermon. I think that this is the first time that he preached in Cree, and we are glad that he did so well. He has learned how to skate and talk English since he is in Canada.[37]

The final decade of yearbooks in the 1960's present numerous photos celebrating the students in Indigenous regalia that they created and sewed themselves with mentorship from an Elder at Saddle Lake.[38] Referencing back to Sr. Annette Potvin fonds and the PAA images on Flickr, an April 1960 photo presents a group of boys in Sea Cadet uniforms inside a classroom. Portraits on the wall behind the children include Christian effigies, a Christian cross, the Pope and three portraits of Indigenous men in traditional regalia.

---

[35] https://searchprovincialarchives.alberta.ca/uploads/r/provincial-archives-of-alberta/a/6/f/a6f8f8295587f38dbfcc7ab64973c44fe20bc1cf6be8c2979fa2bb0bf7f87bcc/PR1971.0220.5768AC.pdf , 1948, p. 18.

[36] https://searchprovincialarchives.alberta.ca/saint-paul-ab-ecole-blue-quills-moccasin-telegram-2, PR1971.0220/5767, Saint Paul. AB: Ecole Blue Quills.

[37] PR1971.0220.5667AC Provincial Archives of Alberta, p. 17. Blue Quills Newsletter 1939.

Archival documents confirm for this region that both the Cree and Chipewyan culture and language were consistently encouraged, celebrated and included in the educational, recreational and religious curriculum, including attendance as a school group at Indian Festivals held at Saddle Lake:

> A very colorful Indian festival was held at Saddle Lake Reserve on December 27 and 28, 1962 … Performers included older generations of Indians as well as youngsters. The part played by the high school students was especially gratifying … Miss Madeleine Redcrow presented a lecture on Indian culture … All dancers wore beautiful hand-made Indian costumes with bead and quill work and the traditional head-gear … The Saddle Lake Band Council deserve special congratulations for putting on such a wonderful 'all-Indian show'.[39]

Culminating from the celebration of and reverence for Indigenous culture and language, the following list, by no means conclusive, highlights Indigenous namesakes specific to the province of Alberta in relation to Chief Blue Quills, the Cree community,

---

[38] https://searchprovincialarchives.alberta.ca/uploads/r/provincial-archives-of-alberta/5/8/c/58cfaf66ddd0242d3b552b53461bff1f115d33ceffaf0570c83c49a7f4f2bf80/PR1971.0220.5781AC.pdf, PR1971.0220.5781AC, 1965, p. 83.

[39] PAA ACC 74.156. Blue Quills, St. Paul Alberta 1962-1963. Archives Provincials, OMI, Edmonton, Alberta, p. 27

IRS students and their history within the era of PAA Artefact #1 or prior to the TRC (2015) findings—preserving Indigenous culture and language within Alberta communities:

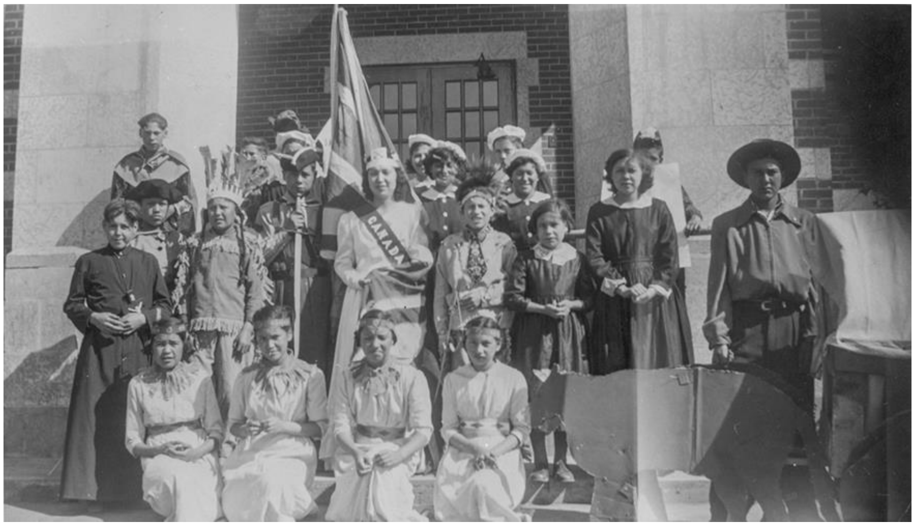
1. Blue Quills National Wildlife Area–created 1968 and managed by Canadian Wildlife Service, Federal Government
2. Keeheewin Public School, Edmonton, Alberta
3. Keheewin Community Garden Association, Edmonton, Alberta
4. Mee-Yah-Noh School–created 1960, Edmonton Public Schools
5. Steinhauer School–created 1970, Edmonton Public Schools
6. Saint Kateri Catholic School, Edmonton, Alberta
7. Alex Janvier School, Edmonton, AB (former student of Blue Quills School)
8. Blue Quills Residential Community–created 1979, Edmonton, AB

The Indian Affairs Branch, under the direction of the Federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, completed Volume II of the Hawthorn Report (1967). This volume reported Canada-wide findings on the educational situation of Indigenous people. For the province of Alberta, provincial curriculum guidelines included the inclusion of Indian languages, history and culture "to broaden the knowledge of Indian students of their own cultural traditions and to increase their pride in their origins, as well as their knowledge of their environment" (Hawthorn, 1967, p. 44).

A 1964 analogue image donated to the PAA from the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Alberta perhaps sums up pride in origins but also the mutual respect between Indigenous culture, Christian faith and European settlement as the children present in costumes and regalia for what was called a pageant (see Figure 23).

Figure 23

Blue Quills School Pageant

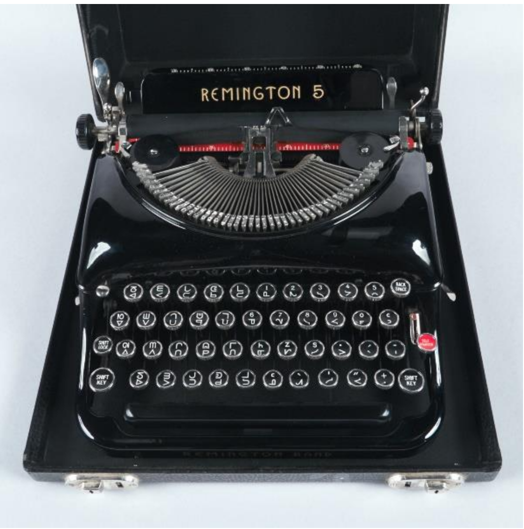


Note. Photo PR1997.0304/0001 Blue Quills Pageant 1964 appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Finally, dating from the late 19th century to circa 1970s, the OMI published regular Cree newspapers and calendars written entirely in Cree syllabics, eventually with a Cree typewriter, preserving Cree language and culture (see Figures 24, 25, 26).

Figure 24

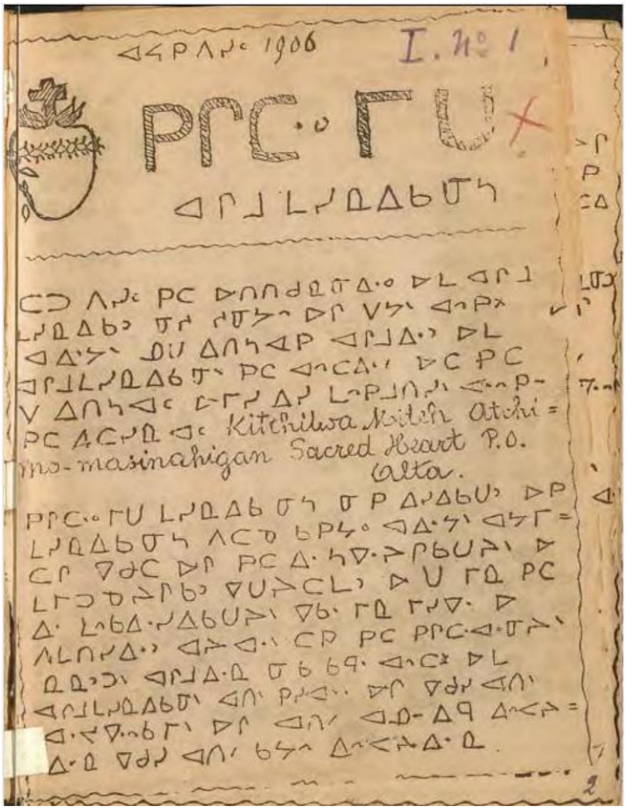
Cree Syllabic Typewriter



Note. Photo PH2004.9.1 Cree Syllabic Typewriter appears courtesy Sam Waller Museum, The Pas, Manitoba.

Figure 25

Cree Review, OMI, 1906



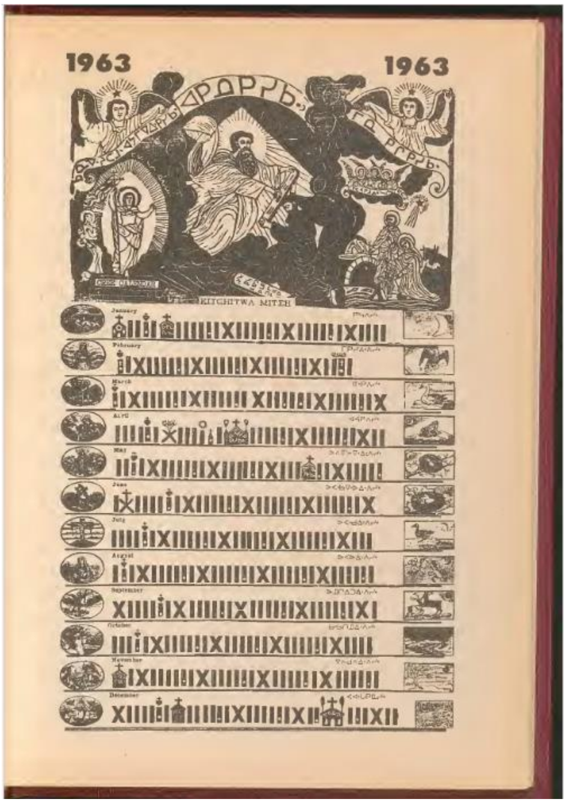
1906 I. No 1

Kitchikwa Nitch Atchi=mo-masinahigan Sacred Heart P.O. Alta.

Note. PR1971.0220.8870AC.pdf page 5 The Cree Review, OMI, appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Figure 26

Cree Calendar, OMI, 1963


1963
1963
KITCHITWA MITEH
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

Note. PR1971.0220.8921AC, page 5, 1963 Cree Calendar, OMI, appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Chapter 6. Discussion

This chapter concludes the research with first an overview of social stratification as related to Crown photography and its meaning and value in summarizing missing context followed by the resulting semiotic theory, recommendations for further research and concluding remarks.

An Issue of Class and Wealth

Morton Newman (1967) conducted community development research on Saddle Lake Reserve under the direction of the Government of Alberta, circa 1967. The research team consisted of Newman, a non-indigenous male research assistant, a female Band member, a member of Kainai (Blood) reserve in southern Alberta and a Cree woman from an unnamed reserve in Saskatchewan. They all resided for eight weeks with Saddle Lake community members. The research included extensive documentation on the state of education for the children of Saddle Lake. This included attendance at Blue Quills residential school, an on-site day school for grades one and two and schools in neighboring towns. The following summation relies heavily on the Newman report for its relevance to the overall context surrounding the existence of Blue Quills Residential School, the adults responsible in circa 1960's, and its highlights of the social and educational environment that the children were exposed to.

Blue Quills residential school's move from Saddle Lake Reserve to a rural location outside the town of St. Paul in 1931 was initiated as an opportunity to include students coming from neighboring reserves. Catholic parents/guardians exercised control over whether their children attended the boarding (residential) school or the Roman Catholic schools in St. Paul where they would be bussed daily and remain living at home

(Newman, 1967). Newman's research describes Indian Residential Schools as "boarding schools for children having poor home conditions, and for children who because of remoteness from the reserve school are unable to attend day schools" (p. 79).

Ninety-three percent of the research participants attended a residential school—boarding or attending but returning home daily—with fifty-nine percent in favor of the segregated Indian schools. Overwhelmingly, former students expressed dislike of corporal punishment and the historical practice of half days of instruction and half days of agricultural and home economic work.

Indian boarding and day schools were not solely English speaking (French and Cree, for example) as mentioned earlier which resulted in challenges when children were integrated into neighboring mainstream schools usually at the senior level. Indigenous parents who advocated for integration began speaking English to their preschoolers in order to "facilitate their transition into the integrated world" (p. 81). In other words, many children entering school at six or seven years old did not speak English.

Documentation confirms that Indigenous children and their families preferred the residential school system because the children would be fed adequately and "the poor children would be able to get decent clothes in the winter. School children often stated their reluctance to attend classes because they must wear old patched clothes or the same clothes every day" (Newman, 1967, p. 83). The researchers stress that "the Indian people oppose only the administration of the school, not the existence of the institution" (Newman, 1967, p. 87) mainly due to unqualified supervisors—typically former students, older members of Indigenous communities or town residents—who were "unqualified and unwilling to attempt more modern and appropriate methods of supervision of children" (Newman, 1967, p. 87).

A statement following the 1970 take-over of administration and management of the school reiterated that the children would continue to be taught the "white man's ways" and Indian culture (Persson, 1980); a culture that would not be available in the neighboring municipal schools. The language would be Cree. The dominating Cree culture prevailed as the Chipewyan language, previously included in curriculum, would no longer be available to Blue Quills students.

With reference to class hierarchy, integrated Indigenous children experienced discrimination in the form of derogatory name calling by both teachers and non-Indigenous students and they were made to sit at the back of the class. Some families felt inferior to even the poorest "white" children in the integrated schools; something that they did not feel when their children were at the segregated residential school (Persson, 1980). Additionally, the vocational training historically available in the residential school was absent for the senior students attending day school in St. Paul. This was a contributing factor to the high drop-out rate of students who also informed researchers that they were "not interested in the regular academic courses" (Newman, 1967, p. 86). It appears from the report that former students disliked the academic programs at both the segregated and mainstream schools.

The reasons for the high dropout rate and an analysis of the region's interpersonal relationships are outside the scope of this research, but it is clear that the Newman report confirms poverty, discrimination, corporal punishment and child neglect as historical truths that may currently remain hidden behind the myth of cultural genocide. Ironically, loss of language and culture is most evident in the yearbooks for Racette High School in St. Paul, where senior Blue Quills' students were bussed daily and no longer learned in Cree or Chipewyan or practiced Indian Drills, for example, as they had at Blue Quills School.[40]

Dr. Diane Persson's (1980) research for this region ends with a warning to heed the findings of previous social scientists addressing the influence of class and wealth on decision making for the education of children. Today, the institutionalization of children continues to be proposed as a viable solution for "other" children. For example, the education of Roma children in Europe under the guise of advocacy for the poor and ethnically outnumbered (Csesznek, 2018).

A Semiotic Theory

A semiotic theory describes a society's ideologies as constructed from social/cultural norms related to a semiotic analysis (Rose, 2016). The habitual use of identifiable Indigenous children to teach difficult history may perpetually distract from the history of the adults responsible, exploit the children and risk, as is already evident, the gradual replacement of historical artefacts with myth.

Ideologically, Indigenous children do not warrant the same privacy and protection afforded non-Indigenous children when it comes to informing on historical harms. Their images may now represent the digital tattoos used to distract from the documented experiences that they, their families, communities and school staff, agents and researchers left behind.

---

[40] Digital copies of Racette High School yearbooks for 1969 and 1970 were provided to the researcher by Richard Boychuk, now of Ottawa, Ontario, who attended high school with students boarding at Blue Quills.

There is a difficult history; one that was articulated by children, their families and school staff for decades and it may not be about a school system. It may be about corporal punishment and child neglect (Persson, 1980; Newman, 1967; Hawthorn, 1967, NCTR, 2004) perpetrated by all sides, in and out of school. It is not difficult to find evidence of this regardless of the ethnicity or circumstances of children. It is just difficult to find a digital image of it.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are numerous directions that future research could take just based on the paradigmatic relationships in this project. I have chosen to highlight inadequate historiography, child advocacy, preservation of heritage culture and semiotics.

This project asked what context was missing but did not explore the consequences of inadequate historiography. For example, once missing context was realized, I no longer understood the sign’s (PAA Artifact #1) message. I was no longer on board socially. Further research could address consequences for learners and educators; including a society’s ability to realize peace post-conflict.

Bringing to light society’s false belief in advocacy and protection for all children warrants further research into social norms around the presentation of images of children used to inform on child abuse.

A common theme apparent in most federal, local, and church documentation on the history of Indian education in Canada is the reluctance for both non-Indigenous and

Indigenous people to support integration of all children into mainstream schools. There is a marked difference between assimilation (rejection of heritage culture) and integration (facilitation of heritage culture) that may be systemically misunderstood as is evident in the TRC's (2015) and PAA's (2014) descriptions of the IRS system as a policy of assimilation. This research revealed an interesting process of integration in a segregated school which may warrant further research of this process in other segregated schools.

Finally, social semiotics may also include a linguistic analysis that could provide a valuable window into social norms and ideologies. For example, historic correspondence between administrators and agents involved in the IRS system referred to Blue Quills as a boarding school or, in later years, a hostel instead of using the word residential. The word residential has now become synonymous in the 21st century with the segregated IRS system. Additionally, the Blue Quills Native Education Council referred to the IRS as "Blue Quills School or Blue Quills Student Residence depending on to which aspect, the school or residence, was referred" (NCTR, 2004). This essentially separated the words residence and school. This interesting modification of language to signal or entrench a cultural message warrants further research into its effect on educators and learners.

Conclusion

While my semiotic analysis was able to uncover a wealth of context from all sides, it was unable to discover anything that the five girls in PAA Artefact #1 or Sr. Potvin may have left behind to explain the photograph. The 1963 Blue Quills yearbook does contain announcements by three of the girls for winning Public Speaking awards and best costume at the Halloween masquerade.[41] Missing context should alert course and curriculum designers in online, distance education to critically reflect on choice of image for ethical implications that fly in the face of social norms.

While we may understand the paternal and even protectionist ideology within the context of Crown–Indigenous relations from decades ago (Persson, 1980), repurposing historic images today calls for additional ethical disclosures as part of photo attributions: Crown copyright in perpetuity, subjects and context of photo remain unknown. Additional reflection upon the question of why Indigenous children are identifiable while the adults responsible are invisible may be a much-needed benchmark. Ethically, the image could be considered unusable in representing harms against children (see Appendix D for an example of ethical considerations vs. copyright considerations).

Successful education on the topic of difficult histories includes everyone at the table and encouragement of “students in critical inquiry, helping them develop the ability to see many sides of a story” (Gross, 2014, p. 443). Dr. Persson’s Doctoral thesis (1980) is a remarkable example of everyone at the table. Research participants included the responsible adults and former students, including many of the people mentioned in this research: Sr. Potvin, Alex Janvier, Fr. Lyonnais, Mr. Stanley Redcrow, Frank Large (brother to Eric Large), and the Cree Elder who responded to my enquiries and wished to remain anonymous (p. 336, Appendix A).

The current educational and political approach to Canadian IRS history may be an example of the consequences of missing context. This includes attempts to outlaw critical inquiry as evidenced by the introduction of private member's Bill C-413 to The House of Commons which proposes criminalizing residential school denialism.[42] Canada may remain in a state of conflict while only Indigenous children's images are seated at the table and non-Indigenous world views are assumed to be harmful and excluded from a history that, in the words of the former student of Mohawk Industrial Residential School as quoted earlier, is also their story to tell.

---

[41] https://indianresidentialschoolrecords.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Blue-Quills-Yearbook-1963.pdf

---

[42] https://www.parl.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/bill/C-413/first-reading

REFERENCES

Aiello, G. (2020). Visual semiotics: Key concepts and new directions. In Pauwels, L. & Mannay, D. (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of visual research methods.* SAGE. Giorgia AIELLO | University of Milan, Milan | UNIMI | Department of Social and Political Sciences | Research profile (researchgate.net)

Aliakbari, M., & Kamalvand, A. (2023). Social semiotic analysis of photographic elders on websites. *Visual Studies*, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2023.2188251

Amineh, R. J., & Asl, H. D. (2015). Review of constructivism and social constructivism. *Journal of Social Sciences, Literature and Languages 1*(1), 9-16. https://www.blue-ap.com/J/List/4/iss/volume%2001%20(2015)/issue%2001/2.pdf

Anderson, S. (2018). The construction of national identity and the curation of difficult knowledge at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. *Museum Management and Curatorship 33*(4), 320-343. https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2018.1466351

Azizah, A. & Andriyanti, E. (2023). Multicultural values represented in English textbooks for Indonesian learners: A social semiotic analysis. *Journal of Education 23*(1), 53-73. https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v23i1.6023

Barthes, R. (1988). *The semiotic challenge.* Hill and Wang.

Barthes, R. (2012). *Mythologies: The complete edition, in a new translation.* Hill and Wang.

Bopry, J. (2002). Semiotics, epistemology, and inquiry. *Teaching and Learning: The Journal of Natural Inquiry & Reflective Practice 17*(1), 5-18. https://commons.und.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1245&context=tl-nirp-journal

Brady, M., & Hiltz, E. (2017). The archaeology of an image: The persistent persuasion of Thomas Moore Keesick's residential school photographs. *Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies 37*, 61-85. https://doi.org/10.3138/topia.37.61

Carstens, P. (1971). Coercion and change. In R. J. Ossenberg (Ed.), *Canadian society: pluralism, change, and conflict.* Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd.

Castonguay, T. (1999). *A leap in faith: The Grey Nuns ministries in western and northern Canada* (Vol. 1). The Grey Nuns of Alberta.

CBC News: The National. (2023, June 12). *Former Toronto music teacher accused of abuse* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5RL8sMaCdI

Clark, A., & Morriss, L. (2017). The use of visual methodologies in social work research over the last decade: A narrative review and some questions for the future. *Qualitative Social Work 16*(1), 29-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325015601205

Creswell, J., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th Ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* SAGE.

Csesznek, C. (2018). Identifying solutions to promote the education of children in Roma communities. *Bulletin of the Transylvania University of Brasov, Series VII: Social Sciences & Law 11*(1), 85-96. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332014836_IDENTIFYING_SOLUTIONS_TO_PROMOTE_THE_EDUCATION_OF_CHILDREN_IN_ROMA_COMMUNITIES

CTV News. (2024, July 20). *Ont. Teacher facing multiple sexual assault charges after assault of a minor* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=folEODisxSQ

Cutrara, S. (2018). The settler grammar of Canadian history curriculum: Why historical thinking is unable to respond to the TRC's calls to action. *Canadian Journal of Education 41*(1), 251-275. https://journals.sfu.ca/cje/index.php/cje-rce/article/view/3156

Demiral, U. (2018). Examination of critical thinking skills of preservice science teachers: A perspective of social constructivist theory. *Journal of Education and Learning 7*(4), 179-190. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v7n4p179

Duhame, R. (1964). Treaty Texts: Treaty No. 6 (rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca)

Faizan, M. (2019). The role of semiotics in advertising: Communicative approach. *Language in India 19*(2), 135-142. http://www.languageinindia.com/feb2019/faizansemioticsmarketing.pdf

George, T. (2020). *Hermeneutics.* Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hermeneutics/#:~:text=Philosophically%2C%20 hermeneutics%20therefore%20concerns%20the,language%20and%20history%2C%20art%20and

Giancarlo, A., Forsyth, J., Hiwi, B., & McKee, T. (2021). Methodology and indigenous memory: using photographs to anchor critical reflections on Indian residential school experiences. *Visual Studies 36*(4-5), 406-420. https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2021.1878929

Gibson, L., & Case, R. (2019). Reshaping Canadian history education in support of reconciliation. *Canadian Journal of Education 42*(1), 251-284. https://journals.sfu.ca/cje/index.php/cje-rce/article/view/3591

Glaw, X., Inder, K., Kable, A., & Hazelton, M. (2017). Visual methodologies in qualitative research: Autophotography and photo elicitation applied to mental health research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 16*, 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917748215

Gordon, J. H. (1963). Canadian department of citizenship and immigration report of Indian Affairs Branch for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1963. Roger Duhamel, F.R.S.C. Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationery, Ottawa, 1963. https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Search?q_any=Indian%20Affairs%20annual%20reports%20by%20federal&DateBucket=1960-1969%7C1963&DataSource=Library|IndAffAnnRep&

Gross, M. (2014). Struggling to deal with the difficult past: Polish students confront the Holocaust. *Journal of Curriculum Studies 46*(4), 441-463. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2014.923513

Green B. (1966). Trumpets, justice, and federalism: An analysis of the Ontario Training Schools Act of 1965. *The University of Toronto Law Journal 16*(2), 407-423. https://doi.org/10.2307/825185

Hawthorn, H. (Ed.). (1967). *A survey of contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, political, educational needs and policies*. Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa. https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.700111/publication.html

Hodgins, J. G. (Ed.) (1883). *"The story of my life" by the late Rev. Egerton Ryerson, D.D., LLD., (Being reminiscences of sixty years' public service in Canada)*. William Briggs Toronto. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/24586/24586-h/24586-h.htm#Page_352

Kerckhoff, A. (2001). Education and social stratification processes in comparative perspective. *Sociology of Education 74*, 3-18. https://doi.org/10.2307/2673250

Kress, G., van Leeuwen, T. (2021). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (3rd ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Ku, K., Ho, I., Hau, K., Lai, E. (2013). Integrating direct and inquiry-based instruction in the teaching of critical thinking: An intervention study. *Instructional Science: An International Journal of the Learning Sciences 42*(2), 251-269. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-013-9279-0

Martinez, L. (2023, August 17). *Pentagon to make changes at military service academies to stem sexual assaults.* ABC News. https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/pentagon-make-military-service-academies-stem-sexual-assaults/story?id=102346817

McKee, T., & Forsyth, J. (2019). Witnessing painful pasts: Understanding images of sports at Canadian Indian residential schools. *Journal of Sport History 46*(2), 175-188. https://doi.org/10.5406/jsporthistory.46.2.0175

Miles, James. (2019). Seeing and feeling difficult history: A case study of how Canadian students make sense of photographs of Indian Residential Schools. *Theory & Research in Social Education 47*(4), 472-496. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2019.1626783

Miller, K., & Hunt, C. (2022). A picture is worth a thousand words: Visual microaggressions in teacher education. *The Urban Review.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-022-00636-3

Milloy, J. S. (1996). *Suffer the little children: The Aboriginal residential school system 1830-1992*. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Children: Canada. https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.829950/publication.html

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. (1966). *Indian record*, *29*(6-10). http://archives.algomau.ca/main/?q=node/26917

Mitchell, B. (2023, January 9). *'We were just children': Canadian gymnasts speak out against culture of abuse in sport.* CTV News. https://www.ctvnews.ca/w5/we-were-just-children-canadian-gymnasts-speak-out-against-culture-of-abuse-in-their-sport-1.6147831

NCTR (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation). (2004). Blue Quills IRS School Narrative (point form). https://t-r-c.ca/nctr/school_narratives/blue_quills.pdf

Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.

Naydenov, K., Parashkevova, B., Chamova, G., Mindov, I., & Manolova, T. (2023). Social stratification in the 21st century. *Trakia Journal of Sciences 2*, 195-198. https://doi.org/10.15547/tjs.2023.02.019

Newman, M. (1967). *Appendix F Indians of the Saddle Lake Reserve: Community opportunity assessment.* Human Resources Research and Development Government of Alberta. https://archive.org/details/communityopportu00mort/page/2/mode/2up

Niezen, R. (2016). Templates and exclusions: Victim centrism in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian residential schools. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.) 22*, 920-938. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12497

Oreopoulos, P. (2005). Canadian compulsory school laws and their impact on educational attainment and future earnings. *Family and Labour Studies Division, Statistics Canada*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2005251-eng.pdf?st=UqC35Amz

PAA (Provincial Archives of Alberta). (2014, December 19). *Blue Quills residential school*. Flickr. Retrieved March 15, 2023, from https://www.flickr.com/photos/alberta_archives/albums/72157649831501971

Persson, D. (1980). *Blue Quills: A case study of Indian residential schooling* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. University of Alberta. https://doi.org/10.7939/R3ST7F56F

Romo, V. (2021, July 2). *Boy Scouts of America reaches historic settlement with sexual abuse survivors.* NPR. https://www.npr.org/2021/07/01/1012388865/boy-scouts-of-america-settlement-with-sexual-abuse-survivors-victims

Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Rose, G. (2023). *Semiology: Laying bare the prejudices – Beneath the smooth surface of the visible.* Sage Publishers. https://study.sagepub.com/rose4e/student-resources/chapter-6/exercise

Roxas, K., & Velez, V. (2019). Photovoice as micro-invitation: A case study of high school im/migrant youth disrupting everyday forms of racism. *High School Journal 102*(4), 267-282. https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2019.0011

Rupar, M., Voca, S. & Graf, S. (2024). The link between social norms and reconciliation and behavioral intentions in postconflict societies. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology.* Advance online publication. https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pac0000730

Ryerson, E. (1898). Statistics respecting Indian schools with Dr. Ryerson's report of 1847 attached. Library and Archives Canada File 172495 AMICUS No. 15206086. https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?idnumber=2069786&app=FonAndCol

Sajid, M., Buzdar, H., & Wagar, S. (2019). A semiological discourse analysis of Pak-Army representation in Pakistani print media. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS) 39*(4), 1375-1381. https://pjss.bzu.edu.pk/index.php/pjss/article/view/763

Smith, M. (2022). Beyond a single story: Peripheral histories of boys brought up in a residential school. *Ethics and Social Welfare 16*(3), 290-305. https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2022.2036789

Steltenkamp, M. F. (1993). *Black Elk: Holy man of the Oglala.* University of Oklahoma Press: Norman.

TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada). (2015). Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

(2015). Calls to action. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Van Leeuwen, T. (2005). *Introducing social semiotics.* Routledge

Wallace-Casey, C. (2022). Teaching and learning the legacy of residential schools for remembering and reconciliation in Canada. *History Education Research Journal 19*(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.14324/HERJ.19.1.04

Young, J., Worley, C., & Young J. (2022). The promise of the taxonomy of online racism for critical race media literacy in Social Studies education research. *The*

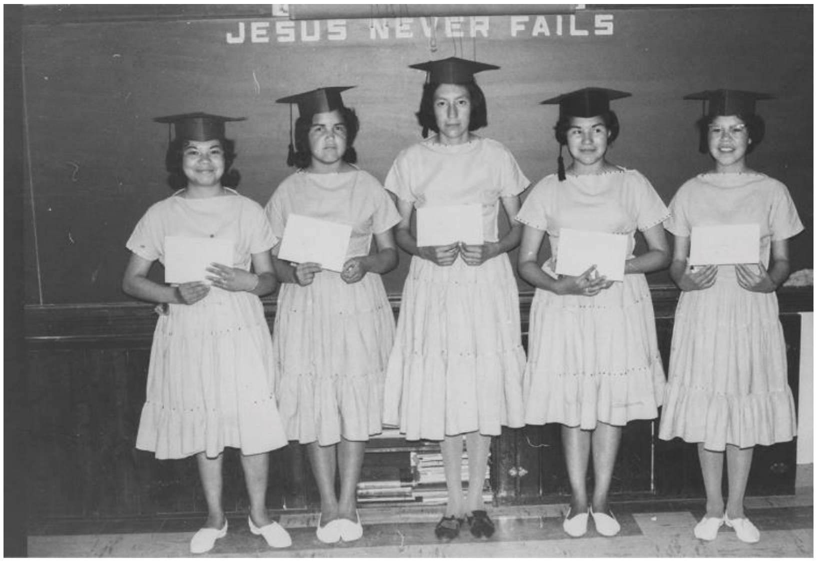
Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies 83(2), 1-32. https://thekeep.eiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1199&context=the_councilor

Yunus, R. (2022). ‘Labour class’ children in Indian classrooms: Theorizing urban poverty and schooling. *British Journal of Sociology of Education 43*(1), 104-119. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2021.2003181

Zingaro, L. (2009). *Speaking out: Storytelling for social change*. Left Coast Press: California

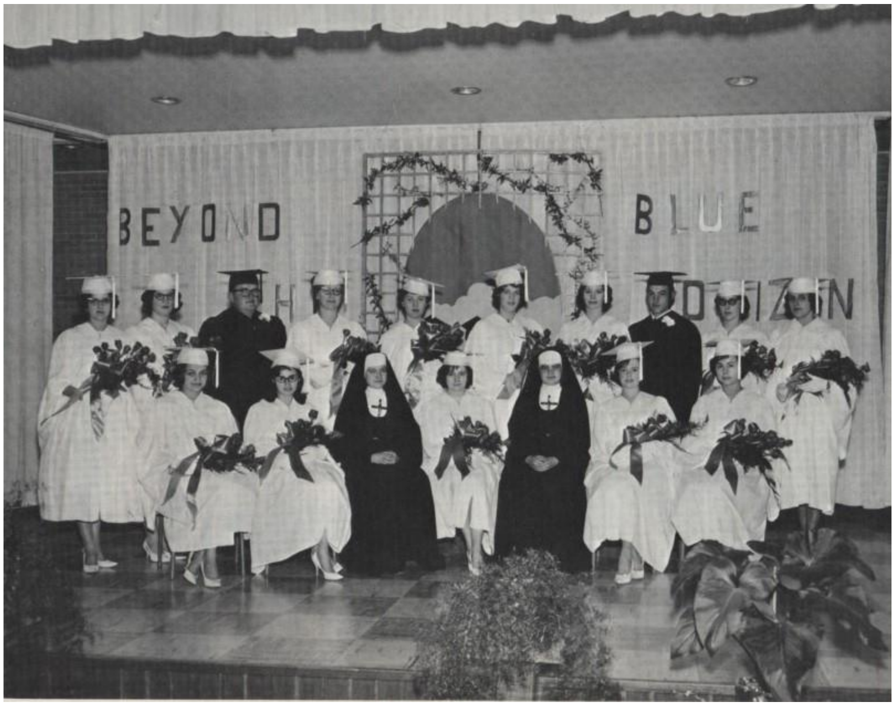
Zou, Y., Xiao, H., & Yang, Y. (2022). Constructing identity in space and place: Semiotic and discourse analysis of museum tourism. T*ourism Management 93*, 1-12. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104608

Appendix A – Paradigmatic Relationship–Culture


JESUS NEVER FAILS

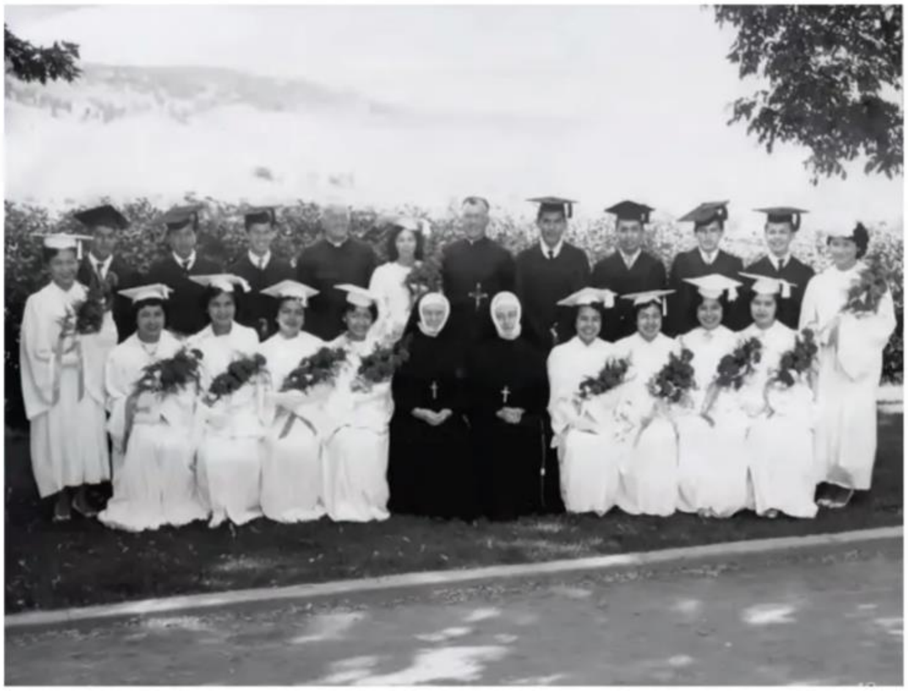
PAA Artefact #1

Photo PR1973.0248.909, JESUS NEVER FAILS appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Alberta


BEYOND
BLUE

UCO Artefact #1

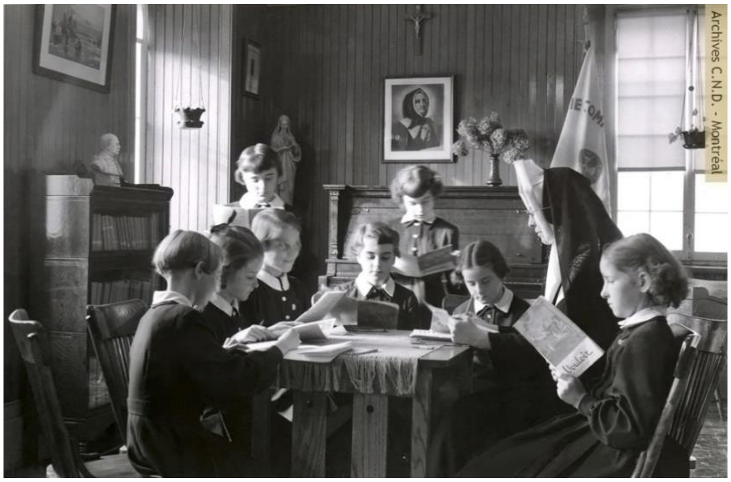
Photo 2023-UO/TI-09 appears courtesy Copyright Board of Canada under Unlocatable Copyright Owner License of July 24, 2023



BC Artefact #1

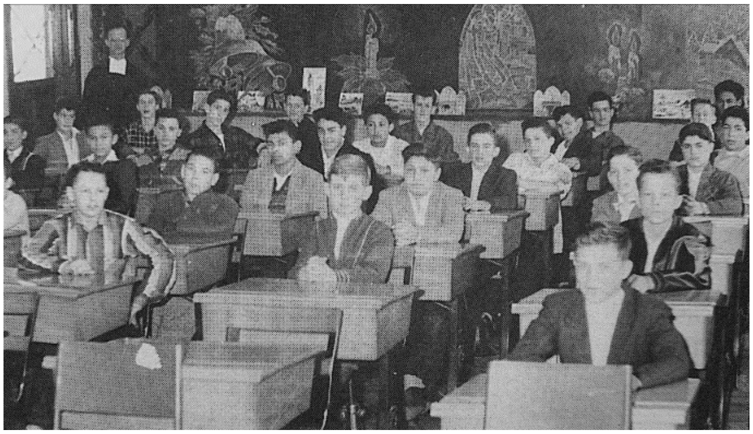
Photo LAST GRADE 12 CLASS, Kamloops Indian Residential School, appears courtesy BC Archives Accession Number P65-01-05a.

Appendix B– Paradigmatic Relationship—Institutionalization



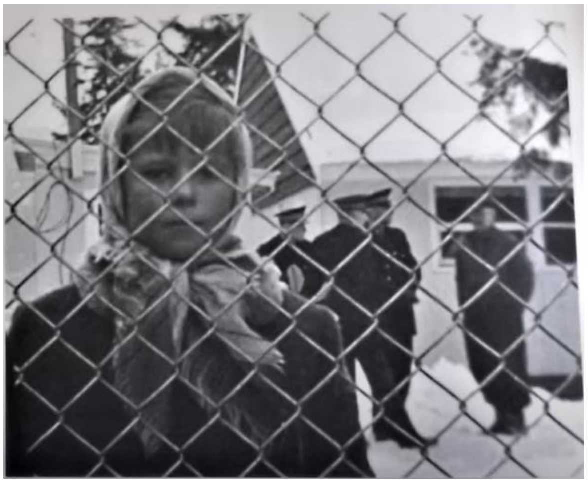
CND Artefact #1.

Photo 312_510_052_p024 appears courtesy Congrégation de Notre-Dame.



MCCANN Artefact #1

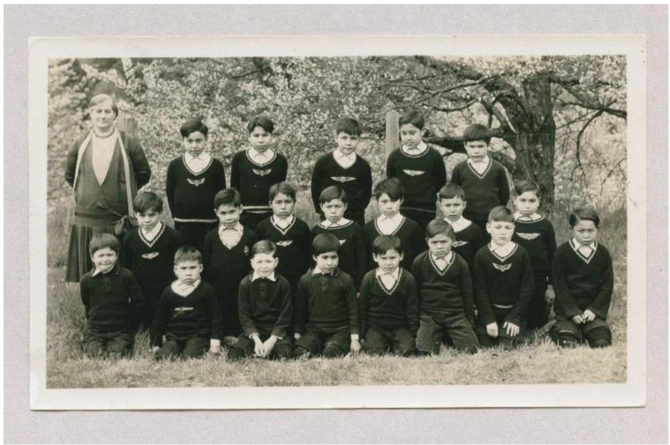
Photo David McCann, St. Joseph’s Training School for Boys appears courtesy David McCann.



DOUKHOBOR Artefact #1

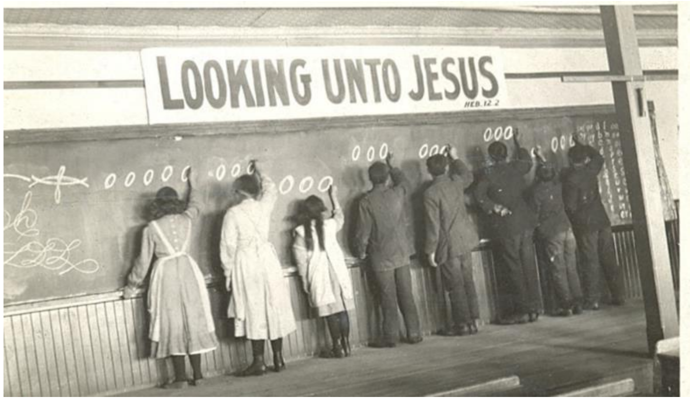
Photo VISITING DAY CIRCA 1957 appears courtesy Helen Chernoff Freeman.

Appendix C – Common Images Used to Teach Difficult History



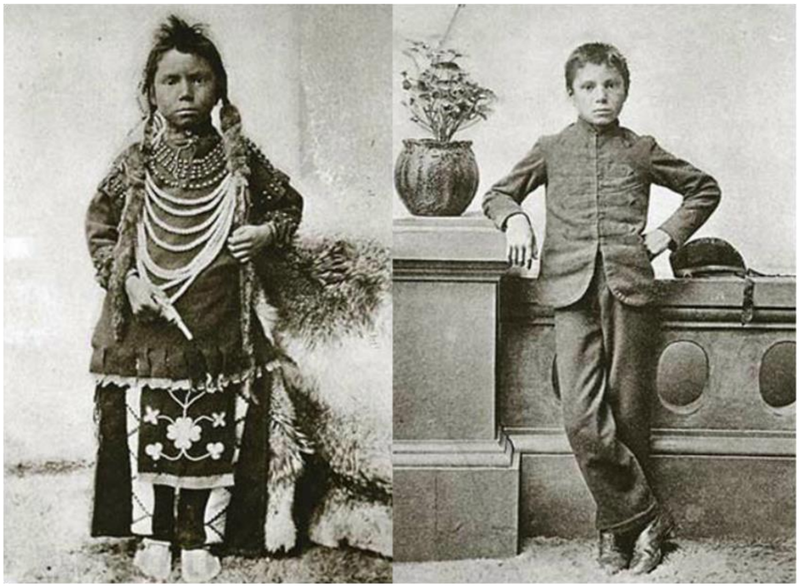
PMRA Artefact #1

Photo BCCA_2_90 BOYS' PRIMARY CLASS, Port Alberni Residential School appears courtesy Pacific Mountain Regional Archives.



UCCA Artefact #1

Photo CA 0N00340 F582-2- 1993.049P/850, A CLASS IN PENMANSHIP, 1919, From Mission to Partnership Collection, appears courtesy of United Church of Canada Archives, Public Domain.



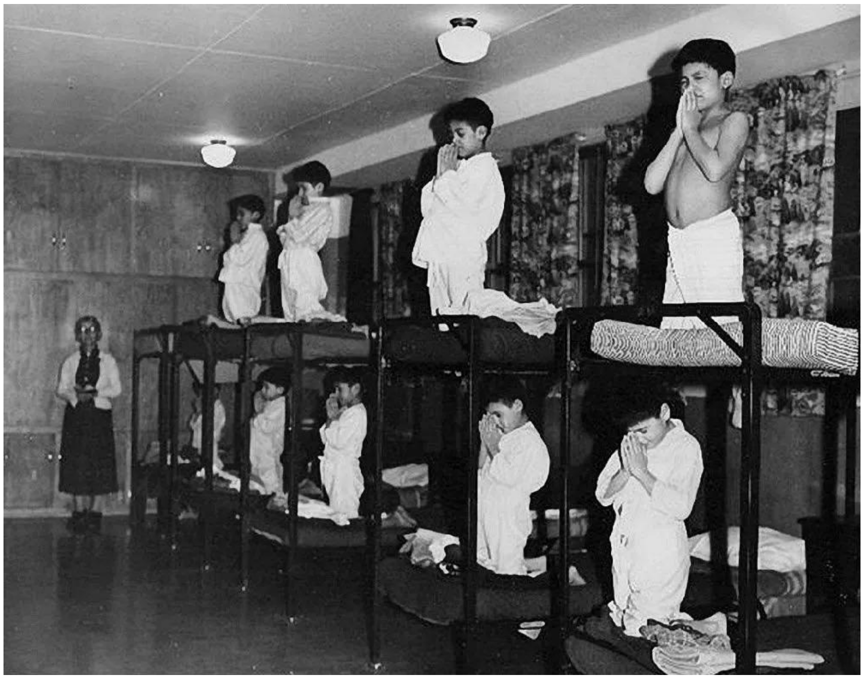
PAS Artefact #1

Photo R-A8223 (1) (2), Department of Indian Affairs, THOMAS MOORE BEFORE AND AFTER ADMISSION TO REGINA INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, 1895, appears courtesy Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

LAC Artefact #2

[*does not appear due to full restrictions on use*]

Photo PA-195124, Item ID 3195174, SOEURS DU SACRE-COEUR d'OTTAWA SUPERVISING CUTTING AN ABORIGINAL BOY'S HAIR IN THE CLASSROOM, Pukatawagan Reserve, Manitoba, 1960, creator Sister Liliane, private collection.



AUA Artefact #1

Photo 2010-043_001_001 Bishop Horden Memorial Indian Residential School, Moose Factory, Ontario, 1958, Harry Fay Collection appears courtesy Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre.

Appendix D—Ethical Considerations vs. Copyright Considerations (Figure 1)

ETHICS			**COPYRIGHT**		
Identifiable Children	YES	X	Photo Attribution	YES	✓
Agency Over Image	NO	X	Analogue Location	YES	✓
Monolithic Thinking	YES	X	Permission to Use	YES	✓
Image as BAIT	YES	X	Fair Dealing for Educational Purposes	YES	✓
Private Collection	YES	X	Copyright Holder has Agency	YES	✓
Published	NO	X			
Original Purpose Known	NO	X			
Could Child be Alive	YES	X			
Representing Harms?	YES	X			
Is the Child Alone at the Table?	YES	X			
ETHICS DETERMINATION	*Unusable*	X	**COPYRIGHT DETERMINATION**	*Usable*	✓