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Beyond Church and State: Rethinking Who Knew What When About Residential Schooling in Canada

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Article abstract

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Beyond Church and State: Rethinking Who Knew What When About Residential Schooling in Canada

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Abstract

This study moves beyond evidence left behind by church and state officials to ask who knew what when about residential schooling in Canada. While our historical knowledge about residential schooling and the people involved in and affected by it has grown in recent years, scholars have characteristically focused on official church and state agents. Other non-Aboriginal individuals who lived in or spent some time in Aboriginal communities, and who are not typically implicated in residential schooling, have consequently been overlooked as a source of knowledge about the truth of residential schooling. By broadening our examination of the various people who knew about residential schooling, by considering what they knew, and by coming to terms with the truth that many of them did little or nothing to stop the abuse they witnessed, this study suggests that we can more fully understand ourselves and our history, and we can be more properly prepared to move forward in a process of reconciliation and healing.

Key words: Residential schools; children; abuse; residential school witnesses; bystanders; knowledge; truth; reconciliation; healing

Introduction

An increased effort has emerged in recent years that is aimed at understanding and coming to terms with the experience of residential schooling in Canada's history. Inspired by student memoirs that began to appear in the 1960s, scholars in Canada have attempted to address the experience of Aboriginal children and the painful memory, both individual and collective, of residential schooling. A proliferation of scholarship since the 1960s has challenged Canadians to rethink the intentions of government and church officials in the schooling of Aboriginal children, and the impact that it had on the lives and communities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

While our historical knowledge about residential schooling and the people involved in it has grown, scholars have typically used official church and state records as their evidence in order

to uncover the primary people implicated in residential schooling, while other agents who lived in or spent some time in Aboriginal communities, and who are not normally associated with residential schooling, have been characteristically overlooked. In contrast, the present study considers the role of non-state and non-church

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agents, such as anthropologists, archaeologists, and social workers, through both the historical record and contemporary reflections on their past work, which offer telling histories regarding their experiences and how they remember residential schooling.

We can learn more about who knew what when about residential schooling by broadening our scope of investigation into the agents not typically associated with residential schooling. By moving our attention away from the “official” agents involved in residential schooling and toward these individuals, we can open new territory into studies on the impact of residential schooling through the perspective of new witnesses. Anthropologist Anthony Fisher (1998) speaks candidly about his field research on the Blood Indian Reserve in Alberta in the 1960s, and admits to being aware about the abuse and horror of residential schooling. Yet, “aside from a few complaints to the Indian Agent,” he states, “I did nothing” (p. 93). Fisher attempts to make sense of his failure to do something, and expresses shame about his inaction. He rightfully points out that he was not alone: “Many of us studied residential schools, studied their pupils psychologically, compiled life histories that included residential school episodes, visited residential schools, speculated about acculturation and the schools, and did nothing” (p. 93). Coming to terms with what his generation of researchers in aboriginal communities knew about what was going on, and how little they did about it, was something, he suggests, that simply has to be done. Fisher’s words also suggest that evidence left behind by non-church and non-state agents in Aboriginal Communities may indeed be able to help us expand our knowledge about the history of residential schooling in Canada.

This study examines the writings of academic researchers and professionals, such as social workers, whose work brought them into close contact with Aboriginal children, families, and communities throughout the twentieth century. An analysis of their published writing reveals that many of these non-church and non-state agents were aware of the psychological and social harm inflicted upon Aboriginal peoples, and in some cases their writing reveals first-hand knowledge about the abuse of Aboriginal children in residential schools. In addition to published material, this study examines unpublished archival writing from anthropologists, archaeologists, and other academic researchers who did fieldwork in and among Aboriginal communities. At times Aboriginal peoples themselves were the subjects of that research, and at other times they were not. In both cases, however, those doing work and living in Aboriginal communities were given access, both directly and indirectly, to the inside world of those community members’ lives. What did they witness? To what extent were they aware of the horrors of residential schooling? Did they become aware of other types of horrors and abuses? In what ways can they broaden our knowledge about the history of residential schooling and the impact of Euro-Canadian educational policies on Aboriginal peoples?

The Writing of the History of Residential Schooling: A Brief Review

Eric Taylor Woods (2012) identifies the 1972 policy paper *Indian Control of Indian Education* by the National Indian Brotherhood as the turning point in Aboriginal education in Canada. Prior to that, government involvement in the education of Aboriginals was extremely paternalistic, with public policy in Canada directed toward the assimilation and “civilizing” of Aboriginal peoples into a perceived mainstream Euro-Canadian society (Canada, 1996). By extension, scholarship on residential schooling was also extremely paternalistic in tone, dominated by missionary literature that emphasized the noble struggle of missionaries to bring “civilization” and Christianity to Aboriginals (Woods, 2012).

The shift in public policy in the 1970s was reflective of a shift in thinking at the time among Euro-Canadian scholars regarding residential schooling. Increasingly, studies of residential schooling began to consider the perspective of Aboriginal peoples themselves while questioning the intentions of residential school advocates. Maurice Lewis (1966), Jacqueline Gresko (1970, 1975), and John Chalmer (1972) were among the first to shed light on the questionable politics of residential schooling and the appalling environment of the schools, both physical and emotional, that led to psychological problems among Aboriginal children later in life. Studies by Sylvia Dayton (1976), Eric Porter (1981), Sally Weaver (1981), Kenneth Coates (1984), and Brian Titley (1986), along with the seminal collection edited by Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and Don McGaskill (1986, 1987), built upon these studies in their consideration of church and state involvement in residential schooling and connected the intentions of church and state officials involved in residential schooling with an assimilationist mentality that permeated Canadian culture from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries.

In the 1990s, studies on residential schooling began to move away from the intentions and designs of policy makers and toward an investigation of how the schools actually worked. Thorough and meticulous historical research by James Miller (1987, 1992, 1996, 2000) demonstrated the negative impact of residential schooling on Aboriginal children and the ways in which they and their communities were often helpless victims in rivalries among churches that were ultimately concerned and driven by their own interests. John Milloy (1996, 1999) added further to the historiography by focusing on residential school administrators, arguing that while they were aware of the problems with residential schooling, they purposefully remained ignorant and neglectful.

Over the last decade, research on residential schooling has primarily been conducted in disciplines other than history, such as psychology, health, and social work (Woods, 2012). The historical research today is often produced by government and government-supported agencies. This should not, however, be considered a weakness of the field but rather a strength in the type and quality of research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. Historians set in motion important government-funded studies into residential schooling. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) was a watershed that forced the federal government to acknowledge its involvement in the attempted assimilation of Aboriginal peoples. The formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2008 has increased efforts to broaden our understanding of the legacy and impact of residential schooling in Canada. Historians have been instrumental in opening the doors into investigations about residential school advocates and participants, and the consequences of their actions.

While scholarship on residential schooling has provided deep insight into the intentions of residential schooling and the impact on pupils and their families, it has nevertheless been overwhelmingly focused on official records left behind by church and state agents. Some notable exceptions are Celia Haig-Brown (1988), Linda Bull (1991), Rosalyn Ing (1991), and Robert Regnier (1995), who go beyond the documentary evidence and explore the student experience through interviews and conversations that provide a striking oral history of abuse, neglect, and pain. The focus, however, remains on those involved and implicated within residential schools. Few studies have gone beyond official records to consider what knowledge about residential schooling in Canada existed among those not directly working in or within the residential school paradigm. That is, a greater number of witnesses to residential schooling exist than has yet been considered. What can evidence from those not involved in residential schooling, yet fully aware of

what was happening, add to our historical understanding of this painful legacy and phenomenon in Canadian history?

Toward a Broader Understanding of Who Knew What When

The evidence left behind by non-church and non-state agents who witnessed the events surrounding residential schooling in Canada offers to broaden our historical understanding. We can and should begin to assess the variety of histories that emerged through the eyes of a greater number of witnesses than are usually recognized in the writing of residential school history. Anthropologists, archaeologists, doctors, nurses, social workers, and a greater variety and number of individuals than we are used to considering witnessed the horror of residential schooling. What exactly did these people know, or not know? And what did they do, or not do?

In certain ways, these questions raise similar concerns about witnesses of the Holocaust in Europe during the Second World War. Witnesses of the Holocaust have been characterized as “bystanders,” and their reluctance to oppose the activities of the Nazi regime have been linked to the “bystander effect” or “Genovese syndrome” demonstrated by John Darley and Bibb Latané following the murder of Kitty Genovese of New York City in 1964 (Henry, 1984; Hilberg, 1992; Barnett, 1999; Bar-on, 2001). Darley and Latané (1968) suggest a social psychological phenomenon in which individuals are less likely to offer help to victims in situations when other people are present. Like witnesses of Genovese’s violent murder among a number of witnesses in New York City, witnesses of the Holocaust either remained unaware of victimization or ignored it as a result of being fearful of the consequences. They chose, consciously or unconsciously, to go on with their daily lives in the hope, perhaps, that others were doing something.

Can we identify “bystanders” in the history of residential schooling in Canada? Does the bystander effect explain the longevity of residential schooling? Did the inaction of individuals living among, working with, and sharing lives with Aboriginal families in Canada throughout the twentieth century perpetuate a policy of assimilation and acculturation that Canadians today find challenging to make sense of? How do we come to grips with the fact that people were aware of the horror of residential schooling, but did nothing? Were they in agreement with what they saw? Did what they see bother them? Did they make the conscious decision to look away? Or were they paralyzed with fear of the consequences of what speaking up to church and state would entail? We must begin to look outside of church and state evidence to begin addressing these questions.

Certain historical scholars in Canada have suggested that residential schooling may indeed be considered Canada’s Holocaust (Furniss 1992; Grant, 1996; Annett, 2000; Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun, 2006). Dean Neu (2000) and Neu and Richard Therrien (2003) have even compared administrators in the Canadian government with administrators in Nazi Germany. Scott Trevithick (1998) and Miller (2000), however, suggest that such a comparison should be made with caution. They note that much of the scholarship that has compared residential schooling to the Holocaust or to cultural genocide has tended to be based less on evidence than on opinion, and that the evidence itself should not be read through a contemporary perspective but rather through its proper historical context (Woods, 2012).

In all of the writing on residential schooling in Canada, the question of who knew what when remains, and it challenges us to look beyond the familiar sources. The following sections will

attempt to provide some answers to this question by considering the actions and inactions of some of the non-church and non-state agents who witnessed residential schooling in Canada. This study employs the bystander theory in a broad sense, and considers not only those individuals who witnessed physical violence directly but also those who knew that the residential schooling of Aboriginal children was inflicting various forms of harm – physical, psychological, and social – and yet did nothing about it. The purpose of this study, however, is not to judge such individuals but rather to open dialogue about our history so that we can begin to understand what non-church and non-state agents knew about residential schooling. In doing so, it aims to suggest that a far greater array of agents should take responsibility for the history of residential schooling in Canada.

Non-Church and Non-State Agents among Aboriginal Communities, 1920-1980

As early as the 1920s, Diamond Jenness, Canada's leading anthropologist and scholar of the North for the first half of the twentieth century, promoted the building of industrial schools for Inuit children. While there is no documentary evidence suggesting that Jenness witnessed residential schooling first-hand, the evidence does suggest that Jenness was aware of missionary education, disapproved of it, and was involved in an attempt to restructure education for Inuit children in the 1920s and 1930s. Amidst the growth and expansion of residential schooling, Jenness offered an alternative educational model. Nevertheless, his voice became silent by the 1940s and, despite his proposals, residential schooling continued to cement its place in the lives of Aboriginal children and families.

Jenness, the Chief of Anthropology at the National Museum of Canada, had served in the Canadian Arctic Expedition in the early twentieth century, and was regarded in the Euro-Canadian community as the leading authority on Inuit (or, Eskimo, the term used at the time) culture and society. Jenness has been criticized for having a theoretical approach to Anthropology couched in an evolutionary framework at least a generation old at the time (Hancock, 2002). Even though he was part of an establishment that held a paternalistic attitude toward the Inuit, Jenness also held some surprisingly progressive views concerning the education of Aboriginal peoples in the North. In the autumn of 1925, he sent a memorandum to Duncan C. Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs, outlining an educational plan he saw as essential for the survival of the Inuit. "Conditions in the Arctic," he warned, "are changing rapidly. Within the last ten years fur traders and police have extended to every inhabited corner, and although little except furs are now exported, other developments, such as mining, may follow in the not distant future. The Eskimos, the only natives in the region, are changing also.... But with no knowledge of the outside world, with no education or training except what they can acquire from a rare missionary, or from association with traders and police, they are ill-adapted to meet the changed conditions, to assist in the development of their country, or to aid in its exploration and exploitation" (Jenness, 1925).

Jenness saw a serious flaw with the education provided by missionaries who he felt did not provide any useful or practical training. He advocated a different approach altogether, one that favoured training for, as he stated "skilled labour for any industry that may one day arise ... their training should commence immediately, to enable them to breast the changed economic conditions and inaugurate a new and more prosperous era." In fact, he was very clear about his

opposition to the type of schooling offered by the missionaries. His own scheme for the schooling of Inuit centred on three principles:

1. That a primary school education would be of little benefit to the Eskimos in their present economic condition. Many can already read and write in their own language, and the knowledge is spreading; many also have a smattering of English. This is sufficient for their present needs.
2. That a limited vocational training which would enable the Eskimos to run, or assist in running, some of the services essential in the far north (e.g. as skippers, pilots, engineers of motor boats) would greatly facilitate the development of the Arctic and reduce the cost of administration. [Clearly his suggestion here would benefit the Euro-Canadian government more than the Inuit, but nevertheless he saw some form of cooperation that was not typical of Euro-Canadian educational values at the time.]
3. That vocational training, wherever possible, should be given in the north, partly to reduce the expense and to avoid all danger of the Eskimos contracting tuberculosis and other diseases in southern cities, but mainly, that the natives might be training in their own environment by instructors familiar with its needs (Jenness, 1925).

His views are remarkable when we consider that he was advocating this type of schooling in 1925. The idea of educating Inuit not only by instructors familiar with their needs, but more importantly at home, in their own communities, was a major point of departure from residential school philosophy.

What did the Department of Indian Affairs do with this report? Through the historical record, we can see that Scott forwarded it to Charles Camsell, Deputy Minister in the Department of Mines, but then there is no more trace of it. Did they take it seriously? We cannot really say, but it may be reasonable to conclude that they did not, because in 1934, Jenness would try again, this time writing to D.L. McKean of the Council of the Northwest Territories with a detailed "Scheme" for practical and industrial schooling in the North. "The present condition of the Canadian Eskimo," he opened his report, "is extremely depressing to any one familiar with the natives in Greenland and Alaska." Citing the Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen, he went so far as to proclaim "that the condition of the Canadian Eskimo is a disgrace to a civilized country" (Jenness, 1934).

Clearly, Jenness wanted, and tried, to have something done. He knew that the condition of Aboriginals in the North as a result of Euro-Canadian involvement was "a disgrace," and he was not alone. Peter Heinbecker (1934) of the School of Medicine at Washington University in St. Louis wrote to H. E. Hume, of the Department of the Interior. His letter suggests that Jenness was not the only academic aware of the ill-effect that the Euro-Canadian presence in the North was having. Heinbecker was condescending by contemporary standards, to be sure, referring to the traditional "Eskimo" way of life as "primitive," and he was certainly not an opponent of Euro-Canadian involvement in the North. Still, he was concerned that without some sort of support from the Canadian government "most of the natives...would starve to death or move away." The "Eskimo" way of life had been altered forever as a result of the emergence of trading posts and the introduction of European weaponry in the North, he suggested. And while it was "not possible to put the clock back," something had to be done to protect Aboriginals in the North. "The price," otherwise, "would be their extinction" (Heinbecker, 1934).

What do we make of these scholars' concerns? Clearly, these scholars did not support a policy of assimilation and acculturation. Did the Canadian government hear Jenness' and other researchers' warnings? Did they take the issue seriously? The history of residential schooling would suggest not. Rather, the Canadian government gave more authority, and funding, to the missionary schools, the Indian Agents, and the RCMP. The idea of industrial practical schooling seems to have died with the end of Jenness' memoranda after the 1930s. Why was Jenness ignored? Did he carry little political weight? Was the Great Depression and WWII just too much of a concern for the government of the time? That is, did the issue of properly addressing Inuit concerns in the North carry little political weight?

A more important question, perhaps, is why did Jenness stop his efforts there? He continued to do research about, and at times speak on behalf of, the Inuit in his papers and books, but official complaints and correspondence to the state waned. Was he aware of the unresponsiveness of the Canadian government, and so gave up? Or did he withdraw, as so many bystanders have throughout history, in the hope that somebody else would do something? It would certainly be unfair to characterize Jenness as a bystander. Although he was aware of, and spoke out against, missionary schools, there is no evidence to suggest that he was aware of the physical abuse and trauma inflicted by certain missionaries. Moreover, Jenness was not a bystander as he clearly tried to offer a model based on an educational philosophy that would have ended residential schooling altogether. Although his efforts to promote his educational scheme ended by the 1940s, he continued to do research in the North. Perhaps he hoped, as many academics do, that his research and writing could effect change.

There were of course many other researchers and workers in Aboriginal communities. Did they do nothing? In 1947, the Canadian Association of Social Workers and the Canadian Welfare Council added to the dialogue in a Joint Submission to the Senate Common Committee on Indian Affairs (CASW and CWC, 1947). Arrangements for the welfare of Aboriginals they insisted, fell short of adequacy in large part by the role played in education and child welfare by residential schools (p. 333). Residential schools, they suggested, were harming Aboriginal children and their families in ways that impacted both their psychological and social well-being. "This institutional policy is out of line with newer thinking respecting community life. We are convinced that the best interests of Indian children and families are not served by the present system. The lack of what Canadian communities have come to recognize as the moral partnership of home and school in child care and training not only hampers the social adjustment of the child, but is a serious deprivation for the parents" (p. 333). The reliance on residential schooling for the education of Aboriginal children, they went on to say, eliminated the possibility of parent education and of developing recreational and community activities at home. The detrimental impact of residential schooling, these witnesses suggested as early as 1947, was being felt by entire communities. In the end, the report did not recommend that residential schools be abolished, but rather that they did indeed "have their place" (p. 334). Again, despite knowledge of the overall harm, nothing was done. They, and other social workers in the 1950s, in fact, made calls for further intervention which would result in the influx of additional non-church and non-state agents in Aboriginal communities in the post-war era (Martins and Bartlett, 1951; Payne, 1956).

Richard J. Preston wrote "Facing New Tasks: Cree and Ojibwa children's adaptation to residential schools," for the National Museum of Canada in 1968. Preston was, at the time, a contract Ethnologist for The National Museum of Canada and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Franklin and Marshall College. It is a striking document not so much because of its content, but because of its commissioning. The commissioning of this study should raise questions concerning

why the national museum, a house of material culture, was interested in the psychological impact of residential schooling on children. Did years of fieldwork and first-hand knowledge of what was going on by many of the anthropologists and archaeologists and other museum workers force the people of the national museum to take some sort of action? Did such researchers, consciously or unconsciously, refuse to become bystanders?

In the report itself, Preston (1968) makes no judgements, but does emphasize that the traditional world view of the children he was studying was changing rapidly. The experience of the child in a residential school, he stated, is made truly complex when we consider that he or she “has only partly internalized the traditional world view” (p. 11) before being sent to school at a very young age. The “stress and strain of such rapid assimilation into the Euroamerican milieu,” he pointed out, resulted in a number of development concerns such as “the development of a protective shield of apparent impersonality,” withdrawal, resistance, and so on (p. 11).

The findings by a Euro-Canadian of the “stress and strain” of residential schooling and its negative psychological impact on both the children and its communities is striking when we consider that it was written in the 1960s, and yet residential schools continued in operation in Canada for roughly two more decades. Was this report also ignored? Why was the report not more widely distributed and its findings disseminated in the 1960s, when it was written?

Preston (2008) has subsequently written about his other fieldwork collecting Cree narratives. “When collecting Cree stories in the 1960s,” he states metaphorically, “I was committing the neo-colonialist sin of ‘butterfly collecting,’ that is, going to the natives, collecting specimens of living culture, symbolically asphyxiating them and pinning them to a blotter in a museum case” (p. 201). Although not addressing the issue of residential schools, he does allude, like Fisher, to having acted as an outsider. Nevertheless, Preston cautions against judgmental venting, placing his own work as an applied anthropologist, perhaps rightly, within a historical context that cannot be understood properly through a contemporary perspective.

There are others, however, who suggest that we should indeed judge our actions, or inactions, through new understandings of the legacy we have created by doing nothing. Adje van de Sande and Karen Schwartz (2011) are two social workers who have recently suggested that social workers must examine the “Western positivist paradigm,” as they call it, in the history of social work practice with Aboriginal peoples, and must come to terms as a profession with social workers’ roles in Aboriginal communities (p. 76). Historically, the active participation of social workers, who were almost exclusively Euro-Canadians with little or no knowledge of Aboriginal culture, was geared toward supporting government policy that “aimed to assimilate Aboriginal people into western culture as quickly as could be managed” (p. 77). Social workers participated in a broad program of assimilation that resulted in loss and devastation among Aboriginal families and communities. “We now acknowledge this as wrong,” the authors state (p. 77). Van de Sande and Schwartz suggest that recognizing the damage done by social workers who entered into Aboriginal communities, applied white standards, and, too often, apprehended children and placed them into foster or adoptive homes with “white” families, is the first step toward healing. “We recognize the damage done by such initiatives as the ‘sixties scoop,’ when thousands of Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families by ‘white’ social workers and placed in non-aboriginal foster and adoptive homes far from their communities” (p. 77). Lessons can be learned from this history, they argue, that can lead to improvements in practice that can ultimately lead to support the self-determination of Aboriginal people (p. 78).

Raven Sinclair (2004), refers to social work's "colonial influence" in Aboriginal communities, going so far as to suggest that "the colonialistic actions and attitudes [of the social workers] towards Aboriginal people have been deliberate and calculated; designed to displace and distance the people from their land and resources. The attempted obliteration of Aboriginal culture was one strategy towards achieving that end" (p. 50). Social workers, she suggests, played a part in that attempt. Citing the example of the Spillumcheen Band in British Columbia, social workers, she points out, removed 150 children from their families between 1950 and 1977 without any notice to them or their bands. Moreover, when Aboriginal families searched for their children they were lied to and deliberately misled by social workers. Sinclair's message to social workers is one that should probably be considered by everyone who was involved in, witnessed, or otherwise knew about residential schooling: in order to move forward, we must be aware of the historical elements that continue to be carried intergenerationally.

Conclusion

In a report presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2011 by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Marcel Eugene-LeBeuf, the author of the report, admits that police officers routinely acted on behalf of the federal government to track down children who had run away from residential schools; however, LeBeuf argues that they generally were not aware of the abuse. In the end, the report suggests that the children themselves should carry some of the blame, because they would rarely denounce the abuse they experienced. The system, according to LeBeuf, prevented outsiders from knowing about the abuse that occurred. "Indian Residential Schools were," the report concludes, "essentially a closed system between the Department of Indian Affairs, the churches and school administrator" (p. 2). Nevertheless, even this report provides evidence from an anonymous RCMP officer who had refused to bring children back to the schools because, as the officer states, "I think it was not right...there were a lot of parents that were hesitant to send their children to school because of abuse. I was aware of what was going on in the school because I conducted an investigation...in 1959 [ellipses in the original]" (p. 143). Combined with the above evidence from the variety of non-church and non-state agents who became witnesses themselves, we can reasonably conclude that the residential school system was not closed, and that the reality of life in the residential schools was not hidden.

In answering who knew what when, a central question of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission today, it is clear that many individuals knew something was wrong, and they knew it much earlier than we have previously supposed. Many are willing to admit it, and they encourage others to make sense of it. "For my own part," Fisher writes, "I visited both of the residential schools on the Blood Indian Reserve in Alberta in 1962. I was shocked by the violence perpetrated by the school's teachers and administrators. All of my neighbors on the Reserve had attended residential schools and many told me horrible anecdotes from school life. Although my thesis research was a study of young Blood Indians, I avoided the residential schools and school officials as much as possible" (Fisher, 1998, p. 93).

Fisher knew what was happening, yet did nothing. What does the fact that so many people knew what was happening, were immersed in it, were driven to write about the injustice and abuse, reflected on the pain and sadness of it all, yet ultimately did nothing, could do nothing, or were blatantly ignored, tell us about ourselves and our history? Could they have done more? Should they have done more? Did they hope that somebody else was doing something to help Aboriginal children? It is perhaps time to reflect upon the variety of individuals that may have known or

not known what was going on; this means looking at the intentions and actions of not only church and state agents, but everyone – the academic community, researchers, anthropologists, archaeologists, social workers, nurses, doctors – even the airplane and helicopter pilots who flew agents into, and children out of, their communities – all of those who found themselves within the world of residential schooling and became aware of the conditions surrounding the schools and the students. If we do as such, can we come to better terms with what we knew about residential schooling and what we did not do about it, far beyond the perspective of the church and state?

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